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C. H. Spurgeon Sermons on Psalms Part 1

Psalm 9:18 Good Cheer for the Needy

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“For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.” — Psalm 9:18.

These words will fall upon different ears with quite different effects. If any of you are, in the Scriptural sense, “poor and needy,” God the Holy Spirit will enable you to see much in these gracious sentences; but if you fancy that you are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” you will care nothing whatever for such words as these. You know right well that the value of a text to any soul depends upon the condition of that soul. I know not how many stars may be visible at the present moment; I do not think that I even looked up at them before I came here, and perhaps you have not; but to the mariner, who wants to know his position when far out upon the sea, even one lone star gleaming amid the cloud-rack may be very precious. So, if you are among the poor and needy ones, the light in this text will be most joyful to your heart, but if you are not among them, perhaps you will scarcely condescend to look up to see its light. When Richard I was shut up within the gloomy walls of a foreign prison, you remember that he heard a song sung by his faithful friend, who was traversing all Europe, as a troubadour, to try to find him. There were many ears that heard that strain; and, possibly, some of the listeners had noticed the sweetness of the music; yet there was nothing very special in it to them; but the imprisoned king, when he heard that song, could sing the refrain to it, and, therefore, it had a peculiar value to him, for it re-opened his intercourse with the world outside, and ultimately led to his release. So, it may be that my text has a refrain that you do not know; and if it is so, you will not care for it; but if your heart is very poor,- — if you are consciously very needy, — if you are reduced to spiritual destitution, then these simple words, “The needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever, will awake echoes in your soul which will be the means of bringing you great joy.

Here let me remark what a blessed thing it is to be poor in spirit and down among the lowly in heart. The best things come to those who are in such a condition. Up there, on the mountain tops, you are in a conspicuous but very cold position. If there are any storms about, they will be sure to gather around the mountain’s brow; but if there be waterproofs, they will be sure to flow down there in the quiet seclusion of the valley, where the nourishing grass grows for the feeding of the sheep. He who dwells in the Valley of Humiliation, lives in a place, where he may delight himself with safety; because he is certain, while he abides there, to give all the glory for his delight to his God. It is not a land that every man chooseth; it lies too low for some men’s tastes. There are those who

love the high places of the, earth, where they can exalt themselves; but he who is wise will choose to be numbered amongst the hungry whom the Lord filleth with good things, and not among the rich whom he sendeth away empty. He will delight to be reckoned among those that are of low degree, whom God exalteth, even the humble and the meek; and he will not wish to be gathered with the proud, against whom the Lord has registered his solemn declaration that he will stain the pride of their glory.

If you look at our text as it stands, it bears, first of all, the literal and natural meaning that God will take care of the poor and needy. As a general rule, they are forgotten. In the regulations of many kingdoms, no provision whatever has been made for the, poor. Christianity has done much to cause modern governments to make some recognition of the rights of the poor and needy, and also to provide to some extent for them; yet this provision is often handed out to them with great coldness and sternness. Our poor laws are not, even with the best intentions, always administered justly; while there are lands where everything seems to be done to increase, the riches of the rich, and to make the poor still poorer. Well, it will not always be so; there are better days coming for you that are despised, and poor, and needy. You need not fight, and strive, and be envious, and make discord; there is One in heaven who is your Helper, and he is coming down to earth again; and when he cometh, "he shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The reign of Jesus Christ, though it may seem to be long in beginning, will assuredly come at the appointed time; and when it cometh, then all tyranny and oppression and wrong-doing shall be speedily ended. "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." In his days shall no man be robbed of his rights, — no man be down-trodden, — no man be oppressed. Behold, the Lord hath laid help upon One who is mighty; he hath exalted One chosen out of the people. His coming is the world's hope; his appearing will be the signal for the world's deliverance from all that is opposed to him and to his gospel.

But I am going to take our text in a spiritual sense, and refer it to those who are "poor and needy" in the Scriptural meaning of those words. This is a description that is very frequently applied to the people of God. They have been taught, by the, Spirit of God, to realize their poverty; they know it, and they confess it. They also feel that they have many needs; indeed, they seem to themselves now to have more needs than they ever had before; and were it not for the infinite fullness which is treasured up in Christ, the very thought of their needs would crush them, and drive them to despair. "Poor and needy" is a fair and full description of all those who have been taught of the Lord to see themselves as they really are in his sight.

I want to give some good cheer to the poor and the needy, and my text seems to me to refer to three pairs of things which concern them. First, it speaks of two bitter experiences which will come to an end; then, two sad fears which are removed by the text; and, thirdly, two precious promises which are given to us in the text.

I. First, there are Two Bitter Experiences, which many of God's people — nay, all God's people have more or less had, especially if they happen to be poor and needy in temporal things as well as in spiritual.

The first bitter experience is that they have been forgotten. The text says, "The needy shall not alway be forgotten," plainly implying that they have been forgotten; — forgotten by those who used to know them, forgotten by those who fed at their table, and who landed and flattered them in the days of their high estate. They do not know you now. You are the, same, but your coat is different, your house is different, your purse is different; and, therefore, though they loved you, — oh, so fervently! — their love is gone now because the various adjuncts, which, after all, were the real ground of their love, have departed. The leaves are, withering, so the swallows, which gathered in the summer, are all gone before the winter comes. Many friends are of that sort; their friendship withers like the leaves of autumn; and, like the swallows, they are gone to find other summers somewhere else. If you become prosperous again, and get another summer, they will come back, and seek to ingratiate themselves with you again. Like dogs, they will follow you as long as you have a bone to give them; but, unlike many dogs, they will not stay with you even when you have nothing to bestow upon them. If you are a poor man, who was once better off, you have passed through this bitter experience, I have no doubt, and have been forgotten because your circumstances have changed.

Possibly, you have been forgotten ever since you have been a Christian. While you were self-righteous, like other men, they knew and respected you. You helped to keep each other's self-righteousness up, just as tradesmen, with their accommodation bills, help to keep each other financially afloat. But you suddenly became poor in spirit; you began to see that you needed a better righteousness than your own. They called you melancholy; and no wonder that they did, for you were indeed melancholy. You were very uncongenial company for them; you used to heave a deep sigh when they would rather have heard a noisy laugh; and now that you have gone right over, as they say, to the Puritanic party, and left their merry-making, they have forgotten you, — they do not know you, — they look down upon you, and despise you. They say, sometimes, "You are a canting hypocrite," and they have other equally pretty names that they apply to you. If they remember you, it is that they may scoff at you; but they say they have forgotten you, and it is a great mercy if they have; and it will be another great mercy if you also forget them. There is a message, in the 45th Psalm, which may be addressed to you: "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. "You are to go without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach, and to be

forgotten by your former friends and acquaintances because of your religion. It will be a painful ordeal to you, but you may go through it without any very serious loss.

