

The Writings and Teachings of George Müller of Bristol



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A Faithful Saying

Notes of a Sermon preached by George Müller at the Opening of Salem Chapel, North Common, near Bristol, Feb. 27, 1872

I Timothy i. 15,16.

Well now, dear friends, you are almost all strangers to me. I do not know your state, cannot possibly know it; therefore I do not know what you need to have more especially brought before you this evening, and therefore in the consciousness of my weakness I asked the Lord again and again to direct me to a portion from which to speak to you, and after prayer I have been directed to two verses in the chapter which we have been reading. This is just the portion which suits us all; there is not one here present for whom there is not something contained in this portion, for we are all sinners, without a single exception; and that is a point which I desire particularly to impress on your hearts, as well as on my heart. By the grace of God I am convinced about it; now are all here present convinced that they are sinners? We are all sinners, and great sinners; and here it rests. Some make excuses and say they are not so bad as others: they have not murdered anybody, they have not robbed anybody; but that is not the question. We are all naturally going our own way, instead of going the way that God would have us go. And it is just this which is hateful to God, that we naturally please ourselves, go our own way, do all to our own liking, instead of caring about the way of God, and seeking to please Him. It is because we seek to gratify ourselves, and do not set God before us, on this very ground that we are sinners whose sins are most hateful to God. If we had what we all deserve, we must all go to the place of perdition. There is no help for us. But in this verse it is pointed out that although we are the chief of sinners, yet there is hope. Wicked, guilty never so much, yet there is no need of despairing if we are ready to be saved in God's own appointed way. Now these verses bring the matter before us in a very few words. The Holy Ghost by the Apostle Paul seeks to commend the way in which a sinner is to be saved. God might speak in the way of command or threatening, - If you will not believe I will send you to hell. But God is entreating, reasoning with sinners. That is according to the heart of God, so pitiful, so compassionate, in order that He might get the sinner to Himself; and therefore he says it is a "faithful saying," it is quite true, there is no flaw in it, it is all real, all good this saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. You stake nothing, you risk nothing; you may depend on it that it is so.

It is worthy of all acceptance. It deserves to be accepted. Now have we all accepted this statement? By the grace of God I have accepted it, and there are not a few here present who have accepted it. Now just ask yourselves this question one after the other. Let not a single heart be left out here. The aged need it as well as the young. Have I accepted it? You see I am a witness for God, and I tell you I have accepted it. And I could point to this one, and another, and another who have accepted it; but the point is have we all accepted it? The hearts of those who have accepted it long that all might accept it. Should there be any here present who might be in doubt about it, let them now accept this statement. We have especially to notice this, - "Christ Jesus came into the world." What does this imply? That He was before in existence. It also teaches us the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son of the living God, the Creator of the universe, by whom all things were made, by whom everything is kept in existence, and for whose honour and glory everything has been created, without whom none of us would have an existence, without whom none of us would be kept in existence. How did He come into the world? As a prince? Not as His Royal Highness, on whose account thanksgiving is made today, but He came as a little babe in a manger. He was a carpenter's son, working at the bench as a carpenter, and called upon this account the carpenter's son, and thus going on until He was thirty years of age. As such He came into the world, in the form of a servant, as a poor one, as a mean one, as a despised one - not as a prince, not as a nobleman's son, but as a poor one, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and for thirty-three years thus going on. And for what did He come into the world? To save sinners; for this very purpose. He did not come into the world to save good people, and if there are any persons here who consider themselves good people, then they are not among the number Jesus came to save. If you continue so, you will not have the benefit of this salvation. We must be brought to see that we need the Saviour, that we are wicked persons who deserve nothing but punishment. As long as we have a good opinion about ourselves, and will do our best to please God, and make up for any little thing that might be wanting, we are altogether mistaken, we know nothing yet about the way to heaven. We must first see that we are sinners: that is, that we are wicked, although we are not drunkards; that we are wicked, although we are not murderers; that we are wicked, although we are not thieves; that we are wicked, although we may be industrious, and although we have not defrauded people, - because naturally we are going our own way, we are seeking to please ourselves, to do the things we like, instead of doing the things which God would have us do. We all fall short of the glory of God naturally; we have all gone astray from God like lost sheep. If God were to go from one to another and to chalk those who are sinners, every one would be chalked. I should be chalked, and you would be chalked, not one would be passed by, but everyone would be chalked as sinners. And if the question were, Are there any great sinners here? and if God were to chalk all the great sinners, he would chalk me and you and every one of us. But there is hope, hope for such wicked sinners as you and I are, but hope alone in God's appointed way. Hope in Jesus, but in no other way. Hope through the shedding of the blood of Jesus, but in no other way. Hope by God not sparing His only begotten Son, wounding Him, bruising Him, laying upon Him the punishment due to us. That blessed Holy

One stands, and He has transferred to and laid on Him all our sins and all our iniquities. You all remember the late war between the Germans and the French. Now in these countries people, whether they like or not, must be soldiers if their health and strength allow it. Now suppose it could have been managed in the case of anyone that a substitute could have been bought, that is, by giving another man who was not under the necessity of attending to his business, a sum of money to serve instead, then the substitute takes the place of that other one, and goes into battle and fights in his stead. So the Lord Jesus Christ became a substitute in the room of such as you and I. We ought to be punished for our iniquities, for all our wicked deeds and wicked thoughts, for our pride and high-mindedness, for our self-will, and for our temper, and for all those things; but the blessed Lord Jesus has the punishment for all our sins laid on Him, He stood instead of us, and in our stead endured the torment, anguish, and punishment we ought to have borne throughout eternity. He became a real man, and really bore the punishment. But not only was it necessary that He should be a man, He must be Divine, in order to give value to the sufferings; and all the woe, the misery, and anguish which ought to have come upon us throughout eternity was concentrated in that time when the Lord Jesus hung upon the cross. He came into the world to save sinners, to deliver them from hell, from the power of sin, to translate them into His own kingdom. And now you see what the sinner has to do - to depend upon Jesus for salvation. We have not to go to Paris, or to Bath, or to Bristol; here, in this very place, in this very hour it is to be had. No money to be paid for it, but only to accept what God in His wondrous grace and mercy has provided in His dear Son. If we do this we shall obtain forgiveness of sins, shall be accepted by God, shall be justified, shall be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and have heaven at the last. Now how many are ready to receive this blessing? Who will say, - These are good news; I will accept them? Or will you slight it still? The vilest, the most hardened, the most wretched, may even now obtain the full blessing through Jesus.

The apostle says "of whom I am chief". He does not say - came into the world to save such wretched sinners as you are; but I am a very good being, and I do not need this. He says, I am the first among them, the chief among them. He does not point out other people to be very bad, and make out himself to be very good. I do not mean to say, dear friends, that you are worse than I am. If I were to speak out my heart I should say that I am one of the vilest, most guilty sinners who sought most greedily to find satisfaction in the world, and found it not. What an encouragement is contained in this word for you and me - "that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering!" Now what does this mean? Just this, - though I am such a wicked, guilty sinner, though I did such abominable deeds, I, Saul, a great persecutor, who sought to torment to the uttermost those who believed in Jesus, tried to make them blaspheme Christ, who worried them to such a degree, and sought to use such means in every way to get them away from Christ that I compelled them often to blaspheme, and went a great distance to a large city, Damascus, to bring them to Jerusalem, and torment them there, - yet I was converted just when on the point of entering Damascus. The Lord Jesus appeared to him and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" . This abominable wretch Saul was accepted by Jesus, and not only obtained forgiveness of sins, but became one of the chief instruments in preaching the Gospel. See what an encouragement this is. The Apostle Paul was converted in order that afterwards not a single sinner might despair, that none might say, Oh! I am too great a sinner. You should say, Oh! Paul was converted; Paul was a pattern to show that what the Lord did to him He would do to others. Saul was converted, and therefore I need not despair. Now should there be anyone here who says, I am too old for Christ; you are not too old, Paul was a pattern. If any should say, I am too hardened; you are not too hardened, look at Saul. If any should say, I have too long neglected the Lord Jesus; if you wish to obtain the blessing in the appointed way, there is hope, and you are told for an encouragement that Paul was converted. If any should say, I have sinned against light and knowledge, and I have neglected it and resisted it to this day, and never laid these things to heart; it is true it is very late, but not too late if, you are willing this very evening to accept Christ. Come, black as thou art, says Christ; and here I am with open arms ready to receive thee. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Coming means believing Him, trusting Him.

Now comes in conclusion a precious word, particularly for you and me who are believers in Jesus. We believe, for what, and to what? and what is the end of our belief? "To life everlasting;" that is, through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we become one with the risen Lord Jesus, who liveth for ever; and if we believe in Him, the life of the Lord Jesus will be ours for ever. How blessed, how unspeakably blessed, that the moment the sinner rests in Jesus he obtains life everlasting! The body may die, in millions and millions of instances it has died; but as surely as the soul trusts in Jesus Christ for salvation, so surely from that moment we obtain life everlasting, because it is a heavenly life, Divine life, the life of the risen Lord Jesus, as certain as that blessed One is at the right hand of God. We throughout eternity shall be a happy people; we throughout eternity shall, live spiritually; we throughout eternity shall partake of the rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, shall enjoy the presence of God and of His dear Son. Oh, how blessed and precious, that when this little span of life shall come to an end, there will be the development of that eternal life which is in us now, as surely as we have put our trust in Jesus! Oh, the unspeakable blessedness of being in heaven! - as ages shall roll on, our happiness becoming greater and greater.

Now, beloved fellow-disciples, let us see to it that during the little span of time we are here on earth we are fruit-bearers. We are called to show forth the praises of Him who bought us; we are no longer our own, we are His who has given Himself for us, and our business is to give ourselves to Him, - with our substance, with our all, to give ourselves

to Him, and to seek for the little time that we live here to bear fruit to the honour and praise of His name. In order that it may be so, let us come to this precious book to obtain nourishment and strength for our souls.

Now, are you readers of the Bible? There are so many religious publications now, that they furnish a great temptation to neglect this blessed book, and to read all sorts of books, periodicals, and newspapers. Now, if you want real happiness, real spiritual strength, seek day by day to get to this blessed book. Are you in the habit of reading regularly through the Bible? Some just open the Bible, and where it falls open there they read; but after a little while it will always open in the same place. How do we read other books? We begin at the beginning and turn over page after page. So should we read God's blessed book. I recommend to you something I have known the blessedness of for forty years. After my conversion, I did not read the Bible much, but I read missionary papers and other books. But since July 1829 (now nearly 43 years ago) I have been reading God's blessed book: I read sometimes in the Old Testament, and sometimes in the New Testament. I put a mark where I left off, and read on from there when I come to it again, reading thus regularly on. During these 43 years I have read about one hundred times through the Bible. And I am not tired of it yet. It is just as fresh and as new and as pleasant, and I am just as delighted with it as if I had never read it before. One speaks to you who has known the blessedness of it for forty-three years and a half; and to it I owe all I have, and I am just as happy in reading this portion as another portion. We have not to pick and choose; it is the whole that constitutes the word of God. Is it not a shame that we should have God's blessed book, and not have once read it through?

Suppose a rich uncle of yours were to die, and leave a will, and your name were in the will, - "To my nephew I give three of the cottages in such and such a place; and every year ten pounds is to be paid to my niece Sarah, and to my niece Jane, and to my niece Ann." Now if you knew that your name was in the will, you would want to see that it was all correct, you would want to read the whole will, saying, "Perhaps there is something more that my uncle may have said about me." Now these things are written for your blessing and mine, and they are better than these three cottages, and better than a thousand pounds. Oh, how deeply important to read what God says about us! If you cannot read, ask God to help you to read; if you say, I have not a Bible; then I pledge myself to supply you with a Bible. Only be in earnest about your soul, be not trifling with the things of eternity. It is high time that we should be in earnest about our souls. And we must see that God teach us by His blessed Spirit. We must not suppose that we are clever enough to understand it all ourselves. If in humility of soul we wait on Him, He will teach us. If He has taught us, then we must seek to carry out the light, for one of the especial means to obtain light is to practise what God has given us. If otherwise, God might say to us - "I have taught you so and so, and you have not done it." We must be faithful to the light we have. If we thus go on, our peace and joy will increase more and more. From strength to strength we shall go on, and our path will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

A Garden Inclosed

An Address delivered by George Müller at a Conference of Christians of various denominations held at Clifton, on Tuesday, September 30th, 1873

Song of Solomon iv. 12-16.

The few words, beloved Christian friends, I have to speak this evening, are in connection with the first portion of Holy Scripture to which our attention has been directed, contained in the Song of Solomon, - the portion on which our beloved brother has already spoken.

It is not necessary to repeat what is God's object in giving to us the Song of Solomon; you all know it, and our esteemed brother has again referred to it. But it should be in our hearts to seek to enter into the spiritual meaning of this most precious Book. I do not know one single part of Divine testimony which more effectually acts like a spiritual thermometer, to show how it is with regard to our affection for the Person of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ, than this little portion of the Word of God called the Song of Solomon. And this portion to which our attention is directed for consideration in these meetings, if entered into with regard to ourselves, would bring an abundant blessing to our souls.

Now let us once more read this verse; and, as God may help me, I desire to make a few remarks, in addition to what has been stated already. "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse;" we are called a "spouse," the most intimate of all unions. How comes this, that we are in this most intimate of all unions? By reason of that deep sleep of death which fell upon Jesus. That Blessed One died in our stead, in order that we might have life, in order that we might be brought into this most intimate of all relationships to Him, in order that we should be His spouse. Now this sister is called a "garden inclosed," "a spring shut up," "a fountain sealed;" these three different figures are employed. A "garden inclosed:" let me here observe that I judge the meaning is not what is commonly stated. A "garden inclosed": the very word "garden" implies that it is inclosed; a portion of land taken away from other parts, inclosed by a hedge or wall, or somehow or other inclosed and cultivated afterwards. It is this very thing which constitutes it to be a garden. But it is

not simply said a "garden," there is something added regarding the garden, and that is, that it is "barred," "bolted," "shut up," just like this spring, and this "fountain sealed"; that is the particular point: not that this portion of land is inclosed, but that this inclosed field is shut up, - that it is not accessible to everyone. The owner goes in and out as he pleases; he has a right to this piece of land - this Garden; but it is bolted, it is barred, it is shut up, and not accessible to everyone. Just as he who sealed the fountain may alone break the seal; and he who shut up the Spring may break away that by which it is shut up, and may partake of the refreshing draughts of this fountain: that is the particular point. Now what is meant by this figure of "a bolted Garden," "a spring shut up," "a fountain sealed"? We are our Lord's property, - He has bought us with His precious blood; thus we are His and not our own. The right to the Garden is His, the bolts and keys are His, the fountain is His, the spring is His; all belongs to that Blessed One, who bought us with His precious blood. Do we feel in our inmost souls that all we have and are belongs to the Lord? - that He has bought our persons, our talents, and our time? Do we feel that He has bought our eyes, our hands, our feet? Do we feel that our houses and lands, our horses and carriages, belong to Him? - that all the money we have is His, - that our profession or business is His, - that everything we have and are is His? Oh! if our inmost souls entered into it, what Christian men and women should we be from this time and henceforth.

Now beloved in Christ, as we are come here not to pass an hour or two for amusement, but in order that our inmost souls may be affected, that we may be more holy and devout, "out and out" consecrated to the Lord; oh! let us seek to enter into this glorious fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ has bought us with His precious blood, that "out and out" we are His, and not our own; and that not for this evening, or tomorrow, merely, but that all the days of our life, we and all we have and are, belong to the Lord. Oh! let us ask God to seal this upon our hearts, and to seal it so, that from this evening and henceforth we shall never be able to lose sight of this truth. This, I judge, is the great practical point that the Holy Ghost would bring before us in this portion.

Now we read the next verse: "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices." What is this? The Lord Jesus coming into His Garden, and the grace He sees in His Church; - the grace He sees in His spouse, His sister: the Bridegroom able to take a delight and joy and pleasure in what He sees in His people. Beloved in Christ, the great practical point is; - Is it thus with me? When I was meditating upon this portion last Sunday evening, I said to myself, "Lord, let it be thus with me; help me, that it may be thus with me." Oh that it may be thus with ourselves, individually; and that it may be thus not only "now and then," when we are under special spiritual influences, or under special spiritual excitement, such as the present may be; but that day by day, from Monday morning until Saturday evening, and all the day through, all the week long, all the year round, - we may be in the "fear of the Lord." It is just this which, with the blessing of God, will make an effect upon the consciences of the unconverted. When they see that we are in earnest, - that there is a reality about our profession as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; when they are able to say, "Look at that man, he is just what he was twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago." And so goes on that man or woman, - day by day, week by week, month after month, and year after year, - always in the fear of God, always setting Christ before him. Oh, if it were thus with us, beloved in Christ, what a testimony would our lives be to an ungodly world! More than this, how we should strengthen each other's hands in God! We are all members of the Body, and each one has a duty to perform, in order that his fellow-believers may be helped on. We should not be simply satisfied with reading that Jonathan went into the wood to strengthen the hands of David; but we should ask ourselves, "Do I strengthen my brethren and sisters? do I lend them a helping hand when they are tried and afflicted and weak? When they are falling, do I seek to strengthen their hands in God? " Again, in the Epistle to the Thessalonians we read, "Edify one another even as also ye do." Do we build up one another, and seek to encourage and lead on one another in the knowledge of Christ? How is it with us regarding these points? Is it true of us that we are not merely plants and trees, but fruit-bearing trees in the Lord's Garden? Oh! beloved in Christ, is our life and walk day by day a sweet perfume to Christ? Just let us ask ourselves, and deal honestly with our souls this evening; and before we go away let us ask ourselves, as before God, the question, Is my life and my deportment a sweet savour unto Christ? Do I refresh the heart of my blessed Lord? Thus it might be thus it ought to be, beloved in Christ. Oh let us aim after it, that it may be thus; and if we honestly ask the Lord that He would help us, we should most assuredly experience the fulfilment of the promise of the blessed Lord Jesus, contained in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, the twelfth verse: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." And we should verily experience the truth of the precious statement of the apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

The next verse, the fifteenth, "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." This is what the Lord Jesus Christ further says about the Church, - she is a fountain of gardens. That means a fountain in gardens, or a fountain such as is found in a garden. "A well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon," The particular point here, I think, that is intended to be conveyed as to the spiritual meaning is this, - the refreshing that is intended to be diffused through the instrumentality of the Church. You remember well that statement in the Gospel of John with regard to the Spirit not yet given, "That out of the believer should flow rivers of living water." The Church should be a fountain, - a spring of living waters, - a spring running from Lebanon. How is it with us regarding this? If we ask ourselves as before God (and we should always deal honestly with our hearts), we should say, Is the living water flowing out of me? Am I God's instrument in conveying spiritual blessings? Do I by my life and deportment and words minister

the Spirit to others? How often has it been thus; or has it been so at all? And if in some degree, is it so habitually? What the Lord Jesus Christ looks for is this, That since He has graciously been pleased to give unto us the Holy Ghost, it should be true of us individually, "that out of us flow rivers of living water." And I would say, that, if we more expected it, we should have more; and if our life and walk and deportment were more as it becomes a disciple of the Lord Jesus, we should, by the grace of the Spirit, refresh others, and out of us would verily flow "rivers of living water"; as was the case in the days of the apostles. The office of the apostles we cannot have; and if any were to come and tell us that they were apostles, we should at once say that they were liars. But while we cannot have the office of the apostles, - the grace of the apostles we should seek after. It may be true of the saints of the Most High now in this latter part of the nineteenth century, as it was true of them in the days of Paul, - that out of them "flow rivers of living water." And if, beloved in Christ here present, we were expecting this, and were praying for this, - that we might be men and women out of whom should "flow rivers of living water," we should find that verily the Lord is as good as His Word, and that He would give us help and strength that thus it might be.

The last verse, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." Possibly the way in which I understand this verse may differ from the way in which one or other of my beloved brethren understand it. The meaning, as I understand it, is this, - The Church responding, and the Church delighting to give joy to the heart of her beloved Bridegroom. The Church wishing to refresh Him by her sweet savours and pleasant fruits, says, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." I understand the whole of this verse, and not simply the last words thereof, to be a statement of the Church: the beloved is speaking to the bridegroom in order to refresh his heart; and so the saints of the Most High should ever look above and say to themselves, How can I give joy to the heart of my blessed Lord? He has laid down His life for me, what can I do for Him, how can I serve and glorify Him? And lest any say, I am poor, or I am young, or I have not much learning, I have been but recently brought to the knowledge of the Lord, - I say, everyone who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a partaker of the Holy Ghost, regenerated and renewed, has it in his heart to refresh and gladden the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh let us never say, "I can do nothing to give joy to the heart or my blessed Lord." We can do it, and the Lord Jesus Christ looks for it that we should do it. He has given the last drop of His blood for us, and went through everything that was necessary for our salvation; and now is He looking that we, on our part, seek His glory, and refresh His heart, in return for all He has done for us. And thus it comes that the Church desires to gladden the heart of the Lord Jesus, and she says, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits."

Now notice the response or the Blessed One in the first verse or the next chapter, "I am come into my Garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." The first thing I notice here particularly is this, it is all "My," "My," "My," because we belong to the Lord, and have nothing in ourselves. It is My spice, My Garden, My honeycomb, My honey, everything belonging to the Lord Jesus. And this we must never lose sight of, that however much we may be advanced in knowledge and grace, yet we owe every particle of race and knowledge to the Lord. We must never stand before a spiritual looking-glass and think what we have done, what we have attained to; but give all the honour and glory - not in word only, for that is a little thing, - but in our inmost souls, to Him to whom it is alone due: the Lord Jesus Christ claims it all for Himself. It is My Garden, My sister, My spouse, My myrrh, My spice, My honeycomb, My honey, - everything belongs to Him.

And then at the close of the verse, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." "Be drunken in love," as it should be, or at least might be rendered. And here let me say particularly, if there is one thing more than another after which we should aim, it is an increase of love. Oh! when we think of it, - that there is a possibility of being drunken in love, what a blessed, blessed, blessed thing to set before us, to be aiming after this, - to be drunken in love, to be filled with love. Oh, beloved in Christ, let it be our holy, godly aim, to know something or this for ourselves! And these blessed meetings may be a great stimulus to us to aim after an increase of love. That is one of the special objects why we come together; not so much that we may instruct one another, but that we may excite one another to an increase of love. Oh let us aim after this! "God is love." And just in measure as we are helped on to increase in love, so, and only in so far, do we become more like God.

Account of a Preaching Tour

On Monday evening, July 12th, 1875, at the ordinary Weekly Prayer-meeting at Bethesda Chapel, Mr. Müller, in accordance with a previous announcement, gave an account of his recent tour to a large congregation. He said, -

"Nearly two years since my beloved wife and I visited Brighton. I preached there with evident marks of blessing both to believers and unbelievers, and I thereby was particularly led to consider how desirable it was - as I had ministered for more than forty-two years in Bristol, and almost exclusively during that time in Bristol - that I should not confine my ministry to Bristol. Last year we were in the Isle of Wight, and there I preached manifestly with blessing to those

who heard. A very dear lovely brother in the Lord, who had been one of the leading ministers of Birmingham, said to me on the last Lord's Day I preached in his chapel, - 'Dear Mr. Müller, I do not wish to flatter you, but I must tell you this has been the happiest day of my life.' This spoke to my heart. I knew how God was with me; and how He had used me in the ministry of the Word. It spoke to my heart thus: 'Why confine your ministry to Bristol only.' It was this in particular which determined me, by the help of God, to go forth to other places ministering the Word. Many of you remember that after my return from the Isle of Wight I stated here that I had it laid on my heart thus to go forth. Peradventure one or other thought this would never be. Nevertheless it remained in my heart. I had not spoken lightly or unadvisedly, but to the glory of God, and in the fear of God. In process of time the thing came about. It was not simply that I looked at the result of the blessing I had seen in Brighton and elsewhere, but it was the deep consciousness, - I may speak egotistically, but I do not mind what is said about that, for I speak to the glory of God, - it was the deep consciousness that I had learned truth in the school of Christ during the forty-nine years I had been a believer, which I felt responsibility was laid on me to seek to communicate to others. I felt I knew God in a way which was not generally known. I felt I had an acquaintance with Scripture, and was able to apply truths in a way in which truths are not generally applied. I felt God was with me, and would help me, and that a blessing would come out of my labours. But more: I felt I had a place in the Church of Christ which not every one has; that I was known to hundreds or thousands and millions, and that these hundreds or thousands and millions loved me and esteemed me; and that therefore if I came to a place I should get hearers. The question was whether I should get places large enough to hold the hearers who would come. I felt therefore that on me was laid a responsibility to make good use - though at the evening of my life - of the opportunities God had opened for me to set forth the truth. After waiting on God, and seeing that the time had come, I went forth, and assuredly God has abundantly blessed my labours. I know some here thought little of it, and questioned whether I was called to this work. But as for myself I had the fullest assurance that it was the will of God, and that God would bless my labours abundantly. And what have I now to say? Ten times beyond my largest expectations, if not a hundred times, God has been with me blessing my labours. Now a few particulars. I wrote to a beloved Presbyterian clergyman at Brighton, and said I had it in my heart to go again to Brighton, and preach again in his church if he were willing. I had the most affectionate letter in return, in which he expressed the greatest delight at my coming. The first time I preached, not only was the place crowded to the utmost, but hundreds had to go away, and God wrought greatly in the way of blessing to the unconverted and to believers. And as soon as this dear brother found I was there, he gave out that I should preach every Sunday and twice in the week, and I readily accepted it. So I preached time after time whilst there in this place, besides preaching also in the Odd-Fellows' Hall, where the so-called Brethren met. I had then invitations from all quarters to come and preach. At first I felt a little the exertion with regard to my voice and chest; but the more I preached the more this passed off, and soon I felt no difficulty whatever. So I looked out for the largest place in Brighton - the Dome, - which will hold 3000 persons. But as it could not be had on the Lord's-day evening, - the reason I found out afterwards being that the ministers in the place did not like their own congregations to be disturbed, - I took it for a week-day. It so happened that evening, that for an hour before the service the rain poured down in torrents, and continued so till after the meeting. One thousand persons were there, and God helped me to preach; but with regard to this place I had not the joy I had expected. The people did not sleep over what they heard at Brighton. I had the testimony of the Holy Ghost to my own soul how God blessed my labours there. I felt I had not strength for inquiry meetings, and therefore I did not attempt them, except once or twice; but felt I must leave this work to be done by beloved brethren and ministers stably labouring in the places in which I preached. I was delighted to meet the heavy expenses connected with these services."

Mr. Müller also referred to visits paid by him to Lewes, and continued, -

"Now having been nearly six weeks at Brighton, I felt I must go forth elsewhere. Preaching, of course, was not my only service. I saw many persons who came to me about their souls. A little portion of my work followed me from Bristol daily: I wrote my Report, and had correspondence to attend to. My beloved wife helped me in all, especially in the correspondence and with the Report. My purpose had been to go now to Liverpool, to follow up Mr. Moody's work there. I had corresponded with a beloved brother who particularly advised me to seek to lend a helping hand to the young converts. But when I gave myself earnestly to prayer about this, I was led, contrary to my expectations, to Sunderland. It was most clearly and distinctly impressed on my heart to go to Sunderland instead of Liverpool. I prayed again and again, and Sunderland remained present to my heart, and I was delighted. There was a large Church there of about 800 believers, and a large chapel which would hold 1600 or 1800 persons, and my beloved friend Mr. Rees would give me a hearty welcome. I wrote him, and he was overwhelmed with joy. No sooner did he know I was coming, than he wrote to Mr. Spurgeon to say, that Brother Müller was passing through London on his way to Sunderland: I had then a most affectionate letter from this beloved brother asking me to preach on my way through London. This was done. I had no hesitation whatever about my voice, because my voice is very strong and very good. Moreover, I looked to the Lord for help regarding this as everything else. The building holds 6000, and I judge that about 4000 persons were present, and that all heard me except any who were dull of hearing. God was with me, and helped me. I saw then how God helped me in every way. On the next day I prayed at the Haymarket Opera House, at Mr. Moody's meeting, and I believe everyone heard me distinctly. When I preached the first time at Sunderland, I found, to my great sorrow, that whilst about 1800 persons were crammed into the place long before the meeting commenced, many hundreds, could not get in. I preached for about four weeks at Sunderland, and also attended twice the noon-day prayer meeting, and

spoke. The choicest part of my service during my absence from Bristol has been the opportunity of addressing many hundreds of ministers. The mere fact becoming known that Mr. Müller was to preach brought a number of ministers who had read my narratives and reports. Thus I judged my service particularly was used by God in bringing the simplicity of the truth before ministers, and the way of setting forth the truth and applying the truth. Whilst I was at Sunderland, two excellent ministers came to me, and in the name of all the Nonconformist ministers of Newcastle, asked that I would visit that town. I said, 'I am unable to give an answer; but if you can get me the largest chapel there, I will come next week and preach there, and then consider the case further.' They said, 'We pledge ourselves to this, and will make arrangements.' I went, and there I preached in the largest chapel. You cannot get to any place where the truth is more needed than at Newcastle, on account of the sceptical reading and the infidelity that prevail there."

Mr. Müller then gave a detailed account of his labours at Newcastle, and of arrangements which were made for him to occupy the pulpits of the nine largest chapels in the town. Referring to one service, he said, -

"God was with me. If I had had an inquiry meeting I have no hesitation in saying that perhaps 200 would have stayed behind, but I felt that this was not my service. For many reasons it may be best to have a little time to see how far the work is real.

"I was asked to address a meeting of Christian workers. I consented, for I felt to decline would be false humility. If I said I had nothing to bring out to profit the people, it would be a shame and disgrace to me. For a servant of Christ, who for nearly fifty years has been engaged in the ministry of the Word, to have nothing to say, would be shame and disgrace. What chiefly induced me to go to Newcastle was the desire to follow up Mr. Moody's work, and to seek to benefit young converts by seeking to instruct them in the things of God. Mr. Moody began his labours in England at Sunderland. From Sunderland he went to Newcastle; and I desired to follow in his track."

Mr. Müller then referred to other places visited by him, and continued, -

"I state these facts to the glory of God, that all of you may have the deep conviction in your souls that it was of God that I should leave you for a time. I never spent a time in my whole life when I so enjoyed the presence and blessing and wondrous help of God. I bless and praise Him that at the close of my 70th year He has condescended to use a poor miserable worm to such an extent. I adore, praise, and magnify Him for His wonderful condescension, though it does not surprise me. I expected great things from God. I knew that if ever I went forth in this way, that God would be with me and would abundantly bless me. The last meeting I attended - which was for Christian workers - was so blessed, so precious, that if during my fifteen weeks' absence from Bristol, that had been the only opportunity I had of opening my mouth, I should have been repaid most abundantly. Now what is the conclusion of the whole matter? I bless and praise God for the great honour, the glorious privilege, bestowed on me at the evening of life to do this great and glorious work. My inmost soul is convinced it is all of God that I should be far more abundantly engaged in such service. I purpose, - as soon as the Lord permits, as soon as dear Mr. Wright has had some relief and change, together with my dear daughter, and as soon as the Report shall have been completed, and God in other ways shall make my path plain, - to sally forth again. The next place I visit will be Edinburgh, because Mr. Moody went from Newcastle to Edinburgh. Then I purpose to go to Dundee and Glasgow; and then as God may lead me, to other large towns and cities, with the determination, as much as lies in me, to set forth the truth in its simplicity, as God may help me. I doubt not He will further bless me in this glorious service, for in my inmost soul I give Him all the glory. I am a poor miserable worm in myself; but if I were not to say that God was with me, and that I had not ministered in the power of the Spirit, I should be ungrateful to Him; for the power of the word was felt, and I have no doubt the greatest blessing conveyed has been especially to the hearts of hundreds of ministers who will become thereby the better instruments in setting forth the truth as it is in Jesus."

Account of a Second Preaching Tour

On Monday evening, July 10th, 1876, Mr. Müller, who had recently returned from a long preaching tour extending over ten months, gave an account of his labours during that period, to a large congregation in Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street

After the singing of a hymn and prayer, Mr. Müller said, - "One object, beloved brethren and sisters, why I propose that we should have this meeting is, as knowing how earnestly you prayed for myself and my beloved wife, both with regard to the service for the Lord, and with regard to blessing for our health of body and blessing to our souls, it seems right, suitable, and becoming, to bring before you cause for thanksgiving, for the Lord has been remarkably good to us in every way. As to our health, we have been remarkably well. If I may refer to myself, I have cause to say that during the forty-three years I have been in England, I have never had one single year that I have been in better health than during the past twelve months, and I find myself now as capable of work and labour, both as regards the body and mind, as I was fifty years ago. I do not know of a particle of difference as to energy of mind and strength. And as to voice, never

during my whole life was it stronger than during the past twelve months, nor even when I first began to minister the Word, and ministered ten or twelve times a week, including services in the open air. I never had an engagement made but I was able to fulfil it though during the time I was away I preached 328 times. Now this is a matter for thanksgiving and as I know that you have been so kindly again and again remembering us, not only at these meetings but in the other chapels, and as I have the fullest reason to believe, in secret also, I feel it right to let this be known as a subject for praise and thanksgiving, how the Lord has been listening to your prayers; and we thank you heartily for the kind interest you have taken in us. Nothing happened, all the thousands of miles we have travelled, in the way of harm.

Then with regard to the help which the Lord has given, eternity only can prove with regard to spiritual profit and blessing; but this I do say to the praise of His name, whatever the appearance may be, though I say it myself, I am certain I was never in one single city or town but the Master's print was left behind. Blessing, blessing in abundance, left behind, more especially among the children of God, though as to blessing among the unconverted there was a good deal. My especial object was not to go as an evangelist, though I did it, and with greater power and help than ever; yet that was not the object, but my particular object was the edification of the people of God, to seek to help on the believers, and especially to care about strengthening the young disciples; and in every way and in every place God most abundantly blessed the labours, so that again and again I had thanks given me for the kindness in coming to them. And again and again deputations were sent to thank me for coming to the place, on account of the blessing they had received. What I have to say savours of praising myself. I have counted the cost; I know well how one or the other who does not know me, and who does not desire to receive it from me as the desire to praise the Lord, will hear words of self-complacency and self-esteem. But this I must leave with Him. I seek to please Him. But this you know, that if I sought to praise myself, the blessed Lord would soon put me down.

When we set out, the first stage was London. We were there fifteen days, and I preached fourteen times. This sphere of service has always appeared to me one of the most glorious parts of my labour for the Lord, for I had from perhaps fifty or one hundred different Churches, individuals coming, so that among the 3,000 or more who heard me in the Conference Hall at Mildmay Park, were persons who came from all quarters of the city. During the whole time I was exceedingly helped by the Lord, and I believe most abundant blessing resulted. I preached to young converts five times, as well as to other Christians, and attended the noon meeting.

After this we turned our steps towards Scotland, for in the previous preaching tour we had not reached Scotland, and that was particularly laid on my heart."

Mr. Müller then stated again the circumstances which at first led him to devote his time to this service, and gave as his chief reasons: first, because in his work and labour in connection with the Church in Bristol for forty-three years, he had gathered a measure of experience on account of the length of time; and, second, because he had also gathered considerable experience in connection with the Orphan work which might be useful to others.

On these accounts, he said: "I felt a measure of responsibility laid on my heart to benefit other children of God in the way of comfort, instruction, warning, and that I should do my best to lend a helping hand to other believers. Then many can bear me witness how for years I have again and again brought before you the importance not only of praying for evangelists, and to be thankful for evangelists, but to pray for pastors and teachers, that the young converts might be led on, Then I had it laid on my heart to follow up the work which God had wrought by the instrumentality of the beloved brethren Moody and Sankey, going to the places where they had been, and seeking to benefit the young converts. This I have been enabled to do, so that now scarcely any place remains unvisited. We have been to York, Sunderland, Newcastle, London (twice), Dublin, Glasgow, Dundee, Liverpool, Aberdeen, Inverness, Kilmarnock, Wick; so that as far as I know there only remain Manchester and Birmingham. And as I was going about from place to place I saw the deep importance yet further and further of being engaged in the work in which I was, because the blessing which has been communicated through these beloved American brethren was here and there in a measure beginning to grow cold; therefore the deep importance to lend a helping hand, to rouse, to strengthen the disciples, to bring before them not to be satisfied with first impressions, but to seek to grow, and particularly to be careful lest they should lose their first love.

The first place visited in Scotland was Kilmarnock. The largest parish church, holding 1,800, was placed at my disposal by the aged minister, a true evangelical man. I preached there three times; also preached in two different Free churches, the church of the Evangelical Union, and the meeting-place of so-called Brethren, seven times altogether; also once at Saltcoats, Everywhere we were received with the greatest kindness, letters of commendation were not needed to one single place. I was known everywhere; everywhere I was loved and esteemed. Hearts were opened, and pulpits were opened with delight. This I felt to be the finger of God pointing out what was His will regarding me. I had reason to believe it would be so, for my heart has been towards the Church of Christ for many a year. I love all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, and I was loved among all the denominations, and by them all received with open arms, and the greatest kindness shown by every one, by Episcopalians, National Churches, United Presbyterians, Morrisonians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and so-called Brethren, - nothing but love shown me in all quarters! If I had had ten times the amount of time I could have used it all, so vast the openings, so abundant the openings, - and in no little corners,

but to vast congregations. Now all this was God's confirmation as to what He would have me do, even to make good use of these precious, blessed talents which He had put into my hands to use for Him in the closing days of my earthly pilgrimage. Many of you have heard me pray that He would make the remaining days of my life the best part of my whole journey. I believe He is answering my prayers in this way, in condescending to use a vile, wretched, miserable worm, to the blessing of tens and hundreds of thousands, as in the past year.

After being in Kilmarnock a week, we went to Dundee. We went to no place without clear guidance. It was always manifest in every place that God had sent us there. Work was ready for us, and blessing followed. Our way to Dundee was instrumentally opened in this way. We had a very affectionate invitation to go to the Conference there. We waited on God about it, and as we prayed about it the matter became clear and distinct. We went to Dundee. At this Conference there was a large and particular service. A vast number of brethren in the ministry were present, and among them I could seek just to do what could be done to lend them a helping hand in the way of encouragement; and though it may seem boasting, I dare not keep it back, for on the 17th of next month it will be just fifty years I have been engaged in the ministry of the Word, and if I had nothing to say to my younger brethren in the ministry, it would be a shame to me. I ought to be able to comfort, to encourage, and to help them, and by the grace of God I felt I had something to say. There was no keeping back in the way of false humility, for to the praise and honour and glory of God I could bring out what I had to say. At all these meetings I had blessed opportunities of giving out what I had learned, and all my mistakes I could bring out in the way of warning. To speak within bounds, I have had the opportunity of bringing the truth before 2,000 ministers. On one occasion alone I addressed for about an hour 500 of them, and at all the meetings they were present in great numbers. For instance, I brought out how profitable I had found the inquirers' meetings from my earliest days in the ministry; for although they were comparatively new in England, yet they were not new to me, as I had begun to hold them in Germany in 1828. Then, "How to get a text?" How deeply important not only to preach but to have the very message God would have us to deliver. Then, "What was the most profitable way of ministering?" Not sermonizing, but expounding the Scriptures, in order to lead the disciples to a love for the Word of God. Everywhere I went entreating and beseeching them to make good use of the Word of God, more and more to become men and women of one Book, to be taken up with the Bible, and to find all and all with regard to spiritual things in this blessed Book. And again and again they have thanked and blessed God that they have been stirred up to care about these things.

In Dundee I preached in an immense hall, called Kinnaird Hall, to 2,000 or 3,000 people. I preached also in a number of churches besides. Among others, in the church where beloved holy McCheyne preached - St. Peter's church; also in the McCheyne Memorial church. In all these places I attended the noon prayer-meetings, and particularly sought to revive the spirit of prayer, for I brought before them how entirely everything depended on earnestly dealing with God. Everywhere I went the prayer-meetings increased fourfold or fivefold, and sometimes to a greater number than that; because I sought to bring before beloved brethren what it was to deal with God in simplicity, expecting great things from God; and the beloved brethren were encouraged thus to wait upon God, and blessing came. During the sixteen days we were in Dundee I preached sixteen times, and once in the neighbourhood of Dundee, at Broughty Ferry.

From Dundee we went to Perth. I had been invited by a Baptist minister at Perth to come and preach there. I knew nothing of the place except that this dear brother was a godly man, and that there were some beloved brethren in fellowship for many years, friends of beloved Mr. Craik, who had preached again and again in this Baptist chapel. This I found to be a small place, and it was crowded to the utmost. I next preached in the City Hall. When we arrived there, there were ten or twelve of the ministers of the town waiting to receive us. As they had no service in the evening (the preaching in Scotland being generally in the morning and afternoon), they were there to give me and my beloved wife the right hand of fellowship. Then we went into the hall. When they saw this hall crowded, they said, "It has been announced Mr. Müller will preach in the Baptist chapel, but the people cannot go in there;" and therefore they gave notice that I would preach in the United Presbyterian Church close by. This they arranged entirely by themselves, without consulting me in the least showing by their lovely spirit and readiness to receive me. We only stayed there five days, and then went to Glasgow, not only because there these American brethren had laboured, but because I was invited to come to the Conference. At the Conference the crowd was immense, - about 5,000 being present, and hundreds unable to get in. There was all but a complete disturbance on this account; but it was stated that Mr. Müller would repeat his address in one of the neighbouring churches, which I did, and also had the opportunity of enlarging upon the subject there, which I could not do at the Conference, on account of the number of speakers. Every Lord's-day I preached in the Prince of Wales' Theatre to between 3,000 and 4,000. Among these there were about 2,000 Christians, who had come there to get some spiritual food, as there are no churches open in the evening. On the week evenings I preached in the largest churches in the place. Five different Monday evenings I preached to young converts, and the places were crowded to the utmost, - aisles and pulpit-stairs being occupied, the number present being about 1,600, all young converts. At another time I spoke to Christian workers in a church holding 1,600 or 1,700 people. They were admitted by ticket, to insure that all should be bona fide Christian workers. Then I also preached in the church in which Dr. Craik (brother of our departed brother Mr. Craik) preached. At the noon meeting I was present as often as possible; and there, at twelve o'clock every day, I had a congregation of about 1,000, among which were a great number of ministers. An Episcopalian bishop was again and again among my hearers, and I also had some

conversation with him, Thus I went on in various places. I may just mention that the longer I remained in places, not the fewer came, but the number increased; the taste and relish for the truth increased.

In Inverness I began with 400 or 500, but by the time we were leaving, the place was crowded. I did not seek to excite the people, but to bring them to the Bible, and to make them value the Bible and prayer, and to expect great things from the Lord.

We were in Glasgow thirty-five days, and I preached thirty-five times. Also at Kirkintilloch once, Pollockshaws once, and Hamilton once, making a total of thirty-eight times.

While in Glasgow I had a pressing invitation from Dublin to go to the Conference there, but hesitated about accepting it, on account of the great blessing in Glasgow. Then came a letter signed by seventeen ministers in Dublin, entreating me to come. At last I felt I ought to leave, as I should have a most blessed opportunity in Dublin. Notwithstanding my natural disinclination for going to sea, we went; though in the depth of winter, we went; and it was of God that we went, for the opportunities were most blessed, I preached in the three largest halls, viz., the Metropolitan and Merrion Halls, and Exhibition Palace. Then I preached also at one of the Free churches beside, and attended the noon meetings. Wherever I went these noon meetings were placed at my disposal at once. "Dear Mr. Müller, you may have them entirely to yourself, and give addresses at everyone of them;" and in most places I did so. In Dublin the Lord was with me, and blessed abundantly.

While in Dublin I had time to look over letters I had received while in Glasgow, and among them was one inviting me to come to Liverpool and preach in the Victoria Hall, which letter I had not read till then. Since my return I may say that I have looked over the letters of invitation, and I have now no less than ninety-eight letters of invitation from the largest towns. When I read the letter from Liverpool, I thought this is too mighty for my voice, on account of the size; but we prayed about it, and I eventually agreed to go there. We were twenty-one days in Dublin, and I preached twenty-four times.

Before going to Liverpool, we went to Leamington in Warwickshire, where I preached fifteen times; to Coventry, where I preached twice; at Rugby once; at Kenilworth once. During the twenty-seven days I was in Leamington and neighbourhood, I expounded the Scriptures every morning at a large establishment.

Then we went to Liverpool. On the Lord's-day mornings we went to the Albion Hall for the breaking of bread, and in the evening to the Victoria Hall. The Lord strengthened my voice, and I preached eleven times the first week in this place. We went to York for one week. Then back to Liverpool, and preached again at Victoria Hall six days following. Many of the Liverpool merchants came from the Exchange to hear the address at the noon meetings. Altogether, I preached at the Victoria Hall thirtynine times.

From thence we went to Kendal; and here, remarkable to say, as a large place was desired, the beloved Society of Friends offered their meeting-place, it being the largest in the town. I preached there twice, and twice in other places. Next we went to Carlisle, where I preached once.

Then to Annan, where I preached at the United Presbyterian Church. In this place the total inhabitants are 3,000, but out of these 600 were present.

Next we went to Edinburgh, where we remained six weeks. The Free Church Assembly Hall was placed at my disposal, and I was requested to give addresses at all the noon prayer meetings, and hold as many meetings as I had strength for. In Edinburgh I preached fifty-three times. When in Glasgow I had a meeting with about 100 ministers of all denominations. In Edinburgh I had a similar meeting, with about sixty or seventy of the ministers. They asked a number of questions regarding pastoral work and the ministry of the Word, and everything was of the most affectionate character. I also addressed a meeting of about 800 Christian workers, and by the request of a professor, addressed many divinity students for about an hour.

After leaving Edinburgh we went to Arbroath; then to Montrose, preached there four times; then to Aberdeen, where we stayed three weeks. Here, in addition to other meetings, I had two meetings for women only: one meeting of 1,600, and another of 1,000. The very first evening God gave testimony in the winning of one of them, who was a teacher, and was brought to the knowledge of the Lord. From thence we went to Ballater, and then to Crathie. I preached six times close to Her Majesty's ground, the castle being within sight. Several of the Queen's household came: one, a German lady; also the housekeeper; and the head gardener, who is also one of the elders of the Free Church. At that time it so happened there was a communion in the Free Church, and the dear minister asked me to speak at this service.

Then we went to Braemar, where I preached twice. Then to Inverness, Wick; and to the extreme end of Scotland, preaching in the parish where John O'Groat's house is; and the scattered population came from three to six miles to

hear. Then to Inverness again, and back to England. I purposed to have stayed a fortnight longer in Scotland, but the death of an aged Christian friend made it necessary that I should come back sooner. We came to Reading, where we stayed thirteen days, and I preached thirteen times. Then to London again for ten days, preaching ten times.

Now I leave it with you, my beloved brethren, to form your own judgment as to what my business is. But to whatever conclusion you might come, I can only say this, - Day by day we have been crying to God for guidance, light, and direction; and the longer I have been engaged in this service, the more I see it is the will of God I should devote the evening of my life to this blessed work. Here I am: this seems the will of my heavenly Father; and until He speaks differently, what can I do but give myself to this service? For I feel there is responsibility laid on me to attend to it, on account of the openings I have in every place; on account of the love I have received in every place; on account of the confidence saints have in me everywhere I go. They say, "We know you by name for ever so long; and are delighted to see you and hear what you have to say!" I have found that where no one else could go, I have been received with open arms. Brethren have told me, "Well, we will go and tell such a minister in the way of respect; but there is no prospect he will let you preach." The reply has been, "Is it Mr. Müller of Bristol? Mr. Müller of the Orphan Houses? delighted to let him preach." Such a thing never heard of before. Thus you see the openings God gives in every direction, and I feel the responsibility to use them. I have felt like this: "I have been the servant of the saints here for forty-three years, and delighted to minister among you; and formerly when I went away for a month, it was always like banishment to me, and delighted I was when the time came to come back. All this is now different. I see God leads me; and just as much as I was opposed to go from Bristol, I am ready to follow the leadings of the Lord. As long as He pleases to give health and strength and voice, and to give to Mr. Wright health and strength, and as long as there is nothing of a pressing character calling me back; what can I do but obey, and attend to this evident call from God to give myself to it? What of course may be next year I cannot say, for I am now nearly seventy-one years of age; but at present this is my happy blessed service, in which I purpose to spend the evening of my life.

Now I commend this matter to you, my beloved brethren, asking you to help by your prayers; asking God to sustain us physically, mentally, and spiritually, in our precious service; to be pleased to make use of us, both myself and my beloved wife, who gives away tracts and speaks a word in private. All we can do is to commend ourselves to your prayers, that He would make it increasingly plain regarding us."

Address on Ecclesiastes 9 v 10

A sermon preached at Alma Road, Bristol on Sunday evening, 24th July 1887

All are in great danger, even the children of God, of forgetting that life is given to us as a precious talent to be used for the Lord and for blessing to ourselves. So many are going on as if dreaming as if life was not a reality. We are continually in danger of forgetting practically that we have but one life and that this one life on earth is, in comparison with eternity, very, very brief. Now, in order to counteract all this, God in His grace has given words to us in His Book like our text, whereby He, our Friend in heaven, speaks loudly to our hearts and says to us, "Now mind what you are about, your life is but brief. You have but one single life on earth: what you have to do, do with all your might, because when this life is over, you have not another life on earth." With our might we are to do what we do.

In the first place the first, great thing to do above all is to care about the salvation of our own souls. Everything else in comparison with this is of little moment. Now I affectionately ask all those present, have we attended above everything else to the salvation of our own souls? – and are we certain on Scriptural grounds that we have made no mistake about it – that all is settled regarding this matter, that we are surely not walking on the broad road leading to destruction, but are verily brought into the narrow road leading to life everlasting? Is it settled? And remember this is to be settled not by our own feelings or by what this one or the other tells us, but to be brought to God's only standard – to be settled by the Word of God. I direct the attention of any here present, who are as yet in any measure of uncertainty about this to a few passages: Romans 3 v 20-22 – a righteousness God can accept which comes from Him through the Lord Jesus Christ, a righteousness obtained by putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, after we have been made to see ourselves sinners, passed sentence on ourselves and accepted what has been so mercifully provided for the greatest, vilest and most hardened sinner in the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is "unto all and upon all them that believe". None is excepted, any and every one may have it – it is not offered to this one or that one merely, but is "unto all". But it is not "upon all", therefore we read "upon all them that believe". No-one is excluded, no-one can say "I desired to have this righteousness, but could never obtain it". It is for every poor sinner if he is but willing to accept what God has provided for him. Verse 24, justified because it is a righteousness of His own, provided by giving up His Son, who at all times and under all circumstances acted according to the will of God. Then in chapter 10 we read, "being justified by faith". We have to put our trust in Christ, to depend on Christ; then we are counted as just ones, righteous ones, in the sight of God (Romans 8 v 1): the poor sinner, united to Christ, becomes a member of the body of which Christ is the Head, through faith in the Lord Jesus. One passage more, and I quote it because it is so apt for the weakest and feeblest sinner who puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ: Romans 10 v 9-10. Here are two points brought before us

whereby we can settle whether we are saved or not. First we are to believe in our hearts that Christ is raised from the dead and secondly with the mouth to confess the Lord Jesus Christ. These two points are so united together in the same individual – not that we believe that the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead only, not that we confess the Lord Jesus only, but that these two points are found in us. Now in whatever way our faith is weak, very weak, yet in all true believers we find no doubt with regard to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. They believe He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood to save sinners – that He was taken down and put into the grave, but raised again. But this is not the only point. If we desire to be sure of the salvation of our souls we must combine with this the confession of Christ – we must let men know that we depend for salvation on the merits and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is this without the belief of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ it will give no comfort. If we believe and do not confess Him, we shall have no assurance in the matter of salvation. But as surely as these two points are found in one individual, God declares – not I declare it, but God declares it – that they shall be saved. Now I am a poor sinner, but wicked, guilty, hell-deserving sinner though I am, I shall be saved because I believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. I am as certain about it as if I had been one of the guard and seen Him come from the grave – nay, more certain, for I might have been mistaken or deluded by my sight but God declares it in His Word and I believe it. And I **do** confess with my mouth the Lord Jesus, though I **have** done it tens of hundreds of times – and so, though a poor, hell-deserving sinner, I shall be saved. One more passage – Acts 10 v 43. Do you want to get rid of the burden on your conscience? – to be at peace in your soul by knowing that your sins are forgiven? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for whosoever does this shall receive remission of sins, obtain the forgiveness of all their numberless transgressions. This matter thus how easily settled, if we desire to settle it by Scripture alone.

Now this is being done, the question is – what next our hands find to do with our might. If the matter of our salvation is settled, the most deeply important point is to glorify God whilst life is continued to us. That is our great business whereby we shew our love and gratitude to God, for all His great love and wondrous grace in the gift of His only Son. To live for Him, to glorify Him we should make the great, sole business of our whole life, in comparison with which all other business is trifling. David says – “This one thing I have desired” Psalm 17 v 4 – not **six** things have I desired – not **five** – not **four** – “This **one** thing” One! One! And thus it should be with every child of God, with every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, after the matter of salvation is settled, there should be this **one** thing, to live for God, to glorify God. Now this implies a great deal and in order that the subject, to the utmost of my ability, may be of a practical character, I will hint at a few things, as illustrating how we may glorify God.

For instance, we are surrounded by poor believers – do we care for these? Do we seek to minister to them with supplies from our own means? Are we really interested in their temporal concerns? Do we realise that this is the will of God concerning us – that if there are poor believers surrounding us that it is His mind that we should care for them? There are sick ones – do we care for their comfort, aid them, minister to their necessities, provide things to ease their pain and comfort them on their bed of languishing? Do we care for them with our “might”, not in a trifling, careless way, but with our “might”, as the Lord Himself says in His own Word? Are we doing it? Then again, there are fellow-believers not merely to be cared for temporally, but spiritually. If we see one uninstructed and we have a little more knowledge, are we ready to help on and instruct him? When we see any cast down, are we ready to encourage him? When we see a brother in doubt, are we ready to do what we can to increase his faith and by communicating how the Lord has provided for us, to encourage him to trust in God? Do we, with our might, seek to help on those who are weak in the faith? When we see a brother departing from the narrow way, do we go after him and seek to restore his soul in meekness, according to the mind of Christ? With our “might” we are to do it. Ah, let us ask ourselves this – for as we are sowing, so will be the reaping hereafter. And let us never forget the words – “Do it with thy might” – not in a slovenly way, not carelessly, not in a half-hearted, trifling way, not giving away what does not cost us anything, but we are to do with our might what we do, for we have only one life to glorify God in.

Again – it can be done by taking a deep and lively interest in the work of God. What are we doing in this way? – in the work of God at home – in the first place in our families, for it would not do for us to go out and neglect them – they have the first place. But having attended to the spiritual welfare of our families and neighbours in the sphere in which God has especially put us, what are we doing for our fellow-men surrounding us? Do we care for their souls, according to our strength, time and ability, seek to pluck them as brands from the burning? Do we seek to win souls for the Lord? – for we are left here for that reason among others. How many spiritual children have we, beloved brethren and sisters? Can we point to one? If so, blessed by God, but that is very little – our life is not being redeemed as it might be – there might be five! Ten! Ah, beloved in Christ, let us see to it that at the last we shall be able to say to the praise and honour and glory of God – “Here am I and the children which God hath given me”. Let us see to it that we do not go to heaven alone. How many spiritual children have we? Ah, the more, the better. Let us not say: “It is not to be expected, because I am not a preacher that I should have any spiritual children”. The Holy Spirit is given to us for the very purpose that out of us may “flow rivers of living water” (John 7 v 38) and if we do not grieve or quench the Spirit it is impossible to say to what degree “rivers of living water” may flow from us as regards the conversion of our fellow-men, and the building up of our brethren and sisters in Christ. It is impossible to say to what degree the Holy Spirit is ready to use us, if we are desirous of being used and if we live in such a way as to be vessels “meet for the Master’s use” (1 Timothy 2 v 21).

Again, there are brethren labouring abroad – do we feel an interest in such, pray for blessing on such, seek to minister to their physical necessities, mental comfort and spiritual advancement? Do we contribute of our means in addition to giving our prayers? For if our prayers mean anything, they will be accompanied by love-tokens. What are we doing and are we doing it with our might? Ah, beloved brethren and sisters, let us arouse ourselves! If we have been drowsy and sleepy, let us get out of our sleep, and attend to the words “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might”. Have we with our might aided the brethren labouring at home, under trying circumstances as many, and by far the great part, do? With our “might” this is to be done.

Again, the Word of God is to be spread abroad over the earth (it has been published in 250 languages) - what are we doing to spread it? What to spread tracts, now to be had in so many languages? What in regard to Sunday Schools – Ragged Schools for destitute, neglected children? – with what interest do we seek to lend a helping hand? Do we satisfy ourselves with giving the merest trifle once in the year, because we do not like to appear to do nothing? God does not look at what we give, but God looks at what is left behind. We see this in the example our adorable Lord brings before us, the widow who cast two mites into the treasury – the merest trifle, but what had she **left**? She gave her **all**! So God looks at the amount left after we have given. And if we couple our text with this – ah, beloved brethren and sisters, what an effect it will have on us and how it will stir us up and rouse us, in a way in which we have never been roused before.

Now a few words about the third part of our subject: “For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest”. This is a deeply important point to be noticed. We have only one life and that a brief one, and the end of it will be (if the coming of the Lord Jesus prevent not) that we shall enter the grave. The time will be over, the opportunities granted to us in great abundance on earth will be over; only this remains – as was the sowing, so will be the reaping. Sowing sparingly brings a very poor harvest, it brings reaping sparingly, but having sown bountifully we reap also bountifully. This has nothing to do with the matter of salvation, for all our sins are gone, but then will come the reward of grace, and as we sow, so shall we reap. Now, brethren beloved, let us with earnestness see to it that there shall be a bountiful harvest, but a bountiful harvest will only take place if there has been bountiful sowing. This very evening, how much do we find to do? Tomorrow morning how much? Tomorrow evening how much? – and thus throughout the week, throughout next month and throughout the remainder of our earthly pilgrimage?

I affectionately beseech and entreat my beloved fellow-believers to lay these things to heart and to ask God to impress deeply on your hearts that you have but one life on earth and that that one life on earth is a brief life in comparison with eternity, and therefore beseech Him, in the riches of his grace, to help you to make the very best use of this one brief life which is as a precious talent entrusted to you. God grant it for the glory of His name, the blessing of yourselves, the good of the world “lying in the wicked one”, and the good and profit and blessing of the church at large. God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Part of an Address on Isaiah 3: 10-11 (only this part of the notes survived)

A sermon preached at Alma Road, Bristol on Sunday evening, 26th Jun 1887

There is a most perfect unity between the Old and New Testaments. Both reveal to us the true and living God, both bring before us the precious, adorable Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ, both tell us that by faith in the Messiah sinners are to be justified. Both also bring before the intimate connection between holiness and happiness. It is this last point which is especially the subject of our meditation this evening. “Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him.” Who are we to understand by the righteous? Romans 3: 20-26 distinctly shows us, viz: “Such as have put their trust in our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls, after having been led to see themselves as needing a Saviour and having passed sentence on themselves. These are reckoned righteous by God and they are able to act in a little degree at least according to the mind of God. Because through faith in Jesus they are renewed, born again, have obtained spiritual life and are no longer dead in trespasses and sins.

Now of these it is said “It shall be well with the righteous”. On account of the intimate connection between holiness and happiness we see what this statement means. As they are sowing, so they are reaping – if sowing to the Spirit (Gal 1: 8) they are reaping of the spirit in a measure abundantly now – to the full hereafter and throughout eternity this reaping will be going on. Let us particularly notice – “Say ye”. This truth is not to be kept back, but published far and wide, that it is not a vain thing to live for God. And on the other hand, it is also said: “Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him”. This is the will of God, made known on the one hand for the encouragement of those who have judged themselves and on the other for a warning to the ungodly, so that at last they will have no excuse.

We have further to notice that it is stated here, “They shall eat of the fruit of their doings”. But we have never to forget that in this time-state, it is only in measure. We have to walk by faith and not by sight and for our encouragement

to lay hold on the blessing of eternal realities. And because some forget this they are greatly discouraged for they are reaping now only in part. Now when we look at the lives of holy men, we find this truth here illustrated. Look at Joseph, Mordecai, Daniel etc. There were great difficulties connected with Daniel's life, with Mordecai's life, great difficulties connected with Joseph's career, yet see how God dealt with them and made manifest that He was caring for His people, that His eye was on them, that He would not leave them in the hands of the ungodly, but in due time He would deliver them out of their difficulties. See the blessed end of Enoch, whom God took to Himself without even letting pass through the article of death. Look at Moses, Elijah and others. And in the New Testament remember John and Peter, what peace and joy they had in the Lord Jesus, and how God used them in blessing to the ungodly and in blessing to His children and though they were not among the great, the rich or the mighty of this world, and though they had great difficulties, yet how God continually was with them. And God points them out for our encouragement, and just as we tread in their footsteps so we shall find in this present time-state what a blessed thing it is to belong to the righteous.

And then how blessed it is to belong to the righteous, because guilt is removed from the conscience. In our natural state, whether we see it or not, it rests on us and we cannot get rid of the burden until by faith in the Lord Jesus we are born again, become children of God, and are brought to the holy, godly determination to henceforth seek to please God and not to live to ourselves. Now here we see what blessing the righteous have already in this life – to be able to look up to God without fear or terror, because of a guilty conscience.

Is that the condition in which all here are? It is mine, by the grace of God, though I have been guilty of ten thousand sins, the burden is gone through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the blessings we have that one is able to look forward to the end of the journey knowing that one is a forgiven sinner, that one's numberless transgressions are all forgiven – to know that one is a child of God through faith in Christ. Oh, how precious! And this is the privilege of every one who believes, not of those merely who are strong in the faith and well instructed in the things of God, or who have had a great deal of experience of spiritual life or who have laboured for the Lord many long years. No! It is the blessed privilege of the youngest child of God, though weak and feeble, if their faith is only laying hold of it. Ah, the blessedness of this – no longer to be a child of wrath, disobedient, but to be a child of God and that for all eternity, for once regenerated you are forever a child of God, though through your state of health you may not see your interest in Christ, yet God sees the Blood in which you rest, God sees that you lay hold of Christ and God remembers it for ever and ever. And when we look at the end of the journey – what is awaiting us? Full, complete redemption as to the body. We shall have a redeemed, glorified body, as the Lord Jesus has had since His resurrection and we shall be free from weakness and weariness, pain and suffering and shall no longer be subject to sickness and death and in this glorified body we shall go on serving God throughout eternity. Ah, how great a privilege to have a glorified body! And this comes as the fruit of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now to think (though I have often brought this point before the beloved brethren and sisters) of being able to work on and on without a particle of weariness! At present we can only work six, eight – 10 hours, or perhaps fourteen, if strong, but at last there comes over us the greatest weariness, but when we have our glorified bodies we shall be able to go on working day after day for 24 hours (speaking after the manner of men) for ever and ever, never being weary or requiring rest, but going on year after year, working one hundred years after another hundred years, as vigorous as ever – one thousand years after another thousand years and we shall be as vigorous, as fresh and strong as ever and if there is any difference we shall grow spiritually stronger and stronger, and thus hundreds of millions of years will pass over and eternity is, so to speak, only commencing. And during all this time we shall have been reaping, reaping, reaping the fruits of time. And we shall not only have a glorified body, but we shall be perfectly like Christ, for we shall see Him as He is – when He comes not merely as a Judge of the ungodly, but as a Friend, Brother, Bridegroom, High Priest, who waits no longer at the right hand of God, but comes to take us to Himself.

Address on Matthew 28 v 20

A sermon preached at Stokes Croft, Bristol on Sunday evening, 17th July 1887

“Lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world.” There is great need that we should clearly understand the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in its three aspects – his work for us, His work in us and His work with us. If these be confounded, great spiritual difficulty arises to the children of God, and often great distress of minds also. For instance, if from not clearly **servicing** His work for us, on which alone rests the salvation of our souls, we look at His work in us there will be want of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. His work in us is most important, but not for salvation – it is that we may glorify God after believing. If we desire true, real peace of soul let this matter be clearly settled. All our sins have been atoned for by Christ's substitutionary death on the cross. He suffered in our room and stead. Settle this clearly. I as a sinner deserve nothing but death. I have not a particle of righteousness of my own. To trust in our own goodness and merits is the greatest folly – if persevered in to the end of our course there is nothing before us but to be lost, finally lost. I must perish if I come before the Holy and Perfect Judge rejecting salvation through Christ. Now there are many persons who do not see this clearly. They say “I have so little love for my Heavenly Father, for the Scriptures, for the children of God”, forgetting that we are not received into Heaven on these grounds. There ought

to be all these most certainly, but the one ground only on which depends our salvation is Christ's work. The vilest, greatest wretch under heaven may become a child of God, in perfect comeliness before Him. Is this matter settled? Do I simply and solely look to Christ's work for the salvation of my soul? If I mix up in the matter the least particle of my own worthiness, there will be uneasiness. From the first moment of spiritual life to the last breath drawn on earth, it must be nothing but Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Then my heart is filled with gratitude to my Heavenly Father, and my spiritual strength and hatred of sin and love of holiness grow greater and greater continually.

But while I say all this do I in the least degree mean that there is to be no striving after holiness, - no walking with God, no seeking after conformity to Christ? No assuredly. The more we see our need of a Saviour, the more will our hearts be constrained by gratitude and love to work for Him. This is His working in us by His Spirit, leading to holiness, to the keeping down of the corrupt, evil nature within us, service of the children of light (1 Thess 5 v5). The two working are thus of the utmost moment that for us in the matter of salvation, that in us in the matter of glorifying God and having peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But there is a third point on which I would specially dwell in our meditation this evening: the work of the Lord Jesus Christ with us. "So I am with you always". Every day, always, all the day, from the first moment to the last, Christ will be with us. Parents may be taken from us, children may be taken from us, good advisers, the best earthly counsellors and friends may be taken from us, but our adorable Lord Jesus Christ ever remains with us. I rest on it and believe it. Brothers and sisters, do you rest on it and believe it? In proportion as we rest on it we shall say "All is well!" Of the precious position of the children of God!

At last we come to the article of death. Vain the skill of doctors, try and try and try they never so much. Go we must, but go where? Go where? To perdition, if we depart out of this world without Christ! Gay young men, fast men, you who have spent never so much in seeking pleasure, think of this! I knew a young gentleman, who before he was 25 had spent three immense properties, more than £700,000, and instead of being happy he was wretched and miserable. At last he had to live on a small property, left him by his mother, but he found Christ and then he became happy. Now it is my earnest desire that none of my fellow-sinners may go to perdition. If I had died 61 years and 8 months ago, I should have lost, but coming the Lord Jesus Christ I have been happy even since. Condemn yourself, put all your trust in Him and your numberless sins will be pardoned. I have got Christ as my Friend, Helper, Teacher, who Himself declares He will be with me "always". Then especially if we couple with all this that our Lords Jesus Christ declares that He loves us as His Father loves Him - John 15 v 9. What is the Father's love? Infinite - it cannot be deeper, it is unchangeable! Think of it! Such is the love of the Lord Jesus not merely to John, Philip, Andrew, Paul, but to weak, feeble ones such as you and I. But now, beloved brothers and sisters, do you believe it? Then you must be brimful of joy. "I am His darling child," each believer should say. His love never alters - ours, alas! Does but His is always the same. Believe and lay hold of this and you will be happy men and happy women to the end of your life. He wishes His children to be happy. He does not want them to be low-spirited and gloomy. To be so is a disgrace to Him. What - a dismal Christian? If our hearts were entering into this truth we could not help being happy. If we love anyone it is our joy and delight to be with them. We do not forsake and turn our back upon them. Thus it is with Him who loved us and laid down His life for us. He is with us to strengthen and help us - to do us good continually. We need to keep before us all that the bible teaches of our relation to Him. Head and members, Bridegroom and bride, Husband and wife. Now in this nearest of all unions we stand to the Lord Jesus Christ. How then can He not be with us to help us and do us good at all times?

Let us now prove this by illustrations. One of the greatest burdens of the child of God is spiritual conflict within. His special aim is to become more and more heavenly-minded, more dead to the world and more conformed to Christ. If these are absent, if no desire be manifested for inward holiness, then there is lamentable want of proof of the individual having been born again! "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God." Deut 29 v 29. We cannot see the heart, we do not know but if any one goes on contented to be just as he was before, no change being manifest, there is to proof that he is redeemed. The redeemed child is grieved that he is not more Christ-like, does not bear more fruit to God's glory. Now in this warfare, we do not go at our own changes. The Great Captain of God's hosts goes with us - Jehovah. Jesus is on our side to fight with us and as He conquered so shall we conquer. Oh, the blessedness of this truth! Our Lord Jesus Christ with us in warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil! But do we make use of His presence as we might? Do we say "Ah, precious Lord Jesus, I shall be overcome if I fight alone, but I know that Thou art with me. Help me! Help me!" Thus owning our perfect weakness and His perfect strength, we shall see our enemies fall before us and in Him we shall gain the victory.

Again in our work and service for the Lord, we may preach, give Bibles and tracts, visit from house to house, the sick and the healthy, the rich and poor. If left to ourselves it will be all useless, even if we travel thousands of miles. But the Lord Jesus Christ is with us to be used. Let us exercise faith in His willingness to help. Oh, let us make confession of our perfect weakness, but also of His perfect strength and what will be the result? Perfect weakness **often** through Him does wonders! This is a comfort to the soul of the poor child of God who seeks to teach in Sunday or Ragged Schools, visit, act as Bible-woman, preach in rooms, halls, villages and various places. A special comfort and encouragement comes with this knowledge.

Then again, in reading the Scriptures difficult passages meet us, though we have the Revised Version and perhaps some little knowledge of the original. All in vain, these helps, unless Christ be with us. We ought to read as if He were sitting on another chair beside us, looking over us and we ought to point with our finger, as it were, to the verse and say to Him, "Lord help me – I cannot understand it." Days, weeks, months, years, even may pass, but if we go on patiently and humbly seeking help it will come at last. Now how comforting is all this.

And yet more in regard to the affairs of this life. We have children and we are seeking to bring them up in the fear of the Lord. What trade or profession shall we choose for them? We have no wisdom of our own in the matter and let me affectionately remind thee, dear brother or sister, if thou think in my own wisdom to settle the matter, thou canst not. Go to the Lord Jesus Christ – ask Him in His pity and compassion to be thy help. One of the offices He sustains to the Church is that to by own knowledge of life, but in humility of soul go to Him, the best of Counsellors. So, if you want to manage anything else, go to Jesus. He is "with" you. Only reckon on His love and you will find what a blessed thing it is in everything. In all the little affairs of life come to Jesus. Undertake nothing trusting to self. Renounce all this and lay hold of His infinite love and wisdom, and prove them. Remember particularly that this life is made up of little trials, little difficulties, little burdens and cares. If you try to bear these in your own strength, it is a miserable thing. You will wish to get rid of it quickly. I know this and hence I am a happy man. If I tried to bear only one hundredth part of my troubles I should be miserable. I have continually more or less trial, still I am happy, very happy. I ask God, though nearly 82 years of age, still to give me the great honour and delight of living to work and labour for Him. Life is no burden to me. But the secret of all this is that I look to my precious Lord Jesus and ask Him to carry my burdens for me – and if anyone has not hitherto done so, let him begin this night! Life will then be no irksome burden, he will not say as so many do: "Of, I wish I could come quickly to the end and die." I do not think that I have said that since I was converted. And the Lord Jesus is willing help, not one, but everyone. He loves the weakest Christian. I look on myself as a worthless, wretched, hell-deserving sinner and know that yet for all this I am loved for Christ's sake, as a darling child.

One word more. The Second Coming of Christ is the Hope of the Church and is to be kept ever before us as such, but supposed His return should be delayed, at last we shall all fall asleep. With the poor worldling all is then done. No more gathering of riches, no more enjoyment of pleasure, not a grain of gold can be taken away – all is left behind. But how different with the child of God! Growing weaker and weaker, pulse scarcely to be felt, heart and flesh failing, but what does that matter? Christ is "with" us! David, who did not possess the whole revealed will of God as we do could yet say this – in his words we can see our text. Brought into the valley of the shadow of death "Thou art with me" he says, not "Thou hast now forsaken me." See what precious things belong to the child of God – how he is brought more and more into blessing through the precious work of our Lord Jesus Christ, made more and more holy, more and more useful in service.

God grant it may be so with all here present, for Christ's sake.

Address on Psalm 119 v68

"The Lord is good and doeth good"

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol by Mr George Müller, founder of the Orphan Asylum, Horfield, upon the recent death of his wife.

This sermon was taken on Thursday evening, March 3rd, 1870, but was first preached on the previous Sunday when upwards of 800 persons were unable to obtain admission.

Before commencing his sermon, Mr Müller made the following remarks:

"I was truly sorry to hear that last Lord's day evening such numerous crowds, so many hundreds, were unable to obtain admission into this church. I had foreseen that, and therefore I intended to take the largest place that could be had in the city for the purpose of preaching this funeral sermon, but I felt that my strength was unequal to it, and upon that account I had to give it up. Moreover, and most strongly of all, my beloved wife, having herself attended this place of worship for 37 years and six months, and never been absent except when out of Bristol or kept from illness, I felt it due to her memory to preach here instead of elsewhere; as it occurred to me, in order that those who were disappointed last Lord's day evening may have an opportunity of also attending, to give notice that I would again go through the subject this evening; but it also occurred to me how inconvenient a work evening would be for very many in comparison with the Lord's day, and especially the early hour compared with the Lord's day, still it was the best I could do under the circumstances. There is only one more thing I have to say: it is now nearly 44 years that I have been in the habit of ministering the Word. Many thousands of times I have preached during this time, and I have never read a sermon; but in this case I felt that as what I am going to say is full of dates, full of incidents, and a number of things which at the moment my memory might not serve me to recall, I thought it best to write down the circumstances to bring them

before you, knowing that by so doing I should be better guided by calm and collected judgement in what I am now going to say to you regarding my beloved wife.

THE SERMON

119th Psalm, 68 verse

“Thou are good, and doest good”

The reason why I purpose to preach this funeral sermon is not because the late Mrs Müller was my own beloved wife; nor that I might have an opportunity of speaking highly of her, most worthy though she is of it; but that I may magnify the Lord in giving her to me, in leaving her to me so long, and in taking her from me to Himself. At the same time it appeared to me well that as she became the first member of the church assembling at Bethesda, when it was formed in August, 1832; and as her whole life ever since then has been of the most blameless character; and as her life was full of most remarkable and instructive events, that at the departure of such a Christian we should ponder the lessons which her life is calculated to teach. She had lived to see 2,700 believers received into communion in that church, of which she was the first; and when she fell asleep there were 920 in communion in that church, about 1,500 having, during the 37 years and a half, either fallen asleep or left Bristol, about 200 united with other churches in Bristol, and 90 having been excluded from fellowship. During the six days that my beloved wife was on her deathbed, my soul was sustained by the truth contained in the words of our text. Whether she was more easy from pain, or in severe pain, whether there was a little prospect that she might yet be given back to me, or whether all hope was gone; my soul was sustained by these words. They were ever present with me, and I rested my soul on them. When it pleased God to take my darling wife to Himself, my soul was so sustained by these words that if I had gone out that evening to preach, I should have preached from this text. I desire now, as God may help me, for the benefit of my younger fellow-believers in Christ particularly, to dwell on the truth contained in these words, with reference to my beloved departed wife:

1st – The Lord was good and did good in giving her to me.

2nd – He was good and did good in so long leaving her to me.

3rd – He was good and did good in taking her from me.

1st – In giving her to me, I own the hand of God; nay, His hand was most marked; and my soul says, “Thou art good and doest good.” I refer to a few particulars for the instruction of others. When at the end of the year 1829 I left London to labour in Devonshire in the Gospel, a brother in the Lord gave to me a card, containing the address of a well-known Christian lady, Miss Paget, who then resided at Exeter, in order that I should call on her, as she was an excellent Christian. I took this address and put it into my pocket, but thought little of calling on her. Three weeks I carried this card in my pocket, without making an effort to see this lady; but at last I was led to do so. This was God’s way of giving me my excellent wife. Miss Paget asked me to preach the last Tuesday in the month of January, 1830, at the room she had fitted up at Poltimore, a village near Exeter, and where Mr AN Groves, afterwards my brother-in-law, had preached once a month before he went out as a missionary to Bagdad [sic]. I accepted readily the invitation as I longed everywhere to set forth the precious truth of the Lord’s return, and other deeply important truths, which not long before my own soul had been filled with. On leaving Miss Paget she gave me the address of a Christian brother, Mr Hake, who had an infant boarding school for young ladies and gentlemen, at Northernhay House, the former residence of Mr AN Groves, in order that I might stay there on my arrival at Exeter from Teignmouth. To this place I went at the appointed time. Miss Groves, afterwards my beloved wife, was there, for Mrs Hake had been a great invalid for a long time, and Miss Groves helped Mr Hake in his great affliction by superintending his household matters. My first visit led to my going again to preach at Poltimore, after the lapse of a month, and I stayed again at Mr Hake’s house; and this second visit led to my preaching once a week in a chapel at Exeter; and thus I went week after week from Teignmouth to Exeter, each time staying at the house of Mr Hake. All this time my purpose had been not to marry at all, but to remain free for travelling about in the service of the Gospel; but after some months I saw for many reasons that it was better for me, as a young pastor, under 25 years of age, to be married. The question now was – to whom shall I be united? Miss Groves was before my mind; but the prayerful conflict was long before I came to a decision; for I could not bear the thought that I should take away from Mr Hake this valued helper, as Mrs Hake continued still unable to take the responsibility of so large a household. But I prayed again and again. At last this decided me. I had reason to believe that I had begotten an affection in the heart of Miss Groves for me, and that therefore I ought to make a proposal of marriage to her, however unkindly I might appear to act to my dear friend and brother Mr Hake, and to ask God to give him a suitable helper to succeed Miss Groves. On August 15th, 1830, I therefore wrote to her proposing to her to become my wife, and on August 19th, when I went over as usual to Exeter for preaching she accepted me. The first thing we did after I was accepted was to fall on our knees and to ask the blessing of the Lord on our intended union.

In about two or three weeks the Lord, in answer to prayer, found an individual who seemed suitable to act as housekeeper, whilst Mrs Hake continued ill; and on October 7th, 1830, we were united in marriage. Our marriage was

of the most simple character. We walked to church, had no wedding breakfast, but in the afternoon had a meeting of Christian friends in Mr Hake's house and commemorated the Lord's death; and then I drove off in the stage coach with my beloved bride to Teignmouth, and the next day we went to work for the Lord. Simple as our beginning was, and unlike the habits of the world, for Christ's sake, so our Godly aim has been to continue ever since. Now see the hand of God in giving me my dearest wife:- 1st, that address of Miss Paget's was given to me under the ordering of God, 2nd, I must at last be made to call on her, though I had long delayed it. 3rd, she might have provided a resting place with some other Christian friends, where I should not have seen Miss Groves. 4th, my mind might have at last, after all, decided not to make a proposal to her; but God settled the matter thus in speaking to me through my conscience – "You know you have begotten affection in the heart of this Christian sister, by the way you have acted towards her, and therefore, painful though it may be, to appear to act unkindly towards your friend and brother, you ought to make her a proposal." I obeyed. I wrote the letter in which I made the proposal, and nothing but one even stream of blessing has been the result. Let me here add a word of Christian counsel. To enter upon the marriage union is one of the most deeply important events of life. It cannot be too prayerfully treated. Our happiness, our usefulness, our living for God or for ourselves afterwards, are often most intimately connected with our choice. Therefore, in the more prayerful manner, this choice should be made. Neither beauty, nor age, nor money, nor mental powers, should be that which prompt the decision; but first – much waiting upon God for guidance should be used; second – a hearty purpose, to be willing to be guided by Him should be aimed after; third – true godliness, godliness without a shadow of doubt, should be the first and absolutely needful qualification to a Christian, with regard to a companion for life. In addition to this, however, it ought to be at the same time calmly and patiently weighed whether in other respects there is a suitability. For instance, for an educated man to choose an entirely uneducated woman is unwise; for however much on his part love might be willing to cover the defect, it will work very unhappily with regard to the children.

From what has been stated, I think it is plain that "He who is good and doeth good" had given me Miss Groves for a wife.

Let us now see for a few moments what I had received in her as God's gift. I mention here, as her chief excellence, that she was a truly devoted Christian. She had for her one object in life, to live for God; and during the 39 years and 4 months that I was united to her by conjugal bonds, her steady purpose to live for God increased more and more. She was also, as a Christian, of a meek and quiet spirit. I speak to those who knew her, and not a few of whom knew her for thirty years and upwards, and who know what a very excellent Christian she was. If all Christians were like her, the joys of heaven would be found on earth far more abundantly than they are now. In her, God had been pleased to give me a Christian wife, who never at any time hindered me in the ways of God, but sought to strengthen my hands in God, and this, too, in the deepest trials, under the greatest difficulties, and when the service in which she helped me brought on her the greatest personal sacrifices. When during the years from September 1838, to the end of 1846, we had the greatest trials of faith in the Orphan Work; and when hundreds of times the necessities of the orphans could only be met by our own means, and when often all our own money had to be expended; that precious wife never found fault with me, but heartily joined me in prayer for help from God, and with me looked out for help and help came, and then we rejoiced together, and often wept for joy together. But the precious wife who was God's own gift to me, was exquisitely suited to me, even naturally, by her temperament. Thousands of times I said to her "My darling, God himself singled you out for me, as the most suitable wife I could possibly wish to have had." Then as to her education, she was just all I could have wished. She had had a very good and sound education, and she knew besides the accomplishments of a lady. She played nicely, and painted beautifully, though not five minutes were spent at the piano or in drawing or painting after our marriage. She possessed a superior knowledge of astronomy, was exceedingly well grounded in English grammar and geography, had a fair knowledge of history and French, had also begun Latin and Hebrew and learned German, when, in 1843 and 1845, she accompanied me in my service to Germany.

All this cultivation of mind became not only helpful in the education of our daughter, but was more or less used by the Lord in His service to the praise of His name. She was a very good arithmetician, which for 34 years was a great help to me; for she habitually examined month by month all the account books, and the hundreds of bills of the matrons of the various Orphan Houses; and should and tradesman or one of the matrons at any time have made the least mistake it would be surely found out by her. But in addition to the good education of a lady, she possessed – what in our days is so rare among ladies – a thorough knowledge of useful needlework of every kind, and an excellent knowledge of the quality of material for clothes, linen etc, and thus became so eminently useful as the wife of the director of the five Orphan Houses on Ashley Down, where hundreds of thousands of years of material of all kinds had to be ordered by her, and to be approved of, or to be rejected. My beloved wife could do fancy needlework as other ladies, and had done it when young; but she did not thus occupy her time, except she would with her own dear hands now and then knit a purse for her husband while she was in the country for a change of air. Her occupation had habitually a useful end. It was to get ready the many hundreds of neat little beds for the dear orphans, most of whom never had seen such beds, far less slept in them, that she laboured. It was to get good blanketing or good blankets that she was busied, thus to serve the Lord Jesus, in caring for these dear bereaved children, who had not a mother or father to care for them. It was to provide numberless other useful things in the Orphan Houses, and especially for the sick rooms of the Orphans that day by day, except on the Lord's days, she was seen in the Orphan Houses. The knowledge which is useful to help

the needy, to alleviate suffering, to make a useful wife, a useful mother, how far above the value of doing fancy work! Mrs Müller pre-eminently possessed and value useful knowledge. She and her dear sisters had been brought up by a wise as well as loving mother, who saw to it, that while there was nothing spared with regard to a good school, and the attendance of good masters etc, her daughters should also be eminent in useful knowledge. May Christian mothers who hear me now take heed that their daughters have an education which will make them useful wives and useful mothers. We have seen now that God himself had given me my beloved wife; we have also seen how suitable she was to me; and in the gift of such a wife a good foundation for real conjugal happiness was laid.

And were we happy? Verily we were. With every year our happiness increased more and more. I never saw my beloved wife at any time, when I met her unexpectedly anywhere in Bristol, without being delighted so to do. Day by day as we met in our dressing room at the Orphan Houses to wash our hands before dinner and tea, I was delighted to meet her, and she was equally pleased to see me. Thousands of times I told her – “My darling, I never saw you at any time since you became my wife without my being delighted to see you.” This was not only our way in the first year of our marriage union, nor in the tenth, in the twentieth and in the thirtieth year of our conjugal life. Thus I spoke to her many times since the seventh of October, 1869. Further day after day, if anyhow it could be done, I spent after dinner twenty minutes or half an hour with her in her room at the Orphan Houses, seated on her couch, which the love of a Christian brother, together with an easy chair, had sent her in the year 1860, when she was, for about nine months, so ill in rheumatism. I knew that it was good for her, that her dear active mind and hands should have rest, and I knew well that this would not be, except her husband was by her side; moreover, I also needed a little rest after dinner, on account of my weak digestive powers; and therefore I spent these precious moments with my darling wife. There we sat, side by side, her hand in mine, as an habitual thing, having a few words of loving intercourse, or being silent, but most happy in the Lord, and in each other, whether we spoke or were silent. And thus it was many times since October 7th 1869, viz in the fortieth year of our conjugal life. Our happiness in God and in each other was indescribable. We had not some happy days every year, nor a month of happiness every year; but we had twelve months of happiness every year, and thus year after year. Often and often did I say to that beloved one, and this again and again even in the fortieth year of our conjugal union – “My darling, do you think there is a couple in Bristol, or in the world, happier than we are?” Why do I refer to all this? To show what a remarkably great blessing to a husband is a truly godly wife, who also in other respects is fitted for him.

But while I own in the fullest degree that the foundation of true spiritual happiness in our marriage life was laid in that my dearest wife was a decided Christian, and fitted for me by God in other respects, and thus given to me by Him; yet at the same time I am most fully convinced that this was not enough for the continuation of real conjugal happiness during a course of 39 years and four months, had there not been more. I therefore must add here the following points – first, both of us by God’s grace had one object of life, and only one – to live for Christ. Everything else was of a very inferior character to us. However weak and failing, in a variety of ways, there was no swerving from this one holy object of life. This godly purpose and the godly aim, day by day to carry out this purpose, greatly added, of necessity added, to true happiness, and therefore to an increase of conjugal happiness also. Should this be wanting in any two Christians who are united by marriage ties, let them not be surprised if conjugal happiness, real conjugal happiness, is also wanting.

Second, we had all the 39 years and four months the blessing of having an abundance of work to do, and we did that work; by God’s grace we gave ourselves to it, and this abundance of work greatly tended instrumentally to the increase of our happiness. Our mornings never began with the uncertainty of how to spend the day, and what to do; for as the day began, we had always an abundance of work. I reckon this an especial blessing, and it greatly increased our happiness, and sweetened exceedingly the little while we had for rest in each other’s society. Many true Christians even make the mistake of aiming after a position in which they may be free from work, and have all their time on hand. They know not that they wish for some very great evil, instead of some very great blessing. They forget that they desire a time when, for want of regular occupation, they will be particularly exposed to temptation.

Third – but great as habitually our occupation was, and especially during the last 25 years, we never allowed this to interfere with the care about our own souls. Before we went to work we had, as an habitual practice, our seasons for prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures. Should the children of God neglect this, and let their work or service for God interfere with caring about their own souls, they cannot for any length of time be happy in God; and their conjugal happiness therefore must also suffer on account of it.

Fourth, lastly, and most of all to be noticed is this: we had for many years past, whether twenty or thirty years, or more, I do not know, besides our seasons for private prayer and family prayer, also habitually our seasons for praying together. For many years my precious wife and I had immediately after family prayer in the morning, a short time for prayer together, when the most important points for thanksgiving or the most important points for prayer, with regard to the day, were brought before God. Should very heavy trials press on us, or should our need of any kind be particularly great, we prayed again after dinner, when I visited her in her room, as stated before, and this at times of extraordinary difficulties or necessities might be repeated once or twice more in the afternoon; yet very rarely was this the case. Then in the evening, during the last hour of our stay at the Orphan House, though her or my work was never so much, it was an habitually understood thing, that this hour was for prayer. My beloved wife came then to my room, and now

our prayer and supplication and intercession, mingled with thanksgiving, last generally forty minutes, fifty minutes, and sometimes the whole hour. At these seasons, we brought, perhaps, fifty or more different points or persons or circumstances before God. The burden of our prayer was generally of the same character, except when prayers were turned into praises, or when fresh points were added, or when peculiar mercies or blessings, or peculiar difficulties or trials, led during a part of the time to a variation. We never thus met for prayer without having, on various accounts, cause for thanksgiving; but, at the same time, our seasons for prayer never arrived without our having abundant cause to "cast our burdens upon the Lord". These seasons for united prayer, I mean in addition to the family prayer, I particularly commend to all Christian husbands and wives. I judge that it was in our own history the great secret for the continuation, not only of conjugal happiness, but of a love to each other, which was even more abundantly fresh and warm than it had been during the first year, though we were then exceedingly fond of each other.

I now pass on to the second part of our precious text:

II The Lord was good and doing good in giving so long leaving to me my precious wife.

I think it has been clearly shown to the Christians who hear me, that God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, and my father, through faith in His name, gave to me my beloved wife; and I will now endeavour to show us clearly, that in God's hand was most distinctly seen in leaving her to me as a companion in joy, and sorrow, and service for 39 years and 4 months. I have stated before that we were married on October 7th, 1830. On August 9th, 1831, my beloved wife was, after seventeen hours suffering of the severest kind, delivered of a still-born child. Her life had been in the greatest danger, humanly speaking, and remained in the greatest danger for several weeks afterwards, so that two medical gentlemen visited her daily, or even two or three times a day. That she did not sink at that time, but was raised up again and given back to me for 38 years and six months more was of God, and was, I believe, the result of my most earnestly crying to God for this blessing. But my dearest wife never was fully again in health and strength what she had been before. The second time when her life was again, humanly speaking, in the greatest danger was when, four months after our arrival in Bristol, her confinement came on September 16th, 1832. She was very ill. She was in the greatest danger. I was the whole night in prayer. But God had mercy on me, and not only spared my precious wife to me, but made her also the living mother of a living child. Our beloved daughter was given to us on September 17th, 1832. On March 19th, 1834, she became the living mother of a living male child; but that time was in as marked a way free from great peril, apparently, as the two previous times had been the reverse. In this, too, I own the hand of God. About a year after that, she was staying at the house of a Christian friend, at Stoke Bishop, and, while out walking, suddenly a carriage drove up and turned speedily round, and my beloved wife was all but killed; but God in a marked way preserved her life, though she was somewhat bruised by falling whilst she sought to save her life. On June 12, 1838 my beloved wife was taken ill. Often had I prayed expecting her hour. She continued in the most severe sufferings from a little after nine until midnight. Thus hour after hour passed away until eleven the next morning. Another medical gentleman was then called in, at the desire of the one who attended her. At three in the afternoon, she was delivered of a still-born child. The whole of the night I was in prayer, as far as my strength allowed me. I cried at last for mercy, and God heard me. For more than a fortnight after her delivery, my precious wife was so ill that her two medical attendants came twice or three times daily. Her life was in the greatest danger, humanly speaking. But this time also "He who is good and doeth good" gave her back to me to leave her yet 31 years and six months longer to me, and to make her more useful to me, and in the Orphan work than ever. The hand of God, in sparing her life in 1838, was most marked.

In 1845 my beloved wife accompanied me the second time to Germany, where I intended to labour in the Gospel, and especially in writing German tracts, and circulating them in many tens of thousands, together with my Narrative in German. Soon after our arrival in Stuttgart she was taken very ill, but God restored her then also, and gave her back to me for 24 years and six months longer. In the summer of 1859 she complained about the weakness of her left arm, which increased after a time more and more, instead of decreasing; and towards the end of October, being exposed to a draught, this weak left arm became exceedingly painful, and after a day or two swelled greatly, and especially her hand became greatly enlarged. Now that very ring which at the wedding on October 7th, 1830, I had put on her finger needed to be broken off. Her arm and hand became worse, and continued thus week after week. That room in which I had been in the habit of paying those happy visits to my beloved wife after dinner and at other times, was now, week after week, for a long time, without her. But this was the state of my heart at that time. When this most heavy affliction began, I said to myself, "Twenty nine years the Lord has given me this precious wife with comparatively little illness, and shall I now be dissatisfied, because He has been pleased to afflict her thus in the thirtieth year of our conjugal union? Nay, it becomes me rather to be very grateful for having had her so long in comparatively good health, and fully to submit myself to the will of the Lord". This my soul was enabled to do. Keenly as I felt her absence from the Orphan work for almost nine months, with the exception of a very few times when she drove up to give various directions, yet, as I saw the hand of God in the whole, and was enabled to take the whole out of His hand, my soul was kept in peace, whilst day by day we were able still to have our precious seasons for prayer, and whilst day by day also we entreated God, that, if it might be, He would be graciously pleased yet to restore that feeble arm and hand again, and spare her longer to me for service. At last, in April 1960, my dearest wife was brought so far as that our kind and most attentive medical man would recommend her to go to Clevedon and use the warm sea baths for the benefit of her arm and

hand. Therefore, I took her to Clevedon, our daughter remaining with her, and myself going down as often as I could. The warm sea baths seemed to agree with her well, and progress appeared to be made, when one day, returning from the bath, she slipped as she was stepping out of the road on the footpath near her lodgings, fell against the wall with her head, and on her weak arm, which she carried in a sling, and which had made her so helpless in not being able to break her fall. She seemed as dead, and our dear daughter ran to the lodgings to get help. But when she returned, her dear mother, who had been stunned by the fall, had revived, and could be moved to her bed. All now seemed gloomy and dark indeed. The prospect of removal of the rheumatism from the arm and hand appeared entirely gone, and my precious wife was worse than ever. I now went down evening after evening to Clevedon, after the day's work on Ashley Down, to wait on her by night. Her suffering was very great for some time, but gradually this wore off, and she was brought back to the state in which she had been when she first went to Clevedon; and, after a stay of more than three months at Clevedon, there had been granted considerable improvement. She now returned to Bristol spent about six weeks at home, and I then took her and my daughter to Teignmouth for a month, that she might have further change of air, and further the use of warm sea baths, which evidently had been of considerable use to her. By the time we returned from Teignmouth, my dearest wife was so far restored, as the use of her arm and hand, that she could take her work again at the Orphan Houses, and her dear hand was so far reduced in size, that her wedding ring, being put together again by a jeweller, could be put on again. How good was the Lord in sparing to me my dearest wife in this illness in 1859! How good to me in that she was not killed on the spot when she had that heavy fall in Clevedon! I magnify Him for it! "He is good and doeth good."

But I cannot dismiss this part without noticing one point in particular. My dearest wife had worked so hard in 1856, 1857, 1858 and 1859, when through the opening of the New Orphan House No 2, and the prospect of opening the New Orphan House No 3, there was such an abundance of work, that her health had been brought into a very low state and her strength had been greatly reduced. I begged her not to work so much, but it was in vain; she loved work; she never would bear to be idle. And thus it came on account of her very low state of health that the rheumatism had so much effect on her. But now see how the Lord worked. This very illness, most painful though it was to her, and most trying as it was to me, became God's precious instrument in sparing to the orphans their true friend, and to her own dear sisters a sister, to her own daughter and mother, and to her poor husband a precious wife for ten years more. This very illness obliged her to rest beyond what she otherwise would have done. She was also medically ordered to take more nourishment than she otherwise would have taken; and by October 1860 she was in a far better state of health than she had been for years. How true that work, therefore, in this instance – "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God". We have seen now how good the Lord was to me in sparing my dearest wife to me 39 years and four months, as she might have been removed from me sooner. It now remains to show:

III "That the Lord is good" and was doing good in the removal of the desire of my eyes.

Perhaps all Christians who have heard me will have no difficulty in giving their hearty assent that "the Lord was good and doing good" in giving me such a wife; and they will also probably most readily admit that He was good and doing good in leaving her to me so long; but I ask these dear Christian friends to go further with me, and to say from their hearts "The Lord was good and doing good" in the removal of that useful, lovely, excellent wife from her husband, and that at the very time when, humanly speaking, he needed her more than ever. While I am saying this, I feel the void in my heart. That lovely one is no more with me to share my joys and sorrows. Every day I miss her more and more. Every day I see more and more how great her loss to the orphans. Yet without an effort, my inmost soul habitually joys in the joy of that loved departed one. Her happiness gives joy to me. My dear daughter and myself would not have her back, were it possible to produce it by a turn of the hand. God himself has done it; we are satisfied with him. During the last two or three years it was most obvious to my loving heart and eye, that my precious companion for so many years was again failing in her health. She did not only considerably lose flesh, but evidently seemed much more worse than she used to be. I begged her to work less, and to take more nourishment; but I could neither prevail as to the one nor the other. When I expressed my sorrow that she lay awake at night for two hours or more she would say "My dear, I am getting old, and old persons need not so much sleep". When I brought before her that I feared her health would be again reduced, as in 1859, and that I feared the worst, she would say, "My darling, I think the Lord will allow me to see the New Orphan Houses No4 and No 5 furnished and opened, and then I may go home; but most of all I wish that the Lord Jesus would come, and that we might all go together". Thus her dear mind and hands would be at work, and as there was such an abundance of work in such a great variety of ways to be done, she was generally all the day at work at the Orphan Houses. Under these circumstances she caught cold in the early part of January, which brought on a most distressing cough, and that to such a degree, that she never had had nearly as bad a cough all the previous 39 years. With difficulty only could I prevail on her to allow me to send for our dear medical friend; for she even made little of her own illnesses, whilst most solicitous about the health of others, especially myself and daughter and her sisters. I now pressed affectionately upon her she should drive to and from the Orphan Houses, also lie down a little on her couch after dinner, which had been advised by our kind medical friend. It was during the time of this distressing cough that I felt her pulse because I wished to know how it was with her health generally, and I found she had a very feeble, irregular and inremittent pulse, which only too much confirmed my fears about her health during the last two or three years. Still my precious wife would not allow that there was much the matter with her. Through the

medical means, she entirely avoiding night air, going to and fro in a fly when she went to the Orphan Houses, the use of a more generous and somewhat altered diet, and the resting a little more than usual, the distressing cough was so entirely removed, that scarcely the least trace of it remained, and my beloved one was again able to get out to public worship in a fly in the mornings of the Lord's Days January 23rd and January 30th, but stayed at home in the evenings to avoid a return of the cough. On Sunday January 30th there was an additional reason for not going out in the evening, because she felt a pain across the lower part of her back, and in her right arm. This pain was rather worse than better on Monday January 31st, and we considered it better to send for our dear medical friend to call and see her if possible before we started for the Orphan Houses; but as he was already from home, visiting his patients my dear wife set off in a fly to the Orphan Houses, our daughter accompanying her mother, to work for her under her direction, as it was feared her pain would prevent her doing anything actively herself. The day passed tolerably, though the pain increased, instead of decreasing.

At teatime she drove home with her sister Miss Groves, who also had been for weeks in a very feeble state of health and with my daughter. I remained to go in the evening to our normal public prayer meeting at Salem Chapel. When I came home, I found our dear medical friend, Mr Josiah Prichard, had been, ordered my dearest wife to bed, and to remain in bed, and to have a fire lighted in her bedroom, stating that it was acute rheumatism, or what is commonly called rheumatic fever. She suffered much pain during the following night, but the next day, and the night from Tuesday to Wednesday especially, the pain was still more severe, and her limbs became one by one so painful, that she could neither move them, nor bear them to be touched, except the arm and hand which had been so weak ten years before. When I heard what Mr Prichard's judgement was, viz, that the malady was rheumatic fever, I naturally expected the worst as to the issue, on account of what I had found out about the action of my dearest wife's heart, when I felt her pulse, but though my heart was nigh to be broken on account of the depth of my affection, I said to myself – "The Lord is good, and doeth good", "all will be according to his own blessed character. Nothing but that which is good, like Himself, can proceed from Him. If He pleases to take my dearest wife, it will be good, like Himself. What I have to do, as His child, is to be satisfied with what my Father does, that I may glorify Him". After this, my soul not only aimed, but this my soul, by God's grace, attained to. I was satisfied with God. On Tuesday February 1st, I was alone in the room of my precious wife at the Orphan Hoses. She was at home in bed, a thing which had not been the case for more than nine years, as far as I can recollect. There were hanging in her room a number of precious texts from the Holy Scriptures, printed in large type, arranged for each day of the month, called "The silent comforter". The sheet then turned up contained these words: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psalm 199:75). I read this again and again, and each time my inmost soul responded "Yes, Lord, thy judgments are right. I am satisfied with them. Thou knowest the depth of the affection of Thy poor child for his beloved wife, yet I am satisfied with Thy judgments, and my inmost soul says that Thou, in faithfulness, hast afflicted me. All this is according to that love with which Thou hast loved me in Christ Jesus, and whatever the issue "all will be well". There was also written on that sheet of the "Silent Comforter" "My times are in Thy hand" (Psalm 31:15). My heart responded in reading these words "Yes, my Father, the times of my darling wife are in Thy hands. Thou wilt do the very best thing for her and for me, whether life or death. If it may be, raise yet up again my precious wife, Thou art able to do it, though she is so ill, but howsoever Thou dealest with me, only help me to continue to be satisfied with Thy holy will". During the whole week, whilst my beloved wife was lying on her deathbed, these lines of the precious hymn – "One there is above all others – Oh! How He loves!" were ever present with me:

"Best of blessings He'll provide us
Nought by good shall e'er betide us
Safe to glory He will guide us
Oh, how He loves!"

My heart continually responded – "Nought but good shall e'er betide us". My inmost soul was assured, that however my loving Father acted with His poor child, it would be for his good. On Wednesday, February 2nd, my beloved wife being comparatively free from pain, I read to her before I went to the Orphan Houses, this verse out of the 84th Psalm – "LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly". Having read this verse I said, "My darling, we have both received grace, and we shall therefore receive glory; and as, by God's grace, we walk uprightly, nothing that is good for us will He withhold from us." She evidently was blessed through this verse, for she spoke about it to our daughter in the course of the day. To my own heart the verse was a great support, for I said to myself again and again: - "I walk uprightly, and therefore my Father will withhold nothing from me, that is good for me"; if therefore the restoration of my dearest Mary is good for me it will be surely given; if otherwise, I have to seek to glorify God by most perfect submission to His holy will.

On Thursday, February 3rd, I evidently saw how grave Mr Prichard considered the case to be, indeed, on Wednesday evening already, for I was to give to my dear wife every two hours a small quantity of beef tea during the night, or a teaspoon of wine, but the sufferings of that night brought her soon to the close of her earthly pilgrimage. About ten in the morning, dear Mr Prichard, who from the first had called twice a day, and who to the utmost had done all that medical skill, coupled with Christian kindness, could do, called to see her, and found her, as I thought, much worse. He

proposed at once to send for Dr Black, and to wait till he arrived. About eleven o'clock, Dr Black very kindly came, examined the dear invalid, and confirmed what Mr Prichard has told me just before, that all hope of recovery was gone. After the medical gentlemen had left, I felt it now my duty to tell my precious wife that the Lord Jesus was coming for her. Her reply was – "He will soon come". By this I believe she meant to indicate, the Lord will soon return, and we shall be reunited. As there was yet life, I felt it my duty to do to the last everything that medical skill could devise, and love on my part could do. At half past one pm, when I gave her the medicine, and a little later, a spoonful of wine in water, I observed that she had difficulty in swallowing, and a few minutes later, that she could not distinctly articulate. She tried to make me to understand, but I could not. I sat quietly before her, and about a quarter of an hour later I observed that her dear bright eyes were set. I now called my dear daughter and her aunt, Miss Groves, stating that the loved one was dying. They at once came to the bedroom and were presently joined by Mrs Mannering, another sister of my dearest wife. We all four sat quietly for about two hours and a half, watching the last moments of that much loved one, when about twenty minutes after four in the afternoon or Lord's Day February 6th 1970, she fell asleep in Jesus. I now fell on my knees and thanked God for her release, and for having taken her to Himself, and asked the Lord to help and support us. My soul was so sustained and so peaceful that had I the physical strength, and had I not had plain home duties, I could have preached immediately after; and the portion on which I should have preached would have been the one which forms the text of this sermon. I repeat again – "The Lord was good and going good" in taking my beloved wife, because, 1st she had worked long, very long and very much on earth, and He was now pleased to appoint her to other service; 2nd "He was good and doing good" in releasing her from her pain and suffering, which she had endured to so great a degree during the last week of her life; 3rd "He was good and doing good" in taking her, instead of removing me and leaving her. I adore the Lord's kindness in this in sparing her this heavy trial, as I think it would have been to her, and I gladly bear it for her; 5th, He was, most of all, good and doing good in giving to my dearest wife what had been long the desire of her heart, ever to be with Jesus. As long as two years since, my daughter had seen the following, written by her dear mother, in one of her pocket books, kept at the Orphan Houses, of which I knew nothing, but which precious jewel my daughter pointed out to me two days after the death of her dear mother, and which is now before me. The words written are these – "Should it please the Lord to remove MM (Mary Müller) by sudden dismissal, let none of the beloved survivors consider, that it is in the way of judgment either to her or to them. She has so often, when enjoying conscious nearness to the Lord, felt 'How sweet it would be now to depart and to be for ever with Jesus that nothing but the shock it would be to her beloved husband and child etc etc has checked in her the longing desire that thus her happy spirit might take its flight. Precious Jesus! Thy will in this, as in everything else, and not her's be done". With such words before me, and knowing besides, as I do, the deep personal attachment my dearest wife had to that Blessed One, who hung for us on the Cross, can it be otherwise than that my inmost soul should rejoice in the joy in which my loved one has now in being with the Lord Jesus for ever. The depth of my love for her is rejoicing in her joy. Remember that word of our Lord "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father" (John 14:25). As a husband, I feel more and more every day that I am without this pleasant, useful, loving companion. As the director of the five Orphan Houses, I miss her in numberless ways, and shall miss her yet more and more. But as a child of God, and as a servant of the Lord Jesus, I bow, I am satisfied with the will of my heavenly father, I seek by perfect submission to His holy will to glorify Him, I kiss continually the hand that has thus afflicted me; but I also say I shall meet her again to spend a happy eternity with her. Will all who hear me now meet my precious wife? Only those will who have passed sentence upon themselves as guilty sinners, and who have put their trust alone in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of their souls. He came into the world to save sinners, and all who believe in Him shall be saved; but without faith in the Lord Jesus we cannot be saved. Let all those who are as yet not reconciled to God by faith in the Lord Jesus be in earnestness about their souls, lest suddenly a fever should lay them low and find them unprepared, or lest suddenly the Lord Jesus should return again before they are prepared to meet Him. May the Lord in mercy grant that this may not be the case. Amen.

Address on Psalm 40:1-8

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol on Sunday morning, 25th July 1897

These verses refer throughout to our adorable Lord Jesus Christ, they bring before us His sufferings and resurrection, and they especially also point to His voluntary coming into the world to be our Substitute.

In verse 1, we read, "I waited patiently for the Lord." As in every particular our Lord Jesus Christ is an example to the church, so regarding His patience also. And here we see the result of waiting patiently. "He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." So the children of God will find it always. If we patiently wait for the Lord the result will be the answer will come according to our desire. We should particularly keep this in mind in order that we may receive the blessing for which we have asked God. Nothing is obtained by impatience, we only dishonour God by it, but we never in the least degree obtain the answer by impatience.

Verse 2. This refers to the great and awful sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ as our Substitute. When He passed through the hour of darkness this was fulfilled. "An horrible pit," the very figure brings before us the awfulness of the

hour through which our Lord had to pass. But this did not continue always. He was brought out of it. And though we have not to suffer in the way of a substitute for others, yet we in the providence of God, because He sees it to be good for us, may also in our little degree be found in the horrible pit and in the miry clay. But it will not last forever – we too shall have our feet set upon a rock. Oh, how precious, how bright the prospect which will have its fulfilment in the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ! Now the Lord Jesus once for all passed through suffering, and once for all had His feet set on a rock, and His goings established, but ever since His resurrection this work has been further and further developed, and will be developed further and further up to the time of His return, and then the reaping will go on throughout eternity, so far as Himself is concerned, and so far as the church is concerned, and there will be nothing, nothing but partaking of the rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God (Ps 36:8).

Verse 3. “Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” This second part of the verse we see continually fulfilled, millions of millions have been brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and millions of millions will yet further be brought to a knowledge of Him, an innumerable multitude. Oh, how bright the prospect with regard to the end! Comparatively now as to outward appearance, the number is small – it will be seen how innumerable it is at last!

Verse 4. “Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust.” This is real blessing, and this only is real blessing, to make the Lord Jesus our trust for the salvation of our souls, for the obtaining of all that which we really need while passing through this vale of tears in the midst of trial and difficulty, and for our spiritual work and labour, for all this the only remedy is to trust in the Lord and then and only then, we are really blessed and can be really happy. This word “blessed” is the same in the original as “happy”, so we may read it with regard to its application in both respects – “Happy, really happy is that man who maketh the Lord his trust”.

Verse 5. This we should remember for our comfort when we are in trial, in difficulty, in affliction, whatever the outward appearance is – “This will never come to an end, I shall never be happy any more” – we should remember this word. “Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done.” Thou canst increase their number by helping me also out of the trial, out of the difficulty in which I find myself.

Then comes a remarkable sentence: “And Thy thoughts which are to us-ward”. Here the Lord Jesus is brought before us in union with the church of God, to **us-ward**. Not “to **me**”, or simply toward the church, but to “us-ward”, in intimate union with the church, for we are members of that mystical body, of which the Lord Jesus is Head. And this truth we should continually seek to dwell on, and never lose sight of. Oh, how great the joy in God when we are able to enter into this, poor, wicked, guilty, hell-deserving sinners though we are naturally, the thoughts of God are “to us-ward”. His mind is toward us, He is thinking about us! Oh, how precious is this, He never loses sight of us, never forgets us. Oh, how precious is this! And then how many they are we read in what follows: “They cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them they are more than can be numbered”. Just think of this! So often does God think of us that the thoughts which He has toward us, regarding us, these thoughts are so many they cannot be reckoned up in order. Not a thousand merely, not ten thousand merely, not fifty thousand merely in them – far, far more, they cannot be reckoned up in order. How about whom He is thinking thus? About poor sinners who deserve nothing but hell? We should say to ourselves individually, “He is thinking about **me**, wicked, guilty sinner, deserving nothing but hell, yet so dear am I to the heart of God, so precious in His sight, so entirely He is looking on me as He looks on His only begotten Son, because I am one with Him, I am a member of that body of which He is the Head, I am altogether united to Him, and therefore for His sake He is continually occupied in mind about me, and thoughtful ever how He may invariably make me happy, how He invariably may make manifest His care over me, so dear am I to His heart, so precious in His sight.

Verse 6. “Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire.” Originally this was the law of things – it was according to the mind of God, but it was instituted because of man’s weakness, otherwise it would not have been. “Mine ears hast Thou opened.” Most, if not all, present know what is meant by this. When a slave was set at liberty, and chose to remain a slave (Ex 21:5) “I love my master, my wife and my children, I would rather remain a slave for ever” – then he was to be brought to the doorpost, and his ear bored through, and he was to remain the bond-servant of his master for ever. Now the Lord Jesus Christ makes Himself the bond-servant of God, that is, He would perfectly obey God at all times and under all circumstances, never, never doing anything contrary to the mind of God. To this it has reference. By thus yielding perfect obedience to God at all times and under all circumstances, the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out a righteousness through which, by faith in His name, we stand as justified ones before God. So He not merely fulfilled the law in our room and stead, but bore the penalty of the law, which we deserved on account of our numberless transgressions.

Now let us, beloved in Christ, whilst again we surround the table of the Lord, seek more than ever to enter into this thought. Though we individually have broken the law of God and that times without number, in our room and stead the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled it, and this is put to our account, and thus we who trust in Jesus stand as justified ones before God. Then the Lord Jesus Christ bore the punishment in our room and stead, and therefore, though we deserve nothing but punishment on account of our numberless transgressions, we shall not for one single sin be punished. And this should always be particularly before us when we meet for the breaking of bread, though at other times it should be

continually in our minds, day by day and hour by hour we should seek to remember what the Lord Jesus did, and suffered in our room in order that peace and joy in the Holy Ghost may increase and abound more and more.