Possibly, too, dear friends, you have often thought that you have been forgotten in the arrangements of God's people, since you have come among them. You are so needy, perhaps in pocket, but certainly in spirit, that when arrangements have been made for the help and relief of others, you fancy that you have been overlooked. Do not be quite certain that it is so, for I have known some poor people, who have been a little too sensitive on those points, and have suspected unkindness when everything has been really planned for the best. Do not be ready to misjudge your fellow Christians if they are better off than you are. As it would be a sin, on their part, to be proud, it would be equally a sin, on your part, to be envious. It would be wrong for them to be unkind to you, but it would be just as wrong for you to be unkind to them by thinking that they are unkind when they are not. Still, I should not wonder if it does sometimes happen that you fancy yourself forgotten even in the arrangements that are made in connection with the house of God.

So, too, you may have had the experience of seeming to be forgotten in various regulations which are passed by your fellow-Christians. For instance, someone has been declaring the proportion that every Christian should give to the cause, of God out of his substance. It has been laid down by some, as a hard and fast rule, that nobody should give less than a tenth, — a good rule, mark you, and a rule applicable to nearly everybody; but, sometimes, there is a needy saint, who says, "I could not spare a tenth from my poor pittance; I can scarcely spare a penny from the little that I have, so this rule presses hardly upon me." Well, then, give what you feel to be right, and do not trouble about the matter. When we speak to various classes, we cannot always mention the exceptions; you know that there are exceptions to all rules, and we do not wish any rule to press hardly upon anyone. The poor widow gave her two mites, and so may you; but do not fret and worry, though I have no doubt it sometimes pains you when, in such utterances, you seem to be forgotten.

It is also very painful to a Christian, who is poor and needy in spirit, when, in the preaching of the Gospel, there seems to be nothing for the poor lame sheep, for the halting, for those that are weak-kneed, for those that are ready to perish. I have heard sermons, which have related to very glorious experiences, in which I have taken some delight; but I have felt, all the while, "I wonder what the poor weaklings of the flock think of this, when they hear about this experience, and are told that they can have it if they like, and that they must have it, or else they have no real saving faith at all." At such a time, my mind always goes to those who can only touch the hem of the Savior's garment, or say to him, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." My witness is that some of the best children in the whole family of God never have the enjoyment of full assurance; but they are so careful, so watchful, so sensitive, that their very sadness of heart drives them close to Christ. They seem to be so conscious of their own weakness, and so afraid of sinning against God, that, though in them there is not the perfect love that casteth out fear, — I wish it were; — yet I would be the last to condemn them. There is One, who will not condemn them; even he who carries the lambs in his bosom, and who is tender and pitiful to all the weak ones in his flock. We must mind, when we are preaching experience, that we do not so put the experience of the strong as to make it the standard for the weak. That is almost as wrong as to make the experience of the weak to be the standard of the strong, as some have done. The fact is, there, is no experience, that is a real standard of the Christian life except the experience of a change of heart, and of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, dear heart! I know what you mean when, after listening to a sermon, you have said, "Alas, I am forgotten! There seems nothing there for me. There are no crumbs for those who have lost their teeth, and have only sore gums; there is no bread and milk for the children. It is all rounds of beef, — strong meat for grown-up men; but, woe is me, there is nothing, that I can cab." I should not wonder if that is what you have felt; but, if so, do not feel it any longer, "for the needy shall not always be forgotten."

And, peradventure, up till now, you have even experienced a forgetfulness on the part of providence as you have understood the term. Others of your family have risen in the world, but you have not. Your friends have set up in business, and have done well; but you have not. You have sought to obtain a competence, but you have not secured it yet. You wished, at any rate, to get out of financial trouble; but you are in it still, and you are apt to fear that, when the Lord distributes his favors, he forgets you; — at least, so far as his providential mercies are concerned. Well, now, let this fear be gone, I pray you; let this bitter experience come to an end. Believe that you are not forgotten, after all, by him who is in heaven, and who beholdeth all his people; and if you have experienced, in some measure, a sort of forgetfulness, real on the part of man, but never real on the part of God, do believe that it will not last for ever.

The second painful experience is that you, have been disappointed, as well as fancied that you have been forgotten. Our text says, "The expectation of the, poor shall not perish for ever," which implies that it has perished sometimes.

Now, dear friend, I know that, if you are a Christian, you have had some of your expectations that have perished, and a good many of them, too. Why, you expected, at one time, to find your own way to heaven, — you expected that your own righteousness would make you acceptable to God, and that you could do everything that was necessary to gain his favor. That foolish expectation has perished for ever, has it not? Your self-righteousness is such a mass of filthy rags that you never mean to try to patch those old rags together; and make them into a garment to wear in the sight of God.

Then, you thought that you might expect, when you believed in Jesus Christ, that you would have perfect peace directly. Yet, possibly, you did not have it. Believer as you were, you had to live by faith, without much experience of inward joy. And you also expected that you would never be troubled any more with any sort of bitter experiences, certainly not with any sins. You had lost your burden at the foot of the cross, and you meant to go singing all the way to heaven; in fact, you imagined that you were to ride there, in a carriage, in a most luxurious and delightful style, having two heavens, — one here, and another hereafter. That expectation has not been realized, has it? You have found that the way to heaven is a rough road, that there are, many hardships in the pilgrim's pathway, and that there are giants to be fought and slain. Alas, also, there are sins within that have to be contended with from day to day.

Perhaps you had even entertained some very high expectations that you were going to be one of the brightest stars that ever shone among the spiritual constellations of God. Oh, what wonders you were going to do! You were going to be the leader amongst the people of God. There would be no diminution of zeal in you; no lack of life in you; no declension from grace in you; no neglected prayer in you. You would be the very paragon of virtue; you would push the world before you, and drag the church behind you. I do not know how high your expectations soared; but I should not wonder if some of them have perished before now, and you have come down to be, even in your own estimation, a very ordinary sort of person; in fact, you have continued to grow smaller and smaller ever since you have known Christ, till now you have come down to be nothing, and you are on the way to being less than nothing; and you will be wonderfully near the mark when you get down to that point.

How many human expectations turn out to be mere wind! As I studied my text, turning it over and over again, it occurred to me that the needy, the poor, are generally the people who have the greatest expectations. I have talked with many poor men, and I have found, over and over again, that they have a great, great uncle, somewhere or other, who may leave them a lot of money some day; or else they think they are entitled to property somewhere, only the lawful owner keeps them out of it! They have proofs that there was someone in their family who left- well, I do not know whether it was not- some millions of money, that now lie in the Bank of England, and they are expecting to get them! Ah, he that butters his bread with such expectations will find it very dry; and he who waits till expectations of that kind are fulfilled will, I am afraid, find that he is waiting in vain. But poor people generally have plenty of expectations; and, as a rule, those expectations come to an end. This is a part of the bitter experiences of life, and always will be; so, let us bear it patiently, for our text assures us that our disappointment shall only be temporary.