Address to Young Converts

A sermon preached at Mildmay Conference Hall (date unknown)

As one who for fifty years has known the Lord, and has laboured in word and doctrine, I ought to be able, in some little measure, to lend a helping hand to these younger believers. And if God will only condescend to use the acknowledgment of my own failures to which I refer, and of my experience, as a help to others in walking on the road to heaven, I trust that your coming here will not be in vain. This was the very purpose of my leaving home – that I might help these dear young brethren.

THE MANNER OF READING THE WORD

One of the most deeply important points is that of attending to the careful, prayerful reading of the Word of God, and meditation thereon. I would therefore ask your particular attention to one verse in the Epistle of Peter (1 Peter ii.2), where we are especially exhorted by the Holy Ghost through the apostle, regarding this subject. For the sake of the connection, let us read the first verse, “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

The particular point to which I refer is contained in the second verse, “*as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word.*” As growth in the natural life is attained by proper food, so in the spiritual life, if we desire to grow, this growth is only to be attained through the instrumentality of the Word of God. It is not stated here, as some might be very willing to say, that “the reading of the Word may be of importance under some circumstances.” Nor is it stated that you may gain profit by reading the statement which is made here; it is of the ‘Word,’ and of the Word alone, that the apostle speaks, and nothing else.

CLEAVE TO THE WORD OF GOD

You say that the reading of this tract or of that book often does you good. I do not question it. Nevertheless, the instrumentality which God has been specially pleased to appoint and to use is that of the *Word itself*; and just in the measure in which the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ attend to this, they will become strong in the Lord; and in so far as it is neglected, so far will they be weak. There is such a thing as babes being neglected, and what is the consequence? They never become healthy men or women, because of that early neglect.

Perhaps – and it is one of the most hurtful forms of this neglect – they obtain improper food, and therefore do not attain the full vigour of maturity. So with regard to the divine life. It is a most deeply important point, that we obtain right spiritual food at the very beginning of that life. What is that food? It is “*the sincere milk of the Word;*” that is the proper nourishment for the strengthening of the new life. Listen, then, my dear brethren and sisters, to some advice with regard to the Word.

CONSECUTIVE READING

First of all, it is of the utmost moment that we read regularly through the Scripture. We ought not to turn over the Bible, and pick out chapters as we please here and there, but we should read it carefully and regularly through. I speak advisedly, and as one who has known the blessedness of thus reading the Word for the last forty-six years. I say *forty-six* years, because for the first four years of my Christian life I did not carefully read the Word of God. I used to read a tract, or an interesting book; but I knew nothing of the power of the Word. I read very little of it, and the result was, that, although a preacher then, yet I made no progress in the divine life. And why? Just for this reason – I neglected the Word of God.

But it pleased God, through the instrumentality of a beloved Christian brother, to rouse in me an earnestness about the Word, and ever since then I have been a lover of it.

Let me, then, press upon you my first point, that of attending regularly to reading through the Scriptures. I do not suppose that you *all* need the exhortation. Many, I believe, have already done so; but I speak for the benefit of those who have not. To those I say, My dear friends, begin at once. Begin with the Old Testament, and when you have read a chapter or two, and are about to leave off, put a mark that you may know where you have left off. I speak in all simplicity for the benefit of those who may be young in the divine life. The next time you read, begin the New Testament, and again put a mark where you leave off. And thus go on, always reading alternately the Old and the New Testaments. Thus, by little and little, you will read through the whole Bible; and when you have finished, begin again at the beginning.

THE CONNECTION OF SCRIPTURE

Why is this so deeply important? Simply that we may see *the connection* between one book and another of the Bible, and between one chapter and another. If we do not read in this consecutive way, we lose a great part of what God has given to instruct us. Moreover, if we are children of God, we should be well acquainted with the whole revealed will of God – the whole of the Word. “*All Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable.*”

And much may be gained by thus carefully reading through the whole of the revealed will of God. Suppose a rich relative were to die, and leave us, perhaps, some land, or houses, or money, should we be content with reading only the clauses that affected us particularly? No, we would be careful to read the whole will right through. How much more, then, with regard to the revealed will of God ought we to be careful to read it through, and not merely one and another of the chapters or books.

ANOTHER BENEFIT OF THIS CONSECUTIVE READING

And this careful reading of the Word of God has this advantage, that it keeps us from making a *system of doctrine of our own*, and from having our own particular favourite views, which is very pernicious. We often are apt to lay too much stress on certain views of the truth which affect us particularly. The will of the Lord is, that we should know *His whole revealed mind*. Again variety in the things of God is of great moment. And God has been pleased to give us this variety in the highest degree; and the child of God, who follows out this plan, will be able to take an interest in every part of the Word.

Suppose one says, “Let us read in Leviticus.” Very well, my brother. Suppose another says, “Let us read in the prophecy of Isaiah.” Very well, my brother. And another will say, “Let us read in the Gospel according to Matthew.” Very well, my brother; I can enjoy them all; and whether it be in the Old Testament, or in the New Testament, whether in the Prophets, the Gospels, the Acts, or the Epistles, I should welcome it, and be delighted to welcome the reading and study of any part of the divine Word.

SPECIALLY BENEFICIAL TO THE LABOURER FOR CHRIST

And this will be of particular advantage to us, in case we should become *labourers in Christ’s vineyard*; because in expounding the Word, we shall be able to refer to every part of it. We shall equally enjoy the reading of the Word, whether of the Old or the New Testament, and shall never get tired of it. I have, as before stated, known the blessedness of this plan for forty-six years, and though I am now nearly seventy years of age, and though I have been converted for nearly fifty years, I can say, by the grace of God, that I more than ever love the Word of God, and have greater delight than ever in reading it.

And though I have read the Word nearly a hundred times right through, I have never got tired of reading it, and this is more especially through reading it regularly, consecutively, day by day, and not merely reading a chapter here and there, as my own thoughts might have led me to do.

READING THE WORD PRAYERFULLY

Again, we should read the Scripture *prayerfully*, never supposing that we are clever enough or wise enough to understand God’s Word by our own wisdom. In all our reading of the Scriptures let us seek carefully to have the help of the Holy Spirit; let us ask, for Jesus’ sake, that He will enlighten us. He is willing to do it. I will tell you how it fared with me at the very first; it may be for your encouragement. It was in the year 1829, when I was living in Hackney. My attention had been called to the teaching of the Spirit by a dear brother of experience. “Well,” I said, “I will try this plan; and will give myself, after prayer, to the careful reading of the Word of God, and to meditation, and I will see how much the Spirit is willing to teach me in this way.”

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THIS

I went accordingly to my room, and locked my door, and putting the Bible on a chair, I went down on my knees at the chair. There I remained for several hours in prayer and meditation over the Word of God; and I can tell you that I learned more in those three hours which I spent in this way, than I had learned for many months previously. I thus obtained the teaching of the Divine Spirit, and I cannot tell you the blessedness which it was to my own soul. I was praying in the Spirit, and putting my trust in the power of the Spirit, as I had never done before.

You cannot, therefore, be surprised at my earnestness in pressing this upon you, when you have heard how precious to my heart it was, and how much it helped me.

MEDITATE ON THE WORD

But again, it is not enough to have prayerful reading only, but we must also *meditate* on the Word. As in the instance I have just referred to, kneeling before the chair, I meditated on the Word. It was not simply reading it, not simply praying over it. It was all that, but, in addition it was *pondering over what I had read*. This is deeply important. If you merely read the Bible, and no more, it is just like water running in at one side and out at the other. *In order to be really benefited by it, we must meditate on it*. We cannot all of us, of course, spend many hours, or even one or two hours each day in this manner. Our business demands our attention. Yet, however short the time you can afford, give it regularly to reading, prayer and meditation over the Word, and you will find it will well repay you.

MAKE THE MEDITATION PERSONAL

In connection with this, we should always read and meditate over the Word of God, with reference *to ourselves* and our own heart. This is deeply important, and I cannot press it too earnestly upon you. We are apt often to read the Word with reference to others. Parents read it in reference to their children, children for their parents; evangelists read it for their congregations, Sunday-school teachers for their classes. Oh! this is a poor way of reading the Word; if read in this way, it will not profit. I say it deliberately and advisedly; the sooner it is given up, the better for your own souls. Read the Word of God always *with reference to your own heart*, and when you have received the blessing in your own heart, you will be able to communicate it to others.

Whether you labour as evangelists, as pastors, or as visitors, superintendents of Sunday schools, or teachers, tract distributors or in whatever other capacity you may seek to labour for the Lord, be careful to let the reading of the Word be with distinct reference to your own heart. Ask yourselves, how does this suit *me*, either for instruction, for correction, for exhortation, or for rebuke? How does this affect *me*? If you thus read, and get the blessing in your own soul, how soon it will flow out to others!

READ IN FAITH

Another point. It is of the utmost moment in reading the Word of God, that the reading should be accompanied *with faith*. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." As with the preaching, so with the reading it must be mixed with faith. Not simply reading it as you would read a story, which you may receive or not; not simply as a statement, which you may credit or not; or as an exhortation, to which you may listen or not; but as the *revealed will of the Lord*: that is, receiving it *with faith*. Received thus, it will nourish us, and we shall reap benefit. Only in this way will it benefit us; and we shall gain from it health and strength in proportion as we receive it with real faith.

BE DOERS OF THE WORD

Lastly, if God does bless us in reading His Word, He expects that we should be *obedient* children, and that we should accept the Word as His will, and carry it into practice. If this be neglected, you will find that the reading of the Word, even if accompanied by prayer, meditation and faith, will do you little good. God does expect us to be obedient children, and will have us practise what He has taught us. The Lord Jesus Christ says: "If ye know these things, happy are ye *if ye do them*." And in the measure in which we carry out what our Lord Jesus taught, so much in measure are we happy children. And in such measure only can we honestly look for help from our Father, even as we seek to carry out His will.

If there is one single point I would wish to have spread all over this country, and over the whole world, it is just this, that we should seek, beloved Christian friends, not to be hearers of the Word only, but "*doers of the Word*." I doubt not that many of you have sought to do this already, but I speak particularly to those younger brethren and sisters who have not yet learned the full force of this. Oh! seek to attend earnestly to this, it is of vast importance. Satan will seek with much earnestness to put aside the Word of God; but let us seek to carry it out and to act upon it. The Word must be received as a legacy from God, which has been communicated to us by the Holy Ghost. Therefore, it is the will of the Lord that we should always own our dependence upon Him in prayer.

THE FULLNESS OF THE REVELATION GIVEN IN THE WORD

And remember that, to the faithful reader of this blessed Word, it reveals all that we need to know about the Father – all that we need to know about the Lord Jesus Christ, all about the power of the Spirit, all about the word that lieth in the wicked one, all about the road to heaven, and the blessedness of the world to come. In this blessed book we have the whole Gospel, and all rules necessary for our Christian life and warfare. Let us see then that we study it with our whole heart and with prayer, meditation, faith and obedience.

PRAYER

The next point on which I will speak for a few moments has been more or less referred to already, it is that of *prayer*. You might read the Word and seem to understand it very fully, yet if you are not in the habit of waiting continually upon God, you will make little progress in the divine life. We have not naturally in us any good thing; and cannot expect, save by the help of God, to please Him.

The blessed Lord Jesus Christ gave us an example in this particular. He gave whole nights to prayer. We find Him on the lonely mountain engaged by night in prayer. And as in every way He is to be an example to us, so, in particular, on this point. He is an example to us. The old evil corrupt nature is still in us, though we are born again; therefore, we have to come in prayer to God for help. We have to cling to the power of the Mighty One. Concerning everything, we have to pray. Not simply when great troubles come, when the house is on fire, or a beloved wife is on the point of death, or dear children are laid down in sickness – not simply at such times, but also *in little things*. From the very early morning, let us make *everything* a matter of prayer, and let it be so throughout the day, and throughout our whole life.

A Christian lady said lately, that thirty-five years ago she heard me speak on this subject in Devonshire; and that then I referred to praying about little things. I had said, that suppose a parcel came to us, and it should prove difficult to untie the knot, and you cannot cut it; then you should ask God to help you, even to untie the knot. I myself had forgotten the words, but she has remembered them, and the remembrance of them, she said, had been a great help to her again and again. So I would say to you, my beloved friends, there is nothing too little to pray about. In the simplest things connected with our daily life and walk, we should give ourselves to prayer; and we shall have the living, loving Lord Jesus to help us. Even in the most trifling matters I give myself to prayer and often in the morning, even ere I leave my room I have two or three answers to prayer in this way.

Young believers, in the very outset of the divine life in your souls, learn, in childlike simplicity, to wait upon God for everything! Treat the Lord Jesus Christ as *your personal Friend*, able and willing to help you in everything. How blessed it is to be carried in His loving arms all the day long! I would say, that the divine life of the believer is made up of a vast number of little circumstances and little things. Every day there comes before us a variety of little trials, and if we seek to put them aside in our own strength and wisdom, we shall quickly find that we are confounded. But if, on the contrary, we take everything to God, we shall be helped, and our way shall be made plain. Thus our life will be a happy life!

A WORD TO THE UNCONVERTED

I am here to-night addressing believers, those who have felt the burden of their sins, and have accepted Christ as their Saviour, and who now through Him have peace with God and seek to glorify Him. But if there be any here who are still in their sins, in a state of alienation from God, let me say, if they die in this state, the terrible punishment of sin must fall upon them. Unless their sins are pardoned, and they are made fit for the Divine presence, they can never enter heaven. But, dear friends, Christ came to save the lost, and as sinners, you are lost, and you have no power of your own to save yourselves. The world talks of turning over a new leaf, but that will not satisfy Divine justice. Sin must be punished, or God's righteousness would be set aside. Jesus came into the world to bear that punishment. He has borne it in our room and stead. He has suffered for us. Now what God looks for from us is, that we accept Jesus as our Saviour, and put our trust in Him for the salvation of our souls. Whosoever looks really and entirely to Him shall assuredly be saved. Let his sins be ever so many, he shall have the forgiveness of them all.

Nay, more, he will be accepted by God as His child. He will become an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ. Oh, what a great and glorious salvation, so freely given! May it be as thankfully accepted! And may we who rejoice in Him stand boldly out and confess Christ, and work for Him. May we not be half-hearted, but be valiant soldiers of Christ.

Let us be decided for Christ. Let us walk as in God's sight, in holy, peaceful, happy fellowship with Him, in the enjoyment of that nearness into which we are brought in Christ. Oh, the blessedness of this privilege of living near to God in this life! May we, then, seek His guidance in everything, so that we may be a blessing to others, and thus we shall be greatly blessed in our own souls.

Address to Young Men

Delivered by George Müller in Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday, October 12th, 1873

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity." - Eccles. xi. 9, 10,

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." - Eccles. xii. 1.

I have been requested to preach this evening more particularly to young men, - to the dear young men; and as I myself have been a young man, and know what it is to be a young man out of Christ, and a young man in Christ, a believer in the Lord Jesus, I cheerfully complied with the request. I myself lived to be twenty years of age and a few weeks before I was converted, and therefore I know experimentally what it is to be a young man out of Christ; especially when it is considered that, though I was only twenty years of age, I had the experience of one who was thirty or thirty-five years old; for I had been, from ten years and a half, so to speak, my own master, and had seen much, very much, of life by the time that I was twenty. Yet, as I was only a young man of twenty when converted, I know experimentally what it is to be a young man as a believer in the Lord Jesus, and gladly, therefore, do I comply with the request to preach to my dear young friends, - the dear young men. But while the subject which we lay before you this evening is of importance to young men, it is also of importance to all of us, - to young men and young women, to middle-aged men and to middle-aged women, to elder men and to elder women; for the truth as it is in Jesus must always be of importance to every human being. The portion which I have read is one which more especially, by the Holy Ghost, is addressed to young men; and of all the portions in the Divine Testimony for the occasion, I know none more suitable than the one which I have been reading.

We will now read again, little by little, this portion, and meditate upon it, as God may help us: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." The first thing we have especially to keep before us regarding this statement is not as if the Holy Ghost were encouraging people, whether young men or young women or any human beings, to live according to their own likings. We have not for a moment to suppose this. The statement is precisely of the same character as we find at the very close of the blessed book of God, in the last chapter of the book of Revelation, in the eleventh verse, where we read: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. (12 v.) And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." These two verses are to be taken in connection, just as the first part of this ninth verse in the eleventh chapter of Ecclesiastes is to be taken in connection with the latter part of the self-same verse. The Holy Ghost is stating here what will be seen with regard to young men - the natural liking of the natural heart of young men, that is, to please themselves; to go their own way; to gratify themselves; to walk according to the sight of their own eyes. It is not stated in the way of encouragement by the Holy Ghost that they should do so. Far less is it sanctioned by the Holy Ghost, as if there were no harm in all this. The fact is simply referred to, as it is among men. What is the common course among men, and what is the natural tendency of youth. It was the same with all of us; the same, not only with young men and young women, but the same with middle-aged men and middle-aged women, with elder men and elder women. We like to go our own way, to please ourselves, and gratify ourselves, and act according to the biddings of nature. This is the statement of the Holy Ghost, just as we find it in the last chapter of the book of Revelation, but with this solemn, weighty, momentous addition: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me;" and here the Holy Ghost adds, "For all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." Now, the very reverse of all this the Holy Ghost would tell them should be the case.

In the first place, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth." Are we to rejoice in our youth? The statement of the Holy Ghost again and again and again is, "Rejoice in the Lord." Our strength is, to be happy in the Lord. This we are enjoined, this is the will of the Lord concerning us, to rejoice in the Lord, and not to rejoice in youth.

Further, "Let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth." Our own hearts cheer us? The consolations of the blessed gospel are to cheer us, and not our own hearts. He that would trust in his own heart, and he that would look into his own heart, to find there a fountain of happiness, is a fool; and therefore that cannot possibly be the meaning. But it is simply the statement of the Holy Ghost how it is among men, what is the tendency among men, and how it is found to be among men. So, then, it does not at all mean that we should cheer ourselves, from the fact that we are young men.

"And walk in the ways of thine heart." Verily, is it this that is enjoined? Can it be so? The walking in the ways of our own heart would be the ways of the transgressors. We are naturally far from God; we naturally do things which are hateful to God, which are anything but pleasing to Him. What is enjoined to the human being is, to walk in the ways of the Lord; and therefore it cannot possibly mean here that it is pleasing to God, and according to the mind of God; but it is simply stated what is the tendency of youth - to walk in their own ways, not liking to be directed by God's orders, by God's ways.

And then further, "In the sight of thine eyes." This we like naturally, but that which is inculcated in the Holy Scripture is this, - to walk in the sight of God, to walk according to the mind of God, to walk in the light of God's countenance, so to walk as that we do not go out of the sight of God. This is the will of the Lord respecting us. And, therefore, in the first place, this is to be settled in our own hearts, that here is the statement of the Holy Ghost, not by way of commendation, the very reverse, only the simple statement of the Holy Ghost as to what is common among men, what is the result of our fallen state, as long as we are not in Christ we rejoice in things which are according to nature, instead of rejoicing in things which are according to the mind of God. But it is the latter, and the latter only, which brings real, true joy, peace, and happiness to the human being; and the former never did, never will, never can. It is not contained in that which this world affords, not even in natural relationship, nor in the state of man as to his varied progress, it is not possible that, in any of these things, real joy, real happiness can be found; but only in communion with God, in oneness with God, in having done away, by the grace of God, the distance from God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, can we find peace and happiness.

Now, that this is not a supposition of mine, but that it is evidently the mind of God, we at once find from the second part of the verse, where this is stated: "For all these things God will bring thee into judgment." If it were commended by the Holy Ghost that a young man should rejoice in the fact that he is a youth, that he is young; if it were commended by the Holy Ghost that he should let his heart cheer him in the days of his youth; if it were commended by the Holy Ghost that he should walk in the ways of his own heart, and in the sight of his own eyes, then why this addition? Why this contrast? A plain proof that it is the very reverse from what the Holy Ghost means us to do; for, as I said before, He would have us to rejoice in the Lord. He would have us to be cheered by the consolations of the gospel, He would have us to walk in the ways of God, He would have us to walk in the light of the countenance of God. This is according to the mind of God, and not the other. If, however, young men are determined to go their own way, then let them hear the word of the Lord: "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

What then, if we are brought into judgment? If all our wrong doings are brought before God, and sentence passed according to our actions; if all our words, the tens upon tens of thousands, and the hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of words which we utter, from the moment that we are brought, into the world to the moment that we are taken out of the world; and if all the thoughts and desires, the inclinations and purposes, which have been found in our hearts are tested by the scrutinizing eye of God, and weighed in His balance, what will be the end of this? What can be the end of this but to hear that awful sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh! what would befall us if once we are to be dealt with according to our deeds, our words, our thoughts? We should be undone, and undone for eternity; and, therefore, the solemn and momentous point with regard to this latter part of the verse is not only that it says to us that the meaning, which is apparently the meaning of the first part of the verse, cannot possibly be the meaning; but that also, by this latter part of the verse we are stirred up to the utmost, and entreated, and besought by God to the utmost (if I may use the words), with all earnestness, with all diligence, with all haste, to close with Christ, to lay hold on the offers of the gospel, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, in order that we may not have to stand at the judgment-bar of the Lord Jesus Christ, and hear that awful sentence to which I have referred. There is no possibility of escaping punishment and hell, but by believing the gospel. There is no possibility of having eternal joy and happiness, but through faith in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if there had been a possibility of any human being being saved in any other way, God would not have delivered up the choicest, the most precious of all gifts He had to give, - even His only-begotten Son. But when He saw that we were lost and undone, His heart being full of yearning love, His heart full of compassion to the lost and ruined and guilty, He, in the riches of His grace, gave for them the choicest gift He had to give, - His only-begotten Son, and bruised Him and wounded Him and laid on Him the punishment of us all; and that blessed One endured, in our room, all the punishment which was due to those who put their trust in Him.

Now the great point before we pass on is this: First of all, I ask my dear young friends, the dear young men to whom I am speaking more particularly this evening, - how is it with you? Have you closed with Christ or not? Have you accepted the offers of the gospel or not? Are you in Christ or out of Christ? I feel for you; I can well enter into your state. I was out of Christ for many a long year, and oh! the thousands of times that I have wished that I had known the Lord much younger than I did. There was, however, this difference between me and you; I never heard the gospel till I was twenty years and five or six weeks old; I never met with a Christian till I was twenty years and five or six weeks old. I never understood about the atoning death of the Lord Jesus till then. You, at least almost all of you, if not everyone of you, have heard the gospel again and again; some of you, it may be, times without number. You have been entreated and besought, most of you, if not all of you, many times to believe the gospel; therefore see the difference. Now, be besought and entreated at last; oh! let me beseech and entreat you to give, without delay, your heart to the Lord. And if you want another testimony, though I dare say you have had testimony upon testimony before, I tell you that it is altogether a mistake when persons suppose that they will never have a happy hour if, while young, they believe the gospel, - that is a most grievous mistake; it is the reverse. It is just this very reception of the Lord Jesus Christ which gives real joy, real happiness, real gladness of heart. The other is a mere fancy, a dream-like joy; there is no reality in it; it brings nothing but an aching heart afterwards, whatever the apparent joy for the time may be.

I know from my own experience what it is with all one's might to seek to enjoy the world, for I did it to the utmost, and I had opportunity above many to do it; and it was nothing but vanity and misery and wretchedness that it brought.

Then, again, on the other hand, I know, what it is, as a young man, to be a Christian; for, as I told you, I was about twenty years and five or six weeks old when I was brought to the knowledge of the Lord; and then, having found the Lord, I was happy, and before the very first evening had closed, in which I was brought to the knowledge of the Lord, I said to my former companions in travelling, "What are all our joys and all our pleasures on the journey to Switzerland in comparison with this evening. That was the very beginning of my divine life; and now forty-eight years have passed, and I bear testimony, to the praise and honour and glory of God, that I have never been tired of Christ; but the longer I walk on in the ways of God, the more I find how true the Word of the Lord is, that the paths of wisdom are paths of pleasantness and peace; that real joy, real happiness, real blessing, real peace, real comfort, reality, are to be had by faith in the Lord Jesus. Only I make this addition, You must be an out and out Christian; you cannot hold with one hand the world, and with the other Christ. You would otherwise be a wretched being; and if there are any here present who want the world and Christ, let them keep the world, for they cannot have both. You can have nothing but perdition if you cleave to the world, because it is under condemnation, and you will be condemned with the world if you will not let the world go; but if you are minded to let the world go, and lay hold on Christ, and be an out and out disciple of the Lord Jesus, I tell you this, as an honest man, you will be a happy man. Oh! how happy, how unspeakably happy, how blessed your portion as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! it is a blessed thing to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, dear young men, be no longer believing the lie of the devil; and to you young women I say the same; and to you elder men and women I say the same; to everyone here present, and even to the little boys and girls here present, I say the same; if ever there comes a whisper to your mind from the devil, that all joy and happiness would be gone if you were to become a Christian, - it is the very reverse. Real joy, real happiness, real blessedness, only begin with the day that we obtain spiritual life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; for then comes the time when our sins are forgiven; then comes the time when we become the children of God through this faith in the Lord Jesus; then comes the time when we become the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; then comes the time, and only then, that you can lie down in peace at night, knowing that, if it were the last time, and you should not awaken any more in this world, you would not lift up your eyes in torment, but in heaven. I challenge any dear young man here present, who will show to me any way that makes so happy as this, - to know that if this were the last night, to be awaking in heaven, and not in torment. Oh, what is not this worth! Oh, how blessed is this one single thing! What can all the world give in comparison with this one single thing, - to know that, if this were our last night, heaven would be our portion, and not the place of torment? Is it not worth something? You speak about the happiness at the billiard table: I know it; and misery it is, and nothing else. You speak about the enjoyment of the theatre: I know it, above many of you, if not all of you; I was there times without number, and was passionately fond of the theatre; and what then? Wretchedness and misery were the result. You speak about the ballroom: there was I; - there was I, and at two or three o'clock in the morning left the ballroom with a disordered stomach.

I know all this, - the wretchedness and misery which it gives, instead of real enjoyment and real happiness. You speak about the pleasures of reading: I know them too; for when I was only thirteen years old I had my books by the month out of the library, and I devoured them with all eagerness - volume after volume. And you speak about learning, and the enjoyment in this:

I was at school from the time that I was five years old, to the time that I was nineteen and a half, when I went to the university with honourable testimonials, and was there for four years; and then studying was not over, for when I came to England I went on with Hebrew, Chaldee, etc. And what did I find? That learning in itself gives no happiness, - no real, true happiness. Christ, and Christ alone, gives real, true happiness. I know seven languages; and with all this I should have gone to hell, if it had not been that I know Christ, Christ, Christ. Oh, the blessedness of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus! Oh! my dear young friends, be you male or female, or little children, let me tell you of the blessedness, the blessedness, THE BLESSEDNESS, of being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only be an out and out Christian. It is this half-hearted mind which makes men to be no really happy beings. You cannot be happy if you want to hold the world with one hand and Christ with the other; but the moment you come to the determination that you will not halt between two opinions, and that you will be an out and out Christian, you will be happy. I know the difficulty of this; for, when I was converted, I was almost the only believer out of 1260 young men who were students at the university; and they knew me, that I had been in the fencing saloon to learn fencing, in order that I might be able to fight a duel if anyone insulted me. They knew me: "There is the Mystic," as I was called; and they pointed at me with fingers. But those sneers lasted a few days or a few weeks at the most; and, by the grace of God, I stood at the side of Christ with two or three students out of the 1260, and the result was, a happy man I was. And the result has been, a happy man I have been. But it must be an out and out thing. And therefore this I would say affectionately to those who are yet out of Christ, - Only be upright and honest. You who are believers in the Lord Jesus, let me affectionately say this, - Let it be an out and out standing at the side of Christ with you. Be not half-hearted. The devil will seek, if he cannot altogether bring you back to him, at least in some degree to bring you back into the world. Now let me affectionately beseech

and entreat you to let it be an out and out Christianity, and then the result will be this, - you will be an out and out happy man. Thus it should be with all the disciples of the Lord Jesus. It would pain me to the utmost if people could live with me a month in the house and not bear this testimony, - that Mr. Müller is "a happy man," And a happy man I desire to be; and a happy man I am. It is Christ who makes me happy; for there is something unspeakably blessed in this, - that the older one gets, the nearer the end of the journey, the brighter the blessedness of the prospect; with heaven as one's home, that one is getting nearer and nearer to the gates. Oh! how blessed to be in Christ. And this blessedness I desire for all my beloved dear young friends to whom I am more specially speaking this evening. It is a blessed thing to be a believer in the Lord Jesus.

"But know, thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity." If we act according to the statement of the first part of the ninth verse, the result will be this, - sorrow to the heart and evil to the flesh. I would mention here, by the way, that "flesh" is to be here understood as "the body." It does not mean the old and corrupt nature, it means the body. Now if we walk according to the ways of our own heart, according to the sight of our own eyes, it is certain that there will come, sooner or later, more or less sorrow to the heart, and that there will come evil, even to the body, as the certain result.

The will of God is, that young men should remove sorrow from their heart, and put away evil from their body; but, if young men walk according to their natural inclinations, it will bring, it must bring sorrow, - oh! how much sorrow. Let any dear young men just follow out their own desires: sorrow upon sorrow it will bring; sorrow upon sorrow it will bring, not only as to the heart, but also as to the body, in most instances; yet not only to the body, evil, but oftentimes premature death. Oh! how often is it seen that not only disease of the body, but even a premature death comes from walking according to the natural inclination and the carnal mind.

So, then, if you wish to put sorrow from your heart, if you wish to put evil from the body, the way is to walk according to the mind of the Lord, which begins, in the first place, by the reception of the gospel, by receiving Christ, and then, afterwards, by continuing in Christ. Abide in Christ, seek to please the Lord, and to act according to the mind of the Lord. It is by this, and by this only, that sorrow can be kept from the heart, and that evil can be kept from the body. Oh how deeply important it is to attend to these things! And we see it is just the graciousness of the heart of God which brings before us this boon; because the Lord wills not the death of the sinner, but that he should turn from his evil ways and live. This is not all. If young men are believers, God desires them to be happy believers, - truly happy. This, however, cannot be, except they abide in Christ. This is the only way whereby sorrow can be removed from the heart, and whereby evil can be kept from the body. Awful diseases many dear young men bring on themselves, and even premature death, because they do not attend to these things.

And then it is added, in the way of caution, "For childhood and youth are vanity." The word "youth" in Hebrew means "the beginning of the day," "the breaking of the day," and therefore the figure is carried out here. "Childhood and the morning of life are vanity." Vanity here means, "of a transient character, - it passes - it does not last long - it goes away."

Now this is also a point to be kept before us. It is deeply important, in the first place, with regard to this life, that youth is of a transient character, it passes away. Therefore, in childhood and in youth, the best use is to be made of time, talents, strength. The cultivation of the mind is deeply important. From what I have been saying, you must not for a moment suppose that I mean that it is not worth anything at all that one knows this or the other thing, or that the mind be well cultivated; I mean no such thing to be understood by what I am saying. I simply mean that these things are nothing in comparison with the choicest and the chiefest of all the good that we can have, - faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important for young men to make good use of their time, even with regard to this life; because childhood and youth are of a transient character, they pass away; and therefore the mind should be cultivated.

Things that are profitable for this life are to be learned, - and to be learned, among other reasons, that hereafter they may be useful even in the cause of Christ. I have just been referring to languages. When I learned French, for instance, and other languages, I had no thought that they would ever be useful in the service of Christ; but afterwards it pleased God so to order it in His providence that I had sometimes six missionaries for five and six months at a time in my house, and there were three different languages spoken at my dinner-table, - German, French, and English. Now the very fact of knowing these languages helped me in the cause of Christ. I am now continuing my correspondence in three different languages, - French, German, and English. These, in the cause of Christ, have been very useful. Not that I mean to lay stress on these things, as if they were of such moment that there would be no happiness without them. Not this; for the great point, after all remains, - to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and to walk in the ways of God. But, if we have the opportunity, let us make good use of the opportunity. We must not despise the opportunities, nor put them aside, but make good use of them; because youth passes away, is of a transient character, does not last, and therefore the time is to be usefully employed in the cultivation of the mind and in becoming acquainted with the affairs of this life, all of which may afterwards be used, not only with regard to this life, but in the service of the Lord, and for the glory of God.

But though it is important with regard to the affairs of life and the things connected with this life, to do so, it is of infinitely more importance with regard to eternal matters, because childhood and youth are not lasting, are of a transient character; therefore the momentous point is, that, while yet young, we should give our hearts to the Lord. Not to put it off to this time or that time. Suppose that time never came? And even if the time came, the heart naturally gets harder and harder, and therefore, a loss is sustained by putting it off. But the cares of this life come after awhile, and then the less inclination to give the heart to the Lord. Therefore, the great object, both as to this life, and especially with regard to the world to come, should be to make the best use of childhood and youth, which are passing away.

Before passing on to the last verse of our subject, I pause, and I ask the question, "How many have given the heart to the Lord?" I see a number of dear young persons before me, both male and female. How many have given the heart to the Lord? I see also a few very young persons - children; have they given the heart to the Lord? I do not want you to answer the question to me; but I do beseech and entreat you, in sincerity, in uprightness, with godly earnestness, to answer the question to God Himself, who, by His Spirit, puts the question to your heart: "Art thou Mine, or art thou for the devil? Art thou for Christ, or art thou for the world?" How can there be a halting between two opinions?

Youth and childhood are of a transient character; you put it off, and you think there is time enough. How do you know there is time? What if, when you get home this evening, you are laid low? What if, in the night, the cholera comes upon you, or if some other disease should befall you and hurry you away? What then? - what then? - what then? All is too late.

Oh! be besought and entreated, dear young friends. Be assured of this, that the more you hear of the gospel; and the more you reject the invitations of the gospel, the harder your heart becomes; the further you get away from Christ; the more you are getting into the ways of the devil; the more you love the world. Oh! be besought and entreated.

The last verse: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. "

What is the import of this? In the first place, I judge what the Holy Ghost would bring before the human beings is this: That the human beings - especially the young part of the human beings - should keep it before them solemnly, deeply, gravely, earnestly, that they have a Creator. Now all in this country know that they are created. But the mere superficial knowledge is not enough; it is of little significance in comparison with the reality. What the Holy Ghost would have us to keep before us is that we are creatures, and that we have a Creator.

The verse we have before us implies various points. In the first place, it implies this: "That the creature is subject to the Creator." This we cannot sufficiently keep before our hearts. It implies further: "The creature is made for the honour and glory of the Creator." We can never have this sufficiently before our eyes. It implies further: That because the creature is made for the honour and glory of the Creator, therefore the creature should live so that the honour of the Creator would be upheld. In what way can the human creature, above all things, honour the Creator? In the first place, by accepting the choicest of all His gifts, the Lord Jesus Christ; and whosoever has not accepted Christ never honoured the Creator.

You think this is a hard saying; - it may be. I repeat it solemnly, - Every one here present, who has not accepted Christ, whether fifteen years old, or twenty years, or twenty-five years old, never once, in his whole life, honoured the Creator. There is no such thing as that we honour the Creator, whilst the choicest gift, the most precious gift, this unspeakable gift, which cost Him so much, - His only begotten Son, - is not accepted. Go home in this belief, that you are fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years old, and never once, for one single minute in your whole life, honoured God, because you have not accepted Christ.

This is no hasty statement. It is my deliberate conviction: As a man of God I give it as my deliberate conviction. All you have done - all you have said, never can, never has, tended to the honour of God as long as you have not received the gospel. Therefore, the first thing, if you would honour God the Creator, if you would realize what is meant by "remembering" Him, you must close with Christ; you must accept the gospel; you must pass sentence upon yourself as a ruined, guilty, lost sinner, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul. You must put your whole trust, and only trust, in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This, and this only, God would consider as remembering Him.

Then, if you have received the gospel, further abide in Christ. Seek to please Jehovah Jesus, who spake the word; everything that is in existence was brought into existence by Him, and He is the builder of the universe. Abide in Him; seek to please Him; seek to act according to His mind. That He considers, as the choicest, most precious way of remembering your Creator.

Lastly: ""While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." This is the very reverse from what a young man naturally says: "I am very young; there is time enough; when I am old I will attend to these things." The very reverse from what God says: "Before the evil days come," that is the will of the Lord. When men get advanced in life, then comes the danger of not attending to these things: because of the heart having been so much hardened, because the cares of this life shut out Christ, because of numberless troubles, a long family, a number of children to be settled in life; therefore this, the most momentous of all matters, is not to be put off. Oh! how wise, - how infinitely wise, is God. But the devil, you see, is always against God; he is always placing things in the very opposite light. God says, "Before these days come." Nature says, "I will put it off till I am an old man, or till I am an old woman." The devil whispers, "There is time enough when you get to your death-bed." How do you know that you will ever get to your death-bed? The next time you travel - rush! and in an instant you are carried away in a railway accident; the next time you ride in a carriage, off the horse goes, and in an instant you are thrown out, and in eternity; the next time you go out, a tile falls on your head from the roof, and in an instant you are in eternity. Oh! how do you know that you will live one single day more? How utterly fallacious it is to put it off to old age, to this or that time! The present moment, and the present moment only, is the time, and therefore the present moment alone is ours; we cannot boast of time.

Once more, beloved young friends, male or female, beloved older men and women, let me beseech and entreat you, with all earnestness, to seek the Lord while He is to be found, and to call upon Him while He is near. And be you sure of this: if you go - to speak after the manner of men - one single step, it is Jesus who comes a dozen or a hundred steps towards you. He stands, as it were, with open arms to receive you. It is the very joy and delight of His heart to welcome you; and, therefore, delay not. Oh! be besought and entreated.

Answer from the Holy Scriptures to the Four Most Important Questions

Many years since I received a letter from a Christian lady in Ireland who for many years had been concerned about her soul and considered a consistent Christian, but who habitually had been without the assurance that she was a child of God, that she had obtained the forgiveness of her sins, that she should be saved, and that she belonged to the elect of God. In this letter that lady requested me to write to her how she could come to an assurance about these points. Now as I know from experience, through my service among thousands of the children of God during the past forty-eight years, how many there are who are in a similar state of mind to that Irish lady, it has appeared well to me to answer these various points.

Before going any further, I request the reader earnestly to consider that "the world passeth away, and the lust therefore: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" - I John ii. 17. All, all of this world passeth away! Whatsoever you may possess, whatsoever you may enjoy, whatsoever you may be according to your rank, position, and education, in so far as that which you possess or enjoy is in connection with this world; your possessions and your enjoyment are not only subject to change, but one day all this will be taken from you; and this may take place very soon. Consider the solemn statement of the Holy Scriptures: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" - Heb. ix. 27. Is it not on that account of the utmost moment that we should soon, yea, while we are yet young, not only come so far that we know how we can ascertain whether we are children of God or not, whether our sins are forgiven or not, whether we shall be saved or not, and whether we belong to the elect of God or not; but that we also with earnestness seek to be able to say upon Scriptural ground: *I am* a child of God, *I am* born again, my sins *are* forgiven me by God, I shall not perish but shall have everlasting life, and I *belong* to the elect of God.

You can easily suppose, dear reader, how great the peace and the joy of that heart must be, which at all times and under all circumstances, even in severe illness, in the greatest danger of losing life, and in the prospect of death, can say: God has forgiven all my sins, I am his child; let come what may, whether I live or die, all will be well with me, I am on the road to God. You may not enjoy such a state of heart; but you can easily see how peaceful the heart must be, if in the prospect of death and of the judgment to come one need not trouble, because one is prepared for eternity. Through carelessness, the love of pleasure, or even infidelity, men may seek to banish the thought of eternity, death, the judgment at the return of the Lord Jesus, the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection; they may also, by the permission of God, be able for a time to succeed in this; yet in the silence of the night, or when life is in imminent danger, or when heavy sickness comes, the voice even of a conscience that was lulled into sleep, hardened or overpowered, will speak, and will be heard. Often and often, when you least may wish to hear it, God tells you, through His holy word: "Thou art a sinner".

Know, dear reader, that the writer was for the first twenty years of his life a great sinner, a very great sinner; but that he has now had for forty-nine years peace with God, through faith in the Lord Jesus, and that he has enjoyed this peace during all this time, that he is a child of God, that his sins are forgiven, and that for more than forty-five years he has never questioned that he is a child of God, that he has been born again, that his sins are forgiven, that he shall be saved,

and that he belongs to the elect of God. Perhaps you say, I should like to know how I can attain to this, that I may have good reason to say this of myself, and therefore the writer answers what follows.

First of all, you have to seek to *learn* and afterwards to *hold fast*, that one cannot through a dream, through any powerful impression, nor through this, that it was to us as if a stone fell from our heart, nor even through this, that our spiritual experience resembles the experience of this or that one, come to the assurance that we are born again, that we are children of God, that our sins are forgiven, that we shall be saved, and that we belong to the elect. As in all spiritual matters, so in this particular also, the Word of God alone is to be our rule and guide. Through the revealed will of God alone, which is made known to us in the Holy Scriptures, can we come to the knowledge regarding these most important points. Howsoever much you may seek to obtain peace and rest regarding these points, yea, howsoever much you may supposed that you have obtained rest for your heart regarding them, if this peace and this rest are not built upon the good foundation of the Word of God, this peace and rest will not last long. Although the writer owes it alone to the grace of God that now above forty-five years his own heart has not had the least doubt regarding these point, it is nevertheless also true that the means whereby this uninterrupted peace had been granted to him, was this, that in childlike simplicity he has been clinging to the Word of God, and that *through it alone*, without reference to anything else, he sought to come to a certainty on these points.

You ask now:

I. *Question.* By what passages, then, for instance, may I make out that I am a child of God, or born again?

Answer 1. the portion from the Word of God, which the writer would give in answer to the first question, is Gal. iii. 26, where it is written: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus". The question here again is: Do I believe in the Lord Jesus? Do I depend upon Him along for the salvation of my soul? If so, I am a child of God, whether I feel it or not.

Answer 2. In John i. 11-13 it is written of the Lord Jesus: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (or the right, or the privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". The question here again is simply this: Have I received the Lord Jesus? ie, do I believe in His name? If so, I am born of God, I am a child of God, *else I should never have believed in the Lord Jesus; for none but the children of God do believe in Him.*

Perhaps you say, - I do not *feel* that I am born again, born of God; and I have therefore no enjoyment.

Answer. In order that you may have the enjoyment, which is the result of the knowledge that you are a child of God, that you are born of God, or born again, you must receive God's testimony. He is a faithful witness, He speaks nothing but the truth. If you receive this testimony of God, you, to whom by grace it is given to believe, cannot but be happy, from the fact that God Himself says that you are His child. But if you will wait till you *feel* that you are a child of God, you may have to wait long; and even if you felt it, yet your feelings would be worth nothing; for either it might a false feeling, or, though it were real, it might be lost the next hour. Feelings change; but the Word of God remains unalterably the same. You have, then, without having had a dream about it, without having had a portion of the Word in a more than usual way impressed upon your mind concerning the subject, without having heard something like a voice from heaven about it, to say for yourself: If I believe what God says, I am a child of God. And then *from the belief of what God declares*, even that you are His child, springs peace and joy in Holy Ghost.

II *Question.* How may I know that my sins are forgiven? Have I to wait till I feel that they are forgiven before I may take comfort concerning the matter? Or, must I wait till I have in some powerful way a portion of the Word of God applied to my mind, to assure me of it? Or, must I wait till I feel as if a load were removed from my heart; or, as if I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Go in peace: thy sins are forgiven?

Answer. This point is again only to be settled by the Word of God. We have not to wait till we *feel* that our sins are forgiven. I myself have now been a believer for forty-nine years. How long it is since I have had no doubt whatever about the forgiveness of my sins I cannot tell with certainty; but this I am quite sure of, that ever since I have been in England, which is now about forty-five years, I have never once had a single moment's doubt that my sins are all forgiven; and yet I do not remember that I even once have *felt* that they were forgiven. To *know* that they are forgiven, and to *feel* that they are forgiven, are two different things. The right way to settle whether our sins are forgiven, is to refer to the Word of God alone with reference to it. In Acts x. 43 it is written concerning the Lord Jesus, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins". All the prophets, speaking under the immediate power of the Holy Spirit, bore testimony that through the obedience and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, whereby He becomes our Saviour, all who believe in Him for salvation, who depend upon Him and not upon themselves, who receive Him to be the one whom God declares Him to be, should receive the forgiveness of

their sins. The questions therefore to be put to ourselves are simply these: Do I walk in utter carelessness? Do I trust in my own exertions for salvation? Do I expect forgiveness for my sins on account of living a better life in future? Or do I depend only upon this, that Jesus died on the Cross to save sinners? If the latter is the case, my sins are forgiven, whether I feel it or not. I have already forgiveness. I shall not have it merely when I die, or when the Lord Jesus comes again; but I have it *now*, and that for *all* my sins. I must not wait to *feel* that my sins are forgiven in order to be at peace, and in order to be happy in the Lord; but I must take God at His Word, I must believe that what He says is true: and He says "That whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus should receive remission of sins"; and *when I believe what God says*, peace and joy will be the result.

Again, in Acts xv. 8,9, it is written with reference to us Gentile sinners: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith". Here we see how the guilt is to be removed from the heart, how we can get a clean heart, obtain the forgiveness of our sins, - even by faith in the Lord Jesus. Depending upon the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in the room of sinners, His sufferings are considered by God as endured by us. In Him (if we believe on Him) we are considered to have hung on the accursed tree, and therefore were punished in Him; on account of which, God, though perfectly holy and just, can forgive us our sins for Jesus' sake, as well as reckon us righteous, through faith in the Lord Jesus, who in the room of those who believe on Him fulfilled the law of God.

III *Question.* How may I know that I shall be saved?

Answer. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." - Rom. x. 9. The question therefore is simply this: Do I confess with my mouth the Lord Jesus? Do I own Him by the confession of my mouth before men? And do I believe in my heart that Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified was not left in the grave but was raised up again by God on the third day? If these two points are found in me, I shall be saved. For while there may be the confession of the Lord Jesus with the mouth without the person being finally saved, there does not go along with this the believing in the heart that God has raised Him from the dead, without the person in whom *both* are found being finally saved, for in none but the children of God are these two points found united together.

We have particularly to observe, that it is not written: If thou shalt *say* that God has raised Him from the dead; but if thou shalt *believe in thine heart* that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. I have, then, to take God at His word, which states that if I do confess the Lord Jesus with my mouth, and do believe in my heart that God has raised Him from the dead, I shall be saved, though I do not *feel* it, though I am utterly unworthy of salvation, yea, though I am altogether deserving condemnation. I must not wait till I *feel* that I shall be saved before I take the comfort which this message is intended to give; but I must believe what God says in this verse, and out of that peace and comfort will flow into my soul. Should, however, one or other of the children of God believe in his heart the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, if at the same time has never made confession of the Lord Jesus with his mouth, he cannot be surprised that the assurance about his salvation is wanting to him; yet if both be found in you, my dear reader, God has been gracious to you, you are His child, you shall be saved.

Further, in John iii. 16 it is written: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Notice here in particular:

1. Not a single sinner who seeks salvation in God's appointed way, however great and many his sins have been, is excluded.
2. The promise is positive concerning my salvation, if I believe in the Lord Jesus.
3. I have *only to believe* in the Lord Jesus. However it may have been with me hitherto, if only now I trust in and depend upon the Lord Jesus for salvation, I shall have everlasting life.

Further, in John iii. 36 it is written: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him". As assuredly as I depend upon and trust in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of my soul, I shall be saved, I have already everlasting life; for He died to deliver those who believe on Him from the wrath of God, under which all men are in their natural state. But if I do not believe in the Lord Jesus, the wrath of God, which rests upon all men in their natural state, will finally destroy me, if I *remain* without faith in the Lord Jesus; for then I reject the only one remedy in refusing to take Jesus as my substitute, who bore the punishment that He might deliver the sinner from it, and who fulfilled the law of God that He might make the sinner who believes on Him a just one before God.

Further, in Acts xvi. 30, 31, it is written: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

IV *Question.* How may I know that am one of the elect? I often read in the Scriptures about election, and I often hear about election; how may I know that I am chosen one, that I am predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God?

Answer. It is written: "As many as were ordained (ie, appointed) to eternal life believed." - Acts xiii. 48. The question therefore simply is this: Do I believe in the Lord Jesus? Do I take Him to be the one whom God declares Him to be; ie, His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased? Do I trust in Him alone, as it regards the salvation of my soul? If so, I am a believer, and I should never have believed, except I had been appointed by God to eternal life - except I had been made by God to be a vessel of mercy. Therefore the matter is a very simply one: if I believe in the Lord Jesus, I am a chosen one - I have ben appointed to eternal life.

Again, in Rom. Viii. 29, 30, it is written: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called' and whom He called, them He also justified' and whom He justified, them He also glorified." How are we justified, or constituted just ones before God? By faith in the Lord Jesus—Rom. lii. 20-26. Therefore if I believe in the Lord Jesus, it follows (on account of the inseparable connection of all the precious things spoken of in these two verses) that I have been foreknown by God, that I have been predestinated by Him to be conformed to the image of His Son, that I have been called, that I have been justified, and that in the sight of God I am already as good as glorified, though I am not as yet in the actual possession and enjoyment of the glory.

The reason why persons who renounce confidence in their own goodness for salvation, and who only trust in the merits and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, do not know that they are the children of God, that their sins are forgiven, and that they shall be saved, generally arises from one of these things:

1. They do not know the simplicity of the gospel; viz, they do not know that simply through faith in the Lord Jesus, without the merit of works, we have the right, if we believe in the Lord Jesus, to appropriate to ourselves what God says of those who do believe, even that they are the children of God, that they are born again, that their sins are forgiven, that they shall not perish, and that they belong to the elect. Or,
2. They seek to settle it erroneously by their feelings. Or,
3. They wait for some powerful impulse, or a dream, or something like a voice from heaven to assure them of it, or for some passage being in a powerful way applied to their mind to assure them of it. Or,
4. Because they are living in sin.

Should the last be the case, then, however correctly we may understand the gospel, however much we may desire by the Holy Scriptures alone to settle these questions; yea, however much in former times we may have enjoyed the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, or of our being the children of God, or that we shall be saved: in such a state of heart all peace would be gone, and would not return as long as we live in sin. There may be found much weakness and many infirmities, even in the believer who has assurance about these points; but the Holy Ghost does not comfort us, if we habitually indulge in those things which we know to be contrary to the mind of God. An upright, honest heart is of the utmost importance in all divine things, and especially with reference to the assurance about our standing before God.

In conclusion, I request you affectionately, esteemed reader, to ask yourself, How is it with me? If you are upright before God, what have you to say regarding yourself? Do you live in utter carelessness, and do you not think at all about eternity and the preparation for it? Of, do you think, I am yet young, and there is time enough when I am old, or when I am brought to my death-bed.

Dear reader, I beseech you, do not allow yourself to be deceived by the devil. I have no earthly advantage in warning you. The love of Christ constrains me. In love to the Lord, for what He has done for my own soul, I write this and other publications, that in my feeble measure I may do what I can to benefit my fellow-sinners or lend a helping hand to my fellow-believers. And thus it comes that this little book falls into your hands. Lay therefore to heart, dear reader, what I have said in love, and that is, if you postpone to care about your soul, when you are old, or when you are brought to your death-bed, it may be too late. You do not know that you will live till you are old, you do not know you will ever be laid on a death-bed. Ah! be not deceived by Satan. Perhaps you say, - I am not so bad as others; I hope to be saved because I have lived an upright and moral life. Dear reader, in this way no one can be counted righteous before God. However much this may commend you to your fellow-men, in the sight of God you are not righteous, but are a sinner. Hear what God saith by the Apostle Paul: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

- Rom. lii. 19, 20. this portion of the Holy Scripture shows plainly that we cannot be justified before God through our own works, or by seeking to fulfil the law of God. And in order that you may see, dear reader, that you are not excepted, but that you also are a sinner, and therefore deserve punishment, hear what God says with reference to all men, as long as they are in their natural state, as long as they do not believe in the Lord Jesus. It is written in Rom. lii. 10-12: "There is none righteous; no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good: no, not one."

Perhaps you say, God will not deal severely with me. He is a merciful God, and He knows that we all have our infirmities and things to hinder us. Know, dear reader, that if God at any time would not have been severe - viz, if God at any time could have been less holy and just than merciful and loving and gracious - He would have been so when His *only begotten Son*, whom He loved with *infinite love*, who had been at *all times obedient*, was on the point of suffering punishment for us. He cried to God, but there was no answer. Why? Because God is *holy*. Either He had to punish *us* or *Him* as our Substitute. See Ps. Xxii. 1-6, particularly ver. 3. Be not deceived by man, nor by your *fallen* reason, which is at enmity with God since the fall of Adam, nor be deceived by Satan. I entreat you to ask God to show you that you are a sinner, and ask Him to give you faith in the Lord Jesus. I also ask you once more to read this little book with attention, and to ponder the portions of the Holy Scripture which have been referred to.

Behold! What manner of Love

A sermon preached by George Müller at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday evening, April 11th, 1897.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." I John iii 1-3

Because we need again and again to be reminded of the truth contained in these verses, God directs our especial attention to this little portion by prefixing the word, "Behold"! As if He meant to say, "My dear children, the whole of the revealed will of God, the whole of the Holy Scriptures, which I put into your hands, is of importance to be considered, to be pondered and to be read from time to time; but there are certain portions which, by reason of your spiritual infirmity and by reason of the difficulties in which you find yourselves spiritually whilst passing through this vale of tears, you need especially to read from time to time, you need especially to ponder from time to time; and therefore, by reason of your weakness, I direct your attention to such portions."

Now, then, let us ponder, particularly ponder, the truth contained in this little statement made in these three verses. "Behold!" "Look at it carefully, ponder it, pray over it again and again, lay it to heart yet more and more than, up to the present, you have been doing," our Father would say to us! "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." That is the especial point to which, in the first place, our attention is directed. If God had forgiven us, so that punishment had not come on us on account of our numberless transgressions, and had done no more, this would have been wondrous grace; but He has done far, *far*, FAR more than this. And therefore it is stated, "What manner of love." The greatness of it, that not only has the Lord passed by our numberless transgressions, and forgiven every one of them, so that we shall not be dealt with according to the thousandth part of the sins of which we have been guilty - nay, not concerning one single sin even, in action, in word, or in thought - but that He makes us His own children, takes us into the Heavenly Family. We, who are by nature rebels against Him, and despise His love, and care not in the least about Him, and manifest this entire dislike and disregard of God day by day by going our own way, doing the things which are hateful to Him - we are not only forgiven, not only shall not be punished for one single sin, out of the many ten thousands of sins of which we have been guilty, in action, or word, or thought, or feeling, or desire, or inclination, but are made His own children, taken into His family, and that not merely in name, but in reality. By the power of the Holy Spirit, through belief in the Gospel, He regenerates us, makes us a new creation in Christ, makes us His very own children. Not merely calls us so, but makes us His very own children. Gives us spiritual life, heavenly life, and thus makes us His very own children.

That is the wondrous grace which we should ponder. That is what God calls upon us to ponder, not to pass by lightly, not to think little about, but to think very, very, very much of, and never let pass out of our mind till we at last get home to glory! This is the "manner of love," the kind of love which "the Father hath bestowed upon us." O Lord! Help us to ponder it a thousand times more than as yet we have pondered it. O Lord! Help us, by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, to lay it to heart; and grant that, through the consideration of it, through praying over it, through laying it far more

abundantly to heart than we have hitherto done, our hearts may be filled with love to Thee and with gratitude in a way in which as yet has not been the case! O grant it to be even so, for Jesus Christ's sake, we entreat Thee.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” Now, here is a good practical point. “Bestowed upon us;” and to be able to say, “Bestowed upon me.” That is what I, by the grace of God, am able to say. That is what, by the grace of God, many scores here present are able to say. But is everyone able to say it? This is what I desire, this is what I pray that God would grant to everyone here present, that they shall each be able to say, “Hath bestowed on me.” O how happy this would make us, how heavenly-minded it would make us, how dead to the world it would make us! And in a little degree it would make us more Christ-like than as yet we have been! “Bestowed upon us.” That we sinners, such as we are, rebellious sinners, as we are by nature, should be called the sons of God – more literally and correctly the children of God, for it is a blessing bestowed not merely upon male believers, but on female believers, upon all who love the Lord Jesus, and trust in Him for the salvation of their souls! Therefore, that we should be called the children of God. O precious! Unspeakably blessed this, that we belong to the Heavenly Family!

By nature every one of us are just as the Jews were, to whom the Lord Jesus said on one occasion, “Your father is the devil” – “for his works you do; you act according to his mind, you act according to your father the devil.” Now, this was not merely true about the Israelites, to whom the Lord was speaking; but it is true regarding us, as we are not believers in the Lord Jesus. We may call ourselves children of God, and we may call God our Father, but it is not true so long as we are not trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls; the moment, however, we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, however long, however much we have lived in sin, and however varied our sins, however great they may have been, all is forgiven, we are regenerated through the reception of the Gospel, born again, and verily then are the children of God, and belong to the Heavenly Family!

Then the Holy Ghost by the Apostle adds, “Therefore the world knows us not because it knew Him not.” The children are not known because the Father is not known. As long as persons are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they do not know the children of God as children of God! They may know their name, they may know their occupation, they may know where they live, how they are dressed, and such like things which belong to the outward man, and which belong to this present time; but, in so far as they are the children of God, those who themselves are unconverted know not the believers in Jesus, and the reason is given to us here, “Because they know not the Father” of the children. They know not God Almighty and the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore they do not really and truly know the children of God as children of God. The divine life cannot be discerned by the ungodly.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God”; “Beloved, now we are the children of God,” – for the same alteration is here to be made. “Now!” This little word, “now,” is especially to be considered, to be laid hold of, and to be greatly pondered. It means this, while yet in the body - that is, while still in weakness, beset with many infirmities in many regards, and very ignorant in that state of weakness and helplessness in which to a greater or less degree are all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ – nevertheless we are children of God; for though we are not all like John, who wrote this epistle, or like Paul, or like Peter, yet, notwithstanding all our many infirmities and weaknesses and failures and shortcomings, as assuredly as we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, we are already, even while yet in the body, really and truly the children of God! A precious truth is this! And on this little word, “now,” we have to lay hold by faith, to ponder it in our hearts again and again and again, and not to let it go, nor to suppose that we only become children of God when we die, or when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

Nay, now already are we the children of God. This, as you all at once see, even the youngest of believers, implies that we have a Father in heaven, and that this our Father in Heaven is none other than God Almighty – the God who can do everything, to Whom nothing is impossible. See how precious this is. Our Father can do everything! Therefore, He is infinitely wise; He is infinitely rich; He is infinitely mighty; and His heart is full of infinite love to the weakest and feeblest of the children of God. Therefore, suppose I have pain as to the body, let me go to my Heavenly Father, and speak in all child-like simplicity about it, and ask Him, if it be for His glory and for my real good, and profit, and blessing, that He would graciously be pleased either to entirely remove or else to mitigate the pain, or, while it is necessary that it should last, that He would be pleased to sustain me under it that I may not be overcome by it, and especially that I may not fret, and complain, and murmur, but take it out of His loving hand as a blessing bestowed upon me, which in the end must prove good for me.

If we are in family trial, we should say to ourselves, “This family trial is not only very heavy for me to bear, but it will prove too much if I myself have to bear it; I will commit the matter into the hands of my Heavenly Father, and ask Him that He would be graciously pleased to remove the trial, if it be for His honour and glory and for my real blessing.” He is able to do it, for He can do everything, and He has proved the depth of His love in not sparing His only-begotten Son, but delivering Him up for us all.

Then, again, persons in places, or in businesses, or carrying on a profession, find difficulties connected with their trade, connected with their business, connected with their profession. Now, the great point is not to carry the burden

ourselves, but to cast it upon the Lord. He is willing to sustain us, willing to help us; and, in doing so, we pass peacefully and quietly through life, we are not inclined to fret, to complain, to murmur, and to be dissatisfied with the dealings of God with us, if we cast the burden upon Him, and not attempt to carry it ourselves! And this is just what we should do; and this is just one of the many reasons why it is stated here by the Holy Spirit, "Now are we the children of God" – that is, while yet in the body, while yet surrounded by trial and difficulty, while yet finding that conflict is more or less our lot. O this little precious word, "NOW." It contains a vast deal of deeply instructive, instructing truth.

Again, we have now the spiritual conflict, our natural evil tendencies still are in us, though we are regenerated. The old nature is not removed; the old nature remains in us, just as it was before our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true we are regenerated, we are born again; it is true we have spiritual life – but it is also true that the old nature is not dead; the old nature still is in us, and can only be kept down by prayer and meditation and pondering the Word of God, and exercising faith continually. And therefore when trials come with regard to the old, evil, corrupt nature in us, we should spread the matter in all simplicity before God, and say, "My Heavenly Father, I have no strength in myself; but there is almighty power with Thee, and Thine heart is full of love to me, and Thou hast proved Thy wondrous love to me by bringing me to Jesus, and by giving Jesus for me, a poor, miserable, guilty sinner. Now help me in this my spiritual conflict. I let me not be over powered by this subtlety of the devil, and on account of my spiritual weakness. O help me! Help me! Help me!" What shall we find? The Lord is willing to help us! The Lord is willing to help us!!

I assure my young brethren and sisters in Christ how He has helped me, now for seventy-one years and five months, times without number, and particularly at the beginning of the divine life in me. On account of the evil habits that I had contracted as an unconverted young man, the ungodly way in which I had been living up to the end of the twentieth year of my life, I found it extremely difficult, though really a child of God and though hating sin and loving holiness, to overcome those evil tendencies which I had contracted.

The appearance was, "O it will never be different, and my prayer will never be answered." But by the grace of God I have rolled my burden on Him, and come to Him again and again. Thus by little and little it came about – and it was by little and little only; it took some time – that these natural tendencies were overcome, and God helped me. I mention this particularly for the comfort and encouragement of young, recently converted believers in Christ not to despair, but to expect help from God, for He is able and willing to help them. Never, never, so long as we go to the Lord in our weakness and helplessness, shall we be overpowered; and just because we are the children of God now, therefore the glory will be our portion at last.

It is not that we become children of God when this life is over; nay, while we are yet in the body, while we are yet here on earth, while we are yet in great weakness and helplessness and great ignorance concerning many things, and while the devil has power over us, while he is not yet cast into the bottomless pit – even now we are the children of God, and shall have help from God just as we need. O how comforting is this word. Therefore let us continually ponder it, and not lose sight of it.

"Beloved now" – in weakness; "now," while the devil has yet so much power; "now," while in such great ignorance – "are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Though we are not children of God, and, as such, have many privileges and may go continually to God for counsel, for advice, for help, for strength, for deliverance out of difficulties, for being supplied temporally and spiritually according to our need, yet with all this, great as the privileges are which already we enjoy, they are but little in comparison with what we shall have hereafter. Therefore, we have to ponder also this, that while, on one hand, this word "now" should never be lost sight of, yet on the other hand we should not forget what is written here, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

And what is it that will appear hereafter? What is it that I, poor, worthless worm that I am, shall have hereafter? What is it that I, an ignorant one, shall know hereafter? What is it that in me, a weak one, and an erring one, and a falling one, shall be found hereafter? O this is a deeply important thought. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be" – it is not yet manifested what we shall be. O how will it be as to the body? How will it be as to the soul? How will it be as to our knowledge? How will it be as to our spiritual power? How will it be as to our service for the Lord? O how will it be in every way? An eternal blessing shall be granted to us, henceforth, for ever!

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." When Jesus shall appear we shall be like Him – like Him as to His glorified Body, which He has had since His resurrection. Now, any of us who are often in pain as to the body, or finding their weakness and infirmity ever reminding them of their not yet being at home, and not yet having obtained the glorified body, O how precious the consideration that there is a day coming when there will not be found the least particle of uneasiness, nor of pain and suffering and weakness and helplessness, for we shall have a glorified body, exactly such a body as the Lord Jesus Christ has had since His own resurrection. A precious, bright, glorious prospect is this!

And in this body, because it will be such a body as the Lord Jesus Christ has had since His resurrection, we shall know nothing of weariness. At present, we may be able joyfully and gladly to work eight, ten, or twelve hours, sometimes fourteen, or even sixteen hours a day, but at last the weakness comes by reason of yet being in the body of humiliation, and not in the glorified body. But, then, there will be four and twenty hours' work hereafter, and the next day the same, and the next day the same; and thus seven times four and twenty hours every week the ability to work; and thirty days every month the whole day able to work. And thus it will go on, month after month, year after year, one hundred years after the other, one thousand years after the other, one million years after the other, and so throughout eternity. Work, work, work! Constant work to the glory of God in this our glorified body! O what bright, blessed, glorious prospects are these, if the heart enter into them. O how we are gladdened by the consideration of working throughout eternity for God without the least particle of weakness, weariness, and suffering!

But this is only one part of it. The other part is this. We shall be perfectly holy as the Lord Jesus Christ was during the thirty-three years and a half that He was on earth! Never a particle of wrong found in anything that He did, never a particle contrary to the mind of God in anything that He said; never a particle found in all His thoughts, in all His desires, in all His wishes, contrary to the mind of God. Perfectly in conformity to the mind of God everything was found during the whole time that the blessed Saviour was here on earth! And thus it will be with us. We weak ones, feeble ones, shall not be always weak ones, feeble ones, but holy ones, spotless ones, pure ones, lovely ones. Yes, lovely ones! O how lovely! Because the comeliness of Christ is put on us! O how precious these words are; and O, if we bore them more in mind, if we entered into them, how the heart would be full of peace and joy all the day long and every day.

Now, it is on account of this that the statement is made, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." We shall be like Him! Notice the reason why! "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!" More correctly, "For we shall see Him even as He is." That is, we shall perfectly know the Lord Jesus Christ: in all His work and all His offices, not merely know Him as our Judge. In that way the ungodly will have to become acquainted with Him. Every human being, if they are not believers in Christ, will know Him as their Judge, but we shall know Him as our Saviour, as our Brother, as our Friend, as our Husband, as our Bridegroom.

In every one of the offices which He sustains for the benefit of the Church of God we shall know Him; and, just in proportion as we know the Lord now, we are conformed to Him, we become more and more like Him, even while we are yet in the body. The more acquainted we are with the Lord Jesus Christ, the more are we like Him; and then in the glory we shall know perfectly that Blessed One, and we shall perfectly be like Him! What a bright and blessed prospect this is! So that not only without weakness and weariness, pain and suffering, will our service be throughout all eternity, but completely according to the mind of God, completely in the same spirit in which the Lord Jesus Christ was working while in the body here on earth! Precious, bright, glorious prospects are ours! It is just because the world is so ignorant, so completely ignorant, about all the glorious things which are the portion of the believer in Christ that they care not about the things of God; for were it known what really is the blessed position and portion of a child of God, everybody would seek to know Him, everybody would care about Him, everybody would believe on Him.

Now the last point, "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." First of all, as to the somewhat more correct literal meaning, "Every man" – that is, "everyone" – "that hath this hope in Him." The meaning is not, "Has this hope in himself." That is not the meaning of it; but "has this hope regarding the Lord Jesus Christ," that, through faith in Him, he will be perfectly like Christ in heaven. "Everyone that hath this hope in Him, or regarding Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." That is, as in every way truth has the tendency to increase holiness, so here we repeat again the statement. Whosoever has this hope regarding the Lord Jesus, to be made like Him in body and soul; everyone who has this hope regarding Him purifieth himself. It has a tendency to make us increasingly holy, for just as we become acquainted with Christ, and see what God has given us in Him, the more we know of this clearly, distinctly, minutely, and the more fully is holiness increased in us, so that we shall be satisfied with nothing short of this, that we may continually become more and more Christ-like.

We do not attain to it to the full while we are in the body; yet this will be our aim more and more, more and more, more and more to be like Christ. We are not satisfied with this, that we have power over our natural, gross sins; we are not satisfied with this, but only that in spirit, in mind, more and more, we are Christ-like, gentle and loving. O how increasingly we seek to attain to this; earnestly desiring it more and more; in every way seeking to become like Christ. And though to the full it will never be attained to while in the body, yet it is impossible to say to what a degree we may, even while in the body, become Christ-like.

Now, let this be the great lesson that we learn this evening, that because we are now already children of God, blessing, wonderful blessing, is to be obtained from our Heavenly Father; and that, by reason of the prospect we have before us, it is impossible to say to what a degree we may not become Christ-like. Now, will you who are not believers in Christ always continue in the way in which you have been going on hitherto? Shall there be no alteration? If you continue on the broad way, final destruction will be your portion! Do you long to spend a happy eternity together with the Lord in heaven? O what delight it will be to many at the last to see not one of all who are present here lacking in heaven!

This is a personal interest I have in your spiritual welfare, and out of love to your soul, that I long to meet you in heaven; and O how it would increase our joy and delight in heaven at last to find not one lacking, to find that this our little meditation on the evening of the 11th of April 1897, was not in vain. O how precious to find it thus at the last! And now, is there anyone present who says, "I will yet have the world; I will yet seek to enjoy the world?" You will not be happy by this determination; be quite sure of that. O, I tried your ways for twenty years and five weeks, and all that ever I got was disappointment and increased guilt on the conscience. But when I found Jesus there came real happiness. O such happiness as I cannot describe. That was in the beginning of November, 1825, and I have felt it ever since – only with this difference, that the happiness increased more and more, more and more.

And that is what God is willing to give to you; for I suppose there is not a greater sinner here present than I was, though but twenty years of age, yet God bestowed this wondrous blessing on me; and what He did for me, and what He did for Paul, and what He did for other sinners, He is willing to do for anyone else.

Therefore, O let it be Christ whom you choose, and not the world any longer; for the world never will prove real, but, if continued in, will bring damnation, and only damnation. God grant His blessing, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Christ, the Refuge of Sinners

A sermon preached at Kensington Baptist Chapel, Stapleton Road, Bristol, on Sunday morning, March 28th 1897, on the occasion of the Chapel anniversary.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." - 1 Tim i., 15

In the first part of this statement - "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" - it is recorded that it is a "faithful saying" - not a questionable saying, or one that is exposed to the shadow of a doubt! We, who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, should make it habitually our business to show by our life and love for God that we believe implicitly in the truth of the statement that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners! Therefore, our business is to be faithful witnesses for the truth of the Gospel!

It is next stated that "it is worthy of all acceptation." It is worthy, therefore, to be received by us; it is our duty to receive this statement that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now what do we say regarding this? Do we individually all of us set our seal to this by receiving it implicitly? There are very many here at present who do so. I question not that there are hundreds here present who do so - who have received this statement of God's Holy Spirit that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! But my heart's desire and prayer is that every one of you, without exception, may receive this statement. There is no other Saviour but Jesus Christ, and we must receive this truth into our hearts. There is no other way regarding the salvation of our souls but through Him! O let us lay this to heart!

And then we have to consider that "He came into the world," not that He was born into the world! This is particularly to be noticed. If it had been stated that He was born into the world, it would have been true so far as regards His human nature. Mary was His mother according to His human nature; but the divinity of our Lord Jesus is referred to here. Our Saviour was really and truly a man as much as we are; but He was really and truly God as God the Father. It would have been quite true if it had been stated that He was born into the world to save sinners. But here, however, the divinity of our Lord is pointed out to us! He is the Creator of everything that exists; the Builder, the Upholder, of everything that exists. But as the divinity of our blessed Lord is here referred to, it was necessary that He should be really and truly divine as the Father of our souls! That He should be human was necessary in order that, in our form and state, He might fulfil the law of God which we have broken times without number, and thus work out the righteousness in which we can now find ourselves, but which by nature we cannot of ourselves obtain, for we have nothing of our own. Of our own righteousness we cannot be accepted by God! In the Word of God it is compared to filthy rags. By God's love, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to all those who trust in Him for salvation; and solely on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, poor sinners - old and young - male and female - rich and poor - educated or uneducated - any and everyone trusting alone in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation shall be accepted!

Now, it was necessary that He should be human in order that, as a human being, born under the law, He should fulfil the law of God which we have broken times without number, by action, by word, by thought, by feeling, by desire, by purpose, and by inclination! But the righteousness of Christ shall be put to our account - shall be reckoned to our account! We shall ourselves be considered as if we had fulfilled the law of God, if we put our trust in Christ!

Further, it was necessary that He should be really and truly human in order that our sin might be punished in the person of the substitute - that punishment might actually be borne by the person who was to be our substitute - even the Man

Christ Jesus! And therefore the substitute, in order to make a real atonement for our sins, must bear this punishment, in our room and stead.

But this is only one side of the truth. The other side of the truth is this; He was truly divine as the Father; and it was necessary to give value to the righteousness entrusted to Him and imputed to us, and also to give value to the atonement, that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hung upon the cross and shed His blood for the remission of our sins! A mere human being might have been crucified; but this human being would merely have been punished himself through the death of crucifixion. This, however, would not have given value to the blood that was shed. It must be the blood of the God-man, Christ Jesus! This very blood which was shed is called the "blood of God" - for He was truly God as well as man - was shed for the remission of our sins; and it was just this which gave the value to the blood, for it was to be efficacious in the salvation not merely of one sinner, nor a thousand, nor a million poor sin-sick souls; but an innumerable company were to be saved by this blood - the blood of that blessed Jesus who took our sins - my sins, your sins - upon Him. Therefore the blood, to be of value, must be the blood of the God-man, Christ Jesus! This is the valuable part - the all-important fact to be remembered by us! - Christ's blood can save us from all sin! And we can only be saved through Him who shed His precious blood for our ransom and regeneration!

And now, dear friends, how precious is this thought! Yes, how precious! The law has been fulfilled! I am a poor, wicked, hell-deserving sinner - you, and I, too, are poor miserable sinners under the law; yet, if you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, God will accept and receive you through the righteousness of Christ which is put to your credit, reckoned to your account, imputed to you!

The Lord Jesus Christ has made an atonement for every one of our numberless transgressions, for all our sinful ways, sinful words, wicked thoughts! That blessed, precious, adorable, loving Saviour has made an atonement for every one of our sinful words as well as sinful actions! Yes! He has made an atonement! And not only was this atonement to be for every one of our sinful thoughts, unholy desires, ungodly wishes and inclinations, but the Lord Jesus Christ made the atonement to the full! And thus it comes that the poor sinner is saved! O How precious! How comforting to our sin-sick souls!

Now, the next point that we have especially to consider is this: He came into the world to save SINNERS! Yes, my dear friends, sinners! It does not say that He came into the world to save EXCELLENT people, or those who are very good, or those who are only moderate sinners! Then I must go to hell, for I was a great sinner for the first twenty years of my life. For several years I was pursuing the pleasures of the world - the vanities of the world - the vices of the world! These were what I followed! And yet I went to the University to study for a clergyman! Yes! that was the intention - to make me a clergyman. I attended the Classical Schools; and for nine years after I entered the University, and attended the examinations to become a clergyman - I say for nine years, from the time that I was ten and a half till I was nineteen and a half - and still preparing for a clergyman, I was living far from God! For six years - from the time that I was fourteen till I was twenty years of age - I never read one single chapter of the Bible - not one single verse! I read the Hebrew and the Greek New Testament, and had the Bible in my own language, but I never read it!

This was the state in which God found me! There was nothing for me but hell - nothing but hell! I knew nothing of that wondrous cross until God opened my eyes, when I was twenty years and five months old, and showed me what a wicked young man I was, and that I was deserving of nothing but hell! But, blessed be His Name, He also showed me from this precious Book that even such a wicked, hell-deserving sinner as I was could be saved from my sins through the blood of Christ and through the atonement which had been made for poor sinners!

Now, I had not your privileges. I had never in my early life heard the Gospel till I was twenty years and five months of age! I had never heard of a real trusting Christian in my life! No doubt there were many; but I had never heard or seen one! And yet I was one of a number of students in the University who were preparing to become clergymen!

About this time I was led to a little prayer meeting which was held in the house of a tradesman. There were about a dozen or fifteen citizens in the room; and here I, for the first time, heard of Christ. I entered the house of this tradesman as dead in trespasses and sins, and as utterly reckless and careless of divine things as any person in existence. I came away from that little prayer meeting a happy young man - a happy believer in Christ! There were at this time twelve hundred and sixty students in the University; but only three of them were believers in Christ, and I became the fourth! This was the state of things in which I was found when I attended that little prayer meeting, and where for the first time I heard the name of Jesus! Merry company - worldly company - was all that I cared about. I met with nothing but disappointment. Instead of finding happiness in these things, I met with nothing but disappointment.

At last I thought I would travel a great deal and find if that would make me happier. God led me. I travelled for forty-three days in succession - day by day for forty-three days; and I saw some of the most beautiful scenery that is to be found under the canopy of heaven. After the lapse of several weeks, I become so sick and tired and surfeited with travelling that I could pass the most beautiful scenery without looking at it.

But three weeks after I had found Jesus in this little prayer meeting I became a truly happy man; and I have had true, real happiness now for seventy-one years and five months!

This real, true happiness, my friends, I desire for everyone of you who is without it; and it is for that reason that I am standing here this morning to bear witness for the Lord Jesus Christ! How many of you have this real, true happiness which I have found in the Lord Jesus Christ?

When I came home from that little prayer meeting - now more than seventy years ago - I found myself lying peacefully on my bed blessing and praising God for what He had been doing for me! No believer I conversed with; no-one said to me, "Now, mind! you must give up the card-table, and the theatre, and the ballroom, and all those evil ways in which you have been going on." No! but God had given me spiritual life - spiritual instincts - spiritual desires. But I said to myself on that first evening after I came from that little prayer meeting, "I shall never go any more to the ballroom, or play cards." And I have never been to the ballroom or played cards since. The whole life became different. All at once it became different, because now I was no longer dead in trespasses and in sins. I had now obtained spiritual life, and joyfully and gladly surrendered myself to God, Who had done so much, so very much, for me. And thus I became unspeakably happy.

And I have, my dear friends, been most unspeakably happy ever since, which is now for seventy-one years and five months.

O what a glorious idea - how simple! how precious! - that through the Gospel of glad tidings preached to us, and coming to, and trusting alone in Jesus, sinners - great sinners, old sinners - may be saved!

After the Apostle had been making this statement that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," he says "Of whom I am chief!" This is not a mere formal expression; it is what St Paul meant; he considered himself a very great sinner - the greatest sinner: and Paul called himself the chief of sinners! This is not the only passage in which he refers to himself; but, again and again, in his Epistles and in the Acts of the Apostles, he speaks of himself as a very great sinner.

Then comes the next verse which follows the text: "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

I am now ninety-one years and six months of age, with the prospect of heaven - very near heaven - very near the end of my earthly pilgrimage! Still I am able to work every day, and all the day long. I preach five or six times a week besides; and am able to do it! But although in my ninety-second year, speaking after the manner of men, there is the prospect of being taken away, yet I am unspeakably happy!

And it is unspeakably happy to be able to help one another trusting in Jesus! Never forget that Jesus came to save sinners - such a sinner as I was! But you must accept salvation in God's appointed way. It is through Jesus alone that you can be saved! If sinners in their own way seek to bring themselves to heaven, they will bring themselves to hell! Hell! HELL! Yes, they will bring themselves to hell by their good works - by their own righteousness! Sinners can be alone saved by trusting in Jesus for salvation, for He is Lord! That is, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in showing to Paul - formerly named Saul, the great persecutor - that as the Lord had saved Paul, a great sinner as he was, so our Saviour thereby showed to every sinner under heaven at any time afterwards that no one need despair of the possibility of obtaining forgiveness! This is a most vital and precious truth! "For this cause I obtained mercy!" That means, "I have obtained forgiveness, for this very cause that, in me, the greatest sinner, the chief of sinners, Jesus Christ might show those "all long-suffering." That means, "How much He is now suffering, because what He is ready to do for sinners is not immediately and completely taken advantage of." That certainly does not mean such as are not particularly great sinners. But that He is willing to forgive the greatest sinner. Paul was willing to become a sample - a pattern - so that not a single individual hereafter might have ground for saying, "I am too hardened a sinner! I have lived too long in sin! My sins are too great and too many to bear! I cannot expect forgiveness!" Nothing of the kind! Paul is here given as a sample - a pattern - a specimen - of what God is willing to forgive, and what the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to do in regard to any and every sinner. But that is by "simply trusting in Him" Who has paid the penalty of sin for us by the shedding of His own blood.

O, my friends, how precious! Yes, how precious! Perhaps there is one here present who says, "My mother has wept over me - begged me, with many a tear running down her aged cheeks, to alter my course and become different; but I am a wretched, guilty sinner, and have continued in my sin up to now!" Ah, my friends! Guilty as you may be - though you could stand against the tears of your poor, dear, aged mother, who has wept over you times out of number - yet even you shall be forgiven if you seek for forgiveness through the righteousness and love of the Lord Jesus Christ!

O how precious! Yes, how precious! Saul was forgiven in order that not a single individual under heaven might say, "I am too old - too great a sinner - too hardened - my sins are too many." Nothing of the kind! If you only seek salvation through Jesus Christ, you may obtain mercy. How unspeakably precious!

This brings before us the point that whilst yet in the body we may know that we are forgiven sinners. We may know that God has forgiven us, and reconciled us to Himself. Do all here present enjoy this knowledge of the forgiveness of their sins? This is what I desire regarding everyone here. I have not the shadow of a doubt that there are a vast number here present who do know and enjoy the knowledge of the forgiveness of their sins. But do you all? I have enjoyed the knowledge of the forgiveness of my sins. I have not the least doubt. I am as certain that I shall go to heaven as if I were there already. But I deserve nothing but hell. I am a believer, however; and the Word of God declares that God so loved the world that He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us, so that every believer in Him should have everlasting life - that we might go to heaven. Now, I do believe in Him. Therefore it is certain that I shall be in heaven. The Word of God declares concerning the Lord Jesus that He is the Saviour of sinners; that all who believe and trust in Him for salvation shall obtain the remission of their sins - that is, the forgiveness of their sins. The 43rd verse of the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles states this emphatically: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Therefore I know that my sins will be forgiven through faith in Christ; and that I shall go to heaven if I trust in the Lord Jesus!

Then, again, we may know that our sins are forgiven even whilst we are here. It is not a matter of indifference to us whether we know it or not. It is of vast importance to us that we should have knowledge of this fact even here, for there is no real state of enjoyment in God without knowing that we are accepted in Him - that our sins are blotted out by the atonement which the Lord Jesus has made for us!

And now, my dear friends, I would therefore affectionately press this point upon every one of you who are believers in Christ. If you have not the knowledge that your sins are forgiven, I would earnestly and lovingly entreat you to give yourselves no rest until you know Christ; and if you trust in Christ alone for salvation, then, according to the passage which I have just quoted, it is certain that your sins are forgiven. Therefore, we may have peace in God, and thus be strong in the Lord, for the joy of the Lord is our strength in the proportion in which we are working for, and loving and trusting in, God. We are dead to the world, and to all its evil influences, if we are thoroughly trusting in Him!

O, my dear friends, it is of the utmost importance to us to know that we are forgiven, to know that we have obtained mercy. What says the Apostle? "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first" - in ME, such a great sinner, the Lord Jesus might make a beginning - to show, first, the vastness of His long-suffering - the degree of His long-suffering - the extent of His patience - for all those who should hereafter believe in Him. O! What a comforting thought to a poor heavy-laden sinner! No poor sinner now need despair of salvation - of being forgiven! What a precious thought! O so precious!

Then one word more. Life everlasting! Yes! Life everlasting! An eternity of happiness! A participation in the rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God! Having been washed in the blood of Christ, we are no longer dead in trespasses and sins. We are purified from sin - spiritualised! And O, what a glorious thought: that this spiritual life in us through the gift of the Holy Ghost is everlasting! It is not fully developed yet! It will be fully developed when the Lord takes us to Himself - fully developed through the praise and honour and glory of God! O how precious is this blessing! Every one here present this morning may obtain it! Here is a specimen before you of a guilty image - forgiven, and made a happy man! I have had this happiness now for seventy-one years and five months! And what God did for me, He is willing and ready to do for any and everyone who will accept Christ. O, accept Him now!

I have travelled in forty-two countries in my missionary labours; but I think I may say that of the many millions of human beings with whom I came into contact who were deserving of hell, none of them were so deserving of hell as myself - the greatest sinner! This being so, I can assure you the only way to find acceptance in Christ is to trust in Him for full, complete forgiveness all your life! To every one of you who has not obtained these blessings of which I have been speaking, I have come here this morning as a witness for Christ, for what the blessed Lord did for me He is as willing to do for you. Trust Him; and I am sure you will be happy. Amen.

Counsel to Christians

In leaving home to preach the Word of life, as it may please God to give openings to me, I have it specially on my heart to seek to lend a helping hand to young believers, and to throw out points whereby, in the very outset of the Christian life, they may be helped so to walk, that God may give them to enjoy peace and true happiness, and which may, by His blessing, cause them in the very beginning of their spiritual life to bear fruit to the praise, the honour, and glory of the Lord. I more especially seek to do so, because, for the first four years after my conversion, I made many mistakes about

the things of God, and was far from walking in the road which leads to real joy and happiness in the Lord, and far from being in a position to grow either in grace or knowledge.

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

Four years after I had known the Lord, through the helping hand of an older and more experienced brother I was led into a way whereby I increased more rapidly in knowledge and grace, and was consequently, in some little measure, able to glorify the Lord and to be more useful than before. The great mistake I made at the outset, was neglect of the divine Word, and in consequence of this many things were lacking. Therefore, it is laid upon my heart to impress it upon my younger brethren and sisters, to go from the very outset to the Word of God.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

I now speak more especially to believers; and by this I do not understand those who at sometime or other have had some religious impressions. These may lead to nothing, and therefore there must be something more in order to be children of God. In order to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must be regenerated, must be on the road to heaven and have been "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son." For all this, more is wanted than mere religious impressions. Many persons have these, and are brought no further; but there they remain. It is needful that we should have been brought in a greater or less degree to look upon ourselves as sinners in need of a Saviour. And therefore I ask affectionately, Have we been convinced of this?

I am not speaking of degree. With ten thousand different persons, God may work in ten thousand different ways. I myself had little of this serious, deep conviction of sin at the beginning of my new life, and yet was, I believe, really and truly converted; and from the very beginning there was a marked difference in me. Yet I did see I was a sinner deserving punishment and nothing else. As to the degree of this sorrow, that is quite a different thing. We must, if we are children of God, have been convinced in the light of His word, that we are sinners deserving of punishment, and that the Lord Jesus Christ alone can save.

TRUST IN CHRIST

Then, again, we must be led to trust in Him; for we may have been convinced of sin, and yet have gone no further. If so, we are not on the road to heaven yet. We must have put all our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls.

And all the more do I make these remarks, my beloved friends, because at such a time, when a wave of divine blessing has been passing through the land, and so many have been led to make a profession of faith, many may be trusting in a mere impression, perhaps a conviction, to some extent, of sin. All this is right as far as it goes, but not enough. Such are as yet in the state of which the Lord speaks - "Not far from the kingdom of heaven," and yet not in it. We must have passed from death unto life, ere we are the children of God, and there is no such thing as being a child of God without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This, then, is most important, that we trust in Him; and in Him alone, for the salvation of our souls, and that we have no other hope in the matter of our salvation, than the merits and the intercession of Him, who sits on the right hand of God.

If we have been convinced of sin, and have believed in Him, then, as it is said in Acts x. 43, we have received remission of sin. Then are we the children of God, as in Gal. iii. 26. And, again, it is said that "to as many as received" the Lord Jesus Christ, "to them gave He power to become the sons of God." It is to these poor sinners who have trusted in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of their souls, that I desire particularly to speak. Those alone are they who have the bright blessed prospect of heaven, and who know in their own blessed experience, the joy of the latter part of Rom. viii., or have the glorious confidence of Philippians i. 6, that "He who hath begun a good work will perform it." To you, brother and sister in Christ, I desire to say a few words as to the Christian life.

UPRIGHTNESS.

One of the most deeply important points to the young believer - indeed to all believers - is to aim after uprightness and honesty of heart. We may have a fair amount of prayerfulness, may read the word of God, may be frequently in a place of worship, and yet, with all these things, we lack much, yea all, if we have not uprightness of heart before God. My dear Christian friends, ask yourselves, as before God the Searcher of hearts, before Him who knows everything about you, how it is with you as to this point? Can you stand before Him and say in honesty, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee, and that my desire is not to listen to sin and temptation, and not willingly to go on in anything contrary to Thy mind. I would have nothing that Thou hatest; but, by Thy grace, I am engaged in a warfare against it.

Thou knowest how Thy weak, erring child hates the deeds of darkness, and desires to carry on a warfare daily against these powers."

Do we really seek to walk in this way? Then we shall have part in the blessed words of the Lord Jesus (Matt. xiii. 12), "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

I desire these words to be fixed upon your hearts, because, in looking back on the past fifty years, during which I have known the Lord, I can see the faltering steps with which I began. How weak I was! How ignorant! Even when preaching the Word, how ignorant! Although Christ was in me, the hope of glory, yet I failed again and again. Nevertheless, I made warfare against sin, and sought not to listen to Satan. I experienced, therefore, the truth of these words, "To Him that hath shall be given," and although it was by little and little, yet I did grow. So this evening I say to you, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

But remember, it is added, "But whosoever hath not" - or only appears to have - "from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." Thus, those who do not maintain an upright heart, and who do not walk sincerely before God, shall, for the time, make no progress in the divine life, because the Holy Spirit does not work in such. Therefore it is deeply important to be sincere and honest before Him who knoweth the heart; and then, although we may be weak, yet we shall be helped in the divine life.

I know how much this one thing helped me at the first-honesty and uprightness of heart. And I remember one who was converted at the same time, and whom I met years after, and found he was just the same as at first - he had made no progress whatever; and it was because he was not honest and upright before God.

DENYING UNGODLINESS.

The next deeply important point is this, whatever at the very outset of the divine life is hateful to God, must be given up. Whatever is offensive to Him, must be forsaken. Some say this is only needful regarding glaring sins, but it must be in everything. If the Holy Ghost says "No," the sin must be put aside at once. We must be faithful to Him. This unfaithfulness, this dallying with sin, is hindering the spiritual life of many. I wish to impress it on your hearts, that from the very beginning you should seek to be out-and-out Christians.

With many who set out in the divine life, the question is, "How much of the world can I keep, and yet get to heaven?" "How much can I enjoy of this world, and yet be saved?" There may be such a thing as being saved under such circumstances; but it is being saved "as by fire;" and none of God's children should be content to be saved as by fire.

Better far that you and I were to be at once taken home to the Lord, than that we should be satisfied with being saved ourselves, and still seeking to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of this world as much as possible; trying how much we can make of both worlds. This is the most wretched possible thing for us to do. Under such circumstances you will have just religion enough to make you a miserable Christian; a happy Christian you can never be while living so.

There are no happy children who are not also holy children. The Father says, "Let *that* mind be also found in you which was found in Him." And what was the life of the Lord Jesus? "Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." His life was one single sacrifice to God, one single act of obedience to God. Now, we are left here to be representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. This great honour He has bestowed upon us here. He might bring us to know Him, and then take us away at once to be with Him, as with the thief on the cross; but, as you all know, this is not His ordinary way. He brings us to Himself, in order that we may bring honour to His name, and glorify Him on this earth; and also, that we may practically and experimentally be prepared for the glory that awaits us above; and that each of us may have the honour of winning souls for Him, and be helpful to the children of God: in short, that we should bear fruit.

FRUITFULNESS.

Well, this being the case - that we are left here to bring glory to His name - our heavenly Father expects us to live in separation from the world; and He does expect us not to go on in a sinful state. If we seek it, He will help us to be holy children, in order that we may be useful. Let us all aim after this. We should not be satisfied without bearing fruit, but should seek to be out-and-out for God.

There is such a thing as bearing much fruit - sixty or even a hundred-fold. Nor should you and I be content with thirty-fold, without seeking to bring forth sixty or a hundred-fold. Ought we not in earnest longing to pray that we may be permitted to bear fruit to the praise, honour, and glory of God?

But in order to this, there is nothing better than at once, in the very outset of the divine life, to aim after being out-and-out Christians. And never should any child of God harbour such a thought as this, "How much can I enjoy this world,

and yet get to heaven at last? Is it possible for me by going to a ball, and attending a concert, or going to the theatre now and then, at last to get to heaven?" Oh! wretched, miserable state for a child of God to be in. Away with it! Be it far from any of those whom God has left on earth as witnesses for His glory.

I am here a pilgrim and a stranger, and far be it from me so, to set my heart on this earth. I am going to heaven; this is not my place. As a child of God I know that no place is my place save that upon which I can ask my Father's blessing. How could I ask His blessing in the theatre? How could I ask God to bless me in the whirl of the ballroom, or at the card-table or in the noisy tavern? Away with all of them; they are the sinful pleasures of this evil world.

LIVING CHRIST.

So, my beloved younger brethren and sisters in Christ at the very outset of your spiritual life say boldly "I will be, by the grace of God, an out-and-out Christian, living for God. I will, by His grace, seek to bear fruit to His glory and honour. I will, by His grace, seek to have done with this sinful world; I will, by His grace, strive so to live, that a line of demarcation shall be clearly seen between me and the world, and that the people of the world shall seek to have no intercourse with me, seeing that I do not belong to them, but that I belong to the kingdom of heaven."

That is what we have to aim after; and what would be the result? Not only should we be holy men and women, but also happy men and women, in whom God delights; and we should also be useful men and women. The world ought to say of each of us, "If ever there was a Christian, it is surely that man or that woman." "Surely that man or woman has been with Jesus." If the world does not say that of us, there is something wanting. We ought to be ashamed, if anyone is able to live three or four days in the house with us, without finding out that we are not of the world, but are born again.

And that is not the only use of thus bearing testimony; it will also be very helpful to our brethren in the Lord.

Let me insist particularly, my beloved brethren and sisters, but especially you, my younger brethren and sisters, on this point - that of being out-and-out for God in the very outset. We must be opposed to the world, and the flesh, and entirely for Christ. This is the purpose for which we are left in the world. I do not say we are to give up our ordinary business. I have seen much of this; there is often too much readiness in giving up the earthly business, and it is often done hastily. I have found that men may greatly glorify God in their earthly business, and I do not say that they are to forsake that business in order to become evangelists, missionaries, district visitors, tract distributors, or the like. We may serve and honour Him well whilst occupied with the business of this life. If God does call us, by all means go at once; but do not go unless He calls. We require a special call from God, and even when we think we have received it, let us make it a matter of consideration. Let us prayerfully, quietly, and calmly look to God before taking such a step.

But, again, I say, if there be anything, whatever it may be, and however dear it may be, which is contrary to the divine will, let us give it up at once, and aim after being out-and-out, and decided for God in every way. The result will be increased happiness, joy, and holiness; and our usefulness will increase more and more.

In connection with this, I would especially state that, though we all ought to aim after conformity to the mind of Christ, yet we all more or less fail.

It is deeply important to mark, that all of us are liable to sin, and do sin. If any man come to me, and say, "I do not sin," I would say, "My brother, you are mistaken; perhaps you do not know what sin is, or you do not know your own state." All of us, though not living in sin, are yet liable to sin; if not in acts, yet in words; or if not even in words, yet in feelings or desires. We are all apt to fall short of what we might be and of what we ought to be. What then? Well, we must make confession, and come afresh to the blood of Jesus Christ, and have these sins washed away.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS.

Many children of God err here. As, for instance, when I was first converted, I thought, when I sinned that now it was all over, as I could not be a Christian, or a child of God. Or if not this there was at least a feeling in me, "Before you come to God in prayer, you must seek to be better. What a great mistake! And yet many of God's dear children make this mistake, and if they fall in any way, in acting, speaking, thinking, or desiring, they feel that they cannot approach with confidence.

What ought they to do? Why, at once to make confession to God. They should seek to enter into that gracious promise, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." This is deeply important to us all because the Spirit of God will not work in our hearts if there is guilt. There is therefore no practical power to resist sin, or to walk with God, as long as sin is not cleansed away. And as we are liable to err, more especially our younger brethren and sisters, yet we must not think we are not Christians because we do so-and-so. Let us cast away this thought, and not entertain it for a moment. Only let us be stirred to go afresh to the Lord Jesus Christ, to have the sin put away.

This is where the words of the Lord Jesus come in, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet; but is clean every whit." Remember our position: we are not criminals; we were that, but such is not the case now." We are in the relationship of children. In this new relationship, however, we are apt to defile ourselves; just as a man who takes a bath in the morning, may require to wash his hands or his face throughout the day, and yet his body is clean. So are we, though apt to defile ourselves, yet clean.

But for this defilement we must come afresh, practically and experimentally, to the blood of Christ. If this be neglected, the result will be loss of power and joy. But it is a grievous mistake to stay away from God because we have sinned, and to wait until we are better. We are to come as we are, to obtain peace and joy in the Lord.

CONFESSING CHRIST.

The next point is also deeply important, and it is, at the very outset of the divine life we must make a plain, bold confession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Very few things are of greater importance than this. The temptation will be, to keep your new life to yourself: "I can get to heaven without telling." Well, if you do so, you are weak, and will remain weak. It is of great importance, even for the vigour of your own Christian life, to make confession, and come out boldly for Christ at once. The reason is this - people will know that you are on the Lord's side, and will therefore no longer tempt you to act otherwise. They will no longer come with invitations to the theatre, or such and such a ball, or company, of a purely worldly character. You escape all this by open confession. If they know you are the Lord's, and see the line of demarcation between you and the world, they will not seek your company.

I remember when I was converted, I was a student in a large university, where there were twelve hundred and sixty students. Amongst all these there were only three who were known as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; but it was well known what they were; they were "marked men." I joined them, and became a "marked man" instantaneously. But we held out, and soon there were about half-a-dozen united together. We were called fanatics and mystics; and I used to be pointed at by my fellow-students, "There goes the mystic." What of this? In three or four weeks it was all over, and they left me alone. Before my conversion, I had been one of the gayest among them, and was continually at the theatre. If there was a ball, I was there; and in the tavern I was one of the noisiest. But now, looked on as a "marked man," they gave me up as a hopeless case, and ceased to annoy me. Thus I escaped a thousand temptations to which I would otherwise have been exposed. If I had kept back the knowledge of my conversion, would I not have been continually tempted to sin?

This is my own experience, I know the blessed result of thus boldly confessing Christ, and would affectionately press it upon all my brothers and sisters in Jesus. If any here have not yet made this bold confession of their decision for Christ, oh, make it now! It will be of immense service to you.

Again, in doing so, we stand by the side of Christ. He comes forward, and takes His stand by our side, saying, "In weakness thou hast stood for Me; now I will stand by thee;" and thus we reap the benefit in our own souls. We can never have grace and strength by keeping our religion to ourselves. You will never be out-and-out Christians - never be happy Christians - without this confession.

The will of the Lord is that we should be as cities set on a hill, which cannot be hid; or as lights, not placed under a bushel, but set on a lamp-stand, so as to be seen. And, let us aim after this, if it is not the case with us now; and let us be assured, that, when any man aims at keeping his religion to himself, he is going the wrong road. People must know that we are the Lord's, and on His side; and we should not rest satisfied without this. Our duty, remember, is to win souls for Him; and how can we do this, if we hide our light? Although we are neither evangelists, missionaries, Sunday-school teachers, nor visitors, yet God will help us to win souls; therefore, we have to come out boldly for Him.

GROWTH IN CHRIST.

Another deeply important point is this; very frequently the dear children of God, at the very outset of their new life, are immensely discouraged, because they do not feel themselves making the progress they ought to make, or wish to make. They are afraid, because they do not make this progress in knowledge or grace, that they are not Christians. Now, as an encouragement to the dear young brethren and sisters, I would say, be not over-discouraged by this. I do not mean to say we are to rest content without making progress, I only warn you against one of Satan's devices - viz., that when we are failing in any way, he is apt to say to us that we are not Christians; that, after all we have felt, we are only deceiving ourselves. Now, every one of you know well enough whether you are deceiving yourselves or not. You have all of you the witness within you, and you can look up and say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." We may not have the bold faith and triumphant assurance of Peter, or of Paul, but we can say "We do love Thee." And while conscious of our weakness and unworthiness, yet we are also conscious of our faith.

You know very well, for instance, when the child is born, it is not at once a young man. It is a babe; a weak, helpless babe. When it is a week old, you do not expect it to run about. We all know how it takes week after week, and month after month, ere it can so run. So it is in the divine life; you do not at once become young men or women in the Lord Jesus. And if any should come to me after being only three or four weeks in Christ, and complain that he is not full grown, I should say to him, "My dear friend, you are greatly mistaken. I do not expect to see you already become a young man, and far less a father in Christ." There is no such thing as fits and starts in the divine life. As in the natural life it requires some time to attain to manhood, so, in the spiritual life; therefore let them not be discouraged that they have not yet become young men or young women in Christ, and far less that they have not become fathers and mothers in Him.

Let them, I say, not be discouraged, but steadily and quietly go on, living according to the light God has given them. If they are thus walking, it will be unto them according to the promise, "To him that hath, it shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" . For your encouragement, let me give you my own experience.

OLD ENEMIES.

I was, at the beginning of my new life, again and again overcome by my old tendencies. For instance, I had been a habitual liar in former days, and could stand and look people in the face, and deliberately say things that were not true. If any of you have been so, my friends, you know what a terrible thing it is. Well, after my conversion I stated twice things that were not true; but that was a very different thing from habitually telling lies; for with sorrow of heart I confessed it before God, and owned before Him that such and such was not the truth.

Again, I had been a habitual attendant at the theatre; and twice after my conversion, through circumstances, I was drawn in to go to the theatre; but, nevertheless, I was humbled before the Lord, and it was a very different thing from my former habitual attendance.

Soon God delivered me from that also. Therefore I wish to say that no child of God who, by deeds, words, or thoughts, is carried away to sin against God, should give heed to the suggestion of the devil, "There is no reality in your conversion." Rather let us come afresh to the blood of Jesus, which "taketh away all sin." Remember that this blood not only washes away, but also gives us more and more power over sin. By coming frequently, we shall grow in grace and in experience. I may say I have grown somewhat since those days, to which, for your encouragement, I have referred; and what one has done, others may do.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

Another important point is, to seek at Once, or as soon as possible, to unite ourselves to some dear children of God, or to some faithful ministry. Wherever you find Christians, with whom it would be to your profit to mingle, or a ministry likely to feed your soul, go there; only get into some little band of God's children, or disciples, at once. Remember, it will be very helpful to you in your new life.

I am not referring to this or that particular place, but wherever God has cast your lot, and wherever there are dear children of the Lord, go there. Go where the gospel is faithfully set forth, and get united to them, that they may help you as the younger brother or sister. You will find such fellowship very helpful to you. I myself found it of the utmost value.

Shortly after my conversion, there were a few other students led to the Lord, and we used to meet together regularly in my room, and sought to help one another. It was very helpful. But, where practicable, I would advise you to seek out the company of some older and more experienced Christian - one who is really a living gospel Christian - to whom you can speak freely, and from whom you can get much useful advice and counsel. All you older believers may lend a helping hand to your younger brothers and sisters, and thus be a great help to one another.

I have often found that, when led astray by natural tendency, the fellowship of my brother-students was exceedingly helpful, and often brought me into the light again. Especially would I say to all Christians - not merely the younger, but even the older - seek to have some truly spiritual friend, to whom you can run and unbosom yourself, and take sweet counsel together; you will find it to be very helpful in the things of God.

I have much more to say, but will continue the subject on Friday evening, when I will seek to bring before you many other important points.

As most of you know already, the especial object of our meeting is, to continue the subject of last Tuesday evening. On that evening, I sought to lend a helping hand to beloved Christian friends, especially the younger brothers and sisters, who are setting out in the diving life.

As one who for fifty years has known the Lord, and has laboured in word and doctrine, I ought to be able, in some little measure, to lend a helping hand to these younger believers. And, by the grace of God, I can say, I *am* able to lend this helping hand; that is, if God will only condescend to use my own failures, to which I have freely referred, and my experience, as a help to others in walking on the road to heaven, I trust that your coming here will not be in vain. As I already told you, this was the very purpose of my leaving home, that I might help these dear young brethren.

I have already referred to seven different points, which appeared to me to be of great moment. There still remain, however, some other deeply important ones to be considered.

THE MANNER OF READING THE WORD.

One of the most deeply important points is, that of attending to the careful, prayerful reading of, and meditation on the word of God. I would ask your particular attention to one verse in the epistle of Peter (1 Peter ii. 2) where we are especially exhorted by the Holy Ghost, through the apostle, regarding this. For the sake of the connection, let us read the first verse, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

The particular point to which I refer is contained in the second and third verses, "as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word." As growth in the natural life is attained by proper food, so in the spiritual life, if we desire to grow, this growth is only to "be attained through the instrumentality of the word of God. It is not stated here, as some might be very willing to say, "the reading of the Word may be of importance under some circumstances." That you may gain more by reading this tract, or this and that book, is not the statement here; it is "the Word," and nothing else, and, under all circumstances,

STICK TO THE WORD of GOD.

You say that the reading of this tract or that book often does you good; I do not question it at all. Nevertheless, the instrumentality which God has been pleased to appoint and use is that of the Word itself; and just in the measure in which the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ attend to this, they will become strong in the Lord; and in so far as it is neglected, so far will they be weak. There is such a thing as babes being neglected, and what is the consequence? They never become healthy men or women, because of that early neglect.

Perhaps - and it is one of the most hurtful forms of this neglect - they obtain improper food, and therefore do not attain to the full vigour of manhood or womanhood. So with regard to the divine life. It is a most deeply important point, that we obtain right spiritual food at the very beginning of that life. What is that food? It is "the sincere milk of the Word;" that is the proper nourishment for the strengthening of the inner man. Listen, then, my dear brethren and sisters, to this advice with regard to the Word.

CONSECUTIVE READING.

First of all, it is of the utmost moment that we regularly read through the Scripture. We ought not to turn over the Bible, and pick out chapters as we please here and there, but to read it regularly through. We should read carefully and regularly through the Scriptures. I speak advisedly, and as one who has known the blessedness of thus reading the Word for the last forty-six years. I say *forty-six* years, because for the first four years of my Christian life I did not carefully read the word of God. I used to read a tract, or an interesting book; but I knew nothing of the power of the Word. I read next to nothing of it, and the result was, that, though a preacher then, and though I had preached in connection with the establishment again and again, yet I made no progress in the divine life. And why? Just for this reason, that I neglected the word of God.

But it pleased God, through the instrumentality of a beloved Christian brother; then labouring in this very city and neighbourhood, with whom I became acquainted in Devonshire, to rouse in me an earnestness about the Word, and ever since then I have been a lover of it.

Let me, then, press upon you my first point, that of attending regularly to reading through the Scripture. I do not suppose that you *all* need the exhortation: many, I believe, have already done so, but I speak for the benefit of those who have not. To those I say, my dear friends, begin at once. Begin with the Old Testament, and when you have read a chapter or two and are about to leave off, put a mark that you may know where you have left off. I speak in all simplicity, for the benefit of those who may be young in the divine life. The next time you read, begin the New Testament, and again put a mark where you leave off. And thus go on always, whether in the Old or New Testaments, putting in a mark, and reading alternately the Old and the New Testaments. Thus, by little and little, you will read through the whole Bible; and when you have finished, just begin again at the beginning.

THE CONNECTION OF SCRIPTURE.

Why is this so deeply important? Simply that we may see the connection between one book and another of the Bible, and between one chapter and another; If we do not read in this consecutive way, we lose a great part of what God has given to instruct us. Moreover, if we are children of God we should be well acquainted with the whole revealed will of God - the whole of the Word. "All Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable."

And much may be gained by thus carefully reading through the whole will of God. Suppose a rich relative were to die and leave us, perhaps, some land, or houses, or money, should we be content with reading only the clauses that affected us particularly? No, we would be careful to read the whole will right through. How much more, then, in the will of God, ought we to be careful to read it right through, and not merely one and another of the chapters or books.

BENEFIT OF CONSECUTIVE READING.

And this careful reading of the word of God has this advantage, that it keeps us from making a system of doctrines of our own, and from having our own particular favourite views, which is very pernicious. We often are apt to lay too much stress on certain views of the truth which affect us particularly. The will of the Lord is that we should know His whole mind. Again, variety in the things of God is of great moment. And God has been pleased to give us this variety in the highest degree; and the child of God, who follows out this plan, will be able to take an interest in any part of the Word.

Suppose one says, "Let us read in Leviticus." Very well, my brother. Suppose another says, "Let us read in the prophecy of Isaiah." Very well, my brother. And another will say, "Let us read in the gospel according to Matthew." Very well, my brother; I can enjoy them all; and whether it be in the Old Testament, or in the New Testament, whether in the prophets, the gospels, the Acts, or the Epistles, I should welcome it, and be delighted to welcome the reading and study of any part of the divine Word.

A SPECIAL BENEFIT.

And this will be particularly of advantage to us, in case we should become labourers in Christ's vineyard; because, in expounding the Word, we shall be able to begin at the beginning. We shall equally enjoy the reading of the Word, whether of the Old or the New Testament, and shall never get tired of it. I have, as before stated, known the blessedness of this plan for forty-six years, and though I am now nearly seventy years of age, and though I have been for nearly fifty years in the divine life, I can say, by the grace of God, that I more than ever love the word of God and have greater delight than ever in reading it.

And this day, though I have read the Word nearly a hundred times right through, I am as fond as ever of reading the Scripture; I never have got tired of reading it, and this is more especially through reading it regularly, consecutively day by day, and not merely reading a chapter here and there, as my own thoughts might have led me to do.

READING THE WORD PRAYERFULLY.

Again, we should read the Scripture prayerfully, never supposing that we are clever enough, or wise enough, to understand God's Word by our own wisdom. In all our reading of the Scriptures let us seek carefully to have the help of the Holy Spirit; let us ask, for Jesus' sake, that He will enlighten us; He is willing to do it.

I will tell you how it fared with me, at the very first; it may be for your encouragement. It was in the year 1829, when I was living in Hackney, not far from here. My attention had been called to the teaching of the Spirit by a dear brother of experience. "Well," I said, "I will try this plan; and will give myself to the careful reading and meditation of the word of God after prayer, and I will see how much the Spirit is willing to teach me in this way."

AN ILLUSTRATION OF THIS.

I went accordingly to my room, and locked my door, and putting the Bible on a chair, I went down on my knees at the chair. There I remained for several hours in prayer and meditation over the word of God; and I can tell you that I learned more in those three hours which I spent in this way, than I had learned for many months previously. I found the blessing was so great, that all the manuscripts, which I had written down from the lectures of the professors of Divinity in the university that I previously attended, I now considered to be of so little value, that when, soon after, I moved into Devonshire, I did not think them worth the carriage. This was because I now found the Holy Spirit to be a better teacher than professors of Divinity. I obtained the teaching of the divine Spirit, and I cannot tell you the blessedness it was to my own soul as I was praying in the Spirit, and putting my trust in the power of the Spirit as I had never done before.

You cannot, therefore, be surprised at my earnestness in pressing this upon you, when you have heard how precious to my heart it was, and how much it helped me.

MEDITATE ON THE WORD.

But again, it is not enough to have prayerful reading only, but we must also meditate on the Word. As in the instance I have just referred to, kneeling before the chair, I meditated on the Word; not simply reading it, not simply praying over it; all that, but, in addition, pondering over what I had read. This is deeply important. If you merely read the Bible, and no more, it is just like water running in at one side and out at the other. In order to be really benefited by it, we must meditate on it.

Not all of us, of course, can spend many hours, or even one or two hours, each day thus. Our business demands our attention. Yet, however short the time you can afford, give it regularly to reading, prayer, and meditation over the Word, and you will find it well repaid.

MAKE THE MEDITATION PERSONAL.