II. Now, in the second place, there are Two Sad Fears, Which The Text Removes.

The first sad fear is that, perhaps, we may be for ever forgotten of God. Oh, what, a sad day it would be for us if God should ever forget us! You remember what varied experiences David had. Once he wrote, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." At another time, he wrote, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Ah, that is how the greatest saints have to talk sometimes; but what a fall in the barometer that indicates! From being up there at "set fair," it has gone down to "much rain" and "storms." "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. "This fear will come to the child of God at certain times, it may take this shape, "What if God should forget me in my present trouble? None but he can get me out of it. I am so bowed down and distressed that, without divine consolation, I know that I shall surely sink in the deep waters; yet the consolation does not come, the help I need does not arrive. I cannot see any way of escape, and I am as much in perplexity now as I was six months ago. I have made it a matter of prayer, and waiting on the Lord; but I sometimes fear that he has forgotten me. What, shall I do if he never helps me? If it had not been the Lord who was on my side, I should long ago have sunk into despair; but what shall I do if he deserts me now? I can never escape out of this difficulty without him."

Possibly, the believer is not so much in temporal trouble as burdened under a sense of sin. He used to feel joy and peace through believing in Christ; but he has wandered away from fellowship with his God, and God is walking contrary to him because he is walking contrary to God. He is dwelling under his Father's frown; he is smarting under his Father's rod. Now he says within himself, "What will happen to me if he should never again give me the kiss of reconciliation?" He cries, "Deal mercifully with thy servant, O Lord, and restore unto me the joy of thy salvation! "Yet still he walks in darkness, and sees no light. He is under a cloud, and his cry is, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him whom my soul loveth!" There comes to his heart the horrible fear that God has forsaken him. It is a horrible fear, but it is quite unfounded; there is no real reason for it. God cannot forget his chosen ones, whom he has graven upon the palms of his hands; and though a woman may forget her sucking child, God cannot forget any of his people, sorrowful or sinful though they may be.

Then, too, this thought will come: "I am sick; my health is failing; I have less strength every day; and, soon, I shall have to go through the cold river of death; and what if, then, I should be without my God? It will be hard to suffer, and harder still to die, — to leave the warm precincts of this house of clay, and, as a disembodied spirit, to be launched into an unknown world; what if there should be no guardian angels around my dying bed, and no Savior to receive my departing spirit? What if, after all, my hope should

turn out to be a delusion, my faith a fiction, and my experience a dream?" I do not wonder, when such thoughts as these cross your minds, that you should feel distressed, as hundreds before you have been, "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But our text is a blessed cure for this sad fear: "For the needy shall not always be forgotten."

The other dreadful fear is, lest, after all, your expectation should perish. Your expectation, beloved, is that, since you have trusted in God, you shall never be confounded; — and that, because, you have relied upon the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, you shall be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting. Yet, sometimes, you sorrowfully say, "Shall I hold on to the end? Shall I be able to persevere? I am so weak, so unstable, so apt to slip and slide, that I fear what will happen to me. Will my hope endure to the end?" Then you look around, and see the strong temptations that beset your path; you live, perhaps, where there are few Christians to help you, and where everything seems to go against your progress in the divine life; and you say, "I shall surely one day fall by the hand of the enemy. How can I hope to outlive these many perils and dangers?"

Possibly, your constitutional temperament is a hindrance to you, and you cry, "Woe is me, because I have such corruptions within, — such a fierce temper, — such a cold heart, — such a penurious disposition. Can I ever, after all, be fashioned into the likeness of my Lord? Can such gritty granite as my soul is made of be ever melted down, and run into the divine mould, or be turned like wax to the divine seal?" It does make you fear and tremble; especially when trials come, the like of which you never saw before; and you say, "My expectation will perish. I thought that, by God's grace, I should leap over a wall, and break through a troop; I hoped that I should continue to trust in the Lord even though all creature aid should fail; but now I tremble and fear. I have run with the footmen, and they have wearied me; what shall I do when I have to contend with horses; and, above all, what shall I do in the swellings of Jordan?" Well, now, this is the sort of fear that arises in the hearts of God's children; yet that fear need not be entertained for a single moment. It is your duty and privilege to shut it out of your heart, for thus saith the Lord, "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."

III. Now I come to our third and last point, — Two Precious Promises Are Here Given To Us.

The first is given to the needy, and it declares that they shall not always be forgotten. Possibly, some of you think that you have been forgotten in the arrangements of providence. Listen, troubled one. If you can only wait with patience, and stand still, and see the salvation of God, you will find that the needy shall not always be forgotten. Have you never noticed how a father carves for a large family.

You do not expect him, at a single stroke, to carve enough to fill every plate, do you? There is a little child who is ill, so there must be a suitable portion sent away for that one; and, likely enough, that will be the first portion sent from the table. Then the father serves his other children according to a certain order which he has in his own mind, and there must be some who come after the others. I have known carvers keep someone waiting till they have reached the most juicy part of the meat; they only made him wait till they could give him something specially choice; so, if you are kept waiting for your portion, you will not lose anything by waiting a while. Patience is rewarded in due season. If ships are longer on their voyage, we expect them to bring home all the richer freight. If the trees are slower than usual, this year, in putting forth their buds, — if the peach blossoms or the apricots are not visible so soon as in other seasons, — let us hope that it will be all the better for the ultimate fruit-bearing of the trees. Be thou content to come last rather than first, for sometimes last is best, and "there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." Poor as thou art, thou shalt not always be forgotten; there is a portion in reserve for thee, — even for thee.

Thou shalt not be forgotten at the mercy-seat. Thou hast been there many times without receiving an answer to thy petitions. Perhaps, poor heavy heart, thou hast prayed seven times, and no reply has yet come. Possibly, thou hast gone to thy God as often as the poor widow went to the unjust judge, and thou hast gone as importunately as she went; but, so far, there has been no sweet relief such as thy soul longed for. Yet thou shalt not be always forgotten; so, continue in prayer. If the promise tarry, wait for it; for, in due season, the answer shall surely come.

Thou shalt not always be forgotten in the Word. Thou hast been reading it, yet no promise has seemed to comfort thee. In fact, as thou turnest over the pages of thy Bible, thou findest bitter things recorded there, as if they were written against thyself. But read on; read on; and, one of these days, thou wilt come to a passage that will seem to leap up out of the Scriptures to meet thee. It will woo thee, the very sight of it will fascinate thee, and thou wilt say, "The Lord hath spoken this message to my soul, and I bless and praise his holy name."

Thou shalt not always be forgotten from the pulpit. Perhaps there is someone here, who has long been listening to the gospel, and who sorrowfully says, "I find that others are comforted, but I am not. God seems to give a portion to all the rest of his people, but none to poor me. Alas! I come and I go, but it seems to be all in vain. I love to go where I see others getting a blessing, yet I find no comfort there for myself." Well, thou shalt not always be forgotten, God will bid his servant drop a handful on purpose for thee. Perhaps this very text is a message to thy heart just now.