In connection with this, we should always read and meditate over the word of God, with reference to ourselves and our own heart. This is deeply important, and I cannot press it too earnestly upon you. We are apt often to read the Word with reference to others. Parents read it in reference to their children, children for their parents, evangelists read it for their congregations, Sunday-school teachers for their classes. Oh! this is a poor way of reading the Word; read so it will not profit. I say it deliberately and advisedly, the sooner it is given up, the better for your own souls. Read the word of God always with reference to your own heart, and when you have received the blessing in your own heart, you will be able to communicate it to others.

Whether you labour as evangelists, as pastors, or as visitors, superintendents of Sunday schools, or teachers, tract distributors, or in whatever other capacity you may seek to labour for the Lord, be careful to let the reading of the Word be with distinct reference to your own heart. Ask yourselves, How does this suit me, either for instruction, for correction, for exhortation, or for rebuke? How does this affect me? If you thus read, and get the blessing in your own soul, how soon will it flow out, to others.

READ IN FAITH.

Another point. It is of the utmost moment in reading the word of God, that the reading should be accompanied with faith. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." As with the preaching, so with the reading - it must be mixed with faith. Not simply reading it as you would read a story, which you may receive or not: not simply as a statement, which you may credit or not, or as an exhortation, to which you may listen or not; but as the revealed will of the Lord: that is, receiving it with faith. Received thus, it will nourish us, and we shall really reap benefit. Only in this way will it benefit us; and we shall gain from it health and strength, in proportion as we receive it with real faith.

BE DOERS OF THE WORD.

Lastly, if God does bless us in reading His word, He expects that we should be obedient children, and that we should accept the Word as His will, and carry it into practice. If this be neglected, you will find that the reading of the Word, even if accompanied by prayer, meditation, and faith, will do you little good. God does expect us to be obedient children, and will have us practice what He has taught us. The Lord Jesus Christ says: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." And in the measure in which we carry out what our Lord Jesus taught, so in measure are we happy children. And in such measure only can we honestly look for help from the Father, even as we seek to carry out His will.

If there is one single point I would wish to have spread all over this country, and over the whole world, it is just this, that we should seek, beloved Christian friends, not to be hearers of the Word only, but doers of the Word. I doubt not that many of you have sought to do this already, but I speak particularly to those younger brethren and sisters who may not yet have learned the full force of this. Oh, seek to attend earnestly to this; it is of vast importance. Satan will seek with much earnestness to put aside the word of God; but let us seek to carry it out and to act upon it. The Word must be received as a legacy from God, which we have by the Holy Ghost.

THE FULLNESS OF THE REVELATION GIVEN IN THE WORD.

And remember that, to the faithful reader of this blessed Word, it reveals all that we need to know of the Father - all that we need to know about the Lord Jesus Christ, all about the power of the Spirit, all about the world that lieth in the wicked one, all about the road to heaven, and the blessedness of the world to come. In this blessed book we have the

whole gospel, and all rules necessary for our Christian life and warfare. Let us see, then, that we study it with our whole heart, and with prayer, meditation, faith, and obedience.

PRAYER.

The next point on which I will speak for a few moments, has been more or less referred to already; it is that of prayer. You might read the Word and seem to understand it very fully, yet, if you are not in the habit of waiting continually upon God, you will make little progress in the divine life. We have not naturally in us any good thing, and cannot expect, save by the help of God, to please Him. Therefore, it is the will of the Lord, that we should always own our dependence upon Him, and it becomes us to follow in prayer the earnestness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That blessed One gave us an example in this particular; He gave whole nights to prayer, and we find Him on the lonely mountain engaged by night in prayer. And as in every way He is to be an example to us, so, in particular, on this point, He is also an example to us. The old evil, corrupt nature is still in us, though we are born again; therefore we have to come in prayer to God for help. We have to cling to the power of the Mighty One. Concerning everything we have to pray. Not simply when great troubles come, when our house is on fire, or our beloved wife is on the point of death, or our dear children are laid down in sickness, not simply at such times, but also in little things. From the very early morning, let us make everything a matter of prayer, and let it be so throughout the day, and throughout our whole life.

A Christian lady said, lately, that thirty-five years ago she heard me speak on this subject in Devonshire; and that then I referred to praying about little things. I had said, that suppose a parcel came to us, and it should prove difficult to untie the knot, and you cannot cut it; then you should ask God to help you, even to untie the knot. I myself had forgotten the words, but she has remembered them, and the remembrance has been a great help to her again and again. So I would say to you, my beloved friends, there is nothing too small for prayer. In the simplest things connected with our daily life and walk, we should give ourselves to prayer; and we shall have the living, loving Lord Jesus to help us. Even in the most trifling matters I give myself to prayer, and often in the morning, even ere I leave my room, I have two or three answers to prayer in this way.

Young believers, in the very outset of the Divine life, learn, in childlike simplicity, to wait upon God for everything! Treat the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Friend, able and willing to help you in everything. How blessed it is to be carried in His loving arms all the day long! I would say, that the divine life of the believer is made up of a vast number of little circumstances and little things. Every day there come before us a variety of little trials, and if we seek to put them aside in our own strength and wisdom, we shall quickly find that we are confounded. But if, on the contrary, we take everything to God we shall be helped, and our way shall be made plain. Thus our life will be a happy life!

FAITH MUST COME FIRST.

There are two passages in the word of God of the deepest moment to Christians, and I would therefore speak on them. The first is in 2 Peter i. 5: "Besides this, add to your faith virtue," etc. It is here supposed that we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because we are commanded to add to our faith virtue, and these other graces. The apostle Peter is addressing believers, and here tonight I am supposing that I am speaking to believers. Yet, peradventure, there may be some who are not believers. To you, if there be any such I would say, you are sinners. You may be young in this life or you may be advanced in years; you may be very moral, or otherwise; but in the sight of God you are sinners. This you must, if you would be saved, realise and understand that you are sinners, and not Only so, but sinners deserving punishment. You are lost and have no power of your own to save yourselves. The world talks about turning over a new leaf, but that will not satisfy Divine justice. The record of your past sins stands against you, and must be blotted out.

What then? You are sinners, and sinners deserving of punishment, nothing but punishment. You must either suffer that eternal punishment yourselves, or obtain another to bear it. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to bear this punishment. He has borne it in our room and stead. He has suffered for us. And now the only one thing that God looks for from the sinner is, that we should put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and in Him alone, for the salvation of our souls. We must look entirely to Himself; we must look only to the blessed Lamb of God, who was nailed to the Cross. Whosoever trusteth in Him shall be saved. Let his sins be never so many, yet he shall have forgiveness for all his transgressions. He is born again - is regenerated through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be made a child of God, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ. Thanks be to His name. "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."

If we have believed in the Lord Jesus, we are, however, not to be satisfied with this, but to seek to add to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience and to patience Godliness.

COURAGE.

"Add to your faith virtue." "Virtue" here means fortitude, or courage; implying that the very first thing after believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, is, to own our attachment to Him. You must stand boldly out and make confession of Him. Some dear children of God think we may keep our religion to ourselves; there is no use in bringing it before our friends, companions, or relations - no use getting into trouble with them about it. What is the result? The Lord Jesus Christ will not stand on our side to strengthen us, if we will not take our stand by Him. Weak we are, weak we must remain, as long as we are in this state. I do not say you will go to hell. But you are half-hearted, and the Master wants valiant soldiers. He looks for fortitude. He will have us let those around us know whose we are, honestly and openly. Therefore we ought to be decided for Christ; that is of the utmost moment. The more we come out from the world, the better it will be for us in the things of God. We shall be strengthened, and the bolder we are for Christ the happier will it be for ourselves. Let me impress this on the hearts of my younger brethren and sisters in Christ; and if they have not already done so, let them make confession of Christ.

KNOWLEDGE.

"Add to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge." Here again we have something to learn. I have already spoken of the importance of reading and meditating on God's word; but here comes a special exhortation to add to your faith, knowledge. We are not to be satisfied with knowing that we are sinners, and that Christ is our Saviour but we must seek to make progress in knowledge. Why is this? Because to increase in knowledge, is to increase in the knowledge of God. And as we increase in this knowledge of Him, we learn more and more of His love; and that it is the very joy of His heart to do us good. We see more and more what a lovely Being God is; and the result of this again, is, that we are satisfied with His dealings with us.

I have passed through very many trials, some of them of no ordinary character; yet I have rejoiced in God. For nearly ten years - from 1838 to 1848 - I had difficulty upon difficulty, scarcely anything but difficulty. But I had always the help of God, and always was joyous, even in the darkest day, because I knew that all came from God, my Father. On that account I say to you, seek to increase in knowledge; and then although there may fall upon you trial and affliction, even heavy trial, deep affliction, yet if you can say, "It is from my Father, my loving Father; from Him who spared not His Son for me, and from Him who hath said that He will make all things work together for good; having freely given up Jesus for me, He will freely give me all things; therefore this trial must be good for me, else He would not suffer it to befall me." You can easily see how ill such a state of mind, we can pass through these trials; and even in the midst of them we may have calmness and peace, and even holy heavenly joy. Thus we shall be able to meet them. That is the result of being really acquainted with God. And the only way to get this knowledge is by diligent study of the Word, and by the teaching of the Spirit from that Word. Let us, therefore, aim after this knowledge, and not be satisfied with the simple belief that we shall get to heaven.

TEMPERANCE.

The apostle next says, add to your faith temperance. Now this is, not merely abstaining from excess in drinking - though it does mean that; but self-control generally is here the meaning of this word. That is, regarding everything, whether meat or drink, or any other thing, that we do not give way to the abuse of anything God has given us. It is here, used as regarding our temper, appetites, and deportment generally. Because by the way in which we conduct ourselves, or behave ourselves, do we glorify God or dishonour Him. The world is watching us, to see how so-and-so, who has become a Christian, behaves himself. And if they see us walk inconsistently, then do they speak against our Master; while if, on the other hand, they see us walk consistently, they are compelled to give honour to our God.

PATIENCE.

"And to temperance, patience;" that is, to be satisfied with the will of God. If we have this contentment, we shall be able to endure tribulation and suffering, and even bereavement and sickness, satisfied that it is for the best. If we are the children of God, we are but strangers and pilgrims here. This is not our home, we here have no abiding city; therefore we heed not the troubles or difficulties by the way, they will soon pass. Let us therefore aim after showing, by our quiet, patient demeanour, that we are satisfied with God.

GODLINESS.

Add to your faith Godliness, that is, the habit of referring everything to God. That we pray about everything and do everything as seeing Him who is above; that we walk as confident that God is our strength; that we walk by day and by night, as in the sight of God; in short, that we walk in holy, precious fellowship with God; that we remember that He is before us, and with us; that the Father's eye is upon us, and that we seek to be guided and directed in everything by Him. Oh that we might take up the meaning of all this, and carry it into our lives!

Now, my beloved Christian friends, is it your calm, quiet purpose to aim after all this? If so, you may be certain that God will give you more power to follow Him. God allows us, for His own wise purposes, to have our lot in this life cast amidst darkness in many respects. But think not of that; remember, we are getting nearer the end. The day is drawing near when the Lord Jesus Christ will come. I do not say by this that I can specify the time, or that it will be such and such a date; I know nothing of the precise time. But this is certain, we are getting nearer, - nearer the end. Nearer the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will appear in glory to call His waiting saints to meet Him in the air.

How the thought ought to warm our hearts, and to fill us with a longing to serve Him, and to be like Him. If others are cold, then let us seek to warm them. If others are foolish, let us seek to teach them. If fire be lacking in others, let us, His servants, be burning coals to set them on fire. Let us remember, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Oh, the blessedness of bearing much love to others, instead of receiving it only; of warming others instead of being warmed only; of teaching others instead of being taught ourselves only. Oh, therefore, beloved in Christ, let it be a matter of great moment to you, that you aim after Godliness, living near to God in this life, that we may enjoy the blessedness of being living witnesses for Him, Let us seek that we may be made burning coals; and if all the brethren and sisters here were thus set on fire, how soon should we set Mildmay Park on fire. Then, would it not extend to Hackney? And then it would light up London itself. In helping to bless others we shall be greatly blessed in our own souls; and the fire thus kindled will burn in our own hearts. The passage which follows this contains so much that I will rather leave it for our next meeting.

In seeking to lend a helping hand to my beloved fellow-disciples, especially the younger ones, I came, at our last meeting, to a portion of Scripture containing deeply important instruction, in connection with this subject. You will find it in 2 Pet. i., from the fifth verse. I will just read a few verses, for the sake of the connection, up to the verse at which I left off.

I suppose, of course, that those whom I address are trusting in the atoning blood of the Lamb alone, for the salvation of their souls; but if any be present who know not the Saviour, may God in the riches of His grace stir them up to see the state in which they are by nature. We are all sinners deserving punishment, and nothing but punishment, in the state in which we are by nature; and the only way we can escape it, is by having

A SUBSTITUTE

to bear the punishment. This substitute God has provided in the person of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who has been punished in our room and stead, and whose perfect obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, has been accepted in the room of sinners, who, by trusting in Him alone, can obtain the salvation of their souls. All here present who have not yet trusted in Him, may cast themselves upon the mercy of God, by accepting what He has provided in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Thus they would become like us, who have obtained forgiveness; would be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son; would be brought from darkness into light, and obtain peace to their souls; would be brought on the road to heaven, and made children of God, and joint heirs with Christ; and would have the bright, blessed prospect of glory; and, while on the road to their home, would have a part in the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, and who is coming again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

POINTS ALREADY CONSIDERED.

Now, as I said before, I suppose that all present have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; then are you doing as Peter writes, "Add to your faith virtue?" Again I mention that this word "virtue" is used in the sense of courage or fortitude, particularly implying that we are to make confession of Christ, and to stand out for Him, and boldly own Him before a wicked world.

Then, as I already observed, we are also to increase in knowledge, specially in the knowledge of the revelation which God has been pleased to make of Himself and His dear Son in the Holy Scriptures. This precious book shows to us the vanity of this world, and the blessedness and reality of heavenly things, and the joys that await us in the Father's house.

"And to knowledge, temperance." This means self-control; not merely to abstain from excess in drinking. It means far more, referring to our temper, way of life, our speech, and whole deportment; to be living in the world as becomes the children of God. And to this add patience; quietly waiting for God in the hour of trial and deep affliction, and expecting Him to deliver us.

And to this add Godliness; that is, the habit in which everything is brought to God, and referred to Him; in which we seek to walk to the praise and honour and glory of God, and at all times and under all circumstances to make this our business - our especial business - to live for God and under the eye of God; and that we do not turn away our eyes from God, but that we seek to go straight on, walking with God all the day long; living, speaking, acting for Him; cultivating the precious habit in which we walk with and live for God.

Thus far we proceeded on the last evening. Now we come to

BROTHERLY KINDNESS;

that is, "the love of the brethren." That especially is to be aimed after, and if this is wanting, there is very much wanting. The heavenly Father looks for love among His children, whom He has loved with an eternal and unchangeable love. He would have us love one another. And if we do not love the brethren, where is the proof that we love God? God does specially look for this love, and He would have us add to all other graces, particularly this grace - the love of the brethren.

And more, we are to add to all this,

CHARITY;

that is, universal love. Not merely are we to love the children of God, but to love those who are not of us, and who do not love us. We are to love those who do not care in the least for us. We are to love those who do not walk with us on the road to heaven, and whom we have never even seen or heard of. We are to love everyone of the human family; that is the will of our heavenly Father regarding us.

He would have the heart of His children so large as to take in all; and then we have what is commanded - universal love, which will manifest itself in seeking to do good to all our fellow-men.

We shall seek to do them good in every possible way, but specially in striving after the salvation of their souls. For this is what our heavenly Father teaches us, when He causes His sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good, and when His rain descends on the just and the unjust. By all this He would teach us to love everyone, even our enemies themselves. "To brotherly kindness, therefore, add charity" - love to all.

THE RESULT OF THIS - FRUIT.

Now comes the next thing; what is the practical result of all this? It is fruit. "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If we seek to "add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience Godliness, and to Godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity"; then, if these things be in us and abound, "we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is impossible to lead an idle life, if these things be found in us; for we shall be seeking to bring glory to God, and it is impossible that we should not bear fruit. If those things be found in us, it is impossible to stand still in the divine life; we shall surely make progress to the praise and honour and glory of God. We shall bear fruit. And the result will be that we shall not merely bear fruit thirty-fold, not merely forty-fold, or forty-five-fold, not even fifty, fifty-five, or sixty-fold only; but there is the possibility in this latter part of the nineteenth century, to bring forth fruit eighty or ninety-fold; and who shall tell us there is not even the possibility of bearing fruit a hundred-fold? But whether we do bear fruit to this extent or not; it should be our aim to bear fruit abundantly; and if we aim at sixty or seventy-fold, we may have a hundred-fold.

THE CONTRARY RESULT

But now notice:- "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." That is the state of the man who does not seek to add to his faith these graces. "He that lacketh these things" (that is, he that neglecteth these things) "cannot see afar off" (that is, is dim-sighted).

It must be so, my brethren. He may have good natural sight, needing no spectacles; he may have clear judgment about business matters, and a thoroughly clear judgment of all temporal matters of this life; yet, if he does not seek to add to his faith all these things, he is dim-sighted, he has not spiritual judgment or discernment, and all his worldly wisdom is nothing. He becomes a hindrance to his fellow disciples instead of a helper; and instead of a counsellor to his younger brethren in Christ, he becomes a darkener of counsel. How deeply important, not to get into such a state, and therefore, my young brethren and sisters in Christ, I beseech you not to allow yourselves to become spiritually blind.

"And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." What a sad thing if, after all that God has done for you, in bringing you to see that you are by nature sinners, in helping you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, so that your sins have been forgiven, and you have been delivered from the powers of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, - how if, after all this, you become blind, or dim-sighted, and your heavenly vision becomes obscured!

If our new light were to be darkened - those eyes which, by the power of the Spirit, have been enlightened - how sad it would be! If by reason of carelessness or worldly-mindedness, we should lose this spiritual sight, oh, how great the darkness would be! God's saints are all in danger of this. Not only until we have been believers ten, twenty, or thirty years, but as long as we are in the body, there is this danger. How deeply important, then, for us to take measures to be kept from this spiritual blindness!

Remember, then, that "he that lacketh these things is blind." He has not the mind of God; he has more or less the mind of the world; and if you bring certain things before him, such as the importance of prayer, that man will probably say you are too religious, too pious; he cannot understand you. Why is all this? Why should a man who has been forgiven and placed on the road to heaven, whose eyes have been opened to spiritual things, become thus blind? It is by neglecting to add to his faith these graces, he has become dim-sighted concerning the heavenly realities; he has been spiritually blinded, and has forgotten the state from which he was delivered. How deeply important, therefore, that we should cultivate these graces! Very many of the dear children of God, who, at the commencement of their divine life saw clearly their state, that they were sinners, and deserving punishment, and who, through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith in Him, had peace, and had known the enjoyment and blessedness of fellowship with God, by getting careless and worldly-minded, and by living to a greater or less degree under the influence of this world, have at last forgotten that their sins were all forgiven, and that they are the children of God.

Thus they lose all the blessed enjoyment of their position, as children of God and heirs of heaven; and what is the result of all this? They more and more settle down in this world, and become less and less spiritually minded, and become more and more lovers of this world.

What a sad state is this, and oh! my beloved brethren, may God keep us all from falling into it. Therefore it is that I do desire to warn you against ceasing to add to your faith all those graces: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, Godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity. All these things are to be added.

And now, "Wherefore, the rather?" That is, because of all that has been said, we are to aim after "giving all diligence, to

MAKE OUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE,"

Have we all done this? Is it true of you all, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, that you have made your calling and election sure? Is it as certain, with you all, that you will go to heaven, as if you were there already?

"But," you say, "how can we do this?" Just by attending to the points brought before us in the previous verses. For if we attend to all these things, then we shall make our calling and election sure. We shall have the assurance in Our own soul, that we are the children of God; that we have received the forgiveness of sins, and that our Father loves us; that we are on the road to heaven, and that we have before us the bright and blessed prospect of glory, and are daily getting nearer home"; and that we shall most assuredly reach heaven at last.

In order to have this blessed assurance, let us, my beloved brethren, aim after all these things, that we may make our calling and election sure.

There is such a thing as doing this. I should be doing dishonour to my God, and failing in my duty if I did not bear witness today that I have made my calling and election sure. After having been about fifty years a believer, I bear testimony that I know I am a child of God, that I have been far given, and that I am on the road to heaven. And although, in myself, nothing but a poor, weak, miserable sinner, and though if I had only committed the fiftieth part of the sins I have been guilty of, I know I should deserve punishment - nothing but punishment; yet, notwithstanding all this, I am as certain of going to heaven as if I were there already.

Why, why is all this certainty? Because God, by His Spirit, declares, "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life." I take God at His word, in childlike simplicity, and hence I have the enjoyment of His promise.

And although I am but a poor, miserable sinner, deserving punishment, yet I know I shall have everlasting life through Christ, and not only shall have everlasting life, but I have it even now. Therefore I have made my calling and election sure. Moreover, I know by the grace of God that I am not a stony-ground hearer. Why do I know this? Because, having heard the Word I received it, and the cares of this world have not choked it; the persecutions of this world have not dried it up; in the hour of temptation I still had the word of God in my heart, and did not take my eye away from the cross; and therefore I know I am

NOT A STONY-GROUND HEARER.

I am not a hearer only, but a doer, in some little measure, of the Word; and though I am weak, I can say that I know I have made my calling and election sure. If, after all this, my beloved brethren, you are not sure of it, oh, be not satisfied till the matter is settled.

And what is the result of all this? The beggarly elements of this world affect me very little, because I have heavenly joy in my heart. I do not care for the money, the rank, or the honour of this evil world, and all its other allurements which attract many. I have something better - better far. The heavenly things are the best lever to lift your minds out of this world into heaven. Therefore aim after this certainty as to heaven, and it will raise you above the things of this life.

It is deeply important, my beloved younger brethren and sisters, to make a good beginning in this way, and to continue thus, and then your joy and assurance will increase more and more. Your path will be as that of the just, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Why should it not be so? We ought to increase. You and I are neither prophets nor apostles, yet our path ought, as that of the just, to "shine more and more unto the perfect day."

DILIGENCE.

In order that it may be thus, let us give heed to this, "Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence" (mark that word "diligence") "to make your calling and election sure." Why so? "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." If you go on in this way, the world will not be able to say, "Look at the drunkard, who calls himself a Christian! Look at that thief who calls himself a Christian! or that idle, slothful man, see how he behaves to his wife; or see how she neglects her family and husband, and yet calls herself a Christian woman."

None shall be able to say such things of the child of God, so long as he continues to walk in these ways of which I have been speaking; and thus reproach shall not be brought upon the name of the Lord, and "if ye do these things, you shall never fall." And you shall never bring dishonour, but rather honour and glory to God.

AN ABUNDANT ENTRANCE.

"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We shall be like vessels under full sail, entering the port. That is what we should aim after, "an abundant entrance." Not like a house on fire, from which there is the possibility of bringing out perhaps a chair or a table, snatched, as it were, from the fire; "a brand plucked from the burning."

In this way some children of God escape at the last, content if they simply get into heaven and no more. But this ought not to be the case with you and me. We should be like vessels in full sail entering the port, having an abundant entrance. Let us aim after this, calmly and quietly bidding adieu to this evil world, joyously waiting for the coming of the Lord, rejoicing in the Lord abundantly.

After this we must also aim, so to live as that we may not have to look back in deep sorrow that we have loved the world." Let us keep this before us, and especially you, my beloved younger brethren and sisters in Christ, while the middle-aged and the aged ought to remember it too; that you have but one brief life to spend for God, and surely this one brief life ought to be spent to the honour, and praise, and glory of God.

I have one more passage, full of deeply important matter to which I wish to direct your attention, by the help of God. You will find it in Eph. vi., and this, for the present, will be the last portion to which I shall direct your attention, except the Lord on Friday evening should lead me to anything else. I shall now only enter upon it, and shall not be able to finish it tonight; but will continue it on Friday evening.

The portion is verses 10 to 18 of chapter vi. This passage, for the first four or five years after my conversion, was one from which, when I came to read it, there was a kind of shrinking in my mind; because I read it merely as a commandment, and found myself reproved by it; therefore I shrank from it.

One Lord's-day, about forty-five years ago, I awoke early in the morning, about five o'clock. I felt tired - very tired, having had a great deal to do on the day previous. I felt I should like to spend another hour in bed; but it came to my mind, "This is the Lord's day, and there can be nothing better than to rise and give myself to prayer and meditation." I did so, and in the course of my reading I came to this sixth chapter of Ephesians. I began reading; I soon saw that it was full of the gospel - blessedly full of the gospel. It pleased God to bless it greatly to my soul that day, and, ever since, this portion has been particularly dear to my heart.

I desire now, as God may help me, to bring before you what the Holy Ghost would teach us in these verses.

"Finally," the apostle says, as if he meant, Now, after all I have said, let us sum it up in the following verses: "My brethren." This word "brethren" is to be especially noticed. As if he meant to say, this is a word for believers, and specially for them. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

TRUE STRENGTH.

The first point here is, for the beloved fellow-disciples never for a moment to suppose that they have, or can have, any strength of their own. And, because they are converted, and are not now dead in trespasses and sins, and have been brought from death unto life, yet they are not to suppose that they have any strength of their own. "Be strong in the Lord." In ourselves we are utterly weak, and in ourselves we remain weak as we are by nature, our strength is in the Lord; and by looking to God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, we receive wisdom, strength, help, and, in short, everything we can possibly need as we pass through this vale of tears.

Therefore do we especially need this exhortation, "Be strong in the Lord." We cannot fight, we can do nothing of ourselves; we have no might nor strength of our own. And if any one should say he thinks he has any strength or power in himself, I would say, "My brother, you are mistaken; you have no such thing."

And this we have to remember to the very last moment of our life. I desire day by day, and hour by hour, to remember this, and I request all of you to remember it, that you may never suppose you have any strength or wisdom of your own. If you do so, you are neglecting the resources laid up in Jesus Christ; and moreover if you do so, you will not make use of the wisdom, power, and strength which God has laid up for us in the hour of our weakness, in the person of His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore is this exhortation much needed, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

The next time we shall see, if the Lord will, the deep importance of this exhortation to put on the whole armour of God. But now I wish you to notice that it is of great moment that we should

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

Not simply the breastplate; not simply the helmet; not simply taking the shield; but the whole armour of God. And these words, "put on" the whole armour, are to indicate to us, to make use of the armour. It is to be "put on." It is one thing to know the armour which God has provided. We may know all about it very intimately, but it is a different thing to put it on. Yet, God has provided his armour, in order that we may put it on, and thus be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

If we do not put it on, then it will profit us nothing. Just as it is with the gospel. God provides it for us; He has made this provision in order that we may escape punishment; and Christ says that they who believe, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Yet if poor sinners do not receive Christ, if they reject Him, and go on trusting in self or living in carelessness and utter indifference as to the things of God, then all this blessed provision for them, through the sufferings and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, will profit them nothing. They must appropriate it, by God's grace, to themselves.

Now it is precisely so with the saints. They will not profit by the armour, unless they put it on. But, one says, "I am so weak." What then? You stand all the more in need of it; cry, "Oh my Father, I am Thy weak child; help me to put on Thy armour." God will accept thy cry, and He will help the weak one who so cries.

There is an apparent contradiction between, on the one hand, the sovereignty of God, which is plainly revealed, and on the other hand, the "will of man." We have no power of our own, and yet we are responsible persons. We are commanded distinctly to receive and obey the gospel; and if we do not, yet we are responsible.

If, however, we feel our own utter inability, then let us go to God, and say to Him, "I am weak and sinful, and cannot receive the gospel. Help Thou me." If we do this, we shall be helped, as God is willing to do so and willing to bless us, if we only seek Him.

So it is with the armour of God. If we are weak, let us say, "Father, see Thy weak child. Yet I wish to put on this armour. Help thou me." You will find that He is willing to help us.

But why is it so important that we put on the whole armour of God, and not a part only? For this very reason, that we should be able to

STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL.

There are many of those who say, with the ungodly world, that there is no such person as the devil. But the Holy Ghost reveals the fact that there is such a person. I am as thoroughly convinced of this in my inmost soul, as I am convinced of

the reality of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and of the existence of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the salvation of all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But while it is true that there is such a person, and while it is true that he who is against us is mighty, - very mighty, yet this is also true that He that is for us is still more mighty; and that in the riches of His grace He has created and provided for His poor weak children the whole armour, whereby they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And as long as we make use of this whole armour, we shall find how ready He is to help us in all our weakness and helplessness.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places." We have a conflict, but it is not a conflict of this world. It is not according to the ideas of this world. As, for instance, when in an earthly conflict soldier wrestles against soldier, flesh and blood against flesh and blood. Not thus is our warfare. It is of a spiritual character, and altogether against spiritual forces; "against principalities and against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." In a word, against the power of the evil one.

Here we stop, and from this, if God will, we shall go on next Friday evening to consider the whole armour of God. And those who come here, I affectionately advise to consider it before you come. Read the passage, and seek to meditate upon it with reference to your own heart, and try to see how far you understand these verses.

Thus our meditations, when we come together, will be all the more profitable. I have it particularly laid on my heart to say a word on this portion of Scripture, which I have found repeatedly to be food to my own soul, and which I trust may be also made profitable to others.

The portion from which I have it laid on my heart to speak a few words of counsel and advice, especially to the younger brethren and sisters in Christ, you will find in Eph. vi, 10-18.

I have already observed the deep importance of never, in the least degree, relying on our own power and energy, or upon our past experience, or upon what we think we can accomplish in the things of God; but rather throughout to distrust ourselves, even to the very close of our earthly pilgrimage, and only to rely upon the power and wisdom of God Himself, so that in His power and might we may go forward in the battle.

WE MUST PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR of GOD;

and regarding this, we have observed the deep importance of putting on the whole armour of God. Every part of the armour which God Himself has been pleased to provide for His children, is absolutely, in order that we may be fully furnished for the conflict. And for this very purpose has required the armour been provided, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. That adversary is very subtle and crafty, and he is ever watching that he may get an advantage over us. In order to lay still greater stress on this, the apostle, by the guidance of the Holy Ghost, proceeds to say, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood." The battle is not that of army against army, or man against man, as in this world, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Here I observe particularly, the deep importance of ever keeping before us, that we have really and truly to fight against the powers of darkness. And if at any time any of us should, through the subtlety of Satan, yield to the temptation that there is no such thing as a real personal devil, let them be aware that that is just one of his chief devices, in order to throw the child of God off his guard, so that he may the more easily get power over him.

THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION.

Verily, there is such a being as the devil. And he is mighty, as well as experienced. But also, for our comfort, let us keep this before us, that greater is He that is for us than all that can be against us. And therefore with courage we may go forth against the powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places. As long as we recognise our own weakness and impotency, and depend upon God, we shall be helped even against these powers.

Thus far we have already proceeded. Now,

"WHEREFORE TAKE UNTO YOU."

Wherefore; that is to say, because the conflict is what it is, and because it is what has been described, because we do not fight against man, or against flesh and blood, but against the powers of darkness, and against spiritual evil powers, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." For this very purpose the armour is provided for us, that we may be able to withstand and finally to overcome.

Now let not any dear child of God suppose, as there is at times a danger of supposing, that because the conflict is what it is - because it is spiritual, and because our enemies are so many and so mighty, that, therefore, it is utterly useless to attempt to fight against the powers of darkness. Not so. Let us go with good courage to the conflict. The will of the Lord is that we should

"BE OF GOOD COURAGE";

and under whatever circumstances of danger, perplexity, or of trial, the child of God may be placed, let him always be of "good courage." Who shall harm us, if God is for us? If He is on our side, who shall then withstand us?

But let us never trust in self, else we shall quickly find how weak we are. Especially let us never begin to reason with the devil; he is too much for us. The will of God is, never, never, never, under any circumstance, to reason with the tempter. He who begins to reason, is certain to fall; because we have ever to keep before us who the devil is, and what power he has; and, therefore, if we begin to reason, we are sure to be overcome.

THAT OLD SERPENT WHICH IS THE DEVIL.

We know not how long the chief of the evil spirits has been in existence; but we know that he was in existence at the creation of the world, and was the originator of evil. Therefore, from the time he deceived our first parents, he has reasoned with a great number of people, and has thus gained a vast experience. Think of all this vast experience, and of all the wiles he has learned, and you will see how absurd it is to attempt to reason with Satan. God's blessed Word is enough, and that is the only thing he cannot stand against. But if you begin to reason with the devil, it is certain that you cannot stand.

Never, then, attempt to reason; especially you, my younger brethren and sisters in Christ. Learn at the outset of the divine life that you must not reason, and that, if you do, you will fall. When tempted, take the blessed book, and say, "My Lord says so-and-so, and I believe it;" and in child-like simplicity rest upon it. Satan cannot stand against that.

"Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

Notice further that word

"EVIL DAY;"

What is particularly meant is the day of temptation; that is the evil day. And on that day we are to take comfort in the knowledge that God is our helper. But in a certain sense the whole of this life is an evil day, because of the power of Satan, and because of the world which surrounds us. The devil is ever on the watch to get at us, and therefore in a certain sense the whole time we are in the body is the evil day. The whole armour of God is given to us, not to be used on this particular day, or that, but to be worn during the whole pilgrimage of this life. We may have fought very successfully for a time, but still we are to keep it on.

In the armies of this world, you all know how it is - battle after battle has been fought, and success has been gained. What then? The armour is put off and now, the soldiers rest. But not thus with the armour of God. The whole pilgrimage is a time of war; the conflict ceases not, but must be maintained throughout life.

THE SLEEP OF DEATH.

But to you who are not alive spiritually, who are dead in trespasses and sins and have no conflict, I say, affectionately, it is the slumber of death which is upon you. The life which you now live will be terminated, unless you are awakened, in eternal spiritual death. Therefore if you are not awakened, seek with all earnestness of purpose to be made to know your own state, and to seek to become alive through Jesus Christ.

The gospel is yet preached to you - the door of mercy is still open wide. The very fact that you are here today shows, that the gospel door is open yet. Oh, press into the door - believe the gospel - obey the commandment to receive the gospel, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him alone, for the salvation of your souls!

Then, if you do so, you will, in the riches of God's grace, receive the forgiveness of your sins; you will be regenerated, and, although you were dead in trespasses and sins, you will instantaneously be made a child of God, an heir of God, joint-heir with Christ; be brought on the road to heaven, and have the bright and blessed prospect of everlasting life before you. Then, and only then, you will know something practically and experimentally of the conflict against the powers of darkness.

It is to those, then, who are believers, and who know what the conflict is, that I speak this evening. And to you beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, but especially the younger brethren and sisters, I say, never allow yourselves to be at ease with regard to the conflict.

It is written here,

"AND HAVING DONE ALL TO STAND."

Oh, how deeply important it is to notice that we must be prepared to stand firm. Again and again do we see the child of God who has set out well, and who has continued for a time to run well, and who has given up the world, with its habits and customs, its passions and pursuits; has renounced all these, and has rejoiced the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the hearts of God's dear children; has gone on for a year or two, and then he begins to hanker after this world; then he begins to take his ease in the conflict; another year or two, and he is as much in the world as ever he was.

What a sad, sad, sad case is this; yet how frequently do we see it occur. To avoid it, if I may be permitted to use my experience, I say to the beloved children of God, Be satisfied with nothing short of this, that you are going on in the self-same decided way for God as you did at the beginning. Continue to keep on the armour of God, and say, By His grace I will stand.

Let it never be said of you, That man began well, and has not gone on well. Let it be so that any who knew us in 1830, and now sees us in 1875, can say of us, Well, after forty-five years have passed away, that man is as decided as ever.

I ask myself, and answer it as before God, and I ask you, my brethren also, to answer before God, How is it with us? Are you as decided as at the beginning? If not, there is something wrong. Having been very decided for God is not enough; we must be so still, even continually; ever resisting the powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places.

Let us, then, never settle down at ease to enjoy the victory. That is never the case in this world. There is no permanent victory here; it is far off in yonder world, in the bright blessed eternity which is awaiting us. We shall have victory and rest there, but here, in this life, we have to fight - fight on in the conflict of life.

Now let us consider the armour itself.

"HAVING YOUR LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH."

To most of you, my dear Christian friends, I scarcely need to say, that we have here to keep before us, not the common English soldier with his firearms and modern equipment, but soldiers as they were in those early days, and especially the Roman soldiers. The nature of their armour and warfare we have to keep before us.

Now at that time it was a matter of great importance to the soldiers to have a girdle to gird themselves. By means of this girdle the soldier braced himself for the march and the conflict. The clothes were thus tied close to the body, in order that the soldier might not be hindered in his marching, nor in his fighting, as the fighting often consisted in one man fighting against another man.

Now, in the spiritual conflict, what have we for a girdle? It is the truth of God. This brings before us the fact, that, just in the measure in which we hold the blessed truths of God's word, so in measure, and only so in measure, are we ready for the conflict.

Every particle of error hinders us in our spiritual conflict. We are helped in the measure in which we adhere to the truth of God. And while the temptation in the case of the young disciple may be to say, "I know I am a child of God, and that Jesus Christ has saved me, therefore what does it matter whether I understand this or that particular truth or not, or this or that particular doctrine or not," yet it is a matter of great moment. Because, in such a degree as we understand the truth, so shall we be able to stand in the hour of conflict, and so much the less shall we be hindered in this our conflict.

We ought to hold the truth in all its parts - every particle of the truth as revealed to us; and we ought not to have our favourite parts, and only those of God's word to which we pay particular attention, to the neglect of other equally important parts. And just in proportion as we seek to know the whole revealed truth, so shall we be strengthened, as with a girdle, for the conflict.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

This part of the armour of a Roman soldier was generally made of a piece of iron or brass, and which particularly covered and protected the vital parts, such as the heart, lungs, and liver. A very important thing, then, was the "breast plate," or piece of iron or brass, covering, as it did, the vital parts of the Roman soldier. Now, we have to ask ourselves, in connection with this, What is this? What have we for a breast-plate to protect us?

One or another says, we must live a righteous life. True, we have to seek to live a righteous life; but this is not the point here. It is this, that we seek continually, as poor weak sinners, to hide ourselves in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this spiritual conflict there is nothing so important, as that from the very beginning of the spiritual course, we begin as poor miserable sinners, trusting alone in the righteousness of Christ, - the righteousness which the Blessed One has wrought out for sinners, the righteousness in which alone we trust before God. This the only ground on which we expect God to help us, to answer our prayers, and deliver us from the difficulties with which we meet in our spiritual conflict.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

It is, then, deeply important to see that we are poor sinners, miserable and weak in ourselves, but that Jesus is our all in all; not only thus at the beginning, but thus we must go on; not only two or three years, not even five, ten, or twenty years, and then trust in our own merits, but that we continue as long as we live to depend solely on the righteousness of Christ. It is not only at our conversion that this is so deeply important, when we are made new creatures and enter upon this warfare; but it is equally important at all times in our spiritual life. So that when the devil says - as he will say - "Do you expect to get to heaven, you miserable sinner? You do not deserve it. Look at what you have done! No such thing; you need not expect it, you will not get there." When he says that, what is the answer to be? "It is true that I have sinned; yet for Christ Jesus' sake - poor miserable sinner as I am - in His righteousness, I shall yet be in heaven." What is the result of this? You rise!

The devil seems to have you down, and seeks to give you your death blow; yet you rise! He seems to have obtained the mastery over you, and yet you rise again, because you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and not in self, and you stand before God not in yourself, but in Christ. And though a poor miserable sinner, yet through Jesus, who makes you clean in His blood, you know you will get to heaven at last.

When you thus go to Christ, and take refuge in His righteousness, the devil is outwitted. Therefore remember particularly to have on this breastplate.

If the Roman soldier had not put on his breastplate how easily he would have been cut down when his breast was unprotected. So it is with us; it is important that we should put on "the breastplate of righteousness."

"YOUR FEET SHOD WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE."

What is the meaning of this? I invited you last Tuesday evening, to meditate on these verses; you may have considered it, but now consider it again with me. What is the meaning of this "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"?

These soldiers, of whom we have been speaking, did not go bare-footed into the battle; for if so, and it were man wrestling against man, how easily they might slip and fall down while fighting one against the other. Neither did they wear sandals, which would not have afforded full protection to the feet. The common thing amongst these soldiers was to wear strong boots.

Many of my friends may remember the name of one of the Roman emperors, Caligula, which means, "little boot." He was called thus because he became a soldier when very young, and his feet were so small that none of the ordinary soldiers' boots would suit him, and he had to have little boots made on purpose for him. I simply remind you of this to show that the common practice amongst the soldiers was, to wear boots, in order that they might be the better helped with regard to their warfare.

Boots also were of especial importance, on account of marching. The roads at that time were rough and rugged, and thus these boots were of great service in the war, as they had to march in rank against the enemy. And so our spiritual boots protect us when on the rough march of life, as also in the hour of conflict. We, who are the children of God, have a provision made for us in this respect, and it is the gospel of peace which God has provided for us, that we may be able to march homewards through the rough paths of life, and even to stand in the hour of conflict.

What is this preparation of the gospel of peace? It means, we are the children of God, and we are no longer at enmity with God, but are at peace with Him. Our sins are forgiven in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is well pleased with us for Christ, His dear Son's sake; and we, having no longer any fear, are at peace with God.

That is the preparation of the gospel of peace, with regard to our spiritual conflict and also with regard to our homeward march. Hold it fast; although thou art a poor, miserable sinner, yet thou art forgiven for Christ's sake. "Through whom we have the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Though I am a poor miserable sinner, yet the heart of the Father loves me, and I am on the road to heaven, where I shall certainly be at last.

Let the child of God hold fast this hope, and this persuasion of his security, as given in the simple statement of the gospel, and by this he will be able to pursue his march heavenwards, and in the hour of conflict he will be able to stand manfully.

All this by having the preparation of the gospel of peace! How deeply important, then, to have clear views of God's gospel, and that we should receive it simply as the gospel, and not in any way mix it up with our own doings or experience. Some would seem to act as if they are to do what they can, and, what they cannot, the Lord will do. Far be it from us to have such thoughts. He and He alone must do all for us. By His atoning death on the cross, He has borne the punishment due to us for our sins, sins which deserved punishment - and nothing but punishment - and has brought us to this blessed hope and trust that all our sins are forgiven; that God is well pleased with us for Christ's sake, and that, sinners though we are, yet He now delights in us for His dear Son's sake, and He is willing to help us in all our conflicts for Christ's sake. Thus we experience that joy and peace, which will help us on the march to heaven, and in the hour of spiritual conflict. So then let us make much of this preparation of the gospel of peace, which is spiritually the protection of our feet, even as the old Roman soldiers were protected by their strong boots.

"ABOVE ALL, TAKING THE SHIELD OF FAITH

wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." As the words stand here in our translation, one or the other might suppose that those words "above all" indicate that it is of the first importance to have this shield of faith. Now I do not at all undervalue this shield of faith, but only to point out that this "above all" does not mean that it is of more importance than the other parts of the armour. The meaning of it is, "in addition to all; "that is, not leaving it out.

We have already observed the importance of faith but this again brings before us the deep importance of exercising faith; and this not only on this particular point, or on the other particular point, but our faith should be exercised on the whole revealed truth of God. In regard to all that He has said as to this world, or the world to come, as well as the first point, that of believing on His dear Son whom He hath sent into the world. We have to aim after this, that we should increasingly and truly, and with childlike simplicity, seek to take God at His Word. That is exercising faith, which is here called the "shield of faith."

Now in the case of the Roman soldiers, it was deeply important to be protected by the shield. You all know how important this shield was to ward off dangers, such as arrows and blows of the sword. But it was also of great service in warding off darts. So in the spiritual conflict this shield of faith is given, that the child of God should be able to stand against the fiery darts of the wicked - that is, the wicked one - the darts of Satan.

"FIERY DARTS:"

They are called fiery darts, because they are so painful and so pernicious. We all know, in our own experience, the exceedingly painful nature of these fiery darts, and the only way to overcome them is by using the shield of faith. Exceedingly great temptations are often met with, which tend to make us distrust the love and power of our Father; and the only means of meeting these is by faith. The best way to illustrate the meaning of faith, as applied to these temptations, is just to give one or two instances.

For instance, here is a child of God: suppose that he has been regenerated, and for some time has fought manfully against the evil one, and the allurements of this world. But after a time, perhaps two or three years, he begins to be less watchful. What then? He goes back again, and begins to love this present world, and soon the temptation comes. "Well, I am afraid I shall not be successful, and after all I shall lose the battle." You all know that a child of God may thus be tempted, and how wretched he will be, till he uses the shield of faith to quench this fiery dart of doubt and mistrust. How shall we use the shield of faith? It is stated regarding the children of God, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." This is true regarding all the children of God; and it is true regarding you. How quickly, when this is used with childlike simplicity, does it quench that fiery dart.

Or in the temptation which sometimes comes to the child of God, when he is tempted to think that he may, after all, be lost; how does the word of God suit this? Simply by believing what it declares, "None shall be able to pluck them out of

My Father's hand." I am one of His sheep, and therefore I cannot be lost. How this will quench the fiery darts of the devil, and give us joy instead of sorrow!

TEMPORAL TRIALS.

Now one or two points regarding temporal matters, where faith is also of deep importance. Suppose one who has all his life earned his bread by toil. He gets on towards sixty, and presently will be past it. Now Satan begins to trouble him, and says, "You are getting old now; soon there will be nothing remaining for you but the union or the workhouse."

How wretched and miserable a child of God is made by this; but by using the shield of faith he will be able to quench it. "If my Father has cared for me when young, surely He will continue to care for me when old, and when sick, even as in the past. Or as He says in the Word, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." How quickly this temptation will be quenched. I have seen many of God's dear children who were thus troubled.

AN ILLUSTRATION.

One instance I remember distinctly, although it occurred many years ago. It was that of an aged widow, a child of God, who had lived very consistently. She had worked hard with her hands in youth, and now in her old age she had begun to say, I shall have to go to the workhouse. She had some money which she had saved of her past earnings, and she said, "When this is gone I can earn no more, and I shall have to go to the union." I sought to comfort her; I reminded her how God had cared for her in the past, and how He had promised never to leave her nor forsake her; and that as surely as she was a child of God, so surely would He care for her; and that even some of His own children would be led to assist her.

But still the temptation continued, and what was the end of it? Her joy was marred completely for years; she was in deep trouble, simply by this one thought. Yet see how it came to pass at last. One by one the sovereigns were used, and at length it came to the last sovereign; one shilling of it was spent, when the Lord took her to Himself, and there was for her no such thing as the workhouse.

But see how she was losing her spiritual joy, and how her life and her communion with God were marred by this one fiery dart; whereas, if the shield of faith had been used, the devil would have been confounded and her last days would have been in peace. Therefore, let us use this shield of faith, with the revelation God has been pleased to make of Himself, and we shall soon see the fiery darts of the devil quenched, and have joy.

"AND TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION."

In the parallel passage in I Thessalonians v. 8 it "for an helmet, the hope of salvation." So we have to understand it here, it is the hope of our salvation that is to be our helmet.

All these parts of the armour were of great importance to the Roman soldier; the girdle to bind the breastplate to defend the vital parts, the boots to protect the feet, and enable them to march firmly, the shield to ward off blows; but although he had all these, there was yet wanting one thing - the iron helmet. Without it, how soon would his head, the most exposed and most tender part of his body, have been injured or hurt. Therefore, the Roman soldier was also protected in this part; his head was protected by the iron helmet.

Thus with the child of God; he has protection for his spiritually weak parts, and it is just this - the hope of salvation. While on earth, we go toiling amidst difficulties, and trials, and temptations. Often all things seem to be against us, and not only the world, but sometimes even the children of God turn their backs on us, and we are left alone, comparatively speaking. Yet, in the midst of it all, there is something unspeakably comforting in this, that makes the heart joyous. What is it? It is "the hope of salvation," the joy of looking forward, and knowing that we shall be in heaven at last.

It is this that keeps us up. The way at times may be very dark, but then it is always a pilgrimage, which is day by day getting shorter as I get nearer home. The journey is ever towards home - nearer, nearer home. It is this bright, blessed prospect of home, home, home - of complete deliverance from sin and temptation, through the blood of Christ Jesus, which strengtheneth us at such times.

To know that we shall be delivered from the old evil nature, to be brought into a state in which the will of God is carried out by us continually, that the mind of God shall be found in us, and that we shall be with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is now at the right hand of God, and shall be like Him - these are some of the bright, blessed prospects of the state to which we are going.

Therefore, my beloved brethren and sisters, especially the younger ones, when temptation, trial, or difficulty come, and when all seems going against us here, remember that this is not our home, and that we must not expect to enjoy this present evil world. Then think of the Father's house where there are many mansions, and the bright, blessed, and glorious prospect we have of that Father's home, and you will find there is not a better lever to lift us above this world than just to contemplate heaven. Oh, make much of it! make much of it!

For fifty years I have known the Lord, and as grey hairs multiply, and as, little by little, I get nearer and nearer, the prospect becomes brighter and brighter; and during many years of sore conflict, trial, and affliction, this has cheered me exceedingly: "I shall soon be home - soon be with my Lord." Therefore, make much of this hope, that, even as the helmet protected the Roman soldier, so the hope of salvation may protect you by the way.

Now the last part of the armour:

"AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD."

All the other parts to which we have referred, were in order to protect us from assaults; that is, of a defensive character. Now, here is something to make an attack with - a weapon of an offensive character, with which to march against the enemy, and to make inroads on the powers of darkness.

Not only as the children of God are we to know our weakness, we are also to know and to act as those who have God on our side, One who is both able and willing to help us in time of need; and we should go right among the enemies, that we may pluck brands out of the fire, to the praise, and honour, and glory of God.

Beloved fellow Christians, it is the will of the Lord, that we should not only defend ourselves, but that we should, also resolutely seek to win souls and rescue poor sinners from the snares of the devil, and bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ. For both of these ends there is nothing like the weapon used by our Saviour Himself when tempted, "It is written"; that is, the use of the word of God.

And in order that we may be able to use it to good purpose, we must study it, as I observed last week, regularly and prayerfully, with meditation, and with simple faith, and with self-application. Do not let us reason, but learn ever to take God at His word with child-like simplicity; and when occasion arises bring it out against the devil. Then he will not be able to stand.

This word, the word of God is also to be used that we may win souls for Christ; and not only with reference to them, but with reference to our fellow-disciples, that we may strengthen their hands, and encourage their hearts against the powers of darkness. We can never make too much of the word of God, which must be in our hands as a sharp sword, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." It is the spiritual sword for the spiritual conflict.

"PRAYING AND WATCHING."

Lastly "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel!"

It is not necessary to dwell on this last part, as I have spoken on it again and again. Only this will I observe, that while all the other points which have been referred to are deeply important, yet they will not be successful unless they are coupled with prayer, constant and believing prayer; for if we should attend to all the other things, and put on the whole armour which God has provided for us, and yet not pray, we shall find how weak and helpless we are.

Why is this? Though we are the children of God we are in ourselves weak, and God will have us to recognise our helplessness in regard to Himself. Therefore, as opportunity and time allow, let us give ourselves to prayer. It is most important to have stated times for prayer, and not to leave it to certain impressions. If we leave it to feelings, you will find that you will be less and less inclined to prayer, and soon will be altogether without it; or, in other words, a poor miserable sinner, without help in the conflict. Have certain times for secret closet prayer, when by ourselves we pour out our souls before God.

In connection with this, let us, as heads of families, have regular family prayer, so that God shall be recognised in the family. As children of God we should also seek to meet with other children of God in prayer, such as prayer meetings. We ought to seek more and more opportunities of fellowship in prayer, as, for instance, in the daily prayer meeting in connection with this hall, where we have met day by day to spread out our wants, before Him, and to seek His blessing on our united efforts for the Lord.

Now, my dear fellow believers, attend to these matters which we have been considering, putting on the whole armour of God, accompanied by prayer, and certain I am that you will be happy Christians, holy Christians, and useful Christians. That is what I would desire with regard to all my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, that they all should be happy Christians; and that they cannot be, except they seek to act according to the mind of God. But acting thus, they will be holy children, and if they walk in His ways and walk with Him, they will also be useful children, as they will be living witnesses for God.

Not only so, but let them aim after being fruitful, bearing fruit thirty, forty, or fifty-fold, and, it may be, sixty-fold. Having attained to this, be not satisfied, but aim after sixty-five, or seventy-fold, and then it might be, and there is no reason that it should not be, a hundred-fold.

May God help us so to live as to bring praise, honour, and glory to His name while life is continued to us.

I wish, my beloved Christian friends, to direct your attention to two passages in connection with prayer. The first you will find in the commencement of Psalm cxvi., "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live,"

MARKING ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

The Psalmist states, that he loves Jehovah, because He hath heard his voice and his supplications. Now this cannot be the case with us, except we mark the hand of God, and except we observe that He hath heard our supplications, and that He hath answered our prayers. The Psalmist had marked the hand of God, and he says, "I love Jehovah, because He hath heard my voice."

Very few of God's dear children are aware how much of this marking of the hand of God, with regard to answers to prayer, has to do with increased love to their heavenly Father. We are so apt to leave unnoticed the hand of God, and to pass over what God has been pleased to do in answer to our prayer.

I would particularly advise all, but especially the younger believers, to use a little book, in which they may note down on the one side the requests which they bring before God. There are certain matters which God has laid on our hearts, and we should note them down. It would be helpful to us to write, "At such-and-such a time I began, to pray for such-and-such a thing; and then to continue to pray with regard to this matter. If we do so, we shall find that sooner or later the prayer will be answered; and then let us mark on the opposite side, that it has, at such a time, pleased God to answer that prayer."

REVIEWING ANSWERED PRAYERS.

After some time, read over the memorandum book, and you will find how again and again it has pleased God to answer your prayers; and perhaps regarding matters about which you little expected the answer to come; and soon you will find the wondrous effect of this on your heart, in increasing your love and gratitude to our heavenly Father. The more careful you are in marking what you ask, and what God has given, the more distinctly you will be able to trace how again and again it pleased God to answer your prayers, and more, you will be drawn out to God in love and gratitude. You will find precisely as the Psalmist found it when he says, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications."

THE EFFECTS OF THUS REVIEWING ANSWERED PRAYERS.

We ought to love God, even though we have not answers to our prayers; but all this will greatly increase our love; and it is not only once, but if we mark the hand of God, we shall soon find that we have scores and hundreds of answers to prayer. And thus we shall be led to love Him more and more for all He has done. And as we mark how we have been helped, and how gracious and bountiful our Father has been, and how He takes pleasure in listening to the supplications of His children, the heart will be filled increasingly with love and gratitude to Him.

Another effect of all this on the Psalmist we find in the second verse. "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." The more evidence we have of His power, and of His willingness to help us, the more our hearts should be determined to call upon the Lord. The more our prayers have been answered, the more should we be stirred up with new determination to ask yet greater things. We should be encouraged to come again and again, in order that He may incline His ear unto us.

Is this, my beloved friends, the case with us? Are those two points found in us, and can we say with the Psalmist, "I love Jehovah, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications?" And do our hearts say, "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live?" Verily it should be so with us, if we are believers.

FREEDOM FROM ANXIETY.

The second passage to which I desire to direct your attention you will find in the epistle to the Philippians, the fourth chapter, and in the sixth and seventh verses, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

"Be careful for nothing." This by no means signifies that we may be careless, thoughtless, or unconcerned about everything. That is not the meaning of it. The meaning is, not to be anxious about anything. This is one of the privileges of the children of God, that they are permitted and not only permitted but invited, and not only invited, but commanded, to bring all their cares, sorrows, trials, and wants to their heavenly Father. To roll all their burdens upon God; to cast all their cares upon Him.

And because they are permitted, yea, commanded so to do, they have no need to be anxious about anything. However many or varied our difficulties or necessities, we should commit them all in believing prayer to God; but we should not be anxious. And why not? Because it is impossible to be anxious without dishonouring God.

If the men of the world see that we Christians are anxious like themselves, they will have ground for saying, that our profession of having an Almighty Friend and Helper in heaven is only a profession; and, therefore, we dishonour God by not trusting in Him in the hour of need.

WE HAVE, HOWEVER, SUCH A FRIEND,

And He is willing and able to help us and to deliver us in His own time and way. This is the very reason we need not be anxious about anything.

But you say, how Can I, a wife with a husband given to drinking, not be anxious? No, I say, my sister in Christ, you are to pray for your husband; you are to pray for that husband very earnestly. But remember to look out for an answer to your prayer; and it is the will of our heavenly Father that you are not to be anxious even in such circumstances. You are earnestly seeking that he should be converted, that is right and proper; but still, be not anxious even in such circumstances. If you roll the burden upon God, and cast all your care upon Him, you will be free from anxiety even regarding this.

And thus with every matter; regarding our children, for instance, who are unconverted, we have to be careful to train them in the fear of God, to set a holy, Godly example before them, to pray much for them, and, at suitable times, to bring the truth before them; but even regarding them we are not to be anxious. We are to roll the burden – the whole burden - upon God, and He will carry the burden for us.

So – literally - this is to be taken, Be anxious about nothing. And thus we shall walk in holy confidence. Trust in your heavenly Father, looking to Him, confiding in Him, knowing that He will help in His own time and way.

But, while the commandment is not to be anxious about anything, at the same time, we are exhorted to bring everything before God. It is not to make us careless, but to teach us to

LEAN UPON HIM ALONE.

We are here exhorted to bring the matter before God. "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Notice especially the word "everything." It is not simply great matters we are to bring before God, not simply small things, but "everything." Therefore, all our affairs - temporal or spiritual - let us bring them before God. And this for the simple reason, that life is made up of little things. If we attempt to stand in our own strength under little trials, we shall find them too heavy for us, and we shall fall, which is dishonouring to God.

THE FOLLY OF NEGLECTING THIS INJUNCTION.

Let me see a Christian man who attempts to carry the little burdens in his own strength, and I know that he will soon dishonour God. For we have not a particle of strength to carry any burdens, little or great; and, therefore, we must bring them all to God. And if we attempt to carry them, we shall find that they will increase in weight.

To speak after the manner of men, God puts a pound weight of trial upon us, and if we take it up and lay it on the shoulders of our heavenly Father, it is gone; but if, on the other hand, we attempt to carry it ourselves, what is the result? Soon it will increase to ten pounds, and if we still try to carry it, it will increase to a hundredweight, and if we try still to stagger under it in our own strength, it will increase still more, in order to lead us to cast it upon God.

Now our wisdom is just this, when we have any little burdens, let us tell our heavenly Father, "I have no strength for this weight, I cannot carry the burden." Well, our heavenly Father is ready to do this for us; He has commanded us to roll all our cares on Him, and not to attempt to carry them in our own strength. Let us then cast all our cares and burdens upon God, and He will carry them for us.

"SUPPLICATION."

Therefore it is so deeply important "in everything, by prayer and supplication, to let your requests be made known to God." With prayer; and not only with prayer, but with supplication; that is, with earnestness and with entreaty, just as the beggars sometimes act. They ask for alms; well, you seem not to listen and pass on, but they go after you; perhaps twenty steps, and sometimes even a hundred yards or more. They follow you, still asking, until they obtain the alms they desire.

Now this is what we have to do; not simply to mention our request before God, but to go on asking again and again, with earnest prayer and supplication, until we receive. Just ask as a beggar would do; and will not our heavenly Father give it to us, seeing that He hath bestowed His greatest gift, even His Son upon us?

"THANKSGIVING."

Again, we have specially to notice that prayer and supplication is coupled with thanksgiving. That is, if I may say so, that we should lay the foundation in the way of thanksgiving, and upon that, place the superstructure of prayer and supplication. We should praise the Lord for what He has given us already; while asking Him for more blessing.

We are frequently very remiss in this; we forget to render praise for the mercies already received from our heavenly Father. This should not be so.

THE CERTAIN EFFECT OF ALL THIS.

In the next verse we have the precious result of all this, "The peace of God," what a precious result of such a way of acting is this; our hearts are at peace, instead of hurrying hither and thither, as men beside themselves, and instead of great excitement. Instead of all this, the result of prayer and praise will be, our hearts will be at peace.

We shall have the peace which passeth all understanding. And that peaceful calm which is so precious, and which no words can describe, and which is called "the peace of God" shall be in our hearts. "The peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

"KEEP YOUR HEARTS."

The idea of a garrison, is in that word "keep." And the meaning is that our hearts shall be kept by the peace of God, as by an occupying garrison.

There is much in these verses; and whilst the men of this world, and even some children of God who know not these truths, and do not ask thus, are wretched, and anxious, and hurrying about like people beside themselves, when trouble or excitement come; we, the children of God, who know these precious truths, are able calmly to wait on the Lord, and to leave ourselves quietly in the hands of God. Thus the peace which passeth understanding will rule in our hearts and minds, and we shall not merely find help, but we shall be kept from false ways, and bring honour to God before the world. And shall thus comfort greatly the children of God, to the praise and honour and glory of His name.

As the Lord may help us, we will meditate this afternoon on a few verses in the third chapter of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, from the 22nd verse: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." (Read on to the close of verse 26.)

On these verses we will meditate this afternoon. I never undertake, according to my own judgment, to choose a subject for meditation. When I have the prospect of preaching, I wait on God, and ask Him to direct me to a subject. So I have asked Him repeatedly for a portion for this afternoon, and this is the portion to which I felt directed. And now, may the Lord grant us a blessing!

We have particularly, in the first place, to consider the circumstances under which Jeremiah wrote these words, "It is of the Lord's (Jehovah's) mercies we are not consumed." We have to consider the state in which, as a nation the Israelites then were.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.

Almost all the Jews had fallen victims either to the war, or to famine, or to pestilence, or had been carried away as captives to Babylon. Only the poorest persons were left in the land, and even these were in very small numbers. In order that the whole land might not be desolate, the king of Babylon gave orders that a few men should be left behind.

Further, Jerusalem was burned and destroyed. The walls had been broken down round about the city, and the Temple was burned. Under these circumstances the prophet says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." He meant to say, if we had what we deserve, we should be utterly destroyed: Not a single man would be left alive; not a single house in the country but it would be destroyed. And if any should be left they deserve no longer to be taken up by Jehovah. That is what we deserve on account of our sins. The prophet finds that all this has come upon them in consequence of their sin

Now, in order to make this practical to ourselves, let us ask; If we had what we deserve, what would it be? We could expect nothing but entire destruction. If we were treated in the way of justice and judgment, and not according to mercy and grace, what could there be but destruction for us?

I ask you to put the question each one to himself with regard to this: Have I been convinced that I am a sinner - and such a sinner as to deserve punishment nothing but punishment? If you have never been convinced of this - that you are a sinner and that, as a sinner, you deserve nothing but punishment, then I ask you affectionately to consider it now; and to consider the only ground of salvation, and whether you have yet seen that your punishment has been laid on the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you are thus a sinner, and deserving of punishment (whether you see it or not, it is a fact, revealed by the Holy Ghost), then consider that God, in mercy, that you might not be punished, has sent Christ, His only-begotten Son, to bear the punishment in our room and stead, as our Substitute.

God, in the riches of His grace did that, in order that we might escape the punishment and destruction due to us, which punishment must have been visited on us, unless He had done this. Therefore was the Lord Jesus visited with stripes, and it was that which nailed Him to the accursed tree, in order that He might bear the punishment, and that we might be saved, eternally saved; that we might be happy, eternally happy.

Now do we all see this? And if not, I ask you, prayer fully to read the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. There it is plainly stated, what we are by nature and what we merit. And if you do see this truth, then I especially ask you to entreat God to help you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: for thus, and thus alone, you can escape the punishment. If you trust in Him, you shall not be punished; for through Him do we obtain mercy, even "the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace;" and if we believe, we become the children of God; "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Through believing the gospel, we are "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." And thus there is before us the bright and blessed prospect of eternal joy and happiness, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

SELF-ABASEMENT.

Notice particularly also here, that the prophet does not say, it is of the Lord's mercies that these wicked Jews are not consumed, but "that we are not consumed." In this he includes himself. This is particularly to be noticed, for Jeremiah was one of the holiest men then living; and yet he includes himself when he says, it is of Jehovah's mercies that we are not consumed-that I among them am not consumed.

So it is with those that fear God, and are believers in the Messiah; whether believing in the Messiah which was to come, as in Jeremiah's days, or as now, in looking back to the Messiah as having come. The more they knew of God, the more they see their own corrupt nature, their own sinfulness and shortcomings. And, instead of having a proud, haughty spirit towards fellow sinners we include ourselves with them, and say, with the prophet, "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

The heart of God was still towards the descendants of Abraham; the compassionate heart of Jehovah was still towards the literal seed of Abraham, and the blessings which had been promised to that seed were not forgotten; so that the prophet could say, "new every morning."

This is the language of all who really know God, of all who are acquainted with God, and who have watched His hand in any small degree. Daily do they say that the compassions of Jehovah are indeed new every morning, and that great is His faithfulness. And if it were not thus, what would become of us who have known the Lord Jesus Christ? We should soon fall back, if left to ourselves. We should soon fall into that corrupt state from which we were delivered, if left to ourselves. It is by God's grace that we are what we are; just because He is faithful to us. Although we should be unfaithful for a time, yet He abides faithful to His people. How blessed is it to know this!

Again, "Jehovah is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." This comforted the prophet in the midst of the sorrows which surrounded him. The people were almost all slain by the sword, or had perished by famine or pestilence; and the few who were "left were for the most part carried away captive. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Temple burned.

Very few of us can enter into the full sorrow of the prophet under these circumstances; but this is certain, that it was an immense trial to him, especially the last circumstance, that the Temple was destroyed. Yet mark, he is not overwhelmed; there is yet hope. Hope in what? Hope in the living God: "Jehovah is my portion, therefore will I hope in Him." The living God remains to me. Though the people are destroyed, though Jerusalem is destroyed, and the walls thereof broken down, and though the Temple is burned, yet God is my portion. That is the special point of our meditation –

"JEHOVAH IS MY PORTION."

God was all to him, and that is particularly my message to all my fellow disciples this afternoon. How is it with us regarding this? Is the living God our portion? Do we find Him to be our all? Is the living God our portion and our hope? Remember, whatever else we have, He must be our portion. Suppose for a moment that all our friends turned their backs on us, yet if God Himself be ours, how rich are we? If we were possessed of much wealth and property, and were to lose it all, yet with God Himself as our portion, we should be rich. And if we were to spend the remainder of our lives in a dungeon, yet if God remains with us and goes with us there, we can be unspeakably happy. What are all these things if we have God? Have we, my dear friends, Him for our portion? I do not ask you now, are you religious people? I suppose you are, because you are here today. I do not ask if you read the Bible; I suppose that you do. I do not ask if you go to a place of worship; I suppose that. I do not ask if you now and then pray; I suppose you do. I do not ask if you give a little money to the cause of God; I suppose that. But, I ask more than all this, far, far more than all this, Do you find in God Himself your all? I ask you nothing short of this, that you ask yourself now, as before God: Is my wife my portion? Is my husband my portion? If so, then a poor portion you have. It is right to have natural affection towards your wife or your husband. It is right and proper for parents to love their children, and for children to love their parents; otherwise it would be sinful in the highest degree. But, none of these relatives are to be our portion as the children of God; Jehovah Himself must be that. He would have us satisfied with nothing short of Himself. I ask you whether this is the case with you? With some, the treasures of this world are their portion - what a poor miserable portion! You will find such are unhappy, and have guilty consciences. You will never be satisfied by the treasures of this world - never.

"JEHOVAH IS MY PORTION."

But others make their business their portion. They are very earnest in attending to their business. Quite right in its place this. I do not wish at all to encourage idleness in any way in reference to this; for Christians should attend carefully and attentively to their business; if they do not, they will not have God's blessing on their business. But yet, if the business is our portion, if money-making, or rank, or standing in life, or anything in this world be our portion, or what we seek to find satisfaction in, then I say it is a poor, miserable portion, by whatever name it may be called. But if, on the contrary, we have God for our portion, if in Him we seek to find satisfaction, and in nothing else, then have we a rich portion indeed. Is He only our joy, our hope, our happiness? Are our hearts in Him? our hopes in Him? our everything in Him? Have we all this? Let us be honest before God. Let us be honest with ourselves. Have we one thing we care about, and is that God Himself? Or, have we two things, or ten things that we care about? There is one thing only that should be uppermost in our hearts; and that is God Himself; one thing that should be our portion, and that is God Himself. The prophet Jeremiah had this portion, and therefore could never be miserable, poor, or forsaken. All is right so long as the living God Himself is our portion. As was the case with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when on this earth, He had only one object, and that was, to live for, and serve God, His Father, to do His work. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." And so it should be with us, that everything we do should be done for the praise, and honour, and glory of God. This should be our ruling motive. All our thoughts should be occupied with God, either directly or indirectly; even our coming together to meet our friends should be with reference to God - even our eating and drinking should be with

reference to Him. Do we seek strength to live and labour for God, and do we spend the strength for Him, which we may have obtained?

Let us then ask ourselves the question,

"IS GOD HIMSELF MY PORTION?"

I do not ask you, without asking myself the question, What is my portion, my happiness, my *all*? Is it God Himself, or the things of this world? I answer for myself, I could not be satisfied with anything short of this, that God, and God alone, should be my portion day by day, and week by week, and month by month, and year by year. Oh, beloved friends, stop short of nothing till you come to this, that God Himself is your only portion. The consequence of having Him for your portion will be that whatever be the circumstance in which you are placed: whether there be war, or famine, or pestilence, or whatever be the circumstances connected with your present life; still you can be happy in the midst of them all. Let it be sickness, or danger, or even the prospect of death itself, God is yours, and you will yet be happy; but if God Himself be not your portion, you are dependent on, and affected by circumstances, and you will be more or less miserable in accordance with the things which surround you. But if you can say, "Jehovah is my portion," you can look forward to brighter and happier days. Jeremiah had this hope, and he looked forward expecting that the people would be brought back again, that Jerusalem would be built again, and that the Temple would be restored. And so it was, after about seventy years. Because the promises were from the living God Himself to the descendants of Abraham, therefore he could say, "The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in Him."

But people will say, this was very well in the days of the prophets and the apostles, but now, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, we cannot expect such things. I believe no such thing. Why should not the people of God be as happy in their God, as ever the prophets or apostles were? Why not? Is not He the same God? Is His power not the same? Is His love to His children not as great as ever it was? Is His willingness to help His children not as great as ever it was? Certainly it is. The blessed Book remains with us; the precious promises are still there; and therefore we ought to remember, that to trust completely in the Lord, and to be happy in Him, is yet as possible as it was to the children of God in the middle of the first, or the beginning of the second century. Why not? There is nothing at all to hinder. You and I are certainly not apostles or prophets, but the blessing of peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and of the blessed promises, we may enjoy now in the nineteenth century as much as these believers of old; and, together with the prophet, we may say, "Jehovah is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him."

Again, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him." What an especial encouragement, this is with regard to the trials and difficulties of life. All of us have sooner later to pass through difficulties and trials, our path is not always smooth. Yet in these circumstances, let us lay hold on such a word as this, "Jehovah is good unto them that wait for Him." To all that wait for Him, He is very good. Let us go and make known our requests to Him, and seek His help, and wait till it comes. For the promise is, "Jehovah is good unto them that wait for Him." There is something to be had by waiting on the Lord. He is good to them that seek Him. This is especial encouragement to any who are not yet believers in Him. Here is the promise: "The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him." What they have to do is, just to ask God to have mercy upon them. And they will find that He is good to the soul that seeketh Him. To any inquiring about the things of God, I would say, the soul that seeks Him will have blessing.

And especially is this comforting to us, the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever our trials, perplexities, and difficulties, there is the promise, "The Lord is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." There is no such thing as seeking God in vain; the seeking soul shall find. He will not seek blessing, comfort, instruction, power over natural evil tendencies from the Lord in vain. Whether we seek power over our temper, or pride, or high-mindedness, or wilfulness, or whatever may be in us, contrary to the mind of God, let us just bring the case with childlike simplicity before the Lord, and we shall find that it is not in vain to seek the Lord, but that "He is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."

Now we come to the last verse upon which we will meditate at present. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

HOPING AND WAITING.

In the first place, "It is good that a man should hope for the salvation of Jehovah." Regarding the word salvation here, it is to be understood as it is generally used in the Old Testament, not merely deliverance from sin and punishment, as it is generally used in the New Testament, but in the wider sense of the word deliverance generally. Thus it does not here mean only deliverance for the soul - though that is not excluded - but it means deliverance generally from trial, temptation, sorrow and difficulty. For this salvation or deliverance, it is good for us to hope in the Lord. All of us at times find ourselves under circumstances from which we need deliverance; then it is good to hope for salvation from Jehovah. Are we doing so? It is the will of the Lord regarding us. It is here stated that it is good to do so and you will

find it to be good - practically and experimentally you will find it to be good in your own soul. The devil's aim, when trial and affliction come, is to whisper to your heart - "Ah this may last for ever!" "I shall never get out of this." You are looking forward anticipating a life-long burden. Listen to Jesus, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Leave everything in the hands of God. Aim at being in such a position, that you can look to Him and seek from Him grace for the present day; and He will give it. As for tomorrow, if it comes, the Lord will give grace for it also.

Remember, when the thought comes into your mind, "I shall never get rid of this;" that it is good for a man, to hope for the salvation of Jehovah; He will deliver. Trial and affliction will come; well, never mind, deliverance will also come, for the Lord is good. If you do not hold fast this hope, if you lose it, and give up the comfort that God would bestow upon your soul, then you will find yourself losing the comfort and strength you would otherwise have. Therefore I say, hold it fast.

Remember the memorable passage in Psalm xxvii. 13, where David says, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. All my strength would be completely taken away, except I were expecting to see better days. That is what we have to do to be looking out for brighter and happier days: more blessed and cheerful days, which the Lord will send if we wait for Him. That is the thought which comes from the Spirit of God; the other thought, that of hopelessness, comes from the evil one, in order that, if possible, he may make us wretched, and that we should give up hoping in God, and should sit down in despair, as if no good were possible. But "it is good that a man should hope for the salvation of Jehovah." And this is not all; it is said, moreover, it is good that he should quietly wait for the salvation of Jehovah. Thus, we have not only to hope, but we have to wait, and wait quietly. This you and I cannot naturally do. We want to have our deliverance at once; we would have it today; and do not want to wait, or that it should be delayed. And if it does not come when we want it, the temptation is to think ourselves wiser "than God, to begin to complain, to be dissatisfied, and even to begin to murmur, because it is so. Now, all this is dishonouring to God, and should not be. The will of God is, that we should make known our requests to Him; in the meantime leave ourselves in His hand. And, for our comfort, remember the words, "All things work together for good to them that love God." This should sustain us in the meantime, together with the hope that He will finally deliver us. And if this deliverance is not yet, then our business is, quietly to wait, and by quietly waiting, to honour God; because then it will be known to those who see us, that we have a Father in heaven, a Father who cares for us; and that we are watched over and cared for; and that we trust and rely upon the Father in the assurance that "all things work together for good for them that love God." Let us seek to carry away a blessing.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER.

First of all, then, let us remember that, whatever trials or afflictions befall us, it is nothing at all to what we deserve. We all deserve eternal punishment, even hell. Therefore let us say with the prophet, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning."

The next point is, that Jehovah Himself is our portion and our hope. Let us be satisfied with nothing short of this, that God Himself is our all.

The third point which I desire you specially to carry away is, that when trials and afflictions come, as come they will, we remember that "it is good to hope and to wait for the salvation of Jehovah;" and not only that we begin to wait, but that we go on quietly waiting till the deliverance comes. And then it becomes us to bless" and praise God for what He has done.

Crucified, Dead, and Risen with Jesus

An Address delivered at a conference of Christians held at the Victoria Rooms, Bristol, on the 7th of November, 1865

How may we know that we are crucified with Christ, that we have died with Him, and that we are risen with Him? Possibly some believers may not know how to settle this point. It is of the deepest moment to have a clear understanding of it. It is not by a voice from heaven, not by some powerful impression made on us in a dream or otherwise, but simply by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Him for the salvation of our souls, that we settle the point that we are united to Him, that with Him we were crucified, that with Him we died, that with Him we are raised again, and with Him sit in heavenly places. We have simply to say to ourselves, Do I trust in Jesus for the salvation of my soul? Do I know I am a guilty, wicked sinner, deserving nothing but judgment; but do I trust, at the same time, in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of my soul? If so, then Jesus is my substitute; then Jesus died in my room and stead; then am I looked upon by God as one united with Christ; then have I been punished for my sins in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; then was I hung, as it were, on the cross with Jesus - God having accepted Him as my substitute; then was I buried with Christ, and have been raised again with Him; then, in my Forerunner, I am seated at the right hand of God in heaven; then, as

assuredly as the Lord Jesus is there, so shall I be. These are precious truths, not man's inventions. The Book of God speaks of them again and again. The epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, and others, are full of these glorious truths. But what we need is, that they become increasingly realities to us. Not so much that we are able to speak with clearness about them, but that more and more we know their power in our hearts. We have, therefore, to say to ourselves, I am a wicked, guilty, hell-deserving sinner; and had not God, in the riches of His grace, given the Lord Jesus to die in my stead, hell must have been my portion for eternity; but it pleased God to deliver Him up for me; and since I trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation, I shall not be punished, because my blessed Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ, was punished in my room and stead. Now, what follows? My sins are forgiven. Not, shall be when I die. Not, I shall find out some day that they are forgiven. But, they are forgiven - are now forgiven. By the grace of God I am as certain that my sins are forgiven as I am certain that I am speaking to you. Not because I deserve it. I am a guilty, wicked, hell-deserving sinner; but I trust in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of my soul; and God declares that all who put their trust in Him shall have forgiveness. As it is written in Acts x. 43, in reference to the Lord Jesus - "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." I do believe in Him - that is, I do put my trust in Him, and therefore my sins are forgiven.

Now, let me affectionately press this point on you because it is a matter of deep moment we be assured our sins are forgiven, and habitually assured of it. Because it is just this which makes heaven certain to us - that we know God has nothing against us. The knowledge and the enjoyment of the forgiveness of our sins will keep our hearts from going out towards this present world.

To be heavenly-minded, really and truly, we must be assured our sins are forgiven; and this we know simply from the Divine testimony, that those who put their trust in Jesus have the forgiveness of their sins. But this is not all. Through faith in Jesus we are now the sons of God. We are not only reconciled, because of our Substitute and Surety, and God is wellpleased with us, but we are also the children of God, and as children we are the heirs of God, and as the heirs of God we are joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now this brings us to another point. If we are the children of God, if we are the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ, then all who believe in the Lord Jesus constitute one family. They may be scattered all over the world, may in ten thousand things differ as to the present life, and in ten thousand things have differed as to their manner of life before they were brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, - may differ after their conversion as to their position in life, and in numberless ways also as to attainments in knowledge and grace; but nevertheless, as assuredly as they believe in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of their souls do they constitute one heavenly family - they are brethren. We glorify God by living as such here. In heaven we shall be together. Throughout eternity we shall be unspeakably happy, and love one another perfectly and habitually. But we are to glorify God by manifesting this love now, while on the earth, while in weakness and exposed to conflict, while the struggle is going on; now we are to be united together, and to manifest that we are one family, the heavenly family. This is the way to bring glory to God. In order to this let us keep before us "Crucified with Christ." What does this imply? That we deserve to be crucified, that we are sinners, wicked, guilty sinners - I, and everyone - all the members of the heavenly family, all sinners, and such sinners that we deserve nothing but hell. And in order that we might escape the torments of hell, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ died in our room, and became a curse that we might escape it. Where is boasting then? Who has ground for boasting? Perhaps one says, "Ah, but I have made much greater attainments in knowledge and grace than others." But what does Paul say? "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The child of God has nought wherein to glory but the cross of Christ. Therefore if we boast, let it be that the blessed Lord Jesus died for us guilty, hell-deserving sinners. And if we have a little more light and a little more grace than some of our fellow-believers, let us testify that it is by the grace of God we have it.

Now because we love one another we may speak freely. It has been stated, that, if we are of one mind about the foundation truths, we should agree to differ about minor points, in order that thus brotherly love may not be hindered. Allow me to say, that according to Philippians iii. 15, 16, I am of a different judgment. We should *not* agree to differ, but should expect and pray that we and other believers may have further light given to us; yea, we should remember that the day is coming when we shall see eye to eye. In the meantime, however, we should act according to the light which the Lord has given to us already, - always seeking, at the same time, to exercise gentleness, tenderness, and forbearance towards those from whom we differ; remembering that we are what we are by the grace of God, know what we know by the grace of God, and that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from Heaven. Instead of agreeing to differ, let us agree to love one another because of Christ's love to us. While in weakness and infirmity, let us agree to walk together, having the same precious blood of Christ to make us clean, and being of the same heavenly family.

Perhaps some present are not prepared for eternity. I cannot sit down without speaking one word to you, my fellow-sinners. I know the state in which you are, for I was once in the same state. You may be seeking for happiness, - you will not find it except you find it in Jesus. Seek it never so much and never so eagerly, you will

not find it except you find it in the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord Jesus. Let me, as one who has been brought to the knowledge of Christ, tell you of the blessedness I have experienced as a disciple of Christ. Times without number might I have gone back into the world, if I had desired to do so; but so unspeakably blessed and precious have I found it for forty years to be a disciple of Christ, that, if the attractions of the world were a thousand times greater than they are, by the grace of God I should have no desire for them. Well, then, as one who eagerly sought happiness in the present world, and never found it, and now for forty years knows the sweetness and preciousness of walking with Jesus, I affectionately beseech you to seek Him. Poor sinner! only put thy trust in Him, only depend on Him for the salvation of thy soul, and all thy sins, numberless as they are, shall be instantly forgiven; thou wilt be reconciled to God, brought into the road to heaven, and when this life is over, have eternal happiness as thy blessed portion.

Faith

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” - Hebrews xi, 1, 3.

The subject of our meditation this evening is, What is faith - how it may be increased? And the growth of faith, which I will endeavour to illustrate by some of the experiences which, by the grace of God, I have realised in the exercise of belief in His promises as revealed in His Word.

First: *What is faith?* In the simplest manner in which I am able to express it I answer: faith is the assurance that the thing which God has said in His Word is true, and that God will act according to what He has said in His Word. This assurance, this reliance on God's Word, this confidence, is faith.

No impressions are to be taken in connection with faith. Impressions have neither one thing nor the other to do with faith. Faith has to do with the Word of God. It is not impression, strong or weak, which will make any difference. We have to do with the written Word. We have to rely on the written Word, and not on ourselves or our impressions.

Probabilities are not to be taken into account. Many people are willing to believe regarding those things that seem to them probable. The province of faith begins where probabilities cease and sight and sense fail. A great many of God's children are cast down, and lament their want of faith. They write to me, and say they have no impressions, no feeling; they see no probability that the thing they wish will come to pass (Luke 18:27). Appearances are not to be taken into account. Impressions and feelings and probabilities are not to be taken into account. The question is - if God has spoken it in His Word.

Now, preliminary to what I have to say to you, dear Christian friends, lay to heart that it is because there is so much dependence on these things that we have so little blessedness among us. All these things must be left alone. The naked Word of God is what we are to depend upon. This is enough for us.

And now, beloved Christian friends, you are in great need to ask yourselves whether you are in the habit of thus confiding in your inmost soul in what God has said, and whether you are in earnest in seeking find whether the thing you want is in accordance with what He has said in His Word. If it is, that the thing you ask for will come to pass is as sure as that you were able to confide in Him.

Second: *How faith may be increased!* God delights to increase the faith of His children. He is thus glorified before an ungodly world and the powers of darkness. The confidence of His children in times of trial, discouragement, pain and sorrow, gives great encouragement to other Christians. God delights that He may do good to others through them and that they themselves, through the exercise of faith, may obtain an increase of it. For difficulties, costs, crusts, hindrances, bereavements and losses, though we shrink from them, and shrink exceedingly, are the very things God uses to develop us more and more, as the young infant has its weak limbs developed, till by and by they grow to the power of a man's. For I am not one of those who believe that we can attain to strong faith at once, any more than a weak infant can spring into manhood at once. Our faith, which is weak and feeble at first, is developed and strengthened more and more by use.

What we have to do instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, is to be willing to take them from God's hands as a means, I say, and say it deliberately - trials, difficulties, obstacles, bereavements, necessities, are the very food of faith. I get letters from so many of God's dear children who say, “Dear Mr. Müller, I'm writing this because I'm so weak and feeble in faith”. Just so surely as we ask to have our faith strengthened we must be willing to take from God's hands the means for strengthening it. We must allow Him to educate us through trials and bereavements and troubles. For it is through trial that faith is exercised and developed more and more. God

affectionately permits difficulties that He may develop increasingly that which He is willing to do for us; and to this end we should not shrink, but if He gives us sorrows and hindrances, and losses, and afflictions, we should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love, and His care for us in developing more and more in us that faith which He is seeking to strengthen in us.

Again, it is necessary that we seek to acquaint ourselves with God as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. We must not content ourselves with the notions that people have about God, but we must diligently seek to know what He has disclosed regarding Himself. And we must not take the notions which the Church and many professing Christians have of God; for I say deliberately that the notions which the Church of Christ has about God are not the truth, and we do not want to gather our views from what the Church says about God, or what Christian men say about Him; but we want to come to the very fountain, the revelation the Lord has made of Himself in His written Word, and step by step, as we read, to learn not only of the power, infinite wisdom, justice, and holiness of our God, but also of His gentleness, pity, beautifulness and bountifulness. When we read and see what God has revealed of Himself in His Word we shall find out more and more from it that God is the Lovable One, **God is the Lovable One, GOD IS THE LOVABLE ONE**; and before I go any further, I stop and ask you what is the response of your inmost soul? Is God, to you, the Lovable One? If not, you are not acquainted with Him. You have yet to find out that He is the most Lovable One. Oh, seek to say in your inmost heart that He is the Lovable One! The result will be that you will confide in Him unreservedly, at all times, in all circumstances. Though He slay you yet will you trust in Him. Turn and read the ninth Psalm. With your very own eyes read the ninth and tenth verses: "The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble". And, "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee: For Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee". We who learn to see God as He has revealed Himself in His Word, are so satisfied with God, and in His dealings with us, we see how everything is for our good. On this account it is so deeply important for our usefulness and for our growth in faith that we get correct ideas of God from the fountain of truth contained in His Word. In the exercise of our faith, and in studying God in His Word, our faith grows. I say this deliberately, advisedly, and tens of thousands of God's tried children will say the same thing.

The Church of Christ is not aroused to see God as the beautiful and lovable One He is, and hence the small measure of blessedness. Oh, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, seek to learn for yourselves, for I cannot tell you the blessedness! In the darkest moments I am able to confide in Him, for I know what a beautiful and kind and faithful and lovable Being He is, and if it be the will of God to put us in the furnace, let Him do it, so that we may acquaint ourselves with Him as He will reveal Himself, and as we know Him better, we come to the conclusion that God is the most lovable Being, and we are satisfied with Him, and say, "It is my Father - let Him do as He pleases."

When I first began allowing God to deal with me, relying on Him, taking Him at His Word, and set out fifty-one years ago simply relying on Him for myself, family, taxes, travelling expenses and every other need, I rested on the simple promises. I found in the 6th chapter of Matthew a passage, "I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Therefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" No man could by care and forethought array a lily. Put a flower under a microscope and you will say it has been attired by no other than the living God. "Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek): for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

I believed the Word. I rested on it and practised it. I "took God at His Word". A stranger, a foreigner in England, I knew seven languages and might have used them perhaps as a means of remunerative employment, but I had consecrated myself to labour for the Lord. I put my reliance in the God who has promised, and He has acted according to His Word. I've lacked nothing - nothing. I have had my trials, my difficulties, and my empty purse, but my receipts have aggregated tens of thousands of pounds, while the work has gone on these fifty-one years, I have had great difficulties, great trials and perplexities. There will be always difficulties, always trials. But God has sustained me under them and delivered me out of them, and the work has gone on.

Now, this is not, as some have said, because I am a man of great mental power or endowed with energy and perseverance - these are not the reasons. It is because I have confided in God; because I have sought God and He has cared for the institution which, under His direction, has one hundred and seventeen schools with masters and mistresses, and other departments of which I have told you before. The difficulties in such an undertaking have been gigantic, but I read that they that put their trust in the Lord shall not be ashamed. Nearly twenty years ago a beloved brother from America

came to see me, and he expected to find me an old man helpless and decrepit, bowed down with burdens, and he wondered, I did not look old. "How is this?" he said, "that you keep so young under such a load as you are carrying?"

"My dear brother," I said, "I have always rolled the burden on the Lord. I do not carry one-hundredth part of it. The burden comes to me, and I roll it back on Him." I do not carry the burden. And now, in my seventy-sixth year, I have physical strength and mental vigour for work as great as when I was a young man in the university, studying and preparing Latin orations. I am just as vigorous as at that time.

How comes this? Because in the last half century of labour I've been able, with the simplicity of a little child, to rely upon God. I have had my trials, but I have laid hold on God, and so it has come that I have been sustained. It is not only permission, but positive command that He gives us to cast the burden upon Him. Oh let us do it, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Day by day I do it. This morning again sixty matters in connection with the church, of which I am a pastor, I brought before the Lord, and thus it is day by day, and year by year; ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years. And now, my beloved brothers and sisters, come with your burdens, the burdens of your business, your profession, your trials and difficulties, and you will find help.

Many persons suppose it is only about money that I trust the Lord in prayer. I do bring this money question before the Lord, but it is only one out of many things I speak to God about, and I find He helps. Often I have perplexity in finding person of ability and fitness for the various posts that I have to have supplied. Sometimes weeks and months pass, and day by day, day by day, I bring the matter before the Lord, and invariably He helps. It is so about the conversion of persons; - prayer, sooner or later, is turned into praise. After a while, God helps. It is so about the needs of our work in sending our tracts and books, and missionary efforts. After a while God helps. We're never left, we're never confounded.

Do not, however, expect to attain full faith at once. All such things as jumping into full exercise in such things I discountenance. I do not believe in it, I do not believe in it, I do NOT believe in it, and I wish you to plainly understand I do not believe in it. All such things go on in a natural way. The little I did obtain I did not obtain all at once. All this I say particularly, because letters come to me full of questions from those who seek to have their faith strengthened. Being over again, staying your soul on the Word of God, and you will find an increase of your faith as you exercise it.

One thing more. Some say, "Oh, I shall never have the gift of faith Mr. Müller has got. He has the gift of faith." This is the greatest mistake - it is a great error - there is not a particle of truth in it. My faith is just the same kind of faith that all of God's children have had. It is the same kind that Simon Peter had, and all Christians may obtain the like faith. My faith is their faith, though there may be more of it because my faith has been a little more developed by exercise than theirs; but their faith is precisely the faith I exercise, only, with regard to the degree, mine may be more strongly exercised.

What little faith I have is the grace of faith, not the gift. But he who has the grace of faith always has it accompanied by love, rendered "charity". The gift of faith is able to command, and may even command devils. The grace of faith has to do with the written Word of the Lord.

Now, my beloved brothers and sisters, begin in a little way. At first I was able to trust the Lord for ten pounds, then for a hundred pounds, then for a thousand pounds, then for a hundred thousand pounds, and now, with the greatest ease, I could trust Him for millions of pounds if there was occasion. But, first, I should quietly, carefully, deliberately examine and see whether what I was trusting for was something in accordance with His promises in His written Word. If I found it was, the amount of the difficulties would be no hindrance to my trust. Fifty-one years, and God has never failed me! Trust Him for yourselves and find how true to His Word He is.

May God's richest, choicest blessings rest upon you now, and upon all who do now feel encouraged to put their whole trust in Christ hereafter. Then will peace, sunshine and happiness begin with the beginning of the exercise of the grace of faith, which is always found united with love.

Food for the inner man

While I was staying at Nailsworth, it pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost, though now...more than forty years have since passed away.

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day, to have MY SOUL HAPPY IN THE LORD. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be

nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as a habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning. Now I saw, that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart may be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. I began therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning.

The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God; searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessings out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.

When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me, that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference between my former practice and my present one is this. Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer. But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or even an hour on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often after having suffered much from wandering of mind of the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began really to pray.

I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it!) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter before me. No private intercourse with a brother stirred me up to this matter. And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is a plain to me as anything that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for his inner man.

As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as every one must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man: not prayer, but the Word of God: and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.

I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow-believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I had ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials and the temptations of the day come upon one!

Freedom from Worry

January 4th, 1897

Philemon 4:6-7

“Be careful for nothing”; that is, “BE ANXIOUS ABOUT NOTHING”; no anxiety ought to be found in the believer. Great, many, and varied, may be our trials, our afflictions, our difficulties, and yet there should be no anxiety under any

circumstances, because we have a Father in heaven who is almighty, who loves His children as He loves His only begotten Son, and whose joy and delight it is to succour and help them at all times and under all circumstances.

Therefore anxiety should not be found in the children of God, but we should attend to the exhortation given us in this verse: “BE ANXIOUS ABOUT NOTHING; BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING, LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN UNTO GOD”.

Here notice particularly the following points:

- (1) “IN EVERYTHING”, that is, not merely when the house is on fire, not merely when the beloved wife is dying, not merely when our children are on the brink of the grave, but in the smallest matters of life, bring EVERYTHING before God, the little things, the very little things, what the world called trifling things - EVERYTHING - living in holy communion with our Heavenly Father, and with our precious Lord Jesus Christ, all day long. And when we awake at night, by a kind of spiritual instinct again turning to Him, and speaking to Him, and bringing our various little matters before Him in the sleepless night, the difficulties in connection with our family, our servants, our trade, our profession, whatever tries us in any way, speak to the Lord about it. And in like manner, our joys, our easy days, speak to the Lord about them, and ask Him to help. Ask Him to help regarding EVERYTHING.
- (2) “BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION”, taking the place of beggars, with earnestness, with perseverance, going on, and waiting, waiting, waiting on God.
- (3) “WITH THANKSGIVING.” We should at all times lay a good foundation with thanksgiving. If everything else were wanting, this is always present, that He has saved us from hell. Then, that He has given us His Holy Word - His only begotten Son, His choicest gift - and the Holy Spirit. And therefore we have always abundant reason for thanksgiving. Oh, let us aim at this!

What is the result of this?

“AND THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING, SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.” We shall have the peace of God. And this is so great a blessing, so real a blessing, so precious a blessing, that it must be known EXPERIMENTALLY to be entered into, for it passeth understanding. Oh, the peace of God, how EXCEEDINGLY precious this blessing!

See therefore how we get this peace of God, through attending to this exhortation, that in EVERYTHING, in the most minute affairs of life, we let our requests, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, be known unto God. And further, that we seek to the utmost to avoid anxiety. Oh, let us lay these things to heart, and the result will be, if we habitually walk in this spirit, we shall far more abundantly glorify God, than as yet we have done.

Glorying in the Cross of Christ

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday evening, March 14th, 1897.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Gal. vi., 14.

This verse was written by the Apostle Paul in contradistinction to the false teachers, who gloried, made their boast, and rejoiced in outward observances, outward forms and ceremonies, and in all the Mosaic appointments which were intended only for a time, until there came the Saviour of sinners, our Lord Jesus. Now in contradistinction to these false teachers the Apostle writes, “But God forbid;” that means, “Far be it.” That is always the meaning when we find this phrase, either in the Old or the New Testament. “But ‘far be it’ that I should glory” – that I, the Apostle Paul, should glory, make my boast, rejoice in this, as those false teachers did – “‘far be it’ that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ he would glory, make his boast, rejoice!

Now the first thing that we have to ask is, “What is meant by the CROSS of Christ?” Not the ceremonies of the Papists, in crossing themselves, that is not the meaning of it; nor to wear, as an ornament, a cross; nor to carry about a large construction representing the cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ hung and was put to death; nor does it mean that cross on which He expired, was hanged, and His hands and feet pierced with large nails – for if it were possible that we could have that very identical cross, it would not be worth a farthing; it could do no good whatever. Relics were sold in Popish times, and alleged relics of this very identical cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ hung have been sold for very large sums of money. But all of no use. If the whole of the identical cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ was put to death could be obtained, it would profit nothing – as to the salvation of the soul; it would profit nothing even as to

one particle of spiritual benefit to be derived from it; it would be worth not one single farthing so far as the actual value was concerned in reference to spiritual benefit.

Now, then, what have we to understand by the cross of Christ? Even this. The blessing obtained through the instrumentality of what our precious Lord Jesus Christ accomplished while he was hanging on the cross, shedding His blood for the salvation of our souls! This is what we have to understand by the cross of Christ! Now nothing in which these false teachers glory, in which they make their boast, is of the least particle of spiritual profit and avail; but that which our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished while He hung on the cross, shedding His blood for the remission of our sins, making an atonement for us, delivering us from the curse of the law, this is of the deepest value! O how precious! Now this we have particularly to keep before us! When the Lord Jesus Christ hung on the cross, it was that He might make an atonement for our sins! It was that He might bear the punishment due to all who put their trust in Him! It was that He might deliver us from the curse of the law, because He became thus a curse for us, for it is written in the Books of Moses that "He who hangs on tree," ie, is put to death as a malefactor by being hung on a tree, "is accursed of God." And it was the Lord Jesus Christ thus worthily allowing Himself to be put to death by wicked men on the tree and on the cross, that he delivered us from the curse of the law.

Every sinner in his natural state is a transgressor before God! Everyone, so long as he or she is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, is under the curse of God, by day and by night, whether at home, or travelling, whether on the land or on the sea, whether eating or fasting, whether at work or at rest – all the time that he is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ he is under the curse of God! Every morsel he puts into his mouth, he puts there as one who is accursed of God; every drop of water he takes, he takes as one who is under the curse of God. And wherever he is, in whatever state of body, in whatever occupation he is engaged, he is under the curse, so long as he is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

O remember this! And in this state we must remain until we are believers in the Lord Jesus, for we have no righteousness of our own by which we can commend ourselves to God! There is no righteousness of our own that will deliver us from this curse under which we are by nature! A fearful condition in which every unconverted person is, and it is simply because they do not see it that they have a particle of quietness of mind; that they are not raving mad is simply because they are ignorant of the condition in which they are! O the solemnity of the thought! Can it be too much weighed, too much considered, too much pondered, in order to get rid of it?

Then, again, through the cross of the Lord Jesus we are not simply delivered from the curse; through what the Lord Jesus Christ worthily took on Himself to deliver us from, the state in which we are by nature, we are not merely delivered, but from the state of thralldom and slavery of sin in which all of us are as unconverted. Spiritual freedom we only receive, and can only receive, by putting our trust in the Lord Jesus, by apprehending the power of the Blood of Christ, shed by Him when He made an atonement for our sins, hanging on the accursed tree! O the solemnity of this! We try to make ourselves better in our natural condition, we try to put aside this thing and another thing, which we see to be contrary to the mind of God. We may have in our natural condition light enough to see that we cannot remain in the condition in which we are; and try then, on this account, to make ourselves better, but we are unable to deliver ourselves from the slavery and bondage of sin till we are brought to believe in Christ.

O, I remember sometimes as a young man, being from my earliest days educated to become a clergyman, and yet careless, reckless, unconcerned about the things of God, never reading the Scriptures, going on in all the folly and frivolity of this present evil world, caring only about eating and drinking, new clothes, and going about to the theatre, the ball-room, to the card-table, and the billiard-room. All these things I only cared about, not about God and His precious Word. Under these circumstances, nevertheless twice a year, the Lord's supper was taken, as a formal thing, a customary thing; and twice at such times I swore with the bread of the ordinance in my mouth that I would become a different man, for I had light enough to see that it would not do to go on in this careless way, habitually frequenting the theatre, and the ball-room, and the card-table, and the billiard-room – it would not do to become a clergyman under such circumstances. Therefore, I swore solemnly twice on these occasions I would become different. The next day was just as before.

How came this? Not because there was not a measure of sincerity. I saw the folly in a certain sense of going on in this way, but I was dead in trespasses and in sins. I had no spiritual life in myself. I was not regenerated. Therefore, I was a ready victim to the devil; he could lead me about, and induce me just as he pleased, and bid me do this, that, or another thing, and I was ready enough to do it by reason of the natural, carnal mind. But the moment I apprehended the power of the Blood of Christ, I became completely different. One evening, at a little prayer meeting, I saw, all at once, by the grace of God, that I was a sinner, and that Christ was a Saviour for sinners, and having entered the house where the little meeting was held as one who was as far from God as he possibly could be, I left a happy Christian.

That night I found myself lying on my bed peacefully, a forgiven sinner, and without a single human being having conversed with me on the subject. I said at once to my Heavenly Father, "My Heavenly Father, I no longer go to the theatre, I no

longer go to the ball-room, I no longer shall be found at the card-table, and in the billiard-room; I know something far better than these; Thou hast made me to be a happy child of Thine; I seek now to live to Thee, to glorify Thee." This without having conversed with a single individual under heaven. I was at once instructed by the Holy Ghost to say this to my Heavenly Father. I became now a spiritually free man. Before, I was a slave to sin for 20 years and five weeks. Now, being a believer in Christ, regenerated, born again, a child of God, all was at an end, and ever since that time, on the 1st of November 1825, now 71 years ago, my whole life has been a different one.

Now, you see the oath that I had sworn to God came to nothing, simply because I was not born again; I was not a believer in Christ. I had depended in my own strength to make myself different, and all came to nothing; but when I came to Christ, was made a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I became a spiritually free man, and I obtained thus, through faith in Christ, power over sin, because I had now spiritual life, and I was constrained by love and gratitude to the precious Lord Jesus Christ to live a completely different life from what before had been the case. Now, then, this brings before us that we should glory in the cross of Christ, that we should make our boast in the cross of Christ, that we should rejoice in what the Lord Jesus Christ did for sinners while He hung on the cross, because He made an atonement for their sins, and thus obtained for them that they should become spiritually free men. Through faith in Him they are regenerated, obtain spiritual life, and thus become free from sin.

Now let us particularly seek to enter into this, that we should glory in the cross of Christ, make our boast in it. We have no goodness of our own, no merit of our own, no righteousness of our own; our good acts and deeds are compared to filthy rags in the Scriptures – there is sin connected with them all; therefore in our own goodness, merit, worthiness, and righteousness we cannot make our boast. But in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for poor sinners, and is doing for poor sinners, we can glory and make our boast, because it becomes ours through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Firstly, all the glory belongs to God, not the least particle of glory belongs to us; what we are, and what we have, we have all in and through our Lord Jesus Christ; we have nothing in ourselves. The Lord Jesus Christ, through what He has accomplished, has given us spiritual life! We, who were dead in trespasses and in sins, have obtained through faith in Him spiritual life. And let me affectionately tell all those who are not yet believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are dead in trespasses and sins. "You have no spiritual life in yourselves, you can have no spiritual life in yourselves, till you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore, being dead in trespasses and sins, you cannot make yourselves better, because you are dead, and just as a dead man cannot make himself better, so you cannot make yourselves better as long as you are not believers in Christ." Therefore ask God to show you that you are sinners, that you may own it before God in prayer; and then when you have owned it before God, ask Him to help you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, for so you will obtain spiritual life, being born again.

Through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we obtain forgiveness of our sins – every one of our numberless transgressions is forgiven, immediately forgiven, when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot work in any way so as to obtain this forgiveness by our own doings, by our own work. It is through Jesus having made an atonement for our sins that we obtain forgiveness; it is through Jesus having in our room and stead fulfilled the law of God, the commandments of God, that we, putting our trust in Him, are reckoned righteous. For naturally we are unrighteous, we are sinners, and great sinners in the sight of God. But the believer in Christ is pardoned, and every one of his numberless transgressions forgiven; not a single sin remains to be punished, but every one forgiven! Now, is not this unspeakably blessed? O seek to enter into it! It is this which makes me such a happy man!

I know that though I have been guilty of thousands and tens of thousands of sins, in action, in word, in thought, in feeling, in desire, in purpose, in inclination, yet every one of these thousands and tens of thousands of sins is forgiven, and not one single sin stands against me. So I am able to look my Heavenly Father in the face without dread and without fear; I would follow Him up to the end of my earthly pilgrimage, either by death or the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I look at all this without a particle of dread or fear, because, as a believer in Christ, all my numberless transgressions are forgiven. I am regenerated through faith in Christ, and thus have I become a child of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ my Elder Brother. I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ! O how precious are all these things.

And hereafter, as regards the world to me, my prospect is I shall have a glorified body and I shall be perfectly like what the Lord Jesus Christ was while here on earth! O how precious these prospects are! In body like the Lord Jesus after His resurrection, in spirit, in soul, like Him, when I see Him as He is. Perfectly holy! O how precious this; and thus it will go on throughout eternity, one thousand years after the other. Unspeakably happy in the presence of God! One thousand years after the other, partaking of the "rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God!" Not a few draughts of pleasure! Notice the figure. The "rivers of pleasure." The rivers of pleasure, in order to bring before the poor sinner who trusts in Christ what awaits him! How unspeakably blessed the prospect of eternity is!

O if we entered into it, every one would at once come to the Lord Jesus; but because these things are considered simply as religious frenzies and not as realities, they are treated with indifference and carelessness, and put off for a while; and persons say to themselves, "Hereafter I may think a little more about it, but at present I will enjoy the world." And

thus, day after day, and week after week, these blessed, glorious realities are put aside, until suddenly one day the end comes and the sinner is found in an unprepared state! O if this were only entered into! One thousand years after the other, one million years after the other, one hundred millions of years after the other, and all these enjoyments in the presence of the Lord, the partaking of the “rivers of pleasure,” of never-ending delights! O if this were taken seriously, persons would indeed care about their souls!

Now the last sentence of our passage. “Far be it from me that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We see the results of this in what follows, “By whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” By entering into what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, the result is this. First, the heart is filled with love and gratitude to God for the gift of Jesus, and to the precious Jesus for giving Himself in our room and stead. Next, we are regenerated, become children of God, obtain spiritual life, heavenly life, become one with Christ, and are thus filled with love and gratitude to the precious Jesus for what he accomplished in our room and stead. And the result of this is, in this life, that we in spirit are separated from the world, we can no longer go on in their ways, in their habits, in their maxims, just as I stated was the result in my own case. The very first evening I was brought to Christ, the theatre was given up, the ballroom was given up, the card-table was given up, the billiard-table put aside, and all the worldly habits in which I had been going on year after year; and my heart longed to live a completely different life. Thus, in spirit, separated from the world, completely separated; and what was the result of this? The world separated also from me.

I remember so well my fellow-students. I was at the University at the time, where there were 1,200 young men, and they knew what a thorough comrade I had been in all their ways, their habits and maxims, and they laughed at me, they pointed their fingers at me, “There goes the fool!” “There goes the madman!” “There goes the enthusiast!” This is what they said. I, in heart and spirit, separated from the world; and they, because of my godly ways, separated themselves from me. Thus it is everywhere with true children of God. They can no longer go on as they used to go on, and the world will no longer reckon them as being one with themselves. They separate from the world, and the world separates from them. They no longer caring about the things of the world, the world no longer cares about them, any more than they would care about a crucified malefactor hanging on the cross. This is the result on both sides where it is really Christ in the heart. Separation from the world comes where it is really Christ in the heart, in the life, and deportment. The world does not care about such; the world turns its back upon them. He is a fool, an enthusiast, a madman, a fanatic, and the world will have nothing to do with him.

Now, one word more. How is it with us who are professed disciples of the Lord Jesus? Have we really come out from among the world? Are we really walking in separation from the world? Is the world crucified to us – that is, no more valued by us than a malefactor hanging on the cross? And on the other hand, is our life and deportment of that character that the world has turned its back on us just we have turned our backs on the world? Does the world care no more about us than it would care about a malefactor hanging on the cross? That is the meaning, “The world is crucified unto us and we are crucified unto the world.”

Now let us seek to know more and more in secret meditation how unspeakably precious it is to be a believer in Christ. Let us seek to be found more and more in secret, meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ has done in our room and stead, in order that our hearts increasingly may be filled with gratitude and love to the Precious One; and particularly let our inmost soul be assured that we cannot save ourselves, that no goodness of ours can bring us to heaven. Our own goodness can only bring us to hell, not to heaven. For we have to own that all our goodness is, in the sight of God, as filthy rags – that is, our own righteousness. But if we are putting our trust in Christ, we are delivered from the curse. We are born again, we are spiritually free men, we have power with God; and power over sin through faith in Christ. God grant us this blessing.

He was Wounded for our Transgressions

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on April 25th 1887.

Isaiah Liii

This chapter was written by the Holy Ghost, through the prophet Isaiah, 740 years before the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; and all that we read here regarding Him was fulfilled in His life, and in His atoning work. Another most precious truth out of many thousands that the Word of God is its own proof. It is not at all necessary to have external evidences that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God! They themselves are proof of its truths!

The commencement of the chapter plainly indicates that multitudes might hear and read what is revealed by the Holy Ghost in this portion, and yet the message of God be not received. “Who hath believed our report?” Comparatively a small number! “To whom is the Arm of Jehovah revealed?” The Lord Jesus Christ is called here “the Arm of Jehovah.” Even as our arm is the great instrument by which we work in connection with the body, so the Lord Jesus Christ was

God's great Instrument in working; and therefore He is called "The Arm of Jehovah." "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." This brings before us, in figure, the outward meanness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the inferiority of His position in the world.

In the first place, it is stated, "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant." A tender plant, a very little plant; just something springing up out of a tree cut down – yet a little life in the root, and a little shooting forth. This refers to the Lord Jesus in being connected with the House of David, the Son of David. The might and power and wealth and riches, seen in the days of Solomon, were all done with His mother, after the flesh, so poor that she was unable to bring a lamb for an offering, but must be content with a pair of turtle doves. Not merely a tender plant, but "a root out of a dry ground." Water is wanted to make it become larger and larger, for it is found only in a dry ground. "He hath no form nor comeliness." All the representations of the Lord Jesus Christ as an exceedingly beautiful man, all are fancy representations. Nothing of the kind, so far as His outward appearance was concerned. There was "no form nor comeliness" found in Him. "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him," for it was on purpose that there should be no attraction according to the eye of the flesh.

"He is despised and rejected of men." This was His standing in the world. Instead of being honoured by everyone, sought after by everyone, it was the very opposite. "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." That was one reason why there was nothing attractive in His appearance, because of the sorrow that was continually found in Him, on account of the ungodliness in all directions surrounding Him. This filled His heart with grief; and therefore no comeliness was found in Him. "And we hid, as it were our faces from Him," because of there being no attraction at all to nature. His very appearance was always indicating His communion with God; His perfect holiness; His abhorring that which was hateful to God. Therefore those who were not likeminded with Him "hid their faces from Him."

"He was despised, and we esteemed Him not; surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." The great mass of the people regarded Him as suffering on account of His own sins; on account of that which was wrong in Him they considered Him "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." But the next two verses tell us the true reason. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." On these two verses I say nothing now, because we shall more especially meditate on them presently.

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." The meekness, the gentleness, the patient suffering, the passing through heavy trials and afflictions without fretting or complaining, far less murmuring, is here brought before us. One of the figures used, "As a sheep," etc, is very remarkable. I have seen again and again, with my own eyes, when sheep are shorn, that instead of resisting and making a noise, they very patiently bear it. And thus is the word fulfilled. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He (the Lord Jesus Christ) opened not His mouth."

"He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people was He stricken." This refers to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ—"He was taken from prison and from judgement." "Who shall declare His generation." In consequence of what the Lord Jesus Christ did, and what He suffered, I here should be given Him a multitude of believers: this is the generation that cannot counted. "He was cut off out of the land of the living," and this was done not on account of His transgressions, but "For the transgression of My people was He stricken." In our room and stead He suffered, and as our substitute.