Thou shalt not always be forgotten at the Lord's table. You have gone there hoping that he, who often reveals himself to his servants in the breaking of bread, will be pleased to manifest himself to you at his own table; yet you have not had a smile from him. You have sat with others at the King's table, but the King himself did not seem to sit there with you. You ate the bread, but you did not spiritually feed upon his flesh. You drank the wine, but you did not spiritually drink his precious blood. Well, you shall not always be forgotten. If you are really trusting in Jesus, there are brighter days yet in store for you. The King shall yet bring you into his banqueting house, and his banner over you shall be love and you shall see such changes that you shall sing, —

“My mourning he to dancing turns,

For sackcloth joy he gives,

A moment, Lord, thine anger burns,

But long thy favor lives.”

And you shall not always be forgotten in the service that you are rendering unto God. You have not yet seen a soul converted through your instrumentality, but you shall not always be forgotten in that respect. And in the sufferings that you are called to bear for Christ's sake, you shall not always be forgotten. Patience will yet have her perfect work, and the suffering will end when it has accomplished its purpose. You are persecuted and despised, perhaps, but you shall not always be forgotten; you shall yet learn the sweetness of being reproached for Christ's sake. You may seem to be forgotten for a little while, but you shall not really be so. God, the Holy Spirit, will not forget you; he will sustain, instruct, illuminate, and console you. God the Son will not forget you. He paid too high a price for you, ever to forget you. You are his bride; he loves you as he loves himself. You are part and parcel of himself, so he will never forget you. And God the Father will not forget you. You have been his from all eternity, and he has “begotten you again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” You will die soon; but you will not be forgotten, for the holy angels will convoy you home to heaven. The rich man died, and was buried, with many waving plumes over his mourning coach. His will was read, his property was squabbled over, and there was an end of him; everybody soon forgot him. But the angels carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom. They had not forgotten Lazarus. The dogs had licked his sores, but the angels had loved him. The dunghill was his couch, but Abraham's bosom was his throne. If you are a believer in Jesus, you are not forgotten up in glory. Rowland Hill, when he was very old, used to like to go and see aged people when they were dying, and he used to say to them, “When you get to heaven, give my love to the three glorious Johns up there, and be sure to tell them that poor old Rowley hopes they have not forgotten him.” There is no fear that they will forget any of you who are going there. There is a crown in heaven which will fit nobody's head but yours, and that crown must hang as a useless thing until you get there to wear it.

There is a mansion in glory that nobody but you can inhabit; and you cannot suppose that it will be allowed to stand empty for ever, can you? Oh, no; you must be there to occupy it; and you may rest assured that he who is preparing the place for his people, will bring his people to it, for he has not gone to heaven to prepare a place for his people without resolving that his people shall not perish on the way thither.

“The needy shall not always be forgotten.” They will be specially remembered when Christ comes, and he says to them, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” They will be remembered as they enter into the joy of their Lord; and then, throughout the eternal ages, they will never be forgotten of him. They may well bear whatever comes upon them now in the anticipation of the glory that is yet to be revealed.

The other promise in our text is that “the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.” What is your expectation, — you who have believed in Jesus, yet who feel very poor and needy, You have been expecting to get peace, have you not? You shall have it in due time. A friend said to me, quite recently, “Supposing a person has believed in Jesus, but does not feel immediate peace, what then? Is that person to believe that he is saved? What is his evidence that he is? I replied, “God says that whosoever believeth in his Son is not condemned, so I need not ask to have peace within my soul in order to corroborate the declaration of God. I am bound to take the truth of God as it stands, and believe myself to be saved, whether I feel any peace or not. If I will do this, then I shall have the peace; but if I say that I will not believe myself saved till I feel peace, then I am not really believing God at all; but I am asking him to give me peace to corroborate his evidence, as if the evidence in the Word were not strong enough to satisfy me.” Dear friend, it may be that you have not yet enjoyed peace because your faith is not as simple and as clear as it should be. But if you are really poor and needy, and cast yourself on the promises of God you may depend upon it that the expectation that you have rightly founded upon the gospel shall not be disappointed. You shall have peace; yes, and you shall have perfect peace one day. “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.”

You are expecting, too, that you shall triumph over sin. God has promised that sin shall not have dominion over you. It may struggle very hard, and, for a while, you may seem to be under its power; nay more, you may come under its power in a measure, but it never shall reign over you. Sin may, for a time, conquer a part of Mansoul; but it can never conquer the citadel of the heart; so rest assured of that. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,” and you shall yet feel the power of holiness, and the

mighty work of the Eternal Spirit in your soul. "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."

You have been expecting, too, to get out of trouble; well, you shall get out of trouble. You have been expecting to see good come out of evil; well, good will come out of evil. I cannot tell you when you shall be delivered, but delivered you shall be, for thus it is written, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." One of these days, you will receive a warrant that will set you free from all trouble for ever and ever. How soon it may come, I cannot tell; but, till it does, you may patiently wait and quietly hope, for the salvation of God.

You have also been expecting to enjoy the full assurance of faith; and your expectation, in that respect, shall not perish for ever. The Lord will make your faith to grow; every day's experience will help to establish it, and even your difficulties and troubles will tend to strengthen it. If a boy is apprenticed to a blacksmith, I should not wonder if, for months, his arm aches dreadfully through swinging the big hammer; but keep on, boy, keep on! Your muscles will grow hard, your sinews will get braced, and you will become strong just where you need to be strong. So, dear friend, shall it be with your faith, you shall become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

You expected to have very special spiritual joys, did you not? You expected that your soul would be made like the chariots of Amminadib, did you not? You expected to be in such a condition that, whether in the body or out of the body, you could not tell. Well, you shall realize all that in due season, for God will reveal it unto you when it seems good in his sight. As for myself, — and I may speak also for all who love the Lord, — I am expecting to be with him where he is, to behold his glory. I am expecting to be like him, and to overcome, and sit with him upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and has sat down with his Father upon his throne. And, brothers and sisters, if this is your expectation, it shall not perish for ever, but it shall be blessedly realized. I have told you before some of the last words of my venerable grandfather, but I may venture to repeat them to you. One of my uncles said to him, "You know, father, that hymn of Dr. Watts, —

Firm as the earth Thy gospel stands,

My Lord, my hope, my trust

If I am found in Jesus' hands,

My soul can ne'er be lost

"Ah, James!" he replied, "I do not like the metaphor that Dr. Watts uses there, 'Firm as the earth.' Why, the earth is sinking from under my feet; I want something much firmer than that. I like better what the Doctor says when he sings, —

Firm as his throne His promise stands,

And he can well secure

What I've committed to His hands,

Till the decisive hour

"That will do for me now, James," said the dying saint; "that is divine sovereignty. The Lord is King; and, as surely as he is King, and sits upon His throne, so surely will He fulfill His promise to a poor feeble worm like me, so I shall behold His face with joy."