"And He made His grave with the wicked." That is, as if He had been an ordinary man, and especially as if He had been a wicked man. "And with the rich in His death." That refers particularly to the splendid grave He had, in being buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, a grave which was cut out of the rock, and therefore exceedingly costly. "Because He had done no violence." The word "because" here is rather more correctly in the Hebrew, "although." "Although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth," yet had He to die, and to be buried, just as if He had been a sinner like ourselves.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." This bruising Him refers to the greatness of His agonies and sufferings in His atoning death. "He hath put Him to grief; when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." All this is now being fulfilled. The soul of the Lord Jesus, or the life of the Lord Jesus, has been made an offering for sin. He does see His seed, O the numberless millions who have been brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ since His crucifixion, and O the thousands upon thousands, and the tens of thousands upon tens of thousands, who are continually being brought to believe on Him, "He shall prolong His days." He is living now after His resurrection; though 1860 years and upwards have passed

already, He is the Living One, and after thousands upon thousands of years shall have passed away, and millions upon millions of years have gone, He will still be the Living One. And thus the fulfilment of the Word, "He shall prolong His days."

But this is not all, for "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." The atoning work has been carried on these 1860 years, and will be carried on till all is completed, till Satan has been entirely confounded, and the works of the devil have been completely destroyed. Thus the atoning work has been going on, and thus the fulfilment of the prophecy, "The pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand." Satan has sought to resist it continually, but has been as frequently foiled, and the work of the Lord, in the midst of all the opposition of Satan, still goes on!

"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." There are not a few present this very evening who are regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the fulfilment, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." And this very day we have reason to believe that multitudes, considering the whole number of human beings on earth to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed, have been brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ; thereby further fulfilling this word. "By His knowledge shall My Righteous Servant justify many." "My Righteous Servant," that is a title given to the Lord Jesus Christ. By knowing Him, many shall be justified; that is, brought into a state, through faith, that Jehovah can count them just and righteous, though unjust and unrighteous in themselves. That is the meaning of being justified. "For He shall bear their iniquities." By reason of these individuals having a Substitute, Who in their room, fulfilled the law of God and Who in their room bore the punishment of the law, they are justified.

"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Satan, the angels of Satan, the powers of darkness, these are the strong ones here referred to; but the Lord Jesus Christ gets the victory, takes the prey out of their hands, and therefore gets the glory to Himself. "Because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." This, again, has had its fulfilment, and is going on being fulfilled in our day, and will be fulfilled while the Lord Jesus Christ carries.

Verses 5 and 6 bring especially before us the vicarious sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He, as our Substitute, not merely fulfilled the law of God, which we have broken times without number, but that He, likewise standing in our room and stead, endured the punishment due to us, on account of our numberless transgressions. For this reason these two verses are exceedingly precious, and are to be present in our hearts and our faith, in our life and deportment, and are continually to be looked at and applied to our life and conduct, in order that, in the midst of all our failures and shortcomings, as long as we do not wilfully go on in a course contrary to the mind of God, we may have "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The very first word, how precious! "Surely." "Surely," it is said in the 4th verse, "He hath borne our griefs." "Surely" He hath "carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." But! O what a "but" this is! "But He was wounded for our transgressions." The whole in regard to the sufferings of Christ is to be put aside, and simply are we to look at it in reference to ourselves, as if we were the people, and the only people, for whom He endured all this. And it is just in the degree in which we are able to apply the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ to ourselves, and to enter into it with reference to themselves, that comfort, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost results. If we think at all upon other persons, we do not to the full degree, as otherwise we might, obtain the blessing. We should write, as it were, our own name on the fifth verse, and say to ourselves, individually as believers, "He was wounded for my transgressions. He was bruised for my iniquities; the chastisement of my peace was upon Him" – that is, that I might have peace in my soul and be at peace with God, therefore He had to suffer – "and with His stripes I am healed."

And thus applying the whole to ourselves, the result will be the heart will be brimful of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; while, on the other hand, the more we look at the sufferings of Christ, the atonement He made, with reference to others, the less will peace and joy in the Holy Ghost result from it. "He was wounded for our transgressions." Here we have especially not to lose sight of the fact that it was not merely bodily pain and suffering which our Lord Jesus had to endure – though, unquestionably, that was exceedingly great – but He passed through "the hour of darkness," and His holy, righteous soul had to suffer. And in connection with all this, we have never to lose sight of the fact that the Father did not deliver at that time, in order that, really and truly, He might pass through all the woe, the misery, the agonies, and pain, and suffering of body, mind and spirit through which we ought to have passed, on account of our numberless transgressions. All this we have to carefully consider, in order to get the least idea of the greatness of the sufferings through which our blessed Lord had to pass.

Then it is further stated, "He was bruised for our iniquities." Ground, as it were, in the mill to powder by His sufferings – something like this is brought before us by the expression, "Bruised for our iniquities." O the vastness of the sufferings, the greatness of the agonies, through which our Lord had to pass! And, O how this should make us to abhor ourselves

on account of sin, for our sins brought all this on our Lord. Speaking after the manner of men, had we been free of sin, had all human beings been perfectly free from sin, the atonement would not have been necessary! But by the fall, sin being introduced into the world and all human beings to a greater or less degree being actually transgressors, and guilty of sinful deeds, sinful, unholy words, sinful, unholy thoughts, desires, purposes, and inclinations, therefore, in order that we might be reconciled to God, that we might be cleansed from all our numberless transgressions, the Lord Jesus Christ had to endure all this, so that we could be saved finally. "He was bruised for our iniquities." I ask, affectionately, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, to ponder this word, "bruised."

"The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." That is, He was chastised in order that we might have peace in our souls, and in order that we might be reconciled unto God. He had to endure all that which we ourselves ought to have endured; but if we put our trust in Him, if we look at the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ with regard to ourselves, then we shall have peace in our souls, and be at peace with God, because what the Lord Jesus Christ endured, He endured vicariously, on account of our numberless transgressions. "And with His stripes we are healed." The moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we obtain the Lord Jesus Christ as a Spiritual Physician, and get under His care, and are placed in a kind of spiritual hospital; and there we remain, under the care of this infinitely great Physician, who watches over us, who looks after us, and who does not discharge us as incurable ones, as many people are discharged from the hospitals in the world. Not thus! Not thus! But "The Great Physician" remains through the whole life we spend on earth "Our Great Physician," and we remain under His care and keeping temporally and spiritually. In His own great, precious spiritual hospital, we are kept till we are perfectly cured, perfectly healed. The moment we believe in Jesus Christ, He becomes our Physician. The moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we are placed under His care, for being perfectly healed. And the same moment we are entered in the hospital of the Lord Jesus, and there kept and looked after, and attended to by the Great Physician, and never let go till we are perfectly healed.

"With His stripes we are healed." Through the instrumentality of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are cured. The atonement He made is God's great instrument of curing us, for there would be no spiritual cure found regarding anyone all over the world, were it not for the atonement of Christ. But through pondering more and more what He did and suffered in our room and stead, by little and little we become more and more free from sin, by little and little we become more and more cured. He has apprehended us for the purpose of curing us, and He will not let us go till we are perfectly cured – that means, till we are as spotless, as holy, as free from sin, and as heavenly-minded as He himself is, and as He Himself was in His life here on earth. And we should lay hold on this by faith. It is very difficult to enter into it; nay, it is completely impossible to enter into it by nature; and even at the beginning of the divine life it is very difficult to do so.

I found it myself thus when I was converted 71 years and 6 months since, on account of the evil habits I had contracted. It was exceedingly difficult to put them aside. I had been passionately fond of the theatre, and was there day after day. I had been found at the ball-room, and at the card-table, and again and again at a late hour at the latter. And when I was converted, though I never touched a pack of cards again, though it was all over with the theatre, though I never went any more to the ball-room, yet these evil habits, these evil natural tendencies, were very difficult to surmount. I began to pray that God would give me power and victory over them, but after I had been praying a good while, it appeared as if I never should lose my love for these things, as if continually they would come back to my mind and desire. But by little and little, after all, I got complete victory over them!

I mention this for the encouragement of young Christians, so that they may on no account despair and suppose they will not be able to withstand these things, and that they will not be able to live for the glory and honour of God. The Lord Jesus is your Physician. The Lord Jesus has taken you under His care. You are in the spiritual hospital of "the Great Physician," the Lord Jesus, and He is ready to help you. Look at Him! Expect great things from Him! "Open your mouth wide, and He will fill it." That is it. He will answer your prayers regarding the things that you require. O the blessedness of the position in which we stand as believers. Everyone of us who is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, who is born again, who has obtained spiritual life, shall at the last be perfectly holy! O the blessedness of this! We shall be completely heavenly-minded, so that throughout eternity never a command will go forth on the part of God that we shall do this, or another thing, but instantaneously the heart will say, "I delight, my Heavenly Father, to do Thy will." And with the greatest alacrity we shall carry out the will of God; there will be no tardiness, no hesitation, no questioning in ourselves, whether we shall do it or not. But, as quickly as the command goes forth, we shall be ready to carry out His will.

For all this we are apprehended by God in Christ Jesus. We shall not be discharged out of the hospital of the Great Physician as incurable persons, but shall be made perfectly Christ-like in the end. This is what is brought before us here when it is said, "With His stripes we are healed." The cure having been begun, you, my brethren and sisters beloved, and I, shall be as holy in the end as the Lord Jesus Christ was while on earth! We have not attained to it yet, but the work is going on, and we shall attain to it hereafter, when the Lord has taken us home to Himself.

“All we like sheep.” Notice here in the first place particularly that it is not only this one, and that one, who went like a sheep astray, but all, all, ALL – without exception. “All we like sheep have gone astray.” And it must come, with every one of us who desires to enter heaven, to this: that in our inmost soul we are able to reiterate this, and to say to God, “Thus it is that I, a guilty sinner, went astray.” Every one who supposes that he is good, or that she is good, and that they deserve the favour of God because they have not been bad, but good, excellent people, are in the greatest error.

They think, on the ground of their own goodness, to go to heaven at last. On the ground of our own goodness, we can go to hell! But there is not among the innumerable multitude of the glorified spirits one single individual who got there on the ground of his or her own goodness; for, I repeat it, on the ground of our own goodness we can only go to hell, and not to heaven. We have no goodness of our own. There is nothing, nothing, NOTHING of goodness in us by nature, but everything which is contrary to the mind of God! And the worst of it all is we do not even see it is so bad – that is, in our natural condition. But there is the fact: the Word of God declares it. We have only to read the first three chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, and the second chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, and there is abundant proof how it is with us naturally.

But though thus with us, that like sheep we went astray and everyone turned to his own way, yet there is hope, in regard to the salvation of our souls. For the greatest transgressor, for the oldest transgressor, if only he will accept what God has provided for us in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is hope, and none need despair. “We have turned everyone to his own way.” Notice this particularly – “his own way.” That is the great sin. It is not that everyone is a drunkard, or that everyone is a thief, or that everyone is habitually given to speaking nothing but lies. That may not be at all the case. There are persons who in their whole life have never drunk more than they ought to have done, who have never been guilty of taking away from anyone as much as the value of a pin that did not belong to them; indeed, their whole life and deportment, in a variety of ways, may be not at all outwardly bad. But this is our sin: that by nature we go our own way, instead of going God’s way; and we live to please ourselves, instead of living to please God, and doing His work as we should. Doing our own work, pleasing ourselves, going our own way – this is the great sin of which everyone of the human family by nature is guilty. And we must come to see this! If we do not, we shall have no comfort whatever regarding heaven being our place and portion.

But while it is stated, and perfectly true is it regarding us, that like sheep we went astray, that every one turned to his own way, it is added, “And Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” O how precious the comfort! Had this not been added, I should not have had a particle of comfort in my own soul! I could have had no prospect with regard to heaven and glory at the last. But it is added, and added for everyone of us, the weakest and feeblest believers, “And Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” For my habitually going to the theatre to amuse myself; for my going to the ball-room; for my being found at the card-table, sometimes to twelve at night – yea, once to two o’clock in the morning – for this my precious Lord Jesus was punished. That I thus misspent my time, that I thus misspent my faculties and my money, everything with which God had entrusted me as a steward; that I lived to myself, pleased myself; that in travelling I sought happiness, instead of seeking happiness in the Lord Jesus – for all this my precious Lord Jesus was punished He did willingly, worthily bear the punishment; and now I, putting my trust in Him, am a forgiven sinner; and thus my brethren and sisters in Christ, doing the like, are forgiven ones. O how precious!

Now our business is to lay hold on this to appropriate all this to ourselves; to write our very own name to these two verses, and say to ourselves, “Jehovah has laid on MY Lord Jesus Christ MY iniquity, as MY substitute, and has made Him to pay MY sins by death; and THEY have been perfectly paid, there is not found one single sin in ME unforgiven, and MY Heavenly Father is most perfectly satisfied with what MY adorable Lord Jesus Christ has done for ME, and has done for the countless multitude believing in Him.” This is the conclusion of the whole. O how delightful it is to be able to appropriate all this to ourselves. Let not my young brethren and sisters say, “O this was very well regarding Isaiah, and such men as Daniel, and Jeremiah, and the Apostles; but that does not apply to me.” Yes, it does apply to you, my weak brother and sister, my young brother and sister; it applies to every one of us trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. The sin that is in us has been perfectly punished, perfectly atoned for; and not a single sin at the last will be brought against us.

Therefore afresh we should give thanks to God for His unspeakable gift, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, with deep gratitude for what God has done for us in Him!

His Glory

Mr Müller’s last address, given in Alma Road Chapel, Bristol, on the Sunday morning before he “departed to be with Christ”, on Thursday, 10th March, 1898

Isaiah vi; John xii. 37-41

“These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him.” this last verse settles the matter, that what we were reading in Isaiah vi, all refers to the glory of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ. In the whole Divine testimony we do not find a single portion which speaks more of His majesty and glory. We will now read it once more, verse by verse, in reference to our precious, adorable Lord Jesus.

Verse 1. The time is fixed when Isaiah saw this vision: “*In the year that King Uzziah died*”. We are reminded here of what Uzziah passed through. All went on well with him until he was highly exalted, until he became mighty and powerful, and then he was lifted up, and went into the Temple and offered incense to Jehovah, contrary to the mind of Jehovah, for it was the business of the priests, and in consequence of this he was smitten with leprosy, and to the end of his days he was a leper. A very deeply important and profitable lesson to us all, to seek for a lowly mind, and to pray that we may be kept from pride and high-mindedness: this was the fault of Uzziah.

Verse 2. “*Above Him (not ‘it’) stood the seraphims.*” He was surrounded by the highest order of holy angels - the seraphims. “Each one had six wings; with twain He covered His face.” This lowly mind of these high angelic beings forbade them to look at Him. Just a lesson to us to seek to have an increasing abhorrence of ourselves on account of our numberless transgressions, to consider ourselves unworthy to look at the Holy One.

Verse 5. “*Woe is me.*” This is the language of the prophet, conscious of his sinfulness, and being in the presence of the infinitely Holy One, he cried out, “Woe is me, for I am undone by reason of my great sinfulness”.

Verses 6 and 7. The alter represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and the “*taking the live coal from off the altar*” represents the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as this “live coal”, touching the lips of the prophet and taking away all vileness and sinfulness and transgression, made him clean before God, so the precious blood of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ, through our sins are numberless, removes all spiritual defilement from us, and makes us clean and spotless in the sight of God. O how unspeakably blessed the position into which we are brought by faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death we are now about again to remember in the breaking of bread.

Verse 8. “*Here am I, send me.*” Just as it was with the prophet, at once ready to offer himself to do the work of the Lord, to go at His bidding, so it should be regarding ourselves. Whatever work the Lord may call us to, whatever business the Lord would have us do, whatever service the Lord would wish us to be engaged in, our hearts should at once respond to His desire, and we should offer ourselves to the Lord like the prophet. If it is to give some food to the poor, if it is to clothe the poor, if it is to go to Central Africa, if it is to go to India, whatever work the Lord would have us to do, our hearts should be ready at once to do that work, of whatever kind it may be. But often, often, often it is, as in the case of the prophet, trying work. He had to shut the eyes of Israel in the way of judgment, to harden their hearts in the way of judgment, to blind them so that they could not see the truth - trying work this. *But*, as servants of the Most High, our part is to do the work, of whatever kind it may be, pleasant or unpleasant; our business is to be *servants*, and the servant has to do his Master’s work.

Verses 10-12. Of such terrible judgments we read little in the Holy Scriptures, but in this case the awful judgment came upon them, because Jehovah had sent His prophets, time after time, and they would not attend to what these prophets said to them. And this awful judgment is yet on them up to the present; nevertheless, they remain the people of the Living God, and it will yet be seen that the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have their further fulfilment.

Now, the great point regarding ourselves is this, that we should say to ourselves: “A like terrible judgment might have come upon me; I might have been left to myself, my eyes might have been shut, my ears might have been closed, my heart might have been hardened more and more in the way of chastisement, if God had been dealing with me according to my sins. O how pitifully, how mercifully, how tenderly, how graciously the Lord has been dealing with us in Christ Jesus! And what He has been doing and is doing, He will continue to do to the end of our earthly pilgrimage - He will not leave us nor forsake us, and a little while, and then He takes us home to Himself. O the bright, glorious prospect which we poor, miserable sinners have through faith in Christ Jesus! And at last taken home to be for ever with the Lord, and to see that Lovely One who laid down His life for us, ourselves being permitted to kiss His feet, ourselves being permitted to kiss His hands! O the precious prospect that awaits us! *Yet a little while*, YET A LITTLE WHILE, and all will be fulfilled. How our hearts should go forth continually in the deepest and liveliest gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ for laying down His life for us, for shedding His blood for the remission of our sins! And how full of gratitude our hearts should be that now, guilty, wicked transgressors that we are by nature, and numberless though our transgressions have been, by the power of the blood of Christ we have been made as clean, as spotless as if we had never in our whole life been guilty of one sinful action: as if we had never uttered in our whole life one single, unholy word, and as if there never had been found in us a thought contrary to the mind of God. This is the position into which we are brought through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that during the whole of the remainder of our life on earth, and throughout eternity, never one single sin shall be brought against us. O the precious blood of Christ!

Holding Fast the Gospel

Notes of a Sermon delivered in Bethesda Chapel, Bristol, on March 1st, 1874.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." – 2 Cor xv. 1,2

Those who are in any measure familiar with the first letter written by the Holy Ghost through the apostle Paul to the Church at Corinth, know that there were three especial reasons why the letter was written.

1. To answer certain questions; as for instance, how those should do who were unmarried, and those who had unbelieving partners.
2. To notice the flagrant wickedness and moral inconsistency which had crept in among these true children of God; and, in doing so, not only sharply to rebuke them on account of these things, but to direct them how to cleanse themselves of them.
3. But there was one other especial object which he had in writing this letter, viz., to take notice of grievous errors which had come in among them, and one of these we have especially noticed in this chapter, and that is, the denial of the resurrection.

The apostle brings before them how this touched the very foundation of their holy faith. If there was no resurrection, there were no glad tidings at all, - no truth in any of these things, if there were no resurrection. But he shows that there is a resurrection, and not only so, but dwells on the blessedness connected with it.

The word "moreover" points to the other things on which he had been dwelling, "*I declare unto you,*" in the sense of, I remind you; I stir up your remembrance; I remind you of the gospel which I preached unto you. The word *Gospel* is one with which we are all familiar, and yet it is so deeply important that our hearts have right apprehensions, and that our hearts enter into the full meaning of the word "Gospel."

Now, then, though we are all familiar with the phrase, and have heard it from our earliest days, yet let us seek to ponder it and enter into it.

"Gospel," - good news, glad tidings. Good news about what? Glad tidings; what glad tidings? These: That while by nature we are lost, ruined, and undone, and must have remained thus for eternity, God, in the riches of His grace, in His abounding mercy, contrary to all human expectation, contrary to all angelic expectation, in the riches of His grace comes forward, in the wondrous power of His love provides a plan for the salvation of our souls. What a wondrous plan is this, not to give all the universe for the salvation of our souls, for that would be the merest trifle; but He gives - what? His only begotten Son; He gives His Holy Child Jesus, His perfect servant; He gives the God-man Christ Jesus to hang upon the cross, to die in the room of wicked, guilty, rebellious men. Oh, wondrous grace this! and this He does not bargain for; He does not say, if you do this, or if you give me this, I will give you my Holy Child Jesus. The only condition He makes is, that the sinner accept the unspeakable gift, the Lord Jesus Christ; and if he does this he shall never lose the blessing any more. Oh, this wondrous grace, this unspeakable grace! God gives the choicest gift He had to give; and He requires nothing whatever on the part of the vilest, most hardened sinner, who has lived ten, twenty, thirty or more years in sin, if he only receives Christ, puts his trust in Him, depends on Him for salvation; instantly he does so, all his numberless transgressions shall be forgiven, they shall be sought for and not found; shall be cast behind God's back; cast into the depths of the sea. Our great adversary shall seek them and not be able to find them. These are the good news and glad tidings. And the sinner may have it now. He has not to wait until the last judgment day, but instantly he obtains the forgiveness of his sins; for it is written, concerning the Lord Jesus, in the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, 43rd verse: "Whosoever believeth on Him shall receive the remission of sins." Salvation is a *present* blessing, the forgiveness of sins a *present* blessing. The instant the sinner owns that he is a sinner, he obtains the full, free, eternal forgiveness of his numberless transgressions. If his sins were a million times more than the hairs of his head, all shall be instantly forgiven, when he trusts in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of his soul. This is not all: through the reception of this very gospel, through the belief of this very gospel, we become the children of God. It is through faith that we are born again, and thus become the children of God.

We are thus introduced by the reception of the gospel into the heavenly family, separated from the devil's family, separated from the kingdom of darkness, translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son: we are regenerated, begotten again, by this very faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; we become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; we shall be manifested as the children of God, and shall share the glory with the Lord Jesus Christ. These are

the good news which the gospel proclaims. No working for these blessings, no going to Rome, no going on pilgrimage. Instantly, on believing the gospel, we all receive these blessings for time and eternity. No devil shall be able to rob us of these blessings which we receive through faith.

The gospel is called by various names. In Romans x. 15, it is called the *Gospel of Peace*, and there is not much difficulty in seeing why. We are at variance by nature with God, we make manifest this variance by doing the things contrary to His mind. By this gospel the alienation between us and God is removed. We obtain a new nature, a heavenly life, a divine life, and so it comes that we are at peace with God, - now we love God, while formerly we hated Him.

It is further called the "*Gospel of God's Grace*" (Acts xx. 24,). It is called thus because these glad tidings have especially to do with the grace of God, not with the justice of God so much, not with the holiness of God, though the holiness of God and the justice of God are intimately connected with the gospel; but these glad tidings particularly bring before us this attribute of the true and living God. These blessings He bestows upon us in the way of grace, unmerited favour, through wounding and bruising His beloved Son in the room of the sinner, making Him a sacrifice in the room of the sinner. It is thus that God, forgives us our sins in the way of unmerited favour.

Merit has nothing whatever to do with these good news. If the question were, you shall only fulfil the tenth part of the law, it would be no longer in the way of grace. If we had the least to do for the salvation of our souls, it would no longer be in the way of grace. Works have their right and proper place, and we cannot make too much of works in their right and proper place. But the right place of works is this: we must have the forgiveness of our sins, we must have peace with God, be at one with God, before there can be found in us one single good work in which God can be well pleased. All is without blessing on the part of God until we have accepted the gospel. And therefore this is the first great business of every man, woman, and child, to accept the gospel. Except this be the case you may be a Sunday-school teacher, or you may give away tracts but not one of these things is acceptable to God. You must receive Christ first. But after we have received Christ, then works come in their proper place; not working for life, but from life, after having been born again, after having obtained heavenly divine life; then we cannot work too much for God, cannot be too much dead to the world, cannot make it too much manifest that we are dead to the world and alive to God.

It is also called the "*Gospel of Salvation*" in Ephesians i. 13; because these glad tidings do not bring merely good business, or health of the body, or family comfort, or prospects of any kind with regard to this life merely, but they bring us the salvation of the soul. These glad tidings, that the lost, ruined sinner, the one who must have remained for eternity in a state of wretchedness and condemnation, and who could look forward to nothing but the second death, to the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; that this vile, lost, ruined, hell-deserving sinner, may be saved from all the wretchedness, woe, and misery, which he must have endured for ever and ever. These are the glad tidings which announce blessing for eternity, the salvation of our souls.

It is also called the "*Gospel of the Kingdom*" (Matt. xxiv. 14). A rather remarkable phrase this. Glad tidings regarding the kingdom. In this day it would be much better understood if it were called the kingdom of the gospel. But we must cling fast to what God says, not what man says, or to what thousands of Christians say. If we do not do so it will be a miserable thing to us in the end. The days are coming when there will be neither buying nor selling, unless we have the mark of Antichrist in our foreheads or hands. These are the good news or glad tidings of the kingdom of Messiah, the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. That blessed One is coming.

The kingdom of Messiah would have been set up when He appeared, but for the rejection of Messiah by the Jews. But the kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ; and the manifestation of the sons of God is connected with all this. The weak ones, the hidden ones, the despised ones, shall share the throne of glory with Christ. With all these good news, with all these glad tidings particularly, this is connected, that Jesus will have the glory, and that each one who believes in Him shall share in this.

Further: it is said, "*Which also ye have received.*" These Corinthians were in a weak state, in a comparatively little instructed state, there were many failings among them. Nevertheless they had received the gospel. Now, how far is this true of my dear friends in the gallery? Is it true of all my dear young friends, my dear aged friends? You have heard it times without number. The Holy Ghost may have been knocking at the door of your hearts again and again; but have you received the gospel? Oh! the solemnity of this thought, the terribleness of this thought - received, or not received. It is the will of God that you should receive it. If you do not receive the gospel, you reject God's blessing, you slight the choicest of all blessings which God has to bestow. Let me press this particularly upon you, dear young people, - Have you received the gospel, or have you rejected it ?

Before passing on, turn to one or two passages where this is particularly enforced.

Romans x. 16. "*But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*" You perceive from this it is the will of God that the gospel should be received, believed, obeyed. It is no matter of choice on our part, no question whether we ought or ought not to believe it. It is as much a command of God, as that we should not steal, or that we should do no murder.

Turn also to 2 Thessalonians i. 8: *Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* There is the end of it, - in flaming fire; He will take vengeance on those who do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: because this is the one only way to obtain forgiveness of sins, to escape the wrath of God which shall be poured out on the ungodly. And therefore all those who have merely been the hearers of the gospel, and not believers in the gospel, oh! be besought to believe the gospel, to obey the gospel. As long as you are in a state of unbelief you are amongst those who obey not the gospel. This is your expectation; oh! think of it. On the other hand, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, if you came into this place as the vilest sinner, as the most hardened sinner, at the greatest distance from God, you may be instantly pardoned, may become a child of God this very instant, and the prospect become bright and pleasing.

"*And wherein ye stand.*" What does this mean? It means we go on believing the gospel, we go on trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, resting on the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls. There is such a thing as receiving the gospel, and letting the gospel go again. We see this by the Epistle to the Galatians. They were so taught by false teachers that they had let go the gospel of Christ. Let us all be wary to avoid this; it is a matter of immense importance, not only to receive the gospel in all simplicity, but to go on from first to last, knowing none other than Christ in the matter of our salvation. So we must go on to the very last of our earthly pilgrimage. As to pleasing God, we need Christ in us; but in the matter of our salvation, we must know none other than Christ for us. Now this is the point, that we stand fast in the gospel; we must hold fast Christ, depend on the work and sufferings of Jesus Christ. And this is particularly important in these days, when, through the subtlety of the devil, ritualism is rampant, and the devil would introduce priestcraft. When these things are so, how important that we should cling and cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ, and know nothing but Him in the matter of our salvation.

"*By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you.*" What does this teach us? Not merely that there is the necessity for receiving, or that for the time being we stand fast, but that to the end of our course we hold fast to Christ.

"*Unless ye have believed in vain,*" - What does this teach us? This is a word to young believers, to young converts, and those who have been stirred up to care about their souls: that they should be in earnest, that God would enable them to cling and cleave to the Lord Jesus, and to know nothing but Christ in the matter of their salvation. Those who have known the Lord for a long time, also, should see that they watch in love and kindness over those who have been stirred up to seek the Lord Jesus, that they may cling and cleave further to the Lord Jesus. We rejoice when we see persons stirred up to care about their souls; but it is one thing to begin, another thing to hold fast to the end of the course. So, while we rejoice, we rejoice with trembling; for the victory is not won, but the battle is only begun.

How To Live A Happy Life

PHILIPPIANS IV 4-7

THESE four verses are by the Holy Ghost written to the beloved brethren and sisters in Christ here present. All of us, more or less, need the counsel, advice, exhortation, here given to us. May we seek now to listen to the voice of God the Holy Spirit in them.

"*Rejoice in the Lord always*" (verse 4). This exhortation is given to believers, for none but such can rejoice in the Lord. In order to attend to it, we must first have been made to see our lost and ruined condition; we must have owned this before God, and then have put our sole trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so we become justified, we are regenerated, we are forgiven, we become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; we are brought into the road to Heaven, and Heaven will be our home at last.

Entering into this, joy in the Lord commences, but only *commences*, because to the highest degree it can be brought only in glory. But in a little degree the joy of Heaven then commences; and the more we lay hold on what we have obtained by faith in Christ Jesus the greater will be this peace and joy in God, the greater our real, true

HAPPINESS WHILE YET IN THE BODY.

We should especially also couple with this, in order that this joy in the Lord may continue, the careful, diligent, habitual reading of the Holy Scriptures; a seeking to carry out in our life what God makes known to us in His precious Word, in order that we may attend to the second part of this exhortation – “And, again, I say, Rejoice.” This is especially to be noted: Joy *commences* by attending to what I have mentioned; but this joy will be *continued* to us, we shall be happy always if we are dwelling by faith on the work of the Lord Jesus – appropriating it to ourselves.

We know how much has been spoken of this joy in the Lord. Philippians, in particular, is full of it. We have in the beginning of chapter iii this word – “Finally, my brethren, Rejoice in the Lord.” Then it is repeated here, but with this especially weighty addition: “Rejoice in the Lord *always*,” and then, as if all this were not enough, it is yet once more repeated – “And, *again, I say, Rejoice.*” So much stress is laid on it, because it tends so much to the glory of God to give testimony to the world that it is not a vain thing to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to show to the world how much we obtain through this faith in Him, and also by attending to it we strengthen the hands of our fellow-believers.

Then come two other most precious verses: “*Be careful for nothing*” (verse 6). That, as we all know, does not mean, “Be careless and unconcerned altogether about your family affairs and business matters, and work and labour for the Lord;” but, as we again and again have heard, it means, “Be *anxious* about nothing.” It is the great privilege of the child of God *not to be anxious*. And it is possible to attain to it even in this life; yea, in the midst of great difficulties, great trials. It can be attained to, it is attained to by not a few of the children of God. And, by the grace of God, I am one of those who for many a long year have not been anxious;

FOR MORE THAN SEVENTY YEARS I HAVE NOT BEEN ANXIOUS

I have rolled my burdens on the Lord, and He has carried them for me. The result of that has been that “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” has kept my heart and mind. If we are anxious, it brings about a gloomy look, and a gloomy look greatly dishonours God and greatly deters the unconverted from seeking after the Lord, for they say to themselves: “That man, that woman, is just as miserable as I am when I am in trouble.” But when they see we are in heavy trial, in heavy affliction, and yet there is found a cheerful look about us, our very look is an encouragement to the unconverted, and also strengthens the hands of our follow-believers in God. And, therefore, beloved, let us aim at this, that we *be not anxious*. As I stated: It is to be obtained, but we cannot obtain it by own resolutions, by our saying to ourselves – “I will go through it bravely.” We have in our weakness and helplessness to roll our burdens on God, then it is brought about that we have the peace of God.

Let me affectionately press this on the hearts of my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, for it brings about a miserable life if we carry our own trials, our own burdens. Even the lightest trials and burdens will be found too heavy for us, if carried in our own strength, and we oblige our heavenly Father to step in and make the burden heavier. If we, in our foolishness and self-importance, try to carry the burden ourselves, then, speaking after the manner of men, the ten-pound weight will be made fifty; and if, in our high-mindedness, we try to carry that, He makes it a hundred; and if we foolishly think we can then carry the burden, it will be made still far more, so that God may make us see how weak we are, and that we cannot carry the burden ourselves.

The next thing which I desire affectionately to commend for your souls’ profit is the counsel: “*In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God*” (verse 6). That means, not merely when the trial is exceedingly great, only then to pray, but about *little* things, the ordinary affairs of life – to bring them all before God. And the result of this is – “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Though this is a vale of tears, yet we are able thus to go cheerfully through the world. It is my habitual practice about little things, to bring them before God. I never attempt to carry any burdens myself; I roll them on God and speak to God about them. Beloved Mr Wright and myself, the first thing when we meet every morning, have prayer about the affairs of our work, and bring everything before our God; the most minute affairs we bring before God, roll them on Him, do not attempt to carry them ourselves.

“*Let your moderation be known unto all men*” (verse 5). Most of the beloved brethren and sisters here present know that the meaning of the word “moderation” is “*yieldingness*.” It does not mean that we can go too far in the things of God. This never has been the case. We cannot pray too much, trust too much, love too much, too much carry out the mind of Christ. It cannot be; but, as I said, the meaning is “*yieldingness*.” This is, though believers in Christ, we should not insist on our own rights, but be ready to yield to the world and to our brethren in Christ; and by manifesting this meek, this yielding spirit, we glorify God. Naturally we might be inclined to say, “If I do so, the people of the world will take great advantage of me.” This would be the case if we had no Father in Heaven who cared for us, if nor Lord Jesus Christ were our Friend and Helper. And immediately after we read: “The Lord is at hand.” Commit your matters into the hands of God, leave yourself in His hands; He will look after you, care for you, and see that the people of the world

shall not overpower you and take too much advantage of you. Since you have a Father in Heaven, and the Lord Jesus Christ is your intimate Friend and Helper, it cannot be so.

ASKING FOR ORPHANS

And I give here an illustration which some may not have heard out of my mouth. When, sixty-two years ago, God particularly laid on my heart to care about destitute orphans, the first thing was to seek to ascertain the mind of God whether I should be engaged in this work, and after a great deal of prayer I came to the decision that it was the will of God. I tried my motives, and invariably came to the decision, "It is for the glory of God I seek to be engaged in this." Then I began to pray with regard to the various matters in which I needed the help of God. I asked God for money. For a house, for helpers to take care of the children, and He gave me all these. And about all the various articles of furniture I asked God to guide and direct me, and did not think myself clever enough or wise enough to get them. Now all was ready for the orphans, and I fixed two hours when I would be in the vestry to receive applications for orphans. I sat there two hours, and not one came, so I left the vestry and walked home, and on the way I had brought to my mind this very verse, "In *everything*," and I said to myself, "You have asked for money – you have obtained it; you have asked for helpers – you have obtained them; you have asked for a suitable house – you have obtained it; and while you were furnishing it you asked God, step by step, about everything, that He would guide and direct; but you never asked God for *orphans*." This was not wilfully and intentionally left out, but it never came to my mind to ask for *orphans*. I said to myself, "There are tens of thousands of destitute orphans; there will be no difficulty in getting them," and therefore I never prayed about it. Now I saw how sinfully I had acted about this matter, and when I came home I locked the door of my room and cast myself flat on the floor, confessing my sin, how I had not regarded the Word of God in this particular; and I lay on the floor two or three hours in confession and humiliation of myself before God. At last, after I had once more examined my heart, I came to this "It is for Thy glory, Lord, that I have begun this, and if Thou wouldst be more glorified by bringing the whole to nought, and putting me to shame before my fellow-men and fellow-believers, bring it to nought if Thou canst be more Glorified; but if it would be for Thy glory, be pleased to forgive me, and send me orphans." And I rose cheerfully from the floor, on which I had been lying in prayer and supplication. Next morning at eleven the first orphan was applied for; before a month was over forty-two came, and since more than twelve thousand – a plain proof that there were plenty of orphans to be had.

I have given the details of this to show what we have to understand by "in everything," bringing our matters before God, and never attempting to carry our own burdens. And I cannot tell you what a blessing this had been to me – to roll every one of my burdens on God, and never to attempt to carry them myself. I had done this before, but this little circumstance taught me the lesson so perfectly that I have never lost sight of it since.

"By *prayer and supplication*" (verse 6). Ordinary prayer, and oft-repeated prayer, is not enough; we must ask in the way that a beggar asks for alms, and pursues us, sometimes fifty yards, and will not let us go till he gets something given to him. In a way something like this we have to bring our matters before God in order to have the blessing.

If you will allow me again to refer to my own experience, I could tell you what

A PEACEFUL, HAPPY MAN I HAVE BEEN THESE SEVENTY YEARS,

And every one of my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ who have not yet habitual peace may have it too, therefore I comment so continually on this. This peace of God "which passeth all understanding" may be enjoyed not merely now and then, but month after month, year after year, and for many a long year, even as I have had it now for above seventy years. And let my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ who have not had it as an habitual gift and blessing from God, see for it and they can have it. I have not the least doubt that there are very many in our midst who like myself enjoy this peace of God, but it should not be merely a few, but everyone.

God grant that this may be the result of our meditation.

How to Live to the Glory of God

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" *John xv, 8*

Extract from a sermon preached by George Müller

Precious Lord Jesus Christ, now use the mouth of Thy servant; direct by Thy spirit Thy poor servant to bring out those very points the beloved disciples especially need to help them. Help Thy servant, and let the Word come, not in word only, but in the power of the Holy Ghost, that it shall not be forgotten to the end of the life of these dear disciples here. And Thy servant asks it for Thy dear name's sake.

“Who satisfieth Thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Psalm 103,5

Notice the figure - the old eagles casting their feathers; and this being done, their strength verily renewed, and they become strong and powerful again. With those advanced in years this was the case. Thus the Psalmist, looking on himself, admired what the Lord had done for him. He does not refer to food, though that is included; and for every crumb of bread and drop of water we should be exceedingly grateful; for the body is strong and vigorous through the food given us. The Psalmist meant to say that his mouth was satisfied with good things, like that of the eagle’s was, through the instrumentality of good food. But more than this; he referred to spiritual food, through which his spiritual strength was renewed. Now, beloved Christian friends, this is the momentous point. There is no necessity for aged believers to get more and more lifeless and careless and worldly-minded. As the Psalmist got old he did not get very worldly-minded, he did not get lifeless and cold and carnal, but his spiritual strength was renewed. Thus it may be with us. It is a mistake to supposed that for two or three years after conversion we may be in a healthy and lively state; and after we have known the Lord five or ten years, may expect to become cold and dead and formal, and go back again little by little.

Far otherwise it may be, far otherwise it ought to be; and if not, we are not living to the praise and glory of God. The Psalmist in his advanced years was more happy in the Lord, more spiritually minded; he had more spiritual power and vigour at the end than he had at the beginning. Oh, my beloved younger brethren and sisters, you have before you, not the prospect of dull miserable days, but of brighter and happier days!

And here I bear for the honour and glory of God, my own testimony. I am happier now, after being a believer nearly fifty-one years, than I was forty years ago; happier far than I was forty years ago, than I was thirty years ago, than I was twenty years ago, than I was ten years ago. As the time has gone on, my peace and joy and happiness in the Lord have increased more and more, instead of going more and more. Why do I refer to this? Not to boast, for it is all by the grace of God, but to encourage my younger fellow-believers to expect greater things from the Lord, who delights in giving abundantly. And as you sing sometimes, “More and more, more and more,” there is yet more to come. Let us look out for it; for God delights to give more grace. It is the joy and delight of His heart to give more and more. Why should it not be? Why should we not in the last part of the life have the best things? Has God changed? Far from it. Is the Bible changed? No. We have the same blessed word. Is the power of the Holy Ghost less? Far different from that: nothing of the kind. The Lord Jesus Christ is ever ready to bless. The word we now have is the whole revelation. And our heavenly Father has the same heart toward His children. Therefore there is nothing to hinder our being happier, as time goes with us. If we are not happier, what is the reason? There must be a reason, and we should ask ourselves, why are we not getting happier and happier?

Now in brotherly love and affection I would give a few hints to my younger fellow-believers as to the way in which to keep up spiritual enjoyment. It is absolutely needful, in order that happiness in the Lord may continue that the scriptures be regularly read. These are God’s appointed means for the nourishment of the inner man. If the word of God is neglected, you are not making progress; but you are spiritual babes, and remain so. That is not all. You will become spiritual dwarfs! You will become spiritual dwarfs! Spiritual dwarfs! Instead of living to the glory of God, you will be living to dishonour Him. You see we are left here after conversion to live for the benefit of the world. Only a few of the children of God are taken to heaven directly after their conversion, but they are left to live for awhile here for the glory of God. This cannot be unless we regularly give ourselves to the word of God, unless we come to it day by day, and pray over it. We should consider it, and ponder over it in reference to our own wants. But especially we should read regularly through the scriptures consecutively, and not pick out here and there a chapter. If we do we remain spiritual dwarfs. I tell you so affectionately. For the first four years after my conversion I made no progress, because I neglected the Bible. But when I regularly read on through the whole with reference to my own heart and soul, I directly made progress. Then my peace and joy continued more and more. Now I have been doing this for forty-seven years. I have read through the whole Bible about one hundred times, and I always find it fresh when I begin it again. Thus my peace and joy have increased more and more. Now think of it, you beloved younger brethren and sisters in particular, and say, let me live to the glory of God. And if you have arrived to middle age, and have neglected thus to read the word of God, begin it now with earnestness; and if you thus read with prayer and application to your own heart, and seek to practice what you find, your peace and joy will increase more and more, more and more; and it will be said of you, “Thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s”. Thus the prospect of eternity, how bright, when we lay hold of the precious Word”. May the Lord grant that we may individually be able to do so!

But are there any dear friends here who have not yet obtained forgiveness? If there are, let them now pass sentence on themselves; let them now condemn themselves as guilty sinners, and put their whole trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone it is to be obtained.

How to Promote the Glory of God

An Address delivered at a United Meeting for Prayer, held in the Broadmead Rooms, Bristol, January 13, 1870.

The meeting was convened -

"To entreat God for a blessing on His work in Bristol - for the attainment of a deeper knowledge of Holy Scripture by Christians in Great Britain and throughout the world - for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of souls - for the progress of the Reformation at home and abroad, and for the spread of the gospel in Roman Catholic countries - for His overruling mercy in reference to the unscriptural designs of the Ecumenical Council - for the closer union and fuller co-operation of believers in Christ, and for the speedy coming of His kingdom."

It appears to me that, for the profit of the younger brethren in Christ, a few practical remarks, and a few hints with reference to the subjects on account of which we have met to pray, may not be out of place. I rejoiced when I saw what subjects were announced for prayer. We are first invited to ask God for a blessing on His work in Bristol. The particular point here is "in Bristol." Not, at this church or this chapel; not, at this Sunday-school or another Sunday-school; not, in connection with the particular movements of individual Christians, or city missionaries, or district visitors, but the work of God in Bristol. This at once brings before us that we are one in Christ, and all interested in His work that is going on around us. Beloved in Christ, the realizing our oneness in Christ may be tested by the extent to which we feel interested about the work of God that is going on in the hands of others. It is the will of the Lord that we should rejoice with those who rejoice, - if they are fellow-believers; and it is His will that we should weep with those who weep, - if they are fellow-believers; and therefore if it please God to work a mighty work in the way of conversion - though as to myself I had not the least to do with it - I ought to rejoice. If God is pleased to use individuals, as instruments of blessing, though known only by name to me, I ought to rejoice in the work of God. First, I am to give myself to pray for the work in which I am engaged, and to which God has been pleased to call me; but I am not to be satisfied with this. I ought to pray for the work of God in this city generally. Let me affectionately ask my beloved fellow-believers whether they are in the habit of doing so? It is a solemn and important question. If not, let me affectionately press this upon my fellow-believers, especially my younger brethren and sisters. I say - not boastingly, but simply to encourage my fellow believers - that for many a long year have I been, day by day, praying for the work of God in Bristol, - and not only in Bristol, but for the work of God in this neighbourhood, in this country and throughout the world. Not a day passes without my bringing this matter before God. I should charge myself with having neglected one of the most important petitions if I were to neglect this. Of course we must first care about our own souls, next about our own particular work; but let us never be satisfied without praying for those who are working elsewhere.

The second subject for prayer is "the attainment of a deeper knowledge of Holy Scripture by Christians in Great Britain and throughout the world." I was particularly delighted when I saw this as one of the points to be brought before us for prayer. It is of momentous importance that we should have a deeper acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, because God has been pleased to reveal Himself by the Holy Scriptures. The more I am truly acquainted with them, the deeper my knowledge with regard to the revelation God has been pleased to make of Himself, the deeper my knowledge becomes of Him. Why is it important to know more of God? Because it tends to holiness, happiness, and usefulness. It tends to holiness: the more I know of God, the more I am constrained to admire Him, and to say, What a lovely, good Being He is! and especially when I see His wondrous love in Christ Jesus to such a guilty, wicked creature as I am; and therefore my heart is constrained to seek to imitate God, to seek to do something in return for His love, and to be more like God Himself. It also tends to happiness: the more we know of God, the happier we are. It was when we were in entire ignorance of God that we were without real peace or joy. When we became a little acquainted with God, our peace and joy - our true happiness, I mean - commenced; and the more we become acquainted with Him, the more truly happy we become. What will make us so exceedingly happy in heaven? It will be the fuller knowledge of God, - we shall know Him then far better than we now do. The knowledge of God also tends to our usefulness in His service here: it is impossible that I can enter into what God has done for sinners, without being constrained in return to seek to live for Him, to labour for Him. I ask myself, What can I do for Him who has bestowed upon me His choicest gifts? Hence I am constrained to labour for Him. According to the measure in which I am fully acquainted with God, do I seek to labour for Him. I cannot be idle.

Does anyone ask me, What is the best way of reading the Scriptures? I may say a little about this, because in my experience in pastoral labour I have found how deeply important it is to know how to read the Scriptures; and because, after forty years' blessed experience, I can confidently recommend the plan I have adopted. In the first place, in order to have a deeper acquaintance with the Scriptures, it is absolutely needful that you read the whole

in course, regularly through, - not as some perhaps do, take the Bible, and where it opens there begin to read. If it opens on Psalm ciii., they read Psalm ciii.; if at John xiv. or Romans viii. they read John xiv. or Romans viii. By degrees the Bible opens naturally on such portions of Scripture. Let me affectionately say that it ill becomes the child of God thus to treat the Father's book; it ill becomes the disciples of the Lord Jesus thus to treat their blessed Master. Let me affectionately urge those who have not done so, to begin the Old Testament from the beginning, and the New Testament from the beginning; at one time reading in the Old, and at another time in the New Testament; keeping it marked in their Bible to show how far they have proceeded. Why is it important to do this? There is a special purpose in the arrangement of the Scriptures. They begin with the creation of the world, and close with the end of the world. As you read a book of biography or history, commencing at the beginning and reading through to the end, so should you read the revelation of God's will; and when you get to the end, begin again and again. But this is not all that is necessary. When you come to this blessed Book, the great point is to come with a deep consciousness of your own ignorance, seeking on your knees the help of God, that by His Spirit He may graciously instruct you. I remember when I thus began to read the Scriptures. I had been a student of divinity in the university of Halle, and had written many a long manuscript at the lectures of the professors of divinity; but I had not come to this blessed Book in the right spirit. At length I came to it as I had never done before. I said, "The Holy Ghost is the Teacher now in the Church of Christ; the Holy Scriptures are now the rule given by God; from them I must learn His mind, - I will now prove it." I locked my door. I put my Bible on the chair. I fell down before the chair and spent three hours prayerfully reading the word of God; and I unhesitatingly say that in those three hours I learned more than in any previous three, six, or twelve months' period of my life. This was not all. I not only increased in knowledge, but there came with that knowledge a peace and joy in the Holy Ghost of which I had known little before. Since that time, for more than forty years, I have been in the habit of regularly reading the Scriptures; and I can therefore affectionately and confidently recommend to my beloved younger fellow-disciples to read them carefully, with a humble mind, comparing Scripture with Scripture, bringing the more difficult passages to the easy ones, and letting them interpret one another. If you do not understand some portions, be not discouraged, but come again and again to God, and He will guide you by little and little, and further instruct you in the knowledge of His will. But this is not all; for with an increasing knowledge of God, obtained in a prayerful, humble way, you will receive, not something which simply fills the head, but something which exercises the heart, and cheers, comforts, and strengthens you, and will therefore be of real good to you,

We are further entreated to pray "for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of souls." None of us suppose that by this is meant that we are to pray for the Spirit now to be given to the Church of God; for we know He was given on the day of Pentecost to the Church in her collective capacity, to abide with her for ever, and has not been taken away, notwithstanding our many failings. Just as the cloudy and fiery pillar was not taken from the Israelites, notwithstanding their many provocations, so the blessed Spirit of God has not been taken away from the Church. Moreover, God has given His Spirit to the individual believer, - to all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But though the Spirit dwells in the Church of Christ as to her collective capacity, and in the individual believer, nevertheless it is fitting and suitable and right on the part of the children of God, that they should ask God again and again, and with great earnestness, that He would work mightily by His Spirit. We depend entirely on the power of the Holy Ghost for the conversion of sinners. There might be the most mighty preacher, as to the knowledge of the Scriptures and the clearness with which he sets forth the truth; yet if the Spirit of God is not pleased to bless the word, he may preach for months, and yet there will be no blessing. Therefore all the beloved children of God - not only those who are preachers, but those who have never opened their mouth publicly to set forth the truth - should seek day by day to ask the blessing of God on the efforts made to set forth His truth. Let me affectionately ask each one of you whether you are in the habit of doing this? Let each one of us put the question to ourselves, - Are we in the habit of praying day by day that God would be pleased, by the power of His Spirit, to work, through the preaching of the gospel, that whenever and wherever His word is set forth He would work? Not only on Lord's-day morning, just before we go out of our houses, is it right to do this, but day by day. On Monday we should begin with this, on Tuesday we should repeat the request, and again on Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday. Oh, what blessing would come to them, if believers thus acted day by day! I don't refer to my habit boastfully, but to show it can be done, and ought to be done. It is laid on my heart thus to pray day by day. I have been doing it for many years. I have been praying, not for the conversion of souls in Bristol only, though this city I begin with first, then this neighbourhood, specially having before my mind the dear Christian brethren who go unto the dark villages around. Then I pray for the spread of the gospel throughout the land and everywhere. Here is a blessed work for every dear sister as well as brother. You are not called to preach, but here is a blessed work in which you can engage. If this were universally carried out, a mighty power of the Holy Ghost would soon be seen.

We are also come together to pray "for the progress of the Reformation at home and abroad, and for the spread of the gospel in Roman Catholic countries." When I read this, I said to myself, The first thing is, in order to progress, that it should commence in my own heart. What was the great principle of the Reformation? The Bible, and only the Bible! They would no longer have anything else. There were many other points, but this was

the great outstanding one. Well, everything must be brought to the Bible. My own individual life and walk, and the work in which I am myself engaged, must be brought to the Bible; and I must ask myself, if I am honestly and sincerely to pray for the progress of the Reformation, whether it has commenced with myself. Then with regard to my family, I should be next especially anxious increasingly to bring them to the Scriptures, that their ways, lives, maxims, habits, and principles may be according to them. That is carrying out the principle of the Reformation. Then, having by God's grace, attended in some little measure to this, I should seek farther and wider to extend the principle, just as a stone thrown into the water makes small circles at first, but spreads wider and wider. Let no man say, "I am singlehanded; what can I do? If there were a hundred others working with me, I might do something." Never say this. Think of what Hezekiah accomplished single-handed, and Jehoshaphat, and Josiah, and Luther, and others, and see what they did. Oh! if we cry mightily to God, and expect great things from Him, what may not be accomplished through us? Look at our beloved Wesley, and Whitefield too: they were comparatively single-handed, and yet what great things were accomplished through their instrumentality. But there must be a right beginning, - and the right beginning is at home, with ourselves. Our own souls must first be nourished and fed and strengthened. If we aim thus to be influenced by the Bible, our influence would be sure to be felt, and would spread farther and farther, - not merely in Bristol or throughout England; but it is impossible to say how far it would be felt. Let us expect great things, and ask them of God, who delights in bestowing abundant blessings.

We are also to pray tonight for the spread of the gospel in Roman Catholic countries. Here it becomes us especially to give thanks for what God has done. There was a time when Italy was completely closed against the preaching of the gospel and circulation of the Scriptures; Spain and Austria, as well as Italy, are now opened to the gospel and the circulation of the Scriptures. It is a remarkable fact, however, that whilst Austria is open in a way it has never before been for many a long century, so that freely the Holy Scriptures may be circulated, and there is no hindrance to the preaching of the gospel there, yet with all this there is scarcely a single evangelist making use of the privilege. The Scriptures are widely circulated there, but the preaching of the gospel is as rare as in any country in the world. I would therefore particularly commend this matter to your prayers, that God would be pleased by His Spirit to call and qualify evangelists for proclaiming the unsearchable riches of the gospel of Christ in that empire.

We are next asked to pray "for the overruling mercy of God in reference to the unscriptural designs of the Ecumenical Council." Here we should say, for our comfort, that to the blessed Lord Jesus, the great Head of the Church, is given all power in heaven and earth. He rules, He governs; and though this is not seen yet, it is not the less true that that blessed One governs the universe. "So far, and no farther" can men go. The wrath of men shall praise the Lord who is able to overrule all for good, and will bring good out of evil. But it becomes us to continue in prayer; and day by day, while these prelates are sitting, we should pray that God would so work that good might come out of this council.

The last subject for prayer is, "The closer union and fuller co-operation of believers in Christ, and the speedy coming of His kingdom." I was so delighted when I read this. What will help us, who believe in Christ, to be more united together? One might say, "Oh, we must give up our differences." Allow me affectionately and humbly to say, I don't think so. According to my judgment, a closer union would not be brought about by this means, by giving up our own views of what we consider to be taught us by God in the Scriptures. Not thus; but the great point is to hold them in their proper place, and to let the foundation truths of our holy faith have their proper place. We have not to say, "Now for this evening I will put all aside that I hold distinctively from my brethren." No! Nor do I expect this from my brethren. No! We will, by God's grace, carry out the teaching of Scripture, - "Buy the truth, and sell it not." With diligence and prayerfulness, and, if necessary, great sacrifice, ought we to buy the truth; but having obtained it, for no price whatever is it to be sold, not even for our liberty or our life. But, beloved, while this is the truth, it is only one side of the truth. The other side is this: The foundation-truths of our holy faith are so great, so momentous, and so precious, so altogether super-abounding in comparison with anything else, that if we lived more under their influence, and more valued and enjoyed them, we should be constrained to love one another, to be knit together in love. Now we know we have one and the self-same Saviour, therefore we are most intimately united in this. By this faith in the Lord Jesus, we are all introduced into one family. Through this believing the gospel, we become the children of God and members of the same heavenly family. Now if this were present to our hearts, - that we have all one Father in heaven, one Saviour, all are bought by the self-same precious blood, and baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body, that we are all walking the same road to heaven, and ere long shall reach the same home, - if this were present to our hearts, I say, then this difference or the other difference of opinion would not separate and alienate us. Let me affectionately say, there is a blessedness and sweetness connected with really holding the membership of the body, and loving our fellow-believers, though we differ from them, that brings unspeakable joy to the soul. We should love our fellow-believers for Christ's sake, without asking to what portion of the Church of Christ they belong. I ask but one question, "Are you a disciple of the Lord Jesus?" "Do you love the Lord Jesus?" This question must be settled. There can be no spiritual fellowship apart from this; but that being settled, no others

should be raised. Let us increasingly pray to enter into what we have received in common in Christ, and that we shall soon be in the same heavenly home, and we shall of necessity be constrained to love one another.

We are also to pray for “the speedy coming of His kingdom.” I cannot sit down without saying a word on this point to those who do not know the Lord Jesus. When we say, “Thy kingdom come,” it implies that we are prepared for it. Are we prepared for it? We should be. “Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” “Ye must be born again.” How is it with us? We must believe the gospel; we must have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or we cannot enter the kingdom. The first thing is to believe the gospel. Fellow sinner, if you are not yet on the side of Christ, have you seen you are a sinner? If not, read the first three or four chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. You may there see what you are. Pray that God may open your understanding. If you see that you are a sinner, you have to stand before God, to pass sentence on yourself, to condemn yourself. But don't stop there. Receive the gospel. Believe the gospel at once. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” and everyone who puts his trust in the Lord Jesus shall have forgiveness for his numberless transgressions. Should any have come to this meeting who are not yet on the side of Christ, I would affectionately say to them, “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” It may be you have come into the midst of the children of God to carry away for yourselves a blessing, as I once went into such a company and came away as a believer, and being happy in the Lord. It is my desire that you may receive Christ, and trust in Him, and the blessing will be yours.

Isaiah chapter 6

A sermon preached at Clifton Bethesda Church, Alma Road, Bristol on Sunday 6th March 1898 four days before his passing on 10th March 1898

“These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.” This last verse settles the matter, that we were reading in Isaiah 6 all refers to the glory of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ. In the whole Divine Testimony we do not find a single portion which speaks more of the majesty and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ than what we are reading in Isaiah 6.

We will now read it once more, verse by verse, and meditate on it verse by verse, in reference to our precious and adorable Lord Jesus Christ.

v1 The time is fixed when Isaiah saw this vision, “In the year that King Uzziah died.” We are reminded here of what Uzziah passed through. All went on well with him until he was highly exalted, until he became mighty and powerful and then he was lifted up, and went into the Temple and offered incense to Jehovah, for it was the business of the priests, and in consequence of this, he was smitten with leprosy, and to the end of his days he was a leper. A very deeply important and profitable lesson to us all, to seek for a lowly mind, and to pray that we may be kept from pride and high mindedness. This was the fault of Uzziah.

v2 Above **Him** (not it) stood the seraphim.” He was surrounded by the highest order of holy angels, the seraphim. “Each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face.” The lowly mind of these high angelic beings, they could not look at Him. Just a lesson to us, to seek to have an increasing abhorrence of ourselves, on account of our numberless transgressions, to consider ourselves unworthy to look at that Holy One.

v5 This is the language of the prophet, conscious of his own sinfulness, and being in the presence of the infinitely Holy One, he cried out, “Woe is me, for I am undone by reason of my great sinfulness.”

v6&7 The altar represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and the taking the live coal from off the altar represents the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as this live coal touching the lips of the prophet taking away all vileness and sinfulness and transgression before God, so the precious blood of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ, though our sins are numberless, removes all spiritual defilement from us, and makes us clean and spotless in the sight of God as if we had never been guilty of one single evil deed, as if we had never uttered one single unholy word, as if we had never had one thought contrary to the mind of God. Oh, how unspeakably blessed the position into which we are brought by faith through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death we are now about again to remember in the breaking of bread.

v8 “Here am I, send me”. Just as it was with the prophet at once ready to offer himself to do the work of the Lord, to go out at His bidding, so it should be regarding ourselves. Whatever work the Lord may call us to, whatever business the Lord would have us do, whatever service the Lord would wish us to be engaged in, our hearts should at once respond to His desire, and we should offer ourselves to the Lord like the prophet. If it is to give some food to the poor, if it is to clothe the poor, if it is to go to Central Africa, if it is to go to India, whatever work the Lord would have us to do, our hearts should be ready at once to do that work, of whatever kind it may be. But often, often, often it is,

as in the case of the prophet, trying work. He had to shut the eyes of Israel in the way of judgement, to blind them, so that they could not see the truth, trying work this. **But**, as servants of the Most High, **our** part is to do the work, of whatever kind it may be, pleasant or unpleasant, our business is to be **servants**, and the servant has to do his Master's work.

V 12-12 Of such terrible judgements we read little in the Holy Scriptures, but in this case, this awful judgement came upon them, because Jehovah had sent His prophets time after time and they would not attend to what these prophets said to them, and this awful judgement is yet on them up to the present, nevertheless, they remain the people of the living God, and it will yet be seen that the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have their further fulfilment.

Now the great point regarding ourselves is this, that we should say to ourselves "A like terrible judgement might have come upon me, I might have been left to myself, my ears might have been shut, my heart might have been hardened more and more in the way of chastisement, if God had been dealing with me according to my sins".

Oh, how pitifully, how mercifully, how tenderly, how graciously the Lord has been dealing with us in Christ Jesus! And what He has been doing and is doing, He will continue to do to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. He will not leave us or forsake us, and a little while, and then He takes us home to Himself. Oh, the bright glorious prospect, which we poor, miserable sinners have through faith in Christ Jesus! And at last taken home to be forever with the Lord, and to see that lovely One who laid down His life for us, ourselves being permitted to kiss His feet, ourselves being permitted to kiss His hands – oh, the precious prospect that awaits us! Yet a little while, yet a little while, and all will be fulfilled. How our hearts should go forth, continually in the deepest and liveliest gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ for laying down His life for us, for shedding His blood for the remission of our sins. And how full of gratitude our hearts should be that now, guilty, wicked transgressors that we are by nature, and numberless though our transgressions have been, yet, by the power of the blood of Christ, we have been made as clean, as spotless as if we had never in our whole life been guilty of one sinful action, as if we had never uttered in our whole life one singly unholy word, and as if there never had been found in us a thought contrary to the mind of God. This is the position into which we are brought through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so that during the whole of the remainder of our life on earth, and throughout eternity, never one single sin shall be brought against us. Oh, the precious blood of Christ!

Mr Müller then prayed. "Our heavenly Father, we come again before Thee with praise and thanksgiving for the blessing of the past week, the past month, the past year, and of the whole of our earthly pilgrimage. But above all we adore and praise Thee, for the choicest, greatest, and most precious of all Thy gifts, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. In **Him** we hide ourselves, to His righteousness we look for acceptance in Thy sight, and to the power of His precious blood by faith in His name for cleansing. Oh, what can we render unto Thee, our heavenly Father for the gift of the precious Lord Jesus Christ. And now will it please Thee to help us by The blessed Holy Spirit, while we eat this bread and drink this wine, to enter into what it signifies, and fill our hearts more abundantly than ever with praise and thankfulness for what that blessed One did and suffered in our home and stead. Lord bless us, Thou hast often done it, do it again, and poor, guilty, worthless sinners as we are, remember us for good and bless us."

Jealousy for God in a Godless World

Notes of an Address at one of the Clifton Conferences of Christians

"I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts." - I Kings xix. 10.

We have especially, dear Christian friends, to notice that we are to be jealous *for God*; for His honour and His glory, and not for our own honour and glory; not for our own reputation and name, not for our party, our ecclesiastical position, nor even for our particular religious notions. The spirit of that holy man of God, John the Baptist, when he said, with reference to the Lord Jesus, "He must increase, but I *must* decrease" (John iii. 30), should be aimed after by us. The more we are willing, like him, to go down in our own esteem, and in seeking our own honour, the more we are fit to be used by the Lord; and He will also see to it that we are honoured by Him, because we seek to honour Him (I Sam. ii. 30).

As in everything, so in jealousy, or zeal, for the honour of God, our adorable Lord Jesus is to us the perfect example, whom we have to set before us, and whom we have to seek to imitate. But in order to be able in *any* degree to imitate Him, we have, -

1. Through faith in Him to obtain spiritual life; for we are naturally "dead in trespasses and sins." We have therefore, naturally, no desire whatever to seek the honour of God: yea, are unconcerned about it when He is dishonoured. But when we have become the children of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus, and are thus

reconciled to God, and have our sins forgiven, we begin to seek to please God, seek to honour Him, and desire that others, too, should honour Him and please Him.

2. This zeal for God allows of an increase or a decrease *in ourselves*; and it will be found to increase, in the measure in which our own hearts are practically entering into the loveliness of the nature and character of God. We have therefore to seek for ourselves to become more and more convinced of the graciousness of God, of His love, His bountifulness, His kindness, His pity, His compassion, His readiness to help and bless, His patience, His faithfulness, His almighty power, His infinite wisdom; in a word, we have to seek to know God, not according to the views of men, nor even according to the notions of Christians generally, but according to the revelation He has made of Himself in the Holy Scriptures, in order to have our hearts filled with love to Him, so that we may be earnestly longing to honour Him, and seek to stir up others to honour Him.

3. Our Lord Jesus knew the Father perfectly: He came out of His bosom. Moreover, as the perfect Man, the servant of the Father, He meditated day and night in the Holy Scriptures (Ps. cxix). The more we, the children of God, meditate in the Holy Scriptures, the more perfectly we shall become acquainted with the true loveliness of God, and the more shall we therefore ourselves seek to please Him, and the more shall we seek to stir up others to acquaint themselves with Him, that they may please Him.

4. There never was a time when it was not true regarding the world what the Apostle John says, "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John v. 19). Hence the deep importance that all the children of God in this godless world should seek to bring honour to God, live for God, be as lights in the world, manifest their zeal for the glory of God. In seeking to do so they may meet with many difficulties, but God will help them and strengthen them, if they pray to Him for help, and expect help from Him. They may find themselves sometimes almost alone, or quite alone, in their path in seeking to glorify God, as was the case with some men of God of old; but the more alone, the greater the importance to live for God, to seek zealously His glory, and the greater the reward of grace at last for doing so. Sometimes also it may appear as if we thus lived and laboured in vain for God; but the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures is the very reverse; for it is written, "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58). Again, it is written, "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not!" (Gal. vi. 9).

As we are drawing nearer and nearer the close of the present dispensation, spiritual darkness, departure from the Holy Scriptures, and consequent ungodliness, we have reason to believe, will increase more and more, though coupled with a form of godliness (see 2 Tim. iii. 1 - 5); therefore the path of a true disciple of the Lord Jesus will become more and more difficult; but for this very reason it is of so much the more importance to live for God, to testify for God, to be unlike the world, to be transformed from it. If we desire that thus it may be with us, it is needful that we give ourselves to the prayerful reading of the Holy Scriptures with reference to ourselves. The Bible should be to us the Book of books; all other books should be esteemed little in comparison with the Bible. But if this is not the case, we shall remain babes in grace and knowledge.

And now, beloved fellow-disciples, how many of us are in heart purposed to live for God, to be zealous for God, and to be truly transformed from the world? We have but one brief life here on earth. The opportunities to witness for God by our life will soon be over; let us therefore make good use of it. Let none among us allow his life, nor even a small part of it, to be wasted, for it is given to us to be used for God, to His glory, in this godless world.

Leaning upon the Beloved

An address delivered on May 14th 1871

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?"
Song of Solomon vii.5

The one here spoken of is evidently the Bride of the Lamb, the Church of Christ. She is described as "coming up from the wilderness". This, then, is the proper description of *ourselves*, as believers. And what abundant cause for thankfulness there is in this one fact, that we *are in the wilderness!* For if it were not so, we should still belong to this present world, which is under condemnation. If we were not *in the wilderness*, we should know nothing of redemption - of the forgiveness of our sins - we should not be united to Christ - we should have no hope of seeing Him and being like Him and with Him for ever.

It is, then, a matter of exceeding thankfulness, and on it our hearts should continually dwell, - that, by God's grace, we are brought into the wilderness, - that we are no longer "dead in trespasses and sins", no longer of the world, but that we have been forgiven, and are united to the living Lord Jesus, the Head of the new creation!

But this wilderness position, while it brings with it such exceeding great blessings and privileges, has, also, its *difficulties* and *trials* in connexion with this life.

The fact of Israel being brought *into the wilderness* marked them as those who had before them the hope of the land. They had been delivered from Egypt and were looking forward to Canaan which God had given them for a possession; but, they were not yet in the *land*. They were still *in the wilderness*, and had to experience its difficulties and trials. So with us. Because we are *in the wilderness*, we have before us the bright, blessed, and glorious prospect of the Father's House; the full enjoyment of all those blessings which are promised to His children, the certainty of being conformed to the likeness of God's dear Son; of seeing Jesus and being like Him. And, after all, *this* is the *chief* blessedness, - *not* that we shall wear a *crown*, and *reign* with Jesus, blessed as that will be; but, above all blessings *this* is the greatest that we shall be perfectly free from sin, absolutely and perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus in purity and holiness.

But this blessedness we have not yet in *actual possession*; by *faith* it is ours, and we have now, *by faith*, to live upon it; but the time is coming when all these things will be *actually enjoyed* by the very weakest, and feeblest, and least instructed of the children of God! It is *certain*! No power of darkness will be able finally to hinder this. As surely as we put our trust in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, so assuredly all these blessings will be ours!

It is further said "Who is this that *cometh up from the wilderness*". Now, here is *progress*. The Church is not represented as *remaining* in the wilderness, but as "coming up from it". This implies, that, as the days and months pass on, we do not remain *stationary*. The *appearance*, outwardly, indeed may be, that we are, on the 14th May 1871, just where we were on the 7th May 1871, - or even just where we were on the 14th May 1870, but it is not *really* so; - No! we are a week, or a year, as the case may be, nearer the *end of the wilderness*. How exceedingly precious it is to think, as the sun once more sets, or as the clock strikes one more hour, now I am a day, - an hour nearer my Heavenly home!

These are, indeed, simple truths, but it is the seeking to enter into these as *realities* that brings blessing to the soul! Verily I am *not remaining* in the wilderness, (our souls should say) but I am now again one week nearer the Father's House! Thus we should seek to stir up our own hearts, and thus we should seek to encourage the hearts of one another in God.

"*Cometh up*" - the progress is made *step by step*, - and so you and I are so many steps nearer home than when last we met; and how soon, how very soon, we may take the *last* step, and find ourselves out of the wilderness, and in that blessed home!

But what in the *meantime*? The Church is here described as "*leaning on her beloved*". She has a *Friend*! - a Friend who provide His love by laying down His life for her. None other this than the precious Lord Jesus; that blessed One who loved us from eternity; that blessed One through whose *blood* we have been made clean from our sins. The Friend "who loveth at all times", and this Friend an almighty Friend, the Creator of the universe, and the One who was *before* all things!

We see, also, that she had not only *taken* His arm, but she *leaned* upon it. We all know that the first may be done without the second. Even a *wife* may take the arm of her husband, *not to obtain* support for herself, but if *he* is in a weakly and feeble state, she may take his arm really to help and support *him*; but *here* is an arm brought before us - always strong, powerful, almighty - an arm on which we may *always* lean, without fear of *wearying* it. And not only has this arm almighty and enduring strength, but think of the *heart* which is connected with this arm - so loving, so tender, so faithful! Oh, what a Friend!

Now, beloved in Christ, do we *lean* upon this arm? When the difficulties and trials come, when the perplexities arise in our path, do we *lean* upon this strong and loving arm? This is just the point. It is just in the measure that we are enabled so to do that we shall be able to endure.

Let me affectionately ask, "Did we lean on this arm during the week that is past, and so lean as to obtain spiritual sustainment?" And let us, now, during the week on which we have entered, seek to aim after this. These words, that we have been considering, are not a mere *phrase* without any particular meaning; but the Holy Ghost means to teach us, by this image, that, in the *midst* of our trials and difficulties, we should, day by day, *prove* the strength of the arm of Jesus; and let us remember that *He* is the one to whom has "been given the tongue of the learned that He should know how to speak the word in season to him that is weary". Let us seek to prove more His power and love, and we shall find that it is not in vain that lean upon *that Arm*!

Love One Another

Notes of Two Addresses delivered at a Conference of Christians at Clifton, October, 1863

I.

My object in coming here was only to manifest the full sympathy I feel with the purpose of the meeting, without any intention of speaking; but being asked to do so I cannot refrain, for love's sake, from saying a few words.

One point has struck me particularly, as to the Headship of our adorable Lord Jesus. It is the will of that blessed One that His disciples should love one another, and be united together in heart and affection. If it is, then, the will of Him, without whom we must perish eternally, who poured out His soul unto death for our life, and stooped so low that we might share His throne, that we should love one another, and be united as His disciples, does it not become us in love and gratitude to obey?

What are the great hindrances to brotherly love and unity? Self-complacency, high-mindedness, pride, and thinking that we know more than others; but if, by God's grace, we are enabled to subdue these evil tendencies, and to love our fellow-believer, and be united to him, we shall see, perhaps, that if in one thing we have more grace or knowledge than he, yet in four or five, or ten points he has more than we. Who am I that I should despise my brother? What have I that I have not received? If I have more grace (though that is yet to be questioned), I received it from my Lord. If I have more knowledge (though that is yet questionable), am I indebted for it to my own mind? How does it come? It is by the grace of God that I know more than my fellow-believer.

If we are, then, what we are by the grace of God, so that every particle of power over sin, of heavenly-mindedness, of desire to act according to the Holy Scriptures, becomes ours, because it pleased God, in the riches of His grace, thus to bless us, who are we, that we should look down upon a brother, because there are degrees of ignorance or spiritual weakness, in a fellow disciple? Jesus is our head. It is His will that we should love one another. In gratitude to that blessed One, who laid down His life that I might be saved, let me obey; and if I find pride keeps me from it, let me seek grace to subdue it. "We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." When we meet with a weak brother, as to grace or knowledge, our natural tendency is to say, "Oh, he is a weak one." The carnal mind says, "Put him aside." But the Word of the blessed Lord says, "Bear the infirmities of the weak." If I am strong, let me prove my strength by putting my shoulder to the burden. If I cannot bear with the weakness of my brother it is a plain proof that I am a weak one myself. Why have we received grace? That we may help on our weaker or less instructed brother - that in helping others we may bring glory to God.

I think it may not be unprofitable to refer to one thing in my experience. When I began, thirty-four years ago, as a young servant of Christ, to labour in this country in the Word, having just received certain blessed truths - as the coming of the Lord, etc. - my natural tendency was to look down upon those who did not see them. Thirty-four years have elapsed since then. By God's grace I hold as firmly as ever, and maintain as strongly, those blessed truths; but as to my deportment to other disciples, who do not agree with me in these points, there is a difference now. The mind of the young servant of Christ was to say, "Stand aloof!" - to esteem them as very little instructed. What was the result? Was it peace and joy in the Holy Ghost? Did I imitate Him who bore with the ignorance of His disciples? No; it was anything but imitation of Jesus, and the result was anything but peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. By the help of God I am now, and have been for more than twenty years, of a different mind, without sacrificing one particle of those truths which I received in the year 1829.

My aim now is, to bear with those who may be less instructed; and, in the measure in which I am able to follow the example of my adorable Lord, the result is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. I affectionately and earnestly entreat my dear fellow-believers, especially the young, to ponder this. Pray to be kept from a spirit of high-mindedness. What you have and are, you have and are by the grace of God, and that should lead you to deal tenderly with your fellow disciples.

It is often said, for the sake of peace and union, we should not be very particular as to certain parts of truth; keep them back, and treat them as matters of no moment. I humbly state that I entirely differ from this view; for I do not see that such union is of a real, lasting, or Scriptural character. If it be truth, it is dear to the heart of Jesus - we are instructed in it by the blessed Spirit - it is found in God's book; it is therefore of great value and must be esteemed worthy of being carefully and jealously guarded. We are therefore, not at liberty lightly to esteem, undervalue, keep in the background (much less to give up) the truth, even for the sake of union. We have to buy the truth at any cost, but we ought not to sell it at any price, not even for our liberty or life.

Yet, while we hold fast the truth, *all* the truth which we consider we have been instructed in from the Holy Scriptures, we must ever remember, that it is not the degree of knowledge to which believers have attained which should unite them, but the common spiritual life they have in Jesus that they are purchased by the blood of Jesus; members of the same family; going to the Father's house - soon to be all there: and by reason of the common life they have, brethren should dwell together in unity. It is the will of the Father, and of that blessed One who laid down His life for us, that we should love one another.

But it may be asked, *Is it possible*, that differing in this and that, brethren can be united together? They can. In the three orphan houses and six schools under my direction there are sixty teachers and other helpers. These are found belonging to the Church of England, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists of close communion and open communion, Wesleyans of the Conference and of the Free Church parties and of the so-called "Brethren." All these, though from different bodies of saints, are united together in this one object of labour for Christ. During the many years we have been thus engaged, I have never known a jar to take place because of such difference. This does not arise from a sort of latitudinarianism in myself, but because, while holding firmly my own convictions, I have not required uniformity in these labourers. In engaging my helpers, it is indispensable that they belong to the Head, that they hold fast the blessed Son of God. This settled, I never question as to what denomination they belong to. This is not brought forward boastingly, but to magnify the grace of God.

It is often said that things are stated on the platform which there is no possibility of carrying out in practical life. I maintain there must be a possibility of this loving one another, because it is commanded by God; and especially may the beloved brethren in Christ, who have gathered together these saints before me, be assured that there is a possibility of doing everything that is according to the will of God. It must be possible to do that which God has commanded. And let us not think that it is an extraordinary and high degree of attainment for Christians to walk together in love. The least instructed saints should be found willing to love, though they may not agree on every point. "Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule." On many things we are agreed, and walking thus together, holding in our hearts the headship of Jesus, it is certain we shall make progress; "and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you,"

Don't say of anything, "I shall never understand this." It is entirely a mistake. As to the things of God, despair of nothing. Never make the basis of union an agreement about particular points of truth. If my brethren differ from me, I must not say, "It is a matter of no moment;" neither should I say, "I shall never know this or that truth," which may not as yet have been revealed to me. Let there be more prayer, more study of the Word, more humility, more acting out what we already know; thus shall we be more united together, not only in love, but in one mind and in one judgment. There will be no difference in heaven. There all are of one mind. Let us aim at the heavenly condition. More patience, more faith, will bring us further on in blessing. May God grant it to this assembly for the sake of Jesus!

II

The two great objects of our salvation are - first, primarily and especially, that God may be glorified and secondly, at the same time, that His children may be conformed to the image of His dear Son, in order to ensure their eternal happiness. They could not possibly be happy even in heaven unless they were thus conformed. The work begins here, and will be completed when we are with the Lord; not till then shall we be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ.

This is the blessed, glorious prospect of all who are believers in the Lord Jesus - that there is a day coming when, their will being swallowed up in the will of God, and having no will of their own, God will only have to present His blessed will to them, and instantly, in their inmost souls, they will respond. For this have we been apprehended by God in Christ Jesus. It is not only true that we shall be perfectly free from pain, sickness, and this corruptible body, and have a glorified body; but also that the day is coming when we shall be perfectly like Jesus in holiness, when we shall have no mind of our own, when the will of God will only need to be presented to us and at once we shall act accordingly.

God is the Author of salvation, and this salvation is to be obtained entirely in the way of grace. Men cannot, in the least degree, help God in obtaining it. Salvation is entirely from God, bestowed in the way of grace through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, whom He wounded, bruised, and punished in our room and stead. Jesus, having given Himself to be our substitute, was punished for us. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And all that is required of us is to accept or believe in Him to accept the salvation which He gives us freely. If, therefore, anyone feeling himself a sinner, asks, "How shall I get this precious salvation?" the Word of God replies, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (that is, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ), "and thou shalt be saved." We must give no other answer than the Apostle Paul gave to the Philippian jailor.

I would say to my dear fellow-sinner, Trust in - depend on - receive what Jesus has procured for thee; if thou wilt leave thine own merits and goodness, and trust entirely in Christ, this very moment thou shalt receive forgiveness of sins. The faith in Jesus which obtains forgiveness, brings thee nigh to God, removes the enmity which existed between thee and God, and gives peace to thy soul. The primary object of salvation - the glory of God - is accomplished in every sinner thus saved.

Then as to the saved one. Being apprehended of God in Christ Jesus, thou wilt ultimately be conformed to the image of Christ, and be perfectly happy and holy. Especially will this holiness be shown in the perfection of thy love. God is love, and thou wilt be made perfect in love. This leads to a word of practical application as to our present meeting. While we are not yet in heaven, we are not yet conformed to the image of God's dear Son - we are not perfect in love now. But this perfect love is to be aimed at and sought after. We are assembled now in order that our hearts may be drawn together in love.

Though not yet perfect in love, we are to aim after that for which we have been apprehended of God in Christ Jesus. We ought to love one another in spite of the weaknesses and infirmities we see in one another. My brethren have their infirmities, I have my infirmities; God knows them all, and He only can estimate which are the greater. That is not a question for us. Believing in Jesus, we have one common life; the precious blood of Jesus has purchased us; we are the children of God by faith as assuredly as we trust in Him for salvation. As children, then, of the same Father, as brothers and sisters of the same heavenly family, notwithstanding our weaknesses, we ought to love one another, and bear with each other's infirmities. With any who live in sin, or who, though professing to be disciples of Christ, renounce the foundations of our most holy faith, there can be no fellowship. Loyalty to our Lord will compel us to stand aloof from such, painful though it be. But all true disciples we are bound, in loyalty to our Head, to love as such, and to bear with their infirmities and weaknesses.

If I see a little more clearly concerning this or that part of God's truth than my brother does, is that any reason why I should stand aloof from him? If I have been better instructed, I am to use this knowledge, not to exalt myself, not to praise myself, but for my fellow-disciple, and to instruct him in a kind and loving way. And if that brother will not receive my instruction, still I am not to stand aloof from him, but to pray for him, and still to bear with my brother for the sake of Him who bears with my infirmities. Am I myself fully instructed? No! There is a day coming when I shall know even as I am known. But that day is not yet. If I have a little more knowledge than my fellow-disciple, still I know only in part, and I am what I am by the grace of God; and that very superiority of knowledge is given (if I have it, - I may be mistaken in supposing I have more) that I may use it for the benefit of my less-instructed and weaker brother. If I have strength, let me prove it by putting my shoulder beneath the burden.

The strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak, and if I am unable to do that, it is a plain proof that I am a weak one myself, and have no ground to complain of the weaknesses of my brethren. All, to a greater or less degree, are weak as yet, uninstructed as yet; none have room for boasting. We are all debtors to the grace of God, and should, therefore, praise more abundantly, and walk more humbly, and seek more fully to bear one another's burdens. But a little while, and the blessed Jesus will come again, that where He is we may be also. In the meantime, let us love one another. Love is of God. God is love; and he who loves most is most like God. All the members of the heavenly family should remember the precious blood that bought them and love one another whilst on the way to their Father's house.

Naaman and Gehazi

A Sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday Evening; May 2nd, 1897

2 Kings v

A great man was Naaman, a very great man, and not only so, but a very rich man, as we shall presently see by the illustration we have here. "But he was a leper." O, how frequently does the Lord act in this way, that with all the glory and honour in connection with great standing in the world, amid the admiration of the world, there is some trial, some affliction, some special trial, or some special affliction associated. Thus it was here. This man was the chief captain of the mighty host of the King of Syria. God had greatly blessed him in that position, for through his instrumentality victory, great victory, had been gained. Personally, also he was "a mighty man in valour." "But he was a leper."

Now, naturally, the desire under such circumstances was that there might be found a remedy for the disease; but it was not to be had. Yea, notwithstanding all that medical skill has been able to accomplish in these hundreds of years, and thousands of years, there never yet has been found a remedy for leprosy. It has been sought after, continually sought

after, but without avail. Now, as I stated, Naaman would say, "O, I wish I could get rid of this leprosy;" and at last he did get rid of it. But this very leprosy was the means of his conversion - he would never have got into contact with the prophet in Samaria had it not been for the leprosy. And thus God in our own case, again and again, allows a trial, a great trial, a very heavy trial, in order to bestow on us great blessing. But for the leprosy, speaking after the manner of men, the salvation of his soul never would have come! God, however, overruled all this to the blessing of his soul, and thus God overrules again and again in our own case, so that the greatest trials turn out the greatest blessings.

Here I set my own case, and refer to my own experience, in a long Christian life. I have never passed through a single trial (and I have had hundreds of them), but invariably it has turned out a blessing to me; and I have found that my greatest trials and my greatest difficulties have become my greatest blessings in the end! I mention this particularly for the comfort and encouragement of young believers; to let God work as He wills. A little maid, a young girl, is here used by the Lord to bring about a great work. God is a wonder-working God! He has ten times ten thousand different ways of working, but He always does His work and always manages things to turn out to the glory of His Name!

Who would have thought that this poor little maid, who was taken captive by the Syrians, would be the instrument in bringing about the restoration of the chief captain of the host of Syria, and, more than this, to bring about the salvation of his soul? The prophet could not do it of himself; but the prophet was to be a further instrument in bringing about the restoration, by the power of God Almighty! "And she (the maid) said unto her mistress, 'Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy'". Now this might have been said, and no notice taken of it, or, if there had been one willing to take notice, yet he might not have been in the right quarter to hear; but to bring about real blessing, we read, "One went in, and told his lord," that is, her master, the chief captain of the host, was informed, "Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. And the King of Syria said, 'Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the King of Israel;' and he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousands pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment."

He considered that as the blessing sought after was so great, he must take an immense present to give to the prophet. It was a matter of such exceeding great importance to be restored to health, to have the leprosy removed. Now here we see, what I stated before, that Naaman was not only a great leader, a great soldier, a might captain, and personally of great valour, but he was, in addition to this, an exceedingly rich man. In the first place, as a fee for restoration, he took ten talents of silver. That means, of our money, £3,422, for the Jewish talent was equal to £342 3s 9d. Then he was not merely content with ten talents of silver, but took also six thousand pieces of gold. In the Hebrew what is called here a piece of gold represents considerably more than a pound sterling; therefore, these six thousand pieces of gold made about £10,000 more. In all about £13,422 was the amount he took as a fee to the prophet for recovering him from his leprosy. This shows how immensely rich he was! Ten changes of raiment, also, of the value no doubt of not a few pounds, were included in the gift.

"And he brought the letter to the King of Israel, saying, 'Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman, my servant, to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.' And it came to pass, when the King of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes and said, 'Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.'" The King of Syria, of course, understanding nothing of the miraculous manner in which the prophet might restore the leper of his leprosy, thought it was simply a matter of power that was to be exercised, and all he had to do was to give a letter of commendation to his chief captain Naaman, and that then the matter would be settled by the King of Israel. But when the King of Israel read the letter he was altogether astonished to receive such a communication, and considered that as it was quite out of his power to do the thing asked, the letter had been written to seek an occasion against him to begin a war.

"And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the King of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the King, saying 'Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.'" It was to Elisha that the little Jewish maid had referred. "So Naaman came with his horses, and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha." He did not go in. It was beyond him, in his pride and high-mindedness, such a great man as he was. He remained quiet in his chariot, and expected that the prophet would come out to him and cure him there. "And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, 'Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.' But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, 'Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the Name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Parpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."

This passage is exceedingly instructive to every one of us. "I thought he would do so and so." He laid down a rule how the prophet should act. And thus are we continually in danger, when we read statements in the Word of God which do not agree with our preconceived notions, saying, "How can this be?" "How is this possible?" "I think so and so about it." "I think it ought to have been thus stated." Just acting like this Naaman, when he said, "Behold, I thought, he will

surely come out to me and stand and call on the Name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place” (move his hand up and down over the place, that is the idea), “and recover the leper.” O, let us ask God to keep us from such a spirit as Naaman manifested in this case.

But then he goes further, “Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.” Now, in the next verse, we see how much wiser his servants were than their master. “And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, ‘My father,’” He was not literally their father, but this was an honourable way of addressing him. “‘My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?’” If, for instance, he had said, “Run a thousand miles time after time,” he would not have considered it anything too much. Or if he had said, “Beat thyself a thousand times for five minutes each time, very severely,” he would not have considered it too great a thing. But because it was such a very little thing, he despised it. Here we find the wisdom of the servant above the wisdom of the master. “How much rather then, when he saith to thee, ‘Wash and be clean?’” Such a very little thing.

Well, this speech of the servants had an effect on him. Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” Now, it is a very remarkable thing that in the oldest translation of the Old Testament, called as many of you know already, the Septuagint, which is written in Greek, the passage is, “He baptised himself seven times in Jordan,” bringing before us the meaning of baptising. “And his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

Now, see how the man instantaneously is completely altered. “And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him. “Not now remaining seated in his chariot, in his pride and high-mindedness, as the chief captain of the host of the King of Syria; but, as a humble servant, standing before the prophet. “And he said, ‘Behold, now I know that there is no God, in all the earth, but in Israel; now, therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.’” He had now come to the knowledge of the true and living God. He had been an idolator before, nothing but an idolator, and an idolator all his life. But now, through the instrumentality of the miracle which had been wrought on him, in restoring him of his leprosy, curing him completely, he is an altered man altogether.

“Take a blessing of thy servant.” That means, “Now, take all this silver and gold which I have brought to thee, and these ten changes of raiment; take all this.” That is what he meant when he said, “I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant,” for he had brought this enormous sum of money as a reward for curing him of his leprosy. Now, see how the prophet acts. But he said, “As the Lord liveth before Whom I stand” (“As Jehovah liveth, Whose servant I am,” that is the meaning of the words, “Before Whom I stand”), “I will receive none.” This prophet sought the glory of God. If he had taken the vast sum of money offered, it would have been considered that he wrought miracles for the purpose of obtaining money. But that was altogether far from this holy man’s purpose. All was done to the glory of God. “And he urged him to take; but he refused.” He would not take one small silver coin as a recompense. Not one single change of raiment. He took nothing whatever! The glory of God was dearer to his heart than all the immense sum of gold and silver which Naaman brought to give him.

“And Naaman said, ‘Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules’ burden of earth? For thy servant will thenceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord.’” See how complete the change was! Without a word being said by the prophet to him, he had obtained from God enough light at once to see that he could not remain any longer an idolator. As to his worship, there must be a complete alteration in his whole life. He saw that the worship in which he had been engaged up to that time was altogether contrary to the mind of God, that it was idolatry, and hateful to Him; that he had been worshipping devils, instead of the true and living God.

He desired instantaneously to become altogether different; and without a single word having been spoken to him on the subject, he considered that now he had to alter all this. He must bring his offering to God, and he conceived that there was no better altar to be obtained than one made of the earth of the country of Israel. For this reason, he desired “two mules’ burden of earth.” See in what a brief time God can work real, true conversion in the hearts of persons! And to make this practical we are to look upon our unconverted parents, or unconverted children, or unconverted wives or husbands, however far from God they may be now, and remember how it is in the power of God very, very quickly, in a brief moment, to change their hearts completely. Such a portion as this tells us how readily God can alter things. There is Paul’s conversion before us. The voice from heaven, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” instantly brought about a complete change in the heart of this persecutor of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there is Manasseh’s case: a most fearfully wicked one. We have not an instance, in Holy Scripture, of one more abominable and more wicked than this Manasseh was. But the Almighty imposed a terrible judgment on him, with the result that he was brought to the knowledge of the true living God, and became an entirely altered person. This abominable wretch, this most awful sinner of sinners!

See what God can do. The man is completely altered. He who had made Jerusalem almost to swim in blood, on account of the numberless innocent persons whom he had murdered. An exceeding encouragement this is, and it brings before us the exhortation under no circumstances to give up prayer, but continually to look at the power of God, in His love, to listen to our supplications.

“And Naaman said, ‘Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules’ burden of earth. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth unto the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.’” A remark that which shows us the enlightenment given to Naaman. He reasoned, “I am going back to Damascus, and when there, I, as the chief captain of the host of the King of Syria, shall have to accompany my master when he worships in the house of the idol Rimmon. My master will expect that when he bows before Rimmon, I bow too; and what will become of me if I bow not down, as my master the king does?” Therefore, he brings this before the prophet.

Now, naturally, one might have expected that the prophet would say, “O, Naaman, this would be very wicked of you; thou must rather give up thy position as chief captain than bow down before this idol. Thou wilt dishonour God, the true and living God, in doing so!” But what does the prophet say? “And he said unto him, ‘Go in peace’”. That means, before Naaman could get to his master’s, the Lord would enlighten him more and more; for he had shown already how in these few hours after his conversion, he had obtained such an exceeding great amount of knowledge that he could no longer carry on his idol worship as before, and, therefore, wanted another altar altogether, and would on this account take some of the earth away out of the land of Israel, in order to carry on a completely different worship from what he had been engaged in before. Therefore, the prophet considered, “Let him alone; the Holy Spirit will instruct him further and further, for he has given proof already how greatly He has advanced him since he dipped himself and washed himself in Jordan.”

It was on this account that the prophet said, “Go in peace.” Not that he would countenance idolatry, but that at present he was too weak to be fully enlightened about everything. Just such a case as we find in the Gospels. The Lord Jesus Christ had many things more to say to his disciples, but they could not bear them, and, therefore, He did not speak, further and further to them. For this very reason, the prophet said nothing, but left it to the power of the Spirit of God, not merely to enlighten, but to strengthen him, for what he had to do. And we have the fullest reason to believe that Naaman, on whom the king had leaned in going to the house of Rimmon, no longer proceeded as he had before.

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, said ‘Behold, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought, but as the Lord liveth, I will run after him and take somewhat of him.’ So Gehazi followed after Naaman, and when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, ‘Is all well?’; and he said, ‘All is well; my master hath sent me, saying, ‘Behold, even now, there be come to me from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets, give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.’” A complete falsehood, a fabrication of the whole, in order that he might get money for himself. And he did get the money for himself; but the lies he had uttered brought a most horrible judgment.

“And Naaman said, ‘Be content; take two talents.’ and he urged him and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.” Naaman was ready at once to do what he was asked by giving two talents – which, of our money, is £684 8s – besides two changes of garments; and it was a heavy load for two servants to carry. “And they bare them before him. And when he came to the tower” – rather to the elevation of the hill, Samaria being built on a hill, which he had come down in order to get to Naaman – “he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house; and he let the men go, and they departed.” Having got the money, he put it away in some secret place in the house to hide it. “But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, ‘Whence cometh thou, Gehazi?’ And he said, ‘Thy servant went no whither.’” Ready to utter lie after lie. “And he said unto him, ‘Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?’”

“O, Gehazi, thou has not cared in the least about the honour of Jehovah!” We imagine the prophet saying, “I refused what was offered to me, and would take nothing whatever, in order that God might be glorified by my declining to accept a recompense for restoring him of his leprosy; and thou hast uttered lies, thou hast taken this money contrary to the mind of God. This is no time to receive money under such circumstances; it is no time to receive a profit, to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants, as thou are looking after, and craving to obtain, by the money which thou, through lies, hast now obtained.”

“The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman, shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.” The ordinary way in which God acts is that He does not, under like circumstances, bestow such terrible affliction, in the way of chastisement, on those who have been as guilty as this Gehazi was, but this

judgment is to bring before us how painful sin is to God, and how in the end He will visit wickedness upon those who offend Him. And this particularly reminds us of the fact, since all of us more or less are sinners, though we may not have been guilty of such sins as Gehazi was, that we need the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to make us clean from our sins.

Therefore, the solemn question occurs in reference to everyone of us, "Have we obtained this atonement for ourselves? Have we individually been really and truly cleansed from our sins, through faith in the Lord Jesus, so that the blood of Christ becomes our atonement, to make us clean from all our numberless transgressions?" How do we stand before God regarding our sins? O, what will become of us if for one single sin of which we have been guilty, we have to suffer! For every one of our numberless transgressions we need the blood of Christ to make us clean; and if we are standing before God on the ground of our own goodness, merits and worthiness, it would be certain to be our ruin for ever. Every one of us, the very best among us, needs a Saviour. And trusting in Him, depending on Him, the greatest sinner need not despair, for there is power in the blood of Christ to make all clean from their sins.

Now, then, let us remember how in Naaman's case, an exceeding great trial led to an exceeding great blessing, even the salvation of his soul. And though we may be saved already by having come to Christ, and therefore, though in this sense the blessing may not be so great as in the case of Naaman, this is certain: that God intends by every trial with which He visits us to bring a blessing in the end. Thus invariably I have found it.

Then let us remember how much a little maid may accomplish; how even a little maid may witness for God, and be His instrument in bringing about a great blessing. Then let us further remember, in regard to the Holy Scriptures, that we have never to reason as Naaman did, "I thought," "I thought." It is not what we think, but what God thinks. God declares the truth, and our business is to accept it as He declares it. We have not to say, "O, I thought He would do so and so!" Let us not reason about the Word of God as if we knew better than God. He knows; and we have to learn. God is infinitely wise, and we are extremely ignorant. We have, therefore, to submit to what He says at all times, and under all circumstances.

Then, lastly, let the example of Gehazi be a warning to us. Though God does not in every case visit sin as He did here in the case of Gehazi; at the last He will have the account settled regarding our sins, and woe, woe, woe, unto us, if we are found standing on the ground of our own merit and worthiness, instead of hiding ourselves in Christ. The work must be His. Depending entirely upon His atoning work, knowing nothing in the matter of salvation but Christ, and from first to last, all, all, will be well throughout eternity.

New Year's Address to Christians

Delivered at the Gospel Hall, St Nicholas Road, St Paul's, Bristol, on Sunday morning, January 9th, 1898

Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump [or renewed], as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. – I Cor v, 6, 7, 8.

We have been reading in the 12th chapter of the Book of Exodus about the institution of the Passover and what it was; and here in this portion, which I have just now read, we find what we have to understand by the Passover; in itself setting forth in type, and setting forth in figure, our Lord Jesus Christ. We will now go through these verses with the object of seeing their connection with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will read again, therefore, this portion verse by verse. The Book of Exodus, chapter 12: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.'" Here we find, in one particular, how the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to in type. The moment the sinner sees that he is a sinner, and condemns himself before God as one who deserves nothing but punishment, and at the same time puts his trust alone in Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul, he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are regenerated, we are born again, we obtain spiritual life; and therefore become completely different from what we were.

Before that, the sinner lives in sin; he is, as the Scripture calls it, "dead in trespasses and sin," and knows nothing really and truly of God; but when his eyes are opened by the power of God the Holy Spirit, and he sees the wretched, miserable condition in which he has been all his life long, and is made to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, a new life begins – that is, a spiritual life begins; he is an altered man altogether. Now this is set forth in figure, in the

chapter, by the month in which the Passover lamb was instituted, and was being celebrated. It becomes the first month. A new year begins; the state of things is completely altered when we are brought to believe in Jesus Christ.

The third verse: "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.'" Here we have to observe that, on the tenth day, this lamb was to be taken from the flock. It was to be a spotless lamb, a perfect lamb; there was to be no blemish in it, else it was not to be taken for the Passover lamb, because all the animals that were used for offering were to be without blemish. Now, although the lamb was taken on the tenth day, it was only to be slain on the fourteenth day; it was not to be slain on the same day that it was chosen from the flock. There is a meaning in this! The Lord Jesus Christ, when He came into the world, was perfectly holy, perfectly spotless, perfectly sinless; but He had to stay here thirty-three years, in order that this might be proved, and seen by everybody. The powers of darkness were to see it; and the holy, spotless, elect angels of heaven were to see it; and the godly of human beings were to see it - that He was the perfectly Holy, Spotless One. Therefore He had to stay here for a good while, that this might be proved.

This is set forth by the fact that the lamb was to be a spotless lamb, chosen on the tenth day of the month, that opportunity might be given to see further and further on those days to the fourteenth day that it was spotless. "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.'" Every man a lamb," that is the household - the head of the family was to choose a lamb! Now, it might happen that there were only five or six in the whole family, possibly only four, and yet they were to gather round the lamb, the whole lamb, nothing short of the lamb. Around the lamb they were to gather; the whole lamb, roasted as it was, was to be brought on the table, and was to be eaten, with the legs, and with the purtenances thereof - that is, the heart, the lungs, and the kidneys. The whole lamb they were to have about them.

Therefore, what was to be done if the family were small? They were to invite the neighbour next to them; not the uncle, or the aunt, or the cousins. But the neighbour next to them was to be invited, with his family, in order that there might be sufficient persons for the consumption of the lamb. Now this is very remarkable. It shows to us that they were to live till the Passover time came again in peace! It was a very awful thing if they were to quarrel with their next neighbour; then to invite him to come. This indicates that it was expected that they who gathered around the lamb were living in peace. Now this is just how it should be in the heavenly family. Those who feed on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ should be on good terms with their next-door neighbour; not on good terms only with their uncle, or aunt or their cousins, but with their next-door neighbour. The whole heavenly family should be altogether on good terms, not merely with the rich among themselves, and the poor among themselves, but all, rich and poor alike, no matter whatever their position in life, whatever the amount of education they have had. As assuredly as we belong to Christ, we should love one another, and we should be on good terms with our neighbours. The question should not be, "Is this one an educated person, or a rich person?" but "Does he or she belong to Christ?" "Does he or she love the Lord Jesus Christ?" That is the point; and then, if such be the case, we should love one another as brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. A very, very instructive point that the next-door neighbour was to come in, and make up the number of those to eat the lamb.

"If the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it, according to the number of the souls, every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish [as all the sacrifices are to be], a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats." "A male of the first year." This is the stronger, and this in type sets forth the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was really and truly *A Man*, sin only excepted; but at the same time He was really and truly *GOD*, as the Father. "Ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month."

"And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." This is particularly to be noticed. It is not that merely certain persons need the Lord Jesus Christ, and that other persons can do without Him! No one will go to heaven without Christ! No one is a real, true believer, except he puts his sole trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ! This is set forth by the fact that "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." They all have a part in connection with the Passover, and as assuredly as we are believers in Christ, so surely do we trust in the Death, in the Atonement, of the Lord Jesus Christ; and whosoever does not put his sole, and whole, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, does not believe in Christ, and therefore is yet in his sins.

"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it; and they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire." It was not to be eaten raw, nor was it to be eaten sodden with water, but "roast with fire." This brings before us in type the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was exposed to the wrath of God, that not merely nominally, but really and truly, He had to pass through all the agonies, the torments, the sufferings through which we ought to have passed on account of our numberless transgressions in

action, in word, in thought, in feeling, in desire, in purpose, and in inclination. This is set forth by the lamb being “roast with fire.”

With unleavened bread they should eat it. We have been reading in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians what is set forth by the unleavened bread. There leaven, as leaven, signifies malice and wickedness; but the unleavened bread signifies sincerity and truth. And this is what we have particularly to aim at, that we are found in a state of uprightness! Uprightness is brought before us by this unleavened bread. The very opposite to guile, the very opposite to hypocrisy. Uprightness of heart, this is what God desires in His children! God bears with the weakness of his children, the infirmities of His children; but He does not bear with hypocrisy, with guile, with insincerity. He wants us to be upright, sincere, and without guile; and therefore we have to ask God continually that, in the riches of His grace, He would give unto us real, true, spiritual sincerity and uprightness and truth – that is, if really and truly we care about the revelation that He has been pleased to make in the Holy Scriptures, and seek to act according to the Word of God. A deeply important point this is – that we do not go our own way; that we do not seek to please ourselves; that we do not think we may do this, that, or the other thing, for God will not be particular. God will be particular! He cares about the Truth which He has put into our hands in the Holy Scriptures!

Then not merely was the lamb to be roast with fire and eaten with unleavened bread, but “with bitter herbs” they were to eat it. With bitter herbs. What might these be? I judge the herbs to be the deep consciousness the poor sinner has of his former life and deportment. We have forgiveness when we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; all our numberless sins are forgiven! But though God has forgiven us, we cannot, so to speak, forgive ourselves; we continually remember all the ungodly life, and the ungodly ways, in which we went before our conversion. It is now seventy-two years and six weeks that I have been a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for these seventy-two years I have known that every one of my numberless transgressions is forgiven, and that not one of my numberless transgressions, in my unconverted days, shall be brought against me. But while I know that God has forgiven me perfectly, I cannot forgive myself! Day by day, more or less, my ungodly ways before I was converted, and all my numberless failings and shortcomings since my conversion, I remember against myself! These are the “bitter herbs” which I have while I am feeding on Christ! God has forgiven us; but we cannot, so to speak, forgive ourselves. We continually remember all our former ungodliness.

“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.” The purtenance being the heart, the lungs, the kidneys. All must be roasted, and the whole lamb was to be brought on the table. And around the whole lamb they were to gather; not around a roasted leg, or a shoulder, but round the whole lamb. Now, there is a meaning in this, and the meaning of it is that we have the whole Christ, with all His offices, with all the virtues of His blessing, and the benefits to be had from Him. He is our Teacher; He is our Guide; He is our Comforter; He is our Helper; He is our Strength; He is our Redeemer; He is our Brother; He is our Friend; He is our Bridegroom; He is our Husband. The believer has Christ in all His offices.

This is set forth by the Israelites gathering round the whole lamb; not a piece cut up. But there is more than what I have said in this. It is this, that we have not to think we have to do with a part of the Saviour, or a part of the blessing of the Saviour; but that just as we need, poor, feeble, worthless worms as we are, whatever we require for our soul. It is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we never need in spiritual things to despair because our necessities are so great! However great our spiritual necessities are, all, all that we require is to be obtained through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; through feeding on the Lord Jesus, through eating spiritually His flesh, and drinking spiritually His blood. All this is set forth by the fact that the Israelites were to gather round the whole lamb.

There is another point of great instruction. The believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and believers in Him alone, are those who should be baptised. “Believer’s baptism,” therefore, is the right ordinance, and the only right ordinance, regarding baptism. It is not a question how old we are, but the question is, that we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ when baptised. Now, while this is the right attention to the ordinance, we have to guard against this, that we do not assemble together as “baptised believers;” but that we assemble together as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a part of the Truth of God round about which we have to meet, but round about Jesus we have to meet. That is the point. That is the set point. All believers must gather round the Whole Lamb! It is not this part of truth, or another part of truth. For instance, the truth of God is that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again before the Millennium, and will not come again after the Millennium has commenced; but He will come to introduce the Millennium, and there will be no Millennium without the Lord Jesus Christ; so that the Lord Jesus Christ in person is coming again! This is the truth of God, and which on no account we have to give up. But while this is so deeply important a truth, we should not meet together as those who hold this truth, but we should meet together as believers in Christ. We should meet together as those who trust in the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ! It is round about Christ we should meet! These are the points that are set forth in the fact that the whole lamb was to gathered round about.

“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire.” And the head was not to be cut off previously. “His head with his legs.” They were not to be cut off, but all roasted, and then brought on the table. “And with the purtenance thereof.” “And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the

morning, ye shall burn with fire; and thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover." Here the statement brings plainly before us the way in which persons are to be dressed and attired when going on a journey. The large loose gown was to be girded to the loins, that the traveller's marching or walking might not be retarded. Then, his shoes on! Because there might be a rough road; all kinds of things might be in the way, thorns, sharp stones, which would hurt the feet; therefore they were to put on their shoes! Then, the staff in the hand: another thing that is found in the traveller.

Now, this brings before us the deeply important truth that the moment we become believers in Christ, or for the first time feed on Christ, our own Passover Lamb, from that moment we become strangers and pilgrims in the world; we belong no longer to the world, for this world abides with the wicked one, is in intimate connection with the devil, and with the powers of darkness. From it, therefore, we are separated the moment we belong to Christ, and feed for the first time on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we become strangers on earth; we set out on the journey, and this journey is heavenward. The end of the journey will be heaven! O how precious is this! My beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, do you all enter into this, that heaven is your home. I have, for seventy-two years, looked at it in that way, and it has made me a very happy man. Trials and difficulties, sorrows and afflictions, and disappointments I have had a great many of; I might say I have had them by hundreds, if not by thousands, but, notwithstanding all, I have been during the seventy-two years and the six weeks I have now been a believer in Christ an exceedingly happy man, because I have always looked to the end of the journey. I am as certain that I shall be in heaven as if I were there already; not a shadow of a doubt about it, and I have never had a shadow of a doubt about it during the last seventy-two years.

And this is what, my beloved brethren and sisters, you should seek more and more to aim at, if you have not already attained to it; though I have no doubt that very many, if not most of you, have done so. But if there is anyone here who has not yet attained to it that heaven is their home, let them cry mightily to God that they may be sure of it, that heaven is their home. Now, I walk up and down in my room, and say to myself I am a sinner, a great sinner, and deserve nothing but punishment, but I shall not be punished, because my precious Lord Jesus was punished in my stead, and because I put my trust in Him. Therefore, nothing remains to me but heaven, and every day brings me a day nearer to it. See how precious is this. That is what we should feed on continually, and ponder continually. Consider what the Lord Jesus has done in our room and stead, and that salvation is completed by Him, and He will see to it that you and I, as assuredly as we are believers, shall be in heaven. And all this is perceived, and is set forth, in this verse. It is the person who believes in Christ setting out on a journey. He may have long to travel, but the end is what he has to look at. The end; and the end will be glory, the end will be heaven! We, poor miserable sinners, deserve nothing but punishment, but if we put our trust in the Lord Jesus the end of the journey will be glory, will be heaven! And we shall be for Eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ! O how precious this is; and I, by the grace of God, have been enabled for these seventy-two years to look at it in that way, and it has made me for all these years a very happy man!

The 12th verse, "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both men and beast." Let us ponder – the firstborn of the king, the firstborn of the poor. "And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord." The judges, the princes, and the great ones of the earth, who are said to be the representatives of God here on earth, they shall be slain. Not merely the poor, but the lords therein, and every one of the kings, the princes, the judges, the great ones of the land.

Now the last verse, and a remarkable one it is; and we should seek particularly to ponder it. "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are, and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you, to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." Here we see what brought salvation, deliverance, safety to the Israelite! It was the blood of the Passover Lamb, which had been put on the door posts! Now, thus our salvation depends not upon our alms deeds, not on church or chapel-going, not on what we have given, or intend to give to the poor; on none of these things depend the salvation of the soul, but simply, solely, entirely, only, on the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for the remission of our sins, if we trust in it, depend upon it, look to it, and to it alone, for the salvation of our souls. That is the first point that we gather from this last verse. But there IS something else. "The blood shall be to you for a token on your houses where ye are, and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not come nigh to you." The eye of man might not be able to see the blood, but God saw the blood; the people inside the house might not be able to see it, the people outside the house might not be able to see it, but God saw it!

And now that brings before us that there may be among you, dear, true children of God, nervous ones, and very often, as a believer in Christ, I have clearly pointed out to them, for such and such reasons, they are truly believers in Christ, yet these nervous persons may not be able to see it! Now, must they go to hell because they cannot see it clearly regarding themselves? No! No! God, your Heavenly Father, He sees that, after all, you are really, truly, sincerely, alone looking to the blood of Jesus Christ; but on account of your nervous state you never come to the assurance you ought to, that you are saved; and for your comfort, I say that just as God in the dark night saw the blood, so God sees now, though these sincere, honest, upright, dear children of God, on account of their nervousness, do not see it.

Now, in conclusion, "Are we all convinced that we are sinners needing a Saviour?" Let us ask ourselves, young and old, male and female, aged and young, "Do I see that I am a sinner?" If not, O ask God to show it to you. No one can get to heaven without seeing that he is a sinner. All the people who go to hell have only a good opinion about themselves, and see nothing at all of their sinnership! You must come to see that you are a sinner – you must come to it, and see that you deserve punishment; and if you have not yet come to it, you won't get to heaven without it! Therefore, ask God to show you clearly that you are a sinner, that you are a sinner needing a Saviour. And what will you come to when you see it? You will seek to live a better life, but to make up for your past misconduct you will never be able to do. Never! Never! There is but One Who can make up for our transgressions; that is Jesus, Who yielded His perfect obedience to God, His own life, Who suffered the punishment which we deserve on account of our numberless transgressions. And if we trust in Him, and depend on Him for salvation, that is enough.

Therefore, the next point is to believe in Christ. That means to trust in Him for salvation, and if you say "I wish I could do that, but I am not able to do it," and you are sincerely wishing to put your trust in Him, He will show you, He will help you. But, remember, when we have come to it that we see we are sinners, we are to put our trust in Christ! One point more, and that is, that we seek for the whole remainder of our life to live to the praise, and honour, and glory of our Saviour, and that we ask Him day by day to aid us! May He bless us for His Name's sake. Amen.

Of God

An Address delivered at the Conference of Christians at Clifton, October 3rd, 1871

The passage from which the subject has been taken is evidently the 19th verse of the 5th chapter of the first epistle of John, which I will read: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" or the Wicked One. The first point suggested to us is this, - "We know that we are of God." We have then to ask ourselves, - "Do we know we are of God?" How can I come to this knowledge? Not, by some particular impressions I may have had! Not, by waiting for some dream, or some powerful application of a certain passage! But we have, on the ground of what we find in the Holy Scriptures, to settle the matter. As about all spiritual things we have to come to the Divine testimonies, and only to the Divine testimonies, to settle matters; so regarding this point in particular also, if I am to know I am "of God," I must be able to put my hand on what is written in the Holy Scriptures, and by the Divine testimonies settle the matter, that I am "of God."