Psalm 16:1 Christ's Prayer and Plea

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"Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust."-Psalm 16:1

I Believe that we have in this verse a prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some portions of this Psalm cannot apply to anyone but the Savior; and we have the examples of Peter and Paul to warrant us in saying that, in this Psalm, David spoke of Jesus Christ. There is no apparent division in the Psalm, so that, as one part of it refers most distinctly to the Christ, we are justified in concluding that the whole of it refers to him, and belongs to him! But we knew that whatever belongs to Christ belongs also to all his people because of their vital union with him, so we shall treat the text, first, as our Savior's own prayer; and then, secondly, we shall regard it also as the prayer of the followers of the Lamb.

I. So, first, we will take these words as Our Savior's Own Prayer: "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust;" and we will divide the text, at once into two parts,-the prayer itself: " Preserve me, O God: " and the argument or plea: " for in thee do I put my trust."

In considering these words as Christ's prayer, does it not immediately strike you as a very singular thing that Christ should pray at all? It is most certain that he was "very God of very God," that "Word" who was in the beginning with God, and who was himself God, the great Creator "without whom was not anything made that was made." But, without in any degree taking away his glory and dignity as God, we must, never forget that he was just as truly man, one of the great family of mankind, and "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Though he remained sinless, he "was in all points tempted like as we are." Being, therefore, man, and intending to make himself not only the atoning sacrifice for his people, but also a perfect example that they might imitate, it became needful that he should pray. What would a Christian be without prayer, and how could a Christ who never prayed be an example to a Christian? Yet notwithstanding the fact that it was necessary, it was marvelously condescending on our Savior's part. The Son of God, with strong crying and tears making known, his requests unto his Father, is one of the greatest marvels in all the ages. What a wondrous stoop it was that Jesus, the unsinning Son of God, the thrice-holy One, the Anointed, the Christ, for whom prayer is to be made continually, should himself have prayed to his Father!

Yet, while there is much condescension in this fact, there is also much comfort in it. When I kneel in prayer, it is a great consolation to me to know that where I bow before the Lord, there is the print of my Savior's knees. When my cry goes up to heaven, it goes along the road which Christ's cry once traveled. He cleared away all impediments so that now my prayer may follow in the track of his. Be comforted, Christian, if you have; to pray in dark and stormy nights, with the thought that your Master did the same.

**"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witness'd the fervor of his prayer;
The decent his temptation knew,
His conflict and his victory too."**

If you have to pray in sore agony of spirit fearing that God has forsaken you, remember that Christ has gone further even than that into the depths of anguish in prayer, for he cried in Gethsemane, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

In addition to being condescending and comforting, this fact of our Savior praying shows the intangible communion there is between Christ and all the members of his mystical body. It is not only we who have to pray, but he who is our Head bowed in august majesty before the throne of grace. Throughout the narratives of the four evangelists, one is struck with the many times that mention is made of Christ's prayers. At his baptism, it was while he was praying that "the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." On another occasion, we read that, "as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." On the mount of transfiguration, "as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." Jesus was emphatically "a man of prayer." After a long day of teaching the people and healing the sick, instead of seeking repose, he would spend the whole night in prayer to God; or, at another time, rising up a great while before day, he would depart into a solitary place, and there pray for the needed strength for the new day's duties.

Having thus noticed the fact of Christ's praying, I want now to call your attention to the particular prayer in our text, and I ask you first to observe that it is addressed to God in a peculiar aspect. You do not see this in our translation, but in, the Hebrew it is, " Preserve me, O El." That is one of the names of God, and the same name that the Savior used when he cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lame sabachthani?" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Many Christians seem to have only one name for God, but the Hebrew saints had many titles for the one living and true God. Worldlings generally talk of "The Almighty" as though his only characteristic was the omnipotent might which is displayed in great storms on the sea or terrible calamities on the land. But our Savior, whose knowledge of God was perfect, here selects a name of God peculiarly suitable to the condition in which he was when he offered this prayer; for, according to most commentators, the word "El" means "The strong One." So it is weakness crying to the Strong for strength: "Preserve me, O thou who art so strong, so mighty, that thou upholdest all things by the word of thy power!" Others say that "El" means "The Ever-present One." This is a delightful name for God, and one that is most appropriate for a believer to use when he is in peril on land or sea, in the den of lions or in the burning fiery furnace: " O thou ever-present One preserve me!" Jehovah is indeed "a very present help in trouble." I wish we could acquire a more intimate knowledge of the divine character so, that, in calling upon him in prayer, we could seek the aid of that special attribute which we need to have exercised on our behalf. What a blessed title is that of Shaddai which Bunyan uses in his Holy War,-El Shaddai, God-all sufficient or, as some render it, "The many-breasted God," the God with a great abundance of heart, full of mercy and grace, and supplying the needs of all his children out of his own fullness! Then take the other names or titles of God, Jehovah-Nissi, Jehovah-Shammah, Jehovah-

Shalom, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, and any others that you can find, and think how much better we could pray if, instead of always saying, "O Lord!" or "O God!" we appealed to Him under some title which indicates the attribute which we desired to be exerted on our behalf.

Next notice that this is a prayer produced by an evident sense of weakness. The suppliant feels that he cannot preserve himself. We believe that the human nature of Christ was altogether free from any tendency to sin, and that it never did sin in any sense whatsoever; yet, still, the Savior here appears not to rely upon the natural purity of his nature but he turns away from that which might seem to us for be a good subject for reliance in order to show that he would have nothing to do with self-righteousness, just as he wishes to have nothing to do with it. The perfect Savior prays, "Preserve me, O God;" so, beloved, let us also pray this prayer for ourselves. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was without any tendency to sin, put himself under the shadow of the almighty wings; then shall I wickedly and presumptuously dare to go into danger trusting to my own integrity, and relying upon my own strength of will? God forbid that you or I should ever act thus. Jesus was only weak because he had assumed our nature, yet in his weakness there was no tendency to sin; but our weakness is linked with a continual liability to evil; so, if Jesus prayed, "Preserve me, O God," with what earnestness should each one of us cry unto the Lord, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

I remark, next, that this prayer in the lips of Christ, appeals for a promised blessing. "What!" says someone, "is there anywhere in God's Word a promise that Christ shall be preserved?" Oh, yes! Turn to the prophecy of Isaiah, the forty-ninth chapter, and the seventh and following verses, and there read, "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him, whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Thus saith the lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." When the Savior prayed this prayer, he could remind his Father of the promise given through Isaiah, and say to him, "Thou hast said, 'I will preserve thee' do as thou hast said, O my Father!"

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, let us learn, from our Savior's example, to plead the promises of God when we go to him in prayer. Praying without a promise is like going to war without a weapon. God is, so gracious that he may yield to our entreaties even when he has not given a definite promise concerning what we are asking at his hands; but going to him with one, of his own promises is like going to a bank with a cheque, he must honor his own promise. We speak reverently, yet very confidently upon this point. To be consistent with, his own character, he must fulfill his own word which he hath spoken; so, when you approach the throne of grace, search out the promise, that applies to your case, and plead it with your heavenly Father, and then expect that he will do as he has said.

Observe, next, that this prayer of Christ obtained an abundant answer. You recollect the many preservations which he experienced, how he was preserved, while yet a child, from the envy and malice of Herod, and how again and again he was delivered from those who sought his life. He was also preserved many times from falling into the snares set for him by scribes and Pharisees and others who sought to entrap him in his talk. How wisely he answered the lawyer who came to him tempting him, and those who sought to catch him over the matter of paying tribute to Caesar! He was never taken as a bird ensnared by the fowler; he was always preserved in every emergency. He was like a physician in a hospital full of lepers, yet he was always preserved from the contagion.

Then, to close this part of the subject, notice that this prayer most deeply concerns the whole company of believers in Christ, for it strikes me that, when our Savior prayed to his Father, "Preserve me," he was thinking of the whole of his mystical body, and pleading for all who were vitally united to him. You remember how, in his great intercessory supplication, he pleaded for his disciples, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." This is the same prayer as "Preserve me" if we understand the "me" to include all who are one with Christ. We also are included in that supplication, for he further said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Yes, dear friend, though you may seem to yours if to be the meanest of the Lord's people, even though you are in your own apprehension but as his feet that glow in the furnace of affliction, even you are among those whom Christ entreated his Father to keep, and you may rest assured that he will certainly do so. Christ will never lose one of the members of his mystical body; if he could do so, his body would be imperfect and incomplete, but that it never can be. Paul tells us that Christ's Church "is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all;" so that, if he were left without his fullness, he would have suffered an irreparable loss. That can never be the case, so this prayer will be answered concerning the whole body of believers in Jesus, who shall be presented "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," blessed be his holy name!

Let us now turn to the plea which Christ urged in support of his prayer: "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust." Did Christ put his trust in his Father? We surely need to ask the question, and we know at once what the answer must be. In the matter of faith, as in everything else, he is a perfect example to his people, and we cannot imagine a Christian without faith. Faith is the very life of a true believer in Jesus; indeed, without faith he is not a believer, so Christ was his model in this respect as well as in every other.

The words "in thee do I put not trust" may be translated "in thee do I shelter" There is in them an allusion to running under something for shelter; in fact, the best figure I can use to give you the meaning of this sentence is that, of the chicken running under the wings of the hen for shelter. Just so do we hide ourselves under the overshadowing wings of the Eternal. As a man, Christ used this plea with God, that he was sheltering from all evil under the divine wings of power, and wisdom, and goodness, and truth. This is an accurate interpretation of the passage, and there are many instances recorded in Scripture in which Christ really did this. Take, for instance that remarkable declaration in Psalm 22:9: "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts," as though very early in life, probably far earlier than any of us were brought to know the Lord, Jesus Christ was exercising hope in the Most High. Then again, in the fiftieth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, we have these words, which must refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, "I gave my back to the smilers, and my cheeks to them, that plucked oh the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." "That verse is immediately followed by this one; "For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." These words were peculiarly appropriate from the lips of Christ, yet each one, of his followers may also say, "The Lord God will help me."

Even in his last agonies Christ uttered words which plainly prove that he had put his trust in God, " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." There is more faith in that, final commendation of his soul to his Father than some of you might imagine, for it takes great faith to be able to speak thus in the circumstance in which Christ was then placed. Not only was he suffering the terrible pangs that were inseparable from death by crucifixion, but he had to bear the still greater grief that was his portion when his Father's face was withdrawn from him because he was in the place of sinners and therefore had to endure the separation from God which was their due. Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and this was what Jesus actually did. What wondrous faith it was that trusted in God even when he said, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts!" Yet even then Jesus turned to his Father, and said, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit; I commit myself into the hand that wields the sword of infallible justice, into the hand that has crushed me, and broken me in pieces." Talk of faith, did you ever hear of such sublime confidence as that having been displayed by anyone, else? When, a martyr had to lay down his life for the truth, his faith is sustained by the comforting presence of God; he believes in the God who is smiling upon him even while he is in the midst of the fire. But Christ, on the cross trusted in the God who had forsaken him. O beloved, imitate this faith so far as it is possible in your case! What a glorious height of confidence Jesus reached; oh, that we may have grace to follow where he has so blessedly led the way!

I want you carefully to notice, the argument, that is contained in Christ's plea: "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust." Christ, as God, had felt the power of that plea, so he knew that his Father would also feel the power of it. You remember that Jesus said be the woman of Canaan, " O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wills." Her faith prevailed with him, and he felt that his faith would prevail with his Father; so that, when he said, " In thee do I put my trust," he knew that he would obtain the preservation for which he pleaded. Jesus never forgot that the rule of the kingdom is "According to your faith be it done unto you." He knew that we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave: of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let, not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." So Jesus came to his Father with this plea, "I do trust in thee, I have, absolute confidence in thee, therefore, I pray thee to preserve me." My dear brother or sister in Christ, can you say the same? Can you look up to God, and say, "In thee do I put my trust"? If so, you may use it as Christ used it in pleading with his Father. Perhaps you have gazed upon a weapon that has been wielded by some great warrior. If you had that weapon in your hand, and were going forth to fight, you would feel, "I must not be a coward while I am grasping a brave man's sword, but I must play the man with it as he did." Well, you have in your grasp the very weapon which Christ used when he gained the victory. You can go before God with the very same argument that Christ used with his Father, and he, will hear your plea even as he heard Christ's: "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust."

II. I had intended, in the second place, to speak of my text as The Prayer Of Christ's Followers; but, instead of preaching upon it as I would have done had time permitted, I will merely give, you a few notes upon it, and then you can preach the second sermon yourselves by practicing it as you go your several ways to your homes.

First, what does this prayer mean to a believer? It means that you put yourself and all belonging to you under divine protection. Before you close your eyes, pray this prayer: "'Preserve me, O God!' Preserve my body, my family, my house, from fire, from famine, from hurt or harm of every kind." Specially present the prayer in a spiritual sense. Preserve me from the world; let me not be carried away with its excitements; suffer me not to be before its blandishments, nor to fear its frowns. Preserve me, from the devil; let him not tempt me above what I am able to bear. Preserve me from myself; keep me from growing envious, selfish, high-minded, proud, slothful. Preserve me from those evils into which I see others run, and preserve me, from those evils into which I am myself most apt to run; keep me, from evils, known and from evils unknown. 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.'