The next point is, - What does it mean, to be "of God." The connection in which this verse stands will teach us the meaning of the opposite. "We know we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the Wicked One." Naturally we all belong to the latter part of the verse. We are all naturally in the Wicked One; that is, by nature we are the children of wrath, the children of Satan - the devil. This is to be clearly before us, that we are not naturally the children of God, but the people of the devil, serving him, being led about by him according to his will, and our hearts naturally being in sympathy with the evil one, obeying him, and acting according to his bidding. This is our state naturally, and thus, therefore, we are doing things contrary to the mind of God. We seek to please ourselves, we serve the world, we serve the flesh, we obey Satan instead of obeying the word of God. That is our state naturally. Now the very opposite of this is to be "of God."

How then may we be "of God?" First, we have to trace it all up to the councils and purposes of God from eternity. He did choose us in Christ. He did apprehend us in Christ. He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. He arranged from eternity for our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. But all this, while true, would not give us the enjoyment of our being "of God," the blessedness practically of our being "of God"; and, therefore, in order to this, we have to obey the Gospel, we have to believe the Gospel, we have to put our trust for the salvation of our souls in the atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is through faith in the Gospel, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, through receiving Jesus, through resting on Him alone, that the enjoyment comes of our being "of God" that the blessedness thereof comes to our souls. We are, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, "begotten again," according to the 3rd verse in the 1st chapter of the gospel of John: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power," - the right, the title, the privilege, the blessing - "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Thus we become the children of God, as to enjoyment, as to the power, as to the blessedness, as to the practical enjoyment, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we have to believe the testimony of God regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, we have to submit to the Gospel, we have to receive the atonement, and to rest on it alone as the ground of our acceptance. Again, in Gal. iii. 26, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." That is, the enjoyment, the blessedness, the realization of our having been predestinated of God, and chosen in Christ Jesus, comes through faith. Again, in the 1st verse of the 5th chapter of 1st John, we have this portion, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." I have therefore to believe that the despised, the rejected, the crucified Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah, the Saviour, and I have to depend on Him

as such. And this settles the matter that I am "born of God," that I am "born again," that I am "begotten again," that I am a "child of God."

Now comes, in connection with this, the responsibility of all such. "Born of God!" A "child of God!" ,Oh, what it implies!

"Our God and Father, we beseech Thee that by the power of the Holy Ghost Thou wouldst help us to seek to enter into it! O God, our Father, we Thy children know a little of it, and we Thy children can speak a little of it, and can enjoy it in some little measure, - that we are Thy children, that we are "of God." But all this is yet but little. We know little of the power of being "of God," of being Thy children, and we pray and entreat Thee, by the power of the Holy Ghost, so deeply write this on our hearts, so deeply impress it on our hearts, so deeply affect our hearts by the consideration of being "of God," of being Thy children, that from this evening and henceforward it shall be uppermost in our hearts to our last moment on earth. We ask it for Christ's sake.

Now, for a few moments, let us ponder this. We are "of God," we are the children of God, not nominally, but really, for we partake of the Divine nature. We have obtained spiritual life, whilst once we were dead in trespasses and sins. And this life is eternal life. We shall not perish. We are really the children of God. What a wondrous blessing this! "And if children," according to the Scriptures, "then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs through Christ." Now, let the soul enter into it, - I am a child of God. Oh, how the things of this world vanish as nothing - as nothing in comparison with what I have already as a son of the Most High, as to what I shall have in heaven - all as nothing in comparison with what I am as a child of God! All this world, with its honours, with its pleasures, with its grandeur of every kind, - all is as nothing in comparison with what I have, and with what I am as a child of God. And therefore what we have to do, beloved fellow-saints, is this: to seek in our inmost souls to enter into it, and in childlike simplicity believe everything God has in the riches of His grace revealed concerning us as His children, as His heirs, as join theirs with Christ. When the soul contemplates this, - that Jesus will, ere long, come again and take us to Himself, that "where He is, there we shall be also," that He will share the crown with us, and the throne, and we shall be engaged in the judgment of the world with Him, - when the soul enters into it, how the heart is filled with gratitude to God, and says, "What can I do in return to Thee, my God and Father, for having done so much for me!" It only needs the realization of what we receive as the children of God. In a former address at one of these Conferences, I mentioned how it wrought with regard to my own soul. It was in February, 1830, that for the first time my inmost soul was powerfully wrought upon by the realization of what it was to be a child of God. I had been a believer for many years, but I had not, up to that time, sought to enter into what it was; and I cannot tell you what an impression it made on me. Oh, how it deadened me to the world! Oh, how it filled my heart with love to my heavenly Father, with love, to the Lord Jesus Christ through whose atoning death I was brought into this blessed position, by the power of the Holy Ghost, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now let me affectionately urge my fellow-believers to seek to enter into it, to understand it, to pray over it. And ask God graciously to be pleased to open your hearts fully to receive what He has been pleased to say regarding us as His children.

Then one word more. Are we all "of God?" We are met here as the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is the fullest reason to believe that by far the greater number here present are such. But, peradventure, there may be a few here present - indeed one has reason to fear there are a few - who as yet are not "of God." Let me affectionately say one word to such. Oh! how long will you continue in this state, seeing one Conference after another passing away, and yet remaining of "the world which lieth in the Wicked One." And as year after year passes, and you are at last brought to the close of life, what then, if not "of God?" Be assured, if you pass out of the world as not being "of God," that is, without having rested for the salvation of your soul on the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not be where Jesus is, you will not be in the Father's house, you will not spend a happy eternity with the people of God with whom you are now meeting. But we long that you too may be "of God." We wish to spend a happy eternity with you. We are not satisfied to meet you only at these happy Conference Meetings, we want to meet you in heaven. But this cannot be except your heart is changed by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must own you are poor miserable sinners. You must pass sentence on yourselves. You must accept what God has so graciously provided for you in the Gospel, in the gift of His Son. But one peradventure says, "You have been telling us that believers are "of God" primarily as regards election and predestination, and I can do nothing to save myself, but must wait till God does it for me." This is Satan's trap for the poor sinner. It is quite true that you cannot elect yourself; it is quite true that you cannot predestinate yourself; it is quite true that you cannot save yourself. Quite true! But what God expects is, that you should receive, as a poor lost sinner, what He has so graciously provided for you in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you say, "Oh, I wish I could believe!" well, I grant it, you cannot if left to yourself. But you can groan out to God, "Lord, help me to believe." If you say - "My heart is full of sin, and I cannot cleanse it," - I grant it. But you can groan out, "Help me, O Lord; look on me, a poor, wretched, guilty sinner, through the Lord Jesus Christ;" and as truly as you desire anything from God, will you find He is more ready to bestow the blessing than you are to receive it. Look at the whole life of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ. Did any ever

come to Him really desiring blessing, and be denied? Assuredly not! Whether they came as regarding sight, or the use of the arm, or the power to walk; whatever it was, He always received them. It was only the Pharisees and Scribes, those who were full and did not want to be blessed by Him, but who only came to tempt Him and to set Him at nought, who went away without His blessing. But the poor, the wretched, the miserable obtained blessings at His hands. So come you, poor, wretched, miserable ones, and pour out your groans before God; and tell Him at the same time that you want Christ, that you want to be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ; and ask Him pitifully and compassionately to help you, and assuredly you will not be sent empty away. Then, when you have found Jesus, tell other poor sinners what a precious Saviour you have found.

And let us, fellow-believers, seek individually, just in our measure, and according to the ability and opportunity God gives to us, to spread the truth, one in one way, one in another, and all seek to do something to spread the truth. If all cannot, in the like measure, be actively engaged, all can give themselves to prayer, and that is the most mighty weapon we can wield to the praise and honour and glory of God.

On the late Mr Henry Craik

An Address printed as an introduction to the volume entitled "Passages from the Diary and Letters of Henry Craik"

It was in July, 1829, that I first became acquainted with Mr. Craik. That which drew me to him was not that we both were then nearly twenty-four years of age; nor was it that we both had had a university education; nor was it that we both, with great love and earnestness, at that time, pursued the study of the Hebrew language; nor was it even, that both of us had been about the same time brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, whilst at the university; but it will be seen in what follows, what it was that drew me to him. In May, 1829, soon after my arrival in England, I was taken very ill. My desire was then very strong to depart, that I might be with my adorable Lord who had loved me and given Himself for me, the great sinner. It pleased God, however, contrary to my expectation, and especially contrary to my desire, to begin to restore me; and, in order to complete my restoration, I was medically advised to leave London for change of air. In submission to the will of God I went to Teignmouth; for though the state of heart, in which I was, desired no prolongation of life, yet I considered it my duty to use this means. While at Teignmouth, I became acquainted with Mr. Craik, and *his warmth of heart towards the Lord* drew me to him. It was this which was the attraction to me.

As I stayed but a few weeks at Teignmouth, I saw but little, comparatively, of him; but in January, 1830, I returned to Teignmouth, and thenceforth abode there. We were now drawn more fully together; for between July, 1829, and January, 1830, I had seen the leading truths connected with the second coming of our Lord Jesus; I had apprehended the all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as our rule, and the Holy Spirit as our teacher; I had seen clearly the precious doctrines of the grace of God, about which I had been uninstructed for nearly four years after my conversion; and I had learned the heavenly calling of the Church of Christ, and the consequent position of the believer in this world. As these very truths so greatly occupied the heart of Mr. Craik also, we were now soon drawn closely together; and from that time to the day of falling asleep in Jesus, our friendship was intimate and unbroken for thirty-six years.

The reader will learn from the memoir itself that we remained labouring in the Word in the same locality in Devonshire for about two years and three months; and then, in a very marked way, were both led, at the same time, to Bristol, where we have laboured together for more than thirty-three years.

It has been often observed how remarkable it was that we should have laboured for so many years so harmoniously together, and that this should have continued up to the last. Now, as I write this introduction for the profit of the reader, I dwell a little on this point. It was not because Mr. Craik had no mind of his own, and therefore submitted himself habitually to my judgment; nor was it because I blindly followed him, having no judgment of my own. All our Christian friends who were acquainted with us knew well that this was not at all the case; but the reasons were these, - When in the year 1832 I saw how some preferred my beloved friend's ministry to my own, I determined, in the strength of God, to rejoice in this, instead of envying him. I said, with John the Baptist, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven" (John iii. 27). This resisting the devil hindered separation of heart. But this was not all. God honoured me also from that time in the ministry of the Word, and greatly, which is only referred to, to show how a double blessing followed my resisting the devil. But when it pleased the Lord, from the beginning of 1839, and thenceforth, to condescend to bestow such abundant honour upon me as He did in connection with the Orphan Houses and the other objects of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad, the temptation was the other way, especially when this work was more and more extended, and the blessing of God resting thereon became greater and greater. Then my beloved friend, on his part, speaking after the manner of men, had cause for

envy. But how was it in reality? There were few, if any, who more truly rejoiced in all the honour which the Lord condescended to put on me than my friend did.

Still this was not all. There is this particularly to be added, that whatever the spiritual infirmities of my friend or of myself were, there was given to us, throughout the whole thirty-six years of our friendship, an honest purpose to live to God, not to ourselves; to please Him, and not ourselves; and thus it came that our friendship remained unbroken to the end, though the temptations for alienation of heart, humanly speaking, increased more and more, instead of decreasing. Our natural constitution of mind and temperament were very different, and yet we had to work together; whilst about 2500 believers, were received into fellowship since first we came to Bristol; and whilst of late years, nearly 1000 believers were in fellowship in the Church meeting at Bethesda and Salem chapels, among whom we laboured. Who therefore can doubt the difficulty there was constantly in the way to this continuation of love and union? but there was help to be found in God, and we found it to the end. Our parting was thus, when I saw my dear friend for the last time. After I had kissed him, when I purposed to go, he, being too weak to converse anymore, said, "Sit down," and also asked Mrs. Craik to sit down, that he might look on us, though he could not converse. I sat thus silently still awhile, and then left. This was our last interview. The next day I took cold, and was for several days kept at home, during which time my dear friend fell asleep.

The reader will see from the memoir that Mr. Craik had very superior powers of mind; but that which made him especially lovely in my estimation, were the following features of his character and spiritual attainments :-

He was very affectionate.

Like Nathanael of old, he was truly without guile.

He was particularly conscientious. Whatever his weakness or failing in any way, you might be sure that he acted conscientiously. He did what he did, because he thought it right. Our views concerning certain modes of action differed materially, but I always came back to this: My friend is conscientious; if he only saw as I did, he would surely act differently.

Whilst endowed by God with such great mental powers, he did not use them to get a name among men, nor to be admired by men, but to throw light on the Holy Scriptures, and to set forth the truth. As a striking proof of his humility, and his being far from seeking the honour of men, I mention the following: In the year 1849, Professor Alexander intimated to him, in the name of the University of St Andrew's, that it was intended to confer on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, or of Doctor of Canon and Civil Law. He courteously declined this honour, but recommended a Christian gentleman who had laboured much in biblical literature for the degree, as it might be of great use to him as an author. The latter was done, and this gentleman had bestowed on him the degree of LL.D. Some years since, the same university repeated to Mr. Craik their former intimation and desire, and a second time my friend humbly declined the honour. Truly this is a striking proof that whatever momentary failings there might have been to the contrary, he was steadfastly purposed in his heart not to seek the honour that comes from man, but to commend himself to God as His servant.

Mr. Craik manifested great sympathy to those who were in trial and affliction: His affectionate heart felt deeply for the sufferings of others

Mr. Craik was eminently a man of prayer, and a man given to the study of the Word of God. Such prayerfulness regarding the Holy Scriptures, such truly digging into the Word as for hid treasures, such meditation over the Word as he was given to, I never knew surpassed by any servant of Christ. The chief loss that the Church of Christ at large has sustained in his removal, is not merely that he was a lovely, amiable, truly spiritually-minded Christian to all who intimately knew him, and an earnest, devoted preacher of the Lord Jesus; but one who had truly studied on his knees, with great diligence, the oracles of God. Among all the thousands of believers whom I know, there is none whose judgment on any part of truth I should have more esteemed than that of my departed friend, on account of his *great caution*, his prayerfulness, his diligence in comparing Scripture with Scripture, his humility of soul, his very considerable amount of knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and his habitual reading the Scriptures in their original languages.

In reference to the health of Mr. Craik, as one who knew him so intimately and so long, I have to state that when he was about forty years old, he looked far healthier than when I first knew him at twenty-four years of age, and this was still more the case when he was about fifty years old. He was never strong, and, like many men of great mind, he was not sufficiently careful to make the best of the health and strength he had. He would eat generally rapidly and, though suffering from weak digestion, neglect proper mastication of his food. Moreover, when he felt pretty well, he would forget his constitutional weakness, and labour mentally beyond

his strength. This is not stated to throw any blame on that excellent man who is no more among us, but his friend states it as a warning to his fellowbelievers; for life, health, strength of body or mind are entrusted to us as precious talents to be used for God. This want of *habitually* acting with caution respecting his health, and overtaxing his mind, produced, no doubt, at certain times, a measure of nervous depression, of which the reader will find intimations in his diary, which makes Mr. Craik almost appear to be another man than what he was known to be in his ordinary public life, in which he generally manifested great cheerfulness.

Having referred to his health, I cannot help adding that it is my full conviction that the constitutional weakness of my friend was intended by God for an especial blessing to him. Though Mr. Craik was a very humble man, and though it was his earnest and habitual desire to use his mental powers for the glory of God; yet no one could intimately know him without being aware that his natural tendency was to aim after the cultivation of his mind with too great an earnestness and natural fondness, which, but for his weak constitution, might have become a great snare to his inner man. As a check, therefore, the Lord so mercifully gave to him this powerful mind in conjunction with a weak body, that he might not overmuch indulge in the cultivation of his mental powers.

I add further this with regard to his health. I never knew anyone who constitutionally so shrank from suffering as he did. He often spoke to me on this subject. And yet this very individual was, for nearly seven months before his decease, not only a very great sufferer, but was also greatly sustained under his great sufferings. On Christmas-day, 1865, sitting a longer time than usual at his bedside, because I had more time than generally, all at once I remembered what he had so often spoken to me about, and then told him, that now the strength of the Lord was manifested in his constitutional shrinking from pain and suffering. He saw it and owned it. And verily the Lord greatly sustained His suffering servant, and did so to the end. Without complaining, he passed through his sufferings, though praying and longing to be delivered out of them. And at last he was delivered. Peacefully leaning upon Jesus, he fell asleep.

His poor friend who writes this, remains. As yet the Lord allows me to serve Him on earth. Pray, Christian reader, that whether this time be long or short, I may be enabled to spend it truly to the honour of God.

Open thy Mouth Wide, and I will Fill it

A sermon preached at the Gospel Hall, St Nicholas Road, Bristol, on Sunday morning, January 10th, 1897

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” – Psalm lxxxi v 10

This is a figure we all understand, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;” that is, “Ask great blessing from Me, very great blessings, and I am ready to bestow them.” O what a precious, glorious promise at the opening of the New Year, for poor weak ones, as we are. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” The great point is to apply this to our various particular positions, and to the circumstances in which we are placed.

We often find that the hindrance to the answer of prayer lies in ourselves, because our hearts are not yet prepared for a blessing. Now, in connection with this verse, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” I will refer, for the comfort and encouragement of beloved Christian friends, to my own experience in connection with the Orphan work, in order that you all increasingly may be comforted and encouraged to expect great things at the hands of God. It is now 68 years ago that my heart was greatly tried, when again and again I saw dear children losing both parents, and there was no one to take a real deep interest in their well-being.

I felt deeply for such bereaved children, and I said again and again to myself, “O I wish I had a little Orphan institution, into which I could take these children.” But the desire remained for years only a desire, though I had much prayer in connection with it. In the November of the year 1835, a particular circumstance occurred, through the instrumentality of which I was made to know how to be able to do something for destitute orphans, and I began to pray more earnestly than ever I had done before that God would be pleased to guide and direct me whether I should make a beginning of a little Orphan institution. Thus I prayed month after month, and at last I came to the decision that I would do something in this way; and though it might have never so small a beginning, I would make a beginning.

After having come to this decision, I passed one evening – namely, on the 5th of November, 1835 – reading the Scriptures, and, as my habit has been since July, 1829, going consecutively through them. That is, not picking out here and there a little portion and reading it, or a few verses here and there, or half a chapter here and there, but going on straight forward, through the whole of the Old Testament, and then through the New Testament. Then, having finished the whole of the Holy Bible, beginning again from the commencement, and so going on. This has been my habit now

ever since July, 1829, and I have read four times every year through the whole Bible, with prayer and meditation, and especially with meditation in reference to myself. How does this comfort you? How does it instruct you? How does it warn you? How does it reprove and rebuke you? Thus do I read the Holy Scriptures in regards to myself.

Now, just reading through the whole Bible, I came, at that time, to this 81st Psalm and to this 10th verse, "I am Jehovah thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." When I read this verse, I shut the Bible, went to the door of my room and locked it, and then I cast myself on the floor and began to pray. I said to my Heavenly Father, "I have only asked Thee, Heavenly Father, that Thou shouldst show me whether I shall begin the Orphan work or not. Thou hast been pleased to make that plain to me, and now 'I will open my mouth wide.' Be pleased to 'fill it.' Give me, my Heavenly Father, a suitable house to begin the work; give me suitable helpers to take care of the children; and give me a thousand pounds sterling to make a beginning."

A thousand pounds was a very great sum at that time. At the present day it is a very small sum for me, for often and often I have in one day to pay away – a thousand pounds? No, not merely a thousand, but £2,000, £3,000, in one day; yea, again and again £4,000, £5,000, and £6,000 in one day. But at that time a thousand pounds was a great sum to me. Nevertheless, I expected to get it, though I did not know how. I expected to get it from my Heavenly Father, on the ground of this promise. The next day I received a shilling from a German missionary staying in my house. I had for six months, staying with me, six missionaries, brethren and sisters, and one of these brethren gave me a shilling. Another German missionary staying in my house, out of the six, gave me another shilling. This was the first money I received in connection with the thousand pounds.

Every one of you say, "A very little beginning;" but it was a beginning. I received also on the same day a second gift, a very large wardrobe for the house I was going to open for destitute orphans. Then I went on praying, and by little and little I received more; and very soon there was one especially remarkable answer to prayer. There was in fellowship with us a sister, a seamstress. She earned by her needle half-a-crown, or three shillings, or three-and-six; but the very utmost that now and then she earned was five shillings – never more than this. And this weakly, afflicted sister, this seamstress, sent me £100 for the Orphan work. I would not accept it. I knew not how this came about, that this poor, weakly sister, who earned so very little, should have sent me £100.

I therefore sent for her, and had an interview with her. I found that her grandfather had died, and by a legacy, in which he had left to his children and grandchildren, this money had come to her. The sum of £480 had been left to her, and out of this she would give £100 for the Orphan work. When I saw her, I said, "I cannot accept your £100, for I am afraid you have done all this in haste, and you may regret it afterwards, and that would be a sad affair. I cannot take this money." She said, "I have not done it in haste; I have well considered it; I have prayed much over it. I must entreat you to take the money. My brothers and sisters each gave to my mother £50, out of the money that they had inherited; but, as I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I gave my mother £100. Then my brothers and sisters would pay the debts of my father when he died, though they were not bound to do it; but they agreed with the creditors, the public-house keepers to whom he owed the money, for he was fond of drinking, that they would give five shillings in the pound.

"Now, though my father did not as he ought to have done, in incurring these debts at public-houses, yet he was my father, and I am a child of God, and I ought to honour my father, though he did not walk as he should have done, and I agreed with these public-house keepers that I would repay the whole of their debt. So I went and paid the fifteen shillings in the pound which my brothers and sisters had not paid. And you must take the £100. I feel so deeply interested in your purposing to open a little Orphan institution, that I would rather give the whole of the money than that it should not come to pass; and to show to you that I do it after much consideration, here is not merely the one hundred pounds, but five pounds more, which I request you to give to the poor as a proof that I do this heartily, and have well considered it."

Under these circumstances, I saw how this godly sister had well weighed the matter, and I took the hundred pounds just as God's plan of giving. And thus by little and little, and with large help from some, came in the money, and I was able to open a large house in Wilson Street, in St. Paul's parish, with the extremely useful help of two sisters who gave themselves to the work, one as a teacher and the other as a seamstress. Thus I was able to fit up and furnish a house, and had a small sum in hand to make a beginning. The house was now ready, and a day was fixed when I would receive the applications for the reception of orphans. I went to the vestry. I had appointed two hours to see the relatives of destitute orphans. I sat there half-an-hour. Nobody came. I sat a whole hour. Nobody came. I sat an hour and a half. I sat two hours. Nobody came to make application for orphans, and I had to go away without one single application.

On my way home, I said to myself, "I have prayed about everything, but I have never asked God to send me orphans." For I took it for granted that there were tens, and hundreds, and thousands of orphans in England, and that the orphans would be coming in hundreds. But the Word of God says, "In everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God."

I had prayed for the right house, for the right helpers, for the money; and, when I had finished the house, I prayed about the furniture, almost every article. But I had never asked God to send orphans. Well, I cast myself down on the floor before God, and confessed that I had erred in this matter, and asked His forgiveness, and asked Him if, after all, I had been deceiving myself, and that He would be more glorified by bringing the whole thing to nought than by my getting an Orphan institution to do so – to bring the whole thing to nought. If He could be more glorified, I should rejoice.

But I could not help thinking that it would be for the glory and honour of His Name if He brought it to pass, and I asked Him to send me orphans. The next morning, at eleven o'clock, I went again, and before one month had passed 42 orphans had applied, though the house was only large enough for 30. So God answered prayer, and the house was filled. Six months later I opened a second house for 36 children. That was filled very soon. Twelve months later I opened a third house for 30 children. That was filled, and a short time after I opened a fourth house for 30 more children. Now I had 126 orphans, with eleven helpers, who laboured among these children.

But the applications continued more and more. I therefore felt I must build a house, large enough to hold hundreds of orphans. But this would cost an immense sum of money. However, I said, "The Lord is able to give it to me," and for thirteen weeks I prayed for land. The Lord gave it to me on Ashley Down. Then I continued praying for money, as I wanted to build a house for 300 orphans. By little and little it came in. I began the house. The house was finished. All was paid for, though it cost more than £15,000. Yet I had £676 over and above, after all was paid. But the house soon filled, and the applications increased more and more.

Then I said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And after much prayer, it was to go on building accommodation for 700 more, that I might have 1,000 orphans under my care. Now, when I had nothing but £30 in hand, the devil said, and had it circulated, that I had £30,000 in hand. Instead of contradicting it in the newspapers, saying that it was a lie of Satan, I simply spoke to my Heavenly Father, "Lord, Thou knowest that this is a lie of Satan; confound him; Lord, confound him, and influence the hearts of Thy children to help me." So by little and little the money came in, and after a number of years there stood another house, and all paid for, and a third house for 350 more began!

That also was finished. Now I had accommodation for 1,150 orphans, and, after all was paid for, there were between two and three thousand pounds over and above in hand! But, remarkable to say, nine hundred orphans were yet waiting for admission! I had now accommodation for 1,150, but 900 were yet waiting. So I prayed, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? I do not want orphan houses, but if Thou wilt help me to go on, here is Thy servant, and I am ready." Well, I began two houses more, each for 450, that I might be able to accommodate those 900 that were waiting, and there stood the houses after some years, erected at a cost of £60,000. Now these five houses accommodate at one time 2,050 orphans, and I have accommodation for 112 helpers and assistants as matrons, teachers, etc., for the destitute orphans. *And in all God has been pleased to give me, simply in answer to prayer, £1,416,000 sterling! One million, four hundred and sixteen thousand pounds sterling, without asking a single human being!!*

There is none, in this whole city, who can say that I ever asked them for a penny; there is none, in the whole of England, who can say that I ever asked them for a penny; there is none under heaven, in the whole wide world, who can say that I ever asked them for a penny. To God, and God alone, I went; and I did this because I knew ever since my conversion that one of the greatest necessities for the Church of God at large was an increase of faith. Therefore, I determined to dedicate my whole life to this one great lesson, for the Church of God to learn, and the world at large to learn: real, true, lasting dependence on God.

Thus I have now been going on for 68 years, not only regarding the work of God, but regarding my own temporal necessities and the necessities of my family, and I have laid every burden on God, and God again and again has helped me. He has also led me to the founding of many schools. I have had 117 schools under my direction throughout England, Scotland, India, the Straits of Malacca, British Guiana, Demerara, Essequibo, Berlice, in Spain, in France, in Italy, and in other parts of the world. And in these schools have been educated 122,000 young people. One hundred and twenty-two thousand young people; and from among them, more than 20,000 have been converted that we know of. In heaven I expect to meet more than 40,000 or 50,000; but we know that more than 20,000 were converted while they were in the schools, the masters having given reports. Sometimes fifty and sixty in half-a-year in one single school have been brought to the knowledge of the Lord, and thus has it gone on that God has abundantly blessed the work.

Then, in regard to the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, God has abundantly blessed that. Bibles in various languages to the number of 279,000 I have been enabled to circulate, and 1,440,000 New Testaments, 21,000 copies of the Book of Psalms, and 222,000 other portions: and God has also abundantly blessed this part of the work, especially in Spain, in Italy, and in Ireland. Then as to missionary operations, I have been enabled to aid a large number of missionaries and helpers, and altogether I have spent £258,000 on missions alone. The matter of the circulation of tracts was also particularly laid on my heart, and God has granted me the privilege of circulating 109 millions of Scriptural books, pamphlets, and tracts – not 109 thousand, but a thousand times as much. One hundred and nine millions of books,

pamphlets, and tracts, in various languages – so many that this large hall would not hold them, and 400 big cart horses would not be able to drag them away! To such an extent have tracts and books been circulated.

Thousands of souls have been brought to Jesus through the instrumentality of the four or five hundred missionaries that I have sought to assist, and as for the Orphan work, I have been enabled to receive 9,750 orphans. That may seem a small number in comparison with what we can have at one time in the houses. The reason is this: we have the orphan girls and boys from their earliest days, and often and often we have girls in the houses fifteen years, sixteen years, even seventeen years, and in a few instances longer than seventeen years. That is the reason why the number has been comparatively so small, though we have the accommodation of the greatest Orphan institution under heaven. There is not a second Orphan institution in the whole wide world so large as that on Ashley Down. Out of these 9,750 orphans, between 4,000 and 5,000 have been brought to the knowledge of Jesus; more than 2,000 are already in heaven; over 2,000 are walking in various parts of the world as believers, and we have at present over 1,000 in the Orphan houses who are believers.

One single point more for your encouragement, and for the sake that my beloved Christian friends may be led increasingly to give themselves to prayer, especially for the conversion of sinners. When I came to Bristol, sixty-four years and seven months since, and we met for the first time in the breaking of bread at the Lord's Supper, there were seven of us. That was all "seven of us." Since then there have been received by us, as a Church, more than 6,000 into fellowship. Let this be another encouragement to go forward. And when the branch Churches that have sprung out of the Church at Bethesda are taken in, O how many thousands more! So let this be a great encouragement for prayer. Seven, meeting the first time round the Lord's table! And now look at the many, many thousands who have been converted since, and been received at the Lord's table.

Are there any here who have not yet believed? See what God is willing to give in answer to prayer. See what He is willing to give to you, my dear young man, my dear young woman, and you elder friends. If any of you do not know the Lord, see what God is willing to do in answer to prayer. I am a poor, miserable sinner myself, deserving nothing by hell if I had my desserts; but see what God has given to a poor miserable sinner, simply for Christ's sake. I trust in Him, and therefore, for Christ's sake, He has given to me; and what He has given to me, He is willing to give to you. O expect blessings from Him, and He will give them to you, if you seek them by earnest prayer.

For instance, are any weak and feeble as to the body, suffering pain, or needing anything in reference to their health? This text applies to them, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." The very connection in which this stands here in this verse gives to us the assurance that we shall have blessing in God's own time and way, for it was He Who brought, under the most difficult circumstances, the Israelites out of Egypt. Neither Pharaoh nor his servants would let them go; he had kept them long as slaves, made them to work continually under the most trying circumstances. Everything that the Scripture tells us was done to them was done with rigour, whether they were brick-makers, or were working in the fields, or were building stone cities for Pharaoh. Nothing in that treatment escaped.

Jehovah says, through Moses and Aaron, to Pharaoh, "Let them go." The reply of Pharaoh is against Jehovah, "I know not Jehovah; I do not mean to let them go." Presently, when this request is repeated and neglected, and there comes a judgment on him, he minds it not. There comes one judgment after the other, and one judgment after the other increased more and more; but he will not let them go. At last comes the most awful of all the judgments; in every house throughout the country one is taken, the firstborn throughout the land slain in one night by the destroying angel who goes through the land. Now the Israelites are allowed to go; yea, driven out of the country for fear they should all be dead men if they were not to let them go.

Thus we see what God is able to do on Man's behalf, seeing that He, under these circumstances, could get out of the state of bondage and slavery those hundreds of thousands of Israelites. And not merely is the power of Jehovah seen in this verse, but His love also. Who were these Israelites? Were they better than the Egyptians? They were decidedly worse than the Egyptians, because they had more knowledge than the Egyptians, and yet were a stiff-necked, rebellious, hard, wicked people. But notwithstanding all this, Jehovah brings them out of the country by reason of the love He has for them, and by reason of the covenant into which He had entered with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and because He is Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God. Now in all this can we not see especial encouragement in regard to our own case? If, therefore, we need anything in reference to our bodies, let us go to our Heavenly Father. Do we need anything in reference to our family positions? Tried by our children, tried, greatly tried it may be, by the husband or wife, or perhaps by our relatives? Let us bring these things before God! It is no use complaining, speaking about it particularly to one another; no, instead of murmuring, bring this matter often before God in prayer, look to Him for help and support, and entreat Him again and again that He would, in the riches of His grace, deliver you out of your trials.

Then again, in reference to our business, our earthly occupation, our profession. Are there particular trials? Are there particular difficulties? Instead of continually talking and fretting about the competition, the difficult times, the tricks manifested in trades and businesses, the matter should be carried to the Lord. Meekly, quietly, gently, submissively

behaving ourselves under the circumstances, and again, again and again bringing the matter before God and leaving it there. And we should find that this is the very best remedy which could be used! Then not merely in reference to temporal matters, but to spiritual things also, this is to be applied. For instance, in our spiritual conflict there is nothing better than to remember this gracious, the most precious, promise, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." We feel the natural evil tendencies within us, we struggle against them, we seek to overcome them, we find ourselves too weak, but God is able to help us, and out of these things He will bring us. Our text says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," and so it encourages us to come to God and ask great blessings in respect to these things, and we shall find how ready He is to help us so that pride and high-mindedness, carelessness and slothfulness, indulgence in natural evil tendencies, can be overcome by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Then in reference to our work and labour and service for the Lord, as Sunday School teachers, as tract distributors, as visitors of the sick. In all these matters we can obtain help from God. In ourselves extremely weak, let us seek help in the right way. As teachers in the Church of God, as pastors, as labourers in any way spiritually, wonderful help can be obtained from God in answer to prayer, so that if we "open our mouths wide" we shall find the text fulfilled.

The second point in connection with this is especially to be noticed. "He will fill it." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "I will fill it." "I will fill it." It is not stated, "Perhaps I will fill it," or "I shall see if I will do it or not." No promise of this kind. He does not say, "If thou are doing so and so, I will fill it." We have not to fill our mouth after we have opened it wide; that is, we have not by our own power and ability and skilfulness to bring about the fulfilment of the promise. We have to leave this to God. He will do it. We have not to look to our fellow-men to bring about the answer to prayer, as often is the case on the part of dear children of God. They look to their fellow-men, instead of having the eye fixed upon the almighty power of God and the loving heart of God; they look to their fellow-men to answer their prayers. "I will fill it," He says. We have not to look to circumstances, or to a contingency in everyday things and affairs, but to God Himself is the eye to be directed. "I will fill it." "I will fill it."

Then, in the third place, we have not to be discouraged because our mouth is not at once filled; we have not to be discouraged because the answer does not come immediately. Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, ever be mindful of the fact that in connection with all the many hundreds of promises given to us in connection with prayer, in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Scriptures, there is not one single passage to be found where God makes in connection with this promise a statement regarding the time when He will fulfil it. He simply states everywhere, "I will do it," "I will answer it." He never says, "At such a time I will answer," "At such a time I will fill your mouth." But He simply states "I will do it." And often and often the delay is appointed by God so that when the answer comes it may be all the more lovely to us and more suitable to us than if the answer had been immediately given. Yes, and another reason, in order that by the exercise of faith and patience, faith and patience may develop further and further, and increase more and more. There is another, a third, reason. That we may, by the exercise of faith and patience, glorify God. The world looks on to see how shall we behave ourselves under especial trials and difficulties, what we shall do. Now, if they find us waiting without fretting, without complaining, and especially without murmuring, then they may perceive that we are looking after the things of God, and this may lead to blessing too. Thus by such behaviour we strengthen the hands of our fellow-men.

And then often and often in the experience of the children of God answers to prayer are delayed because their hearts are not yet prepared for the reception of the blessing. I will give you an illustration. Suppose there is a young convert going to work in the Sunday School; he has heard a great deal about answers to prayer, and he longs for answers to prayer, and begins to pray that it may please God very speedily to convert all the children in his class. He goes the first Sunday; he does not find that they are all converted. He goes the second Sunday, the third, and the fourth Sunday, and it is not accomplished. He is tried now, and becomes distressed. He says to himself, "I pray so much that all the children under my care in the class may be converted, and yet I go Sunday after Sunday, and they remain unconverted. How comes this?" The reason is because this dear brother is not yet prepared for receiving the blessing, for if the class so very easily were brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, he would take the credit to himself, and begin to look upon himself and to say what an excellent teacher he is, and how much he could accomplish in the conversion of those scholars, instead of its all being done by the power of the Holy Ghost. The heart is not yet prepared for the reception of the blessing; therefore the blessing is delayed. But let this beloved young brother go on waiting upon God, coming more and more to see that he can do nothing in the way of converting sinners, that all must be accomplished by the power of the Holy Ghost, then when the blessing is given, and the class converted, he will be prepared to give all the honour and glory to God.

Thus often and often we find that the hindrance to the answer to prayer lies in ourselves, because our hearts are not yet prepared for a blessing

Parable of the Ten Virgins

Notes of a Sermon delivered in Bethesda Chapel, Bristol, Lord's Day Evening, March 15th, 1874

Matthew xxv. 1-13

The connection in which this portion stands, you know. In the previous chapter, the Lord Jesus had been speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem, and about His return, particularly about the latter; and having brought weighty matters in connection with this deeply important subject before His disciples, He then goes on with our parable in the 25th chapter. The very commencement of the chapter shows us the connection, - "Then," - at that time, when these things spoken of in the latter part of the previous chapter were coming to pass, at that time the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins.

With regard to parables, I state again, what I have several times before stated, that we should seek to inquire what is the great truth, or what are the great truths couched under the parable, and intended to beset forth by the parable. Having found out this, to be content with that, and not to seek to press every particular point of the parable, lest we should be led into great errors in doing so: for earthly things never to the full can set forth heavenly things. In seeking to find some great truth couched under every particular point, we are in great danger of being led astray. Nevertheless there are always great points, weighty points, couched under the parables spoken by our blessed Lord. Now the question arises, What are the great points which the blessed Lord meant to bring before the disciples by this parable of the ten virgins? Evidently this: that at the time of His return while there may be the looking for Him, the expecting Him, and the great mass of Christians being stirred up to look for His return the danger will be this, - lest all fall asleep; not only those who have merely the form of godliness without the spirit, but also true disciples, real children of God even; these will be in danger of falling asleep, and not going on waiting and watching. Therefore the great point against which the blessed Lord meant by this parable to warn disciples is, not to go to sleep, but to watch and wait for His return to the very last moment. And we should especially seek to have coupled with this the preparation of heart in which all should be found waiting, looking for, expecting the return of the Lord, and the danger lest persons are occupied with these things connected with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and profess even to wait for His appearing, and yet unprepared for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We consider now a little more minutely this parable. I have to state before doing so that this parable was given by our Lord Jesus Christ in reference to Jewish customs; and as those to whom He was speaking were intimately acquainted with these customs, He does not enter more particularly into them; but one or the other here present may not know the customs to which our blessed Lord refers. At the time of marriage among the Jews it was the custom that the bridegroom in the evening went out with his male friends to fetch home to his house the bride, while the companions of the bride waited in the neighbourhood of the bridegroom's house for the bridegroom; and then the bride coming with the bridegroom, these companions, coming with the bride and bridegroom, went into the house and partook of the marriage feast. The custom was in the evening to fetch home the bride, and therefore the going to sleep is referred to; therefore the reference is made to the midnight cry.

"Then shall the kingdom, of heaven be likened unto ten virgins."

The kingdom of heaven is used here for the professing Church; this is the meaning of the phrase here. I say advisedly here the professing Church, for there is no reason to believe that the foolish virgins were true disciples, but only professing Christians "which took their lamps;" for this reason, because it was evening, it was after sunset, they had to wait sometimes an hour or two, and as it became dark soon after sunset, therefore the necessity for the lamps. But the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins: the wise not only took their lamps, but in separate vessels took oil, that if necessary they might replenish their lamps; but the foolish had made no such preparation. That was the difference, and only difference between the two. You see the ten went to meet the bridegroom, not the five only. They all had lamps, but there was wanting, with regard to the foolish, the vessel containing the oil, that the lamps might be replenished if necessary. The wise went to sleep like the foolish, but they had the oil, and that was the difference. Now this is one of the points regarding which we rightly judge what is couched under the parable. We have to inquire into it, what is the meaning of the oil? what is set forth by the Holy Ghost with regard to the oil? The one had oil, the other had none. Evidently this is the meaning, - that through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they were partakers of the Spirit; the others were not partakers of the Spirit, because they had no real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ at all. They professed to be His, they professed to care about Him, they professed to go out to meet Him, but in heart they were strangers. And this is the momentous point, "Whether through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are partakers of the Holy Ghost or not. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. Whatever we have, if we have not the Holy Ghost, we do not belong to Christ. In whatever way we may seek to resemble the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, - we may be in the habit of reading our Bibles, of bowing our Knees, of singing together with them,

of meeting together with them, of partaking together with them of the Lord's Supper, we may be reckoned among them as disciples; and yet with all this, far from God; with all this, unregenerate yet; with all this, wanting the Spirit of Christ; with all this, not born again through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Talkers we may be, in outward appearance like the children of God; but if the heart is unregenerate, if there be no faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, through which we are begotten again and renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost, so that the Holy Ghost takes our bodies and makes them His temple, - if this is not the case, we are yet far from God and His kingdom; and therefore the solemn, momentous question, particularly in these days of almost universal profession and discipleship, when there is so much profession and religion in the land, whether it is the form or the reality; whether we are born again, or yet dead in trespasses and sins with all our profession; whether merely in the way of form we bow the knee, and sing His praise, and say Amen to the prayers of others; or whether the heart goes along with the praises and prayers, or whether we only go to this or that meeting, because it is respectable in these days. In the days of the apostles they were cast out as mad; but in these days no man is called a respectable man if he does not make a profession of religion in some shape; and people, therefore, in order that they may be respected would make a profession of some sort or other; and therefore the momentous question is this, - Whether it is a reality? whether it is heart work? whether we be born again? whether it is really taking Christ as our Saviour? or whether it is, after all, only a mere hollow profession? The question is not whether my name is written on the Church book, but whether it is written in the Lamb's book of life; not how my fellow-men look on me, but how God looks on me. Not what is my appearance in the sight of my fellow-men, but in the sight of God. Am I His child? am I born again? Are the disciples loved by me in the heart, or do I simply by the lips profess to care about them. Before God we should weigh these things, and see that we are not deceiving ourselves. But the simplest believer who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul, feeble and weak though he may yet be, nevertheless having the heart upright, in carrying on warfare against sin, and not in league with the world and the devil, having yet the desire to carry on the conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil, - all such simply entirely hanging on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, they are the wise virgins, they will be saved at the last, they will assuredly enter with the bridegroom to the marriage supper of the Lamb; while those who simply make a profession, but who cannot appeal to the heart-searching Lord Jesus, and say, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," will be shut out. Oh! may such be entreated to seek after reality, and not be satisfied with the mere empty name to live, while they are dead in trespasses and sins.

Now to which of the two classes do we belong, - the wise or the foolish? Oh! let us seek to answer before God; and if the matter is unsettled, let us not retire to rest tonight without making the inquiry whether we belong to the wise. You may try to put it off, but it will force itself again upon your heart; therefore ask the question now - To which do I belong? All of us here present belong to one of the two classes. Now let it be answered. Let me beseech and entreat you not to sit down to supper, and far less to retire to rest tonight, without answering the question before God. And if in honesty of heart you have to say, I am among the foolish virgins, then I ask you, how long you intend to continue in that state? That word belongs to you: "The door was shut." You must be regenerated. The door of mercy is open yet; press, press, press into the door while it remains open. Oh! be besought and entreated.

But some may say, How may I press in? Own before God that you are wicked, guilty sinners deserving punishment; if you do not feel that you are sinners, ask God to show it to you, for it is His delight to reveal it to you. Now, then, God tells you that you are wicked, as all men without exception are wicked, and we have to pass sentence on ourselves, and to accept what God so mercifully has provided in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wounded Him, bruised Him in our room and stead. The Lord Jesus in His own person carried our sins, He bore the punishment due to us, and the soul believing in Him, for His sake, on the ground of what the Substitute suffered in the room of the sinner, shall be saved. Then if you find out by the grace of God that you belong to the wise virgins, you have to say to yourself, All praise to God on this account, I am indebted to Him, for it; and now my business is to seek to live to Him, to seek to let my gratitude show that I am sensible of the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that my future business is this, - while the Lord Jesus carries I seek not to go to sleep, but to wait for the Son of God from heaven.

As I said before, the danger lest true disciples, real children of God, such who have begun in heart to wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, lest they should be found slumbering and sleeping when the Lord comes. It pleased God about forty-four years ago to arouse the Church in this land with regard to the truth concerning the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was in the year 1829. Since that time many a true servant of Christ who was stirred up has been taken away, has fallen asleep in Jesus. The blessed One has delayed His return. Many others have been in danger, and not only in danger, but have actually gone to sleep with regard to the return of the Lord Jesus. And therefore the great point is, that we seek in heart and spirit, in life and deportment, to let it be seen that we are waiting for the return of the Lord, like the Thessalonians of old. What delight it will give to the heart of Jesus when He comes again and finds our hearts ready to receive Him. Not only to have been stirred up for a little time to talk about His return, but practically and experimentally to look for His return.

But seeing here that the wise virgins slumbered and slept, we should not hide it from ourselves that we are in danger of sleeping.

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you.”

In such an hour as this, no faith of the one will do for the other. No possession on the part of the one will do for the other; it is an individual matter. We must have Christ in our hearts the hope of glory; we must be partakers of the Holy Ghost for ourselves; we must be born again as to ourselves, others have none to spare. No parents can believe on the part of their children. The son and the daughter need the Holy Ghost as well as the father and mother. No godly children can believe on the part of their father and mother; the parents must believe for themselves. The father must have the Spirit, and the son, and the daughter. Except it be so, that the individuals are partakers of the Holy Ghost through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will have no admission, the door will be shut. Oh! the awfulness of the case; to think the door shut, and to be without. But remember, the door is not shut yet; it is open wide now, and the Lord Jesus, this very evening, with open arms is standing in our midst, and saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink;” “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” The blessed Lord Jesus is delighted to receive sinners, - the oldest, the most hardened sinner, if he but believes in Him, trusts in Him. And therefore remember, any who have to say to themselves, I am among the foolish virgins; I have been born in the house of godly people, have been educated among godly people, and yet I am among the foolish virgins; remember, it is not too late, but do not remain undecided, lest you find it is too late at the last.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.”

What is the great practical lesson to be gathered? Evidently this, - That if people put off to care about their souls to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is too late. That is not the time. While He tarrieth, that is the time; while He is carrying on the high-priestly work of intercession, that is the time. But when once the Master of the house has risen up, when once He has come, then to care about the soul is too late, too late, too late then. Oh! that this may be deeply impressed on the hearts of my dear friends and fellow-sinners here present. Did you ever, with reference to your own hearts, consider this word, “The door was shut”? If you never did, let me entreat you to do it now, - you my dear girls there, and you my dear little boy, and you my dear little girl, and all here present who have never pondered this word, “the door was shut,” “the door was shut,” “the door was shut.” And, oh! if this were to be my place, if I had to stand outside, if I had to knock; oh! what would be my pain if the door was shut? Oh, the solemnity of this! Oh! who can describe the feelings of those persons who used to say, - Ah! it is only a dream, it is only a fancy, it is all right; God will not be so particular? and now find that God is very particular, and that the Lord Jesus is as good as His word, Oh! what then? what then? to stand outside and find that it is shut, and shut for ever? Oh! the solemnity of the position. But it is open yet. The very fact that we are assembled here is a proof that it is not shut. If it were shut, the poor servant of Christ now addressing you would not be allowed to speak a word. Now, then, will you delay yet? Will you remain undecided yet? Oh! be besought not to remain undecided, but to close this night with Christ. If you leave it till tomorrow, it may be too late, and the difficulties will be greater than they are now.

Paul’s Letter to Philemon

Notes of an Exposition of the Epistle to Philemon, delivered in Bethesda Chapel, Bristol, on Lord’s-day Evening, March 2nd, 1873

The occasion which gave rise to this letter was this: Philemon, who resided at Colosse (for this is plainly to be seen by the last chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians. The letter to the church at Colosse was written at the same time with this letter to Philemon. Onesimus and another brother were the bearers of the letter to the church at Colosse, and of this private letter to Philemon), - Philemon, who resided at Colosse, had a slave by the name of Onesimus, and this slave in his ungodly state ran away from his master Philemon, and in the providence of God, as we say, he comes to Rome. Rome was the greatest place in the whole world at that time. In all probability this slave said to himself, “If I could get to Rome, what prospects there would be before me.” This may have occurred to his mind after he left his master. He wanders on from Asia Minor to Rome with bright prospects before him. “Oh, what pleasures I shall have in Rome; what sights I shall see in Rome; what companionship I shall meet with in Rome!” No doubt some such thoughts passed through his mind. And what happened in Rome? He was converted. So God allows men to go their own way; so God allows men to follow the desires of their own heart, and if they could they would yet farther and farther run away from Him. But God says, “Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.” Many have gone to London and to other places, not to get good

for the soul, but in the service of the devil; but God there laid hold on them, in the very way which they least thought of, and converted them.

Again, Onesimus might have come to Rome and never seen Paul. He might have spent fifty years in Rome, and never seen Paul; but God has purposes of grace and mercy towards him, and in His good providence orders it that he may fall in with Paul, that he must become acquainted with this Paul. And who was Paul at this time in Rome? Not a great man in the eyes of the world. Truly a great man in one sense, and yet in the greatest obscurity in another sense. Paul was at this time a prisoner for the gospel's sake. Paul did not walk about in the market place, the Forum, where the great and wealthy of the capital met together. He was in prison, with a soldier watching him, and yet God so orders it that this runaway slave must fall in with Paul and that Paul shall become a blessed instrument in the hands of God of converting his soul. How full of encouragement this should be to us all! Some have dear ones who are far from Christ, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and other relatives, and many of them are apparently getting farther and farther from God and caring less and less about the things of God and more and more about the things of this world. Go on, beloved in Christ, believingly, patiently bringing their cases before the Lord, and you will yet have the joy of finding out that your prayers have not been in vain. There is every reason to believe that Philemon, the godly master of this slave, was concerned about his spiritual welfare; but all seems lost when this slave runs away, and yet God follows him, and lays hold on him at the very time when you and I would least have thought he would have been brought to the Lord.

Let us read and meditate on this letter to Philemon.

Ver. 1. *“Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow-labourer.”*

He regarded this Philemon as one who laboured with him in the gospel. He speaks of him and treats him as a fellow-labourer.

Ver. 2, *“And to our beloved Apphia (the wife of Philemon), and to Archippus our fellow-soldier (this Archippus was a brother who laboured in the word and doctrine at Colosse), and to the church in thy house.”* The house of Archippus was the meeting place of the church, for at that time it was not so that there were churches and chapels built, but they met in private houses or in some places which were fitted up for the purpose. We have an instance of this in the 20th chapter of the Acts, where Paul was preaching in an upper chamber. It was not the aim of the disciples to have costly places, to resemble the temple at Jerusalem. The first hundred and twenty met in an upper room. So here the church at Colosse had for its meeting place the house of Philemon.

Ver. 3. *“Grace to you.”* You observe how this comes in in the various letters addressed to the churches, and there must be a reason for it. It is not a common phrase which is brought in. The reason seems to be this: we have to be reminded that grace has been bestowed upon us by God through Christ Jesus, and that He is willing to bestow more and more blessing. And so also we have to be reminded continually of the fact that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I am now only speaking to those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who having passed sentence on themselves, and having condemned themselves in the sight of God as guilty sinners, are trusting in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the one ground of acceptance before God.

Ver. 4-7. *“I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy, and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.”*

This is what the Apostle Paul writes with regard to the spiritual state of Philemon, and a high commendation it is, a most blessed man of God he was; and yet one says, He had slaves! Yes; he had slaves. But then we have always to keep this before us, that the having slaves at that time was not connected with such awful cruelty as the slavery of modern days. Many of these people were idolaters, and there were many things connected with slavery which were quite wrong. Yet ordinarily speaking, we have no reason to believe that there were the cruelties of slaveholders of modern days. In most of these instances where we read the word *servant* it means *slave*, those who belonged to the master; but in not one single instance is there a hint given how wicked you are, how cruel and abominable your conduct. If the love of Christ constrained them to set all free, the apostles would have rejoiced in it; and when these slaves had the opportunity of becoming free, they were to accept it thankfully and not reject it.

The apostle Paul commends Philemon on account of the blessed state spiritually in which he was. He says *“I thank my God,”* and this particularly with reference to the 5th verse, *“hearing of thy love and faith.”* This was a subject for praise and thanksgiving in the heart of Paul with regard to Philemon. This is rather a remarkable expression, *“faith and love towards the saints.”* You can see what that means, that he had love; but what is the meaning of this,

that he had *faith* towards the saints? Did you ever think of this? It is deeply important that we seek to search into the meaning of what we read in the Divine testimony. The meaning of it is evidently this: - looking upon them with faith, seeing in them that they are the children of God, treating them as such, as the children of God. "Whenever we are enabled to look on one another as the children of God, whenever we are enabled to see Christ in one another, that is exercising faith towards one another. He also prayed that God would help him further, and from this we should gather instruction, that as Paul prayed for Philemon we should pray for each other. This was the subject of his prayer,-" *that the communication of thy faith may become effectual, by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.*" This in other words means, My dear Philemon, I pray that thou, having received faith, might go on; that this might energize thee, might become effectual in thee, and give thee yet further and further strength to acknowledge everything that is good in any of the saints. And he adds to his praise this in the 7th verse: "*For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.*" What a high commendation of this dear man! Evidently he was one in a position of comparative wealth and prosperity, and he says "we have great joy" because on account of the holy, godly walk of this blessed man of God, Philemon, the hearts of the saints were refreshed.

Do we the children of God aim after this, *viz.*, that we become a spiritual refreshment to the saints, that the saints are refreshed by our godly life? After this we have to aim. Giving way to our natural tendencies, to our temper, and to other things which are hateful to God, we do not strengthen the hands of our fellow disciples; but when we seek to do those things which are according to the mind of God, we strengthen each other's hands in God. In bringing glory to God, we also help on the life and deportment of other children of God. Just as it is with regard to any army; if one regiment acquits itself well, the other regiments are strengthened thereby; and if one regiment turns its back on the enemy, the other regiments are weakened thereby. So is it with the Church of God.

Ver. 8-14, "*Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels; whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.*"

Exquisite statement this, and of the deepest moment. Briefly it was just this: -Onesimus was converted; Paul a prisoner for the gospel in bonds. What a comfort this good man would have been in waiting upon him! He longed to have one to wait on him. Paul might have said, This Onesimus is my son in the faith, and therefore I shall just act as I have a right to act; I will just keep him, and let him wait on me. He might have said, - I am an apostle, and for the gospel's sake am here in prison, and it is an right and fit that my child in the faith should wait on me. Not thus, not thus. This was not the mind of Christ, and this blessed man of God sought to act according to the mind of Christ. He might have said, - I am an aged servant of Christ, an aged apostle, and I have laboured more abundantly than any of them; and as this runaway slave has been converted through me, it is all right that I should have him to wait on me. Not thus, because this would be by constraint. He would not know whether it was "done willingly and cheerfully on the part of Philemon. He desired that this man of God might do what he did cheerfully, willingly. Oh, how deeply important it is to keep this before us! The principle is just this. Suppose anyone said, - Now I am in great need, and such and such a one is my brother in Christ, and such and such a one has plenty of money, and he ought to give to me because I am a poor brother; he is bound by the word of God to do it, and I have a right just to demand it of him. Is this the mind of Christ? It is the mind of the flesh, and not the mind of Christ. You never find such an instance on the part of a man of God in the epistles or the gospels. Quite true that he who hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion, cannot have the love of God in him; but it is also true on the other hand that it is ill becoming that a poor brother should insist on it. The apostle Paul could have insisted on his rights, but he did not do so.

"*Which in time past was to thee unprofitable.*" This brings out the character of Onesimus: a good-for-nothing man, a bad fellow.

Philemon had lost nothing.

"*But now profitable to thee and to me.*" Because a child of God, a brother in Christ, a member of the body. That brings out another deeply important principle. There is no child of God but what is of some good. One might say, - Here is a very ignorant person, cannot put two letters together; what good is such an one to the Church of Christ? If in no other way, to afford opportunity for the exercise of grace on the part of others. Here is one helplessly confined to his bed year after year. That individual can pray, that individual can yet manifest the mind of Christ to such an one who comes to see him. And suppose none of these things were so, yet they give the

opportunity to those who are in health and strength to show love to such an one. We should always look on one another as precious in the sight of Christ. Our natural tendency is this: to see the old Adam in one another, to see the failings and shortcomings in one another; and the result is misery to one another and dishonour to God. O beloved in Christ, let us aim after it to see Christ in one another. Onesimus was profitable to the chief of the apostles; just think of this. He could not be a useless one, because he was a member of the body of Christ, and Christ can have no member of His body who is altogether useless.

“Thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels.” Philemon was to receive him as if Paul himself came to him. And oh, how would Paul have been received? O beloved brother Paul, how glad I am to see thee again here, he would say, falling on his neck and kissing him many times. Now Paul says, - Just as thou wouldest have received me, if I were to come, so, beloved Philemon, receive this runaway slave, because he is thy brother in Christ, and thou wilt have to spend a happy eternity with him.

“But without thy mind would I do nothing.” But I must first know that this pleases thee, that thou art satisfied with it, that this is according to thy wish and will. How deeply important to keep this before us in the Divine life, that we manifest the mind of Christ. Just as that blessed One sought not to please Himself, but to be the servant of others, so have we to imitate that blessed One.

“For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.” For ever,” never to be separated any more. And that brings before us the precious truth that the disciples of the Lord Jesus are bound together for eternity, are knit together for eternity. And that you see is so precious. There may come separation by distance, there may come separation by death; ah, but it is only the appearance. We are bound together in the bonds of love, not for time only, but for eternity. All the poor sinners who rest on the atoning death of the Lord Jesus form one holy, happy, blessed family for eternity, and there will be no separation for eternity. Do we belong to that family? Do we believe in the Lord Jesus? How many among us belong to the heavenly family? How many are decided yet? Put this to yourselves, you dear young men, you dear girls from the Orphan Houses, and all here present.

Oh, the blessedness of belonging to the heavenly family! Oh, the blessedness of belonging to the members of Christ! Then let come what may - one in Christ, and one in Christ for ever!

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

A sermon preached on Sunday evening, July 11th, 1897 at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” – “Cor xii:7-9

The position in which the Apostle Paul stood was that though, with his might, he had sought to do everything he could for the church at Corinth, through false teachers, who had crept in unawares, he was calumniated, spoken against, looked down upon, rejected, and the like; and he was under the painful necessity, for the sake of the Gospel and for the glory of God, to speak about himself in a manner which he had never done before, to justify himself before these adversaries of the Gospel. And this is frequently the case, not merely with preachers of the Gospel and pastors of churches, but with children of God generally, that they are evil spoken of. “For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.”

After reading to the end of verse 27, chapter xi, Mr Müller went on to remark: Just think of it, that this holy man, one of the holiest men that ever lived on earth, had to suffer from hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, “being in the position that he could not have a comfortable place, being without in the cold, and with not sufficient clothing.” Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? ... If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.”

Commenting on the first six verses of the 12th chapter, Mr Müller said: He Himself was the person, but he does not say so; though it is obvious that he was the person. “Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine

infirmities” – that is, he could have mentioned far more than this, but he would no longer speak about himself, lest any should form too high an opinion of him, which he did not wish to be the case.

“Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; and He said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong.” “The confession of this holy man regarding his entire dependence on God, and his own weakness, yea nothingness, is especially to be treasured up in our own hearts, and we have to seek for grace to imitate him, in coming to the conclusion to which he came. “Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations;” Notice here, how this most holy man, the chief of all the apostles, had such a view regarding himself that he considered he was in danger of being “exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations;” through what God had done for him in taking him to Paradise, in taking him who was yet in the body, to be in a place which was only fit for those who were no longer in the body. He tells us that he was in danger of being “exalted above measure.”

Now, if such a man of God as he was, “the chief of all the apostles,” the one who, in honesty of heart, could say about himself that he had “laboured more abundantly” than any of the apostles – if he could confess that he was in danger of being “exalted above measure,” what shall we weak ones, and feeble ones, in comparison with the Apostle Paul, say regarding ourselves? Most assuredly, if with any measure of truth and of uprightness of heart we have to make a confession regarding ourselves, we must say; “If Paul was in danger of being exalted above measure, a thousand times more may we be in danger of being exalted above measure, and of having too high an opinion about ourselves.”

Now, then, the remedy was provided, even for Paul, regarding this. “Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh” – that is, a trial, and a very heavy trial, to counterbalance, that he might not be “exalted above measure.” We are not told what this thorn in the flesh was. That it was something very painful, very trying, we see by the figure which is used. Many of us may know from our own experience what it is to have a little splinter, or thorn, go into our hands, or any part of our body; how painful it is until the thorn, or the little splinter, is extracted – how exceedingly painful it is. Therefore, it was something extremely painful on purpose, we have reason to believe. We are not told what it was, for if we had been told such a thing, or such a thing, or such a thing, then those who were not similarly situated might say, “O this might be borne,” or, “I could have borne it.” So, in order that none of us might say regarding ourselves, “O my trial is a different one, and a far heavier one,” we purposely are not informed what this thorn in the flesh was.

But evidently, by the very figure which is used, it was something extremely trying that he had to bear day by day, week after week, month after month. This thorn in the flesh is called, “The messenger of Satan,” because through the instrumentality of Satan comes the trial. All trials that come upon us, in our family, in our business, in our health, and in other ways, come directly, or indirectly, through the instrumentality of the Wicked One. Our Heavenly Father tries to make us pass through this life pleasantly, easily, happily, without having trials and afflictions; but Satan hates us, exceedingly hates us, because he knows that we are no longer belonging to his kingdom – we who put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. We no longer belong to him.

That he will not have us at last for eternity; to torment us, to make us wretched and miserable, he knows; and therefore, as he cannot have us then, he seeks to make us in this life, while we are in the body, as unhappy as he possibly can. He tries to afflict us, to torment us, to the very uttermost that he has permission to do; for we have ever to keep before us that he can do nothing against us, unless he obtains first permission from God. A most striking illustration of this we have in the case of Job. Satan had been trying to get at him, but was unable to do so: he had been trying to injure him, his family, his property, but he could not do so, and he was constrained to make a confession, “Hast Thou not set a hedge round about him?” that is, he had often and often unquestionably tried to get at Job, but could not by reason of the protection which God gave to His holy servant. And therefore he says, “Thou hast set a hedge round about him,” which implies, “I have often tried to get at him, but I was unable to do so.” And this hedge is never broken down, except by the permission of God. A wall of fire is round about us, and Satan dare not touch us, except God gives permission; and this permission is never, never, NEVER given, except God has determined to rule it all for the confounding of Satan, and for our real good and blessing and comfort. So that we come under this precious promise, “All things work together for good to them that love God.”

If Satan is permitted to break down the hedge, this permission is only given for the purpose of confounding him, and of bringing more blessing to us out of it than if the hedge were not broken. O how precious the position of the children of God! And if everyone knew what it means to be a child of God, everyone most earnestly would seek to become a child of God. But because it is not known, we are naturally blinded, we have no proper Scriptural idea of what it implies to be a child of God; therefore we care not about it, we treat the matter with indifference. But all those who are made

to see their lost and ruined condition by nature, all those who have turned to find out, in any goodly measure, that they are sinners, and that they deserve nothing but punishment, and who own this before God in prayer, and then put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls, become happy, happy, happy beings. They are blessed and truly blessed, and no other persons are really and truly blessed and really and truly happy until they come to this!

Therefore, should there be any here present who have not found out yet that they are sinners, great sinners, deserving nothing but punishment, let them pray to God that He will be pleased, in the riches of His grace, to show it to them, and when they have come to see it, then humble themselves before God, make confession of their sinfulness before Him, and ask His merciful forgiveness. When they are come as far as this, they have further to put their trust alone in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls. Being brought thus far, they are regenerated; through this trust in the Lord Jesus Christ they become a new creation, they become children of God, they obtain spiritual life, they are now born again, they belong no longer to the world, and they stand as justified ones before God, through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and they are forgiven ones by reason of the atonement which the Lord Jesus Christ made in their room and stead. For He not only fulfilled the law, He also bore its punishment, and on this account we shall not be condemned, because the Lord Jesus Christ bore all the punishment which we guilty sinners ought to have borne; and this belongs not merely to one or the other, not merely to a few thousands of human beings, but belongs to every one whose eyes have been spiritually opened to see his lost condition, and who really has trusted in Jesus for salvation. Now, being brought on the road to heaven, having obtained spiritual life, as assuredly as we continue putting our trust alone in Jesus Christ, we shall at last reach glory.

“There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me.” This figure is particularly to be noticed. “Beats me with his fists,” that is the literal meaning of “to buffet me.” “Beats me with his fists.” This figure implies the greatness of the trial, the greatness of the suffering, that he had to endure from this “messenger of Satan,” from this evil angel, this evil spirit. And this buffeting was, “Lest I should be exalted above measure” – that is, God allows it in order that on no account the Apostle Paul should be exalted; that he might be kept in real, true humility of soul, that he might have a lowly view about himself. Now let us not forget this, that if such an exceedingly holy man as was the Apostle Paul was in danger of being “exalted above measure on account of the abundance of the revelations” which he had had, how much more is this the case regarding ourselves? Now, what did this man of God do under these circumstances? “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”

Because this “messenger of Satan” was so very trying, the sufferings were so exceedingly great, he, with earnestness, besought God that it might be taken from him. When it is stated here he “besought the Lord thrice,” he did not for five minutes ask God three times, but we have reason to believe it means in a solemn way, most earnestly, at three different times he besought the Lord that it might depart from him. This is what we have to do, to come to the Lord under trial and affliction, and beseech Him to take it away. And if the prayer, once prayed before God, is not enough, to bring it the second time, to bring it the third time, to bring it the thirtieth time, to bring it the fiftieth time before the Lord, until we plainly see that he has something better for us, and therefore does not take it away. But until we are instructed about this, we may go on praying that God graciously would take away the heavy trial, the heavy affliction.

Now, in the 9th verse we see what the Lord Himself says, “And He said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’” Grace is sufficient for every trial and every affliction, because, obtaining grace, we get the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, as the Strengtheners, of the inner life, the divine life, the spiritual life we have obtained; and He leads us on spiritually and helps us under all circumstances, under all trials, under all afflictions, of whatever character they may be. Therefore the great point is this, “Are we partakers of grace?” Then, and only then, have we obtained spiritual life. Only then are we regenerated, only then are we warranted to look at ourselves as the children of God, and as pardoned sinners through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. O how precious is this, that as partakers of grace we are helped for time and for eternity. When once brought to this, we are no longer in nature’s darkness, we no longer belong to the kingdom of Satan, but to the kingdom of God. We then are the children of God, and as such the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. We then for eternity have the Lord Jesus as our Friend, as our Helper, as our Comforter, as our Guide, as our Counsellor, and as the One Who will watch over us and never leave us or hide Himself away from us, in order that He may shield and protect us against the powers of darkness. O the blessedness of such a position!

Now I ask, before going any further, “Are you partakers of this grace?” I have been through the wondrous mercy of God, in this state to which I have referred, for 71 years and 8 months. And as God has bestowed this wondrous blessing on me, He is willing to bestow it on anyone who is yet without peace. We must obtain this blessing if we desire to go to heaven at last! There is no such thing as obtaining this blessing when once we have passed out of time into eternity. In the world to come there is no seeking after Christ; in the world to come there is no such thing as being regenerated; in the world to come there is no such thing as obtaining forgiveness for our sins, if we do not obtain forgiveness before passing out of time into eternity! Now, then, ask yourselves, I beseech and entreat all of you who are not certain on Scriptural grounds that you have obtained the blessing – ask yourselves, “How is it with me, and shall I still go on without this blessing, and treat it yet with indifference as I have done for a long time?” O, on no account delay to care about

your souls. The present moment is ours, and the present moment alone is ours. How it may be after a single hour, who will tell us? Often, often it has happened that persons who were at a religious meeting were one hour afterwards no longer in the land of the living. Now, I do not say that this will be the case with any here present tonight; but because of the possibility, therefore let us, on no account, delay to care about our souls.

“My grace is sufficient for thee.” Paul had obtained grace; that meant in every position in life that he could need it, though he had “the thorn in the flesh,” grace was given to him to counteract. Though he had “the messenger of Satan” sent to him, yet grace could counteract this. Though he was “beaten with fists,” greatly afflicted, greatly tried, yet grace was sufficient to meet all. “My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” That means “My power is just seen more abundantly on account of thy weakness; thou art a weak one in thyself, thou hast no strength in thyself, but the power is Mine, and My power shall be made manifest in thy weakness.” Now, what decision did Paul come to, when this was told him? “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” “I will no longer be tried, though I have this ‘thorn in the flesh’; I will rejoice rather than be tried, by reason of what I have, through the grace of God, to strengthen me.”

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me,” for this is the meaning of to “rest upon me.” Dwell in me, that I may be a partaker of the power of Christ, through the grace bestowed on me. We weak ones, and feeble ones, may therefore say to ourselves, “In myself I am extremely weak, in myself I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have no power of my own but the power of Christ dwells in me, through the Holy Ghost being given to me.” O how precious! And the Holy Spirit we have individually, as assuredly as we have owned before God that we are sinners, and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls. That brings this wondrous blessing to us, and the power of Christ dwells in us, in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong.” See what effect this had had upon the Apostle Paul, when once he knew that the very way of obtaining great blessing, exceeding great blessing, was just the position in which he was, because he was a partaker of the grace of God, and that therefore he should never be left nor forsaken! He could then come to the conclusion, “I take pleasure in infirmities.” “Take pleasure in infirmities” – that is, when weak in body he took pleasure in his weakness, because the power of Christ dwelt in him. “I take pleasure in reproaches.” He was called “a fool,” “a madman,” “a good-for-nothing fellow,” “not fit to live;” these reproaches were heaped upon him, but the Apostle Paul now says, “I take pleasure in these reproaches; yea, though men reproach me, to make me wretched and miserable, they only make me happy by the reproaches which they heap upon me, because I know what blessing all this in the end will bring.” Then, he further says, “I take pleasure in necessities.” When I am hungry, when I have not sufficient food, when I have no proper clothing to warm and to shield me against the inclemencies of the weather, or, when in other respects, I am in necessities, I take pleasure in them, because I now see that this is the very opportunity given to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who by the power of His Spirit dwells in me, and this power dwells in me to help me, to comfort me, and to bring a blessing to my soul.

In persecutions he could now take pleasure. No longer complaining of being dissatisfied because he was persecuted, but taking pleasure in it, because it gave to the Lord Jesus Christ an opportunity of manifesting His power. Then he says, “I take pleasure in distresses, for Christ’s sake.” Not in distresses on account of having acted improperly, imprudently, but for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. If he were in distress he would take pleasure in it, for it would bring blessing to his soul. And the whole is wound up with this, “For when I am weak, then am I strong;” because of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in him. Now, our comfort is particularly this, that these glorious statements referred not merely to such an one as the Apostle Paul was, but they refer to the weakest, feeblest, least instructed child of God; yea, they belong to the new-born babe in Christ who but this morning was brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. O how precious is all this; and when we appropriate these things to ourselves, we are no longer cast down, we become peaceful and happy, very peaceful and very happy. We glory in the greatest trials and difficulties, because we see they are all appointed for our good and blessing and profit, and they all give to the Lord Jesus Christ the opportunity of manifesting his power in reference to ourselves. They give Him also an opportunity of manifesting His matchless care and love, which He has for the weakest and feeblest of His children.

Now our business is to enter into all this, and if, as yet we are unable to do so, to ask the Lord to strengthen us, by His Holy Spirit, that we may comprehend all that which is contained in these few verses on which we have now meditated; and, in doing so, lasting, lasting and abiding blessing will come to our souls.

Satisfied With God

Addresses, etc., delivered shortly after the death, and at the funeral, of Mr Müller’s beloved wife Mary

Mrs Müller died at 21, Paul Street, Kingsdown, Bristol, on Sunday afternoon, February 6th, 1870, at the age of 73 years, after a few days' severe suffering. At the usual weekly Prayer-meeting on the following day at Salem Chapel, Mr Müller, after mentioning some subjects on behalf of which prayer had been requested, said,-

"Lastly, I desire, on behalf of myself and family, thanksgiving, that it has pleased the Lord to release my precious wife from her pain and suffering, and that He has given to her what had been the desire of her heart for many years, - to be with Jesus. And I also desire thanksgiving for the great peace of mind which He has given me, and with which He has sustained me, and my dear daughter also."

Mr Müller, during the meeting, rose and said, "The last portion of Scripture which I read to my precious wife was this: 'The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory, no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Now, if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have received grace, we are partakers of grace, and to all such He will give glory also. I said to myself, with regard to the latter part, 'No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly' - I am in myself a poor worthless sinner, but I have been saved by the blood of Christ; and I do not live in sin, I walk uprightly before God. Therefore, if it is really good for me, my darling wife will be raised up again; sick as she is, God will restore her again. But if she is not restored again then it would not be a good thing for me. And so my heart was at rest. I was satisfied with God. And all this springs, as I have often before said, from taking God at His word, believing what He says. I fully intended to have preached last night, though I stayed at home in the morning, which I felt to be due to the members of my family to sustain them, and also, feeling the need of rest myself, having been greatly deprived of sleep for several nights, and feeling much worn. But the latter part of the afternoon my dearest wife fell asleep, and for many reasons I had to remain home on this account. Yet if I had preached, this would have been my text, 'The Lord is good, and doeth good.' You have often heard me say before, what a lovely Being God is; and I believe it still, and I am satisfied with what He does. For the six days that my dear wife was ill, I had the unspeakable privilege of being her nurse, - my beloved child by day, and myself by night. I am one that feels greatly the want of sleep. Having so much mental work seven days every week, I need sleep greatly, and usually suffer for the want of it; but, in this instance, I have proved, in my own experience, the faithfulness of God, - 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' As I awoke last night my heart was glad at the thought that my beloved wife was with Jesus. She had done her work, and who would wish it otherwise than that she should have her heart's desire, to go to be with Jesus!"

Mr Müller again spoke: - "A few weeks ago my dearest wife had a very severe cough, on account of which I felt her pulse, and found to my sorrow that she had a very feeble, irregular, and intermitting pulse. When therefore this acute rheumatism, or rheumatic fever, came on, I judged, humanly speaking, how it would end, on account of the effect of acute rheumatism on the heart. Still, in the prospect of this, I was able to say to myself, -

"Best of blessings He'll provide us,
Nought but good shall e'er betide us,
Safe to glory He will guide us: -
Oh how He loves!"

You have often before heard me say this, - I meant what I said, and now I took it to my own heart. And I was at peace. And so it was sixteen years ago, when my beloved child was at the point of death. My dear wife and I were at peace. Why? Because we did not love her? We loved her intensely. But we were satisfied with God, whatever He might do. And now how was it? Because I did not love my dear wife? I loved her intensely. As the years rolled on, our affection for each other increased more and more. But it was because I was satisfied with the will of God."

Mr Müller concluded by referring to the keenness of the trial to him as a man and a husband, and to his dependence upon God still, as difficulties increased, and his loneliness was more felt.

On the following Friday the earthly remains of Mrs Müller were conveyed to Arno's Vale cemetery, preceded, accompanied, and followed by a large concourse of people. About 1400 orphans from the five Orphan Houses on Ashley Down followed the remains of their benefactor.

The entire service was conducted by Mr Müller, who spoke in the chapel at Arno's Vale, as follows: -

"I shall read a few portions of God's most precious word, and make a few remarks thereon. First, in the fourth chapter of I Thessalonians, - 'But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.'

'The dead in Christ!' Not, all the dead; not, all who died before that time. But, 'the dead in Christ,' - those who had fallen asleep as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is it which gives me the peace, the unspeakable joy I have this day in committing to the tomb the earthly remains of my deeply beloved, precious wife, - because I shall spend a happy eternity with her. Whilst we were living most affectionately and unitedly together for thirty-nine years and four months, this was the theme of our conversation, again and again, and thousands of times; and often and often I have taken her hand, and the hand of my beloved daughter, and said, 'we shall be together throughout eternity,' and our hearts thrilled with joy in the prospect of spending a happy eternity together in the presence of our adorable Lord Jesus. And therefore, because the earthly remains are placed in the tomb of one of whom we have hope and a good scriptural assurance that she is now with Jesus, and that when our adorable Lord comes again, she will have a glorified body, and those who love her here on earth will be united together again with her; therefore we 'sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.'

'The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

I do seek to sustain thereby my own heart. Let us read also a few verses of the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians.

'As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.'

Bright and blessed prospect! My precious wife has borne the image of the earthly Adam, who sinned, who fell: she will bear the image of the heavenly Adam, the Lord from heaven.

'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.'

That is, in the state in which we now are, we cannot enter into the immediate presence of the Lord; we must first put off this body.

'Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.'

That is, as previously stated in this chapter, those who die in Christ shall be raised incorruptible. Bright, blessed prospect to my own soul regarding that loved one! She will be raised incorruptible - this weak, frail tabernacle, this suffering tabernacle, in which she endured so much pain and agony during the last few days of her earthly pilgrimage - will be raised incorruptible. Each living believer shall be changed.

'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

Let me call on all my beloved Christian friends to lay to heart the words, 'Be ye steadfast.' Let us aim after it, beloved in Christ. 'Unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.'

My precious wife died, as it were, in harness. Up to the very last she was at work for the Lord. Even when on her death-bed she gave directions for this thing and another thing to be done connected with the honour of the Lord, - caring about the sick ones outside the house, and sending them refreshments; caring yet for the orphans, and giving directions concerning them. 'Always abounding in the work of the Lord.' It was the very joy and delight of her heart to labour for that blessed Jesus who had bought her by His precious blood, in the full assurance of the blessed fulfilment of this word, 'Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

I will read one other passage in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, -

'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'

How true regarding her – ‘To me to live is Christ’! During all the thirty-nine years and four months that it was the joy and privilege of my heart to be united by conjugal bonds to that loved one, for her to live was Christ. This dear sister in Christ had one single business in life, one single object in life, - to live for Christ. As soon as I was united to her by conjugal bonds she became a true helper to me in pastoral work. She went about and worked; she laboured, and laboured abundantly, in the Church at Teignmouth of which I was the pastor. And when it pleased God, thirty-seven years and nine months since, to allow us the honour and privilege to come to Bristol, to labour in this city, she in the fullest way gave herself to work among the children of God, and in every way she could, in order to live for Christ. And when it pleased God to give afterwards, as she clearly and distinctly saw, another sphere of labour on Ashley Down, it was day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, that she laboured in one even, steady course, - for her to live was Christ. Can my heart, then, but rejoice when I think of one whose life was what it was, when there is not so much as the shadow of a question remaining as to where she is now? Oh! how can it be otherwise than that my soul should be filled with unspeakable joy and delight, thinking of that blessed one being with Jesus. For her to live was Christ, and as she put off this her tabernacle, her spirit is now in the presence of Jesus; therefore to her to die is gain. I might give many reasons why to die to her is gain. For her the weakness and weariness of the tabernacle are at an end. For nearly two years past, when she came home with me, about nine o’clock in the evening, from the Orphan Houses, I could see that she was worn to the utmost. I often said, ‘My darling, work less; my darling, stay at home.’ But I could not prevail upon her to do so. She still worked and worked. She loved to be at my side, as I loved to be at her side. But I saw that it was becoming too much for her. Now for her this weariness is past - gone for ever. I might mention a number of other things to show that death was gain, but the greatest is this, it was the desire of her heart to see that lovely One in heaven, our adorable Lord Jesus. She longed to be with Him. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, was continually the theme of her heart. God allowed me to find a most precious jewel the day before yesterday which that loved one had left behind. My darling daughter told me she had seen, about two years since, in a pocket-book of her beloved mother, a sentence written to this effect, - that she longed to be with Jesus; and when her soul was consciously happy in the Lord, she often wished instantly to depart, only that she dreaded the shock to her beloved husband, daughter, and other relatives and friends. But she wound it all up with this, - ‘Not my will, but Thine, dear Jesus, be done.’ That was just the desire of her heart; not, at some particular time only, on Lord’s-days, or once now and then, but it was the constant desire of her heart to be with the Lord Jesus. Well, to die therefore has been gain to her. Should I wish it to be otherwise? Ah! strange as it may appear to some, what can I say but that I delight in the happiness of my beloved departed one! Oh! the unspeakable peace and joy of my soul as I think she has the desire of her heart. I kiss the hand that has thus laid me low. Do you ask me as a man how I feel? I feel it keenly. Do you ask me as a husband how I feel? I feel it to the utmost. Do you ask me as the director of the Orphan Houses how I feel it? I say again, I feel it to the utmost, and I see no prospect how her loss can be made up. But I kiss the hand that has done it. I rejoice in the joy of my beloved departed one; and if at this moment I could alter it, I would not wish to have her back. The depth of my affection for her is too great to wish her back. She longed to be with Jesus, she has now the desire of her heart, and her joy is my joy! And now in the full assurance of the resurrection of the just, and of all our loved ones who have died as believers in the Lord Jesus meeting together in heaven, I commit these earthly remains to the tomb. But are all here present prepared for eternity? Who will meet that loved one in heaven? None will meet her there, none will meet me there, but believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must be born again before we enter heaven; we must be changed in heart by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. ‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Let me affectionately ask all present, - Are you prepared for heaven? Only those can enter there who are taken out of the world as, believers in the Lord Jesus.”

Mr Müller then prayed, -

“O Lord, accept my grateful thanks that Thou didst give to me the precious blessing of such a wife, of such a companion, of such a helper, of such a comforter. Oh! how good hast Thou been to me for thirty-nine years and four months in giving and keeping her to me. And now Lord, it has pleased Thee to take her to Thyself. So it pleased Thee; it is therefore the very best thing. Thou dost withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly; and Thy poor servant - weak and feeble though he is - walks uprightly; and his beloved one walked uprightly, and now Thou hast taken her, and therefore it is the best thing for her, and for Thy poor servant, and for his beloved child, and for the other relatives and friends. Thy poor servant, therefore, believes Thou hast done it in love; and that, if it had been good for him that his dear wife should yet further labour with him, Thou wouldest have caused her, notwithstanding her advanced years and her frail tabernacle, to remain. Thy poor servant therefore bows to Thy will, and would not forget Thy benefits during their happy conjugal life for thirty-nine years and four months. And as Thy servant knows he shall meet her again, and spend a happy eternity with her in Thy presence, he would bless and praise Thee for the comfort given to him, the comfort given to his beloved daughter, the comfort given to the dear sisters and all the other dear relatives and friends. O Lord! do good to us all. And wilt Thou graciously grant, that to us as a Church this may be blessed; and not only to us, but

to thousands of Thy dear children in this large city and elsewhere; and in Thy good providence so work, that in the end good may come out of this event to the Orphans. Now, Lord, we go to the grave. Go with us. Help us yet. Bless us yet. And when Thy poor servant and the other dear relatives shall feel their loneliness, because Thou hast taken their loved one to Thyself, help us to remember her joy in Thy presence. We ask it for the sake of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ.”

On the following Sunday evening, Mr Müller occupied, as usual, the pulpit of Bethesda chapel. Before discoursing upon the 14th, 15th, and 16th verses of Ephesians vi., in continuation of the meditation commenced a fortnight previously, he said, -

“Let us read again part of the last verse we have just been singing, -

‘Best of blessings He'll provide us,
Nought but good shall e'er betide us.’

If we are acquainted with Jesus, and know Him, just in the measure in which this is the case, from our inmost soul we shall say, -

‘Best of blessings He'll provide us,
Nought but good shall e'er betide us’

Oh the exercising of confidence in the loving heart of Jesus, - what repose it gives, what calmness, what quietness of soul! What an unspeakable blessing to find Jesus, to have Him for our friend, our almighty friend, our never-failing friend, whose heart never will change towards us, to whom has been given all power in heaven and in earth, and who on our behalf will exercise this His power just in the measure in which it shall be for His glory and our real blessing.

‘Nought but good shall e'er betide us.’

This was the song of my heart during the last week but one. Another portion was, ‘The Lord is good, and doeth good’; and so day by day I proved it, and my soul was peaceful and happy.

Let me affectionately urge all present, especially my young friends, not to be satisfied with religious feeling, and keep aloof from God's blessed Book. That was my state of heart when I was brought to the knowledge of the Lord in Germany. Even when I was on the point of preaching in the Establishment, and when afterwards I did so, I cared little about God's blessed Book. My religion was a mere religion of feeling, and so it came - I was a babe, and continued a babe in spiritual things for three years and a half of my Christian course. But when it pleased God, in the riches of His grace, in July, 1829, to bring me to this blessed Book, and to seek to acquaint myself with the Scriptures, it became quite different. I then began to be established in the things of God, to take firmer steps heavenwards, and to fight more successfully in the battles against the powers of darkness. Never let your religion be the religion of feeling, but let it all spring from what you see in this blessed Book. It is because of what I have seen in the Scriptures that you see me here this evening, - and how calm and how peaceful my soul! None of you, except you had heard of it, would suppose that one of the greatest of afflictions that can befall a human being has befallen me. And yet how calm and how quiet I am! And why? Because I take God by His Word, because my religion is not a religion of feeling. With all the depth of affection of a husband, whence sprang the calmness, the quietness, the holy joy I felt all the past week? Because I have been able, by God's grace, to acquaint myself with God as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. And thus it comes, and only thus, I am able to stand here with this holy calmness. Last Lord's-day, immediately after the death of my beloved wife, I should have been here if I had had physical strength; but having had, to watch night after night for several nights, I was unable to come and moreover I felt it my duty to my household to stay at home with them, for many reasons; but so far as the state of my heart was concerned, I should have been able as calmly and quietly to occupy this place as I do now. Why do I refer to this? To seek to encourage you to acquaint yourselves with God, - to know God. And I, by His grace, know Him, and find in Him such satisfaction and I know there is in Him such love to me that my soul is satisfied with Him. See, therefore, the deep importance of coming to the Scriptures; for it is written, ‘They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.’ I know Him, therefore I put my trust in Him. But if you only hear about Him, or read about Him, if you do not know Him as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures, then, when trials and difficulties come, it will be seen how little you are acquainted with Him. How important, then, that we hold the truth as it is in Jesus, that we know what God says about the vanities of this world, the blessedness of the world to come, and heavenly realities. Because my soul was enabled to lay hold on eternal life, to treat the truths of the Scriptures as realities, to grasp them by faith and not to hold them as notions, therefore in the midst of the storm I was calm and quiet, and there was not so much as a particle of difference between the bridal day and the funeral day. Oh, the holy

calmness of my soul! But you must know God. I delight to speak about Him, because our holy faith is a reality. The God of the Bible is the same in the second part of the nineteenth century as He was at the beginning. There is no difference between the Living God four thousand years ago and now; no difference between what the blessed Jesus was when on earth and now. Only let us seek to acquaint ourselves with Him; only believe what the Scriptures say about Him; only in child-like simplicity come to the word and believe it, and lay hold on it. Oh how blessed - how blessed! Oh that some of my dear fellow-sinners might be attracted to Jesus this evening! I have a friend in Jesus - a bosom friend. What He is to me He is willing to be to everyone present. Seek Christ first, then confide in His love, in His power, in His wisdom, and you will be happy - happy all the days of your life. Your peace will flow like a river, - not like the ocean, which is sometimes very calm, then all in motion, but your peace will flow like a river, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Oh, it is an unspeakably blessed thing to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus! I had no intention to refer to these points, but it may please God to bless them to one or the other here present.”

At the conclusion of the discourse Mr Müller further said, - “I suppose many dear Christian friends expected I should preach what is ordinarily called a funeral sermon, or give some account of my beloved departed wife. I mean to do so. It is quite in my heart so to do, but I desire, as there is so much to refer to, and as there are so many important incidents in our married life, to do this in the most public way possible. I have reason to believe that many hundreds of persons more than could get into this chapel would desire to be present; and therefore, as soon as God may please to give me strength for this, and as soon as my way is made plain so to do, I shall do so, and delight to do so, and count it a great honour from God to be permitted to do so. Timely notice will be given previously, but when, and where, or in what way, I cannot at this moment say. I am waiting on God, and He will direct me.* I thank all most heartily for the deep love and affection shown to me and my beloved departed wife, in the time of suffering and trial, and for all the inquiries made, and kindness shown to me and my dear daughter and other dear relatives. I commend myself and my dear daughter to your prayers, that God may help us to continue to rejoice in Him, howsoever we may be placed. I trust, by God's grace, we shall be enabled yet further to rejoice in God.”

*The Funeral Sermon was afterwards preached and published, and is still in print.

Spiritual Building

A sermon preached at Philip Street Baptist Chapel, Bedminster, Bristol on Sunday morning 12 November 1893

‘But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith’ – Epistle of Jude v 20.

In reading this short epistle of Jude, we learn that while yet one or other of the apostles was living, a great departure from the truth, and conformity to the mind of Christ, has already begun in the Church of God, and thus ever since, more or less, it has been; yea, and at certain times an awful darkness and great departure from the truth and godliness have been found in the Church of God, but, on the other hand, there have been also in the darkest days some truly godly ones, holding fast the truth as it is in Jesus, and seeking to tread in the footsteps of their divine Master. Now, beloved in Christ, our holy, godly aim and purpose should be this, and our earnest prayer to God that we may be strengthened for this; that we belong to the little company holding fast the truths as to a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour, and seeking more and more to be minded like Christ, dead to all that which is sinful and hateful to God in the world, and alive to all that pleases Him and is agreeable to his mind.

Our text shows us how it should be with us *‘But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.’* It is on these words that I desire particularly to speak this morning. The figure used here we are all familiar with. It is taken from the erection of a building. According to the size of the building, whether it is high and large, so the foundation is laid – the foundation deep and broad, according to the size and height of the building.

Now we all know what this signifies. The Apostle Paul tells us plainly no other foundation can be laid but Jesus Christ. What does this mean? That we cannot save ourselves, that our fellow-men cannot save us – that none but the Lord Jesus saves us, and can save us. Then how is this brought about? We have to own before God that we are sinners, and that we deserve nothing but punishment. We have to confess this openly before God, and then put our whole trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls – that is, trusting alone in the righteousness which He wrought out for poor sinners in fulfilling in their room and stead the law of God, which we had broken times without number, by our deeds, our words, and by our thoughts, and put our whole trust in His perfect obedience unto death, the death of the cross, because when that Blessed One hung on the cross, when He shed His blood, it was for the remission of our sins. While He hung on the cross He made atonement for every one of our sinful deeds, unholy words, ungodly thoughts, desires, purposes and inclinations and thus the wrath of God, the holiness of God, and the justice of God were satisfied. When He fulfilled the law, and stood in our room, He satisfied the holiness of God. When he bore the

punishment while hanging on the cross in our room, He satisfied the justice of God, and every poor sinner trusting in Him alone for the salvation of the soul shall be forgiven. Before going to our second part of the subject, I ask everyone of my beloved friends here present, "Have you ever been convinced that you are sinners needing a saviour?" If not, ask God to have mercy on you, and to show you this. When you are convinced that you are sinners, have you confessed it before God? Have you humbled yourselves before God? Have you condemned yourselves, and passed sentence on yourselves before God? If not, ask God to help you do so. But all this, while it is beginning in the right way is not all.

The great point is to put our sole trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, for we can do nothing whatever in the matter of our salvation – the blessed Lord Jesus did it all. He finished the work for poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinners, as I am, and every one of you are. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the law of God, and bore the punishment which that law demands should be inflicted on account of transgression. Either we must bear the punishment ourselves, or we must obtain a substitute. The blessed Lord Jesus voluntarily gave Himself to be our substitute, and if you put your trust in Him alone for salvation, God looks upon you as having fulfilled the law. This is the righteousness wrought out by the Lord Jesus, in our room and stead, for the greatest, the oldest, and the vilest of sinners, for if you put your trust in Him you have the substitute, Who, in your room, bore the punishment for you. How blessed to have a friend in Jesus! Do you enjoy the knowledge of the sweetness of this happiness? Without it, there is no lasting peace. The knowledge of forgiveness of sins is to be had while we are in the body. We are not to wait for it until the body is at an end. We can have it while we are alive. We should earnestly seek for it while we live. I have enjoyed for sixty-eight years the knowledge of the forgiveness of my sins, and, by the grace of God, I have not had a single minute's doubt whether my sins are forgiven or not; although a wretched, helpless sinner, all my sins are forgiven, and what God has done for me, a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, He is willing to do to everyone who seeks it in God's appointed way. Thus, owning we are sinners, and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, everyone who has done so is on the right foundation.

You all know that if a house is built, he who builds it does not simply lay the foundation, but there follows the superstructure, and adding stone to stone, and one piece of timber to another afterwards. Thus it is in the divine life. It is right to lay the proper foundation, but this is not all. Almost all persons, after they are converted, are left here for a season. Comparatively few only are in the position of the dying thief – there was nothing in him but trust in the Lord Jesus. That was the foundation laid, and the Lord Jesus said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." But almost all persons, when they are brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, are left in the world for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with Him, and that they may see more of the vanity of this world, and the reality of heavenly things; and especially that they may bear fruit to the honour and glory of God, that they manifest the mind of Christ, that they seek to win souls to Christ, and do their part in helping the people of God both in spiritual and temporal things. For these reasons, being left here in the world, we have to seek to make progress in the divine life, and, as the text expresses it "to build yourselves up on your most holy faith."

Before coming to this second part of our subject, I make one remark. You note it is "building up yourselves". Naturally, we should expect it to be said, "Let your pastors build you up; let your elders, let the deacons, let the aged, experienced Christians build you up on your most holy faith."

"Building up yourselves." The responsibility is laid upon every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he do his part to make progress in the divine life.

Now, the great question before us is, "How is this to be done? How can we build up ourselves on our most holy faith?" Of all the Scriptures, the most blessed, precious answer to this question we find in 2 Peter 1, to which we will now turn. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." Notice here, the apostles and every believer had the same kind of faith. The apostles had not one kind of faith, and other believers another kind of faith.

In the fifth verse we read, "And beside this, giving all diligence, **add** to your FAITH, VIRTUE; and to VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE," etc. Now, here we get the catalogue of what we have to do in these following verses – to build up ourselves in our most holy faith. If we have trust in Jesus Christ, faith in Him, the foundation is laid. Now, the next point at which we have to aim – and regarding which we have to "give all diligence," not in a slothful way, but in "all diligence" – is to add to FAITH, VIRTUE.

What have we to understand by this? The 4th chapter of Philippians, 8th verse, gives us the answer. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Here we see what is the first thing for any child of God, for any person brought to Jesus, where the right foundation has been laid regarding the salvation of the soul, is in order that he may be able to build up himself on his most holy faith, to aim at everything that is lovely, and bright, and pleasing in the sight of God, which implies that we avoid

everything which is contrary to the mind of God – “if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Now, as we are weak in ourselves, it becomes us to call upon God to help us to attain to this. To our “VIRTUE” we are to seek to add “KNOWLEDGE”. The knowledge referred to here is not the knowledge of the things and affairs of this life. I do not despise knowledge concerning the ordinary things of this life, in reference to science or languages, which may be profitable to this life, and may be useful and proper. While I allow this, it is not the kind of knowledge referred to here, but spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the knowledge of the vanity of this world, and of the reality of heavenly things; the knowledge which God has given to us in the Revelation which He has been pleased to make of Himself in the Holy Scriptures. It means, carefully to read the Scriptures, diligently to read the Scriptures, with prayer to read the Scriptures, and to meditate on the Word of God. Now let me ask my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, is this your habit? Are you habitually reading the Scriptures? There is great danger, through the multiplicity of matters, that we neglect the Word of God. There is great temptation lest through the multiplicity of books which are issued year after year from the press, we neglect the Holy Scriptures.

What will be the result of this? We shall injure ourselves spiritually, we shall not make progress in the divine life except we give ourselves CAREFULLY, HABITUALLY, DILIGENTLY, and WITH MEDITATION, to the reading of the Holy Scriptures. It is these means which God has specially used, and does use, for the advancement in divine life. Now as I love you, my beloved friends in Christ, and as I am come here for the purpose of leaving a blessing behind, with God’s blessing, I affectionately ask you if you are lovers of the Word of God. Ask yourselves in the presence of God, “Am I a lover of the Word of God?”

For the first twenty years of my life I was not a lover of the Word of God. I neglected the Word of God. From the time when I was fourteen and a half years old until I was twenty years and five weeks old, I never read the Word of God. Then it pleased God to show me that I was a sinner, and needed a Saviour, and I saw how to put my trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation. Then I took to reading the Word of God, and I read it every day. I cannot say I was a real lover of the Word of God, but in July, 1829, four years after my conversion, I became a lover of the Word of God, and it is a great delight to me to have the Word of God. I cannot tell you what a blessing it is to my soul. Blessed as I have been for fifty-eight years with work, my habit is first of all to have a good meal for my soul. I come to the Word of God, I read it, I pray over it, I meditate on it, and I apply it to myself. How does this comfort you? How does it exhort you? How does it warn you? How does it reprove you? Thus I read the Scriptures, and get a blessing to my soul, and then I go to work with all my might, with earnestness, but I do not go to my work until I first have a good meal for my soul. And what has been the consequence? I am a healthy man, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. I have now entered my eighty-ninth year. I am not cold, and dull, and lifeless, spiritually; I am a healthy man, spiritually, and the great instrument that has been used by God for this is the Word of God, which I read with delight and joy, and which I would my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ do the same. They would find the healthfulness I have had, and the continued happiness I have had, year after year, and which I have now had for sixty-eight years. There is nothing to hinder you from being happy children of God, when carefully, habitually, diligently, you read the Word of God. Now, after we have added KNOWLEDGE to VIRTUE, it is said, “and to KNOWLEDGE add TEMPERANCE.” This does not mean merely to avoid excess in eating and drinking; all this is implied; but it means more than this. It means self-control, that is, to seek to keep more and more under, all our natural, evil tendencies, such as passion, envy, pride, the love of money, the love of dress, the love of worldly pleasures and amusements; to keep under idleness, to aim at all that which glorifies God. O, beloved in Christ, are we doing this? Are we seeking to act more and more according to this – that we have self-control over our natural tendencies? In ourselves we are perfect weakness; we cannot do it, but we can cry to God that He would help us, and strengthen us to keep down more and more these natural tendencies, for if we indulge them it will prove a stumbling block to the unconverted. If we seek to keep under self-control, we not only glorify God, but strengthen the children of God, and remove stumbling blocks.

Then to TEMPERANCE, we must add PATIENCE – that grace by which we meekly, submissively, without fretting, complaining, and much less murmuring, bear the afflictions of life. One says, “I am naturally impatient, and I cannot help it.” This is a mistake, my brother and sister. Being tried, immediately cry to God. He will enable thee to keep under thy impatience.

The world is looking on, and by thy impatience thou are dishonouring and weakening the hands of thy brothers and sisters in Christ, while, on the other hand, thou art glorifying God by bearing the trials and afflictions of life. “All” these “things work together for good,” and out of all these difficulties and trials God will bring blessing to thy soul. By thy impatience thou are dishonouring God, and by patiently bearing the trials of life thou art glorifying God.

Then to PATIENCE we are to seek to add GODLINESS. Godliness – that is the grace by which we do what we do, to the honour of God, in the sight of God, as looking to God for help and strength, so that, more and more, we get into this state of heart. “Whether we eat or drink, we do it to the glory of God.” If we have a morsel of meat, or drink of water, we do it to the glory of God. Ah! this grace. O for this grace! It is the kind of grace that the Blessed One had, who had it for His meat and drink, to do it to the glory of His Father. Although we do not compare ourselves with

Christ, as if we were anything like Him, yet what God did for Him, He is willing to do for us. He is willing to “strengthen us with might, by His Spirit in the inner man.”

Then to GODLINESS we are to add BROTHERLY KINDNESS – the love of the brethren, the children of God, not because they are our relatives, not to love them because they are in the same position in life, not to love them because they are of the same education, not because they are of the same church to which we belong, but to love them because they are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The more we do this, the more we glorify God. All the believers in Christ should love one another. No distinction between rich and poor, learned and illiterate, whether they belong to us of the same church, or to another church – we are to love one another because we belong to Christ. Is it this after which we aim, my beloved friends? This is the very reason why I came here. I love the beloved brethren and sisters in Philip Street Baptist Chapel. I love all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and for seventeen years, in which I was almost always travelling about in all parts of the earth – in Europe, and all over Europe repeatedly, and in China and Japan, and in the six colonies of Australia – wherever I went I preached in the Church of England, amongst the Congregationalists, amongst the Baptists, amongst the Methodists, among all denominations, and I preached provided they loved the Lord Jesus Christ. I would not preach in Socinian chapels, lest it should be supposed I did not care about the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would not preach in the Roman Catholic churches and chapels, lest it should be supposed I was an admirer of the Pope. Wherever the foundation of our “most holy faith” was laid, there I preached.

Now, let us aim increasingly, beloved brethren, after this – that we love all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then to this BROTHERLY KINDNESS we should add LOVE. To love those who do not love us, to love those who are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and our very enemies, because the more we have of this love, the more we have of God, for it is expressly said that “love is of God”, and the more we are like God, the more we love.

What will be the result of all this? We see in the next two verses. “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

No-one will be an idler in the Church of God who aims at thus building up himself on his most holy faith. He will care to win souls for Christ in one way or another, nor be “unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”. He will live to God’s honour and glory. “He that lacketh these things is blind.” Spiritual dimness of sight is the result of this, if we do not seek “to build up ourselves on our most holy faith”.

Again and again in our day, when persons are brought into spiritual difficulties, they know not how to act because they have been so little acquainted with God and His ways. “They do not build up themselves.” We should know how to act in difficulties, and this will be the case if we seek to build up ourselves; and if we do not know how to act in difficulties, the remedy is to aim at this – that we build up ourselves. And another boon we need continually in our day – people do not know whether their sins are forgiven or not. How comes this, if they are believers in Christ? Because they do not build up themselves in their most holy faith. They do not know how they stand before God, and that their sins are forgiven. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Here is another blessing – the result of building up ourselves on our most holy faith. We know we have been called out of the world, that we are on the road to heaven, and when this life is over, we shall enter into everlasting life. This is the result of building up ourselves. And another blessing will result. We are thus “kept from falling” – that is, a person who is seeking to build up himself on his most holy faith will not bring disgrace on the name of the Lord. He will not be found a drunkard, he will not abscond with large sums of money in his pocket. None of these things occur on the part of those who profess to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and build themselves up on their most holy faith.

And one more blessing in the next verse. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” We should desire to enter the haven like a vessel, under full sail, enters the harbour. Do you think of this?

It has been thousands of times my prayer that my last days may be my best, and that I may, like a vessel under full sail, enter the haven. O, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, should this not be yet the aim of all of you? Ask God to bring you to this mind, that you, in the remainder of your life, may glorify and love God, and that at last, like a vessel under full sail, you may enter the haven of eternal love and blessedness. God grant it, for Christ’s sake!

The 23rd Psalm

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel on 20 June 1897

The Twenty-Third Psalm:

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, through 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 for 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. - Psalm 23.

Our meditation this evening, as the Lord may help us, will be on the short but precious 23rd Psalm, "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*" This was spoken and written by King David. Now, naturally, we should be inclined to say, "No wonder that he said, *I shall not want*, because he, who had once been a poor shepherd boy, looking after a few sheep, was now a king." And not merely a king, but an exceedingly mighty king, for he had it in his power, if it had been necessary, to send many thousands of soldiers into the battle. And not merely a very mighty king, but an exceedingly rich king. Therefore, we are inclined, naturally, to say, "That was the reason why he said, *I shall not want.*" He was, indeed, exceedingly rich, for he had gathered together for the building of the Temple such an enormous sum that it would amount to more than 900 millions of pounds sterling of our money! So vast a sum that all the enormous national debt of Great Britain could be cleared off at once by it! And out of his own privy purse alone he had given for the building of the Temple more than 18 million pounds sterling, a thing that has never been since heard of in history.

Yet these were not reasons why he said, "*I shall not want*," but because Jehovah was his Shepherd! He looked after him. He cared for him. He fed him. He nourished him. And thus the great point regarding ourselves is, that the Lord Jesus is our Shepherd, that we are His sheep; and this we know if we are heeding His voice. Let us ask ourselves, "Do we hear the voice of the Lord Jesus? Do we attend to what He says? Are we mindful of seeking to please Him, and to carry out His Word in our life and deportment? And, above all, do we trust in Him who laid down His life for the sheep, who made an atonement for poor sinners, whereby all who trust in Him for salvation might be saved?" These are deeply important questions, which we should aim to be able to answer in the affirmative. Thus it is with me. Then, even though we may be amongst the poorest, the most ignorant, the most tried persons on earth, we, too, shall be warranted by the fact that we are the sheep of Christ to say, "*I shall not want*".

And here particularly notice this. "*I shall not want*," does not simply refer to bodily necessities, but to everything that we can possibly need while here on earth. If we find the spiritual conflict is great, and we seek more and more to enter into our weakness, and helplessness, and nothingness, and entire dependence on God for assistance, here is the word for our comfort which does not belong to David only, but to us also, individually, if we have Jehovah-Jesus for our Shepherd. In whatever want, of whatever kind, we possibly can be while on the road to Heaven, it is our precious, glorious privilege, with David, to say to ourselves, "*I shall not want*, because my Heavenly Father is my Shepherd, my precious adorable Lord Jesus Christ is my Helper, my Friend, my Elder Brother, my Saviour. He will never leave me, nor forsake me!" O, how unspeakably blessed is the position of the weakest, the feeblest, the least instructed child of God! Therefore the great, the deeply important question once more is this, "Do we belong, individually, to the sheep of Christ?" My heart's desire and prayer is that everyone here present may with earnestness seek to get into such a Scriptural state of heart, as to be warranted to say, "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*"

In the second verse, the figure of the shepherd and the sheep is kept up. "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.*" Not, "driveth me to a few dry blades of grass," but green pastures, tender grass. Then, the sheep are not driven to these; but they are at leisure to partake of the green grass, the tender grass, the "*green pastures*," and to lie down and to rise again, as sheep. Now, the figures here used bring before us the blessedness of a child of God! The world knows nothing of our happiness in the Lord, and cannot, therefore, in the least degree enter into the blessedness of our position as God's children.

Our eyes have been opened to see the awful state in which we are by nature; that is, led captive by the devil, at his will, to do the things which are hateful to God and perfectly contrary to His mind. Further, it has pleased the Lord not merely to show to us this lost and ruined condition, but to enable us to own it before Him, to confess that we are undone, lost, and ruined, and that we cannot save ourselves. Even this is not all. But God has helped us by the power of His Holy Spirit to put our trust simply, solely, and entirely in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for sinners, even fulfilling the whole law of God in our room and stead, and bearing the punishment which we have deserved on account of our numberless transgressions, so that we stand before God as just ones. That means we are reckoned on the part of God as just and righteous-unjust and unrighteous though we are in ourselves. We, through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely become children of God, and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; but already, while yet in the body, all our numberless transgressions are forgiven.

We have not to wait till we die, or till the Lord Jesus Christ comes, in order to obtain forgiveness from all our sins; but the moment we put our trust alone in Jesus for salvation, that moment every one of our numberless transgressions is

forgiven, and shall be remembered no more throughout eternity. O, how unspeakably blessed is this position, and the result of it is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost! We, without dread and fear, now think about God—so to speak, look Him in the face, guilty sinners through we are naturally without being in the least afraid of an eternally Holy God. O, how precious! How unspeakably precious this is!

And then, when at last it pleases God to take us home to Himself, after He has helped us during the whole of our earthly pilgrimage, in all our variety of difficulties, and trials, and perplexing circumstances, and amid the manifestations of our weakness and helplessness—when at last He takes us to Himself, either by passing through death, or, if found alive at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, being taken to Him, then we enter upon our inheritance. And that inheritance is nothing less than what our Heavenly Father gives to His Only Begotten Son, as the reward of His mediatorial service, for all He did on earth, for all He suffered on earth, for the passing through the hour of darkness, in order that the innumerable company of poor sinners which no man is able to count might be saved.

What our Heavenly Father gives to Him in the way of glory and reward for all this, we who put our trust in Him shall share with Him. We can say to ourselves, as believers in the Lord Jesus, “Though I deserve nothing but hell, I shall not only have heaven, I shall not only partake of the rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, but I shall share with my precious adorable Lord Jesus Christ all the glory which the Father gives to Him for his mediatorial work!” O, what is contained in this! If the world only knew what the sinner who believes in Christ obtains through faith in Him, all the world would joyfully seek Him; but it is because it is not apprehended, it is not known, that with carelessness and indifference the world passes on, and often and often till it is too late to awake it.

“*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.*” The figure here used regarding the sheep brings before us the exceeding great blessings and happiness which are the result of putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. What, therefore, we have to do is to seek more and more to ponder it, and more and more to enter into it, with reference to ourselves. Then, not merely “*green pastures*” are mentioned, but “*still waters.*” “*He leadeth me beside the still waters;*” the waters of quietness, on account of the timid nature of the sheep. This is especially referred to. Not a mountain torrent, which might frighten away the sheep, are they led to for drinking; but to the quiet still waters, in character with the sheep. They are not frightened away. “*He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His Name’s sake.*” I will mention here (what have I mentioned, I think before) that this has nothing to do with bringing backsliders to Himself again. In the Hebrew, the words mean, “*He refresheth my soul,*” or “*He invigorates my soul,*” just as by means of a very good night’s rest we are invigorated and refreshed, or as a cooling draught of water given at the time of harvest on a hot summer’s day to the labourer would refresh him, so, spiritually, we, who are the children of God, are refreshed by our Precious Shepherd.

It is the very joy and delight of the heart of our precious Lord Jesus Christ to refresh us spiritually. If at any time we are cast down, through trials and difficulties, or through sore temptations, which we have to encounter, and we find that we are not being refreshed, what we should do is to remind the Lord Jesus Christ that to Him “*hath been given the tongue of the learned, that He might know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary,*” to them who have need to be refreshed, to comfort them, to encourage them, to strengthen their hands in God. This precious word we have brought before us regarding the Lord Jesus Christ in the 4th verse of the 50th chapter of Isaiah, and I advise all my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ to make much more use than they have yet done of this blessed word.

“*He refresheth my soul.*” O let us make use of this! O let us, in childlike simplicity, trust our precious, precious Lord Jesus Christ! Whenever you are cast down, whenever you are greatly tried spiritually, open your heart to the precious Jesus, as your Friend. I have done it for many a long year, and it is just this which upholds me, which comforts me, which makes me a happy man. I deal with my precious Lord Jesus as a bosom Friend. I pour out my whole heart to Him, and tell Him, everything; and beg and intreat Him, whenever I need it, to speak to me a word in season, that the weariness may pass away, and that I may be refreshed spiritually. And I find Him in ever ready to help me. “*He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His Name’s sake.*” The Lord brings us into the right road, into “*the paths of righteousness,*” and we are depending on Him to be led along in the same road, for we should soon wander away from Him and go back again to our foolish, sinful desires. This second part of the verse shows what is meant by “*He restoreth my soul;*” that is “*he refresheth my soul, He leads me along in the right road.*”

“*Yea, through 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.*” Here we find the psalmist supposing himself to be brought to meet the greatest trial, the greatest affliction; nay, to be brought to the very close of life, to pass through the ordeal of death. Yet his language is, “*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*” How comes this? Is it because we have so much medical power? Surely not! When we are brought to the very brink of the grave, is it because we have so much physical power and strength? No! But quite the reverse. The reason is this: because we have the Lord Jesus with us! “*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.*” O how precious! The Lord caring for us, by His passing with us through the Vale of Tears.

When we are brought to the condition that more than ever we need Him, as a Friend, as a Helper, as a Support, there He is, never leaving us, nor forsaking us! What we have to say individually to ourselves when the heaviest and greatest trials come, and when we are brought even to the very blink of the grave, and when heart and flesh fail, is, "Thou art with me; Thou, my precious lord Jesus, art with me; Thou hast not forsaken me, Thou art now with me, in utter weakness and helplessness; I have Thee as my Almighty Friend and Upholder, and Comforter and strength." O how precious! "Yea walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Some of the dear children of God, the real, true children of God, have fear regarding the hour of death. "How will it be when I come to die?" they think. O say to yourself, "I will fear no evil!" Not because we are anything in ourselves, or can do anything by ourselves; but simply because it is written, "*Thou art with me; Thy rod and staff, they comfort me.*"

Now the last two verses place before us the intimate connection between God and His children, under another figure—under the figure of a host inviting guests. "*Thou preparest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*" Taking this verse, what is the meaning? It consists in two things. Trusting the Lord Jesus Christ, the one on Whom we have to feed; seeking to enter into what God has given us in Jesus Christ, as the Law Fulfiller, as the Atoner for our sins, and on Whom we have to feed spiritually. That is the table which God has prepared for us. Secondly, the Word of God, the revealed Will of God, as we have in it in the Holy scriptures, that is what God gives to us for our food; and this notwithstanding all the hatred of Satan, notwithstanding all the opposition of our enemies. "*Thou preparest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies.*"

But now comes the practical question, "Do we feed practically on Christ? Do we seek at large to ponder what the Lord Jesus Christ is to us, as our Redeemer, as our Great High Priest, as the One Who is coming again to take us to Himself, that where He is we may be also? What the Lord Jesus Christ is to us as our Friend as our Counsellor, as our Strength? Now do we seek in Him an interest, and do we day by day put on (to use the figure that is used in Scripture) the helmet of our salvation; that is, seek to enter into what is connected with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we comfort ourselves day by day with all this?" O how deeply important to attend to it that we may have peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, that the world may see what a blessed thing it is to be a child of God—that thus we may not only glorify Him, but strengthen the hands of our fellowmen.