This is a prayer which is more comprehensive in the original than it is in our version. It may be translated, " Save me," and this is a

prayer that is suitable for many here. Those of you who have never prayed before can begin with this prayer, "Save me, O strong One! It will indeed need a strong One to save me, for I am so far gone that nothing but omnipotence can save me." It may also be rendered, "Keep me," or "Guard me." It is the word which we should use in speaking of the body-guard of a king or of shepherds protecting their flocks. It is a prayer which you may keep on using from the time you begin to know the Lord until you get to heaven and then you will only need to alter Jude's Doxology very slightly, and to say, "Unto him who has kept us from falling, and presented us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Next, when is this prayer suitable? Well, it is suitable at this moment; you do not know what dangers you will meet with before you go to your bed tonight. Take, special care when you come to what you consider the safe parts of the road, for you will probably be most in danger when you think you are in no danger at all. It is often a greater peril not to be tempted than to be tempted. This prayer is suitable to some of you who are going into new situation, where you will have new responsibilities, new duties, and probably new trials and difficulties. In the old days of superstition, people were foolish enough to wear charms of various kinds to guard them from, evil; but such a prayer as this is better than all their charms. If your pathway should lie, through the enchanted fields or even through the valley of death-shade, you need not be afraid, but may march boldly on with this prayer on your lips, "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust."

Then, in what spirit ought this prayer to be offered? It should be offered in a spirit of deep humility. Do not pray, "Preserve me, O God," as though you felt that you were a very precious person; it is true that God regards you as one of his jewels if you are a believer in Jesus, but you are not to regard yourself as a jewel. Think of yourself as a brand plucked from the burning, and then you will pray with due humility. Pray as a poor feeble creature who must be destroyed unless God shall preserve you. Pray as if you were a sheep that had been shorn, and that needed to have the wind tempered to it. Pray as a drowning man might pray, "Preserve me, O God." Pray as sinking Peter prayed, "Lord, save me," for so you shall be preserved even as he was.

With what motive ought you to pray this prayer? Pray it specially out of hatred to sin. Whenever you think of sin, the best thing you can do is to pray, "Preserve me, O God." Whenever you hear or read of others doing wrong, do not begin to plume yourself upon your own excellence, but cry at once, "Preserve me, O God, or it may be that I shall sin even as those others have done" If this night you are a Christian, the praise for this is not to be given to yourself, but to the Lord who has made you to differ from others. You are only what his grace has made you, so straw how highly you value that grace by asking for more and more of it.

This must suffice concerning the prayer off the text, for I must, in closing, remind you of the plea, and ask if each one here is able to use it: "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust." Can you, my friend, urge this plea with God to-night? Perhaps you say that you could do so years ago, then why not put your trust in the Lord now? It is present faith that you need in your present perils, and you, cannot pray acceptably without faith "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder off them that diligently seek him." You know what it is to trust a friend, and perhaps to be deceived, but do you know what it is to trust in God, and not be, deceived? Are you trusting for salvation only to Christ? Do you sing,-

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,

More than all in thee I find,"?

Is this your plea continually; are you always trusting in God, in the dark as well as in the light? Many a man thinks he is strong until he begins to put forth his strength, and then he finds that it is utter weakness. There are many who fancy they are full of faith until they try to exercise it, and then they realize how little they have. They are fine soldiers when there is no fighting, and splendid sailors as long as they are on dry land; but such faith as that is of little service when some great emergency arises. The faith we used is that firm confidence which sings,-

"His love in time past forbids me to think

He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;

Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review

Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through."

If that is the kind of faith you have, you need not fear to pray, "Preserve me, O God," for he will be as a wall of fire round about you to guard you from all evil; and though you are now in the midst of those who would drag you down to their level if they could, or turn you aside from, the paths of righteousness, the Lord, in whom you have put your trust, will never leave you, nor forsake you, but will bring you in his own good time to that blessed place of which he has told you in his Word, and there,-

"Far from a world of grief and sin,

With God eternally shut in,”-

you shall be preserved from all evil for ever, and faith shall be blessedly exchanged for sight. God grant that every one of us may be able to pray the prayer of our text, and to use the plea, “Preserve me, O God: for in thee have I put my trust,” for Jesus; sake! Amen.

Psalm 19:11 David Warned and Rewarded

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“Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”-Psalm 19:11.

DAVID was constantly singing the praises of God’s Word, although, as I have often reminded you, he had only a small portion of the Scriptures compared with the complete Bible which we possess. If, then, it had pleased God that the Canon of Revelation should have been closed in David’s day, it would, by the aid of his Spirit, have been even then a sufficient light to lead the saints of God into the way of holiness. You would be very sorry if the Pentateuch and the earliest Historical Books, should be all that you had of the Scriptures; yet they are, evidently, so rich, so full, so instructive, that they were all that David needed for the practical purposes of a holy life. Never allow anybody to make you depreciate the Old Testament. No part of the Bible is to be set up above the rest, or to be treated as of secondary importance. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

So I gather, from what David says, that, if we had no more Books of the Bible than he had, we should still possess all inestimable treasure for which we ought daily to bless and praise the name of the Lord. But now that we have the’ complete Revelation of the will of God, as contained in the Old and the New Testaments, we ought to rejoice with exceeding great joy. We have a Bible which is large enough to be a perfect library, and which is also so compact that we can carry it about with us wherever we go. It is exactly the right size, and it is just right in all other respects. It is just adapted to every individual in the world, and it is also the fittest book for any nation to use as an every-day guide as to its morals, its laws, and its conduct in relation to both God and men.

There are two things, mentioned in the text, which made the Scriptures very dear to David. The first is, that they had warned him against evil: “by them is thy servant warned;” and the second is, that obedience to the Scriptures had brought him a great reward: “and in keeping of them there is great reward.”

I. First, then, The Scriptures Had Warned David Against Evil.

We are so dull and so foolish that, unless we are taught of God the Holy Spirit, we really know nothing as we ought to know it; yet we are so headstrong and so obstinate that, if we are not divinely checked, we run with heedless impetuosity into all manner of evil. We need to be goaded on to everything that is good; but we need to be held in with a tight rein, or we shall plunge into many things that are evil. Even when we do not willfully choose the wrong, we seem to run into it by a sort of natural tendency, and we find ourselves bemired before we know where we are. If, however, the Scripture is made to be our constant companion and guide, we shall be saved from many mistakes into which, otherwise, we are sure to fall. Where we should have rushed on madly to our destruction, we shall find ourselves suddenly stopped, and we shall bear a voice behind us saying, “This is the way; walk ye in it;” and, through giving heed to that warning voice, we shall turn back from the broad road of our own choosing to the narrow way of God’s choice.