"*Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*" In the East, when a great one invited any one of his friends to take a meal with him, to spend a day with him, one of the first things was not only that the servants should hand him water to wash his feet, but oil to anoint his head. As a mark of respect and reverence this was done. That was the welcome, so to speak, given to the guest who came to the house of the great one. Now, we have no such thing done to us, but something infinitely more precious. The Holy Spirit is given to us—the Holy Spirit again and again represented under the figure of oil. And as assuredly as we have the Holy Ghost given to us, so surely shall we get to heaven, so surely shall the glory of Christ, so surely shall we become like Christ and have our glorified bodies. These are the things which are implied in the gift of the Holy Spirit! O how precious these things are!

If the heart habitually were given to these things, it would be full of joy! We should be exceedingly happy; and therefore my affectionate counsel and advice to my beloved fellow believers is, seek more and more to ponder all this, with application to your own hearts, in order that your joy may increase more abundantly. And what will come of it at last? You will be able to say, with the psalmist, "*My cup runneth over*"—"I am so happy a man that I can scarcely bear it; I not only have something in my cup, and have my cup full; but *my cup runneth over.*" O the blessed position of a child of God, not as to pounds, shillings, and pence, not as to the possession of many houses, not as to the possession of a great many hundreds of acres of land, not because he has an enormous sum in the funds—not on these accounts. There may be little, or nothing at all, of all this found in his possession. But as to peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, as to the blessedness of having this brought down into his heart. O, my friends, how precious this!

Now comes the last verse, "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me in all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*" The poor one has been invited as a guest by the rich one. He goes, and finds it very pleasant there, and is happy. All that is just what he desires naturally. Now, what conclusion does he come to? "I find it so pleasant to be here, I will remain here, I will not go away any more." This brings before us what the child of God finds, in acquaintance with Christ. Not merely entering into what God has given him in Christ Jesus; not merely having to say, "*My cup runneth over; I am brimful of happiness.*" But, "I have almost more than I can bear. I find it so pleasant, so exceedingly pleasant, this way of going on, I can never get into another position any more. I will remain in the house of my Heavenly Father for ever."

That is the position into which we are brought as believers in Christ! And as assuredly as we are honestly walking in the ways of the Lord, and truly surrendering the heart to God, this is the result to which we come. We find it so pleasant, so precious, even for this life, that we have no desire to depart from the ways of the Lord. In our natural, worldly condition, we seek after happiness; but we do not get it. Nothing but disappointment is the result, for after a few hours all this worldly happiness is gone. But the position into which we are brought by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

not only insures us happiness for a few days, or a few months, or a few years, but for ever and ever. So that our hearts says, "I will remain in this way; I am so happy in this way; I will never forsake this way."

Not merely so. But "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. I shall now be for ever and ever a happy man, and I will remain in the presence of my Father; I will not leave His House any more, because I have found it so very, very precious to be a child of God." Now, this has been my own happy experience for seventy-one years and a half, and therefore I command this plan, which is according to the Holy Scriptures, to any and every one who has not yet had it. It is not merely for this one, or another one; but God is willing to bestow the blessing upon any and every one who is desirous of having it. All we have to do is, just like mere beggars, to open our hands and to receive what God is willing to give to us. We have to own that deserve nothing but punishment; we have to own that we are sinners who, on account of our natural sinfulness, are entirely unworthy of all the blessings which God is willing to bestow upon us; and owning to this, and then putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, ensures to us these gifts. Will you not accept them yet? Will you all who have not yet put your trust in Jesus, do so now? O what unspeakable blessedness is here! I remember well the very first evening after my conversation lying peacefully on my bed, knowing that my sins were forgiven, that Heaven was my Home, that I was now regenerated, brought on the road to Heaven and my heart was ready to leap for joy. And ever since matters have gone on in the same way, and this is the blessedness I desire for everyone who is yet without it. God give the blessing, and abundant blessing, for Christ's sake.

The Beloved of the Lamb

A Sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday Evening; June 6th, 1897

Revelation vii., 9-17. "AFTER this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." At present, to all outward appearance, the number of the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is small, in comparison with the vast number of those who do not believe in Him. But it will not always be thus; the day is coming when innumerable multitudes will be found to belong to Christ. O how precious to remember this! How deeply important to dwell on it, to seek more and more to apprehend it, to comfort ourselves by it, and to be stimulated through it to labour that we individually may be God's instruments of adding to this vast multitude! What an encouragement this for missionary labours! What an encouragement this to speak to souls about their salvation! What an encouragement, also, to seek to win the young, the middle-aged, and all classes of persons for the Lord, by Sunday schools, ragged schools, and in any way that will tend to it!

But in an especial manner it should lead us, individually, to stand before God, and to offer ourselves for missionary service, if we have not done it yet. If the Lord accept us, He will use us for the praise of His Name; if the Lord does not accept us, we have done our part, in ourselves. Still further, if we do not go out individually to heathen countries, we may yet be instrumental in glorifying God in connection with missionary labours. We can help the missionaries with the means with which God will entrust us, and we can help them by our prayers, by writing to them a word of comfort, and a word of encouragement, and in a variety of ways besides we may be instrumental in helping missionary operations. A deeply important verse is this, full of comfort, full of encouragement, full of exhortation to do what we can that we may be instruments to increase this great multitude won for the Lord.

"I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number." It is out of the power of any human being to count the vast number of the saved ones. "Which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues stood before the throne." Notice the word "stood;" that shows the attitude of a servant. All these elect holy angels stood before the throne; all these saved ones, this innumerable multitude of all nations and tribes and peoples and languages were in the attitude of servants before Jehovah. "Stood before the throne and before the Lamb." The Lamb, as you all know, whenever the expression is used, has reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, by reason of the atonement that He made. "They were clothed with white robes." White robes! This has reference to the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Naturally, we stand before God in filthy garments, spiritually; and these filthy garments we cannot ourselves wash and make white, so that God can be satisfied with us. We cannot give righteousness to ourselves. We have none. All our own righteousness in Scripture is compared to filthy rags. Whether we see it or not; whether we readily allow it or not, this is the statement of God: our own goodness, merit, worthiness, and righteousness are as "filthy rags."

Now these filthy rags can never enter into heaven! God cannot bear spiritual filth in heaven! All of this character must be taken away: the spiritual filth must be removed, and the only way to remove it is by the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, a great practical question, therefore, regarding everyone is this, "How is it with me?" We should ask ourselves, "How is it with my spiritual robes; are they white and clean?" "Am I brought into such a state as that God can receive me into heaven?" If I have not yet seen that I am a sinner; if I have not yet confessed before God that I am a sinner; if I have not yet put my trust solely in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in His atoning blood, then I am

not prepared for heaven! But I am come to this. This is not a salvation for a few chosen ones, or a few hundreds, nor even a salvation of a few thousands; but of an innumerable multitude saved by the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as they were saved, and deserved nothing but punishment, so I (we should say to ourselves individually), even I, may be saved, if I seek salvation in God's appointed way - seeking not to obtain it by my own goodness, merit, and worthiness, but through Jesus Christ. This innumerable company, everyone of them obtained salvation through Jesus Christ, and thus may I obtain it. But in no other way.

Many persons say to themselves, "Well, it is true that it has not yet been all right with me, as it might have been and as it ought to have been; but I have tried now to turn over another leaf; I would seek now to live differently from what I have been doing, and thus I shall make up for past shortcomings, and failures, and sins." This is a soul-destroying error! We never, never, never can make up for one single sin of which we have been guilty, for if we failed in one particular only, if it were possible that we should be in such a state that we had fallen short but by one sin, that would be enough for our perdition, for we should then have broken the whole law; and as long as we trusted in ourselves for salvation, this broken law would bring destruction upon us. Therefore, we must look away from ourselves to Christ, and Him alone. God sent Him into the world in order that He not only might fulfil all the commandments which we have broken times without number, and thus work out a righteousness in which we can be accepted by God, but He also bore the punishment in our room and stead for our disobedience. We must, therefore, hide ourselves in Christ; that is, look away entirely from our own goodness, merit, and worthiness - of which we have none, none, none - and put our entire trust in the Lord Jesus.

Then, let us remember we must have "white robes," else we cannot enter into the presence of God. Our own sins, which are compared to filthy garments, must be removed, and we must solely and simply trust in the merits and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus, by the power of His atonement, be made clean from all our sins. O how precious! Now this is my comfort, having been guilty of numberless transgressions as a young man, having also failed and come short in a variety of ways since my conversion, though not living in gross sin: yet failing in action, in word, in thought, though hating sin and loving holiness - this is my comfort, I am standing before God in white robes, clean, and spotless, as if I had never in my whole life been guilty of one single sin. And into this state I have been brought through faith in the Lord Jesus; and into this state not merely I have been brought, but all who believe in Jesus, who trust in Him alone for salvation! O how comforting is this! The dread of God, the fear of death, the fear of eternity stops completely when entering into the work of the Lord Jesus, and appropriating it to ourselves! Now see to it, beloved Christian friends, that you individually do, if you have not yet done so, derive all the comfort which God intends us to derive from this expression, "White robes."

"And palms in their hands." The palm was in ancient times the sign of victory. And this innumerable multitude, everyone of them having a palm in his or her hand, declares that victory has been obtained. Victory through the blood of the Lamb. Victory through the power of Jesus Christ, Who gave it to them. Victory obtained for us individually, because He loves us with an eternal, unchangeable love, "He Who has begun a good work in us will carry it on by the power of His Spirit," and so at the last receive us to glory. O how precious this is! At present we are in spiritual conflict. Satan is not conquered yet. Satan still is our great enemy and fights against us, and often and often obtains, in some way or another, an advantage over us - if it be not in the way of leading us to an open fall, there are some words escaping us which ought not to; there are some thoughts found in us which ought not to be; and even, now and then, an action which is not altogether according to the Christ-like state in which we ought to be found. But all this will come to an end. The blessed Jesus, Who has begun a good work in us, will finish it, and we shall have individually (weak and feeble and worthless though we are in ourselves), the victory, through Jesus Christ.

Now this innumerable multitude "Cried with a loud voice, saying, ' Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.'" Notice this particularly! They ascribe salvation to God and to the Lamb; to the Father and to the Son; to Jehovah and to our Lord Jesus Christ. They do not say, "I was very prayerful; I was very conscientious; I never gave way to anything contrary to the mind of God." Nothing of the kind! The very reverse! Salvation is ascribed by everyone of the saved ones to God the Father, and to God the Son, the Lord Jesus, Who is found here under the figure of the Lamb. "They cried with a loud voice." It is especially also to be noticed that they did not merely whisper it now and then, a few times; but with a loud voice they declared it, that people might hear it, because it was the joy of their hearts to ascribe salvation to God, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, and take not the least credit to themselves. This will be the case with everyone of the saved ones. Fellow-believers, we shall all, from our inmost souls, ascribe entirely our salvation to God and to the Lord Jesus, and that we did nothing whatever, but simply, like beggars, accepted what was given to us!

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts" - that means the four living creatures, in contradistinction to the four great worldly powers that will brood over Gentile sinners - "and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God." Notice this again, the holy, unfallen angels stood round about the throne;" stood, indicating the position of servants before the Master "stood round about the throne and about the elders," representing the Church, and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, in deep humility

of soul, ascribing salvation to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus, "and worshipped God," praising and adoring Him for what He had done for them, "Saying, Amen" - that is, "Even so is it. "Blessing" - that is, praise in the highest degree - "and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen." This expresses the deep gratitude felt on the part of the redeemed ones; and thus it will be with us. If there is a little praise and a little thanksgiving now found in our hearts, in the highest degree we shall adore, and praise, and magnify, and worship the Lord for what He has done for us in Christ Jesus. And then again, to this they set their "Amen," that is, ascribing all from their heart to God.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, 'What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?' And I said unto him, 'Sir, thou knowest!'" The question was asked the apostle John as to whence these individuals came; and he confesses his ignorance. "Sir, thou knowest" - that means, in other words, "I do not know, but thou dost know it, and thou art able to tell me;" and through this confession of his ignorance he obtains the information. And this is just what we have to do before God, not to make our boast that we know everything, that we are already instructed to the very highest degree, that we cannot be instructed; but, on the contrary, to own again and again, when we read the Scriptures and find something that we do not understand, that we are ignorant of the meaning of the passage, and ask God that He would graciously be pleased to teach us. We shall find that He is ready to do it. And this instance of how even an apostle confessed his ignorance should be a particular encouragement to us to be ready on our part also to confess our ignorance; for we know that he was not only greatly honoured, but he was a believer who had been for a long time in service, in great service, who for a very long time had been an Apostle, and who was now at the close of his earthly pilgrimage, for he was about ninety years of age, but he was not ashamed to confess his ignorance. And so we should never be ashamed before God to confess our ignorance, for that is the very way to increase our knowledge. If we humble ourselves before God, He will further and further instruct us.

"'Sir, thou knowest.' And he said unto me, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation'" - more exactly, "'which came out of the great tribulation,'" having especial reference to what they had had to pass through, and bringing before us also that through which we may have yet to pass - "and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here we have on no account to suppose that the great tribulation had made their robes white, but the blood of the Lamb; and we must never lose sight of the fact that no trials, no afflictions, make us white. They may be helpful to us, they may do us good spiritually, they ought to do us good spiritually; for on this very account, trials, sufferings, pains, sickness, afflictions, are sent to us, to be a blessing to us - but they never can make our robes white. The blood of Jesus Christ alone can accomplish this. "And have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne." Not on account of the great tribulation are they there, but because their robes were made white by the blood of the Lamb; that is, by the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Therefore are they before the throne of God."

Now comes something else. "And serve Him day and night in His temple." "Serve Him day and night." Some persons have an idea that heaven consists in singing away our time, so that one hundred years after the other we shall be singing, and that the joys of heaven consist in doing nothing. This is a great mistake. If we work and serve the Lord a little, it is held out as a great honour, a great privilege of serving the Lord in eternity. There is one verse, particularly, pointing out this in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, the third verse, where it is stated, "There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him." Notice, this is held out as the greatest honour, privilege, enjoyment, and blessing - that the servants of the Living God shall serve Him; that is, have the great honour, the great privilege, bestowed upon them of serving the Lord, and just in the degree in which they have now the mind of Christ, in which they look at being allowed to serve the Lord as an honour, as a privilege, and not as a burden, not as an irksome task.

I myself, have now for many a long year, again and again and again, asked the Lord that He would yet allow me to have the great honour, the great privilege, the great enjoyment to serve Him, to labour for Him. So far from considering it a burden, an irksome task, the very reverse of this; and just in the degree in which we are happy in the Lord, so we shall look upon serving Him as a great privilege, as a particular honour, a particular enjoyment bestowed upon us.

And when you and I, as believers, shall be found at the last in this place, and in this state, and actually do serve the Lord night and day, and we shall adore and praise Him for bestowing this honour upon us to do any little thing for Him. "And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." God completely near, in our midst; we shall look at Him without the least particle of dread or fear, because the guilt is completely gone from the conscience, through the power of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. O the blessedness of all this; and these are not merely simple phrases, but these statements are brought before us as realities, which hereafter will be found true in our own happy experience.

Then in the last two verses we have before us the exceedingly blessed state in which we shall be found, when the curse has been completely removed. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." That is not literally hunger, nor literally thirst; but spiritually no longer hungering nor thirsting, having obtained to the full everything which even the renewed heart can desire. O think of the blessedness, the wondrous blessedness of all this! And yet with all these

statements in Holy Writ, it is again and again found that when persons are converted, they are pitied as being very silly and foolish persons, because it is thought they have to be wretched, as if it were a miserable thing to be regenerated, to be born again. Why, the truth is there is no real happiness, and can be none, till we are brought to know Jesus, and all of us who are believers in Christ know it from our own experience. We sought happiness in the beggarly pleasures of the world, and we sometimes even thought we had obtained it; but a little while longer and we found we had been deceiving ourselves - that no real, true happiness could be found anywhere else but in the Lord Jesus. And we know, from experience, that what we did obtain was through faith in Christ.

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat” – that is, the sun shall not strike them in a painful way, in an unpleasant way, as in tropical countries. While I was once on my missionary tours, going through India, I had again and again to hear from beloved missionary brethren what a trial to them was the excessive heat, this being struck by the sun. And at last, I myself knew this, from my own experience, for after I had laboured for forty weeks in Calcutta, with the heat at 110 degrees, it came to this, that I could only lie on my couch, without being able to do anything at all; and when I sought medical advice regarding it, the physician told me, “At the risk of your life you stay one day longer here; you must at once go to the hills.” Any only when I was in an atmosphere of three or four thousand feet above the sea, life returned again, as it were, and I got into a different state. All this explains what is meant here, “neither shall the sun light on them,” that is, strike on them, “nor any heat.” The curse being gone, this too, will completely go, and so in our glorified bodies we shall not have the least inconvenience regarding any of these things.

“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Completely near God! Completely near the Lord Jesus, in His happy presence habitually, day after day, year after year, one hundred years after the other, one thousand years after the other, one million years after the other; and unspeakably happy continually, everything that would try us removed completely, because the curse is gone. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” This is the blessed privilege not merely of one, or of the other, such as Paul, or Peter, or James, or John, but the great privilege of the weakest, feeblest child of God now on earth, O how blessed! How unspeakably blessed is the lot of everyone who is a disciple of Jesus! Therefore, instead of allowing these persons to pity us, because we are awake spiritually, and made to come to Christ, we have rather to tell them how exceedingly happy we are, through believing in Jesus. Now are there any present who are not yet believers in the Lord? You may be looking forward to especial enjoyment at Whitsuntide, and be saying to yourselves, “O when Whitsuntide comes, how happy I shall be.” That was just the case with me when I was a boy. Whitsuntide was particularly a pleasant time, and in the little town where I was brought up there was much going on at that time. But Whitsuntide lasted only a few days! At last, however, when I was twenty years of age, I found Jesus, of Whom I had never heard as an unconverted young man, for though I had thirty tutors in the high classical school in which I was for nine years to be prepared for the University, it being the wish of my father that I should become a clergyman, yet not one of them ever spoke to me about my soul. One day, when in deep trial, infidel books were put into my hand, which I shuddered to look at and returned, but never did anyone speak to me about Jesus until I was just past twenty. Then being led into a little religious meeting, through the advice of a friend, I found Jesus. I entered this meeting as completely dead in sin as any young man could be. I left the house as a happy young disciple of the Lord Jesus, and have been a happy man ever since, now seventy-one years and seven months. Therefore, instead of our being to be pitied when brought to Jesus, if people understood what is meant by coming to Him, and trusting in Him they, themselves would be in earnest to care about their souls. But because they are ignorant as to what it means to believe on Christ, so they look on us with pity and compassion.

It is an unspeakably blessed thing, even for this life, to be a believer in Christ; but what will it be when at last we actually enter upon the glory, and become perfect in His likeness, perfectly free from sin, in every way ready, moment by moment, to glorify God, so that His Will will only have to be presented to us, and instantly we shall be ready to carry it out! That day is coming, be sure of it. It will come, and therefore should there be any present who have not as yet surrendered their heart to the Lord, O, my dear young friends, O, my dear fellow-sinners of middle age, O, my fellow-sinners greatly advanced in life, if you have not yet given your heart to the Lord, hasten to do it without a moment's longer delay.

Be in earnest! Own before God that you are a sinner, that you deserve nothing but punishment, and ask Him in pity and compassion to look upon you, and to help you to put your trust in Jesus. Thus the blessing will come, as assuredly as you really desire to obtain it. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The Conversion of the Jailor

Portion of an Address to the Orphans of the Ashley Down Orphan Houses, March 26th, 1875.

On "Good Friday," March 26th, 1875, according to annual custom, there was a large gathering of the Ashley Down Orphans at a public service at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street. About 1,600 were present, with their teachers and other workers associated with Mr. Müller. After singing and prayer, Mr. Müller read, expounded, and commented upon the narrative of the jailor's conversion, as recorded in the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. As in all his addresses, so now in this address to the orphans, his aim was to secure a practical application of the subject. Speaking of Paul and Silas praying and singing praises unto God at midnight in the prison, he said, - They knew they were suffering for well-doing, not for evil-doing, they knew they were the children of God; they knew they were on the road to heaven; they knew that heaven was their home, and that if they never came out of prison again, heaven would be their home. Have you anything of the feeling they had? Some of you have. Have all of you something of it? Do you know your sins are forgiven? Do you know you are the children of God? Do you know you are on the road to heaven? Do you know that if you died this day you would go to heaven? Paul and Silas knew it, and so you may. Anyone having this precious knowledge can afford, at all times and circumstances, to give thanks to God. Now it is that you may be brought to this blessed position, and have this happiness that I built the orphan houses, and that I have had the joy of gathering you under my care; and it is for this very reason your beloved teachers and my beloved fellow-labourers instruct you in the things of God - that you may have this joy and be as happy as Paul and Silas were. There is no reason why you may not be as happy as they were, though you are not apostles, and never can be; for it is the happy portion and privilege of all who are the children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I ask, beloved children, that you will solemnly and earnestly ask yourselves, in the fear of God, Are my sins forgiven? Am I a child of God? Am I on the road to heaven? Shall I go to heaven? Should I sing praises to God if I were in such a position as Paul and Silas were? And if you cannot, then why not? God is not altered. He is the same almighty God. He is the same loving, good, and gracious God as He was in the days of the apostles. Why are you not happy? You cannot be in the state of mind they were in unless you are happy in your souls. Are you happy in your souls? Are you happy because you know you are the children of God? If not, you have not the right kind of happiness.

Speaking of the earthquake, and the extraordinary circumstances attending it, as an answer to prayer, Mr. Müller said: One or another, if there had merely been an earthquake, might have said it would have taken place if the apostles had not prayed. But what a remarkable circumstance that the earthquake should open the doors and loose the bands of the prisoners! The hand of God was in it. Here was the miracle. Do you know the power of prayer, my beloved children? I have been praying forty years. One proof of the power of it is that I see you here before me. But every one of you might know a little of the power of prayer. And we know not to what an extent we may know of the power of prayer. Try it, try it, beloved children; you must begin in the right way. If on the ground of your own merit or righteousness you ask God for blessing, you will not get it. You must ask on the ground of the merits and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ!. It is called in Scripture - asking in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must first be yourself a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your own soul. Then, further, the blessings for which you ask must be according to the mind of God. For instance, if anyone of you were to ask for many bags of gold so that you might be able to do all your days without work, you might ask a long time without getting these bags of gold to enable you to spend your time in idleness. Prayer must be according to the mind of God. Further: you must have confidence in the power, in the love, and the willingness of God to answer prayer; this is particularly important. We have to believe God does hear us, and is willing to give us the blessing. Then, having asked, we must go on waiting upon God and looking for blessing till it comes. I never in my life, in this way, asked God for blessing without at last getting it; and I expect I shall never ask in this way without the blessing coming. And what God is willing to do for one He is willing to do for another. Have you had any answers to your prayers, my dear children? The answer to prayer brings great blessings to the soul. It makes one so happy when one gets answers to prayer. Ask yourselves, - How many answers have I had to my prayers? If you watch the hand of God you will easily find out if your prayers are answered.

Speaking on the 30th and 31st verses, Mr. Müller said, - Just let every one of these dear boys and girls consider, - Have I ever asked myself "What must I do to be saved?" What is the answer? Some perhaps will say, "We must pray. Prayer never saves, and never will save. Another may say, I must read my Bible. Reading the Bible never will and never can save. Another will say, I must go to a place of worship. But that will not save us. Another will say, I must keep the commandments of God, I try to please God. That never will save. The trying to save yourself by keeping the commandments would only add sin to sin, and increase your guilt. What then is to be done in order to be saved? We have to do nothing ourselves. Salvation depends altogether upon another, upon the Lord Jesus Christ whom God sent into the world to save us. Salvation is wrought out already, accomplished already, and all we have to do is to receive salvation according to the riches of His grace, as provided for the guiltiest, the oldest, the vilest, the most hardened sinner. As the beggar opens his hand when a kind lady or gentleman offers him something, so we should open our hands to receive the blessing God has provided for the salvation of our souls. And the way of receiving the blessing is to put our trust in Jesus, to depend on the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, which is commonly called in the Scriptures -

believing. I ask, - Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul? If you do, your sins are forgiven, you are the children of God, you are brought on the road to heaven, you are born again, - you will go to heaven at last, - through believing in Jesus, through putting your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But without trusting in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ you can never have these blessings. I am afraid there are many who have not yet asked yourselves this question, "What must I do to be saved?" What must I do? The first point is I - I - I. That I am saved - that my sins are forgiven - that I am born again - that I am a child of God. Until this is so, everything else is nothing. It is all very well to learn to read and write, to learn a little arithmetic, a little geography, and a little history, and for the dear girls to understand needlework. All this is right and proper to enable you to fill respectable positions in life, - all very well for this life; but the most momentous matter is this, that your soul is safe. There is not a single child here, there is not a single person in this large city who may not have salvation if they seek it in God's way, which is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Speaking of the jailor after his conversion, Mr. Müller said, the change of heart was shown in the manifestation of kindness. Religion does not consist in sweet words and religious sentences. It is a poor thing where it goes no further. Wherever there is real trust in the Lord Jesus Christ it shows itself in the life. Just as our faith is strong or weak, so in a greater or less degree will it be seen in our life that we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The jailor was made happy as soon as he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. As soon as I was brought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ I was made happy - made very happy; and It is now in the fiftieth year that I am going on as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet I am happy - very happy. And that is why I come to speak to you, because I am happy in my soul, and wish you all to be as happy as I am. There is no reason why you should leave this place without being made happy. Now put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; now pass sentence on yourselves, and condemn yourselves before God, and own you deserve punishment; but at the same time trust in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this very moment you will be forgiven, this very moment you will be changed in heart, this very moment you will be brought on the road to heaven. Just as I left the meeting-place at which I was converted forty-nine years ago, so you, if you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, may leave this place happy, very happy. Do not remain thoughtless, but be in earnest. I long for the salvation of your souls, and day and night pray for it. The blessing may be had by everyone. There is nothing to hinder. Only God looks for earnestness. Be in earnest, and the blessing will be yours. Only trust in Jesus, - only depend on Jesus, and the blessing will be yours.

The First and Second Adam

An Address given at the Conference of Christians at Clifton, on November 6, 1866

The few words I may say this evening will have especial reference to the object for which we have assembled. First: a few words as to the first Adam. It is a solemn thought that it is possible there are some here present who as yet only belong to the first Adam, and not to the second. If so, they are dead in trespasses and sins at this present moment; they are ruined still; they have before them still the blackness and darkness of despair; they have before them still eternal woe and misery. Now, dear friends, as I love your souls, I desire to refer to the fact that all of us here present who now by the grace of God are interested in the Lord Jesus Christ, were once as you are now, but it has pleased God in the riches of His grace to bring us out of that state. And what He has done for us He is willing to do for you. In the riches of His grace He has given His only begotten Son, He has punished Him, He has wounded Him, He has bruised Him in our room and stead. The punishment due to us guilty, wicked sinners was laid on Jesus, who shed His precious blood for the remission of our sins. The wrath of God, that ought to have been poured on us through eternity, fell on Him. And all God expects from sinners is, that they accept what He so freely and graciously has the heart to give. He looks not for us to do something to assist or help the work of Christ but that we entirely rest our hope on that which our adorable Lord has accomplished on the cross in our room and stead. So that the poor sinner who believes in Jesus, who trusts in Jesus for the salvation of his soul, shall obtain full, free, complete forgiveness for all his numberless transgressions, through faith in Him. At once obtain forgiveness; not, - shall have it some day; not, - shall have it when we die; not, - shall have it when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again; but instantly receive it when we rest for salvation upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only so, but we become, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the children of God. Through faith we are united to the heavenly family, of which our adorable Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, is the Head. By far the greater number now present I doubt not, belong to that family. But let me invite those who are conscious that they only belong to the first Adam, to look to Jesus, to accept what God so graciously offers in Jesus and then their sins will be pardoned.

Then as to those of us who do believe in Jesus, who do trust in Him for salvation who belong to the Lord Jesus, the second Adam who is the Head of the heavenly family, - how does it become us to walk while here on earth? It is not now the question how we shall be when the manifestation of the sons of God shall have taken place,

and when the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, shall have been revealed. Then we shall all be filled with love, we shall all be perfectly united together, we shall be ever together, loving one another, minding the things of each other, and caring for each other. Then there shall be no weakness, nor ignorance, nor infirmity. But now, while yet in ignorance partially, how should we walk, - we who belong to this heavenly family? The great point is to remember that what we have and what we are, we have and are by the grace of God. How is it that we do believe in the Lord Jesus; that we are on the Lord's side; that we look to the Lord Jesus as the Head, and trust in Him for salvation? How does it come that the life of the risen Jesus is in us, that we are risen up again and quickened with Him to sit with Him in heavenly places? Verily, brethren, we did it not ourselves. It was all of grace that it is thus - that we have been made to believe in Jesus, that He has been revealed to our hearts. Not only was He given in the way of grace by the Father, but it is of grace that He ever was revealed to our hearts.

We see then that these blessings come in the way of grace, and every other spiritual blessing in the way of grace also. How does it become us to deal with each other while we remain here a little while longer in weakness and in partial ignorance. Surely we should forbear, surely we should be gentle, surely we should tenderly deal with each other; ever remembering that if we are stronger than others, it is by the grace of God we are so. Supposing we see a little more clearly on this or that part of truth, it is only by the Grace of God we do it. We might have been weaker and more ignorant than our brethren, and peradventure we may really be the weak and ignorant ones. We may only *suppose* we are stronger and better than others. Oh let us bear with each other in love! We are of the heavenly family, - a little while; and Jesus will come again to take us to Himself. We are of the heavenly family, - yet a little while we shall be in heaven together, where there is only perfect harmony and love; surely, then, here we may love one another, and bear with one another, and care for one another.

Why, if we have been better instructed, are we better instructed? Why, if we are stronger, are we stronger? Why, if we are richer, are we richer? For this purpose, - that we may communicate of the abundance which in the riches of the grace of God we have received, to those who have not so much. Just as the clouds empty themselves in blessing on others, so we, if better instructed than others, are so that we may bear with those who are less instructed, and lend them a helping hand. If in these our meetings we learn this one lesson - that by the grace of God we who believe in Jesus will henceforth seek to strive more earnestly, more habitually, more fully than we have yet done to bear with each other's weaknesses and infirmities, what profitable meetings they will have been! We should not be satisfied unless we come to this state of heart that we know of nothing less among the disciples than that the precious blood of Christ has made us clean. That is the bond of union - that belonging to Christ. One with Christ - that is the great bond to keep before us. The more we realise that the grace of God has apprehended us in Christ, and revealed to our hearts the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are all bought with the same precious blood, that we are all in the selfsame Spirit, that the self-same life of the risen Jesus is in us, that we are all heirs of God - and joint-heirs with Christ, and shall all ere long enter into the glory of God, - if these things were more present to our hearts, how loving, kind, and forbearing would the children of God be! And yet once more, in this nineteenth century it would be said, "See how these Christians love one another."

Only let us seek to aim after this, that we see Christ in each other, and not the old nature; the life of the risen Jesus in each other. If we seek to discern Christ in each other, now shall we be drawn to each other. May God grant this to be so. Let us pray and labour that thus it shall be. Let us resist Satan, that he may not have the mastery over us. May God grant it.

The Forgiving God

A Sermon preached at the Tabernacle, Penn Street, Bristol on Sunday Morning, August 13th, 1876

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."-Psalm ciii. 3-5

We should particularly notice in this Psalm, which I read to you, the stress the Psalmist lays on praise: "Bless the Lord (or Jehovah), O my soul, and all that is within me." His soul is engaged in the service. All! - the affections of His heart, the powers of His mind, - all! This is what we are to aim at. Not that we do not thank the Lord; - I trust we do, but that it be more of a spiritual character, that more and more the heart be engaged, all that is within be occupied with praising, adoring, and magnifying the Lord. Then there is a remarkable addition to this: "Bless His holy name." This is only what believers can be engaged in. Naturally, we care not about the holiness of God. Naturally, man likes to gratify self, and would have God to be like himself. The attribute of

holiness is the last, naturally, we care about. But when we are born again, when we are renewed, when we have spiritual life there is begotten in our hearts a longing after holiness, and we rejoice in the fact that God is a holy Being. Then we have a prospect of one day being like Him. Only a child of God takes a real interest in admiring the holiness of God, and rendering praise to Him for it. Then the Psalmist adds, in the second verse: "Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." We are in danger of forgetting the mercies of God. We are ready to speak about our trials, our difficulties, our bereavements, our Crosses; but are we just as ready to speak of and admire the goodness of God, and His mercies in numberless ways bestowed upon us all the days of our life? This the Psalmist was particularly anxious about. Now to our text:

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." This is the first blessing the Psalmist enumerates. The first mercy of which he especially desired not to be forgetful. Notice particularly that among all the blessings this is the first. And is not this the choicest blessing we have received? Is there one single blessing to be compared to this? What are all business blessings - and they are something to be grateful for - in comparison with the forgiveness of our sins? What are all the peace and quietness in the family - and these, too, are something to be grateful for - compared with the forgiveness of our sins? What is the soundness of the health of the body - for which we should be thankful - in comparison with the forgiveness of our sins? What is the vigour and strength of mind with which we are blessed, in comparison with the forgiveness of our sins? It is as nothing in comparison with it. The Psalmist brings this blessing first because it is the choicest, the chiefest, and the most precious a human being can have.

Let me affectionately ask, - Have we all obtained the forgiveness of our sins? That is the point! that is the point! Are we all pardoned sinners? We are all sinners, without exception. Are we all pardoned sinners? Have we all obtained the forgiveness of our sins? That is the point! I have no doubt many hundreds here have; but at the same time I cannot help feeling that there are many who have not. Now this is the momentous point, - To which of the two classes do we belong? Pardoned sinners, - sinners with a load of guilt removed; or unpardoned sinners, unable to look up to God peacefully, calmly, through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ? Ask yourselves before God, - To which class do I belong? If I am not pardoned, I am without peace, I cannot look peacefully and calmly forward to eternity, and do not know what will be the end of my course. It is a fearful thing to go on day by day unpardoned.

This leads to the question, - How can we obtain the forgiveness of our sins? Simply through laying hold by faith on the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. God, in the riches of His grace, instead of sending us to the place of perdition, as we deserved, laid all the punishment due to our numberless transgressions on His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Him He sent into the world, that in our room and stead He might work out a righteousness for us in fulfilling the whole law of God; so that poor guilty sinners who trust in Him shall be looked on by God as if they had lived the holy and spotless life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The believing sinner, standing before God in the righteousness of Christ, hiding himself - as he does - in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out for the poor sinner who trusts in Him, is accepted of Him. In our stead the Lord Jesus Christ bore every particle of the punishment we wicked, guilty sinners ought to have endured. Now God looks to us not to do something to complete the work of salvation, but to accept what He so graciously provides for the sinner in the person of His Son, whose righteousness He accepts for the sinner.

But when the sinner believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, a different life begins; he seeks to please Christ, he seeks to adorn His doctrine, he seeks to walk according to His mind. He does this not to be saved thereby, or to add to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But having through faith been saved, having obtained forgiveness, and having been accepted in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out for sinners, he seeks to please God. This is the way to obtain forgiveness, - simply trusting in Jesus, thus believing in Jesus. Whosoever does this obtains forgiveness.

Another important point is the knowledge of our forgiveness. We are not to wait for this knowledge till we die, far less are we to wait for it for the judgment-day. The blessing is to be had now, is to be known now, is something to be enjoyed now. He who is without it cannot be very happy for any length of time. It is this which brings the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost into the heart, - the knowledge that, wicked and guilty as we are, our sins are forgiven. My beloved Christian friends, do we all enjoy the forgiveness of our sins? I trust none say it cannot be had. Assuredly it can. This was the blessing enjoyed by the first Christians. They knew in whom they believed; that in Him they had "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." They had that statement brought before them concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." So that every poor sinner believing in Jesus obtains the forgiveness of sins. This verily is a blessing to be had now. If any of you are without this blessing, do not give rest to the Lord till you know that your sins are forgiven. It is verily to be had and enjoyed now, for salvation brings with it present blessing. This is one of the blessings connected with our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, - to obtain the knowledge of forgiveness.

Notice further the statement of the Psalmist, not, "Who forgiveth some of thine iniquities, but ALL." That is so precious. It is not that five hundred of our sins are forgiven, or five thousand, but every one; so that though they be innumerable, every one is forgiven. Just think - vile, guilty as we are, every sin of every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is forgiven. Do you enjoy it? I do enjoy the forgiveness of my sins. Not because I have very strong feelings. I do not rest on feelings. I take God at His word. I rest on His word: "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." I believe in Jesus, therefore I have been pardoned. I have had no dream or vision about it. Some people think that unless by some strange vision or other they see Jesus suspended on the cross in some corner of the room they must remain in doubt. I have had no such vision. For fifty years I have never had a single minute's doubt about the forgiveness of my sins. For these years I have been a believer, and all this time the word I have referred to, and on which I rest, has been written in the Book, and by it I know my sins are forgiven. Every believer who is willing to take God at His word has a right to look on himself as a pardoned sinner, as a forgiven sinner. This is a blessing, a great blessing, to know that all our sins are forgiven. Suppose now our sins were just 9090, and suppose we had the forgiveness of 9089 - just one single sin unforgiven. What then? This one single sin would bring us to the place of perdition. There is no trifling with sin. We must be perfectly without sin, hiding ourselves in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and fully pardoned; or we are unclean, and cannot come into His presence. Therefore see the blessedness of this statement of the Psalmist: "Who forgiveth ALL thine iniquities." All gone! Oh, the blessedness of this! Every one gone! Sins of action, sins of word, sins of thought, sins of feeling, sins of desire, sins of purpose, sins of inclination, - all gone, as assuredly as we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls.

Now comes a point to which I particularly wish to refer, for the instruction of Christians, and especially of young believers. We read, "Who FORGIVETH." This shows that forgiveness is something going on now. Christians may say, Sometimes we have statements in the New Testament as if our sins were all forgiven, and sometimes as if we needed to obtain forgiveness; and this passage, "Who forgiveth," seems as if forgiveness were going on. The explanation is this. In the position in which we stand as sinners, naturally being guilty criminals, the moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we obtain the forgiveness of all our sins; and in the matter of our salvation, the thing is done once for all. But then we pass out of the old relationship of guilty criminals towards the righteous Judge, into the position of children; and in this relationship of children, though the matter of our salvation is settled, yet in the relation of children, whenever we fail, - as is more or less the case day by day, - and the Holy Ghost makes us conscious of our failure, we have to own before God, in childlike simplicity, that in such a way we have not behaved ourselves, that this thing we have left undone, or that thing we have done improperly. In childlike simplicity we are to make confession before the Lord; then comes in that word: - "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" and there is a necessity of the High-Priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ. So far as regards the matter of our salvation, when He died He could say, "It is finished;" and He then ascended as the great High Priest, still to point in the sinner's behalf to the efficacy of His blood. It is in this latter sense - in our position of children - that we need to make confession whenever we err or fail, to get the Fatherly forgiveness granted us; and this will be as assuredly as we confess, I trust this will be the explanation to my dear Christian friends.

"Who healeth all thy diseases." This is the next blessing of which the Psalmist desired to be mindful. Here we do not mean to say that the diseases of the body are excluded; for if any one is cured of any bodily disease, it is not by the skill of the doctor, or by the powerful character of the medicine, but by the blessing of God on the skill of the doctor. Still I judge that the especial point referred to here is spiritual disease. You remember what Isaiah said in the beginning of his prophecies: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." We all know that that did not refer to the bodies of the Israelites, that they were not in that loathsome state as regarded the body, but that the reference was to their spiritual diseases. That is the case with regard to all sinners, at all times, and under all circumstances. If we are pure spiritually, it must come from the Lord. Now we have here particularly to remember that the poor sinner who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, the moment he does so is unconsciously, as it were, putting himself under the infinitely wise and gracious Physician. That blessed One takes him up and puts him into His own hospital, His own infirmary, and will not let him go till he is perfectly cured. And as you all know, there is no such thing as a discharge out of that hospital or infirmary on account of incurable disease, as is commonly the case among men; but the patient is cared for till he is perfectly free from spiritual disease. The moment we are there the cure is going on. This very meeting is intended by the blessing of Jesus to do something towards that cure, to help us out of the diseased state. And this is the prospect of the weakest: that as assuredly as he believes in Jesus, as assuredly as he is not wilfully living in sin, so assuredly will he be brought finally into that state in which he will be altogether free from sin. We have been apprehended of God to be conformed to the image of His Son, to be at last altogether like Him, altogether holy; altogether free from spiritual disease. Pride will be gone completely; irritability, covetousness, worldly mindedness, will be all gone. We shall be gentle and lovely, pure and holy, - just like Jesus. Oh the blessed prospect! that Jesus will not give us up till we are

altogether free from our spiritual diseases. Then shall this be fulfilled: "Who healeth all thy diseases." Such is His discipline and care, that day by day there shall be done something towards this complete cure, and we should say to ourselves, Have I made some progress today? Am I a little freer from disease today than I was yesterday? Am I something more conformed to Jesus today? At the new year we should say, Have I made more progress during the last year than the previous one? for the will of the Lord regarding us is that we should be like Jesus at the last; and that the will of God only needing to be presented to us, and instantaneously in our inmost souls we should be ready to do it. The Psalmist desired to be grateful to God that He was carrying on this cure.

"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." This is true in a variety of ways. In regard to natural life, - If God did not watch over us, what would become of us? We are constantly exposed to the loss of our life. This is particularly so in the case of little children. When you look at little children in the neighbourhood of the Tabernacle, by the dozen, and the carts and carriages going by, who does not see that God watches over them. How true as to natural life: *"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction."* Then when we go a journey, how exposed is our life to danger. And though we go no journey, but lie on our beds, we are continually exposed to the loss of our life. How often a stack of chimneys has fallen, and people have been crushed instantaneously! But there is more in it than this. Our whole life was to be for the glory of God. Now, unless we had believed in Jesus, either as to the Messiah who was to come, or in Him who had come, this life given to us would have been spent in hell. Our life has indeed been redeemed from destruction. But in reference to those who are not yet believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, their life given to them for the glory of Christ, and to be enjoyed throughout eternity, is yet liable to be spent in hell. See to it that your life be redeemed from destruction; for unless you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not fully true yet that your life is redeemed from destruction. Further: we who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who desire to live for Christ, suppose we had been left to ourselves since we believed - we should have gone back. We owe it to the grace and mercy and faithfulness of God that we are this day on the Lord's side, and that we have not gone back again into the world. Therefore, how deeply important it is to feel grateful that we have been upheld, and have the word, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ," and that He will never leave nor forsake us. How blessed, how glorious this prospect!

"Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." This was the next mercy for which the Psalmist desired to be especially grateful. We should have a clear understanding of the figure here used. Whenever a figure is employed in the Scriptures we should seek to have a clear understanding of it, so as to be able to know what is the meaning of the spiritual truth couched under it. The figure here is "crowning." We all know with regard to crowning, that not a dozen persons in a country are crowned, nor half a dozen, but that one individual is singled out, on whose head as a mark of honour and power is put the crown. But this individual singled out, taken out from the rest, is placed in this position of honour and power by the crown put on the head. Precisely thus our heavenly Father deals with us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not a particle better than the vilest. We are just as wicked as the poor prisoners on the Cut, or in the Bridewell, or at Lawford's Gate. We are just as bad in ourselves as these are, just as bad as the vilest in the city. When we see drunkards or prisoners carried off by the police-officers, we should say, - But for the grace of God I should now be a drunkard. But for the grace of God I should be in the hands of those policemen. And this we never should lose sight of to the last, - that the heart may be filled with love and gratitude to God more and more, and to the Lord Jesus Christ more and more, more and more; for had we been left to ourselves we should have been wallowing in sin, and in a far worse state. And it is this particular point to which the Psalmist refers when he says, "Crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies," - lovingkindness meaning grace. In the Old Testament, coming to the Hebrew, it means grace. It is the grace and mercy of God to which we are indebted. But for the grace and mercy of God we should be like the vilest of the vile. All this we should be mindful of to keep us from high-mindedness and not thinking ourselves better than others, but that the heart may remain filled with love and gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there is one more mercy remaining for which the Psalmist desired to be grateful.

Precious Lord Jesus Christ, now use the mouth of Thy servant; direct by Thy Spirit Thy poor servant to bring out those very points the beloved disciples especially need to help them. Help Thy servant, and let the Word come, not in word only but in the power of the Holy Ghost, that it shall not be forgotten to the end of the life of these dear disciples here. And Thy servant asks it for Thy dear name's sake.

"Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Notice the figure again, - the old eagles casting their feathers; and this being done, their strength verily renewed, and they become strong and powerful again. With those advanced in years this was the case. Thus the Psalmist looking on himself, admired what the Lord had done for him. He does not refer to food, though that is included; and for every crumb of bread and drop of water we should be exceedingly grateful, for the body is strong and vigorous through the

food given us. The Psalmist meant to say that his mouth was satisfied with good things, like that of the eagle's was, through the instrumentality of good food. But more than this; he referred to spiritual food, through which his spiritual strength was renewed. Now, beloved Christian friends, this is the momentous point. There is no necessity for aged believers to get more and more lifeless and careless and worldly-minded. As the Psalmist got old he did not get very worldly-minded, he did not get lifeless and cold and carnal, but his spiritual strength was renewed. Thus it may be with us. It is a mistake to suppose that for two or three years after conversion we may be in a healthy and lively state; and after we have known the Lord five or ten years, may expect to become cold and dead and formal, and go back again little by little. Far otherwise it may be, far otherwise it ought to be; and if not, we are not living to the praise and glory of God. The Psalmist in his advanced years was more happy in the Lord, more spiritually-minded; he had more spiritual power and vigour at the end than he had at the beginning. Oh! my beloved younger brethren and sisters, you have before you, not the prospect of dull and miserable days but of brighter and happier days.

And here I bear, for the honour and glory of God, my own testimony. I am happier now, after being a believer nearly fifty-one years, than I was fifty years ago; happier far than I was forty years ago, than I was thirty years ago, than I was twenty years ago, than I was ten years ago. As the time has gone on, my peace and joy and happiness in the Lord have increased more and more, instead of going more and more. Why do I refer to this? Not to boast, for it is all by the grace of God; but to encourage my younger fellow-believers to expect greater things from the Lord, who delights in giving abundantly. And as you sing sometimes, "More and more, more and more," there is yet more to come. Let us look out for it, for God delights to give more grace. It is the joy and delight of His heart to give more and more. Why should it not be? Why should we not in the last part of the life have the best things? Has God changed? Far from it! Is the Bible changed? No! we have the same blessed word. Is the power of the Holy Ghost less? Far different from that; nothing of the kind! The Lord Jesus Christ is ever ready to bless. The word we now have is the whole revelation. And our heavenly Father has the same heart toward His children. Therefore there is nothing to hinder our being happier as time goes with us. If we are not happier, what is the reason? There must be a reason, and we should ask ourselves why we are not getting happier and happier.

Now in brotherly love and affection I would give a few hints to my younger fellow-believers as to the way in which to keep up spiritual enjoyment. It is absolutely needful, in order that happiness in the Lord may continue, that the Scriptures be regularly read. These are God's appointed means for the nourishment of the inner man. If the Word of God is neglected, you are not making progress, but you are spiritual babes, and remain so. That is not all. You will become spiritual dwarfs! you will become spiritual dwarfs! spiritual dwarfs! Instead of living to the glory of God you will be living to dishonour Him. You see we are left here after conversion to live for the benefit of the world. Only a few of the children of God are taken to heaven directly after their conversion, but they are left to live for awhile here for the glory of God. This cannot be unless we regularly give ourselves to the Word of God, unless we come to it day by day and pray over it. We should consider it, and ponder over it, in reference to our own wants. But especially we should read regularly through the Scriptures, consecutively, and not pick out here and there a chapter. If we do we remain spiritual dwarfs. I tell you so affectionately. For the first four years after my conversion I made no progress, because I neglected the Bible. But when I regularly read on through the whole with reference to my own heart and soul, I directly made progress. Then my peace and joy continued more and more. Now I have been doing this for forty-seven years. I have read through the whole Bible about one hundred times, and I always find it fresh when I begin it again. Thus my peace and joy have increased more and more. Now think of it, you beloved younger brethren and sisters in particular, and say, Let me live to the glory of God. And if you have arrived to middle age, and have neglected thus to read the Word of God, begin it now with earnestness; and if you thus read with prayer and application to your own heart, and seek to practise what you find, your peace and joy will increase more and more, more and more; and it will be said of you, "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Thus the prospects of eternity how bright, when we lay hold of the precious Word! May the Lord grant that we may individually be able to do so!

But are there any dear friends here who have not yet obtained forgiveness? If there are, let them now pass sentence on themselves, let them now condemn themselves as guilty sinners, and put their whole trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone it is to be obtained.

The Glad Tidings

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on April 18th, 1897.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" - I Cor xv, 1-3

Among all the other things that were wrong already in the days of the Apostles in the church at Corinth was this also: there were some there of the synagogue of Satan. Some among them disbelieved the resurrection of the body, and on this point the Apostle Paul writes, throughout the 15th chapter, and gives unto us most precious instruction regarding the resurrection.

The great point in the whole chapter in particular is this - if there be no resurrection, then the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has not been raised; if there be no resurrection, and Jesus Christ Himself has not been raised, on this account we are yet in our sins, we have not forgiveness, for there would be no such thing as proof of forgiveness had the Lord Jesus Christ not been raised from the dead. Moreover, if the Lord Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead, then I (the Apostle Paul) and my fellow-labourers are false witnesses of God, for we have testified that there is a resurrection, and that Christ was raised from the dead, when, after all, He was not raised; wherefore, the whole Gospel is no longer a Gospel. Now for this was this 15th chapter written, in which there is most precious instruction found connected with the resurrection.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you." Remark here the word "brethren," "believers in Him." Naturally looking at it, we might say, "this is just in an ordinary way; no stress is to be laid on it." My own judgment is the reverse. He calls them still "brethren," and he treats them still as brethren, though they had fallen into such errors as these, and failed as to their life and deportment in various ways. Yet he calls them still "Brethren," because he hoped that by the means he was going to employ, in writing another Epistle, they would be brought out of that state. And we find how greatly this letter was blessed when we read the second Epistle to the church at Corinth. Thus we have to imitate the Apostle, and on no account, because we see the manifestations of weakness, in one shape or another, on the part of the children of God, to at once put them aside and disown them as believers, as if there were no grace at all in them. For, like the Corinthians, they may come out of that state, and they may yet greatly glorify God.

"I declare unto you the Gospel," that is, the glad tidings, the most precious glad tidings. The sum and substance of this we find in the third and fourth verses, where he says: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." He died for our sins, to make an atonement for our sins, to bear the punishment in our room and stead; and that is the great point of what is called "The Gospel." "The Glad Tidings." The Gospel does not consist in this, that someone has left to us an exceedingly large amount of property, either in the way of money or in the way of estates; or that we shall now obtain a most lucrative position and employment; or that we shall be elevated to exceeding high rank or power. That is not the Gospel. These are not the glad tidings we have to ponder. But that, wicked hell-deserving sinners though we are, God in the riches of His Grace will forgive all our numberless transgressions; God, on the ground of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, will forgive every one of our numberless transgressions, and not one single sin shall remain standing against us and do us any harm hereafter, because the Lord Jesus Christ has not merely for a thousand of our sins died and made atonement, nor merely for ten thousand of our sins, but for every one of the sins of which we have been guilty, however many they were, however great they were; nay, in whatever variety of ways we sinned, every one of our sins has been atoned for. O what good news is this! For were there one single sin remaining standing against us, we should be shut out thereby from the presence of God, for nothing that is defiled can enter into the presence. We must be spotless, pure; perfectly spotless and perfectly pure, else we cannot be where God is; and into this state we are brought through the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to us through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ, which removes every one of our numberless transgressions.

This, if rightly understood, if rightly entered into and apprehended, is what is called in the New Testament "The Gospel"; and we have to ask ourselves, "Is this our Gospel?" Do we trust in the Gospel? Or do we think that we must do our part, and that the Lord Jesus Christ will do His part? That we must do our part, else we cannot be saved? Nay, we must come to this, that we ourselves can do nothing; that everything was DONE by the Lord Jesus; that before He expired on the cross He exclaimed, "It is finished" - that it, everything that had to be done in the way of atonement by Him, and then, after He had uttered these words, He expired. This is the Gospel! Not doing one half of it, or one-eighth part of it, on our part to help the Lord Jesus Christ, so to speak! Nothing of the kind. He did everything, and except He had done everything most assuredly we must have perished.

Now of this Gospel the Apostle Paul says, "which I preached unto you." He was labouring at Coring a year and six months (Acts xviii, 11), and therefore again and again and again he had proclaimed these very truths, and those also of

the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the resurrection of the believer; because without the resurrection there is no such thing as “the glad tidings” connected with Christ. That is the first point we have to notice. Now the second point of the Gospel is this, “Which also ye have received.” Now here occurs a deeply important question, whether we have verily received these glad tidings, whether we verily rest the salvation of our souls on these glad tidings? As assuredly as we think that we have to do something ourselves for the salvation of our souls, and that the Lord Jesus Christ has not done everything that was necessary for our salvation, so assuredly are we yet in a most fatal mistake on earth.

We must come to this: that in our inmost soul we believe that Jesus Christ did everything which was necessary to make an atonement for our numberless transgressions, and that we have to do nothing but to stand in the position of beggars to receive what God gives us in Christ. And whosoever will not receive, as a poor worthless worm and as a beggar, what God gives to him, in Christ, such a one has not yet come to the state of heart that he might come to, and to which he ought to come, to have the full blessing of the Gospel. We have just to stand before God, simply receiving what He freely, in the way of grace, gives to us in Christ Jesus. We have done nothing, we are unable to do anything now, and we shall never be able hereafter to do the smallest particle, towards our salvation. Jesus did it all. Jesus finished all that was necessary to be done for the salvation of our souls.

Now, then, to receive the Gospel means in other words that we have to own that we are sinners; we have to own in prayer before God that we deserve nothing but punishment for our sins, and that we can do nothing whatever towards the salvation of our souls; but that the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished everything that was needful to be accomplished, and that we gratefully accept what God gives us in Christ. This is to receive the Gospel. Now I affectionately ask my dear Christian friends, Have we thus received the Gospel? Is this that to which we look for the salvation of our souls? You know we must own before God that we are sinners; we must confess before God in prayer that we are sinners, and simply and entirely for our salvation put our trust in Jesus, and nothing else; and in doing this we receive the Gospel, but if otherwise we have not yet received the Word. This is the second point.

Then in the third place, the Apostle says, “Wherein ye stand.” What does it mean to stand in the Gospel? It means that regarding ourselves and the Lord Jesus Christ we maintain still that we are just in such a state as we were before, and can do nothing concerning the salvation of our souls. In other words, that after ten years of conversion, or twenty years, or fifty years, and the seeking to hate sin more and more, and to love holiness more and more, we must own, “I am a sinner; I deserve nothing but punishment. If I am saved, it must be in the way of grace, through a Substitute, Who in my room and stead fulfilled the law which had broken times without number, and Who in my room, as Substitute, bore the punishment due to me.”

If this is the state of our heart and mind, then we are standing in the Gospel; if it is otherwise, if in the least degree we take the smallest particle of credit to ourselves in the matter of salvation, we are not standing in the Gospel. A deeply important point! And it is particularly for another reason important that we have this in mind. Important not merely regarding the final salvation, but regarding the present peace and joy in God, for he or she taking the least particle of credit to himself or herself in the matter of salvation loses the peace of God and real, true spiritual enjoyment, for God is determined to give all the honour and glory to His Only-begotten Son - the choicest Gift He had to bestow on poor sinners. And He will not, therefore, with a sinful human creature divide the glory of what belongs to Christ, and to Christ alone.

Now the last point. “By which also” - that is, by the Gospel - “by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you, unless he have believed in vain.” By the Gospel we are saved! Precious! O delightful news. Because it is such good news, therefore it is called the Gospel. The Gospel means “glad tidings,” “good news”; and these are the glad tidings: that we are at last saved by the Gospel. In the first place, salvation consists in this - that we get a glorified body, completely free, and free for eternity from all weakness, weariness, pain, suffering, langour, sickness of any kind, and from death. Now how pleasant is the news of this!

Then, again, as to weariness, irrespective of suffering. Children of God delight to labour for the Lord; it is an exceeding great joy to them to work six, or eight hours, in the course of the day, and some by reason of health and strength are delighted to spend ten and twelve hours in working for the Lord, and some surpass even this; but yet, however long we may be able work while in the body here on earth, though it be sixteen or even eighteen hours, at last most assuredly there will come the weariness, the weakness, the inability to go on working any longer. But when we obtain our glorified body, when salvation comes to the full, no more of this weariness.

Yea, there will be the working four and twenty hours, day by day, throughout the whole week, seven times four and twenty hours (speaking after the manner of men) without the least weariness; and thus it will go on throughout the whole months, and throughout the whole years (speaking after the manner of men), and not a particle of weakness or weariness experienced while thus engaged for the Lord. And so it will be year after year, and one ten years after the other ten years, and one hundred years after the other hundred years, and one thousand years after the other thousand years, and never a particle of weakness or weariness experienced, when once salvation is completed and we obtain our

glorious body. O how delightful is this! What glad tidings are these! And if they were held on to be faith, the heart would be full, brimful of joy!

O how delightful we should be if really and truly entering into all this; but there is something even more precious still - all this service will be joyfully rendered to the Lord, and be perfectly free from failure and shortcomings. There will not be a single particle of sin mixed up with our work and labour for the Lord. At present, while we are in the body, in this state of weakness and imperfection, with all our holy longing, with all our prayerful desire, yea, with our earnest prayers, still now and then is mingled a word which is not quite according to the mind of God; a thought which was not found in the blessed Jesus, and therefore not perfectly according to the mind of God.

But when brought to see Jesus as He is, and made like Him in body and soul, everything that we do will be perfectly Christ-like, everything that we say will be perfectly Christ-like; all that we think, that we desire, that we wish, for which we have inclination, all will be perfectly according to the mind of Christ. O what a blessed prospect is this for weak ones as we are, for erring ones as we are, for such who have their spiritual infirmities, great and many and varied, though hating sin and loving holiness. O what bright and glorious prospects are these! And all this is not merely a fancy of ours, but a reality.

We shall, verily, the weakest spiritually among us, be brought to this state of things when once salvation is complete! And this will never be altered, this will never be lost; we shall be throughout eternity in perfect, full, complete communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, and in fellowship habitually with Him - what commonly is called partnership; in complete, holy, godly partnership with Christ in every way! O how precious! Yea, in partnership with God the Father, not merely with the Lord Jesus Christ, our elder Brother. O how precious! How bright! How glorious are our prospects! And were all this known and entered into, everybody in the whole world would care about Christ; but because it is not known, and, if known, not believed, therefore the number of those who really and truly surrender the heart to Christ is yet so small.

Now let us lay all these things to heart. Let us, if we have never yet treated them as realities, do so from this evening; from henceforth for the rest of our lives. There is one word more. "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." We must hold fast what was declared unto us by the Apostle; we have not to listen to false teachers, we have not to listen to those who pervert the Gospel, we have not to receive the statements of such teachers whereby the churches in the Roman province of Galatia were deluded in thinking that they must be circumcised and keep the law of God, like the Israelites did, in order to be saved. Nothing of the kind. Salvation is given to us in a way of grace, and through faith in Christ, through trusting in that which the Lord Jesus Christ has done and suffered. This what the Apostle refers to. "If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." Ye must hold fast the statements of the Apostles, "unless ye have believed in vain." The blessing will be lost, if we do not keep in memory the teaching of the Apostles.

Therefore, in the days in which we live, when good works are mixed up with the work of Christ, we have to be warned by all this; and, in childlike simplicity, enquire and go on enquiring what did Paul preach, what did Peter preach, what did John preach, and what did the other Apostles say? We have to find out this in the New Testament, and to hold fast to what they say. This is the way of continuing in the ways of God, and enjoying the truth of the Gospel; and therefore to be blessed with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

God grant this to all here present; and should there be one individual who is as yet looking to her or her doings for salvation, let him or her remember - I say it once more - we can alone be saved through Christ, and not any one of us by our own doings.

The God of all Grace ... make you Perfect ... Stablish you

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday evening, March 28th 1897

But the God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. I Peter v, 10.

In meditating for a little while on this verse, let us notice, in the first place, the title given to our precious Heavenly Father. He is called "The God of all Grace!" He is God Almighty. He is the God of Power, the God of Justice, the God of Holiness, the God of Wisdom, the God of Infinite Compassion. He bears a variety of precious names, because they set forth His attributes, and prove, all of them, His character.

Now, in this portion He is called "The God of all Grace." That is a most precious title given to Him for our comfort. We are sinners, we fail in a variety of ways, we have failed in numberless ways before this; and we therefore need One

Who is not merely Almighty, not merely righteous, not merely infinitely holy, not merely infinitely wise, but Who is also full of pity and compassion towards poor sinners, such as I am, and as you are. And therefore this word, that "He is the God of all Grace," suits us admirably. We just need such a God as this is. "He is the God of all Grace," and were he not, O what would become of us? But because "He is the God of all Grace" there is hope for the oldest, the greatest, the vilest sinner among us. None need to despair, since "He is the God of all Grace." That is, the grace that is found in God is without limit, and it can be applied to every one of our various failures and shortcomings, of whatever character they may be.

There is even the possibility that the greatest thief, the greatest robber, the vilest person that ever lived under heaven, can obtain forgiveness for his crimes. There is grace found in God, since "He is the God of all Grace," that whatever amount of grace is needed, it is to be had from Him. It is to be found in God. The greatest sins can be forgiven. Look at Manasseh's case, and see what God did for him. He was swimming, as it were, in the blood of the individuals whom he had murdered; and his idolatry went beyond everything that had ever been seen. But after he was taken a prisoner, and he humbled himself before God – really and truly humbled himself before God – see how merciful and good God was to him. It was all forgiven! There is an instance of "the God of all Grace!"

Look, again, at the great persecutor Saul, who delighted in having the believers in Christ beaten in every synagogue; who delighted in having them cast into prison, again and again and again; who delighted in tormenting them till they blasphemed the worthy, precious name of the Lord Jesus; who delighted in having believers in Christ put to death. Yet this great persecutor – in his day, we have reason to believe, the greatest of persecutors – was forgiven. "I obtained mercy," he himself says. "I obtained mercy." Why? Because God was "the God of all Grace." That was the reason, not because he deserved it, not because he had become a better man now. No! While he was on the very way to Damascus, to do to the believers in Christ there what he had been doing to the believers in Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus met him and changed his heart, and made him one of the holiest men that ever lived on earth (as a mere human being, I mean) and this because God is "the God of all Grace." How this suits sinners, as we are, in all our variety of failures and shortcomings – even in the case of the converted. Though they hate sin and love holiness, yet how many are their failures, how many their shortcomings, how many their words which are contrary to the mind of God! Though they do not live in sin, and though they do not go on in an evil, wicked course, yet their failures, their shortcomings, if not in action, yet in word, and if it were even not in word, in thought, in feeling, in desire, in purpose, in inclination, O how many are they! How many are our failures and shortcomings! But our Friend and Helper in heaven, our Father in Christ Jesus, is "the God of all Grace."

O, a precious title! And I advise my beloved Christian friends to study this title yet further and further; to think about it, and to pray over this name given here to our Heavenly Father, that more and more they may be comforted by "the God of Grace," "Who hath called us unto His eternal glory." That is the prospect we have! The weakest, the feeblest, the least instructed of the children of God have this prospect before them – to share the eternal glory of God! What a wonderful thing is this!

And all the glory which the Father will give to the Lord Jesus Christ, on account of His mediatorial work, the weakest, the feeblest of the children of God shall share with Christ, because they are members of His mystical body; of which He is the Head, because they belong to Him; and that is the reason why they shall share it with Him. To this eternal glory of God the Father, and to this eternal glory of God the Son, we are called, and we have obtained (for the very purpose that we might be assured that we shall share it) an earnest, which is the Spirit of God. And as assuredly as we are the partakers of God the Holy Spirit, so surely we shall share the eternal glory of the Father and of the Son. Bright, and blessed, and glorious, therefore, are our prospects!

And how do we come to all this? What is our title to all this? It is stated, "Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus" – rather in Christ Jesus, because we belong to Christ. No goodness, no merit, no worthiness found in us; not because we are better than other people; not because we pray a great deal; not because we work a great deal for God. That is not the reason, but because we are in Christ Jesus, members of His mystical body. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. He, in our room and stead, fulfilled the whole law, the law which we had broken times without number. And thus it comes that we are justified before God – that is, accounted just, reckoned just, though unjust and unrighteous in ourselves.

This perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ unto death, the death on the Cross, is put to our account, is imputed to us; and therefore it is that we are called unto His eternal glory through Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered in our room and stead, as our mediator, and bore all the punishment which we deserve on account of our numberless transgressions. And thus God, though just and holy and righteous, can in Christ Jesus give to us this wonderful blessing, to share His own eternal glory, and to share the eternal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ! O the wonderful, wondrous prospects which we have! If this were entered into, we should sing and rejoice all the day long, under all circumstances, under all trials; but because we enter so little into it, we apprehend so little of it, we pass by so much of what is declared in the Word of God about these things, and are so short of happiness as we are! Now let us ponder more abundantly

all these things, that the heart may be brimful of joy. This is so important, because “the joy of the Lord” is the spiritual strength of the believer while we are this side of eternity.

“Called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile” – more exactly and minutely, “after ye have suffered a little while.” It is only a little while, in comparison with eternity! Suppose it were to last 20 years, or 50 years, or even 80 years, and if it were even longer than this, yet, in comparison with eternity, it is a little while! For a little while only! O how short it will be, in comparison with eternity! We must never lose sight of the fact that eternity is a period without end. A thousand years are as one day! A thousand years, a little time, a very little time! And ten hundred millions of years, a little time. Eternity only beginning, though a thousand millions of years shall have passed away! Only the beginning of eternity! And 50 millions, and 5,000 millions of years, O how little, how little a period in comparison with eternity.

So after this life, suffered a little while, what comes? He will “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” It is a positive statement! It is not merely a wish, not merely a desire, on the part of the apostle, nor merely a prayer. But He will make you perfect! When you look at your spiritual conflicts now, remember they will not always remain. We shall have the victory, completely, through our Lord Jesus Christ. No temptations any longer! Nor hesitation whether we shall do a thing, or not do it – all this completely done away. The will of God will be declared to us, and instantaneously, without a second’s hesitation, without a moment of pondering whether we shall do it or not, the heart will say, “Thy will, Heavenly Father, is my perfect delight; I shall rejoice in glorifying Thee, by doing what Thou wilt have me to do.” This is the state of things to which we are hastening on! Perfect conformity to the mind of Christ! Perfect, universal, and eternal obedience to our Heavenly Father! When, hereafter in the glory, His holy pleasure is made known to us, instantaneously we shall comply. That is the meaning of being made perfect, and that is the promise we have.

He will make you perfect as to holiness and as to intelligence; there will be no remaining in ignorance found in us, but “we shall know in that day, as perfectly as we are known now.” We shall completely know God, we shall completely know the Lord Jesus, we shall completely know everything that is according to the mind of God, or contrary to the mind of God, O the bright and blessed and glorious prospect that every particle of ignorance now found in us will be completely done away with. We shall be perfect as to holiness; we shall be perfect as to knowledge. O how bright, how glorious, these prospects are! We are not perfect now, even as to knowledge, or as to grace. Far otherwise. We are weak and feeble in ourselves still, though believers in the Lord Jesus; and though hating sin and loving holiness, we are far from being perfect. But we shall be perfect! This is the bright and blessed prospect, “He will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

Stablish – that is, He will give unto us a state in which there will be no double-mindedness, all a reality; in regard to the things of God; all one-minded, all according to the mind of God. This is the bright prospect before us. Then we shall be strengthened – that is to say, completely firm according to the mind of God, no double-mindedness whatever; one mind, and only one mind, to glorify God; one purpose, and only one purpose, to live for God, to labour for God; and everything that is contrary to the mind of God will be entirely removed from us. A bright and blessed prospect this, that just as the Lord Jesus Christ was, while on earth, thirty-three years and a half, so hereafter will be the feeblest, the weakest, of the children of God; so completely minded shall we be, as the Lord Jesus Christ was, for glorifying God while on earth. That is the prospect before us.

And lastly, we shall be settled – that is, such a foundation of complete spirituality shall we be brought to, that a shaking of the foundation will be entirely impossible. O this prospect of being settled, with firm foundations, will be ours; no shifting and changing will be the question then, but one purpose, and one purpose throughout eternity, will be ours: to glorify God, to do the will of God, to work for God, to have no will of our own, O how bright is the prospect for us weak ones; feeble ones, and erring ones, as we are, that we shall not remain thus. O how often have we condemned ourselves since our conversion, in that we are not altogether Christ-like, that we are still not always inclined to do the things which are perfectly according to the mind of God, and though at last we come to it, and do the thing according to the mind of God, yet that we hesitated for a little moment, that we considered whether we should do the thing or not. This should not be found in us; this shows that we are not altogether according to the mind of God, that yet the corrupt nature is found in us, that the devil has still a measure of power of us, and that we are not yet perfect in holiness.

All this will then be altered completely. One single aim throughout eternity, one single mind throughout eternity, to live for God, to glorify God, without the least particle of hesitation at any time; instantaneously, when the will of God is presented to us to set our seal to it, that we will obey Him, that we will glorify Him, that we will do His will. How bright and blessed and glorious these prospects! Now is there yet an unbeliever here present? If so, to you, my dear friend, I would say in whatever way you seek after happiness now, you will never have it, can never have it, except you find it in this way that I have been pointing out, through Jesus Christ. The Apostles, holy men, exceedingly holy men as they were, obtained all this through Christ. They did not obtain it by their own exertion. It was as poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinners, they accepted what God gives to the sinners in Christ Jesus.

We have to own before God that we are sinners, and, if we do not see it, to ask God to show it to us, and then to confess before God in prayer that we are sinners, and, having done so, to put our trust solely in Christ Jesus for salvation. It is this, and this alone, which brings the blessing, and can bring the blessing. Any, therefore, who are not yet believers in Christ, if they desire really and truly to be happy, this is the only way to obtain it; if they desire to go to heaven, this is the only way to get there. God grant that some soul or other may be benefited through this our meditation, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

The God of Jeshurun

Deuteronomy 33:26-29 – There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and His excellency on the sky.

This portion is connected with the blessing which Moses gave to the various tribes of Israel, just before the Lord took him away. After giving a particular blessing to each one of the tribes, the blessing in these verses is now uttered, by the Spirit speaking through the prophet, with regard to all the tribes of Israel. The Holy Spirit sums up all the previous blessings in the last which He begins by the words, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun."

Imputed righteousness

Jeshurun means, "the righteous," or "the righteous one." And this is one of the titles given to the Israelites. Strange title, is it not to, to be given by the Spirit to that stiff-necked people, who had again and again provoked the God of Israel, and who had sinned against Him times without number? Stiff-necked and rebellious though they had been, yet they are here called "the righteous." In speaking of this people, the Holy One calls them "righteous".

Precisely so is it with ourselves – by nature we are sinners, and great sinners; and not only so, but deserving punishment, and nothing by punishment; yet the moment a poor sinner is brought to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ he is called righteous. "We are all by nature children of wrath, even as others," yet by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are accepted, regenerated – that is, born again; instead of the children of wrath, we become the children of God, we are brought out of darkness into His marvellous light, are delivered from the powers of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son – are brought on the road to heaven, and have before us the bright and blessed prospect of our Father's house.

Saved by grace through faith

Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, these and all other blessings of the gospel become ours. Fear is lost, judgement is taken away, and instead of all that, we instantaneously become children of God.

Instantaneously we obtain the forgiveness of our sins, are made alive in Christ Jesus, and are "delivered from the powers of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son". But this is only obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, glorious gospel that we should be called the sons of God! When we look inward, we see that we are utterly unworthy of such honour – we can indeed see we are anything but righteous. Yet are called "righteous", and are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, and partake by faith of His perfect righteousness.

Now, regarding these Israelites, it is here stated that "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun". There is no god like unto their God. They had the living God, while others had but dead idols.

The Lord our portion

And this is especially our portion: we have the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be our God and Father. That is, we have the living God on our side, to be our God, our Guide, our Father, and our Friend. All this, however, is only true of us if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We may speak about Him as our God; we may read about Him; we may be able to explain certain passages of Scripture concerning Him; we may even have written much about Him; and may have preached in His name; and yet it may not be true of us that we have the living God for our Father, except we really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust in Him along for the salvation of our souls.

But if we do thus accept Jesus as our Saviour, then it is true of us that we have God as our Father, and we have the same precious share in those blessings as the literal Israelites had. It can be said of us, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun".

The Lord our strength

But further, with regard to these blessed ones, it is said, “Who rideth upon the heavens in thy help and His excellency on the sky”. Look at this expression, “Rideth upon the heavens in thy help”. Such a thought as this would never had entered into the mind of the greatest poet who ever lived, except he had borrowed it from the Bible. All the best and noblest ideas in the poets they have borrowed from that source. The thought here is that there is none who can resist God – that no power on earth can oppose Him. The powers of this earth- that is, all under heaven – are as nothing before Him. He is the Creator – they are the creatures, and they cannot withstand Him, who is above all.

The Lord our deliverer

Now, the comfort to us is that we have such a God for our helper – one who rides on the heavens – in the very sky; we have Him to fight on our behalf. He is above all, He is out of the reach of Satan and wicked men, He cannot be defeated by any of them. He is above the elements, and they cannot withstand Him, neither can any creature stand against Him, who is the chiefest of all. He is on our side, He is for us, and if God be for us who can be against us? If He is on our side all is well with us. But, alas! If He is against us, what shall become of us? If we are in Him we are in perfect safety.

But if there by anyone reading this book who has not God on his side, who has never believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, let me implore you, be you reconciled – be you at peace with God. If so, then you will be safe, and then it will be said with regard to you, that “He rideth upon the heavens in your help”. All that we have to do, feeling as we must our own weakness, impotency, and helplessness, is but to cast ourselves into His arms, and say, “My Father, I am Thy child, Thy poor, weak, helpless child; by night unto me, and help me”.

What will our Father, who rides upon the heavens, do? Most assuredly, He will assist His poor, weak child. Whatever his necessities may be, he may feel assured that the everlasting arms are around him, and that his Father will thrust out the enemies, and will destroy them utterly.

Trying circumstances

Remember, that when this blessing was given, the Israelites had not yet entered the promised land, although on the point of doing so. Moreover, even if they had crossed the Jordan, there were still the seven mighty nations of the Canaanites to be overcome; and therefore at such a time they needed the help of the living God, and were blessed by being reminded that they had such a helper.

And so with us, the Israel of God, and the heirs of the promise. We have much conflict yet before us, and so these words are for our encouragement. God, the living God, is our refuge. As if the Holy Spirit by the prophet would say, “True, you have these great and might enemies to overcome, but in going forward, remember that God will be at your side as your helper. Commit yourselves to Him, look to Him, trust in Him, depend on Him and you will find the power of His mighty arm will save you”. What He would have remember and take courage in is the fact that *the eternal God is our refuge*. Can we, each one of us, say this. “God, the eternal, living God, is my refuge”? For myself, I can say He is my only refuge, and has been so for fifty years. How many of you can say the same? Ask yourselves individually this deeply important question. If you are able to say this with regard to yourselves, what a happy people you are. But if not able to say it, yet there is no reason why you should not be able to say it. It is only trust in Him that is required; nothing else but to place yourselves wholly in His hands. If you will only depend on the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your souls, it may be yours now. Just as it is true of me, a poor, miserable sinner, and true of many thousands who, like me, are poor miserable sinners, but who now trust in Him, so it may be true of you, that there is none like your God, who rideth upon the heaven in your help.

The eternal God

But further, “*the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*”. There is something peculiarly sweet to me to have an eternal Friend, a living Friend, a Friend who is above all, who has all power and might, and that He is on my side.

It is well indeed to have an earthly friend, who, if you in poverty, may help you. But sickness may come, he may be taken away by death; or, if not that, may lose all his wealth with which he helped you, and thus may be unable further to assist you. But none of these things affect the living God – He is the same yesterday, today, for ever. Eternal is thy refuge. Fifty years ago He was as now; a thousand years ago – ten thousand years ago – He is ever the same.

The God of Elijah is here today, and He is exactly the same as He was in the prophet’s time – as ready and as willing to help His children. The living God is with us, whose power never fails, whose arm never grows weary, whose wisdom is infinite, and whose power is unchanging. Therefore today, tomorrow, and next month, as long as life is continued, He will be our helper and friend.

Still more, even as He is through all time, so will He be through all eternity. Oh, the blessedness of having the eternal God on our side! Not only on our side, but on whom we may rely as on a fortress of strength, in whom we may get refuge continually, and in whom there is perfect security.

False views of Christianity

If the world only knew the blessedness of thus having God as our refuge, I think the whole world would seek at once after the Lord. It is only because they think it is something miserable to be a Christian, and do not know that it is infinitely more precious to be a Christian than to be without God, that they are content to remain unsaved.

This is one great reason why they do not seek to enjoy the things of God. And it is just the reason why you and I should make it our business to be out-and-out Christians, that we may show to the world what it is to be truly happy Christians, and at the same time be living examples to the Church. But this true and real joy cannot be possessed unless we are out-and-out Christians. There must not be a seeking to hold fast the things of the world to the utmost, and yet seeking to get to heaven all the same. If this be the case with us, we shall just have enough religion to make us miserable, and too little to make us happy.

What does God want

That we should be happy Christians; and this we can only be if we are holy Christians. We shall never, of course, be altogether free from sin on this earth; not that until we are taken home. But we must aim after being holy children; we must not go on in what we know is contrary to the divine will. And if we are really out-and-out Christians, and are really holding on to the eternal living God, the result will be that we shall be happy Christians, and shall be bearing testimony to those “that are without”.

And the result of this will be to stir them up to seek after the Lord; and so a thousand Christians will be a thousand witnesses for the living God. Therefore, my beloved brethren and sisters, let us lay it to heart to be out-and-out Christians, so that we may lay hold of this word – *the living God is thy refuge*.

I am a weak erring sinner, yet I have the living God on my side, the eternal God as my refuge. Oh, the blessedness of having such a refuge as this. What are all earthly honours in comparison with this? What the highest dignities? What the greatest earthly crown as compared with the blessedness which we possess in having the living eternal God on our side, and of being permitted to make Him our refuge?

And this is the position of the child of God; above everything that man can conceive, “underneath are the everlasting arms”, with the power of the almighty God for our helper. What a comfort in our helplessness, to know that although you and I are weak, erring, and feeble naturally, and can do nothing if left to ourselves; yet we have these everlasting arms underneath us to support us. Though we are helpless, here is an almighty arm to lean upon, and even to lie upon. It is an arm that can carry us through the difficulties which lie before us, and through the trials which await us; can bear us safely through, can carry us in all our helplessness. Oh, the blessedness of the figure used here – “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms”!

The Deliverer

Further, “*And He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, ‘Destroy the’em*”. What a blessed promise was this to the Israelites! Before them was the Jordan to be crossed; and even if it were crossed, were there not those great and mighty nations to be overcome? Looking to themselves, they might well have been afraid; but it must not be thus, there must be no fear in those underneath whom are the everlasting arms. Further to encourage them, Jehovah distinctly says with regard to these seven mighty nations, “I will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say ‘Destroy them’”.

Look at the entrance of the children of Israel, and see how this was fulfilled. Look at the crossing of the Jordan see how the walls of Jericho fell. Look at the various battles with the enemy. When kings came against them, how easily they were overcome. When nations united against them, still Jehovah was on their side; and at last, all were thrust out and destroyed – overcome by the power of Jehovah.

Now, this is particularly comforting with regard to ourselves. We are a feeble band, a “little flock”, our enemies are mighty and strong. “We have no power in ourselves against this great army”. So must we look on all this as a hopeless case, and exclaim, “We can never get to heaven; we are so weak, helpless, and sinful in ourselves”? Well, it is quite true, we are so weak and helpless in ourselves, that we cannot overcome those that are against us; but our Helper is mighty, and though these enemies were ten thousand times more numerous than they are, and though they would easily

overcome us if faced in our own power, yet it is still true that *Jehovah saves*, and that He has promised to thrust out the enemy from before us, even to destroy them. All the power of evil will not finally prevail, though at times it appears as if it would be so. Neither shall the corrupt nature within us finally have the victory; but through the Lord Jesus Christ we shall have the victory, and be more than conquerors.

Therefore, right blessed is the prospect before us! If we look at ourselves, there is abundant reason to be cast down. Yet we must never forget the word, that we shall have the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ, for “greater is H that is for us than all that can be against us”, and through the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall finally have the victory.

God's deliverances

In the literal fulfilment of the promise with regard to the Israelites, the enemy was destroyed, but not all through their own strength. It was solely by God helping them that these were destroyed. Remember how God fought for them time after time. How the sun stood still at the request of Joshua. How, again, the elements from heaven fought for them; how stones were hailed upon the enemy. The hornets also were by Jehovah used for the destruction of the enemies. In various ways Jehovah fought on their behalf, and showed His mighty power in leading His people to possess the land.

So now with the Israel of God; they can of themselves do nothing, having nothing but weakness; but again and again God delivers them; so that while in this life they can never be perfectly delivered from the power of the enemy, yet they shall finally be helped by their God. Further,

“Israel then shall dwell in safety alone”

The safety is dependent on their dwelling alone; the safety is dependent on their entire separation from other nations. It was to be their peculiar position of separateness from others; it was to be their very safety. God intended them to be separate, He forbade their entering into marriage with the other nations, or in any other way forming connections with them. They must destroy the surrounding nations and walk separately.

Now if my beloved brethren will walk according to the mind of God, that is what they must do – come out, and be separate. There must be separation from the world, Naturally, we are inclined to give up the line of demarcation, and to say, “This is too strict, too particular; why should I be so much separated from the world? See that brother, he is enjoying the world a little, he is mixing with the world, and so is able to make something of each world, and he is a Christian. Why should not I also be able to mix somewhat with the world, and yet get to heaven at last?” Mark! Mark! My beloved Christian friends. What the Lord requires is, that we should live *separate from the world*.

Of course, as our business is here, we must have something to do with the world, yet we should not go on in the spirit of the world. It is quite possible that we should conduct our business carefully, and yet be separate to the Lord. God does not see it good to take us out of the world. Jesus prayed with regard to us, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil”. The apostle Paul says, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate”. Thus, if we desire to attain nearness of communion with God, we must be willing to live in separation from the world, and to aim at a decided line of demarcation between the world and the Church, which will be for the praise, honour, and glory of God. This we cannot do if we are living as the world does, or seeking to be as much like the world as possible. In so doing, we shall only bring dishonour upon the name of God, and misery upon ourselves. Beloved Christian friends, let us keep rank against the world, living in separation from its habits, maxims, and principles, and aim at conformity to the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than, as many seem to do, to try to live as much like the world as possible.

We ought to be a “marked people”

Men should know that we are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ; even as our blessed Master Himself, who did not seek to be like the scribes and Pharisees, but rather sternly denounced them. He Himself said that “He must be about the business of His Father”, that was His grand object. And that is what we must aim after. In the business and matters of this life we must of necessity mix, to a certain extent, with the world, but we must, day by day, and hour by hour, seek to live as much as possible unlike the world. Thus only is it that we bright forth fruit abundantly to the praise, honour, and glory of the Lord.

I would ask you most affectionately, my beloved brethren and sisters, “Are you willing to be such disciples – such out-and-out Christians, and to be such children of God?” This, remember, is the kind of children that God looks for; such disciples the Lord Jesus desires to have – men who are willing to live only for Him. Such children, such disciples, are certainly needed for these days. The eyes of the world are upon us, to see if we do live according to our profession. Surely, then, it is expected that we should live so that we may bring glory to God.

By thus living out-and-out for the Lord, we should become bolder and bolder. He will grant us more grace and ore help, and we shall be delivered. “Thus Israel shall dwell in safety alone.” Even so. And “*The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine*”. That means *fruitfulness* – the fountain in the midst of a land of corn and wine. But in the Hebrew, the word here rendered “fountain” also means “eye”, and therefore it means “the eye of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine”. The land into which the Israelites were to be brought, was to be a land of plenty, “a land flowing with milk and honey”. When they entered the land, they did find abundance. So with reference to ourselves, having been brought to safety, we shall also be brought into a land of plenty. We shall be fed with the finest of the wheat, and with corn and wine, to strengthen and encourage in the work of the Lord.

“Also the heavens shall drop down dew.” We are to be brought into a fruitful country spiritually, in which there is no such thing as drought. The children of God have the promise that they shall be well watered, their soul shall delight itself in fatness.

“Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people save by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.” This was spoken just as they were about to enter the land of promise.

“Happy art thou, O Israel”

They were, it is true, about to enter the land, but before them they had the great and mighty nations. Now if this was true of the literal Israel, how far more abundantly ought it to be true regarding the Israel of God. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, is it true of you? *“Happy are thou, O Israel.”*

I desire to give my testimony that it is true of me. Though a poor miserable sinner, I am a very happy man. Though just now nearly seventy years of age, and though having been fifty years in the spiritual life, yet I have not grown unhappy; I am still very happy. Even as it is true of me, so it might be true of each of you. Why not? It is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all His disciples should be happy disciples. Let us, then, aim after it. For there is such a thing as being holy and happy children – such a thing as being thoroughly decided Christians, and yet being happy. It is the will of the Father that we should be happy.

What is the reason that we are not all happy? Let each of you ask the question, and answer it before God to yourselves – *“Why, why, why! Am I not a happy child of God – a happy disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ?”* There is nothing whatever to hinder us, so far as God’s truth is concerned. God delights to see you all happy. Do not say, *“Oh, Mr Müller, if you had my trial, my burden, you could not be happy”*. What a mistake! The Christian may be ever a happy man. While the world is dependent upon surrounding circumstances for apparent happiness, the Christian may be truly happy, whatever his circumstances may be, so long as he is really trusting in God, and satisfied with Him.

Therefore, my beloved Christian friends

Never attempt to carry your own burden

but learn to roll it upon the Lord. Seek to deal with Him about everything; if you have any trial, any perplexity, cast it upon Him. Then you will find out how ready He is to help, and you will be able to say, even in view of all these circumstances, *“I am happy”*.

If we are unhappy, the fault lies with ourselves. There is no reason why we should not be happy children. Our Father loves us, and He will lead us safely through. Having such a Father, it may well be said of us, *“Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord. The shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency”*.

These Israelites were happy because they had such a God. Look how He delivered them and saved them. It was He who delivered them from the Egyptians, who led them through the Red Sea, destroying the hosts of Pharaoh. It was He who led them through the wilderness, provided them with heavenly food, and water from the rock, and finally led them into the land of promise.

Cause for happiness

And remember that it is by Him that you and I are delivered from a worse power than Egypt: are delivered from greater enemies than the host of the Egyptians and by Him we are led through the many difficulties of this life. Daily He is leading us, until at length He will land us safely above. Ought we not then to be happy, truly happy in the Lord? I ask you, affectionately, is it so with you? Are you all happy Christians? You ought to be, if you will only look to Him. Trust Him with child-like simplicity, and you will see how ready He is to help you and give blessing.

The Good Fight of Faith

Notes of an Address delivered in Bethesda Chapel, on Lord’s Day Evening, May 14, 1871

2 Timothy iv, 7, 8.

The apostle Paul writes to Timothy in the previous verse: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." He, as it were, committed the matter into the hands of Timothy, that he might do the utmost to prove a successor in labour and service, saying, For as for me, I am just on the point of being made a sacrifice for the Gospel's sake. I am ready to be sacrificed, and the time of my departure is at hand. And in making this statement there is as it were a glance at the past life, and the judgment regarding it is, "I have fought a good fight," rather, "the good fight." Fighting in the games, running in a race, are the figures here. But this fighting and running implies life. Keeping the faith implies that we have faith; naturally, this is the reverse. Naturally, we are dead in trespasses and sins, we have no spiritual life, and therefore there is no such thing as fighting against the devil, our own evil tendencies, the habits and customs of the world; but the worst of all is, we do not know it. We have life with regard to the body, life with regard to the mind. Having life as to the mind, we can think; having life as to the body, we can use our right or left arm, we can move from one place to another; but spiritually we are dead in trespasses and sins. And so it is entirely impossible to carry on a spiritual conflict. Every one needs to be quickened spiritually, to be made alive spiritually, to be born again spiritually; this is what we all need. And therefore, before we meditate any further upon this, we must ask ourselves, - Am I spiritually alive? or am I dead in trespasses and sins? Now there are hundreds here who by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ have obtained spiritual life, who are born again, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But there are many here who are as yet dead in trespasses and sins, and who cannot possibly fight the good fight. And what is my word to them? What it has been many times before. Own before God that you are sinners. Condemn yourselves before God as sinners; and should you not see that you are sinners, then read carefully the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and if you honestly desire to see what you are, God will show it to you. You will see then that you are sinners; and you will find in these three chapters what God in His wondrous grace has done for these guilty sinners, in that he gave His only begotten Son, bruised Him, laid on Him the iniquity of us all, that all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved, and not only be saved, but through this very faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are begotten again. It is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that this new birth is brought about according to Galatians iii. 26: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" also, I John v. 1: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

Now is this the case with regard to all of us? Have we all seen that we are sinners, and all put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls? If so, then we have spiritual life, but only in this way is it that we can have spiritual life. No religious ceremonies and observances will make us alive, not even reading the Bible itself will make us alive; though it is right and proper that we should read it, but that in itself will not make us alive.

Now, when we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then begins the race. The apostle Paul, looking back on many years, came to this conclusion: - By the grace of God I have fought the good fight. After this, beloved in Christ, we have to seek; and we have not to say to ourselves, But here is an apostle, and no doubt he fought a good fight; but as for me, poor weak sinner as I am, in much conflict, exposed to many trials, having a long family dependent upon me, how can it be said of me, "I have fought a good fight"? But if we reason so, we shall reason to the dishonour of God. We have to keep before us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the living Lord, and we can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us; and it is impossible to say to what amount we may be helped by looking to Him and trusting in Him. Paul was able to say it, not because he was an apostle, not because he had no trials, for he had an abundance of trials and difficulties; not because he had not an evil nature, but it was because this apostle was deeply conscious of his weakness and helplessness, and was looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. And if ye are enabled, like this man of God, to look to the Lord Jesus, owning our helplessness and nothingness, we shall find how willing He is to help us and strengthen us. But means are to be used. Day by day we are to seek to be nourished through the word of God. Persons who have to work with their bodies cannot go on for any length of time unless they take nourishing food at stated times. The child of God has to see to it that again and again and again he comes to this blessed book for nourishment for the inner man. It is not the will of the Lord that we should be twenty-four hours reading that blessed book on our knees. The children of God have work or service appointed them, and by this they are kept in a healthy state. I remember a godly brother said to me, forty-two years ago, - Get nourishment for your soul from God's word, and then work it out." This is deeply important. We should seek to read the word of God to be nourished and strengthened for our service. We must serve God with the strength He has given us - the mother in her family, the head of the family in his business, doing all for the glory of God, looking to Him for help and blessing. And so everyone of us, in our various positions, should seek to labour for God with the strength which He has, given to us. And if anyone were habitually to neglect reading the word of God, let such a one be sure of this, - he will very soon find out how little he is able to withstand the devil and the corruptions within. Now, then, let us seek particularly to remember this; for I judge that though prayer is of the utmost moment, yet still this is as deeply, or more deeply important than prayer itself: for when we pray to God, we speak to God; but when we read the Scriptures, God speaks to us, and this is what we so much need. In addition to this we have to expect answers to our prayers; we have to expect that the next time temptation

comes, we shall not be conquered, but that God will help us by His Spirit's might in the inner man. And this one point especially is to be noticed: when we have found anything in Scripture that we seek honestly to carry it out. Here you see is a special danger. We may clearly and distinctly see what is the will of God; but we may say, But this is very trying; this is very much against my natural inclinations. If we say, I don't like this, then we shall never do the things which are according to the mind of God. But let us say to ourselves, Oh what wondrous love God has shown to me in giving His Son to die for me. What can I do for Him? Though it is but little, let me seek to do that little. To the Cross of Christ we have to look continually; we have to admire the love of God in giving His Son, and to admire the love of God in sending His Spirit into our hearts, and by the memory of it we shall be strengthened to go forth against the powers of darkness, And thus, not only beginning, but going on week after week, month after month, year after year, it would be true of you and me also at the last, "I have fought the good fight." Tens of thousands of the true children of God have passed away, of whom it was true that they had fought the good fight. Why should it not be true of you and me, beloved in Christ? And oh! if it were before us, - an eternity of blessedness, the joy, the crown awaits us for eternity, the rivers of His pleasure, to see the King in His beauty, to spend a happy eternity in the presence of Jesus.

The apostle Paul adds further, "I have finished my course." This refers to the practice in games of running, and he applies what they all knew to his spiritual course. Thus, as the people of the world underwent great hardships and difficulties in order that they might have the prize and the crown, which was nothing more in many instances than a wreath of parsley leaves, and to be admired as the winners; so the apostle ran in a race, and with all steadfastness, and with all prayerfulness, and keeping under his body, and at the last he finished his course. Now, beloved in Christ, let it be present to us that all of us have our course, our race to run. Our service is not all the same. We have different work, different labour; God himself places us in our position, He knows our difficulties, our trials, our natural tendencies. He appoints our work. The blessed Jesus is ready to do for us individually what He did for that man of God, Paul, when he said, - "At my first answer no man stood with me; nevertheless the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." So, whatever the difficulties, whatever the trials, we may reckon on that blessed One. So then, from this evening and henceforth let us come to this holy, godly purpose, - By the help of God I will with renewed earnestness seek to set out in the race. Oh! let us honour the Lord by looking to Him for strength, expecting great things at His hands. "I have finished my course." John the Baptist finished his course; David finished his course; Paul finished his course; and many others; and why not you and I? Why should not we run successfully to the honour and glory of God? The temptation is lest we flag, lest we grow weary. Ah! but the angels are looking on, and the devils are looking on, and the eyes of the world are looking on; therefore, beloved in Christ, let it be our prayerful, earnest desire, as it was the desire of this man of God, to finish our course. Let us aim after the grace of apostles, though we cannot hold the office of apostles. "I have kept the faith." This at first sight might appear as if the apostle Paul ascribed to himself a great deal. But there was no boasting in this man of God regarding it. We know full well, again and again, what he says of himself, - Not worthy to be called a child of God. This was the lowly mind of this man of God. This might be true of us. For while on the one hand we can do nothing in our own strength, yet if we use the appointed means it will be true of us. One especial point is to maintain a good conscience else we are in danger of making shipwreck of faith. The conscience being defiled, we become spiritually weak. Whenever we fall into anything contrary to the will of God, we should confess it, and have recourse to the blood of Christ, and not go on in it, lest the good conscience be defiled. Now this man of God could say, "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." This he could say when he stood before King Agrippa; and in reading the life of this blessed man of God, we find that though he was a poor sinner, yet he exercised himself in this to keep a good conscience before God. Let us aim after it, beloved in Christ. What is implied in it? I have been kept hanging upon Christ, trusting in Christ, for the salvation of my soul. I am a poor miserable sinner, but I look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the ground of my acceptance before God. I am a child of God, an heir of God, and I shall share the glory at the last.

And now the result of running the race, fighting the fight, keeping the faith: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love His appearing." Remarkable word this, "Crown of righteousness laid up for me." It is as it were in God's keeping. God is taking care of it; He would under no circumstances lose it. And thus regarding us, it awaits us. Before the universe to be owned as one worthy of the crown; before the universe, when the manifestation of the sons of God takes place, would this man of God have this crown awarded to him.

And so will it be to those who love the prospect of His appearing. Not to such a one as the apostle only, or Peter, or Stephen, but unto all those who love His appearing. Now we have to ask ourselves, How is it with my heart, with regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do I wish Him to come? Do I long to see Him? or do I not care about Him? If we are in our sins we cannot possibly wish to see such a person as the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Those who do not love Him, if they were honestly to tell out their minds, would say, "I wish I were not under the necessity of meeting Him at all. But all true honest-hearted believers, though they

may not be free from sins, yet they love the very thought of being at last with Jesus, of being free from sin like Jesus, and therefore the prospect is a precious one to their souls. Now all those who love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, will just as much have the crown of righteousness as the apostle Paul. This is the prospect we have. The day is coming for the manifestation of the sons of God. The Lord Jesus will point out this one and that one, and say, - This is my disciple. Will this be true of all of us? Shall we all here present be owned by the Lord Jesus, and receive the crown of righteousness? Suppose the coming of the Lord Jesus were now to take place, in what state would it find us? - prepared or unprepared? Now everyone who is unprepared has to say to himself or herself, I do not love to be with Jesus Christ; this thereby proves the heart is not right. Any who love Jesus, wish to be with Jesus. This was not the case once with the apostle, yet see how great the change has been. Now, what God did for this great sinner, He is willing to do for every unconverted sinner here. Only believe God's gospel; this is the great remedy.

The Gospel in the Holy Ghost

Notes of an Address made on 1 Thessalonians i. 5 date unknown

"Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." - 1 Thessalonians i. 5.

"Our Gospel." That is, simply, the gospel which we preach. There is but one gospel, the gospel of *the grace of God*, the glad tidings, that God gave His only begotten Son, - who gave Himself for us, who suffered and was bruised for us, and who died for our sins. This is what we are to believe. The sinner believing in Jesus, - yea, the vilest, the most hardened, the oldest sinner, - will at once obtain the pardon of His sins, the full forgiveness of them. He has not to do any work, but just as he is, he should come; he has only to receive what God has to give in the person of His own dear Son, who, in our room and stead, died for us, unworthy, guilty sinners.

This gospel, the apostle says, "CAME NOT IN WORD ONLY, BUT IN POWER." Not only as a statement, nor even as a mere clear and scriptural statement, but in spiritual energy, in spiritual power. Such power is to be obtained by a holy and prayerful life, by which, *even now*, believers may be brought into such a state as that out of them flow rivers of living water.

It came further to them "IN THE HOLY GHOST;" viz., the gospel was, as it were, enclosed all round by the Spirit, and accompanied by *His* power, though uttered by mortal and sinful lips. Only as the Holy Ghost works will the gospel be effectual. We should therefore, above all, seek by earnest, frequent prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit.

This "power," in connection with the ministry of the Word is not only to be sought after by public preachers, or by such as minister to stated congregations, but also by district visitors, tract distributors, teachers in schools, by masters, by parents, by all classes of believers; seeing that this "power" is the result of a holy walk and a prayerful life. All believers should seek to win souls for Christ. None should be content to go alone to heaven.

But if we would work *successfully* for God, we must have "power," and we cannot have this spiritual power without much prayer; we must also be especially careful that we do not allow anything which we know to be hateful to the Lord. Thus shall we be "vessels meet for the Master's use;" but thus alone have we any right to expect to be used by the Lord.

The office of an apostle we never can have, but this spiritual state of heart, which the apostle had we may have, yea, ought to have; and just in the degree in which we have it, will the gospel which we preach come in power and in the Holy Ghost. It is not the much we do, the number of visits we have made, or the number of tracts we have distributed; it is not the *quantity*, but the *quality* of our service which we should regard. If we have distributed a good many tracts, how much have we distributed them in prayer, and how much have we followed them in prayer? "AND IN MUCH ASSURANCE;" viz., much full conviction. What an experience is this! a full conviction of the forgiveness of their sins, and of *all* their sins - hearts brimful of joy; thus showing, by their happy faces, their peace with God, and out of full hearts pouring forth blessed truths! It is true I am a stranger here, but heaven is my home. I am on my way to God. God, for Christ's sake, has pardoned me.

Dear Sunday-school teachers, day-school teachers, superintendents of schools, district visitors, visitors of the sick, tract circulators, let all those with whom you have to do see that you are happy men and women. Let it never be asked by the children we teach, or those we visit, "Does Mr. So-and-so himself believe what he says?" "Does Mrs. So-and-so herself believe and enjoy the things she speaks of to me?" Therefore, my beloved brethren, do not expect fruit, unless you speak in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.

"AS YE KNOW WHAT MANNER OF MEN WE WERE AMONG YOU." There should be no uncertainty about this - no doubt as to whether the one who speaks, who teaches, who visits, is a man of God or not. It is to my shame, if men do not know what manner of person I am. If we want to know what manner of men we ought to be, let us read what Paul says of himself in the second chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

I have made these few remarks, firstly, in order that all of us who in any way seek to serve the Lord may be encouraged. Do not let us say, this is too much - this is too high an attainment. Verily it is not! We may not expect to be able to perform miracles, nor have the gift of tongues, nor the office of an apostle; but we may confidently look for this spiritual power, and we shall not be disappointed.

And I have, secondly, made these remarks because the kind of service which I have been noticing is now so particularly needed. Let us pray that God, in the riches of His grace, would raise up, as pastors and teachers, as evangelists, as district visitors and tract distributors, as teachers of schools, etc., holy men, who shall speak not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; and who by their manner of life shall commend themselves to the consciences of men

The Lord's Prayer

A Sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday Evening, March 21st, 1897

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy kingdom done. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.--Matthew vi., 5-15.

We will meditate on part of Matthew vi., commencing at verse 5 : "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." In reference to not a few of the Pharisees of old this was actually the case. They would stand for a long time in the synagogues praying; but what was far worse than this, when the ordinary prayer time came for the Israelites - about three o'clock in the afternoon by our time - they would so manage it that just at that very time they could be found at the corners of the streets, where they might be observed in the act of prayer by as many as possible coming from various directions. All this was hypocrisy. They professed thus to be very holy men, but in reality it was the reverse. "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." Their reward was the applause of their fellow-men. A poor, miserable recompense.

"But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet." The great point here is the secrecy in reference to prayer. Not all persons are in such a position as that they have a little chamber to which they can retire and lock the door. But if it can be done, it should be done. If impossible, God will accept according to our position and circumstances. I remember a case which I would relate to show how persons may be situated. About 50 years ago I went to Germany to find missionaries for the East Indies. On this journey I came to Magdeburg, one of the strongest and largest fortresses of the

kingdom of Prussia. Here I found in the house of a godly man in the Army a comrade of his, and, as he lived in barracks, I said, "My dear brother, how do you manage with regard to prayer, as you are continually surrounded by hundreds of soldiers?" His reply was, "When I want to pray in secret, I go down into a large sand-cellar, which is perfectly dark, and there I kneel down on the sand. No one is able to see I am there, though often some of my comrades come close to my heels; but never am I found there. I am alone, perfectly alone; no one sees me; and that is my closet." So in whatever variety of ways the children of God may be situated, they have to do the best they can. But the great point is that as much as possible we should seek to deal with our Heavenly Father in the way of prayer in secret; and under no circumstances aim to be noticed by our fellow-men in order to get their applause.

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door" (thus further stating the exceeding great importance of secrecy). "Pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Where there is this, a secret waiting on God, He, in His Own time and way, will give the open recompense. He will show that He is noticing; He will show that He has recorded it in the book of remembrance; He will show that it has not escaped His observation. "Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." The secret waiting on God will be manifested by blessing. As assuredly as we thus give ourselves to prayer, God will notice us, and give blessing, that anyone can see.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do." That is, sentence by sentence, repeating the same request, just as Baal's worshippers did, and as the heathen nations do up to the present time, thinking that the more their words, the more the repetition of what they ask for, the more certain is it that they will get it. "Use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking; be not ye, therefore, like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." Prayer is not necessary for the sake of informing God; but prayer is necessary simply because it is the appointment of God. He will have us go to Him for our own good and profit and blessing, asking Him for the things we require, because the blessing bestowed on us in answer to prayer is so much the more precious than if the blessing were given without prayer. Often and often God allows us greatly to be tried, in order that at last, when the blessing does come and prayer is answered, it may be all the more precious to us "Be not ye, therefore, like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him."

Now comes what is commonly called, "The Lord's Prayer." After this manner, therefore, pray ye." This shows us it is not God's appointment that these words of the Lord Jesus Christ should only be used, nor that we should continually use them. But in the spirit, in this manner we should ask blessing. That is the lesson we have to learn. "After this manner pray ye, 'Our Father, which art in Heaven.'" The very first word is full of meaning. The petitions which are recorded here are suitable, and only suitable, for the children of God-for they are the prayer of the heavenly family, those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to keep this before us, that as long as we are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, God is not our Father. God is God to us. He is our Creator. He is our Preserver. He is the One Who supplies us with everything that we can need. He lets His sun shine for us; He lets the rain fall also, so that we are benefited by it. But until we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, God is not our Father. Now this word "Our," shows that we are part of a family, part of the heavenly family; and thus it is that all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls, after having been convinced that they are sinners, deserving nothing but punishment- all such as are believers - have in God Almighty a Father. "Who art in Heaven." His place is everywhere; but especially is it in Heaven, not on earth, though His power may be seen everywhere, and the manifestations of His presence be found throughout the universe.

"Hallowed be Thy Name." That is, Thy Name be honoured; Thy Name be glorified. And here I remind my beloved Christian friends of the meaning of the word "Name." It does not mean the several letters which form the name of "God," but what we learn in the 34th chapter of Exodus, when Jehovah proclaimed His Name before Moses. It is His Character, His Attributes, what He is Himself, which are to be glorified. Jehovah, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all those who believe in Jesus is to be glorified. That is the meaning of "Hallowed be Thy Name;" and just in the proportion in which we enter into what God is, we find out what a lovely, lovely Being He is, how infinitely lovely He is, "Hallowed be Thy Name." In other words, "I pray that Thou mayest be more and more honoured and glorified."

Now comes another petition. "Thy kingdom come." That is, "Hasten the time, bring it about speedily, when Thou shalt universally be honoured, when Thou shalt universally be glorified, when all the works of the wicked one shall be destroyed." This will be after the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. See how entirely impossible it is for the ungodly, the unconverted, to ask this petition from the heart. The lips of such may utter it times without number, but the true meaning is nothing short of this: "Let the time speedily come when I, a wicked creature, shall be cast into the bottomless pit." That is just the meaning of the prayer when so uttered; and of course this plainly shows that only in ignorance the ungodly could ask the petition, "Thy kingdom come." The words can only properly be used by those who are believers in the Lord Jesus, for they beseech Him soon to return, that God universally may be glorified and honoured by everyone on earth. That this is the meaning we see immediately from what follows. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven."

Since the fall of Adam and Eve, the will of God is not done on earth. It was done before the fall of Adam and Eve in Paradise, but from the moment they ate of the forbidden fruit, and sin was introduced by the devil on earth, from that moment the will of God was not done to the full on earth, as it should be, and as it will be hereafter when the Lord Jesus Christ has returned. Let us clearly keep this before us. One of the first things which was done after the fall was that the first child of Adam and Eve, Cain, murdered his own brother, Abel. There we see the fruit of sin entering into the world, and ever since then the will of God has not been "done in earth, as it is in Heaven." There have been those godly in spirit, at various times, who have sought in their feeble measure to glorify God, and to walk to the praise and glory and honour of His Name. But the great mass of human beings on earth have not been doing the will of God, as the will of God is done in Heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread." Here the daily bread does not mean simply bread and nothing else; but it means the necessaries of life generally. What we require we ask God for, and are allowed to ask God to give to us. Notice, particularly, that it is not stated here, "Give us our daily bread," but "Give us this day our daily bread." That means we are not warranted to expect a great abundance, in the way of supply of earthly things. God may be going to fill our hearts with cause for gratitude; God may most abundantly give to us the necessaries of life beforehand, and a long time beforehand; but if He does not do it, we are not to blame Him, far less to consider He is not faithful to His promise, for He has not promised that He will give us years beforehand, neither months beforehand, neither weeks beforehand, neither many days beforehand, the necessaries of life; but He has only promised that day by day we shall be supplied, and this also only under the condition that we seek first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness. In other words, if we walk in the fear of God, making it our business to win souls for Him, and to set a good example of godly walk and behaviour before our fellow-men, we shall then as assuredly as we trust in Him be supplied with the necessaries of life. For so did David say, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed "-i.e., his children, his descendants-" begging bread." "Give us this day our daily bread." On this petition we may write clothes, house rent, taxes, supplies for all that which our family requires. All this is implied in the petition for daily bread. And how precious to have to go to a Loving Father, Whose very joy and delight it is to answer the petitions of His children. He is not a hard Master, an austere Being, but an infinitely loving Father. Oh, that increasingly it might come to everyone of the children of God to look at Him as an infinitely loving Being; for when we are brought to this state we are perfectly satisfied at all times, and under all circumstances with His dealings with us. Whether painful or otherwise, we are satisfied that He doeth all things well.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." This implies the owning that we are sinners. It is a matter of exceeding great importance that we give ourselves to God as we are, not seeking to make out that we are very good people, very excellent people, that we walk habitually in His ways and act according to His Mind-for the very reverse is the case, more or less, with everyone of us even the best among us. Therefore, we should increasingly own before God that we are sinners, that we have not acted at every time and under every circumstance according to His Mind, and have accordingly contracted debts, spiritual debts, because we are transgressors. We should own that we are debtors before God, and ask His forgiveness, for Christ's sake, seeking it in God's appointed way through Jesus. Not on any account seeking forgiveness by pretending henceforth we will live a better life, that we will make up for our misconduct; that can never be done. We can never make up for past transgressions, for moment by moment we are expected to love God, with all our heart, with all our strength, with all our might, and to walk in His ways to the praise of His Name. Therefore we can never by our own doings make up for past misconduct. But, through faith in Jesus, if we put our trust in Him for salvation, the Righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. In other words, the holy work and life of the Lord Jesus is put to our account, as if we had been blameless, as if we had been without sin, as if we had walked as consistently all our days as the precious Jesus did. His righteousness is imputed to us, and by that alone forgiveness is to be obtained-putting our trust in Him, seeing Him hanging on the cross, shedding His blood as the Sinbearer, Who made an atonement for our sins, and through Whom alone we can obtain reconciliation.

"As we forgive our debtors." This is particularly to be noticed. If anyone has offended us, transgressed against us, behaved improperly towards us, are we ready to forgive? Are we habitually forgiving? Even if it should occur many times, yet if the individual who offends us, and behaves improperly towards us, makes confession, we are to be ready to forgive, and, supposing this to be done, it is stated, "As we forgive our debtors." Here I would particularly mention that we are not warranted to expect answers to our prayers if we are not acting according to this. I judge that this often and often is a hindrance to obtaining answers to our prayers, because we cultivate an unforgiving spirit, we are not ready to forgive those who have offended us and behaved improperly toward us. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," that should be true of us.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Our weakness, our helplessness, our nothingness remain, as long as we are in the body, and we shall be liable to temptation, and exposed to temptation. The Lord Jesus Christ found this. It may be in our case, as it was with Him, that for a season the tempter leaves us. For a season he may not specially seek to overpower us, but it will be only for a season, he will come again. That, however, is only one side of the truth; and the other side of the truth is this, that God is ready to succour and help His children. All through their pilgrimage, if they only own their weakness and come to Him and seek His assistance, He is ready to help. Our prayer,

therefore, is to be this; that God, in the riches of His grace, would allow us no more to be tempted than is absolutely needful for the glory of His Name, and to become more and more acquainted with His power, with His love, and His readiness to appear on our behalf.

Then it is added, "But deliver us from evil." That more especially means the devil himself; "from the evil one, the wicked one, deliver us." For it is he who is the source of evil, and the greatest evil, since it is he who has such craftiness, and is continually ready to get an advantage over us. Therefore, above all, our prayer should be this: "Deliver us from the wicked one, the evil one, the devil; allow him not to get an advantage over us;" and this prayer is to be uttered from the heart, to the very last moment of our earthly pilgrimage. We never get into that state that we are so perfectly holy, so perfectly sinless, so perfectly Christ-like, as that the devil can never get an advantage over us. Oh, let us seek to enter into it! I tell you my own experience in this very thing is this: I distrust myself more than ever, I own before God more than ever my own weakness and helplessness, and I have continually cried to God to keep me from the craftiness and the deceit of the wicked one, for were I left to myself, aged as I am, and long as I have walked in the ways of God, and in some little degree also in the fear of God, to His honour and glory, in love and holiness-yet with all this, were I left to myself my life would end just as Asa's did. For thirty years he had glorified God greatly; but in the last two years of his life he dishonoured God deeply. So, on account of my own weakness, my prayer continually is, "Lord, grant that I may finish my course with joy, and not to the shame and dishonour of Thy Holy Name."

"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." These words bring before us "the Why" to expect answers to our prayers. The Kingdom is the Lord's, He, therefore, is able to do it. He is the Mighty One, the Powerful One. "Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." Thou, O God, art not changing, there is no variation found in Thee. Thou art able to succour us. This is still further confirmed by the word "Amen." Yes! So it shall be. In this evil world we shall greatly cheer ourselves and comfort ourselves by this very statement here, "Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen." Oh, how precious the prospect, that we do not speak into the air, but that we speak to the loving heart of God Almighty, Who can do everything and Who is willing on behalf of His children to do everything that is for their real blessing in Christ.

Now, in the next and last two verses, we have that which I have already referred to. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Here we see that not only are we not warranted in expecting answers to our prayers if we do not forgive our fellow-men, when they have offended against us, and have done things which are improper; but also we shall lose the knowledge and the enjoyment which springs from the consciousness of the forgiveness of our own sins. It is plainly stated, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And I believe that in this we have the secret why in our day there are found so many true children of God whose life and deportment indicate that they are believers in Christ, but who yet do not enjoy the forgiveness of their sins. In the case of not a few we have reason to believe it originates from there being something in their mind which they seem to be unable to pass over regarding offences they have suffered from others, and that they have not forgive. If this is the case they cannot wonder why they do not themselves enjoy the knowledge of the forgiveness of their own sins.

Now, this little portion on which we have been meditating says to us afresh, "What an unspeakably blessed thing it is to be a child of God." Thus I have found it during the past seventy-one years and five months that I have been a believer in the Lord Jesus! Oh, I cannot express to any who are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ what they lost by staying away from Him! There are so many who suppose that to become a Christian is a wretched and miserable thing, that to become a believer in Christ and to give the heart to the Lord Jesus shuts us out from life, from everything, and from every particle of enjoyment. A false notion altogether. The very reverse, the very reverse is the case! I repeat what I have said more than once, that with all my might, as a young man under twenty, I sought happiness in the things of this world, and I had the opportunity of finding it if it could be found in this way at all. I was passionately fond of the theatre; I was fond of the ballroom; at the card table, at the billiard table, and in all kinds of worldly societies I was found, and at the head of them very frequently as a leader; but instead of finding real, true happiness it was nothing but disappointment that I met with continually. At last I thought, "Oh, if only I could travel a great deal, how happy that would make me!" God allowed me to taste this. I travelled forty-three days in succession, day by day, day by day. I saw the most beautiful scenery to be seen under heaven; but after six weeks I became so sick of travelling that I could pass the most beautiful scenery without even looking at it. Five weeks after I found Jesus, I found my Heavenly Friend, and the very first evening I was lying peacefully on my bed as a forgiven sinner, in peace with God. I blessed and praised Him for it. And without having to say to me, "Now it must be out with the theatre, it must be out with the card table, it must be out with the ballroom" - without anyone speaking to me a word, for I had not seen a single Christian to converse with, that was a settled matter.

I was regenerated now, born again, having obtained spiritual life after I had been twenty years and five weeks dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore, I say, without anyone saying a single word to me, it was a settled matter that my whole life must be changed and altered. And thus it was; and what has been the result? I became instantly a very happy young

man, and I have been a happy man in middle-aged years, and I am a happy man, yes, an exceedingly happy man, greatly advanced as I am now in years. O, "If all the world my Jesus knew, All the world would love Him too."

But it is because the unconverted think it is a miserable thing to come to Christ that they stay away from Him. The truth is this: That only, only, only through faith in the Lord Jesus can real, true happiness be obtained. Therefore, any who have put this to themselves and stayed away from Christ, let them do so no longer, let them own that they are sinners, deserving nothing but punishment, and put their trust alone in Jesus for the salvation of their souls, and the result will be that they will obtain peace and joy in God, even as I found it when I was brought to Christ. May God grant that this may speak to the hearts of those who as yet have been going on thoughtlessly and carelessly and unconcerned about the things of Heaven.

The Lost Sheep, The Lost Piece of Silver, The Prodigal Son

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol on Sunday evening, 4th July 1897

(The only sermon ever preached by Mr Müller on the Parable of the Prodigal Son)

LUKE XV

We will read the whole chapter, and on some of the verses we will meditate, as the Lord may help us. "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." This is particularly to be noticed. Two classes especially sought to hear the Lord Jesus – "sinners", that is, notorious sinners, who lived in gross immorality, and who came because they wanted something for their souls; and "publicans", those officers who were noted for defrauding those with whom they had to do. These two classes, particularly, came by reason of their spiritual wants. "And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying 'this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them'". These individuals were self-righteous persons, who had, generally speaking, a very high opinion of themselves, who thought themselves far better than others, and who looked down upon other classes of persons, especially on the publicans and on those who were known as notorious sinners. On this account, because they were self-righteous, they murmured. If they had really been God-fearing persons, they would have rejoiced that these "publicans and sinners" sought to hear the Lord Jesus, because there was the prospect of their being benefited through hearing Him.

But self-righteousness is connected with pride and high-mindedness, and so they murmured and said, "This man receiveth sinners". So He does! And if He did not, we should all be lost. Salvation would not be possible if the Lord Jesus Christ did not "receive sinners", because all human beings since Adam and Eve belong to a fallen race, all were unfit to save themselves, all were not in a state of getting to Heaven, except they obtained a substitute on their account, and that Substitute was the Lord Jesus Christ. And instead of rejoicing that the Lord Jesus received sinners, the Scribes and Pharisees murmured. They were dissatisfied, whereas they ought to have been grateful. For all their good opinions about themselves, they needed a Saviour as much as these publicans.

"And He spake this parable unto them." How came it that the Lord Jesus spake this parable to them? Because He knew what was passing in their hearts, and in what state they were. "He spake this parable unto them, saying 'What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing, and when he cometh home he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.''" By this shepherd is represented our Lord Jesus Christ, the "Great Shepherd of the sheep", the "Chief Shepherd", and the love which He has to poor sinners is set forth in the parable. When we, who are believers in Christ, look at ourselves, we are compelled to say, "This is just my case; my Lord Jesus Christ has been looking after me in the past of my life, in a variety of ways, seeking me, caring about my soul, and leaving me not until He has found me". Is not this the case with every one of us? We had cared nothing about God, we went our own way, we sought to please ourselves, to gratify ourselves, one in this way, another in that way; one in "the pride of life", another in "the lust of the eyes", and another in "the lust of the flesh". But in whatever way we sought joy and happiness, it was in a way which was contrary to the mind of God; and the Lord Jesus Christ knocked at our heart's door in a variety of ways, by this trial, by that trial; by this disappointment, by that disappointment; by this loss, by that loss; and so He sought after us, and gave us not up until He had brought us to Himself.

Further, the one lost sheep is here particularly dwelt on, not that the others were not also loved and cared for; but so great is the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to any and every poor sinner who as yet does not know Him, that He goes on seeking, seeking, seeking, till He has found him. O, how precious! Now there may be two or three, peradventure even more, here present regarding whom this is the case. I have reason to believe that it is God's special purpose that I should bring this chapter before some such. It is most remarkable that while I have preached tens of thousands of times within the last seventy-one years, in the case of this *particular chapter*, which is so often spoken about, and from which

so frequently texts are taken, *I have never once before in my life preached!* I call it a very remarkable circumstance. Yesterday, again and again I bowed my knees before the Lord to teach me what subject I should speak about this evening. I had no subject laid on my heart. Even during the night, while I was awake, I asked God to guide and direct me. I had no text when I got up. Then, before the meeting this morning, I again and again asked God to show me on what I should preach tonight. No text yet, and this afternoon again I cried to God to teach me, when all at once this passage was impressed on my mind.

Now, I reckon this to be a remarkable circumstance. The many scores of times that I have read this portion, at least one hundred and fifty times, since my conversion, without having been led to speak upon it, is an indication in my own mind that God means to knock, by the power of His Spirit, at the heart of some one or other here present. Now, let such who as yet know not the Lord Jesus Christ say to themselves, "Is Mr Müller directed to this chapter for my sake? Does it not become me to pay attention? Is not the Lord by His Spirit knocking at my heart, through the instrumentality of this chapter, and is it not high time that I surrender my heart to Him, that I own that I am a sinner, that I acknowledge before God in prayer that I deserve nothing but punishment, and that I began to put my trust alone in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, because He fulfilled the commandments which I have broken times without number, and bore the punishment in order that I might escape?" Thus those here present, who as yet know not the Lord, Jesus is going after you, my fellow-sinner, in order to save you. That is the reason. If He wished that you should be destroyed, He would let you alone and care nothing at all about you; but this is the very reverse regarding the Lord Jesus. He delights to save sinners, and, therefore, He goes after them until He finds them.

Then see the tenderness of this precious Saviour. "When He hath found it He layeth it on His shoulders." Just think what this figure means. That the sheep might not be troubled or hurt by walking, that all the danger in the way might count as nothing, He carries the sheep. O, the love of this Saviour! The tenderness of His heart is brought afresh before us in this parable. Then, further, He does this rejoicing, *rejoicing*. Though the sinner may not care about his sin, yet not merely does the Saviour seek after the sinner; but when He finally finds him, and brings him to Himself, He does so rejoicing, because it is the delight of his heart to make us happy, and He knows that while we are going our own way, we cannot possibly be happy.

"And when he cometh home he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost'. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." Here we find something particularly to be noticed. "Joy in heaven," on the part of the redeemed, on the part of the holy, unfallen angels; all the hosts in heaven rejoicing when they hear that another soul has been won for our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, any here present who are as yet strangers to this great salvation, will you not give joy to Jesus by surrendering your heart to God? Will you not give joy in heaven to the elect angels, the holy angels, and to the redeemed by yielding your heart to the Lord Jesus?

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost'. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

"And He said, 'A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me;" and he divided unto them his living [that is, his possession]. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want; and he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.'" This younger son asked his father to give him the property which, in the case of the death of the parent, was coming to him; to give it to him while he (the father) was yet living. Now, the father was not obliged to do this, but he did it, showing real, true love to the son.

But how did the son treat him, as soon as he was in possession? Without waiting any length of time, only a few days, after he had come into the possession of the property, "he gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country". Going away from his father, from his *kind* father, from his *loving* father. And *that* is just the way in which we, in our unconverted state, treat God. We do not abide in His presence. We cannot bear His presence, because naturally we are wicked; we go our own way; we wish to please ourselves; we wish to do the things which are hateful to God. And because of this we *leave Him*, and go from Him.

Then, after he had left his father, and gone into a far country, this son, having now no one to look after him, to care about him, and to admonish him, "wasted his substance with riotous living", just carrying out his natural evil propensities to the utmost. "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want." Now, the description which is given here brings before us, spiritually, the real, true condition – the miserable, wretched condition – in which we are as long as we are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinner, who is not a believer,

is to the very utmost in spiritual want; he has no Father in heaven, he has no Saviour, he has no Holy Spirit dwelling in him and he is not admonished by the Word of God, because he cares nothing at all about that Word, he has no fellowship with the children of God. All this is wanting, and, therefore, he is really and truly spiritually in want, though he may have plenty of money, plenty of worldly friends, plenty of the possessions of this life.

“And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country.” Now, what does the citizen of that country do for him? He does not say, “O, my friend, I have much feeling for you; come to my house and live with me, and share with me everything that I have; I will try to make you as comfortable as I can!” Nothing of the kind. The description here given brings before us the wretchedness, the misery, the real, true wretchedness and misery we feel as long as we are without Christ. The citizen sends him into his fields to feed swine. Naturally, irrespective of his being an Israelite, a most wretched occupation this, “to feed swine”, but to him, who was born an Israelite, it was doubly and trebly and tenfold a trial. Therefore, I say, this brings before us the wretchedness and misery in which the sinner is as long as he is without Christ. Then, further, we read, “He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat”. This, the most miserable and wretched food, the food of unclean animals, this he would have gladly eaten, if he could have had it, but he could not. “No man gave unto him.”

Now comes the turning point. “And when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!’” “When he came to himself;” that is, pondered his ways. He saw then what had befallen him, in consequence of the manner in which he had been acting towards his father by leaving him and wasting his property in the way he had. “He came to himself.” Now, I affectionately ask all here present, “Have we individually, without an exception, come to ourselves?” By the grace of God, I have come to myself, and by the grace of God, there are many scores here present who have come to themselves; they have pondered their ways, they have seen that they are sinners; they have found out that if they continued in the way in which they were going on, it would have ended in misery and wretchedness for ever and ever. And if that is not to be the case, we all must come to ourselves, and the sooner we do so the better. Therefore, again I ask affectionately this question, “Have we individually come to ourselves? Have we individually found out the evil way in which we are going on? And that, if we continue in this state, it must end in perdition, in wretchedness and misery to the end?” “When he came to himself, he said, ‘How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.’”

Now, to some such decision we have to come; we have not merely to ponder and consider our ways, but we have to decide to forsake them, to come to God, to humble ourselves before Him, to own that we are sinners, that we deserve nothing but punishment, and then to put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. This is the way in which we have to act, and this is the way which will bring blessing to the soul. “I will arise,” he says, “and go to my father.” So must we say to ourselves. And he not merely purposed to do it, but he actually did do it. That is the special point we have to notice in the 20th verse, “And he arose, and came to his father.” He did not say, “I am shabbily dressed, I am so wretchedly miserable, I am ashamed to go to my father.” Nothing of the sort. “My sins have been too great, and too many, and too varied; therefore, I am ashamed to go to him.” No, conscious of all this in himself, “he arose, and came to his father”.

Thus we have actually to turn to God, and the result of it will be blessedness, eternal blessedness and happiness; and the reception that we shall meet with on the part of our Father, our Heavenly Father, will be of the most loving, tender character. “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” This brings before us the heart of our Heavenly Father, for if an earthly father would act in that way, by reason of his love to a son, O, how much more abundantly would this be true regarding our Heavenly Father in His love to us poor sinners. The father did not say, “This, my son, has given me great sorrow, great trouble, I have wept many times on his account. Now, I will let him who has given me such sorrow come to me; I will not go a step to meet him.” Nothing of the kind. “When he saw him yet a great way off, he had compassion on him, and ran.” O, think of this! How it brings before us the heart of God. “And fell on his neck, and kissed him.” Before the son who had given him such sorrow, such pain, and had so deeply wounded him, had uttered a single word, he fell on his neck, and kissed him. O, how precious! All this brings before us our Heavenly Father; all these figures tell us of what we have in God, and what we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“And the son said unto him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry, for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again, he was lost and is found’ and they began to be merry.” Not a single word of reproof, but love, love, love, the manifestation of love. And nothing but a manifestation of love is what we meet with from our Heavenly Father in reference to ourselves. That is what we are taught by this parable, and in the figures which are used. “The father said to his servants, ‘Bring forth the best robe.’” The best robe that was to be had in the house, that was in his possession – *that* was put on him. Now we have also, spiritually, the best robe put on us – “The Robe of Righteousness”. All they

who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ from the moment that they do so, are no more looked on by God as they are in themselves, but as they are in Christ, for He in our room and stead fulfilled the law of God, and *this* becomes “the best robe” that we could have. The filthy rags of our own righteousness are removed, and this best robe, the comeliness of Christ, the perfection of Jesus, the justification we have through faith in Him, is put on us.

“And put a ring on his hand.” Gave it to him, indicating *what we receive* as believers in Christ. We obtain the Spirit. Thus are we regenerated, born again, become the children of God, and, as such, the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. O, what precious things are given to us by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ! “And shoes on his feet.” When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and return spiritually to our Heavenly Father, we obtain not merely full forgiveness for all our numberless transgressions, but we also obtain the help that we require to walk to the praise, and honour, and glory of God, which is set forth by the shoes on our feet, for the way is rough and difficult. But we obtain help from God to be able to walk in it.

“And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.” This also is particularly to be noticed – the joy that we can give to God Himself. Though He is the Almighty God, and the Infinitely Wise One, yet we can give joy even to Him, by turning from our evil ways and going back to Him. And this is set forth by the fatted calf being killed, and all eating and making merry rejoicing, because the lost son had been brought back. “For this, my son, was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found; and they began to be merry.” Now, this very evening, some can thus give great joy to God by surrendering their hearts to Him, by owning that they are sinners, that they deserve nothing but punishment, and by putting their trust now, simply and solely, in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Thus they can give joy to the heart of God, and joy to the heart of the Lord Jesus, and joy to the Spirit; and joy to the holy angels and the redeemed in glory.

“Now, his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing; and he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant, and he said unto him, ‘Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound;’ and he was angry and would not go in. Therefore came his father out and intreated him.” Precious! Precious! O, what a heart is found in *Him*! For this again sets forth the heart of God! The tenderness, the loveliness, the kindness, on the part of this earthly father represents to us, in figure, what we, who are believers in Christ, have obtained in God. The brother was a self-righteous person, and behaved shamefully. Because his brother had lived in open sin, he considered himself far superior to him, and hated him – for it is nothing but a real, true hatred that is manifested here. “And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing,” and on receiving the answer as to what it meant, he was angry. Just manifesting the same kind of spirit as the prophet Jonah, when Nineveh not being destroyed as he wished it, was angry, was displeased with God.

And now hear how the father dealt with his elder son. Because that son was angry, on account of the manner in which his brother had been received, “He would not go in”. O, what a sad state of heart! It shows to us what it is to be in a self-righteous condition. It is one of the most pernicious things we could fall into. “Therefore came his father out, and intreated him.” O, the loveliness of such a father! “And he answering said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.’” He was, indeed, at this very moment transgressing his father’s commandment, because his father wished him to go in, and he would not! “And yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; but as soon as this, thy son, was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.’ And he said unto him, ‘Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.’” In other words, “There is a different state of things between thee and thy brother; thy brother was considered as being dead, as being lost, and that we should never see him again, but ‘thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine’. I am not merely willing to give to thee a kid, but I am willing to give thee ever so much. If thou hadst asked me, thou wouldst have known how willing I was to give thee a kid.”

“It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this, thy brother, was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.” That is the reason why they were so joyous, because it was considered he was dead, that he was lost. Now, what will be the end of our meditation? The Holy Spirit has been knocking at the hearts of some, and the Lord Jesus Christ is standing before them now, and says, “Will you not let Me in? I am your Friend, I love you tenderly, I wish to do you good, and to make you very, very happy, not merely for a time, but for eternity, if you will only have Me, if you will only let Me come into your heart!” Now, what is your reply?

Any here present who have not the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in them, will you not surrender your heart to the Lord? O, come! Come! Come to Him! Come to Him! I know, from my own experience, the wretchedness and misery that are got by walking in the ways of this world. I sought happiness in the things of this life; but I never found it! Never! Never! All that I met with was disappointment and increased guilt on the conscience; but at last, in the riches of the grace of God, I found Jesus, and immediately I became a happy young man, and I have now been a happy man seventy-one years and eight months. And this happiness which I have received through surrendering my heart to Him, I do not wish to keep to myself; I delight that others might have the same blessing, and, therefore, I speak as I do. Be sure of

this, all who know not Jesus, that real, true happiness can only be found through faith in Christ. This world cannot give it. Nothing that we can have in this present world can afford us real, true, lasting happiness. That is alone to be found through faith in Christ. Therefore, let no one put it off to the last, but come to Jesus now!

The Mighty God

An Address delivered at the Annual Conference of Christians at Clifton, October 4th, 1870

The topic suggested for consideration at this day's Conference was, - "The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." - Ps. lxxii. 7; Isa. ix. 6; John xvi. 33.

All who are acquainted, by God's grace, with our Lord Jesus Christ, have not a particle of doubt that the two verses read to us (Isa. ix. 6, 7), refer to Him. We have in them brought before us both the humanity and the divinity of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ; and we, the disciples of the Lord Jesus, should hold fast both the true humanity and the true divinity of our adorable Lord. We have to seek practically, day by day, to enter into the truth, that He who is at the right hand of the Father - the ascended living Lord Jesus Christ - is, in the presence of God, still the God-Man. He is our Brother in the presence of God. But that blessed One, who is our Saviour, at the same time is not only truly man, but is really and truly God, as fully as is the Father; and of this truth, that He is very Man and very God - the God-Man - we have to seek to remind ourselves continually. For there will come a time when we shall need to remember the truth in both these aspects - His true humanity and His true divinity. I would say to any who are not aware of it, that about 750 years before the incarnation of our adorable Lord, the Holy Ghost, by Isaiah, made the statement contained in the two verses referred to. How this in itself is calculated to refresh our hearts, and strengthen us in the belief that this blessed Book, the Bible, is the Word of the living God! Who declared on the first of July, 1870, that in a very short time Napoleon III would be a prisoner? Who wrote it? Who said it? Who was assured about it? But God knew it. And so with regard to the incarnation of our adorable Lord Jesus. It was clearly and distinctly revealed by the Holy Ghost hundreds of years before it took place.

How full of comfort is the word "Counsellor," as applied to our Lord. We shall find ourselves, in our course heavenwards, again and again in positions when we particularly need counsel and advice. Now the blessed Lord Jesus, - our Brother, our Friend, our Saviour, our Lord, our God, - sustains the office of the Counsellor to His Church, and to His individual disciples. To myself, I ought to say, when in perplexing circumstances, "Oh! let me lie on the bosom of the Lord Jesus." To Him let me pray, "Thy poor servant knows not how to act, knows not what to do, but Thou art the Counsellor of Thy people, now prove Thyself in my own happy experience my Counsellor!" What would be the result? As assuredly as we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ with regard to this His office, and as assuredly as we give ourselves to prayer, and seek, by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of the written word, to obtain counsel of Him, so assuredly we shall obtain it.

Then, when in weakness as to the outward man, or in weakness spiritually, in any difficulty, in any trial, or any sorrow, when we are in the hour of temptation, needing special help, how blessed to remember "the Mighty God," to remember He is the mighty God. There is no question as to this being the meaning of it. Every word is here honestly translated. The greatest Hebrew scholars, though rationalists, were constrained to acknowledge that that was the meaning, and they have translated the words thus. How full they are of comfort! He, my Friend, my Lord, my Saviour, my Bridegroom, is the mighty God. I am perfect weakness, I cannot stand against my enemies, I am helpless. Oh, how weak, how extremely weak am I in myself! But if I cling to the mighty God, if I exercise faith in my precious Redeemer, the mighty God, He is able and willing to help me. He proved the depth of His love to me by laying down His life for me, a miserable guilty sinner. He, our best Friend, our bosom Friend, is at the same time the mighty God. Oh! let us cling to the mighty God.

How full of comfort are the words, "The Everlasting Father." As they have been referred to by previous speakers, I need not enlarge. Yet how full of comfort! While all things change here below, the precious Jesus, our Friend, is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." What He was millions of years since, He is now. What He was when He walked through Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, He is now - His heart full of tenderness, of pity, of compassion. Oh, how patient, how loving, how gracious! Oh, what a lovely Being Jesus is! When I saw the notice of these Conference meetings, I was particularly refreshed by the remembrance of this, - that Jesus will be the theme again of our meetings. I have been privileged to attend everyone of these evening meetings during the eight years they have been held, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, has been the theme of every meeting. Well, now, beloved fellow-disciples, it should be Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, more practically and experimentally in our closets, in our walk, in our labour, in our service, and day by day our hearts should be occupied with Jesus, and especially the friendship of Jesus should be cultivated by us increasingly. When trials, difficulties, and sorrows come, we should remember we have the self-same Jesus now as ready to comfort and encourage us as He did the disciples more than 1800 years since; and quite as ready as He was then to prove Himself our Friend, our Helper, our Comforter. We should say, "Now, Lord Jesus, since Thou art 'the same yesterday, and today, and for ever,' and since it is written, Thou hast 'the tongue of the learned' to 'know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary;' give me a word in season to comfort me; Thou art willing, now comfort me, Thy poor servant, for I am weary; Thou art ever the same, and since Thou art as willing to comfort now as Thou wast when in Judea, in Samaria, and Galilee, now comfort me Thy poor servant." Thus should we prove Jesus practically and experimentally to be our bosom Friend. And we should seek to couple with the experience, that He is our bosom Friend, the fact that He is the Mighty God, and ever the same. If all my friends fail, this precious Jesus remains, and He

will never forsake, He will never grow weary, He will ever care for me. How full of comfort is this! Let us enter into what God, in the riches of His grace, has been pleased to provide for us in Jesus. There is reality in these things. God brings this precious truth before us, that we may be sustained and comforted. And if practically and experimentally we lean on the arm of Christ, it shall be yet seen in these last days how happy the disciples of the Lord Jesus may be, though everything may be dark and gloomy, though they are in the midst of difficulties and trial. Not only this - we may even be strong in the Lord; and whilst we cannot be apostles, we may aim after the grace of apostles. Though we never attain to it, it would be a holy aim, and God would be pleased with it. In ourselves we are perfect weakness; yet the Holy Ghost is in the Church, and dwells in every individual believer, and we have the written word, and Jesus our bosom Friend; and therefore if we pour out our hearts before God, in the midst of all our difficulties and trials, what strength may we not get to our souls? Let us live on Jesus, beloved in Christ.

Further: Jesus is "the Prince of Peace." I do not dwell on those points of this subject on which the brethren have already spoken; but there is one aspect I will refer to, and that is the bright and blessed prospect with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when Himself shall put aside war, Himself shall take the power and reign, and all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Christ of God; when the blessed Jesus will come, not in the character in which He came before, but "as the King in His beauty." How the heart, with joyful anticipation, should look forward to the day when He will come and reign, and take the power to Himself, and subdue everything that is contrary to Himself. This is the bright and blessed prospect before us, and most blessed with regard to our own hearts now. He will subdue in us individually everything contrary to His own blessed mind. The Lord Jesus will have His own blessed mind to the full seen in us. Precious, bright, glorious the prospect! After waiting yet a little while, we shall see Jesus as He is, and be made like Him.

But are we regenerated? There is no such thing as being made like Jesus, unless we are first born again, by believing the gospel, by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. There is no such thing as making progress in the heavenly life, except we first believe the truth of the gospel and rest our souls for salvation on the Lord Jesus Christ. As there may be a few here present who are not yet believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, let me affectionately ask such, - Do you know Jesus? Do you believe in Him? Do you simply, solely, entirely, rest on what He did to save sinners? Every other foundation is a sandy foundation. You cannot be saved unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one name alone given, - through Jesus our Lord, by faith in His name, alone is there salvation. Therefore, if any here present do not believe, let me entreat and beseech them to lay these things to heart. Forsake the false ways, do not seek to work out your own salvation by trusting in your own merit or works, or by supposing that reading the Bible or going to a place of worship will save your souls. I commend the one way of salvation to you - trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Pass sentence upon yourselves as sinners; condemn yourselves; and as guilty sinners, deserving nothing but punishment, put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. If you do this, then assuredly God, for Christ's sake, will forgive you. Though you be the greatest, the oldest, the most hardened sinner; though you have sinned again and again against light and knowledge; if you now trust in Christ, you will, for His sake, be forgiven; for there is power in the blood of Christ to take away the greatest sins. The most hardened sinner, instantly when he believes, by God, for Christ's sake, is accepted, and treated as if he had never sinned at all. He who believes, obtains full, free, and eternal forgiveness for all his numberless transgressions. Then begins love to God who gave Jesus, and love to Jesus who gave Himself. And then the soul says, "What can I render to God for His unspeakable gift, and to my precious Lord Jesus for giving Himself?" Then the soul begins to seek to be more like Jesus Christ. The more we become acquainted with Jesus and with ourselves, the more we seek to be like that blessed One. After this, let us, fellow-believers, more and more aim. "The world is passing away, and the fashion thereof." We have but one life to spend here, and that a very brief one; and after our conversion our one great object in this evil world should be to seek to manifest the mind of Jesus. And then, with regard to our fellow-believers, we are to love one another. Disciples should love one another, notwithstanding all the weaknesses and infirmities we see in one another. For Christ's sake should we do it, because it is the will of that blessed One. Therefore let us aim after this; and the more we can thus manifest the mind of Jesus, the greater will be the honour which we obtain for Him.

The Prayer-Hearing God

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." - Matt. vii. 7, 8.

Our Heavenly Father loves all His children with infinite love; that is, He loves every one, even the feeblest and weakest of his children, with the self-same love with which He loves His only begotten Son. On account of this infinite love - knowing how great, how many, how varied, nay how numberless would be their trials, their difficulties, their afflictions, their temptations, while passing through this vale of tears - He, in His grace, made abundant provision in giving most precious and encouraging promises concerning prayer; so that if they would take their trials, difficulties, afflictions and temptations to their Heavenly Father, seeking His strength, His counsel, and His guidance, and acting according to the loving counsel and advice given in the Scriptures - "Casting all your care upon Him" - the position of most of the children of God would be very different from what it is.

Then again, our precious Lord Jesus Christ loves us with the self-same love with which the Father loves Him. Do we all believe it?

The former statement, that the Father loves His children with the self-same love with which He loves His only begotten Son, and what I now state, that the Lord Jesus Christ loves us with the self-same love – that is, with infinite love – and that with this love He loves the feeblest and weakest of His children, possibly may appear strange to some of you. Yet this is the statement of Holy writ as found in the 9th verse of the 15th of John, and the 23rd verse of the 17th of John. Our precious Lord Jesus Christ who loves us with such love, passed through difficulties, trials, and temptations, like unto ours, while He was in this world. He was looked down upon; He was despised; that Blessed One “had not where to lay His head”; and was, while in this world, “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Knowing the position of His disciples in this world, He has given the precious promise which I have read on the subject of prayer, and if it is made good use of, we may have Him as the burden-bearer, ever ready to help in time of sorrow, weakness and affliction - in a word, in all the variety of position and circumstances in which we are found here in the body.

Had it been left to us to make promises regarding prayer, I do not know that you or I could have done more than say, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” Yet, while the promise is so full, so deep, so broad, so precious in every way, we have here – as becomes us with other parts of the Word of God – to compare Scripture, with Scripture, because in other parts additions are made, or conditions given, which, if we neglect, will hinder our getting the full benefit of prayer. I judge we have not to lose sight of the passage in I John, 5th chapter, 14th to 15th verses – “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.”

Here is the first point specially to be noticed regarding prayer – “If we ask anything according to His will He heareth us, and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.” If, therefore, we pray, and desire to have our petitions granted, it becomes us first to see to it that we ask for things according to his mind and will; for our blessing and happiness are intimately connected with the holiness of God. Suppose there were living in Bristol a person who had long carried on a business, who was known by those intimately acquainted with him to be an idle person, one who shrinks from work; or, whenever he can, gets out of it, and seeks to have an easy time of it. Suppose such a person had heard of the promises about prayer, and should say – “Now I will try if these things are true, and I will ask God to give me £100,000 sterling, and then I can give myself easy days, I can travel about and enjoy myself.” Suppose he prays every day for this large sum of money, will he obtain it? Assuredly not! Why not? He does not ask for it that he may help the poor abundantly; that he may contribute to the work of God more liberally, but he asks that he may spend his life in idleness, and in enjoying the pleasures of the world. He is not asking for things according to the mind of God, and therefore, however long or earnestly he may pray, he will not get the answer. We are only warranted in expecting our prayers to be answered when we ask for things according to the mind of God.

The second point we should notice is, that we do not ask on account of our own goodness or merit, but, as the Scripture expresses it – “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” I refer you to John xiv. 13, 14, - “And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” The statement is given twice, in order to show the great importance of this truth; for whenever a saying is given twice in the Word of God, we may be sure a weighty and important subject is brought before us. What does this statement, given twice by the Lord Jesus Christ, mean? If we desire to go to Heaven, how shall we get there? On the ground of our own goodness, merit or worthiness? Because we are not so bad as others? Because we go regularly to a place of worship? Because we give a little to the poor? In this way assuredly no one will get to Heaven. It is quite right to go to a place of worship. It is quite right that of the abundance God gives we should contribute to the poor. It is quite right that we should act according to morality. But in this way a poor sinner cannot get to Heaven. We must see our lost and ruined condition by nature, and that we deserve nothing but punishment. The best person in this congregation, in this city, in the United Kingdom, or in the whole world, is a sinner deserving punishment. Never since the fall of Adam has a single person, by his own goodness, obtained Heaven.

Under the old dispensation there was need to look forward to the Messiah, and since the old covenant dispensation has ceased there is need to look back upon the Messiah, Who, in our stead, suffered the punishment due to us, while hanging on the cross and shedding His blood. All our guilt was transferred to Him, that His righteousness might be transferred to us. And now a sinner – thought the oldest and the vilest wretch, under Heaven, as assuredly as he puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be forgiven, shall be cleansed, shall be justified – that is, shall be reckoned righteous and just through this his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul. In this way the sinner gets to heaven – by faith in Jesus for the salvation of his soul.

As by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall stand before God at the last, so it is now in approaching unto God in prayer. If we desire to have our petitions answered, we must come to Him, not in our own name, but as sinners who trust in Jesus, who by faith in His name are united to the blessed risen Lord; who have become, through trusting in Him, members of that body of which He is the Head. Let none suppose they are good enough in themselves. I deserve nothing but hell. For fifty-four years and nine months, by God’s grace, I have walked in the fear of God, and by His

grace have lived such a life that no one can point to me and say I am a hypocrite, or charge me with living in any sin. Yet if I have what I deserve, I could expect nothing but hell. I deserve nothing but hell. So precisely with all of you, and the very best and holiest persons that can be found. Therefore on the ground of our goodness we cannot expect to have our prayers answered. But Jesus is worthy, and for His sake we may have our prayers answered. There is nothing too choice, too costly, or too great for God to give to Him. He is worthy. He is the spotless, holy child, Who under all circumstances acted according to the mind of God. And if we trust in Him, if we hide in Him, if we put Him forward, and ourselves in the background, depend on Him and plead His name, we may expect to have our prayers answered. Some one may say "I have prayed through long years for my unconverted children, but they have not yet been converted. I feel I shall not have my prayers answered. I am so unworthy." This is a mistake. The promises are particularly for such – for the weak, for the feeblest, for the ignorant, for the needy; and all such who ask for Christ's sake are warranted to expect their prayers to be answered.

But if it means "I live in sin, I go on habitually in an evil course," the prayer cannot be answered, for in the sixty-sixth Psalm we read, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." That is, if I live in sin, and go on in a course hateful to God, I may not expect my prayers to be answered.

A third condition is, that we exercise faith in the power and willingness of God to answer our prayers. This is deeply important. In Mark xi. 24, we read, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." "What things soever ye desire" – of whatever kind – "believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." I have found invariably, in the fifty-four years and nine months during which I have been a believer, that if I only believed I was sure to get, in God's time, the thing I asked for. I would especially lay this on your heart that you exercise faith in the power and willingness of God to answer your requests. We must believe that God is able and willing. To see that He is able, you have only to look at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; for having raised Him from the dead, He must have almighty power. As to the love of God, you have only to look to the cross of Christ, and see His love in not sparing His Son, in not withholding His only begotten Son from death. With these proofs of the power and love of God, assuredly, if we believe, we shall receive – we shall obtain.

Suppose now we ask, firstly, for such things as are according to the mind of God, and only such things can be good for us; secondly that we expect answers on the ground of the merit and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, asking in His name; and thirdly, that we exercise faith in the power and willingness of our Heavenly Father to grant our requests; then fourthly, we have to continue patiently waiting on God till the blessing we seek is granted. For observe, nothing is said in the text as to the time in which, or the circumstances under which, the prayer is to be answered. "Ask, and it shall be given to you." There is a positive promise, but nothing as to the time. "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We have, therefore, patiently and quietly to continue waiting on God till the blessing is granted. Some one may say, "Is it necessary I should bring a matter before God two, three, five, or even twenty times; is it not enough I tell Him once?" We might as well say there is no need to tell Him once, for He knows beforehand what our need is. He wants us to prove that we have confidence in Him, that we take our place as creatures towards the Creator.

Moreover, we are never to lose sight of the fact that there may be particular reasons why prayer may not at once be answered. One reason may be the need for the exercise of our faith, for by exercise faith is strengthened. We all know that if our faith were not exercised it would remain as it was at first. By the trial it is strengthened. Another reason may be that we may glorify God by the manifestation of patience. This is a grace by which God is greatly magnified. Our manifestation of patience glorifies God. There may be another reason. Our heart may not yet be prepared for the answer to our prayer. I will give an illustration. Suppose that three weeks ago a lad of sixteen years of age had been brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that with his heart full of love to the Lord he wanted to do something for the Lord. And suppose he goes to the Superintendent of the Sunday School, and says – "Will you have the kindness to give me a class to teach?" A class of nine children is given him. Now this dear lad, whose heart is full of love to the Lord begins to pray that God would convert these nine children. He prays in private and before them, and also exhorts them to seek the Lord. After going home from his class he gives himself earnestly to prayer that God would convert these nine children. On Monday he repeats his request before God, and so day by day during the week and on Sunday again particularly; and then he goes to his class and expects that these nine children will be converted. He finds, however, they are not, but that they are just in the same state as before. He again sets the Gospel before them; he exhorts, beseeches, and weeps before them. During the second week his prayers are most earnest; but on the following Sunday he finds that none of the nine children are yet converted. Does it mean that God will not answer these prayers? It cannot be that this dear lad will have to go on praying, and God will not regard it. But the reason is that the heart of this lad is not prepared for the blessing. If these children had been converted the first week, he would take credit to himself; he would think what he had been able to do, and would attribute the conversions to his entreaties, instead of to the power of the Holy Ghost. He would take a goodly measure of credit to himself, though he might not be aware of it. But let him patiently go on, and when his heart is prepared for the blessing, God will give it. Thus it is that the child of God has to wait; but when the heart is prepared for the blessing, most assuredly it will be given. Many of the dear children of God stagger, because prayer is not at once answered. And because for weeks, months, and

years prayer remains unanswered, they cease to ask God, and thus lose the blessing which, had they persevered, they would assuredly have obtained.

It should be especially noticed that all the children of God, who walk in His ways and wait on Him in prayer, have, more or less frequently, answers to prayer. I will illustrate this. All who in any measure walk before God, at the close of the day thank Him for his mercies, and commend themselves to Him for protection during the night. In the morning they find no fire has happened and no wicked hands have molested them. Here is an answer to prayer, and we have to thank God for it. The more we observe these matters, the more we shall find how we get prayer answered. Many that have suffered from sleeplessness have often, in answer to prayer, had sound refreshing sleep, and have had in the morning to thank God for it.

Now all, on the other hand, have sometimes long to wait for answers to prayer. Many of the dear children of God have long to wait for the conversion of their children. While some receive the blessing very soon, others have to wait for many years. I have had immediate answers to prayer, so many that I could reckon them by tens of thousands. If I say that during the fifty-four years and nine months that I have been a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ I have had thirty thousand answers to prayer, either in the same hour or the same day that the requests were made, I should not go a particle too far. Often, before leaving my bedroom in the morning, have I had prayer answered that was offered that morning, and in the course of the day I have had five or six more answers to prayer; so that at least thirty thousand prayers have been answered the self-same hour or the self-same day that they were offered. But one or the other might suppose all my prayers have been thus promptly answered. No; not all of them. Sometimes I have had to wait weeks, months, or years; sometimes many years. The man speaking at the present time, whom God has delighted to honour by giving thirty thousand answers to prayer in the same hour or day on which they were offered, this self-same man has had to wait many years for answers to many of his prayers. During the first six weeks of the year 1866 I heard of the conversion of six persons for whom I had been praying for a long time. For one I had been praying between two and three years; for another between three and four years; for the fifth about fifteen years; and for the sixth above twenty years. I asked once a thing of God, which I knew to be according to His mind, and though I brought it day by day and generally many times a day before Him, in such assurance as to be able to thank Him hundreds of times for the answer before it was received, yet I had to wait three years and ten months before the blessing was given to me. At another time I had to wait six years; and at another time eleven and a half years. In the last case I brought the matter about twenty thousand times before God, and invariably in the fullest assurance of faith, and yet eleven and a half years passed before the answer was given.

In one instance my faith has been tried even more than this. In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without one single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land or on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God, and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second one was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day I continued to pray for them and six years more passed before the third was converted. I thank God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remain unconverted. The man to whom God in the riches of His grace has given tens of thousands of answers to prayer, in the self-same hour or day on which they were offered, has been praying day by day for nearly thirty-six years for the conversion of these two individuals, and yet they remain unconverted; for next November it will be thirty-six years since I began to pray for their conversion. But I hope in God, I pray on, and look yet for the answer.*

**One of these persons was converted before Mr Müller's death, and the other only gave clear evidence of conversion after Mr Müller had passed away.*

Therefore, beloved brethren and sisters, go on waiting upon God, go on praying; only be sure you ask for things which are according to the mind of God. The conversion of sinners is according to the mind of God, for He does not desire the death of the sinner. This is the revelation God has made of Himself – “Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Go on, therefore, praying; expect an answer, look for it, and in the end you will have to praise God for it.

There is one point I would especially lay on the hearts of my beloved brethren and sisters, and that is united prayer. In Matthew xviii 19, the Lord Jesus says – “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven.” If, therefore, there are brethren and sisters in Christ who have unconverted relatives, and if they could unite with two or more persons, and unitedly ask God to convert their children, oh, what blessing might not come in this way? They should plead this promise before the Lord, read it out when they meet, and put their finger – so to speak – upon it. If they meet once a week for half an hour, or once a fortnight, or as often as they conveniently could, to plead this promise before the Lord, after awhile a father would have to say, “My son, who almost broke my heart, has been converted;” and a mother, “I have a letter from my daughter, who fifteen years ago left my home, and has been living in sin, telling me she has found the Lord Jesus Christ.”

How their faith would be strengthened by such united prayer and such testimonies! After awhile, as their faith got strengthened, they would unitedly pray for their Pastor, that God would more abundantly bless his labours in the conversion of sinners, and in blessing on the Church; and as they got further enlarged their prayers would extend to Missions, the circulation of the Scriptures and tracts. They would know the power and blessedness of prayer more and more abundantly, and would wait earnestly upon God, asking Him yet once more, in these days, to grant a mighty revival in the Church of Christ at large.

If this were generally so, with what power ministers would set forth the truth of the Gospel, what blessings would come on our Sunday Schools, on the circulation of the Scriptures, on open-air preaching, and other Christian work. God grant we may more earnestly give ourselves to prayer!

I have found it a great blessing to treasure up in the memory the answers God graciously gives me. I have always kept a record to strengthen the memory. I advise the keeping of a little memorandum book. On one side - say the left hand side - put down the petition and the date when you began to offer it. Let the opposite page be left blank to put down the answer in each case, and you will soon find how many answers you get, and thus you will be strengthened; and especially you will see what a lovely, bountiful, and gracious Being God is; your heart will go out more and more in love to God, and you will say, "It is my Heavenly Father Who has been so kind, I will trust in Him, I will confide in Him."

With regard to any who do not yet know Him, let the first prayer be offered tonight, before you leave this place - "Show me I am a sinner." When you see this, ask the Lord - "Help me to put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ," and you will find how ready God is to give blessing. May we all who are the people of God receive a blessing, and our dear friends and fellow-sinners be stirred up to seek Him while He is to be found!" God grant it for Jesus' sake.

The Prophetical Signs of the Last Days of this Dispensation

An address delivered at the Clifton Conference on October 7th, 1884

The first deeply important point in connection with the subject before us is this, - it is certain that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again. It is certain that it is the will of our Heavenly Father that the second coming of Christ should ever be the great hope of the Church of God. Let us increasingly seek to meditate on this, to lay to heart and rejoice in the truth, - Jesus will come again; Jesus will destroy the works of Satan; Jesus will reign; Jesus will be manifested in His kingly office.

Another deeply important point is this, - are we *prepared* for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we, individually, truly converted? The question is not, are we among the number of the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ? Not, are we reckoned among the people of God? But, are we able, on scriptural grounds, to satisfy ourselves that, by the grace of God, we do trust alone in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls? Have we been made to see, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that we are lost, ruined, wicked, guilty sinners; have we confessed this before God, and have we been enabled, after having passed sentence on ourselves, to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls? If so, we belong no more to the world, but to the heavenly family. If so, we are regenerated, we are pardoned sinners, we stand justified before God, we have an interest in the intercession of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, and we need not be afraid to hear about His coming. But if this matter is not settled, so long as it is not settled, we have no real peace in our souls. Let me entreat and beseech any here present, not thus prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus, to see to it that they delay no longer to cry earnestly to God to have mercy on them, and to believe in Christ for the salvation of their souls.

Another deeply important point is that we, the professed disciples and true children of God, are practically and experimentally prepared for His return; that is, that the heart is so loose from the world, so set upon heavenly things, so really surrendered to the Lord, and that we are so really and truly out-and-out disciples of Jesus Christ, that to hear about His coming, at any time, is a most precious, pleasant subject to us, because of our affections going out to Him. We long to see Him for ourselves, long to touch those precious hands, once pierced for us on account of our numberless transgressions, to kiss those feet once pierced with great nails on account of our wickedness, long to touch Him for ourselves, and to spend a happy eternity with Him. O, beloved in Christ, let us crave after this experimental preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what next have we to do? To pray that God would *hasten* the return of the Lord, and that He would give us grace, in the meantime, to occupy till Jesus does come again; to pray that while the Lord Jesus Christ is tarrying, that God would graciously, by the mighty power and energy of the Holy Ghost, yet bring innumerable multitudes to the feet of Jesus as believers in Him.

In our subject reference is made to "signs of the times", but with regard to this allow me to say it becomes us to be very careful.

I remember distinctly, fifty-five years and three months since, in July, 1829, when first my mind was directed to the second coming of Christ, how I made a mistake then. Beloved brethren, at that time interested in prophecy, considered that Palestine would soon be inhabited by the Israelites, as there was war between Russia and the Ottoman power. It was supposed that Palestine would then be taken out of the hands of the Turks; but in only six weeks' time peace was made between the contending powers. Thus I learned to be careful how I looked on these political matters, and ever since have been particularly cautious not to lay too much stress on such subjects.

Yet, on the other hand, it is the will of the Lord that we *should* look at certain signs. For instance, in the very chapter read to us (Mark xiii), in Matt. xxiv, and many other portions, our Lord directs His disciples to look for certain events, and to know from them whether His coming is at hand or not; that is to say, He declares that such and such things must first come to pass, and except they do come to pass the end will not be. Therefore our Lord Himself directs the minds of His Church to look for certain predicted events, and to consider them as signs of His return.

Further, the apostle Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, brings before them this deeply important point on which we do well to meditate. Let us read in the second chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians: - "Now we beseech you, brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first". Except there come the Apostasy first. Not merely bad times in the Church, such as coldness, deadness, lukewarmness, lifelessness, but the *Apostasy*. Now what is the Apostasy? Entire rejection of everything that is divine; the fulfilment of the second Psalm, - "let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us"; let us have neither God, Christ, nor anything divine: the setting up themselves, the denying everything that is divine, the rejecting even the *form* of godliness, this is the Apostasy referred to.

My beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, this has not been fulfilled in Popery. It is *anti-Christian* altogether. Popery is opposed to the written Word of God; Popery is a diabolical system, but it pretends to honour the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, in Popery the Apostasy has not come to pass.

"And that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." The Pope is not here referred to; though he is a fearful servant of Satan, and there were Popes who were most manifestly particular servants of the wicked one. But here Popes are not referred, for the individual, the son of perdition, the lawless one, is not an ecclesiastical person, but a mighty monarch who will be at the head of the restored ten kingdoms of the Roman empire, which will all then be under his control. A mighty monarch to whom Satan will give his power and his seat. This we have to keep before us. Many of these things, though prefigured in Romanism, have yet to be fulfilled.

"Who opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing Himself that he is God." This will have its literal fulfilment, according to Daniel and other portions, with regard to the temple to be built again at Jerusalem.

"Whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming." This is our comfort; whoever opposes the Lord Jesus Christ, whether an individual, or bodies of people, or lying systems, all, all will be conquered at the last by our Lord Jesus Christ, He will subdue everything that is against Him.

Now the practical point is this; in looking at communism, nihilism, socialism etc, we see that lawlessness is more and more prevailing; that all this wickedness is hastening on the day of the lawless ONE, the son of perdition, and that all we now see is only a preparation for that terrible time.

Then, as regards the Signs of the times with reference to the professing church, a very few words. We have already read this morning a verse out of the 4th chapter of the 1st Epistle to Timothy, - "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron: forbidding to marry, an commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." This, no doubt, in a great measure, has had its fulfilment in Popery, but yet to a far greater extent it *will* have its fulfilment. Then, in regard to the doctrines of devils or demons, we have especially to keep before us, I judge, that reference is here made to spiritualism; and should there be any here present who in the smallest degree look carelessly on spiritualism, or who have the least connection with it, O, let me beseech and entreat you to be warned. This is the horrible sin, the abominable sin, of which Saul was guilty, and on account of which God especially smote him.

This having intercourse with familiar spirits, (not *good* spirits, but devils, evil spirits) though abominable in the sight of God, is looked on as if it were not a matter of much account, and some of the real, true children of God have been entangled with this. O, let me beseech them to confess their sin before God, for it is an awful sin to be connected with

this, as it is nothing else than countenancing Satan. As it was considered such an awful sin by Jehovah, let us be on our guard against it.

In reference to Popery one more word. Through the providence of God I have recently had a book placed in my hands in reference to this subject, which I have read with the deepest interest. Though I have been familiar, more or less, with Popery for nearly sixty years, I never saw its abominations, its fearful, horrible wickedness, as I have seen it within the last few months through reading this book; and I cannot help giving you the full title of the book, beseeching all of you who have time to read it to do so, for I know you will bless and praise God for having been directed to it. The title is—"The Secret History of Romanism", by Dawson Massy, D.D., and the Publishers are Hamilton and Adams, London, also Seely, Fleet Street. Dates, names, and documents from which statements are taken, are most minutely given, step by step, so that there can be the fullest reliance on what the Author states. I desire it may be in the hands of the children of God, for we are drifting fast into Romanism. Oh, what an awful thing it is that enlightened *England*, standing out before the nations, century after century, should, little by little, be drifting into Popery. Ah! The thousands upon thousands that have been drifting into Popery since the Emancipation bill was passed in 1829, when I was just come to this country. The Church of Christ awoke then to its fearful consequences. The dear children of God were crying earnestly to God about it, but after I had been a month in this country, in April, 1829, the bill passed. Now I have seen the consequences. At that time a Popish priest was a rare thing in England, and as for monasteries and nunneries, not one was to be found, but at present you can count them by hundreds, and the priests by thousands. And having seen all this, how things have altered since I came to England fifty-five years and seven months since, I warn, and beseech, and entreat my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ that they be on their guard regarding their relatives, their parents, their children, and their servants, that they be not entrapped by Satan.

A few words on the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, 3rd chapter — "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." This does not refer to persecution, or great suffering, but to grievous times, difficult times; and notice, the whole passage is not addressed to wicked men; Chinese and Japanese idolaters are not referred to, but professing Christians, those who have the name of Christians, who call themselves Christians. Having a form of Godliness"; - all these individuals pretend to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, make themselves out to be members of Churches to be intimately connected with the people of God, taking their places among them; but, with all this, have the *form* of Godliness only. Now the point, practically, is this, to see to it that we make our calling election sure; to see to it that we have more than the mere form of Godliness; and as God has allowed us to come together to exhort one another, allow a brother to remind you of this, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ.

You see, we ourselves are in the greatest danger of getting, little by little, into such a state of things. Satan will do his utmost to carry us away, if we do not set our faces against the evil that threatens us, like a flint, seeking to act in a completely different way to these individuals. That it may be so, we must surrender our whole heart to God our-and-out; we must be in earnest, and must meditate on these prophetic truths revealed in God's word, that we may not be carried away by the delusions of the devil.

God grant that our eye may be fixed on the coming of Christ. He is coming again, and in the meantime our business is to wait for Him, to glorify Him, and to be occupied in His service till He does come again, so that when at last that day shall arrive, we may be as delighted to receive Christ as He will be delighted to receive His bride to Himself, in order that where He is she may be also.

God grant that thus it may be with every one of us!

The Redeemed in the Wilderness

An Address delivered at a Conference of Christians of various denominations, held at Clifton on Wednesday, October 1st, 1873

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" *Song of Solomon* viii, 5

Our subject, beloved Christian friends, as you all know, is "The redeemed in the wilderness." Now the first point is, Do we know that we are among the number of the redeemed in the wilderness? Possibly there may be some hearts here present this evening saying, How can I find out that I belong to the redeemed in the wilderness? This is to be settled thus: If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, - if we trust in Him alone for salvation, - if we look away entirely from our own merit and worthiness, - if we are convinced that we are sinners by nature, and put our trust alone in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, - if we look to Him alone as our Substitute, and find in His precious blood alone the power to cleanse

away all our numberless transgressions, in deed, word, thought, desire, feeling, and purpose, - then are our sins forgiven, then are we renewed - born again - regenerated through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; then have we become children of God through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; then have we been delivered from the bondage of Satan, the world, and our own evil and corrupt nature. We are thus delivered out of the mystical Egypt, and are brought into the wilderness

Now we have before God to answer this - Do I trust alone in Jesus for the salvation of my soul? Do I look away from everything but Jesus as the ground of acceptance, and depend upon Him, and trust in Him? Then are my sins forgiven; and though I am but a poor weak believer, and little instructed as yet, nevertheless, if I am really and truly hanging upon Christ for salvation, all is right before God, - we are accepted by Him, we are dear to His heart; He looks upon us as clean and spotless ones for Christ's sake, though we are vile, worthless, and sinful in ourselves. And then, having thus, by the grace of God, been delivered out of the world of Egypt, and brought into the wilderness, - what then? To answer this question we refer to one passage, and only one, brought into the programme before us; it is the last passage referred to.

In the eighth chapter and fifth verse of the Song of Solomon, we read thus: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" As we saw last evening again and again by the Beloved we are to understand the Lord Jesus Christ; and by that one who in her weakness, feebleness, and nothingness, leans upon her Beloved - the Church of Christ, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; because by the power of the Holy Ghost they have been taught to know their weakness and nothingness. This is just what we have to do: having, by the grace of God, been redeemed out of the world, out of the mystical Egypt, - having, by the grace of God, been brought into the wilderness, - now we have to own increasingly our weakness, helplessness) and ignorance; and, under the consciousness of this betake ourselves to the Beloved One - the Lord Jesus Christ - to lean upon the arm which can never tire, that arm which created the world, which sustains and upholds the world. This is what we have to do; and I ask, beloved in Christ, what is our position? Are we leaning upon the Beloved? Just answer the question before God, What is your habit of soul? Trusting in yourself, your intellect, your physical strength, your money, your experience in business, your skilfulness in your profession, or even the experience you have had in the divine life, your knowledge of the Word of God, - do you trust in any of these things? If so, allow me affectionately to tell you, that you are *not* "leaning upon the Beloved." And this will prove your weakness, and will make you feel that you are in a wrong state, and not doing as you should do. When I walked about in my garden, an hour or two ago, and thought upon this passage, I said, "Lord Jesus, I am one of Thy weak ones, and I desire to lean upon Thee. If I should be asked to speak this evening, oh! what can Thy poor servant do? but he looks to Thee, he desires to lean upon Thee. Now, Lord Jesus, instruct Thou Thy poor servant, who cannot speak as he ought to the profit of the hearers; but in his weakness he will lean upon Thee, and look to Thee: now help Thou Thy servant." Well; just as under these circumstances we look to Him, so in the education of our children, in the carrying on our business, in the hour of depression, under the consciousness of our manifold failings, under the temptations that continually befall us day by day, we have to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by faith, draw out of the fullness which is treasured up in Him. He is a power for good to His Church, - of infinite wisdom, and full of pity and compassion; and by prayer, and the exercise of faith, we may draw into our souls from His blessed attributes that strength which we so much need. Now of this weak one it is said, "She is coming up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved," This suggests to us at once that her destiny is not to remain in the wilderness; and this is just the blessed position of the Church of Christ. We have most abundant reason to thank God that we are in the wilderness. I have been in the wilderness forty-eight years, and I well remember the time when I was not in the wilderness, - when I was of the world, when I loved this world; and it was to me a delight and desire. I well remember the time when I should have laughed at the very thought of coming out of the wilderness, and hearing anything about this Beloved One; but now, by the grace of God, it is different. And so with regard to all the believers here present; though we are in the wilderness, yet we shall not remain there. The prospects are bright and blessed for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are not nominal but real Christians, - children of God, partakers of the Divine nature; and though the manifestation of the sons of God has not yet taken place, it will take place: wait, wait for it, and as assuredly as we now trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, so assuredly everyone of us - before the whole universe - will be manifested "in the day of Christ's appearing," as the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as the children of God. Oh, bright prospect, - the manifestation of the sons of God! And just in proportion as the child of God is enabled to enter into it, and to say, "The day is coming when I shall be manifested as a child of God," so this world is let go, with its lusts and vanities and pleasures and wealth and rank; we let it all go, as we are enabled to realize that we are the children of God, and are looking forward to that day when the children of God shall be manifested. This is the great point, and allow me affectionately to press it upon you, as one who has had some little share of experience in these things. Just in proportion as you are enabled to lay hold on heavenly realities, - to look forward to the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, and the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you shall share the kingdom with Jesus, when you will be for ever separated from the world, received into the Father's house, completely conformed to the image of God's dear Son, not only as to the body, but perfectly holy - as that blessed One is - will your heart be lifted up out of the world into heaven. There is no more blessed a lever to

separate us from this world, and lift our hearts right into heaven, than considering what we have been redeemed from, and unto what we are in Christ Jesus now, and shall be hereafter. Oh! the soul entering into it cannot but rejoice in the Lord. It is a bright and blessed prospect, - we are not to remain here, we are to "come up from the wilderness." But do not misunderstand me; as if I were altogether so sick of the world that I wished any moment to be taken out of it: not so. If the Lord were only to give me grace, I am willing to serve Him fifty years longer, and more if it were His will. But yet with all this, on account of the conflict and difficulties of the way, on account of the evil corrupt nature within me, on account of Satan not being bound yet, and the separation between the Church and the world not having taken place, and most of all, because Jesus is not yet manifested in His glory - the children of God rejoice in the prospect that the wilderness state will come to an end: because it will be the day of blessedness for the universal Church of Christ; and the day for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, - therefore we cannot but rejoice in the prospect that the wilderness state will come to an end.

Now this weak one "cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved." What does this imply? - That as she took one step further she got nearer and nearer to the promised land. So with us: as the sun sets once more, we are a day nearer; as the week closes, we are a week nearer; as our Conference has again come round, we are one year nearer. Oh! one year nearer than we were last October, when we had those happy meetings. Oh! bright and blessed prospect, - getting nearer, and nearer, and nearer to whom? To Jesus. Do we delight in the prospect of being with Him? I do not speak about balls and theatres and some extraordinary parties and the prospect of joining them; nor about becoming rich in this world, nor getting a great name in this world, nor about any of these things, but the blessed prospect of being with Jesus. How many here present have any sympathy with such a statement as this? If you have no sympathy with it, let me tell you this, - it proves one of these two things: either you are "dead in trespasses and sins," and walking in the broad way which leads to destruction; or, at least for the time being, your heart is not alive to the things of God, and if a spiritual thermometer were applied to your heart, it would be seen that you are all but lifeless. This never ought to be the case with regard to the disciples of the Lord Jesus: their heart should be full of love to that blessed One who laid down His life for them, so that they rejoice when they hear that the day is coming when they shall be with that blessed One. This then is our great and blessed prospect, that, though glad, if necessary, to labour and suffer here for the Lord's sake; though glad for a season, if necessary, to be separated from that blessed One, and from "the spirits of just men made perfect," with whom we shall be united for ever hereafter; nevertheless we have before us the prospect that the wilderness will not always be, but that we shall come out of it, and that, as days pass on, so we get nearer and nearer to our blessed home. And while we remain here, what have we to do? All of us have our various occupations, - not all as preachers of the gospel, not all as district visitors; but everyone of us, as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, has some work to do; everyone of us has some difficulty to meet, some trial to go through, some affliction to endure; and everyone of us, day by day, is exposed to temptation. What have we to do under these circumstances? We have to "lean upon the Beloved;" to go to Jesus, to trust in Jesus, in the consciousness of our weakness and helplessness; - not to look to our own resources, for we have none; not to look to our brothers and sisters, or friends, for they are as weak as we are; but we are to look to the Lord Jesus. There is treasured up in Him inexhaustible fullness; and just as by prayer and faith we lay hold on the strength of the Lord, so shall we receive comfort according to our need, instruction in the hour of perplexity, help in the hour of depression, deliverance in the hour of difficulty, - difficulties in connection with family trials and business trials; under all circumstances there should not be a single trial that befalls us, but we should look forward calmly to it, and say, "Jesus is able to meet all these circumstances; Jesus can help me; He says, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' Let me open my mouth wide, and see how the blessed One is both able and willing to fill it,"

Try to lean upon the arm of that blessed One, and you will find it never grows weary, but able to bear you up, - it never will fail. Oh! do but try it, and you will see. And remember, Jesus does not simply "take" the arm: sometimes there are such cases as this, - a weakly husband, in the way of courtesy, offers his arm to his wife; but he is very feeble, and the wife knows it is only done in the way of politeness and love; really the truth is that her arm is ten times stronger than his - he has no strength to support her, and, therefore, while she gives her arm, she does, not *lean* upon it. It is not thus that we are to take, so to speak, the arm of the Lord Jesus, but really to lean upon it, and trust in it, and make but trial of it, and we shall find how strong it is, and how able to carry us through. If you have never tried it, let an elder brother now beseech you to try it, and you will find how strong that arm is, how able and ready to carry you all through, - it will never, never tire. Oh, bright prospect, to have such a Friend for ever and ever!

I look forward now to the year which is coming: there is every reason to believe that we shall not all meet again at another Conference; and our path may be varied, - we may have to meet trials and difficulties; but, beloved in Christ here present, with all this before us, are we dismayed or cast down, or overwhelmed in the prospect of what may possibly befall us before another year is over? No; for that arm will carry us through - the arm of our Friend "who sticketh closer than a brother," - He never will get tired of us; He upholds the

"universe by His power and might, and He will "carry us through. And if the Lord permit us to see another year, and if we are again allowed to meet at these happy meetings, what reason shall we not have to bless and praise God for all His goodness; and amidst all other reasons, for this too, that we are one year nearer to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, - one year nearer the day when the wilderness course will be over for ever and ever.

The Resurrection of the Body

The last sermon preached by George Müller at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol on Sunday evening 3rd October 1897

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor 5 v 1

As the Lord may help us, we will meditate on the verses we have now been reading. They particularly refer to the resurrection body, which means the glorified body, that believers in Christ shall have, and in which they shall be seen, at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, such a body as the Lord Jesus Himself received after His resurrection.

"For we know." This is in connection with what is stated in the last verses of the previous chapter. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Our present body is called "an earthly house of this tabernacle." In other words, shortly, briefly, "a tent-house"- that is, our present body is a tent-house. A tent may be broken up, and pitched elsewhere. It may be very soon broken up. Thus it is with regard to the body in which we are now. It is frail, it is weak, it is earthly, it is of time - in contrast with the glorified body which we shall have. No more weakness, no more frailty then; no more of the earthly character, but of the heavenly character! No more of the body of time, but of eternity. That is the difference between our present bodies and the body we shall have.

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved," if this tent-house were dissolved, "we have a building of God." It is likened to a building to bring before us the substantial character, and the enduring character of it, in comparison with a tent. "A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The glorified body we shall receive at the return of the Lord Jesus is eternal; and all weakness, all infirmity, will be done with for ever. No more pain, no more weakness, no more sickness, no more death - all gone completely; gone, all this in connection with our glorified body. And this is something exceedingly refreshing to the inner man. Now those who seek to labour for the Lord in a variety of ways - it may be in the Sunday School, or as tract circulators, as visitors from house to house of the unconverted, or as visitors of the sick, in all these various ways in which they may labour, they may go on for four or five hours, those who are of greater physical strength may be able to go on six or seven hours, it may be even eight hours, but at last the weakness comes, the "being-tired" is felt, and they are obliged to discontinue going on further in the work, and leave it to the next day. All this will be at an end for ever and ever.

There will be labouring in eternity. There will be no sleeping, no folding hands throughout eternity; but work, continual service constrained by the love of Christ. And this working for the Lord, this seeking to glorify Him by our labour, will go on hour after hour, one four-and-twenty hours after the other, one week after the other, one month after the other, one year after the other, one hundred years after the other, one thousand years after the other, one million years after the other, during a period which never, never, never, will come to an end; and the delightful service going on all the time is held out as an especial promise to the Church of God, not merely that the curse will be gone when we are in glory, but an exceedingly high honour and glorious privilege. "His servants shall serve Him," we read at the close of the Book of Revelation. All our work, and labour, and service, much and varied as it may have been while on earth, shall be considered as nothing in comparison with what there will be of work going on throughout eternity. O how precious this consideration in connection with our glorified body. We shall have that without the least particle of weariness; we shall go on labouring for ever and ever to the glory of God!

Therefore this word "eternal" is so precious! "Eternal in the heavens." In the heavens we shall obtain this glorified body. "For in this" - that is, in our present tent-house, in our present frame of weakness, our body of infirmities - "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." One groaning on account of weakness, another groaning on account of pain, another groaning on account of other infirmities connected with the tent-house in which we find ourselves at present; but especially on account of spiritual infirmities, spiritual weaknesses. SIN - on account of this the child of God especially groans, longing to be delivered from all the spiritual weaknesses, spiritual infirmities, which even in the best of us are found. For the more holy we are, the more do we find ourselves extremely burdened on account of the spiritual infirmities that yet remain in us. "In this we groan earnestly desiring to

be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." At present we are not "clothed upon" in this life. We have not a glorified body. We are yet in this tent-house.

"If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." Do you all understand this verse? Just ask yourselves what we mean to put on, for it is important to understand this verse, and I have reason to consider that some do not know what is the meaning of it. Therefore, with such particularly who have doubts about whether they understand it or not, seek to pay attention to what it means. The time will come when there will be given a glorified body; but will all human beings obtain it? No! There will be the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just, there will be the resurrection when the glorified bodies will be given; but not all human beings will obtain the glorified body; the time of the resurrection will have passed, and multitudes not have obtained a glorified body! O let us see to it that when the time comes that the glorified body shall be given, when the time comes to be clothed, "we shall not be found naked." That is, found to have been left in the grave, found not to have obtained the glorified body; and at the last, at the general resurrection, be raised again but for judgement, not raised again to obtain the glorified body. And regarding all those who do not obtain this glorified body, it is stated here that not being clothed, they shall "be found naked." The time passed of the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just, and the glorified body not obtained! To obtain this, every poor sinner, however feeble and weak spiritually he may be, however ignorant in a variety of ways he may be, yet, if trusting truly in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a child of God, and will obtain a glorified body.

"For we that are in this tabernacle," in this tent-body, "do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." "We that are in this tabernacle" - that means, we children of God, yet on earth in the ordinary body, in the tent-body - "do groan, being burdened." We cry, we sigh, we wish to be brought to a different state. And what is it that we long for? Not that we should be unclothed; but "clothed upon" to obtain our glorified body, in order that mortality may be "swallowed up of life." This is what the child of God especially longs for, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ - not death, but the return of Christ, because then the whole of the Church of God will obtain, every one of them, a glorified body, and thus mortality will be "swallowed up of life." For this body that we shall obtain will be an eternal body, and we shall never have to pass through death any more.

"Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, Who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." Notice particularly this precious verse. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing." That is, we children of God, weak, feeble, and erring, foolish and ignorant, thought as yet we may be, have been appointed for this. God has wrought us for this self-same thing - that we should obtain a glorified body. In other words, I, as assuredly as I am speaking now, shall have a glorified body, and my brethren and sisters in Christ here present, and everyone trusting in Jesus for salvation, will obtain the glorified body. Every one of us, without exception, for we are appointed for it, we are wrought for it, we are prepared for it, and we have the evidence that it will be so. The earnest is given to us already; and this is, that we have received the Spirit. And as assuredly as we have the Spirit received, so certain is it that we shall have a glorified body. This is the earnest given to us in the gift of the Spirit, to comfort our hearts, to make us look out for this glorified body, to ponder it again and again and again with truth that we shall have a glorified body. For this very purpose was given to us the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit might be the warrant to us to look out for the glorified body.

"Therefore we are always confident" - that is, of good courage - knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. It would be well that we seek to test ourselves by what is written here. "We are always of good courage, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." That is, we have not yet been brought into the presence of the Lord to have habitual, full, complete communion with Him, and have not entered upon the eternal happiness, as every child of God will have it for ever and ever. "We are confident" - we are of good courage - "I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." That means rather wishing that the Lord Jesus Christ would come and take us to Himself than that simply we should die and put off this our tabernacle. Is this the state of our hearts? When we look at ourselves, are we able to say, "We are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; rather to go Home to get our glorified bodies, instead of remaining longer here on earth?" The more we are in a spiritual state, the more this will be the case, but with an exception, one in which Paul found himself, when longing to go Home, yet willing to stay longer here on earth to labour for the Lord. With this one exception, the spiritual state of heart is to go Home to be with the Lord for ever and ever. But if it pleases God to allow us to labour for Him, to be ready to stay, counting it an honour and privilege to labour yet further on earth. I myself have been praying to obtain the great honour, the glorious privilege to be allowed to stay yet longer in the body, that I might be able, in my weak, feeble measure, to labour further for the Lord, for I count it the greatest honour, the most glorious privilege, to be allowed to do any little thing for my adorable, precious Lord, Who has done so much for me.

"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." "We labour"- that is, we endeavour - "that whether present or absent" - that is, whether in the body or out of the body, whether with the Lord or whether from the Lord, that however it may be with us, on earth, or in heaven - "we may be accepted of Him"- that

is, please Him well. That is the one great concern we should have, to please our Lord well, whether by labouring much or little, in easy or trying circumstances, among friends or foes, at home or abroad, on the land or on the sea. However it may be with us, as to our circumstances, that we may please Him well is the one great business of life if we are believers in the Lord. How greatly we should endeavour to do this whilst life is continued!

Now, in conclusion of our subject, the most solemn word comes in our last verse. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The Eye of God is on every human being! The Ear of God hears every word uttered by every human being, and whatever we do, and whatever we say, nothing escapes the Ear or the Eye of our Heavenly Father. According to all this, we have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The believers, all who trust in Christ, are pardoned for all they have been doing, for all they have been saying, great and many and varied though their failures and shortcomings may have been. All, all who have condemned themselves, passed sentence on themselves, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are escaping thus the judgment. But if we are not believers in the Lord Jesus, if we are going on thoughtlessly and carelessly and unconcerned about the things of God, or trusting in ourselves for salvation, instead of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, or think that by living a different life, we are able to make up for past misconduct, which is a fatal, soul-destroying error - if, in any way, we are not thus found believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, then God is under the necessity, as a Holy God, and as a Just God, of bringing us to an account for all our deeds, for all our words, even for every one of our thoughts. And O how will it be then, when having thus to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body? O how will it be then? May I entreat and beseech all here present, who are yet out of Christ, not to come to this, for they will not be able to answer God one thing out of a thousand; they will not be able to justify themselves regarding their doings, their speaking, their thinking. Numberless millions will be found out, their evil deeds, their sinful words, their unholy thoughts. And O what will be their condemnation at the last, if they are found without Christ? Therefore, before it be too late, let them hasten to Him for the forgiveness of all their numberless transgressions!

May God grant it all for Christ's sake. Amen

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Portion of an Address delivered to the Orphans of the Ashley Down Orphan Houses, on April 3rd, 1874

Luke xvi. 19-31.

It has been Mr Müllers practice for many years to address the orphans under his care on the morning of the day commonly called "Good Friday." On Friday, April 3rd, 1874, the children, to the number of about 1600, assembled in Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol. The whole service was conducted by Mr Müller.

The subject of the address was "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (Luke xvi. 19-31). In the course of his remarks Mr Müller said, -

Beloved children, I desire to impress this point particularly upon you for your whole life, that without the blessing of God nothing you do will really prosper. You may toil and strive and labour ever so much, but unless God is your friend all in the end will be in vain. Through the Lord Jesus Christ alone you can be really happy, and therefore no one is to trust in his own power or goodness. Our eyes must be directed to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone are found life, pardon for sin, and acceptance with God. If any of you, beloved boys and girls, desire to get to heaven, you must turn to Jesus; if you wish to escape the place of torment in which the rich man of whom we have read found himself, you must turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you wish to be in the place where Lazarus was after his life on earth, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and look to Him alone to enable you to reach that place of blessedness. This rich man, who at last went to the place of torment, was not a murderer; there is nothing said to show that he was. He was not a thief; there is not the least reason to think he was. Nor is it said that he was a burglar, or did any great open sin or wickedness. This man was like most people in this world who seek to enjoy themselves, who seek to live to themselves, who seek to please themselves, and care about themselves. This was the sin of this rich man, that he did not set God before him, that he did not live for the honour and glory of God; but that to go his own way, to please himself, to enjoy himself, to gratify himself, was the object of his life. As in Isaiah liii. we read, "We have turned every one to his own way," so this was this man's great sin, he liked to go his own way, Some sinners go astray in some way, and some in another. Many find their all in eating and drinking, others in pleasuring, others in making money, others in dress, others in pleasant society, but all, in one shape or other, living to themselves. This man's great sin was that he did not set God before him, did not seek to live to God, did not seek to please God; did not seek to glorify God.

Ask yourselves, dear boys and girls; "What is my object in life? What do I live for? Is it to enjoy myself? is it to gratify myself? or do I seek to live for the honour and glory of God?" Now none can live for the honour and glory of God - unless they obtain a new nature, a heavenly nature, a spiritual nature, a divine nature. You remember the Lord Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We must be changed, - not merely outwardly changed, but inwardly, altogether changed; and this can alone be through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, only when we are born again, inwardly changed, having spiritual life within, we desire to live not to ourselves, but to God. You see the vast importance of all this. You see that though this man enjoyed himself whilst here, it was only for a little time. He had to be dragged away from his enjoyments, he could not take these with him; he could not take his servants, he could not take his food, he could not take his costly raiment or his splendid house with him; he must leave all his gold, his cattle, his furniture, - everything, behind him. The rich may live in great comfort and splendour now, and when they die be carried to their graves in a hearse, with plumes on it and on the horses, to make a show; but what then? Ah! if they were not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ before they went out of the world, though they have such a splendid funeral, they, like this rich man of whom we have been reading, lift up their eyes in torments. Now it is just this torment I wish you to escape. I long in my inmost soul that you may escape this place of torment. For this purpose, dear children, the five houses on Ashley Down have been built, that beloved orphans might enter and hear of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone it is possible to escape this place of torment. For this same reason this little meeting has been held to-day, and for this purpose the Word of God is read to you every morning and evening, and teachers and friends from time to time speak to you about the only way to heaven. Lay to heart, dear boys and girls, and ask yourselves this question, "If this were my last day, or suppose on my way to Ashley Down from this chapel I were to fall down dead, should I go to heaven, or to the place of torment?" None of the dear boys and girls can go to the place of happiness unless they are born again; for without faith in the Lord Jesus they are in nature's darkness, they are unforgiven, and not clothed in the righteousness of Christ. But if we believe in the Lord Jesus, then, though we have sinned times without number, though we have been the worst people that ever lived, yet believing in the Lord Jesus our sins at once are forgiven, and we become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The moment a poor sinner believes in the Lord Jesus he comes into the road to heaven. How many dear boys and girls here are believers in the Lord Jesus? That is the point. Those who are should see to it that by prayer and reading the Word of God, getting food for your souls, you live to the honour and praise of God.

Mr Müller then read the narrative, commenting as he proceeded. Speaking of Lazarus being carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, he said, - Now I am a great sinner, a very great sinner, and deserve nothing but punishment, and if I had what I deserved I should have hell, but if I were to die I should go to heaven. Though a poor wicked sinner, and though I was particularly wicked when I was the age of some of you, yet if I died now, because I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I should not go to the place of torment, but I should go to heaven. I long to have all the dear orphans with me in heaven. How I long for it! How I pray for it! I pray that I may be surrounded in heaven by thousands of the dear children. But none of you will be in heaven unless while on earth you become believers in the Lord Jesus. Now, then, how many will join me in heaven? I want to see in heaven not only the 1600 or 1700 who are here, but those who have already left the Orphan Houses, and all the thousands who may yet come to them; but I shall only see there those who have believed in the Lord Jesus. Lazarus was not taken up to heaven because he was a poor man, or because he was a diseased man, but because he was born again through faith in the Messiah. The Christian orphan may sit now side by side with the unbelieving orphan, may sleep in the same bed, and may eat at the same table; but this will not be the case when this life is over, for at death there will be a complete separation at once and for ever between the believers and unbelievers. I love you, and wish you to escape the place of torment; and therefore in plain language I tell you that there is no such thing as getting into heaven without preparation, and that must be through believing in the Lord Jesus.

The Second Coming of Christ

In the days of the apostles the disciples were comforted and encouraged by the prospect of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. An angel had said to them as they watched the Lord depart from the earth, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts I v 11). This, and not death, was the hope of the Church; and thus it ought to have remained up to His actual return. His coming should have continued to be the hope of the Church; but this alas! for centuries has not been the case.

In confessions of faith the truth that the Lord Jesus will come again may still have had a place; but practically to by far the greater number of His disciples it has been a mere doctrinal statement that has not been enjoyed, and which has had no influence upon their lives. The Lord, however, desired it should be otherwise. He intended that His Church should look for Him; that she should watch and wait for His return. Again and again,

during His personal ministry, the Lord Jesus foretold this great event; and after His ascension the apostles referred continually to it.

Very many passages of Scripture might be quoted in proof of this assertion, but I will only mention the following; "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" (Matt 25 v 31). "In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14 v 2-3). "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9 v 27-28).

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then (afterward) we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4 v 16-17). These quotations suffice to prove that the second coming of the Lord Jesus means that He will return in person, and has no reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, nor to His manifesting Himself in an especial manner to the believer in the way of comfort, instruction, or help of any kind; nor has it reference to our death, when we, as believers, are taken to be with Him.

If, however, anyone should say, "Why lay such stress upon this; is not our going to Him when we die the same thing?" The reply is, "There is a vast difference between these two events."

(a) As individuals we shall at that time be brought only to a state of partial happiness; we shall have no glorified bodies then, but must await the hour when "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ... the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Nor when we fall asleep do we reign with Christ and sit with Him upon His throne; because He will not then be manifestly reigning. Blessed therefore though it is for the child of God, when he departs, "to be absent from the body and present with the Lord," it will be unspeakably more blessed still to enter upon that fullness of glory which us only at our Lord's return.

(b) Satan will not be bound until Jesus comes again; and for this reason, by the permission of God, he still has power here, both in the world and in the Church, though individuals are out of his reach who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

(c) The whole Church will at once be introduced to full eternal happiness and glory at our blessed Lord's return. Not only as individuals will our cup of joy be full to overflowing, but we shall rejoice throughout eternity with the whole company of the redeemed. What has been said therefore is, I trust, sufficient to show that the second coming of Christ will be His personal return, and that there is a vast difference between the death of individual believers and the coming advent of our Lord in glory.

I now proceed to consider briefly some of the events which will take place then.

1. The first resurrection, when the changed and risen saints together will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be forever with Him (1 Thess. 4 v 16-17). At this time those only will be raised who, as believers in the Messiah under the old covenant dispensation, or as disciples of the Lord Jesus under that of the new covenant, shall have fallen asleep in Him.

The commonly received opinion is, that at our Lord's return there will be a general resurrection, both of believers and of unbelievers, while the Holy Spirit teaches in the Holy Scriptures that they who are Christ's and they only, will have part in the first resurrection. In 1 Cor. 15 v 22-23, we read thus; "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." Notice the words, "they that are Christ's." Not all who had previously died, but those only who through faith in Jesus are united to Him, and shall have fallen asleep as believers. The same truth is taught in 1 Thess. 4 v 16-17, where we read; "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then (afterwards) we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Notice that only of the dead in Christ it is said they will rise at that time.

In Rev. 20 v 4-6, we read thus; "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witnesses of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast (the Anti-Christ), neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest

of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." In the beginning of this passage, when it is stated, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them," we have to understand that believers in Christ who are with Him, are here referred to; the armies in heaven mentioned in chapter 19 v 14.

Further, "The souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held," spoken of in chapter 6 v 9, are next seen. Regarding the whole of the passage, it is obvious that believers only are referred to, and not the ungodly, who had died previously. These ungodly ones indeed will be raised up also, but at the end of the millennium, a thousand years later, in order that having obtained their bodies (not glorified ones), they may be capable of enduring more abundant punishment (see Rev. 20 v 11-15).

Oh! how should the *solemnity* and *certainty* of these events come home to everyone of us, and with what *earnestness* should each person who reads these lines seek upon Scriptural grounds to settle for himself that he is really *Christ's*; because by nature we are lost, ruined, and undone, and deserve nothing but punishment; but we have, at the same time, to accept God's *only* remedy, namely, salvation through faith in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *alone* spiritual life, pardon, and justification can be obtained (see Eph 2 v 1-9; Gal 3 v 26; Acts 10 v 43; Rom 5 v 1; John 3 v 16, and Rom 8 v 16-17).

2. The conversion and restoration of Israel nationally (who will have returned to their own land in *unbelief*); for in Scripture the glory and resurrection of the Church of the first born ones is always connected with the time when Israel again "shall know the Lord." (Psalm 102 v 16). See Jeremiah, chapters 30 & 31; Isaiah chapters 11 & 12; Read also carefully Isaiah, chapters 24, 25, 26, 27.

3. Another event which will take place at the return of the Lord Jesus is that Satan will be bound. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Rev 20 v 1-3). During the present dispensation, *before* the return of our Lord, Satan will not be bound; therefore sin and open wickedness will continue to the end of it; and instead of becoming better, things, according to Scripture, will *become worse and worse*. It is impossible to shut one's eyes to the fearful wickedness now around us everywhere; for murders of the most cruel character, and numerous other atrocious crimes, are, even in this enlightened nineteenth century, continually being committed. How certainly does all this prove that Satan is not yet bound, that he is *even now* the god of this world, and has power *still*; and because he *knows* that his time will be comparatively short, he manifests his hatred against God and against His people to the very utmost.

But this state of things will not always last; for, when Jesus comes again, Satan will *lose* his power in the earth, and will be shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years.

4. In connection with the return of the Lord Jesus is another event, namely, the separation between the wheat and the tares, who represent Christendom, or the professing church of Christ. Read carefully Matt 13 v 24-30; also verses 37-43. In this parable, together with our Lord's own explanation of it, we see what is to be expected during this present dispensation. Civilization, mental cultivation, and advancement in knowledge of every kind may continue to the utmost; but man, fallen man, remains *a ruined creature*, except he be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the acceptance of the Gospel. Intellectually he may be improved and polished to the very highest degree, but he is a *sinner*, and, in his natural condition, remains lost, ruined, and undone. He may even possess natural religion and a form of godliness; but if he is not born again he is still at enmity with God, and as assuredly as he does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ "the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3 v 36).

Sin is not, as some suppose, a *comparatively little thing*. It is a deadly spiritual disease, as the Word of God declares it to be; and no progress in education, no mental culture, can eradicate it from the heart, nor change depraved human nature. For notwithstanding every effort at improvement, the heart *remains* "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Until the return of the Lord Jesus, therefore, the present state of things will *continue*, and, as we shall see presently from the Word of God, will become worse and worse.

This, then, plainly shows the notion entertained by many godly, excellent persons, that the world will be *converted during the present dispensation* by the preaching of the Gospel, and that the millennium will thus finally be introduced, to be not according to the Holy Scriptures.

The Gospel, indeed, was to be preached "for a *witness* unto all nations," but it was not to be the means of the *conversion* of the world (Matt 24 v 14). Moreover, from Acts 15 v 14 we learn the character of the present dispensation, which

is, that God *takes out* from among the Gentiles a people for His name, but does not *convert* all nations. This is confirmed by the parable of the wheat and the tares; for if the whole world were to be converted before the return of the Lord Jesus, there would be no truth in the explanation given of it by our Lord Himself. He tells us that the tares (the children of the wicked one) were to grow together with the wheat (the children of the Kingdom) until the end of the age, namely, up to the time of His own return. This, therefore, the word of the Lord Jesus, is in direct opposition to the common notion that the world will be converted previous to His coming again.

And in addition to this we find passage after passage in the New Testament in which we are expressly told, either by Christ or by the apostles, that at the close of the present dispensation *wickedness will abound* both among professed believers and in the world at large, in proof of which I will refer to one single passage of Scripture only. In 2 Tim 3 v 1-5 we read, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having *a form of godliness*, but denying the power thereof." Here we have particularly to keep before us that this is not a description of Pagans or Mahometans, but of the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus; for to such a state will Christendom, or the professing Church of Christ, be reduced at the end of the present dispensation.

Notice especially that of these persons it is said, they have a *form of godliness*. They wish to be considered Christians, they are not avowed infidels and atheists, but professed *believers*. Are we, then, to expect that things around us will gradually improve, or rather, that as we approach the end of the age the darker they will become? True it is that one day, "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea", but this will never be until Jesus Himself comes. In the meantime lawlessness will increase, and the socialism, the communism, the nihilism, etc., of which we now hear so much, will at last be headed up in the personal Antichrist, the man of sin. This leads me to mention another of the events that will take place at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, namely;

5. The destruction of the Antichrist. In 2 Thess 2 v 1-8 we read: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by (or concerning) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by (or concerning) our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon (or hastily) shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that (or, as though we had said) the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (or, the apostasy) first, and that (or the) man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity (or lawlessness) doth all ready work; only he who now letteth (or restraineth) will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked (or lawless one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit (or breath) of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

From this portion of the inspired Word of God (2 Thess 2 v 3) we learn that the Lord Jesus will not come until after the manifestation of "the apostasy." Has the apostasy here spoken of taken place, and has the lawless one (or, the Antichrist) been revealed? The reply from Scripture is, the apostasy has *not* yet taken place, and the lawless one has *not* yet been revealed. This passage has not found its fulfilment either in popery or the popes. Fearful as the delusions of popery are, and awful as is the picture of what the popes have been, the apostasy here referred to will be far *more dreadful still*; for it will be no less than an entire renunciation of all that is divine, and the setting up as God of the lawless one himself. "For he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing *himself* that he is God."

He will be a king, a mighty monarch, whose might is obtained through the energy given to him by Satan, for "the dragon gave him his power, and his seat and great authority" (Rev 13 v 2). This king, the Antichrist, will be at the head of the *ten kingdoms* of the Roman earth (that is, the ten kingdoms into which the countries which formerly constituted the Roman Empire will be finally divided), and the ten kings will agree to give to him their power.

During the period of his especial glory, which will be only forty-two months, he will blaspheme God, His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. It will also be given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and power will be given unto him over all kindreds and tongues and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13 v 5-8).

This, then, and not the world's conversion, is the state of things towards which we are rapidly hastening. Do we all really *believe* what the Scriptures declare concerning the things that are coming upon the earth, that the time is speeding on when "no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark or the name of the beast (the Antichrist) or the number of his name" (Rev 13 v 17): when whoever will not submit to *this* and worship him, must be prepared to lose his life?

The *end*, however, of this lawless one is plainly foretold in Scripture: for the Lord Jesus will consume him with the spirit (or, breath) of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2 v 8).

We have now in the next place to consider that it is the will of the Lord that we, His disciples, should wait for His return.

A great many passages might be quoted from the New Testament in proof of this; but, for the sake of brevity, I will refer only to a few. In Titus 2 v 11-13 we read, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." Observe how it is laid upon the saints to *look* for the blissful hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 24 v 36-41 our Lord Himself enjoins it upon us to wait for His return, and to *watch*. In Matthew 25 v 13 the Lord said to His disciples, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh". Again in Mark 13 v 35-37 Jesus said "Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all, *watch*. Again in Rev 16 v 15 the Lord says, "Behold, I come as a thief! Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Now, are we as believers, all *watching*? Are we earnestly *longing* for the return of that blessed One? Do our hearts truly yearn after Him, and long for His glorious appearing? Are we also doing our part to hasten on His coming? And is it habitually our *prayer* that the Lord will be pleased to hasten the fulfilment of the events yet to be fulfilled before that day comes?

And now the last part of our subject remains to be considered, namely, the *practical* effect this truth should have upon our hearts. If it be really received and entered into, the child of God will say, "What can I do for my blessed Saviour before He comes again? How can I most glorify Him? His will concerning me is that I should occupy 'until He come.' How then can I best use for Him the talents with which I am entrusted, my physical strength, my mental powers? How can my sight, my tongue, *all* my faculties of mind and body be best devoted to His praise? How should my time, my money, all that I am and have be used for Him? How can my whole spirit, soul, and body be best consecrated to His service?"

These are deeply important practical questions which all believers in the Lord Jesus should ask themselves, seeing that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, even with His precious blood. Instead of indulging in inactivity and listlessness on account of the evil state of things around us, we should pray and work, and work and pray, as if it were in *our* power to stem the torrent of abounding iniquity; for who can say *how much good* one single child of God who is thoroughly in earnest may accomplish; and how greatly he may glorify God by walking in entire separation from all that is hateful to Him? We have especially also to guard against the temptation of slackening our efforts for the conversion of sinners, because the world will not be converted before Jesus comes. Rather should we say, "The time of His coming may be soon; what therefore can I do to warn sinners, and to win souls for Him?"

When it pleased God in July 1829, to reveal to my heart the truth of the personal return of the Lord Jesus, and to show me that I had made a great mistake in looking for the conversion of the world, the effect it produced upon me was this: From my *inmost soul* I was stirred up to feel compassion for the perishing sinners, and for the slumbering world around me lying in the Wicked One, and considered, "Ought I not to do what I can to win souls for the Lord Jesus, and to arouse a slumbering church?". I determined consequently to go from place to place, in order to preach the Gospel and arouse the Church to look and *wait* for the second coming of the Lord from heaven.

I soon began this work, but in a short time saw it plainly to be the Lord's will that I should stay for a while at Teignmouth, Devonshire, in a pastoral position, and labour in Bristol in the same way; but though I have now been a Pastor for more than *fifty-one years*, my heart has always been true to these two points: and by means of 'The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad', which the Lord has permitted me to found, I have for forty-seven years been aiming at the conversion of sinners, and have sought to awaken the Church of Christ at large to look for His appearing as her great hope.

Besides this, during the last six years, from March 1875, to March 1881, I have almost constantly been travelling about (having visited eleven different countries and preached about 1800 times), in order to preach the Gospel, to stir up Christians, and also to instruct them about the character of this present dispensation, with the end thereof.

In conclusion I would direct attention to 2 Peter 3 v 11-14; - "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming (or

hastening the coming) of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

As assuredly as the practical character of the Lord's second coming is really apprehended in the power of it, the most blessed effects upon the life and deportment of Christians will follow. By means of it we are taught what awaits the world lying in the Wicked One, and what will be the end of all this world's glory, pride, and pomp. The future destiny of the children of God is also unfolded to us, even that we shall be perfectly conformed to the image of our risen Lord, both in soul and body, when we shall see Him as He is.

Then shall we enter upon the possession of our inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and shall be seated with Jesus on His throne (Rev 3 v 21), to judge the world in union with Him, and to spend a happy eternity together with our Lord in glory. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev 22 v 12).

*Midst the darkness, storm, and sorrow,
One bright gleam I see:
Well I know the blessed morrow
Christ will come for me.
'Midst the light and peace and glory
Of the father's home,
Christ for me is watching, waiting –
Waiting till I come.*

*Oh, the blessed joy of meeting,
All the desert past!
Oh, the wondrous words of greeting
He shall speak at last!
He and I together entering
Those bright courts above:
He and I together sharing
All the Father's love.*

*He who in His hour of sorrow
Bore the curse alone:
I who through the lonely desert
Trod where He had gone:
He and I in that bright glory,
one deep joy shall share:
Mine, to be for ever with Him:
His, that I am there.*

The Secret of Effectual Service to God

A New Year's address

We have through the Lord's goodness been permitted to enter upon another year, and the minds of many amongst us will no doubt be occupied with plans for the future, and the various spheres of service in which, if our lives be spared, we shall be engaged. The welfare of our families, the prosperity of our business, our work and service for the Lord, may be considered the most important matters to be attended to; but, according to my judgment, the most important point to be attended to is this: Above all things, see to it that your souls are happy in the Lord. Other things may press upon you; the Lord's work even may have urgent claims upon your attention; but I deliberately repeat, it is of supreme and paramount importance that you should seek, above all other things, to have your souls truly happy in God Himself. Day by day seek to make this the most important business of your life. This has been my firm and settled conviction for the last five-and-thirty years. For the first four years after my conversion I knew not its vast importance; but now, after much experience, I specially commend this point to the notice of my younger brethren and sisters in Christ. The secret of all true effectual service is, -joy in God, and having experimental acquaintance and fellowship with God Himself.

But in what way shall we attain to this settled happiness of soul? How shall we learn to enjoy God? How obtain such an all-sufficient soul-satisfying portion in Him as shall enable us to let go the things of this world as vain and worthless in comparison? I answer, This happiness is to be obtained through the study of the Holy Scriptures. God has therein revealed Himself unto us in the face of Jesus Christ.

In the Scriptures, by the power of the Holy Ghost, He makes Himself known unto our souls. Remember, it is not a god of our own thoughts or our own imaginations that we need to be acquainted with; but the God of the Bible, our Father, who has given the blessed Jesus to die for us. Him should we seek intimately to know, according to the revelation He has made of Himself in his own most precious Word.

The way in which we study this Word is a matter of the deepest moment. The very earliest portion of the day we can command should be devoted to meditation on the Scriptures. Our souls should feed upon the Word. We should read it - not for others, but for ourselves; all the promises, the encouragements, the warnings, the exhortations, the rebukes, should be taken home to our own bosoms. Especially let us remember not to neglect any portion of the Bible: it should be read regularly through. To read favourite portions of the Scriptures, to the exclusion of other parts, is a habit to be avoided. The whole Divine volume is inspired, and by degrees should be read regularly through. But to read the Bible thus is not enough; we must seek to become intimately and experimentally acquainted with Him whom the Scriptures reveal, with the blessed Jesus who has given Himself to die in our room and stead. Oh, what an abiding, soul-satisfying portion do we possess in Him! But another point here needs especially to be noticed: it is that we seek habitually to carry out what we know, to act up to the light that we have received; then more will assuredly be given. But if we fail to do this, our light will be turned into darkness. It is of the deepest moment that we walk with a sincere, honest, upright heart before the Lord. If evil be practised, or harboured and connived at, the channel of communication between our souls and God (for the time being) will be cut off. It is all-important to remember this. Infirmities and weaknesses will cleave to us as long as we remain in the body; but this is a different thing from willingly allowing evil. I must be able, with a true, honest, upright heart, to look my heavenly Father in the face, and say, "Here I am, blessed Lord; do with me as Thou wilt."

Then let us remember that we are His stewards. Our time, our health, our strength, our talents, our all, are His, and His alone. Let us seek to remember this, and carry it out this year, and then what happy Christians shall we all be! It is a Divine principle, "To him that hath shall more be given;" and as assuredly as we seek to make good use of that which is confided to us, more will be imparted. We shall be used of the Lord, and shall become increasingly happy in His own most blessed service. Brethren! we have only one life -one brief life; let us seek with renewed purpose of heart to consecrate that one life wholly to the Lord-day by day to live for God, and to serve Him with our body, soul, and spirit, which are His.

Let it be our unceasing prayer, that as we grow older, we may not grow colder in the ways of God. As we advance in years, let us not decline in spiritual power; but let us see to it that an increase of spiritual vigour and energy be found in us, that our last days may be our best days.

Our holy faith does not consist in talking. "Reality, reality, reality," is what we want. Let us have heart-work; let us be genuine. Brethren! we should live so as to be missed - missed both in the Church and in the world, when we are removed. Oh how rapidly is time hastening on! We should live in such a manner as that, if we were called hence, our dear brethren and sisters might feel our loss, and from their inmost souls exclaim, "Oh that such a one were in our midst again! " We ought to be missed even by the world. Worldly persons should be constrained to say of us, "If ever there was a Christian upon earth, that man was one."

But to revert to the Scriptures. In them, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, we become acquainted with the character of God. Our eyes are divinely opened to see what a lovely Being God is! and this good, gracious, loving, heavenly Father is ours, our portion for time and for eternity; and our adorable. Lord Jesus, who gave Himself for us, is that blessed One, to whose image and likeness we shall be conformed; and to serve Him should be our greatest joy and privilege as long as we remain on earth.

But then, when trial and affliction come; when God deals with us as though He were not the lovely, kind, and gracious Being presented to us in His Word, shall we murmur and despond? Ah! no. Beloved in Christ! let us trust our heavenly Father; let us, like little children, hang entirely on Him, reposing in the sweet assurance of His unchangeable, eternal love. Let us remember how He acted towards His saints of old, what His dealings were with them; let us remember what is recorded concerning their history; for now, as He has ever done, God will most surely act according to His word.

This intimate experimental acquaintance with Him will make us truly happy. Nothing else will. If we are not happy Christians (I speak deliberately, I speak advisedly) there is something wrong. If we did not close the past year in a happy frame of spirit, the fault is ours, and ours alone.

In God our Father, and the blessed Jesus, our souls have a rich, divine, imperishable, eternal treasure. Let us enter into practical possession of these true riches; yea, let the remaining days of our earthly pilgrimage be spent in an ever-increasing, devoted, earnest consecration of our souls to God.

The Secret of Prevailing Prayer

Acts 12:1-19

I desire, Christian friends, to bring before you, for encouragement in prayer, a precious instance in which an answer to united supplication is given.

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword...” James was the first apostle who became a martyr for Christ. Stephen had previously been stoned, but he was not an apostle.

Satan’s power limited

“And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.” Now Peter, indeed, seems to be a death’s gate; but the Lord said, *“Thus far shalt thou go, and no further”*. This we have to keep before us, that Satan, though he hates us, can go no further than the Lord gives him liberty.

The most striking instance of this, we find in the case of Job. Satan had tried to get at him but was unable to do so; and at last he has to make confession before the Lord, *“Hast Thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?”* Satan had tried to get at him, but by reason of the hedge he was unable to get at the person or substance of Job. It was only by the permission of God, and when this hedge was removed, that he was able to get at the substance of Job. And even still, the hedge was around the person of Job, and not until this hedge had been removed, was he able to touch the person of Job. Though we must never lose sight of the fact that on the one hand Satan may be, and often is, powerful to hurt us, yet on the other hand, He that is with us is more powerful still, and Satan can do nothing without the permission of the Lord.

“And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him.” He was delivered to sixteen soldiers – four little companies of four soldiers each, who were to be responsible for him; so that there might be two inside, and two outside, and so always some to take care of him. Thus it seemed to be utterly impossible that he could escape. *“Intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.”* It is called Easter, but there was no such thing as Easter then. It was the feast of unleavened bread.

“Peter, therefore, was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

Here we have prayer in church capacity. The saints at Jerusalem meeting together, and giving themselves to prayer, and from what we see afterwards, it was *prayer without ceasing*. There was always some little band at prayer – *“prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him”*.

They did not say, Now we will send a petition to Herod to let him go. They might have sent in such a petition, for by this time there were thousands in Jerusalem who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were a formidable company by that time; and if they had all written down their names to this petition they might have succeeded. And if thus they did not succeed, they might have raised a large sum of money. They were very willing to give of their substance, to sell their houses and lands for the poor of the church; and most certainly they would have willingly done so for the deliverance of Peter. They did not do this, though a most probable way of getting Peter delivered would have been to have bribed some of Herod’s courtiers. Even in this very chapter we find that when disunion had arisen in regard to the men of Tyre and Sidon, some individuals bribed a courtier, the king’s chamberlain, and thus made peace. Therefore it might possibly have succeeded if they had done so. But none of these things did they use; they gave themselves to prayer. And that, my beloved friends, is the best weapon they could have used. There is not a more blessed and powerful weapon for the children of God, than they should give themselves to prayer. For thus then can have the power of God on their side – the almighty power of God. And by making use of this power, through the instrumentality of prayer in all things we need, we can have the infinite wisdom of God brought to work for us, and have God Himself at our side, as children of God. Therefore we should seek to make a far better use than ever we have done of prayer. And you, my beloved Christian friends, who are in the habit of meeting often at the prayer meeting, expect great things

at the hands of God; look out for wondrous blessings, and you will find how ready He is to give those things which we ask for. This, then, these saints at Jerusalem did – they gave themselves to prayer without ceasing. That is, they believed that though Herod had apprehended Peter for the purpose of slaying him, and though this Herod was a notoriously wicked man, as we all know, yet God was able to deliver him from this bloodthirsty Herod. They believed that nothing was too hard for God to accomplish, and therefore they prayed without ceasing.

Waiting for the answer

Now, notice, we do not know how long Peter was in prison, but it is an obvious and natural inference that he had been apprehended before those days of unleavened bread; as after these days his execution was to take place, and, therefore, at least he was in prison seven days. Now, it was not on the first day that the prayer was answered. They met together and prayed, - prayed earnestly; but the first day, hour by hour, passed away, and yet Peter was in prison. The second day, and again they are found waiting on God in prayer. Still, hour by hour, the second day passed, and yet he was not delivered. And so the third, and fourth, and fifth days passed away. They are still waiting on God; prayer is made without ceasing; yet this holy man remained in prison; and there seemed to be no prospect of God answering their prayers.

And thus beloved friends, you and I shall find again and again that the answer is delayed; and the question is, shall we give up praying, or shall we continue? The temptation is to cease praying, as though we had given up hope, and to say, "It is useless; we have already prayed so long that it is useless to continue". This is just what Satan would have us say; but let us persevere and go on steadily praying, and be assured that God is both able and willing to do it for us; and that it is the very joy and delight of His heart, for Christ's sake, to give to us all things which are for the glory of His name, and our good and profit. If we do so, He will give us our desire. As assuredly as we are the children of God, if we pray perseveringly, and in faith, the prayer will be answered. Thus let us learn from this precious instance regarding prayer, which the Holy Ghost has given for our encouragement.

"And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door."

Mark, that the last night before his execution is now come, and yet Peter is asleep. Not carelessly and indifferently was he lying there, but calmly, quietly resting in the arms of Jesus, and leaning on the bosom of his Lord. He is bound with two chains, as the custom was, between two soldiers, one on the one side and one on the other side, that he might not escape.

God's manner of answering the prayer

And now the deliverance; we will see in what way God works.

"And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison." We should have said, this must be done in the dark, and as quietly as possible. But see, the light came into the prison. Humanly speaking, this would have awakened the soldiers; but not thus with Jehovah; when He works, He can do His will, notwithstanding all these things.

The angel *"smote Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, 'Arise up quickly'"*, without any fear that in addressing Peter the soldiers should be awakened.

"And as he rose, the chains fell from off his hands." Still there was no fear of arousing the soldiers.

"Gird thyself:" There is no need to hurry; he is to be taken out, but is to dress himself properly.

And now come the strangest thing of all, *"Bind on thy sandals"*. These wooden shoes must be bound on the feet. We should have said, let him walk out without them, that no noise be made to awaken the sleeping soldiers. Not thus; it was God who wrought the deliverance, and when He works there is no need to fear, for who can withstand?

And so he did. And the Angel saith unto him, *"Cast thy garment about thee"*. His outer garment is to be put on. Everything, therefore, is to be done in an orderly manner. It is as if Herod had sent a messenger to deliver him; he is to go quietly forth.

"When they were past the first and second ward." The eyes of the keepers were miraculously shut.

But now they come to *"the iron gate"*. Many, many times do we come to some such iron gate. He was now out of the prison, and past the soldiers who were watching, but now he comes to this great iron gate. How shall he get out of prison after all? And so it is with you and me at times. Everything seems prepared, and difficulties have been removed;

and yet, after all, there seems to be one great obstacle which is insurmountable. Can we escape? Yes! God is able to open the iron gate for you and for me, even as He caused the great iron gate of the prison to open of its own accord. Let us expect everything from God, and He will do it, if it is for His glory, and our good and profit.

God's unchangeable power

But can He do miraculous things today? Yes, as well as He could in the middle of the first century. Let us never say this was in the days of the apostles, and we cannot expect such things now. Quite true, that God does not commonly work miracles; but He can if He will, and let us give glory to His name, that if He does not work miracles it is because He can and does do His will by ordinary means. He can accomplish His ends in many ways. Let us never lose heart in such circumstances; He has the same power as ever He had. Many think if they were living in the days of Elijah, or in the days of Elisha or in the days of the apostles, they would expect these things; but because they do not live in those days, therefore they cannot expect to have such answers to prayer. This is wrong; remember, that God has the same power as in the days of the prophets of old, or of the apostles of old; therefore let us only look for great blessings, and great blessings will be bestowed on us, my beloved friends in Christ.

"They passed through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him." This contains an important spiritual truth – it is this, that God does not work miracles when they are not needed. The angel was sent to deliver Peter from prison; but Peter was now in the streets, and he knew very well the streets of Jerusalem. He had been living there, and he knew all about them; and it was not, therefore, necessary that the angel should lead him through the streets, and bring him to the house where he was going. Therefore as soon as he was outside the prison, and no more supernatural help was required, the angel departed from him.

The deliverance effected

"And when Peter was come to himself, he said, 'Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hands of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews'." He wist not that it was true at first, and thought that it must be a vision, but now that he finds himself in the streets, he knows that God has indeed delivered him.

"And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying." Notice this, "many were gathered praying". For what purpose? For Peter's deliverance unquestionably; because prayer was made by the church on his behalf without ceasing. Though it was the night before his execution, they did not lose heart. To the eye of man the case seems hopeless, but they still came together to pray. Therefore they had not only begun well, but they had also gone on well' they had continued in prayer.

"And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda." Her name is given. Why so? When this was written down, inquiry might be made as to the truth of the account. The damsel, probably, was then living, and thus opportunity for this inquiry was afforded.

"And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood at the gate." Here we find a description so true to life. What shall we say? The damsel heard his voice and knew it' she knew they were praying for Peter's deliverance; her heart was so glad that first of all she runs to tell that Peter stood at the door. She could not open the door. Now what do we expect to hear out of the mouths of those beloved brethren in Christ, those holy men who have been waiting upon God day after day? Surely it will be praise.

Failing faith

Ah! there is it which shows what we are. *"Thou art mad."* I specially seek, in bringing this before you, that we may learn what we are naturally. They had begun well, and had gone on well, yet failed completely in the end. They had faith at the first, and exercised faith, but had no faith in the end. Let us be warned, beloved friends' that is just what we must seek to avoid. It is comparatively easy for us to begin well and to go on well, day after day, week after week, month after month, but it is difficult to remain faithful to the end. Even thus it was regarding those of whom we are ready to say, "we are not worthy to unloose their shoes"; and if they failed, what of us? What say they? "Thou art mad." They are praying for the thing, and it comes; yet this is what they say. Those men had begun in faith, had gone on in faith, and yet it is gone. They had continued outwardly to wait upon God, but at last without expectation. If they had continued in faith, they would have said, when they heard the tidings, "Blessed by God; let His holy name be praised!" I am as certain of this as though an audible voice had told me from heaven. It would have been impossible for them to say to Rhoda "Thou art mad", when she brought the news of Peter's freedom, unless faith had been gone.

If we ask let us be looking for the answer

"But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, 'It is his angel.' But Peter continue knocking; and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished." Another proof that they were wanting in faith at that time, "they were astonished". True faith is thus known, that when we begin in faith, and continue in faith, we are not astonished when the answer comes. For instance, suppose any of you have beloved sons or daughters who are unconverted for whom you have been praying long. At last they have been brought to the Lord. The test, whether you have been praying in faith or not, is, if you say, "The Lord be praised for it", and you receive the tidings gladly; then you have been exercising faith.

If I may use a phrase in the right sense, "We take it as a matter of course". So, in a spiritual sense, we should be so confident that God will bless, and that He will answer what we ask, that when it comes, we should still be so confident as to say, "We take it as a matter of course; it could not be otherwise; the thing must come because God has pledged to give the blessing".

"But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. And he said, 'Go show these things to James and to the brethren'; and he departed, and went into another place."

The Whole World Lieth in Wickedness

An Address delivered at the Conference of Christians at Clifton, on October 4th, 1871

I John v. 10,

It has been my happy privilege to be present at every one of the various Conference Meetings, year by year, held here; but I do not remember one single day that brought such an awfully solemn subject before our consideration as the one before us to-day – "The whole world lieth in wickedness," or, the Wicked One,

O Lord, grant that our hearts may be truly affected by this Thine own declaration! Through the riches of Thy grace we apprehend it a little, we enter into it a little, we are affected by it a little. But, oh, how little! Now we beseech Thee that Thou Thyself, by the Holy Ghost, wouldst so write upon our hearts the truth contained in this statement, as that it may affect us day by day for the remainder of our life. We ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I just refer to the expression itself, in which there seems a vast deal contained: "The whole world lieth in the Wicked One." What does it imply? A kind of repose, of slumber, - a readiness to be in such a condition. This is implied in it. Thus is it with the world. They will have it to be so. They desire not it should be otherwise, - because they are blinded by Satan, because they are dead in trespasses and in sins, because they are wanting spiritual life, and fail to apprehend the awful condition in which they are. They are just, spiritually, in the condition in which a man is who is sleeping at the top of the mast and apprehends not the awfulness of his danger. Precisely in the same state, spiritually, are those who are lying in the Wicked One. Should there be any here present, - and I cannot help fearing there are some here present, - to whom this applies, because as yet they belong to the world; oh, let me beseech and entreat affectionately, as one who by God's grace knows by painful and sad experience what it is to be in that state, and as one who at the same time by grace has known now for about forty-six years the blessedness of the opposite state; oh! let me beseech such to consider the awfulness of their condition, if by any means they might be aroused out of their state. Oh! be besought and entreated, for the end of your course is destruction, - the end of your course is everlasting misery. Therefore be besought, be entreated to flee from "the wrath to come." The arms of the blessed Lord Jesus are stretched out to receive you. Oh how willing is that Blessed One! He has proved the depth of His love to the vilest, the most awful sinner, by laying down His life for you; and therefore how can you doubt the readiness of the blessed Son of God, who left His glory, who became a servant, who lived as a servant in the most degraded condition for more than thirty years, and then laid down His life as a substitute in order to save sinners, the greatest, the oldest, the vilest, the most hardened sinners, - how can you doubt His love to receive you? Therefore come .to Him; which means, believe in Him, trust in Him, depend on Him for the salvation of your souls, and blessing will be yours, - this evening it will be yours. And oh! what joy in heaven there would be if this last meeting of this happy Conference is God's instrument in bringing some precious souls here present to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, then, be besought, be entreated to consider your state, dear fellow-sinners, and with earnestness to flee from "the wrath to come!"

But while the statement is, "The whole world lieth in wickedness," or the Wicked One, it is evident here are excluded the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the little flock, comparatively the few. Those who trust in Jesus, those who depend on Him for the salvation of their souls; they by God's grace are excluded, they by God's grace believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they by God's grace are "begotten again," "born again," "renewed"; they have

been "delivered from the power of darkness," out of the kingdom of Satan, and have been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son," to show forth His praise, to live to His honour and glory, to be lights in this dark world, to make it manifest that they have been translated into the kingdom of God, and that they are the children of God. Such to whom God has been gracious - to you who are by far the larger part here present, as to myself, what becomes us to do? To show forth our gratitude to God who has done so much for us! That is our one great business of life, if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to be grateful to God for all He has done for us in Jesus, and for having revealed Him to our hearts and given to us peace in Him, and forgiveness of our sins by faith in His name through the power of that precious blood which was shed for the remission of our sins. How may I show forth gratitude? Evidently, by seeking to do those things which please God, acting according to His mind revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures - in that one blessed, precious Book of which we heard at the beginning of this meeting. And, therefore, while seeking to refrain and abstain from those things which are contrary to the mind of God - and this is our business if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ - we are to seek also to please God in doing those things which are according to His mind.

Then there is one other thing in which believers are especially to show their gratitude to God; and that is by seeking to rescue out of the world those who are living in the world, by seeking to do what lies in their power to bring to the knowledge of the truth those who know it not, to seek to be instrumental in the salvation of their souls. I would ask, How many of you have children in the faith? Can you point to so-and-so, and so-and-so, and say, "him has God given me as my child in the faith;" "her has God given to me as my child in the faith"? Oh! if you are yet alone, if you have no spiritual children as yet, there remains yet a precious blessing before you. Let there be a holy ambition, which is according to the mind of God, for this precious blessing. Pray earnestly for this blessing, pray earnestly day by day that God will not allow you to go out of the world without having spiritual children. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus ought to aim after this. Let me affectionately press this point on your hearts. The consideration that "the whole world lieth in the Wicked One" does not allow us to go on dreaming, to go on slumbering; and if we are not affected by it, it is a plain proof that as yet we have not apprehended what is contained in that solemn statement. In the measure in which the soul does apprehend it, the soul cries to God, "Lord, help me to deliver my poor fellow-sinners out of their present condition," and the Lord condescends to use us as the blessed instruments to win souls to Him. Now in this state of mind we are to continue. Not, now and then, - not, to use a common phrase, by fits and starts, - but, day by day, as an habitual thing, this should be foremost in our hearts.

Let me affectionately ask all my fellow-believers, Are we day by day in the habit of praying for blessing in the way of conversion? Are we day by day - at least once in each day asking God that He would graciously be pleased to work mightily through the variety of instruments employed for the winning of souls? If not, such a day should be considered as a day regarding which we have not done one thing which is according to the mind of God, in which we have neglected one thing regarding which He would have us to be earnest. Further: we should day by day ask God graciously to be pleased to fulfil that word which He laid on the minds of His disciples, that they should pray to "the Lord of the harvest" that He would be pleased to "send forth labourers into His harvest." Are we in the habit of doing so? The most important point is, that we are earnest in prayer. But we are not to be satisfied simply with praying. The example of our Lord is before us. He told His disciples - we have it in Matthew - to pray for labourers to be sent forth; and immediately He sent them forth. Then He Himself went forth, through every city and town, preaching the gospel. This is the order in which we should go, labouring according to the ability and opportunity given to us, and according to the gift God has bestowed upon us, - not all of us in a public way, but in our measure doing what we can for the spread of truth. As Sunday School teachers, as Adult School teachers, as Ragged School teachers, as District Visitors, as Tract Circulators, we may labour in winning souls to God. Further: in our own families seeking to bring our children to the knowledge of the truth, - and this is especially the point for Christian parents - to have uppermost on their hearts. I do not mean from morning to night; five, six, or ten times a day bringing the truth before your children, - there are certain times and seasonable times for doing this; but it is to be done prayerfully, lovingly, affectionately, as it becomes parents, the heart filled with love to the children. Then, in every position in which believers are placed, they are to bring the truth before those around them, - before their servants, their warehousemen, their shopkeepers. Then some may speak a word to little companies, and some may have a gift for speaking in the open air. How great a privilege is this, which I was led to enjoy forty years ago, till I was obliged to give it up, not having sufficient strength of voice or lungs. But for those who have strength of lungs and voice it is a glorious and blessed privilege to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God in the open air. And let me affectionately press this on my fellow-believers who have the ability so to do. Everyone has his work to do, and our business is to find out in what way we may serve the Lord in the winning of souls to Him.

I hope some beloved young brethren and sisters in Christ may be stirred up tonight to purpose that they will do something for God; that they will begin in earnest tonight, to work somewhere or other, to do something or other, and by the help of God to say, "I mean not to go to heaven alone; I mean to have spiritual children; I

mean to pray for many spiritual children; and will cry mightily to God till I receive many spiritual children." Here is a holy ambition of which we cannot have too much, for which we cannot pray too much, for which we cannot labour too much.

And in connection with all this use of the means we have never to depend on the means as if they could accomplish anything. Millions of tracts you may circulate, and not a single soul be converted thereby. Wait upon God. Water the tracts with your tears, water them with your prayers. As you give the tract, let your soul go out after the tract. Cry to God, "Go with this tract; direct it to the right person." And when you have given it, or when you have given the Testament, cry to God that He would graciously be pleased to give His blessing upon your effort; but at the same time labour as if everything depended upon your labour. Put no trust in your labour, but let all your dependence be upon God the Holy Ghost; at the same time pray as if everything depended on your prayer. Thus work and pray, and pray and work. Again and again work, again and again pray; expect blessings, and blessings assuredly will be granted. Our meetings have been of an unusually practical character, and I bless God for it; and if furrows are made in the heart, and good traces left behind of our Conference Meetings, what cause we shall have to bless and praise God; and most of all, if some of our dear fellow-sinners, who as yet are out of the way, would receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and love and serve Him, what joy there would be in heaven, and what joy to us to hear of such cases.

To save sinners

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol on Sunday evening, April 4th 1897

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. – I Timothy i., 15,16.

The first point we have to consider in these verse is this, that the statement of God the Holy Spirit that Christ came into the world to save sinners is a faithful saying. That implies there is not a shadow of doubt regarding the fact the "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". The matter is as certain as that the earth is in existence. The matter is as certain as that God invariably speaks the truth, and nothing but the truth. It is declared in the Word of God, given by inspiration; that is, written under the immediate power of God the Holy Spirit – therefore it is without a shadow of doubt. And we who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ should again and again, while life is continued to us here on earth, seek to sound it out far and wide, as much as we possibly can, that it is an entirely correct, perfectly true statement that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".

The second point regarding this is, that the statement deserves to be accepted. It is "worthy of all acceptance" we read. And we have, therefore, to ask ourselves regarding the first, Do we believe the statement that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" Secondly, Have we in heart received this statement, which God the Holy Spirit makes by the Apostle Paul – for on receiving it, or not receiving it, depends the salvation of our souls! O let us not lightly treat it! Let us not simply read it and speak about it, and have certain notions regarding it; let us not be satisfied until in our inmost souls we have received the statement really and truly that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".

Then the next point we have to weight regarding our text is this, it is not stated that Christ Jesus was born into the world to save sinners – though had it been thus stated it would have been perfectly true, for, in reference to His humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ was born into the world. But here His humanity merely not referred to, but more particularly by the statement that "He came into the world to save sinners," His divinity is alluded to, His existence before He was seen on earth. Then He existed, for He is the Creator of the universe, the Upholder of the universe, and He existed from eternity, for He had no beginning of days. This is the particular point, that we have to lay to heart here – that He came into the world to save sinners.

And this brings before us a deeply important truth, regarding which all believers in the Lord Jesus should be clearly, distinctly instructed. In the Messiah, in the Saviour of sinners, in Christ, was united both the human and the divine nature. He was really and truly a man, like ourselves, sin only excepted. There was never found a single sin, as to action, nor as to word, nor as to thought, in our Lord Jesus Christ. He ate and drank, He slept, really and truly slept like ourselves, was altogether human like ourselves, sin only in every way most perfectly excepted. It was necessary that He should be really and truly human in order that in our room and stead, by perfectly fulfilling the law, He might work out a righteousness in which we could be accepted before God, through faith in His Name. For this very reason, it was necessary that He should be human like ourselves, that He should come under the Law, that He might fulfil the

Law, and thus bring in everlasting righteousness to the poor sinner who trusts in Him. So that we, on account of Christ, could be reckoned righteous on the part of God. This is most precious, and we have to ponder it again and again, and to see clearly and distinctly that we may have full comfort under the deep consciousness of our manifold failures and shortcomings.

Further, it was absolutely needful that He should be truly human like ourselves, sin only excepted, in order that, as a human being, He might feel, really and truly feel, the punishment which came on Him as our Substitute. Had the Saviour been only divine, and not truly human also, He would not have felt the pain and the suffering while passing on through this vale of tears for thirty-three years and a half, and especially when He hung on the Cross, when His precious hands and precious feet were pierced through with large nails, and when He shed His blood for the remission of our sins. O how deeply important it is to consider all this!

Then, lastly, it was needful that He should be truly human, sin only excepted, in order that, as our Great High Priest, He might feel sympathy for us, in our trials, in our sufferings, in our pain, and in our need. For these reasons, then, it was necessary that the Saviour of sinners should be truly human. But this is only one side of the truth. The other side is that He was at the same time as really and truly divine as the Father! This was perfectly needful, in order that, in the first place He might be able to endure all that which came on Him, in connection with the hour of darkness. A mere human being, though perfectly holy, perfectly sinless, could not have been able to endure all these pains, and torments, and agonies, which were brought on Him, when, as our Substitute, He bore the punishment, which we deserved, for our numberless transgressions. For this reason it was absolutely needful that the Saviour of sinners should be divine, as well as human.

It was further necessary that He should be divine in order to give value to His precious blood, for by it not merely one sinner was to be saved, not merely a thousand sinners, not merely a million sinners, but an innumerable company. Therefore this must be the blood of the God Man, Christ Jesus, not merely the blood of the man, Christ Jesus, not merely the blood of the One, Who had been born at Bethlehem by the Virgin Mary, and brought up at Nazareth as an ordinary man, but the God-Man, the Creator of the universe, the Upholder of the universe. And thus, because of His being really and truly God, power was given to that blood shed for the remission of our sins, to save an innumerable multitude! O how precious the consideration of this, that we may have full consolation in the fact that He Who died on the cross shed the blood of the God-Man, "the blood of God", as it is stated in the 28th verse of the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Lastly, it was necessary that He should be truly divine, in order that the powers of darkness might not have the ability of overthrowing the atoning work which our precious Lord Jesus began on earth, and is carrying on now in glory. Had He, our Substitute, been merely human, though the most holy and spotless of human beings, the devils would have sought opportunity, without hesitating one moment, to overturn this atoning work of His; but because the atoning work was commenced and is carried on by One Who is really God, Satan, who is a mere creature, cannot overturn the work. Therefore, the salvation of our souls is certain. Now, may the beloved young disciples particularly seek to clearly understand the necessity of the true humanity of our Lord, and the true divinity, as being absolutely needful regarding the salvation of our souls.

The next point we have to ponder is that, "He came into the world to save sinners." This word is full of comfort in particular. O what would have become of all who are believers in Christ were there not this statement. Had it been stated, "He came into the world to save good people, who needed something of His help; excellent people, who were not completely perfect, and needed a little of His help!" o, then, what would have become of great sinners like myself? We should have no comfort. But it is simply stated, "He came into the world to save sinners." Therefore none are excluded, whether they are young sinners, or old sinners, whether they have been guilty of many sins or few sins! No exception made here! "He came into the world to save sinners." That implies even the oldest sinners, the most notorious sinners, the most hardened sinners; those who have been guilty times without number, those whose sins are more in number than the hairs of their head. Even such can be saved by Him. O how precious! O how precious! No poor sinner is excluded, provided he seeks salvation in God's appointed way, through the Lord Jesus Christ. O unspeakably blessed this!

Now what have we to do on our part, in order to partake of the benefit of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done, as our Substitute, is first to see the need of a Saviour. There are many people who think themselves very good, very excellent people, who look on the drunkard, the thief, and the robber with utter contempt, because they regard themselves as such very good and excellent people. They trust that by their good life and excellent deportment they will get to heaven, not knowing that, by our own strength, we can only fit ourselves for hell. But of the thousands upon thousands, the tens of thousands upon tens of thousands that have been on earth since the creation, there has not been one single individual ever found who by his own goodness and merit and worthiness, brought himself to heaven. On the other

hand, numberless individuals, by their own goodness and merit, have brought themselves to hell, to perdition, because they trusted in their own goodness, instead of trusting in Christ.

Therefore the first thing, in order to partake of this salvation prepared by the Lord Jesus Christ for poor sinners is that we see, clearly and distinctly see, we need a Saviour, that we cannot save ourselves by our own goodness, merit, and worthiness. In the Word of God, our own righteousness is compared to filthy rags, and God will have no filthy rags in heaven. Clean, fine, white linen, spotlessness, He requires for His own presence. I repeat, therefore, the first thing, is we desire to be saved through Jesus Christ, is that we see we are sinners, that we see we need a Saviour, and that we put our trust in Him alone for salvation. If we cannot see this, we should ask God to show it to us, and should read His Word, in which it is plainly stated – for instance, in the first three chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, and in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, besides a number of other portions – that all human beings, without exception, are sinners. Then when we see it, we have to confess before God that we are sinners, deserving punishment; and have to ask Him that He would be pleased, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to help us to put our trust alone in Jesus for the salvation of our souls. Thus is brought to us peace and joy in God; and the more we enter into it, the more clearly we see it and apprehend it, the greater will be the peace and joy in our souls.

After the Apostle Paul had made the statement, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” he adds, “of whom I am chief.” This is not merely carelessly or in a flippant way uttered. Nothing of the kind! This is his sure and hearty conviction, that he was the greatest sinner, that he was the chief of sinners, for he could never forget that he had been so great a persecutor of the Church of God, that he had again and again and again beaten the believers in Christ, that he had cast them into prison, that he had worried them until at last they blasphemed the Name of Jesus – at least he had aimed at it, and would not let them go till he had done his utmost to make them do so – and then, lastly, whenever he possibly could, he had sought to see that they were put to death. Now, on account of all this, which he never could forget and which he refers to again and again in his epistles, and in the Acts of the Apostles, he calls himself “the chief of sinners.” We, in a thoughtless and flippant way, may use the same expression; but we should lay it to heart that thus it was not with the Apostle Paul. He meant what he said in calling himself, “the chief of sinners”.

But this is only one side of it! Here comes the other side. He obtained forgiveness, pardon. “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.” The first thing we have to observe regarding this second verse of our text is, that the Apostle Paul knew he was a forgiven sinner, a pardoned sinner. Now, how is it with ourselves regarding this point? I am now particularly referring to believers. If we are believers in the Lord Jesus, do we know that we are forgiven ones? Do we know that every one of our sins is forgiven? That not a single sin shall be brought against us hereafter, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? That, therefore, the one only hateful thing which stands between the sinner and his God, that is sin itself, is put aside? That in the sight of God, we are clean ones, spotless ones, holy ones, because we are forgiven ones. O how precious!

I walk up and down in my room in prayer and in meditation about the things of God; I come out before God with this sin and with another sin, with very many sins of which I have been guilty, and which God the Holy Spirit brings to my remembrance! But it is always wound up with “These, my numberless transgressions, are forgiven!” Every one of my sins forgiven! Not a single sin remains unforgiven! Therefore I am completely reconciled to God, and God reconciled to me! O how precious! And the result of it all is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost! Not decreased by the remembrance of all our numberless transgressions, but increased more and more, because we see more clearly God’s wondrous love to us in Christ Jesus.

Should there be a single believer present who does not yet know that his sins are all forgiven, completely forgiven, that he has obtained mercy from God, though a sinner, a great sinner, let such a one not give himself rest till he knows it for himself, for there is no lasting peace till we come to know that all our numberless transgressions are forgiven. Let us not say we cannot know this on earth; we must wait till we get to heaven. Nay, the very opposite. It is the will of God that we should know it while we are yet in the body, for He has clearly and distinctly revealed to us that our sins are all forgiven if we are believers in Christ, as it is written in the 43rd verse of the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles regarding the Lord Jesus, “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” That is, forgiveness of sins.

By the grace of God, I have known for seventy-one years and five months that all my numberless transgressions are forgiven. I have never had five minutes’ doubt about it. And the result has been peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. So it is whenever we are really able to the full to enter into it that all our transgressions are forgiven. We have on no account to say, “o here is an apostle, who writes this; but it is not for us common ordinary believers to know.” Every one of the children of God may know it! Every one of the children of God ought to know it! Ought to know it, and not give rest to themselves till they know it to the full.

“For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first.” This “first” has a double meaning. Primarily, that a beginning might be laid in his case to be a pattern of the long-suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ; in the next place that in him, the chief of sinners, might be shown what God is willing to do for any and every sinner! Now let us seek to lay hold on this! The Apostle Paul, the great persecutor as he was when he was called Saul, obtained full, complete forgiveness of all the numberless transgressions of which he had been guilty, that a specimen might be given of what the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to do for the oldest, the greatest of all sinners, affording especially a sample in forgiving this vile persecutor of the saints, Saul, in order that no one after him need to despair whether it be possible that he or she could obtain forgiveness of sins. Of the hundreds of millions of human beings now under heaven, it is impossible that there can be one single individual who is too great a sinner to be forgiven; for he (Paul) was forgiven to be a sample that hereafter no one need despair. O this text! How precious! If this building were gold, or were filled with gold, it would be as nothing in comparison with the preciousness of this verse! “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first” – that in me first – “Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering.” That is long-suffering to the utmost, a sample of what He is willing to do for any and everyone! “For a pattern” – that is, for an example, for a proof – “to them which should hereafter believe on Him.” O, precious! That there might not be, of all the numberless millions of human beings, a single individual who should have Scriptural ground to say, “I am too great a sinner to be pardoned.”

Then, lastly, this one word more, “Believe on Him to life everlasting.” That means to eternal joy and happiness; as “an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ” to share with Him the glory, and to be unspeakably happy throughout Eternity, by partaking of the rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God. O, ponder, ponder, ponder, again, again, and again, and pray over it yet further and further, what is contained in this word, “Believe on Him to life everlasting.” The pleasures of this life, of this world, and the possessions of this world are exposed to change, and all is vanity. It is simply of the world. But what we receive in Christ brings eternal joy, eternal happiness; joy and happiness that will never, never, never be taken from us!

O, pray for this yet more and more! Seek to apprehend it more and more, and to lay hold on it further and further, more clearly and distinctly than as yet you have done, my beloved younger brethren and sisters in Christ. God grant it, for His Name’s sake.

Trust in the Lord

Proverbs 3:5-17

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol on Sunday evening, 30th May 1897

The Book of Proverbs forms a deeply important portion of the Word of God. It is full of most precious counsels and advice for all human beings, if they would only give ear. Of course, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will have the greatest blessing through it; but even for those who as yet do not know the Lord, if they were to attend to what is given in this Book of Proverbs, they would find great blessing and benefit, not merely in regard to the life to come, but for their stay here on earth. It is full of important instruction. I will mention just this point, for instance. More than once warning is given against becoming *surety* for other persons. Now, very many of us know, from our own experience, what misery, what exceeding great misery, has come upon whole families, it may be upon several families, simply on account of not attending to this.

Hastily, inconsiderately, they have become sureties for others, saying to themselves, “I shall never be called on to pay this money;” but before they were aware of it they were compelled to make good their suretyship, and often and often brought the greatest misery not merely on themselves, but on their whole family, and perhaps more than one family were drawn thus into misery. Now, God, knowing all this beforehand, through His servant Solomon admonished us not to do it. I myself, in my long life, have known instance upon instance of the greatest misery brought on whole families on account of not attending to this. Now, this is just one instance that I mention; but there are numberless points in the Book of Proverbs of a similar character, which, because they are not attended to, bring wretchedness and misery, not merely on one, but often on very many. Verse 5: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.” Often and often because this likewise has not been attended to, misery has been brought, the greatest misery, not only on individuals, but on large families. The temptation is, “O I have a great deal of experience in my business; I know what to do, I know how to act, I know what will turn out best.” Thus speculation has come on, and speculation to a very, very large extent; and misery beyond description has been brought about on account of this. I just mention one instance which I was intimate with, the individual concerned being one whom I greatly loved. There was a war with China coming on, many, many years ago – the first war with China on the part of England; the individual was advised to buy an immense quantity of tea, because tea would rise in price exceedingly on account of the war, and the beloved, dear Christian man said to himself, “I do not care about this speculation for myself, but I feel exceedingly for my own dear brother about business matters.” And so, being advised by the brother to buy an immense quantity, he speculated far beyond his capital, in order to help his brother out of difficulties. The result was, very soon war was at an end, the tea did not at all rise to what it was expected it would – indeed, because so many had bought very large

quantities, it actually decreased in price, instead of rising – and this beloved Christian friend of mine lost an enormous sum of money, so that instead of helping his brother he brought himself into exceeding great difficulty.

Now here, you see, is the Word speaking to the opposite effect, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart” – “depend on Me for what you need; look to Me for what you need, and do not take the advice of those brokers, or any other such agents, but consult the Lord” – “lean not unto thine own understanding.” Do not suppose because you have had a good deal of experience, or another person has had a good deal of experience, that *that* is all which is needed; but betake yourself to the Lord under all circumstances, at all times, under all difficulties, and seek His advice and counsel. Now this has been my habit (it was not my habit for the first two years after my conversion), but it has now been for 69 years my habit to act according to this, and the result is that all has been going on well with my affairs. I have never been allowed to bring myself into difficulties on account of such matters, because I have not trusted in my own experience, but have trusted in the Lord.

If difficulties arise with our service, when we meet in the mornings we lay our case before God, tell Him in all simplicity our position, and ask His counsel and advice. And He does give unto us counsel and advice, and helps us out of difficulties and perplexing circumstances, though they are very frequent in our service – yea, there is rarely a day but something or other turns up in which we need to be guided and directed by the Lord; and He helps us, He appears for us. I can advise this way of living and acting to all my beloved Christian friends, for the result of it is peace, peace, peace! All the ordinary troubles of life vanish, if we thus throw our burden on the Lord and speak to Him about matters.

“Lean not unto thine own understanding.” How clearly expressed, how decidedly expressed! Our danger is continually to lean on our own understanding; to say to ourselves, “O, I have many times passed through similar circumstances. I have a good deal of experience in these matters; it is not necessary that I should pray about it, for I know very well what I ought to do.” And thus we bring on ourselves wretchedness and misery, and often not merely on ourselves, but on those connected with us.

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” In *all* thy ways. Let us particularly notice this – not merely now and then come to God for guidance and direction, but regarding every step that we take, every business that we enter into, and every new phase of our business, bring it before God and talk to Him, converse with Him concerning the matter. *That* is the meaning of “In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him;” and the result will be this: “He shall direct thy paths.” Never begin anything without going to God about it in prayer! Never take any step without first of all settling the matter between yourselves and God, and the result will be you will not speak to Him in vain. He loves you. “He shall direct thy paths;” He will make plain your way, and show you clearly and distinctly how you ought to act. Thus you will escape the great difficulties, the great trials, in carrying out the measure of light which God will give you. O how precious!

Now, we have *not* to say “I do not live in the days of miracles; I do not live in a time when there is a Urim and a Thummim, and the high priest who could tell me what to do.” For God is willing by His Spirit, through the Holy Scriptures, yet in our day, at the close of the nineteenth century, to guide and direct us. And in being guided and directed, if we carry out the measure of light which God is pleased to give to us, we shall find how blessed it is not to take any steps directed by our own understanding, but to seek wisdom from God, and obtain counsel and advice from Him. The Lord Jesus Christ, among all other titles given to Him in the Word of God, has *one* title: that is, He is the Counsellor. The Counsellor of the Church of God, for her benefit, for her instruction. We are naturally ignorant, we do not know how to act, what to do; but if we betake ourselves to our Counsellor, the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall find how ready He is to counsel us, to advise us.

I have found it thus, more or less, during the last 69 years that I have known the Lord. The first two years I often, often acted hastily, without much prayer, because patience was not natural to me then. I would have the matter settled, and therefore acted without patiently and quietly waiting on God; and taking hasty steps often and often, I was not merely confounded, but I brought trouble on myself. During the last 69 years, however, I have acted differently, and have therefore gone peacefully along, and have had rest in God. None of those trials through which I first passed after my conversion have been found in my life since, because I have patiently and quietly waited on God, to guide, direct, and help me.

“Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil.” Naturally we have, often and often, too high an idea about ourselves; we are “wise in our own eyes,” and on account of this take steps to go forward without seeking the counsel and advice of the Lord. The result is, trouble and difficulty. Now, beloved Christian friends, let us especially be warned by this, not to be wise in our own eyes, because it is too true, that we are *not* wise. If left to ourselves, we shall surely take wrong steps; we shall surely be confounded. Things will not go on well. And therefore it becomes us as being made fully aware of our natural ignorance and helplessness, to betake ourselves to God for counsel and advice. That is what we have to do, and above all to “fear God and to depart from evil”.

Our own ways are so frequently connected with that which is contrary to the mind of God; but if we are not wise in our own eyes, not only shall we be guided aright, but the result, further, will be that taking steps according to the mind of God we shall be departing from evil. Now, what follows from this? It tends even to the benefit of the body. Not merely gives peace of mind to the soul, but is good even for the body. "It shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones."

Now comes in another subject altogether. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thy increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." I do not forget that the Israelites had special promises given to them with regard to abundance in this life, if they walked in the ways of the Lord. Now, though in this present dispensation, we have not the promise to become very rich, to become great men, if we walk in the ways of the Lord, still there is, if we attend to these two verses, blessing coming to us even in this life, besides spiritual blessing. I have known this in my own experience, by acting according to these two verses. I have seen it ever so many times in the lives of godly brethren and sisters in Christ, who acted according to these two verses.

"Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first-fruits of all thy increase." God fills the clouds with rain, for the very purpose that they may empty themselves on the land, to make the land fertile; and so God trusts His children, as His stewards, with means not to keep all to themselves, not to enjoy merely themselves, but to communicate out of the abundance He is pleased to give them to their fellow men – those who are weak and feeble, and cannot work, or who through other circumstances are brought into straightened, difficult positions and circumstances. This attended to brings blessing not only to the soul, but even blessing of a temporal character. I speak as one who knows all this from an experience in my own case of much more than 60 years. I speak about this as having, through my acquaintance with more than tens of thousands of children of God, had brought before me again and again and again the fact that those who acted according to the principles here laid down, not merely brought blessings to their souls, but even as to their circumstances temporarily, obtained far more again than they had given away, so that not only interest was given them, but compound interest, and in many cases twenty times, fifty times, even a hundred times more than they had given to the poor, or than they had given to the work of God. For God ever sees to it that He is not our debtor, but that we are His debtors. O if brethren and sisters in Christ habitually acted according to this verse, how different would be their position even as to this life, and how great the blessing which they would thus bring to their own souls!

"Honour the Lord with thy substance." When God is pleased to give to us temporal blessings, He gives them, not that on our own persons we may spend the abundance He is pleased to bestow on us, but that we may remember the weak and sickly, and help and assist them; that we may remember those who are out of employment, who would gladly work, but who have no work; and that we may care for the widow, and the aged widow in particular, and the aged man who can no longer work – that we may remember their necessities and care for them. And the result will be, as I have seen it times without number in my long Christian career, that not only will blessing come to the souls of those who act according to this work, but that even with regard to temporal things God will abundantly repay what we have thus given. "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." We may have no barns, and no vineyard, to have this literally fulfilled; but God, in some way or other, will make it manifest how He is mindful of what we have given to the widow, to the poor sick person who cannot work, to the poor aged man who is past work.

Now comes another subject: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction, for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." Often and often I have found how real, true children of God are discouraged, disheartened, greatly bowed down, because they are *so long* afflicted, forgetting that the very affliction is a token of the Father's love to them. O remember this, because it is a matter not to question. I take God at His word, "Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth". All these afflictions are education to our hearts. In regard to our positions and circumstances, "Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth;" not the father the son whom he hates, whom he does not care about in the least, whom he despises, whom he may mean to disinherit. Nothing, nothing, nothing of the kind. "Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." Ah! if this were laid to heart by the dear children of God in trial, in affliction, and in difficulty, how differently would they judge their trials, their afflictions, their disappointments, their sorrows, their pain and suffering. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord."

I was once for a good while in a position that I could not work at all, because I had overwrought myself, overworked myself in service for the Lord, had not been careful about my health. For six years, I have never taken a walk in the fields! If the work of the Lord called me to exercise, I would walk eight, ten, twenty miles, or more in such service, but if the work of the Lord did not call me to exercise, I would never go out for five minutes for the sake of recreation, or for the sake of benefiting my health. The consequence was, that while before I was able to write ten, fifteen, or twenty letters without rising from my chair, and read for three or four hours at a stretch, I was now so reduced that the writing of one single little note was too much for me, and, as for reading, not a quarter of an hour could I stay at it. It was all too much. Under these circumstances I did not, by the grace of God, despise His chastening; but, after months and months had passed, leaving me in this state, I began to be weary of His correction. That was the danger into which I

came, and I began to ask God not merely to keep me from despising the chastening, but not to weary – to be willing to go on bearing with the way in which He dealt with me. And, in the riches of His grace, He kept me from being weary.

So after months had passed in this weakness mentally, in the inability of going on doing what I had been able to do, my health became by little and little restored; and I thus obtained the ability of warning my fellow-believers to take care of their health. I began to take now and then a little rest, now and then a little walk; and the consequence was I have been able to work far, far more abundantly, and have been far, far happier in my soul since I began to care about my health. I mention this for warning to those who despise the taking care of their health, and go on toiling, toiling, toiling, as if their bodies were brass and iron. If we wish to get profit to the soul, we need to let the body have rest. I state deliberately and solemnly, in the fear of God, during these last fifty years of my life, since I have allowed myself a quarter of an hour's rest, or a little more, now and then, God has enabled me to labour far more abundantly than before, and my soul has also been blessed far more abundantly.

“My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction.” Let this sink into our souls – not to be weary of His correction. It does not require overmuch grace not to despise the chastening of the Lord; but it requires a good deal of grace when the mental affliction, the chastening of the Lord, continues for a long time, not to be weary of His correction. But the will of God is to submit to His dealings with us, and His leadings of us, both now and always; for “whom the Lord loveth He correcteth”. This is a word for particular support under affliction, to remember that it is a *love token* when we are afflicted. “Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” Notice this phrase, “In whom he delighteth”. Therefore it is entirely a mistake to suppose that when affliction, trial, or sorrow is allowed to befall us, that it is a token of dislike on the part of God; but it is all intended for our blessing to our souls. Because God loves us, He gives us this love-token of affliction.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.” Now, this is particularly a word to those who are not converted, for “finding wisdom” means to be brought to the fear of the Lord. Wisdom is the fear of the Lord, to know the Saviour, to see that we are sinners, to own that we are sinners, to confess that we are sinners; and then to put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls. That is the meaning of finding wisdom. Now, before going on any further, I affectionately ask the little company here present, “Are we all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ?” God's delight is to make us all as happy as we are capable of being while yet in the body. Now, have we obtained this real, true happiness, every one of us, through faith in the Lord Jesus? That is my desire and my prayer regarding all here present.

There is nothing to hinder us individually from obtaining the blessing. I was as far from God as anyone possibly could be; but it pleased God to show me what a great sinner I was. I owned it before God, and He helped me to put my trust alone in Jesus for salvation; and thus I became a very happy young man, and am continuing to hold fast to Christ, to trust in Him alone for salvation, and, by grace, to walk in the fear of God. I have now been for more than 71 years a very happy man. And thus blessing is to be obtained by everyone, for God does not act by partiality, or despise this or another one; He takes delight and pleasure in bestowing this happiness on any and every one He has to do with.

But there are some individuals who will not have it, who are determined to go their own way, who despise the blessing which God is willing to give to them in Christ Jesus, and therefore they are without it, and they will remain without it as long as they continue in this state of mind. But let us not forget what is said here. “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom.” That means, happy is the man who comes to Christ, happy is the man who puts this trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; and here those who have not yet done so will find it thus if they will close with Christ, if they will but own that they are sinners needing a Saviour. Then, having confessed this, having put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, God will account them just and righteous for Christ's sake, God will forgive them their sins for Christ's sake, and this will bring peace to the soul, rest to the soul, and make them happy through faith in Christ Jesus. “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom.” I say once more, wisdom means the fear of God. “Findeth the fear of God;” and this is brought about through faith in Christ. Thus we are regenerated, born again, get spiritual life and a new nature, by which we hate sin and love holiness. Though it be but little and little at the first, yet we shall increase more and more in this.

“And the man that getteth understanding” – that is, getteth understanding about heavenly things, about his own sinfulness; about God and the Lord Jesus Christ; and about the vanity of this present world and the blessedness of heavenly things. “For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold; she is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.” In this figurative language is brought before us the blessedness of being believers in Christ, the blessedness of having found wisdom, and of having obtained a new nature, spiritual life, justification, and the forgiveness of all our sins. “The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver” – that is, whatever we might gain in the possession of silver, *it is all as nothing* in comparison with getting Christ. “And the gain thereof than fine gold.” To have found Jesus is better, better by far, than an abundance of fine gold. “She is more precious than rubies.” Wisdom, the feat of God obtained through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is more precious than rubies or pearls, “and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her”. A very large property left to us, as a legacy, is *nothing* in comparison with finding Christ. A very lucrative

situation is *nothing* in comparison with Christ. A very high post under Government is nothing in comparison with Christ. All the blessings of this present life, *all is nothing* in comparison with finding Jesus. O let this sink deeply into our hearts. "She is more precious than rubies." In other words, "Jesus is more precious than pearls, than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto Him."

"Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." This is particularly to be looked at in a spiritual point of view. The eternal life, eternal happiness, is our lot – is that which we obtain through faith in the Lord Jesus. "And in her left hand riches and honour." That is, spiritual riches and spiritual honours, because we become the inheritors of God and of the Lord Jesus; honours because we shall share with the Lord Jesus Christ the glory which the Father gives Him as a recompense for His mediatorial work as our Saviour. We shall have the honour with Him; He will not have it merely to Himself. His Bride, the Church of God, will share it with Him, and therefore shall we partake of the honour which the Father gives to Him.

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." I cannot tell you what a happy man I became when I found the Lord Jesus. I had been seeking year after year for happiness; but I met with nothing but disappointment and increased guilt on the conscience as long as I was *not* a believer in Christ. But when I found Jesus, I became a truly happy young man, and I have been a truly happy man now for 71 years and six months. I have had fulfilled in my own experiences what is stated here - that the ways of wisdom *are* the ways of pleasantness. Numberless persons think it is far from being pleasant to become a Christian; they think if they were to become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ they would not have a happy day more. This is the greatest folly, the greatest mistake, for our real true happiness commences only when we find the Lord Jesus Christ; therefore we need not to be pitied as believers in Christ, but others are to be counselled to seek the same Lord whom we have found, in order that they, too, may partake of the happiness which we have obtained through faith in Him.

Then, lastly, "All her paths are peace". Now, if at any time we are without peace, we should ask ourselves, "What is the reason? Am I really walking in the ways of wisdom, for it is stated that *all* her paths are peace? If I am without peace, it becomes me solemnly, earnestly, and carefully, to look into the matter, and see whether I have not departed from the ways of the Lord, whether I have not forsaken the fear of the Lord, for if I were going on in the paths of wisdom I should be at peace." O how instructive is all this!

Now, my beloved Christian friends, I have been directed, after a good deal of prayer, to the words on which we have been meditating, and I beseech and entreat you all to ponder again and again and again these verses, and to remember the remarks which I have made in connection with them; for weighty and important matters are contained in these verses, and, if attended to, the result will be happiness in a way in which as yet we have not known it. And, again, should there be any present who are not yet believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they should give themselves no rest in asking God to show them that they are sinners, and that they need the Saviour; and when they are brought to know this, then to ask God to enable them to put their trust in Jesus. And what they will obtain will be the forgiveness of their sins and peace to their souls, and hatred of sin and love for holiness. God grant this blessing to all of us, for Christ's sake.

Underneath are the Everlasting Arms

A Sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday Evening, July 2nd, 1897

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: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.

Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also His heavens shall drop down dew.

Happy are thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places. – Deuteronomy xxxiii, 26-29.

"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky." "Jeshurun" is the name for the Israelites; it means "the righteous ones." They are accounted thus on the ground of the work of the Messiah. In themselves most ungodly, very ungodly, often and often open idolators, and yet by reason of their union to the Messiah, they are called, "The righteous nation." In the first part of the chapter we have the blessing of each of the tribes. "Thy Thummim and thy Urim" (verse 8). Through their instrumentality, which was fixed in connection with their movements from the very first, the Israelites knew which way Jehovah would have them to go,

how to act, and what to do under particular circumstances, when they desired to know the mind of God. "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one."

After each of the twelve tribes of Israel had been individually blessed through the instrumentality of Moses, for the whole of Israel, the whole of Jeshurun (commencing with the 26th verse), there is a blessing pronounced. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun." This is what our hearts continually say regarding the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only true and living God. "There is none like unto Thee;" and this should fill our hearts with great comfort, that we have to do with one, Who is alone by Himself, with Whom no one can be compared, Who is almighty as to power, Who is infinite as to love, wisdom, grace, mercy, long-suffering, forbearance, and in Whom every blessing is to be found. None like Him! "None like unto the God of Jeshurun!" Then, of Him it is said as to His power, "Who rideth upon the heaven," and He does it "in thy help." One Who rideth upon the heavens as almighty. It is only He can do it, and He does do it for our help. How precious! We are, therefore, beyond the power of our enemies, for on our side is He Who is able to ride on the clouds for our help! Who can do everything for our benefit – for that is the meaning of it, "Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help," or for the sake of helping thee; "for thy help."

"And in His excellency on the sky." In His almighty power, in His majesty, He rides on the sky. If this were continually before us, how peacefully we should pass on, remembering that our friend and helper in heaven can do everything, and not only can do everything, but is willing to do everything, for sinners who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation! The great business of life, therefore, in the first place, is to be reconciled to God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, in order that this may be the case, we have to own that we are sinners, that we deserve nothing but punishment, and then put our sole trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment we do so, we are regenerated, we obtain spiritual life, we become the children of God, and as such the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ; and this blessing we receive for eternity – it will never be taken from us, as assuredly as we put our trust in Jesus for salvation.

"The Eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, "Destroy them!" how precious again! "The Eternal God is thy Refuge," or thy dwelling-place. We are in Him, one with Him, shall not be separated from Him, because we dwell in Him; He is our dwelling-place. Just like what we read in the 90th Psalm. The Eternal God is our Refuge, our dwelling-place is found in Him, and underneath are the everlasting arms to protect us, to shield us, to keep us from harm, of every kind – for, in reality, we are kept from harm of every kind.

Sometimes it appears as if we had been injured, physically, mentally, spiritually; but it is often only in appearance, and nothing but in appearance. In reality we are watched over, cared for, looked after, and shielded and protected by the almighty power, and the eternal, unchangeable love of God, by which He has loved us in Christ Jesus. O, how precious! How precious this! And just in the degree in which we are enabled to realise it, to enter into it, and to appropriate it to ourselves, the result is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. There is no trembling then, no fear then, no anxiety then, because we can say to ourselves, "God is on our side, God is for us; who can do us any harm?" Weak though we are, His everlasting arms are under us, to shield us, to watch over us!

"And He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, 'Destroy them.'" We have here especially to notice that before the Israelites ever got into the promised land, this was stated regarding them, and thus it came to pass. It was not their sword that obtained the land for them finally; but it was because God was on their side. "He thrust out the enemy from before them," and in a variety of ways this was done. Among all the ways, all the means used, was that God sent hornets against their enemies to drive them out and to destroy them. "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee." And so it came to pass that they obtained the land, though they had to fight against seven great and mighty nations; but these seven nations could not stand before them, because God was against the enemies of the Israelites. God was for them, fighting habitually their battles, and appearing on their behalf at all times and under all circumstances. When there was a battle, great hailstones of the weight of more than one hundred pounds were smitten down on their enemies, whereby they were destroyed, so that more by the power of Jehovah, in one way or another manifested for the benefit of the Israelites, than by the sword of their own hand, were the enemies destroyed. "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee." So He did, and so He destroyed them; because He spake the word, therefore it came to pass.

"Israel then shall dwell in safety alone." The enemies destroyed, the Israelites were left, and they occupied the land, but notice particularly this word, "Shall dwell in safety alone," because the real, true safety of the Israelites consisted in that they were separated from the Canaanitish nations. The moment they mixed up with the Canaanitish nations, their safety was at an end. And this is particularly to be noticed – that real, true spiritual blessing consists in separation from the ungodly. In all temporal affairs, it may be necessary now and then that we meet with them and mix with them, but in all spiritual matters we should seek to walk in separation from the ungodly. In this, and in this alone, consists our real, true spiritual safety.

“The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also His heavens shall drop down dew.” Not merely a land of corn and wine, but a fountain given beside. There was to be plenty of corn and wine in a land where everything was that was necessary. Water also, and dew also from heaven; and all this was given to the Israelites not because they deserved it, but as a token of their Father’s love to them. And up to this present day is God thus going on with regard to His children. Everything that they really need, everything that is really good for them, everything that would truly prove a blessing to them, He is ready to give to them. And so, in our case, if the land of corn and wine were a blessing to us, it would be given to us; whatever is a real, true blessing God bestows, God delights to bestow, on His children. It is the very joy of His heart to do them good, at all times and under all circumstances; and He not only is willing to give them, where there is plenty of corn and wine, and plenty of water, but He also is ready to give them the dew in addition to these, so that everything may be there that tends to fruitfulness. All this for the purpose of making them as happy as they are capable of being while yet in the body.

Now, the result of all this. “Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency; and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places.” “Happy art thou, O Israel.” Now, the solemn, momentous question here is, “Are we happy?” We should individually ask ourselves at this moment, “Am I happy? Am I truly happy? Spiritually happy?” Not merely, “Have I enough of the necessaries of life?” Not merely, “Have I enough so that I am not at present in great trouble and difficulty?” But, “Am I spiritually happy?” That is the momentous point; and this real, true happiness is alone to be obtained through faith in Christ, we have to own before God that we are sinners, deserving no happiness; we have to own before God, that we are sinners, deserving nothing but punishment; and then to put our trust alone in Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls. This brings about spiritual happiness. At first it may be only in a small degree; but the more we ponder what God has done for us in Christ, the more we feed spiritually on the Lord Jesus Christ, the more this peace and joy in God will increase. But there must be, first of all, a beginning made; and the question therefore is, “Have I the beginning of real, true, happiness in my soul? Do I know the Lord Jesus Christ? Have I come to Him for the salvation of my soul? Do I simply look to Him for salvation?” For without this, there is no real, true happiness to be had!

“Happy are thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” Are we saved by the Lord? That means, in other words, Do we comply with the conditions which God lays down in His Holy Word to save people? Do we put our trust in Jesus for the salvation of our souls? In doing so, the end will be peace and joy and happiness in a little degree; and the more we live on Christ, the more this real, true peace, joy and happiness will increase. “Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” Who among us is able to say, “I am saved by the Lord; if the Lord Jesus were to come round, I should be found a saved one; if the Lord Jesus should take me now out of the world I am a saved one?” Who among us is able to say this? By the grace of God I am one of those who are able to say it; and it is just this which makes me truly happy. Without knowing this, there is no such thing as real, true happiness, “O people saved by the Lord!” Then of Jehovah it is further said, “He is the Shield of thy help.” He protects us. The shield was particularly for the sake of warding off the blows of the sword, or the power to harm of the dart; therefore the shield was used to protect. And so, for our protection, we are spiritually shielded, and God Himself is the shield.

“Who is the sword of thy excellency.” That is true! It is God Himself Who is our sword, power, might, strength, and no accidents will come to us. It is not by our sword. It is not by our power, but by the arm of God, the power of God; and Him we have for us. He is on our side, and throughout eternity He will be on our side, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. “And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee.” That is, shall be overturned, overthrown, conquered, shall have no power over thee, but thou shalt have power over them. “And thou shalt tread upon their high places.” – that is, shalt drive them out, shalt overpower them, shalt overcome them. In their high places they make their boast; but thou shalt take their high places, and conquer them.

Now, once more, the great point is to know Christ, to be a believer in Him, to be found in Him. Now by far the greater part of those here present have found Him, and are believers in the Lord Jesus. Still there are a few present who are not yet believers in the Lord Jesus; and, therefore, real, true happiness and safety are not found as yet in them. But they may secure the like happiness which we who are believers in Jesus Christ have obtained. For we did not give it to ourselves, it was not by our goodness, merit, and worthiness that we came to what we have come, but by the mercy of God, through the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ wrought in us by the power of the Holy Ghost. And just as we, in the way of grace, obtained this blessing so any, in the way of grace also, may obtain a like blessing. No one has to say, “I am too far from God.” They cannot be! “I am too great a sinner.” This cannot be! Because there is power in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ over all sin; and every sin of which we have been guilty may be forgiven us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. O, how precious that no-one need despair!

Everyone who seeks salvation in God’s own appointed way, that is by alone resting on Christ for salvation, after they have confessed to being sinners, will obtain the blessing. But if in the least degree we depend upon ourselves, and think that we have to save ourselves, or to do something in order that we may be saved, we are holding a grievous error, and we shall never obtain the blessing. By the mercy of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, the oldest sinner, the greatest sinner, may obtain salvation of his soul. Let us go hence, if we are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, under the deep

conviction that we, individually, may obtain the blessing, and that there is nothing to hinder us. Once the blessing is obtained, little by little we shall be led on, by the grace of God, and by the help of God's Holy Spirit. God grant us individually a blessing according to our need.

Waiting for Christ

An Address delivered at the Annual Conference of Christians at Clifton on October 5th, 1870

The topic suggested for consideration at this day's Conference was, - "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." - *Luke xxi. 31; 1 Cor : xv. 24; Rev. xi. 15.*

May I be allowed to read once more the last verse of the hymn we have just sung, -

"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace; -
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

This brings before us the subject of personal attachment to the Lord Jesus. And if I might be allowed to ask for myself one thing more than another, it is a deep, personal attachment to Jesus. And if I were to express what I most desire on behalf of all my beloved fellow-disciples, it is a deep, personal attachment to Jesus. Oh! if we all had a hundred times more of real, true deep, personal attachment to Jesus, how delighted should we be to hear of our blessed Lord, how we should long to see Him, how it would be the one thing uppermost in our hearts to say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Beloved in Christ, let this be our prayer, that the Lord, in the riches of His grace, would bring it more habitually, more deeply, more fully before us - what this blessed One did for us, when He emptied Himself and came down to this world, and went about in the form of a servant, and laboured and toiled and suffered, and at last shed His precious blood for the remission of our sins. For the more this is present to our hearts, the more will our hearts be filled with personal attachment to that blessed One, and the more shall we long to be with Him. That blessed One who is now at the right hand of God interceding for us and who remembers all the infirmities and weaknesses which mingle with our attempts to speak for Him, to sing His praise, and to listen to what beloved brethren bring before us, will not always be at the right hand of God. After His ascension to heaven, the promise was given to the disciples: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Now for this blessed One, - for the personal return of this blessed One, - we have to wait. He said, before He ascended: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." We all know He did go to the Father; but He will not be satisfied till He returns to take His Church to Himself, that where He is, she may be also.

As to the time when this will take place, what can we say? If we attempt to say it will be next month, it will be next year, we should not stand on scriptural ground; for it is written, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven." I remember well the mistake into which many fell, about the time when it pleased God first to reveal to me the truth with regard to the return of the Lord. In July, 1829, as many will remember, there was war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Many beloved brethren whose minds had just been opened to look for the return of their Lord, said, "Now is the time when Israel will be restored," "You will see," they said, "in a short time how all this Turkish Empire will be destroyed." Having had my mind recently directed to the subject of our Lord's return, I fell into the same mistake as many of my older brethren. What was the result? Six weeks more, and peace was restored between Russia and the Turkish Empire; forty-one years and three months have passed since then, and the Turkish Empire still exists, and Israel has not been restored. Why do I refer to this? Not to indicate that we are not to look at the circumstances around us. It is the will of the Lord that we should do so, and not shut our eyes to what is passing around us. But this I affectionately say, that we should not be too hasty in at once forming a judgment, that because such and such an event has taken place, therefore in such and such a time it is certain the Lord Jesus will return; lest, when such and such a time shall have passed, and after all our adorable Lord has not been revealed, unbelievers should turn round and say, "The time has passed, and the Lord Jesus, of whose return you talked so much, has not come; and after all, is there anything in the truth about His return?" We should be careful not to give a handle to those who speak evil of the truth; and not lay too much stress on certain events which may not be God's instruments in ushering in the return of the Lord.

What we need is the right state of heart. We should seek to have our hearts kept practically in such a state, that in any hour of the day or night we should be willing to give up everything; and when the last trump shall sound, to say, "Oh, my blessed Jesus, for many a long day and year I have waited for Thy return, and now I am delighted to see Thee." There should be no plans of ours regarding which we should not like to be interfered with by the coming of our Lord. If this were so, it would be a plain indication that we preferred our plans to the person of Jesus, that we were seeking our own honour and glory instead of the honour and glory of the Master. However great our work, however manifold our labours, unless we could say with all our heart, - "Lord, if Thy name may be more magnified by my being instantly taken out of the work, or the whole being broken to pieces, let it be so," - it would be clear that we preferred our own honour and glory to that of Jesus. In so far as we seek our own honour and glory in His work, - though in a little degree only, - just in so far are we unfitted ourselves to be His instruments in promoting the glory of His name. We must go down, down, down, deeper still, if we wish to be used by Him. We must be willing to give to God all the honour and glory; and just in the measure in which this is so, God will delight to take us up. Why? Because we are willing to give Him all the honour and glory. He cannot share it with the creature; it would be derogatory to the Godhead to do so. But if we are willing to give God all the honour and glory, what will He do? Most assuredly He will take the greatest delight in putting honour on us.

Further: if we have our plans, and on this account wish to put off the return of the Lord, it betrays a want of proper attachment to Jesus. If our affections are set on something here below, as were those of Lot's wife who looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt, it shows that something is wrong with us. Our blessed Lord referred to this, and warned His disciples of the danger of engaging their hearts too much with the pursuits of this life, - their business, their wealth, their farms, their plantations, their families or family connections, or the pursuit of anything connected with this world. I do not mean to say that it is wrong to be occupied with the affairs of this life. Far otherwise. A precious opportunity has the dear brother in Christ in that profession or at that shop to serve the Lord! A precious opportunity has the dear brother who in that counting-house seeks to bring honour to the Lord! A precious opportunity has the servant maid in the kitchen to bring honour to the Lord! A precious opportunity has the mother seeking to bring up in the fear of the Lord six, seven, or eight children! It is the will of the Lord that we should attend to these things, and at the same time that we should be waiting for His return. And notwithstanding that His return is the hope of the Church, it is the will of the Lord that we should be occupied in these things. He says Himself, "Occupy till I come;" therefore in whatever position in life we are, we are to occupy till He comes. We must not suppose, because in connection with the return of the Lord, planting and building, and marrying and giving in marriage are spoken of, therefore these things are wrong. What the Lord means is, that the ordinary affairs of life will go on up to the day of His return. The sun will rise as at other times; and, when least expected, and when things are going on perhaps as smoothly as usual, the last trump will sound, and that blessed One will be revealed. We are to attend to the things of this world, but in a right spirit, as the children of God, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, as not of the world, but redeemed out of it; ever remembering what price it cost - the laying down of His life, the shedding of His precious blood for the remission of our sins. So long as what it cost to purchase us is present to the heart, we say, "Here am I, precious Lord! Thou hast bought me. Now tell me what Thou wilt have me to do, and I will do it." The heart must be ever in this state, in order that we may be willing, gladly to labour for Him till He returns.

Now, as it is entirely unknown how soon that blessed One may return, it must not be said, - Mr. Müller has just told us that forty-one years and three months ago he first began to look for the return of the Lord, and these forty-one years and three months have passed away, and the Lord has not come, therefore we need not look for Him for another century or half a century. No! How soon, how very soon, may that blessed One be revealed from heaven! We are to be living like men and women waiting for the return of their Lord. And if the Lord yet tarry for a while, what a privilege, if life is continued to us, to have the opportunity of living for the Lord, of labouring for the Lord! And what a blessed privilege to be allowed to live and labour for the Lord! So then we are not to be cast down because the Lord has not yet come. If He comes, how glad shall we be! But if He tarries, here am I, witnessing for the Lord, and allowed to witness for Him yet for another day, another month, or another year, in this Christ-denying world, in this evil world which is lying in the wicked one. How precious! to rise in the morning to say, "Blessed Lord Jesus; the night is past; Thou hast not yet come; another day is before me; help me to be Thy witness this day; help me in word and spirit, and yet to wait for Thy return." The day passes, and we may yet have to retire for rest. Another day comes, and in the same spirit we should go on day by day, everyone in his particular sphere doing something for Him. Are we to go to sleep if the Lord tarries, and give up the precious truth of His return? Far be it from us! Though for forty-one years and three months I have been looking for the return of the Lord, by His grace I am not tired of waiting for His return, I have not given up the truth; but my soul steadily says, This is the hope of the Church - not death, but the return of the Lord Jesus, and to wait for the same from heaven, to wait for the morning of the resurrection; because when we die, only individually we are ushered into the presence of the Lord, and we leave brethren and sisters behind - the whole Church is not gathered. Moreover, none of the saints have their glorified bodies yet, which they will have at the return of the Lord Jesus; therefore the full redemption, the redemption of the body, is not come to pass yet. We must wait for

this for the return of the Lord. When our blessed Lord said, "After this manner pray ye," He gave one petition, "Thy kingdom come," and meant something by it. We have to wait for the kingdom to which there are frequent references in Daniel, the Revelation, the Epistles, and other portions of the Scriptures, where the glorious things connected with the return of the Lord are spoken of. But if He delays His coming, one way of glorifying Him is, by patiently waiting for His return, and each of us in the meantime in our particular sphere seeking to occupy till He comes.

Are we occupied? Are we living for the Lord? Are we labouring for the Lord? Is it our one great business of life to live for Him? How many objects have we set before us, on account of which we desire to live on earth? To please our God and Father, and to seek to imitate the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, this is the one business of life - the only one business of life. The man in trade seeking this - to bring honour to Christ! The one in a profession, or in any occupation in life, seeking to live, to labour, to bear fruit for the Lord! Is this the one business of life, beloved in Christ? Ask yourselves, What am I living for? Am I living for the Lord? Is my one great business of life to be a fruit-bearer, to live to the praise of Him who purchased us with His precious blood? Remember, these hands and feet and ears and eyes are not ours, they belong to Jesus - He bought them. Our tongue is His, and our brain is His; our time is His, all our talents are His. All He has given us belongs to Him, and at His feet we have to lay it down. And what will be the result of this? Ah! we shall have true wealth; we shall have true joy. I do not mean by this, that as soon as you get money you are to throw it out of the window; or when God gives a business, to put it all aside and say you have nothing to do with the world. The very reverse of this. We are to do all to the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus, "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do." This is true liberty, true joy, and true happiness. And when Jesus comes, and we are found in such a state, how delighted we shall be to see Him; and, oh! what joy to the heart of our blessed Master to find us in such a state. And then this will be for eternity. Our little brief time here will then be gone, and we shall have entered upon that period which will never come to an end. How blessed to spend one happy thousand years after the other with that precious One who laid down His life for us! Do we not long to see Him?

And now, are we all prepared to spend a happy eternity with Jesus? I trust that nineteen out of twenty here present, if not forty-nine out of fifty, are true disciples of Jesus; but I cannot help feeling, peradventure there are a few present as yet strangers to Him. Ah! let me tell you, dear friends, who are strangers to Jesus, that the blessed Jesus stands with open arms ready to receive you. Do but own before Him that you are poor miserable sinners, but trust in His atonement for the salvation of your souls, and all your sins shall be forgiven you.

Walking by Faith, not by Sight

Notes of an Address made at one of the Clifton Conferences of Christians - date unknown

"We walk by faith, not by sight." - 2 Corinthians v. 7.

As long as the child of God is in the world, he has not in actual possession what he will have when with the Lord, and especially, what he will have after the return of the Lord Jesus; he is not yet what he then will be; he does not see what he then will see. But while we are yet in weakness, whilst in the body, in comparative ignorance, and have still to contend against mighty enemies, God has been pleased to give to us a revelation of Himself in the Holy Scriptures, to be our rule of action, to comfort and encourage us, to make Himself known to us, to make the Lord Jesus known to us, to tell us of the blessedness of the world to come, to show us the way to the Father's house, and to reveal to us the vanity of all that this present world can give. This Word of God, the revelation He has made of Himself, is to be credited, to be received fully, in childlike simplicity; and, in doing so, heavenly realities become present things to us by faith. We have not to judge by feeling, by seeing, by reasoning, but by believing, viz., by exercising faith in what God says: and thus have our ways and our actions to be regulated; thus our joys and sorrows.

God is not seen by the natural eye: but we have to seek to see Him, and to set Him before us daily, hourly, momentarily, by faith; and to bring Him and keep Him nigh to us by faith. The presence of God, the habitual presence of God, because we believe that He sees us and hears us continually, has to regulate our life. We have to live in this world as those would who exercise faith in the truth that their heavenly Father is continually their Provider, their Protector, their Helper, their Friend; that He is ever nigh to them, that He is a wall of fire round about them continually. If the child of God thus treated God, exercised faith in Him, looked upon Him practically as the living God ever near to him, how peacefully and happily would he walk through the world!

The Lord Jesus, the loving, sympathising Friend, is not seen by the natural eye; but faith says, I rest upon that word, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" [age]. (Matt. xxviii. 20.) And thus the heart is made happy by the belief in a present living, loving, almighty, Saviour.

The Lord Jesus has not yet taken His power to Himself manifestly. He does not yet manifestly reign: but faith looks for the fulfilment of all that which is said of the return of the Lord Jesus; and therefore, though we are not yet actually with Him on the throne, reigning with Him, we believe that He will come again, and we comfort ourselves, whilst, yet in the conflict, in poverty, meanness, and suffering, by the precious statements made in the Holy Scriptures regarding the time of His appearing; and we walk thus on in peace and joy, though we do not yet see His glory with the natural eye.

We are now in a body of humiliation, which is often weak, yea, sometimes in pain and suffering. The manifestation of the sons of God has not yet taken place; we are not yet in our glorious body, such a body as the Lord Jesus has had since His resurrection: but we have the promise of such a glorified body; this is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, and therefore, though we do not yet actually possess it, we have to lay hold on God's promise regarding this, and to walk in the faith of this promise: thus our hearts will be sustained under present weakness, pain, and suffering.

We have the promise of an inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away;" but we have not yet entered upon the possession of this inheritance: we are poor, mean, without possession at all, it may be, so far as sight is concerned; we have, therefore, to exercise faith in this promise, to lay hold on it, to seek to enter into it, in order that we may be full of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Scriptures tell us of Satan being bound, yea, bruised under our feet; but this has not yet taken place; we are yet in the warfare, we constantly experience his power still: we have, therefore, for our comfort to lay hold on the blessing promised in this respect; and thus our hearts will be cheered and comforted.

And thus, regarding all the numberless promises which God has been pleased to make, in so far as at any time they are applicable to our position and circumstances, both with respect to temporal and spiritual things, we have to exercise faith concerning them; and the comfort, support, and blessing intended by them to our hearts, will be enjoyed by us. For instance, the promise in Matthew vii. 7 - 11: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" If we believe that it will be even as the Lord Jesus said, with what earnestness, perseverance, expecting faith, shall we give ourselves to prayer! Though the answer be long delayed, though, as to *sight*, the answer to our prayers can never be received; yet, since we believe, walk by faith, we shall continue to expect an answer to our prayers, as assuredly as our petitions are according to the mind of God, are asked in the name of the Lord Jesus, and we exercise faith in the power and willingness of God to help us.

Again, the testimony of God the Holy Ghost, in Romans viii. 28, is: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Now, if we lay hold on it by faith, bring to it in faith our greatest trials, difficulties, afflictions, bereavements, etc., our hearts will be comforted, we shall obtain peace to our souls. I have been a believer in the Lord Jesus for forty-four years, but I have invariably found that my greatest trials have proved my greatest blessings; they have worked for my good. But suppose we did not see this to be so, while yet in the body, we have nevertheless to exercise faith concerning what God says; we have to walk by faith, regarding that word of His, "That all things work together for good to them that love God," and then will the heart be comforted and sustained.

Three years ago God allowed two most heavy trials to befall me. They continued month after month. I said to myself, "This too works for my good;" and I continued day by day, while the afflictions lasted, to make known my requests unto God, that He would graciously be pleased to sustain me under them, and, in His own time, deliver me out of them. There was hanging in my bedroom in a frame a text, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. lxxxi. 10), upon which my eyes fell as I rose in the morning; and my heart said to my heavenly Father, I do open my mouth wide; wilt Thou graciously be pleased to do according to Thy word? and wilt Thou fill it!" I continued patiently, believingly, expectingly, to look to God for help, and He did deliver me out of these two most heavy afflictions, and I have thus become further acquainted with Him. All this I say for the comfort and encouragement of my younger brethren and sisters in Christ. Will you, then, the next time that you are in trial, seek to remember this for your comfort? You may not be able to see how such and such a heavy trial can work for your good; but it will most assuredly, as God has said. And if even in this life you should not see it, you will do so in the world to come; but generally we see it already in this life.

The reason why the children of God are so frequently overpowered by difficulties and trials is, because they attempt to carry their burden themselves, instead of casting it upon God, as He not only graciously allows them to do, but

commands them to do; and therefore they lose the promise which is coupled with the command; they find themselves not sustained. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Ps. lv. 22). This does not mean simply that we should pray to God in our trials and afflictions, but that we should exercise faith in the power and willingness of God to help us under our trials; and by this we know whether we have only used words in prayer, or whether we have, in *believing* prayer, exercising faith in God, spoken to Him about our trials. If the latter was the case, then, though the trial still lasts, the burden thereof is gone, because we have laid it upon God, to bear it for us; but if we have not exercised faith in God, we are still carrying the burden ourselves.

All these matters are so deeply important, because if we do not walk by faith we cannot be happy in God, and therefore cannot bear such a testimony for God as we should bear were we indeed happy. Our very countenances should testify of our peace and joy in God, in order that thus the unconverted may be stirred up to seek for themselves after that which makes the children of God so happy.

We have, then, to believe what God says. Nor must we look to our feelings; nor expect help from our natural fallen reason; nor must we be discouraged, though all appearance were against what God says; for faith begins when sight fails. As long as we can see with the natural eye, and our natural fallen reason will yet help us, faith is not needed. This is often lost sight of by the children of God; and hence they are so much discouraged, because they do not walk by sight, which was never intended for them while they are yet in the body. If there is then one thing that we need more than another, it is an increase of faith, in order that we may take right steps, surer steps, firmer steps; yea, run with alacrity in the ways of the Lord. To the end of our course we therefore should pray, "Lord, increase my faith!"

Watchman, what of the night?

An Address given at the Clifton Conference of Christians, in October, 1872

"The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come," - *Isa.* xxi. 11, 12.

The question contained in this passage is asked at a time of heavy trial, heavy judgment, which is spoken of under the figure of the "night." These judgments were coming upon Edom; for this I understand to be the country referred to, from its connection here with "Seir."

The earnestness of the inquiry is brought before us by its being *twice* asked.

Who the watchman is, there can be no difficulty in determining - evidently the prophet; because just as a watchman is set for the very purpose of announcing the approach of the enemy or of any danger, so that those who are in danger may take warning, and prepare against that which threatens, so the spiritual watchman, the prophet, was appointed to give warning of coming judgments, and to announce to the people how they should act, how they should obey and please Jehovah, so that the terrible judgments that were threatened might be averted.

The question here asked is, "When shall these terrible judgments come to an end?" In New Testament language, "When will this dispensation end? When shall our sorrows cease, and we be for ever with the Lord?" Now, observe particularly the answer of the watchman. He does not say, "It is the second or third watch of the night" - not to mention the fourth watch, which could not have been referred to by one who lived at the time when this prophecy was uttered, because the division of the night into four watches was introduced by the Romans; but I say, the watchman does not answer, "It is the second watch," or "It is the third watch." Ah! how deeply important it is to notice this. Again and again it has been the inquiry amongst Christians: "How far are we from the close of the present dispensation? How near is the return of the Lord?" And repeatedly calculations have been made with the view of fixing the precise date, or nearly so, of the fulfilment of the prophetic predictions; and this political event or that religious movement has been taken as an indication of the speedy approach of the end; and statements have been made, "So many years, or months, or days, will elapse, and then the dispensation will close." Now, how, beloved, are we to decide when we hear such statements? I judge we should be guided by the answer of the watchman, "The morning cometh, and also the night." Nothing was declared concerning the *time*.

May I be allowed here to say one word from my own experience to my younger brethren? It was in July, 1829, just forty-three years and three months ago, that it pleased the Lord to show me the truth of His word as to His second coming, and the truths connected with that blessed hope. At that time there was war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia; and many good, excellent Christians said, "Now is come the time that the Euphrates shall be dried up;" "now the Ottoman Empire will be destroyed, and Israel will be restored," and so on; and I, as a young disciple, very naturally took up the views and repeated the words of my elder brethren. Well, what followed? Before six weeks were over peace was proclaimed, the Ottoman Empire remained, and remains to this day, and Israel is still not restored to their land. Now, I firmly believe that Israel *will* be restored to their land; but I refer to this mistake of my earlier years to illustrate the point I am referring to.

Not that we should never look at political events in connection with the prophetic Word, but that we should use the greatest caution before we conclude that such and such events must surely usher in the end. I judge that when the time really comes that we should be guided by such events, the signs will be so plain, so decided, that *all* who love Jesus will be able to see that *now* truly He is at the door. But *before* this time comes, until these things come to pass, let us be cautious how we make such statements as, "In so many days or so many months, or before this generation passes, such and such events will happen;" but rather let us say with the watchman, "The morning cometh, and also the night;" that is to say, the great, the all-important point is, the *certainty* of our Lord's return: "This same Jesus *shall* so come in like manner" as He went into heaven. There is no question whatever that when all is made ready for the *bride*, the Bridegroom will return and receive her to Himself; and what we have to do, is to comfort ourselves with the hope that our Lord will surely come again; and in the full assurance of this, that there is coming the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, we should patiently bear the cross. We should comfort ourselves with the certainty that "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry;" and if He tarry yet a little longer, to say still, He will surely come, and lay out ourselves to win souls for Christ, remembering that it is in longsuffering to the perishing that He tarries.

Some may say, "Why make so much of the coming of the Lord? Is not death the same thing, for it is our going to Him? I once thought so myself; but I was led to see that there is a vast difference between the two. The hope of the Church is not death, but the return of the Lord. If I am taken out of the world by death, I shall myself be happy so far as regards the soul; but, blessed as I shall be, my happiness, even as regards myself alone, will not be full; for I shall not yet have my glorified body, my redeemed body. But when the Lord comes, it is the whole *family* brought into happiness and blessedness - the whole family gathered *home*. Then there will be the resurrection of the just, the *first* resurrection, when, therefore, the *whole* elect family will receive their glorified bodies. *Death* has to do with the *partial* happiness of individual believers; but the coming of the Lord has to do with the *complete* happiness of the *whole* redeemed family! So you see there is a vast difference between the two events as to the *hope* connected with them; and we must not yield to the statements that are made to the contrary. We must be guided by the Word of God, and not frame *our own* notions about these things, nor follow the notions of good people around us, if their thoughts are not according to the Word of God.

"The *morning* cometh;" that is, the morning of that day which will be without clouds, of that day which will never end, in which the whole heavenly family will share together eternal happiness.

But this is not all. The "*night*" cometh also. Ah! *then* it will be seen who are on the Lord's side, and who are not. What a revelation will there be then. The curtain lifted, and the actual condition of all manifested! The bodies of the believers who sleep in Jesus, though by millions scattered over all parts of the world, all raised and gathered together to their Lord; but the bodies of unbelievers, that lie in the grave, will be left in the grave to await the resurrection of the last day! The unbelievers who are *alive*, separated for ever from the believers - the one taken, and the other left! Oh, think of it! for the solemn point for each is this - To which class do I belong? If ever there was a practical truth, *this* is it. Let us look at it again and again, and ask ourselves before God, "will it be to me the *morning*, or will it be to me the *night*? The eternal day of happiness, or the eternal night of woe and misery?" The night! Oh, what a night! The night of "wailing and gnashing of teeth," the night to be spent for ever with the "devil and his angels"! Oh, my beloved friends and fellow-sinners, ask, I beseech you, before God, the question, "Am I prepared? Am I really trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of my soul?" There must be the *entire* dependence upon the Lord Jesus; no ritualism, no works will avail. The precious blood of Christ must be the sole ground of your trust before God. I repeat it, the momentous question is, "Am I trusting in Jesus, depending on Jesus alone for the salvation of my soul?" If so, the morning of that bright, blessed day is before me; if not, there is nothing before me but the endless night of darkness!

In conclusion, one word on the last clause of the verse - "If ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." Our esteemed brethren have regarded these as addressed to the backslider and to the undecided, and I believe rightly so; but I would particularly dwell for a moment on these words, as showing to us the heart of God: These words were written by inspiration and it is therefore, just as if God were saying in our midst this evening, "If there be here the vilest, the oldest, the most hardened sinner, I desire not that that sinner should die. Oh, if he will only *return*, if he will only be in earnest, how gladly will I receive him!"

And then, if there should be any who are in some little measure stirred up to "inquire after God," His word to such is, "Inquire ye;" that is, *continue* to read the word of God. Have you a little desire, a little relish, for that Word? Be encouraged; that desire is the Spirit's working; it comes from God, not from your own evil heart. Continue to look to the Lord, and the blessing will yet be yours.

This word is not to be *limited to backsliders*, but is to be taken more generally; for by nature it is true of us *all*, that we have cast God behind our back; and what we want is to "return," to "come" back to Him. Now to "come" to God means to "believe." This is the inspired explanation of what "coming" means, as we learn from comparing John vi. 64, 65, with verse 44 of the same chapter. This, then, is what the sinner has to do - to *believe* in Jesus, to trust in Him, to depend on Him for salvation. In this consists "coming" to God, and no one who has not *believed* can be said to have "come."

Yet I will Rejoice in the Lord

A sermon preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol on Sunday evening, June 13th, 1897

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. - Habakkuk iii., 17, 18, 19

In the first verse under notice we have brought before us not merely the loss of one thing, or of another thing, or of anything, but the loss on the part of the Jew of everything, for they were in an agricultural country generally speaking; and the prophet Habakkuk says regarding himself, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Now, this is the great and deeply important question, What is it that brought this man of God to the decision that though he should lose everything, though he should be reduced to a state of the greatest poverty and difficulty and affliction, yet he would rejoice in Jehovah? What was it that brought him to this? Because the Living God has given Himself to everyone of His children as their portion! He has given Himself to everyone of His children, so that whatever they may lose, in regard to the things connected with this life, God remains to them; in other words, their ALL remains to them. They are not, and they never really and truly can be, losers of anything that is worth anything, for God remains.

He gives Himself to everyone of His children, to the weakest, the feeblest, the least instructed among them, as their portion; therefore, having Him, they have everything they could wish. God remains to them; He gives Himself to His children, once for all; they have, once for all, blessing to make them happy; they have, once for all, kindness, mercy, and grace, bestowed on them, sufficient for their whole earthly pilgrimage, and for the whole of eternity. O beloved in Christ, and O beloved ones who are not yet believers in Christ, let us all really and truly seek to enter into what it is to have God, and what it means that God gives Himself to us. Two verses of the 73rd Psalm and many similar portions might be brought to bear, but I think these two verses will do, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth." The Psalmist supposes himself to be brought to the end of his earthly pilgrimage, brought to the point of death. "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." God had been his portion in life, and now he was going out of time into eternity, God remains his portion Not only for a few years, or for a few hundred years, but for ever God remains true to His people. If this were entered into what happy persons we should be! O, if only held on to by faith and realised, what peace and joy in the Holy Ghost we should have--not merely now and then, not merely frequently, but habitually! O, how exceedingly precious! God gives Himself, and with all He is and has to the weakest, the feeblest of His children. O, how precious! How exceedingly precious!

And the prophet Habakkuk entered into it, and it was just this that made him so happy. Though he should lose everything that this world could give, yet would he rejoice in Jehovah. "Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord"-it means Jehovah-"I will joy in the God of my salvation." Now, let us just for a little while ponder somewhat more minutely what we have here, what we receive from God as poor sinners, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ; and what other poor sinners might have if they were only willing to know what God is prepared to give to those who come to Him through Jesus Christ. First of all, He opens our eyes and shows to us the lost and ruined condition in which we are by nature; makes manifest our complete spiritual darkness and ignorance. He further shows to us that we cannot save ourselves, that salvation entirely depends on Himself, through the gift of His Only Begotten Son, Whose perfect obedience unto death He accepts in our room and stead. Now, all this is in the first place to be seen, to be apprehended, to be laid hold on by faith, in order that our eyes, being opened, we may have the beginning of peace and joy. Further, so far even as this present life is concerned, we at once, through faith in the Lord Jesus, obtain full forgiveness for all our numberless transgressions. We are accepted in the beloved, in Jesus Christ, and treated as righteous ones, as just ones, though in ourselves unjust ones and unrighteous ones. So accepted in the beloved, and treated as justified ones, accepted in the beloved and treated as forgiven ones, not one single transgression shall be mentioned against us any more. All, all is forgiven! Entering into it oh, what peace it gives to the soul, entering into it more and more it brings joy in God; the heart is filled with gratitude to Him for what He has done for us in Jesus Christ.

But what I have mentioned is not all. We thus being born again, regenerated, obtain spiritual life; while before we were dead in trespasses and sins. Now, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we obtain spiritual life; that life is everlasting. The beginning of this everlasting life is made when we are brought to believe in Jesus, and this spiritual life is continued, this spiritual life lasts, when the natural life is come to an end, when we pass out of time into Eternity. This is another blessing. Then we are now, through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the children of God not merely in name, but in reality. We have obtained spiritual life. We are born again by the power of God's Holy Spirit. We are really and truly the children of God, and as such we are really and truly heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ; and thus we have everything that we could possibly wish. We are infinitely rich as the children of God, as the heirs of God, as the joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus, for we partake of all the things which the Father gives to Him, as a recompense for His mediatorial work on earth. Thus we not only become infinitely rich, but we are infinitely honoured, for we share the honour which the Father bestows upon His only begotten Son as the reward for His great work. Oh, what an abounding reason, therefore, we have to rejoice in the Lord, in Jehovah!

Being in this state, whatever may be our difficulties, our trials, our necessities, we can obtain help from God, because we are the children whom He loves with an eternal, unchangeable love - the children who are so dear to His heart that they are precious in His sight, and loved by Him even as He loves His only begotten Son, for they belong to Christ, they

are members of that mystical body of which He is the Head. What, therefore, can they possibly want that they cannot receive? Their God and Father in Christ Jesus is willing to impart to everyone of them, even the feeblest and weakest among them, every blessing that really would be a blessing to them, everything that really would be for their good and profit, and, therefore, to the glory of God. In the midst of trials and temptations, sore temptations, great attacks of Satan, we may come to Him, in our utter weakness and helplessness, and nothingness, and ask Him to fight our battles for us, to help us, to stand at our side, to rebuke the wicked one, and to drive him from us. All this our Heavenly Father delights to do, because He loves us so dearly and tenderly. He loves us with an eternal unchangeable love. He loves us as He loves His only begotten Son. Oh, how precious is all this!

Now notice further the title that is given to God. He is called in the 18th verse, "The God of my salvation." He is the God of salvation; but the preciousness of the statement lies in this, that we have proved Him to ourselves thus, and are able to say, "The God of my salvation." That is just the language of my heart! Now, how many of us are able to say this? I say, "He is the God of my salvation." I glory in it, I rejoice in it, for, by the grace of God, I am as certain that I shall go to Heaven as if I were there already! Therefore, I say, "He is the God of my salvation." And there are many scores here present who, like myself, can say and sing, "He is the God of my salvation." But if there are any here who are not yet able to say this, give yourselves no rest till you can. First of all, you must come to see that you are sinners needing salvation. If you do not see it, ask God to show it to you, and, as a means to come to the knowledge of it, read carefully three or four times the first three chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, and the second chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. Read these portions with application to yourselves, and if still you do not see that you are sinners needing a Saviour, read yet again these very portions, and ask God to open your eyes. Then, when you see what is contained therein, ask God to help you to put your trust in Jesus for salvation, for He in our room fulfilled the law of God, and, therefore, sets us free, and He in our room and stead bore the punishment due to us.

When able to apprehend this, we no longer dread God; we are no longer afraid of God, but look on Him as our Father, as our Friend, as our Helper Who has loved us in Christ Jesus. But if yet we have no peace in our souls, let us go on asking God that we may, by the power of His Holy Spirit, apprehend more feelingly and truly the work of Christ, and to enter into it that we may have that full peace and joy, which God delights to give to everyone of His children. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet, I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Oh, if any of you know this, how greatly are you blessed! Oh, if everyone here knew this what an encouragement it would be to sinners who have not yet obtained this peace and joy in God!

Now we come to the last verse, "The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places." "The Lord God," that is Jehovah-for you know that whenever we have the word "Lord" printed in large characters, it invariably means this, "Jehovah" - "is my strength." Was he weak physically? God would be able to strengthen him, for He was his strength! Was he weak spiritually, amid temptations, great and varied and many, and of a lasting character? Jehovah was his strength; therefore, what could he lack? Was he poor in any way? Did he require anything for the life that now is? Or, for himself, or for his family, or under any circumstances, did he require anything which would be for the glory of God? God was able and willing to communicate it to him! Now that is just what we have to lay hold of, that Jehovah is the strength of His children physically, mentally, spiritually; and this not now and then, but at all times and under all circumstances, however great the power of our spiritual adversaries may be, and however fearfully they may attack us in order to overcome us, "God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places." The feet like a roe, a wild animal running. For what? To act according to the mind of God! That, I judge, is particularly meant here by the words, "He will make my feet like hinds' feet" Not to accomplish our own purposes, not to enjoy ourselves, but to act according to the mind of God! The will of God presented to us, and instantaneously and with the greatest alacrity acted upon; therefore, the words, "hinds' feet," means that no delay is made, but immediately the will of God is carried out.

Then one other point. "He will make me to walk upon mine high places." The heart of the prophet Habakkuk was in Heaven, and he looked down on the things here below, and the state in which he was. O to enter into it, though we are poor sinners, that we are seated with Christ in heavenly places! That, therefore, we should treat all human affairs as those who are seated in Heaven in Christ Jesus, and look down from Heaven, so to speak, on the poor, weak, feeble, earthly affairs here below, and judge about them as those who are already in glory, who are already in Heaven.

Now, if one or the other says, "But I am yet in the body; I find a difficulty thus to think, to judge, and to act," my reply is, "So do I, but the grace of God can bring us to this state."

"He will make me to walk upon mine high places." These high places are those in which his heart is fixed, and this is just what we individually should have-the heart in Heaven. While in the body, we must attend to the affairs of this life; God would not have us give up our earthly occupations because of the difficulties connected with these things. But we must yet remain in the position to which God has brought us, entering into the spiritual life which has been given to us, remembering that this spiritual life is eternal, that more and more it will be developed, and that at last it will come to

the full fruition and we shall be holy, as our Lord Jesus Christ was holy while on earth and as He ever has been since He ascended to Heaven, and that we shall at the same time have a glorified body, as the Lord Jesus Christ had when He was raised from the dead. These are the blessed prospects of the weakest and feeblest child of God!

Oh, what a precious blessing has God bestowed on us in Christ Jesus! Oh, what are we poor miserable sinners come to by faith in Him! Our great business, therefore, must be in child-like simplicity to ponder all the wondrous blessings God has bestowed on us through His Son, and, in child-like simplicity, to believe everything that He has declared regarding us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in joyful anticipation look forward to the day when all this will have its complete accomplishment, when we shall no longer walk by faith, but by sight, having everyone of these blessings in actual possession. Now, one word more. Are there any here present who up to this time have been thoughtlessly and carelessly unconcerned about the things of God? If so, I now entreat and beseech you no longer to be thus-for the salvation of your souls, your happiness here, and throughout Eternity, depend upon your receiving Christ. Salvation is also to be had by faith in Jesus Christ, and God is willing to bestow the blessing on every and anyone, however great and many their transgressions may be. Only let them own that they are sinners, deserving nothing but punishment, and only let them put their trust in Jesus, and the blessing is theirs for ever.

Address on Hebrews 11 v1

1884

What we have to understand by faith. Faith is taking God at His word, a relying on what He has said, being satisfied with the bare naked statement, because God has said it, and what He has said will come to pass. In the measure in which we take this, so in proportion is our faith weak or strong. Faith has nothing whatever to do with **feelings**. We are not to look at impressions in regard to faith, nor to look at probabilities; faith acts contrary to all feelings, impressions and probabilities; faith works most happily and easily, contrary to all these things. If we wait for them, we are no longer resting **only** on the Word of God. Another wrong idea is – that faith has only to do with certain portions of God's Word; faith has to do with the **whole** revelation that God has made of Himself, and **all** the promises made to His children. Here we have to try our faith, to see if it has increased since our conversion, e.g. Joseph ... rested on the bare Word of **God** (Gen 50:24,25). This should be enough for us – in the measure in which we do this we glorify God, and shall prove that God **does** act according to His Word.

How may this faith, which all the children of God have, be increased and grow? By exercise. The limbs of the new-born child grow by being exercised. God delights to exercise our faith, that His name may be glorified. God puts us into circumstances where our faith is tried. He brings on us bereavement, loss of property, etc. in order that more and more He may manifest His love, His power. But from all these things naturally, we shrink, and do not like them. When we ask God to increase our faith, we ask a little more sickness, a little more trial. God allows trial as the very food of faith. If things were always smooth and pleasant, there would be no need of more patience and faith.

Trials and afflictions are allowed in order that God may deliver us out of them, and so our faith be increased.

Again our faith is brought into exercise **that we may know God not only as God Almighty, or as the only All-wise One, but more and more to watch and see how loving, how faithful, how bountiful He is, that we may see what a lovely Being God is.** The more and more we know God, the more calmly shall we pass through this world, knowing that all, **all** things work together for good to us. **“They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee”** (Ps 9:10). Those who are **really** acquainted with God, they trust Him, because they know how kind and gracious He is, they are satisfied with all His dealings. Entering into what God is, is increasing faith.

For fifty-eight years and eight months **I have known something of all these blessed things in my own happy experience.** First as regards God's temporal provision for His people. For fifty-four years I have been enabled to be satisfied with what God says in Matt 6:25-34 and I have found that He has acted according to His Word. Therein is the blessedness of relying on God.

Then as regards my work and service for the Church of God, I have had the most perplexing matters, but I have committed them all to Him, I have sought His guidance, His help, and He has carried me through them all, He has brought me off as conqueror, though in myself perfectly weak. Also in connection with the Scriptural Knowledge Institution.

In all the variety of the circumstances of life, concerning **everything**, I act thus, committing all to the Lord, and I am helped in the smallest matters, I commit them to Him – “Lord, these burdens are too heavy, Thou hast told me Thou wilt sustain me.” There is not a single position in life in which the child of God may be placed, but should be committed to **God. Prayer and Faith** are the universal remedy for all the difficulties of life. By **Prayer and Faith** I have had

the joy of proving that **God does** keep to His Word. I say this that your faith may be strengthened, that you may be led to trust **God**, and walk with Him, and that any unsaved ones may be led to trust in **Christ**.

Believing God

Just in the proportion in which we believe that God will do just what He has said, is our faith strong or weak. Faith has nothing to do with feelings, or with impressions, with improbabilities, or with outward appearances. If we desire to couple them with faith, then we are no longer resting on the Word of God, because faith needs nothing of the kind. Faith rests on the naked Word of God. When we take Him at His word, the heart is at peace.

God delights to exercise our faith, first for blessing in our own souls, then for blessing the Church at large, and also for those without. But this we exercise we shrink from instead of welcoming.

When trials come we should say, "My heavenly Father puts this cup of trial into my hands, that I may have something sweet afterwards." Trial is the food of faith. Oh let us leave ourselves in the hands of our heavenly Father! It is the joy of His heart to do good to all His children.

But trials and difficulties are not the only means by which faith is exercised and thereby increased.

There is the reading of the scriptures, that we may by them acquaint ourselves with God as He has revealed Him in His Word. And what shall we find? That He not only is God Almighty, and a righteous God, but we shall find how gracious, how gentle, how kind, how beautiful He is – in a word, what a lovely being God is.

Are you able to say from the acquaintance you have made with GOD that HE is a lovely BEING? If not, let me affectionately entreat you to ask God to bring you to this that you may admire His gentleness and His kindness, that you may be able to say how good He is, and what a delight it is to the heart of God to do good to His children.

Cheerful Givers

Part of an Address at a Mildmay Park Conference

I HAVE been for fifty years, by God's grace, acting on the principle of Christian giving according to the Scriptures, and I cannot tell you the abundance of spiritual blessing I have received to my own soul through acting thus; that is, seeking to be a cheerful giver; seeking to give as God has been pleased to prosper me.

I began when I had comparatively very, very little to spare; but as I gave, God increased my ability to give more and more: until at last God has been pleased, in the riches of His grace, to condescend to use a poor worthless worm like me, and has entrusted me year by year with very large sums to expend. Many beloved saints are depriving themselves of wondrous spiritual blessing by not giving as stewards what is entrusted to them. They act as if it were all their own, as if all belonged to them, as if already they were in possession of the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled; forgetting that they have nothing whatever which is their own, that they are bought by the precious blood of Christ, and all they possess – their bodily strength, their time, their talents, their business, their professions, their eyes, their hands, their feet, all belong to the Lord Jesus Christ; because He has bought them with His precious blood.

Therefore may I affectionately beseech and entreat my beloved Christian friends to take this to heart, and consider that hitherto they have been depriving themselves of vast spiritual blessings, because they have not followed the principles of giving systematically, and giving as God prospers them and according to a plan; not merely just according to impulse – not as they are moved by a missionary or charity sermon, but systematically and habitually giving on principle, just as God enables them. If He entrusts to them one pound, to give accordingly a proportion; if they are left a legacy of a thousand pounds, to give accordingly; if He entrusts them with ten thousand pounds, or whatever it may be, to give accordingly. Oh my brethren, I believe if we realised the blessing, we would give thus on principle; and, if so, we should give a hundred times more than we do now.

Just as we are constrained by the love of Christ, so God condescends to use us; and as we give, He is pleased to entrust to us more and more. It is impossible for us to say to what amount God may entrust us, or how largely He may give unto us the joy and honour, the precious privilege, of communicating to others.

And here allow me to refer to my own experience. The first year I began giving, God entrusted me with about fifty pounds; but this afterwards increased, until now He has entrusted me with about two thousand pounds a year. The poor man George Müller, known by everybody as a poor man, who is this very day as a poor man, who stands before

you a poor man, and yet by the grace of God has been able to give about forty thousand pounds sterling – that is altogether since I began.

Of late, God has allowed me to receive one legacy after another, and thus sometimes two thousand and even three thousand a year have I been able to give; and see the blessedness, the privilege, the wondrous honour, that a poor man as I am should thus be entrusted by Him! By the grace of God I desire to be nothing but poor. I wish to be nothing else than a poor man, having nothing, no house of my own, no money in the Funds, not an acre of land – a poor man altogether; day by day waiting on God for all I need, for the very clothes that I wear. I wait on God for everything, and yet He has allowed me the great honour and blessed privilege of giving more than forty thousand pounds sterling within the last fifty years. I began in the year 1830 to live thus as steward for the Lord. In the little way I could I gave, but God increased my ability more and more, until now He is allowing me to give in His service, year by year, two or three thousand pounds. Now, why do I say it? To encourage the hearts of my beloved brethren to seek to give systematically. If you have not done so hitherto, do begin now. It is a blessed thing for the soul, it is a blessed thing for your purse and God will entrust to you more and more.

Now I do not say imitate me, George Müller; but I say, seek to give, if it be ever so little, to give systematically; if it be only the twentieth part of your income, give systematically, and you will find a blessing to your soul; and the blessing with regard to stewardship will be such that you will be encouraged more and more to go on in this way.

Clothed With Humility

An Address delivered at a Monday Evening Prayer-meeting at Salem Chapel, Bristol

I Peter v. 5.

When we see one another, we have no difficulty in observing the colour of the dress each one wears. And so with the disciples of the Lord Jesus, there should be no difficulty in its being seen what we are, whether we are of a lowly, humble, meek mind, or whether we are proud and high-minded. We should be “clothed with humility.” It should be manifest, apparent, that we have been in the school of Christ, that we are followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. This is the will of the Lord concerning us. We have need to pray for grace to be “clothed with humility.” “For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” The due time will come. We must wait for it. In the meantime we are to cast all our care upon Him; and we have the reason, “for He careth for you.” Blessed position!

How may I know whether I have cast my burden upon God? One says, By prayer! Well, right or wrong, just as you understand it. Right, if it is believing prayer, if you exercise faith in the power and willingness of God to carry the burden for you. But simply praying will not do. We know we have rolled our burden upon God, if after praying, the heart is easy, the heart is light. If this is not the case, then we are still carrying the burden ourselves instead of casting it on God, and have need to go again to Him, and in believing prayer exercise faith with regard to the power and willingness of God to carry the burden for us.

Five Reasons Why Prayer Must Be Answered

I ASKED, “WILL you please give me your reasons for this confident faith?” “Yes,” said he, “I believe my prayers will be answered because I have fulfilled these five conditions:

FIRST. “I have no shadow of doubt in praying for their salvation, knowing as I do that it is the Lord’s will they should be saved, for He would ‘have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Timothy 2: 4), ‘and this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we asked anything according to His will, He heareth us’ (1 John 5: 14).

SECOND. “The second reason is, I have never pleaded for their salvation in my own name, but in the all-worthy name of my precious Lord Jesus (John 14: 14), that is, on the ground of His merit and worthiness, and on that alone.

THIRD. “The third reason is, I have always believed in the ability and willingness of God to answer my prayers. (Mark 11: 24).

FOURTH. “The fourth reason is, that I have not allowed my self in known sin, for ‘if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me’ (Psalm 66: 18).

FIFTH. “The fifth reason is, that I HAVE CONTINUED IN BELIEVING PRAYER FOR OVER FIFTY-TWO YEARS, AND SHALL SO CONTINUE UNTIL THE ANSWER IS GIVEN. Luke 18; 7: ‘Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?’”

And surely this had made the difference between George Müller and tens of thousands of God’s dear children. Whenever the Lord showed him that it was His will he should pray, he continued in prayer until the answer came.

GOD DID IT

A WELL-KNOWN evangelist relates the following incident: I first went to America many years ago, with the Captain of a Steamer who was one of the most devoted men I ever knew.

When off the coast of Newfoundland he said to me: “Mr. Inglis, the last time I crossed here five weeks ago, something happened which revolutionised the whole of my Christian life.

“We had George Müller of Bristol on board. I had been on the bridge for twenty-four hours and never left it. George Müller came to me and said, ‘Captain, I have come to tell you I must be in Quebec Saturday afternoon.’ ‘It is impossible,’ I said. ‘Very well, if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way – I have not broken an engagement in fifty-seven years. Let us go down into the chart-room and pray.’

“I looked at that man of God and thought to myself, ‘What lunatic asylum can that man have come from? I never heard such a thing as this!’ “‘Mr. Müller,’ I said, ‘do you know how dense this fog is?’

“‘No,’ he replied, ‘my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, who controls every circumstance of my life.’

“He knelt down and he prayed one of the most simple prayers. When he had finished I was going to pray, but he put his hand on my shoulder and told me not pray. ‘First, you do not believe He will; and second, I BELIEVE HE HAS and there is no need whatever for you to pray about it.’

“I looked at him and George Müller said, ‘Captain, I have known my Lord for fifty-seven years and there has never been a single day that I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up Captain and open the door and you will find the fog is gone.’

“I got up and the fog was indeed gone. On Saturday afternoon George Müller was in Quebec for his engagement.”

Food for the Inner Man

While I was staying at Nailsworth, it pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost, though now...more than forty years have since passed away.

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day, to have MY SOUL HAPPY IN THE LORD. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as a habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning. Now I saw, that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart may be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. I began therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning.

The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord’s blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God; searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessings out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.

When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me, that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference between my former practice and my present one is this. Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer. But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or even an hour on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often after having suffered much from wandering of mind of the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began really to pray.

I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it!) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter before me. No private intercourse with a brother stirred me up to this matter. And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is a plain to me as anything that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for his inner man.

As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as every one must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man: not prayer, but the Word of God: and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.

I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow-believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I had ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials and the temptations of the day come upon one!

How to Ascertain the Will of God

I SEEK at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people generally is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

I seek the Will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's Will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

I ask God in prayer to reveal His Will to me aright.

Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge; and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.

"I NEVER remember, in all my Christian course, a period now (in March, 1895) of sixty-nine years and four months, that I ever SINCERELY and PATIENTLY sought to know the will of God by *the teaching of the Holy Ghost*, through the instrumentality of the *Word of God*, but I have been ALWAYS directed rightly. But if *honesty of heart* and *uprightness before God* were lacking, or if I did not *patiently* wait upon God for instruction, or if I preferred *the counsel of my fellow-men*, to the declarations of *the Word of the living God*, I made great mistakes".

How to Become a Successful Labourer in Christ's Vineyard

In the first prayer this evening there was the following expression:- "Use Thy servants, and let them see fruit, as they are able to bear it." I desire to say a few words on this, especially the latter part. It has in a lively way brought to my remembrance my own experience.

It was forty-four years ago, on the 17th of this month, that I began to preach in my own country; but I saw very little fruit from my preaching. I preached in the parish churches - I loved to preach, there was a real earnestness in my preaching, and a real desire to do good - unquestionably so; and yet I never met with a single instance in which I could say I had been used as God's instrument in the conversion of a sinner, though sometimes I preached to a thousand people, or more. I do not say that persons may not have been converted; but I never met with one single instance of conversion.

It did, however, please God, in a few instances - when I did not expect it - to use me in the conversion of sinners; but this was quite apart from the preaching. I once visited a poor tailor and expounded the Scriptures at his house, and a person was brought to the knowledge of the truth through this exposition. Two of my fellow-students, my former companions in sin, were converted instantaneously whilst I was speaking to them; so that in a few cases, where I expected nothing, I was made an instrument of blessing; but where I expected great things, there was nothing at all.

In course of time I came to this country, and it pleased God then to show to me the doctrines of grace in a way in which I had not seen them before. At first I hated them, and said, "If this were true, I could do nothing at all in the conversion of sinners, as all would then depend upon God and the working of His Spirit." But when it pleased God to reveal these truths to me, and my heart was brought to such a state as that I could say, "I am not only content simply to be a hammer, an axe, or a saw, in God's hands; but I shall count it an honour to be taken up and used by Him in any way; and if sinners are converted through my instrumentality, from my inmost soul I will give Him all the glory; the Lord gave me to see fruit in abundance; sinners were converted by scores; and ever since God has used me in one way or other in His service.

I delight to dwell on this, especially for the benefit of my younger fellow-believers. We must be really willing to give God all the glory. We may say, God shall have all the glory; but the point is, do we mean it? We must aim after this, - to be content to be nothing but the instrument, giving God all the glory. We must not say, God shall have ninety-nine parts of the glory, and the one-hundredth part shall be ours. No, we must give Him all, we must not take the one-hundredth part; He is worthy to have it all. Let us aim after this, and assuredly God will take us up; for He can then use us. Our adorable Lord Jesus, during all His life on earth, had one single aim - to seek glory for the Father.

Well, as we are enabled to get glory for the Master, not for the servant, so He, whom we seek to honour, will see to it that honour is bestowed on the servant.

I affectionately, as an elder brother, lay it upon the hearts of my beloved young brethren, whether engaged as preachers, Sunday-school teachers, tract distributors, district visitors, or in any other way working in the Lord's service, if they desire to see fruit resulting from their labours, that they primarily aim after this, - that not only with the lip, but with the heart, they will give all the honour and glory to God, if He should condescend to use them as instruments in His service.

Love and Humility

Whilst our brother was reading of this dear woman so full of love to the Lord, I felt it was impossible to read the narrative without feeling that this love was coupled with deep humility of soul.

She stood behind her Lord, deeply conscious of her vileness, of her unworthiness. She did not think herself worthy to look Him in the face.

To understand the narrative, we must consider the manners of the people at those times, that when partaking of meat they did not sit at the table as we do; but reclined, leaning on one side, lying on bolsters or couches, and so reclining that the feet were behind the upper part of the body. Now she felt herself so unworthy that she stood behind.

This feeling of love, coupled with that of humility, is what we have especially to pray for. I never read this portion without asking God to give me more of the love of this dear woman, and more of her deep humility of soul.

Our dear Brother - not connected with us in Church fellowship, but connected with another Church in this city - has read to us this deeply interesting history; let us carry it home from this meeting, and ask God to give to each of us more of the love found in this dear woman, and more of her deep humility of soul.

My Heavenly Friend

THE precious Lord Jesus Christ is our FRIEND. Oh, let us seek to realize this! It is not a mere religious phrase or statement, but VERILY HE IS OUR FRIEND. He is the Brother "born for adversity", the One Who "sticketh closer than a brother". Who will never leave and never forsake us.

How precious even on earth to have a heavenly Friend, for this brings the joys of heaven in a little degree into our hearts now. And this is just what our heavenly Father desires regarding His children, that they might be as happy as they are capable of being while here in the body. Do we enter into it, that the one Who is "altogether lovely" is ready hour by hour to be our Friend, by day and by night to prove Himself to be our Friend?

When we cannot sleep at night, say, "My precious heavenly Friend, wilt Thou give me a little sleep?" When in pain, say, "My precious heavenly Friend, if it may please Thee, wilt Thou take away this pain? - but if not, if Thou seest better that it should continue, sustain, help and strengthen me, my precious heavenly Friend!" When we feel lonely and tired, turn to the precious Lord Jesus: He is willing to be our Friend in our loneliness. I have found it thus. For sixty-two years and five months I had a beloved wife, and now in my ninety-second year I am left alone. But I turn to my precious Lord Jesus as I walk up and down in my room, and say, "My precious Lord Jesus, I am alone, and yet not alone, Thou are with me; Thou are my Friend, now Lord comfort me, comfort me, strengthen me, give to Thy poor servant everything Thou seest he needs".

Oh! this is a REALITY, not a fable, that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Friend.

And we should not be satisfied till we are brought to this, that we know the Lord Jesus Christ EXPERIENTALLY to be our Friend, HABITUALLY to be our Friend. Just ponder this. HABITUALLY, never leaving, never forsaking us, at all times and under all circumstances ready to prove Himself to be our Friend.

And this He is willing not merely to grant for a few months, or a year or two, but to the very end of our earthly pilgrimage. David in Psalm 23, says, "YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, FOR THOU ART WITH ME". Oh, how precious this!

Now THIS "LOVELY ONE" IS COMING AGAIN, AND SOON, SOON, SOON, MAY HE COME AGAIN, and then He will take us home, and there we shall be for ever with Him. Oh, how precious that bright and glorious prospect! And here again the practical point is, to appropriate this to ourselves. "He is coming to take ME, poor, guilty, worthless, hell-deserving ME, - He is coming to take ME to Himself."

And in the degree in which we enter into and appropriate to ourselves these glorious things, in that degree the joys of heaven will be commenced already.

Open Thy Mouth Wide and I Will Fill It

Psalm lxxxi. 10

An address delivered at a Prayer-meeting at Salem Chapel, Bristol, on Monday evening, August 14th, 1871

THIS word should be continually present to our hearts. We all have our necessities of one kind or another, and every child of God has many things about which he has need to speak to God. And our gracious God speaks here to each one of His children: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," - now ask much at My hands, look for much from Me, bring great requests before Me, I am God, and not man; it is the very joy and delight of My heart to give abundantly. If we were privileged to go to a great person for anything, we should not ask for twopence-halfpenny, nor two shillings

only, but much more: it would be an insult to ask for so little. And if we were allowed freely to make our requests before the Sovereign, we should be ashamed, or ought to be, to make only trifling requests. But the mighty ones of the earth are as nothing compared with Jehovah; and if we would give joy to the heart of God, we must ask great things at His hands, and expect great things from Him. This is taught us in the figurative expression "Open thy mouth wide," and the promise is, "I will fill it." Let any one act according to the exhortation, and most assuredly God will fulfil the promise. Let us look about, and see when in any measure we have been able to act according to this word, whether God was not as good as His word; let us remember that if He has not yet gratified our requests, it does not follow that He will not. Let us only wait still on Him expectingly, perseveringly, for the glory of God, in the name of Jesus, and we shall see how He will fulfil this word, "I will fill it." How touching are those words in the same Psalm, where God says,

"Oh that my people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."

It is the very joy and delight of the heart of God to do us good; and we are here taught that God is willing to give us everything really good for us.

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice"
2 Corinthians 12 : 8.

SO we should spread our matters before God, speaking to Him about EVERYTHING, not merely about great trials, but even about little trials, little difficulties. This Friend we have in heaven, Whose delight it is to bless us, Who takes pleasure in helping every one of His children. Oh the blessedness, increasingly to become conscious of the friendship of our heavenly Friend, and of communing with Him every day, and more or less all the day long!

Now we hear the answer: "MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE." That means, "Thou art My child, and this implies that all My dealings with thee, are the very best dealings that can be, and that thou hast in heaven, a Friend who will never leave nor forsake thee. Thou hast Me as thy Helper at all times and under all difficulties, and if thou wilt make good use of what thou hast obtained through faith in the Lord Jesus thou wilt continually have opportunities to glorify Me whatever thy difficulties and trials may be."

If we enter into what it means to be a partaker of grace, we should at all times and under all circumstances be perfectly satisfied with God's dealings with us. Whether joy or sorrow, sickness or health, prosperity or adversity, EVERYTHING, without one single exception, is under the ordering of God and the management of God.

He thus gives us continual opportunities to glorify Him. And that is the great object of our life being continued to us after our conversion, that every hour of the day we may glorify God in the position and circumstances in which He has been pleased to place us.

And the result will be this, PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST ALL THE DAY LONG, the cup will be running over, joys of heaven in a goodly measure will be brought into the soul, even now while yet in the body.

Oh, that this were more present to our hearts, in order that the Church of God might yet more, while at the end of the nineteenth century, arouse to glorify God!

And then the word, "FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN AM I STRONG." Our very weakness gives opportunity for the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to be manifested. That blessed One never leaves and never forsakes us; the greater our weakness, the nearer He is to manifest His strength; the greater our necessities, the more have we ground to rely on it, that His help is near – that He is not far off – that He will prove Himself still as our Friend. Oh, what peace, what comfort this gives to the heart!

And this has been my experience for more than 70 years; the greater the trial, the greater the difficulty, the nearer the help of the Lord. Again and again I have been in the greatest difficulty, but never forsaken of my precious Lord. Often the appearance was as if I must be overwhelmed, but it never came to it, and it never will come to it, because the precious Lord Jesus Christ never forsakes His people. The more they need help, the nearer is His help.

MORE PRAYER, MORE FAITH, MORE EXERCISE OF PATIENCE, WILL BRING THE BLESSING.

And as to the future, if yet other trials must come, other difficulties, our business is to have the eye fixed on the Lord Jesus. HE remains our Helper. HE remains our Lord. HE will never leave us, never forsake us. THEREFORE OUR BUSINESS IS JUST TO POUR OUT OUR HEARTS BEFORE HIM, AND HELP, IN HIS OWN TIME AND WAY, IS SURE TO COME.

Pray On! Pray On!

IN seeking to understand the conditions of successful prayer, we must compare Scripture with Scripture, because again and again we find that one part supplies what is wanting in another.

1 Let us commence with I John 5: 13-15. Here is the first condition to be attended to – we have to ask God for the things which are *according to His will*. And should we be little acquainted with the will of God about any matter, we must first ask Him to teach and instruct us. He loves us with an infinitely wise love, and not like foolish parents who give their children all they ask for. He desires true happiness and blessing for His children, and therefore only gives what would be for their blessing and profit to receive.

2 The Lord Jesus said we should *ask in His Name* if we wish our petitions granted (John 14: 13,14).

3 Another point is, that we *exercise faith in the power of God, and in His willingness to hear us* (Mark 11: 24). We must be looking out for the answer. There are few children of God who doubt His ability to give, but many doubt His willingness, forgetting that large word of the apostle, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

4 Now, suppose those three things are found in us with regard to prayer, there is another in Psalm 66: 18, which is an important one: “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*”

5 There remains one thing more – *that we continue to wait on God till the answer comes*. Here we frequently break down. We begin well, but we do not go on.

If month after month, and year after year, we have been praying, and our petitions have not been granted, the thought comes, Will God answer?

Many break down because the petition is not granted so quickly as they expected. Parents pray for their children. They begin to do so; but we should never forget that we have to *continue*, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, until the answer comes. For God knows the best time for us, and He will in His own time give us our requests. It may be for the trial of our faith, or of our patience, or to see if we are in earnest, that He waits. For these and other reasons, the petitions may not be answered so quickly as we desire.

Young workers ask God for the conversion of many souls. They go on praying and preaching, but do not get answers. It may be that they are not prepared for the blessing. If their petitions were granted, it might be an injury to their souls. Therefore He waits till they are prepared to receive the blessing. So with Sunday School teachers. They ask God for good things for their children, yet do not receive the answer. Now let us go on, and patiently, quietly wait on the Lord. The blessing most assuredly will come.

Now, are we all in the habit of thus going on patiently, perseveringly, month after month, and year after year, waiting on God? Then let us set out afresh with renewed earnestness and faith. To all our petitions, if they have been according to the will of God, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, and with faith in the willingness of God to give what we have asked, the answers must come. I have myself had to wait for a long time to get certain blessings. In many instances the answer has come instantaneously, or in the same hour, or the same day; yet in other things I have had to wait years – ten years, fifteen years, twenty years, and upwards – yet invariably at the last the answer has come. And I say it to encourage my brethren and sisters in Christ, Go on waiting, waiting, waiting. Begin afresh to bring your petitions before God. He will hear you. For one thing I have been praying for thirty-nine years and nine months, and the answer has not yet come. Last evening I prayed for it, and the evening before last I prayed again. When travelling in India and in America, year after year I have been praying and I am sure that in the end the answer will come. I have received tens of thousands of answers to prayer, but in this particular I have to wait. For the conversion of the parents of one friend I prayed and the answer came when the father was between eighty and ninety years old. This very individual had cast off his son entirely; for years he did not allow him to come into his presence. At last he sent for him, and then would scarcely allow him to go out of his sight; yet for twenty years I had to pray for his conversion. So with the mother.

Therefore, begin afresh with greater earnestness than ever, and you will receive the answers at last. The Lord delights to bless His children, to give them everything that is for their blessing and comfort; and especially does He delight to bless parents in praying for their children. But if we have set them a bad example, and have let them go on in a self-willed course, then the first thing is to make honest confession of our sin, and to own that we deserve all that may have come upon us. Let us humble ourselves in the dust before God, yet pleading the merits of Jesus, and we shall find that God is ever ready in His pity and compassion to forgive us. Then with renewed earnestness let us begin to pray.

Soul Nourishment First

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When I Die, Shall I be Missed?

We miss our beloved brother Craik, and it is right that we should miss him. The godly aim of our lives should be that when we die we may be missed. My soul longs for grace so to live, so to walk, so to act, that when my course is finished, I may be missed, - I may be greatly missed. It becomes everyone in the body of Christ, - every member in the body of Christ, to aim after this; that when their course is finished they may be missed, - they may be missed. If our beloved departed brother were not missed, we should have great cause for weeping, great cause for sorrow; but because he is missed, we have great cause for giving thanks, great cause for praising God for the grace that was given to him so to live, so to walk, so to preach, and so to act, as that now he is gone he is missed.

Well, then, let us ask ourselves individually, - Suppose this were my last night on earth, suppose I should not have to stay another day here, would my brethren and sisters in Christ miss me? How deeply important it is that we should so walk, so act, and so pass through this world, that when we are gone we may be missed. If when gone, we are not missed by the saints, it is a plain proof that we have not been strengthening their hands in God, it is a plain proof that we have not been ministering to their spiritual profit, that we have not been helping them forward in the things of God.

If we take our place, - though we may not be preachers, though we may not be pastors, though we may not be holding any public position among the saints, - yet if we take our place as members in the body of Christ, and act according to the place the Lord has given us, and walk graciously according to that place, when we are gone we shall be missed, - we must be missed. After this we all have to aim.

Let each one take away with us tonight this godly purpose, - that by the grace of God, from this evening and henceforth, it shall be my earnest prayer, my constant aim, so to live, so to walk, so to carry myself, that when I am gone I shall be missed.

Why Are Thou Cast Down, O My Soul?

Extracts from an Address on Psalm 42: 5, 11

“WHY art thou cast down, O my soul?” the Psalmist saith to himself. And so may we say to ourselves. Is there ever any ground to be cast down? There are two reasons, but only two: if we are as yet unconverted, we have ground to be cast down; or, if we are converted and live in sin, then we are rightly cast down. But except for these two things, there is no ground to be cast down, for all else may be brought before God in prayer with supplication and thanksgiving; and regarding all our necessities, all our difficulties, all our trials, we may exercise faith in the power of God, and in the love of God; and in His own time help will come in answer to prayer and faith.

“Hope thou in God.” Oh, remember this – there is never a time when we may not hope in our difficulties, and though to all appearance help is impossible, yet our business is to hope in God. And it will be found that it is not in vain; in the Lord’s own time help will come.

Oh, the hundreds, yea, the thousands of times that I have found it thus within the past seventy years and four months! When it seemed impossible that help could come, help did come, for God has His own resources, and these resources may be counted by hundreds, by thousands. He is not confined to this thing or that thing, or to twenty things; in ten thousand different ways, and at ten thousand different times, God may help us. Our business is to spread our case before the Lord, in childlike simplicity to pour out all our heart before God, telling Him, “I do not deserve that Thou shouldst hear me and answer my requests, but for the sake of my precious Lord Jesus – in Whom alone I trust for the salvation of my soul, Thy perfect Servant, my Saviour – for His sake answer my prayer and give me grace quietly to wait till it please Thee to answer my prayer, for I believe Thou wilt do it in Thine own time and way.” Thus invariably I have found that (with the exception of one case, for which I have prayed since November 10th, 1844) my prayer has been answered. And I cannot tell you what an effect this has had on my life, and how it has made me a happy man; and in my greatly advanced age it makes me a very happy man.

“For I shall yet praise Him.” More prayer, more exercise of faith, more patient waiting, and the result will be blessing, abundant blessing. Thus I have found it many hundreds of times, and therefore I continually say to myself, “Hope thou in God.”

“Who is ... my God.” This is just the great point to remember, that this God is our God – Jehovah, the Almighty God – is our God. And, therefore, we must wait on Him longer and longer and longer, and exercise patience yet more and more and more; for in God’s own time it will be seen that it is not in vain.

Now the Psalmist tells God in all simplicity that his soul is cast down (v.6). So may we tell God, our Father, tell the Lord Jesus Christ, and ask Him that He would now speak a word to us in season, because we are weary. That is His own precious promise in Isaiah 50: 4. And when we are weary and tried, either through difficulty, sore temptation, losses, crosses, or greatly reduced through sickness – under such circumstances we may turn to the Lord Jesus, and remind Him of His precious promise, saying to Him, “My precious Lord Jesus, I am weary, wilt Thou now speak to me a word in season?” And He will comfort us, refresh our spirit, and so strengthen us by His Spirit in the inner man.

Oh! If you have never made trial of Him, make trial of Him, and you will find how ready He is to do this!

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