God’s Word warned us, first, concerning our soul’s disease and its remedy. To some of us, our first warning concerning the evil of our nature came from the Scriptures. There are some persons, who must, very early in life, have been made aware of the evil of their nature; I mean, persons with a hot, impetuous, passionate temperament, or those with a strong animal tendency, and others who were brought up in the midst of vice, and who themselves eagerly plunged into it. One would think that such people ought to be able to see that they are not what they should be; but there have been others with a gentle nature, who have been trained up in the midst of piety; even without the grace of God, they would not be likely to become vicious, like those to whom I have referred. They have also, through helpful training, become honest, and upright, and amiable; there is everything about them that are pleasing and beautiful. They go to church, or to the meeting-house, and they join with others in making confession of sin; yet, somehow, they do not seem to realize that the confession applies to themselves exactly as it stands, for they are not openly as sinful as others are. There are some people, in such a condition of natural excellence, that, if it had not been for the Word of God, they would not

have known what evil was sleeping within their hearts. A leopard may have been kept under restraint from the time when it was a cub, and it may appear to be perfectly harmless; but if it should taste blood, its real fierceness will soon be seen. You may walk over a grassy hill, and think yourself perfectly secure; yet, underneath, there may be a slumbering volcano, liable to break out at any moment. Everywhere about us there is that which flatters us, and make us think that we are better than we are; but, by the Word of God, we are faithfully warned that there is a sink of iniquity within our soul,-a black and fetid spring,-a foul generator of everything that is evil in the very fountain of our nature. What a blessing it is for us to be warned of that evil, lest we should go on dreaming that all was right, and never find out the truth till we were past conversion-past the possibility of being renewed because we should have entered that other world where hope and mercy never can come! What a blessing it is that God's Word warns us concerning the disease, and tells us of the remedy for it,-warns us that we are lost, and reveals to us the glorious truth concerning the Savior who has come to seek and to save that which was lost!

Then, next, God's Word warned us concerning our danger, and the way of escape from it. Did you never find yourself, dear friend, forming associations with ungodly persons, and gradually becoming more and more pleased with them; and, then, did the Word of God come to you with power, saying, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"? Did you also hear this command applied to you, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing"? If so, I am sure that, as you tore yourself away from the fatal embrace of the ungodly, and escaped for your life out of the Sodom of which you had almost become a citizen, you could not help prizing and praising the Book by which you had been warned to flee from the peril which threatened to destroy you.

Did you ever find yourself thinking that all was well within,-that you were really getting to be somebody of importance,-that you might hang out your streamers, and did the Word of the Lord then come home to you, saying, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"? Did you haul down your flags? Did you hide your face for shame? Did you get away alone, and confess to God the proud mistake that you had made, and not feel safe again until you were lying at the cross-foot, looking up to your Savior for mercy and forgiveness? If so, I feel sure that you took your Bible in your hand, and you said, "By this blessed Book is thy servant warned to escape from self-delusion and from being puffed up with the conceit that he was something when he was nothing."

How many, many dangers there are in this life against which the Word of God warns us! I recollect being on board a steamboat going up the Thames, early in the morning, when the fog had not cleared away, and when a man, in the bows of the vessel, shouted out as loudly as ever he could for us to go astern, for we were out of our track, and should soon have been ashore. As I heard that shrill cry of warning, I could not but be grateful for it; and you and I, dear friends, would long ago have gone aground if the Word of the Lord had not called out to us, sometimes in sharp, stern tones, "Stop! There is danger just ahead;" and we have been compelled to alter our course, and go where our natural inclination would never have induced us to go. Blessed be God that we were not only warned, at the first, concerning our spiritual disease, and directed to him who could cure it; but, many a time since then, have we been warned of unseen dangers in our holy pilgrimage; so let us prize and bless the Book that has been our Mentor and our Monitor, ever seeking to keep us in the right path, or to draw us off from the wrong.

God's Word has also been a warning to us, oftentimes, concerning our duty and our obligation. Many a professing Christian man is not living as he should live; but if he would diligently read his Bible, and obey its injunctions, there would soon be a great alteration in him. Hundreds of believers, while searching the Scriptures, have been powerfully affected by some one text, and have been led not only to see their shortcomings, but also to perceive the way to a nobler and better life. "I must do something," says one, to prove my love, to him who has done so much for me. I have fallen short even of the standard that I set up for myself, and that standard is far below what I find in the Word of God;" and, it may be, under the influence of a single verse, the man has become generous, self-sacrificing, earnest, fervent, and has glowed with a zeal for God which he never knew before. Many of us can testify how often the Word of the Lord has quickened us, so let us be wise enough to go to it whenever we become lethargic and dull; that, under the inspiration of its sacred pages, we may be again aroused and revived. O Spirit of God, we bless thy holy name that, when duties lay neglected, and precepts had been entirely forgotten, thou didst bring them up again before our minds in this precious Book, and then we made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments, because thy Word has warned us concerning our duty and our obligation!

Brothers and sisters, God's Word warns us concerning the whole of our life, and even concerning some things to come which, otherwise, we could never have known. If any brother is impressed with the thought that Jesus Christ may come at any moment, and call him to account, that is an admirable reason why he should every day watch unto prayer, and get himself ready for his Lord's coming; but, sometimes, when I read the Word of God, and when I travel through this great city, I am led to contemplation's of another sort. I think that, whether the Lord comes soon, or not, does not affect my responsibility and yours concerning the people now living, and the generations that may yet come. If this great London is to go on increasing, if the population shall still keep multiplying, what will be said of us if we allow street after street to be built, houses by thousands to be erected, and hardly any new houses for the worship of God, while public-houses may be measured by the mile? It seems to me a dreadful thing to live at this particular time in which, if the gospel seed be not plentifully sown, the waste ground of centuries, if the world lasts so long, will cry

out because of our indolence. But if the seed were scattered broadcast, then the harvests that shall be reaped in the centuries that may yet come shall redound to the glory of God, and also to the credit of those who faithfully served their Lord. I believe that, if ever men stood in a place where they could have power over a vast tremulous mass of humanity,-if ever men were in contact with wondrous wires that may influence ages that are yet to be, and nations still unborn, we are the men who stand in just such a position. That which is done, or left undone, to-day, will have certain effects throughout eternity; but it will, perhaps, be sufficient for us to limit the consideration, and to recollect that our service or our neglect may affect generations of our fellow-creatures for good or evil. May God help us to remember that solemn verse which warns us that "none of us liveth to himself, and no man doth to himself." May the Holy Spirit also bring to our memories our Savior's words, "Ye are the salt of the earth;" and "Ye are the light of the world." If we salt not the earth, what can come to it but corruption; and if we enlighten not our generation, what can come to it but the blackness of darkness? By the consideration of these things are God's servants warned to be up and doing while it is called to day. May God grant that we may not neglect the warning, but may we prize it, and thank God that, in the Sacred Scriptures, there is provision made to wake us up when we sleep, and to keep us active in his holy service! "By them is thy servant warned."

I should like to pass the question round to all who are here,-Dear friends, are you being warned by God's Word? Does it ever stop you, like an angel in the way when you are going forward contrary to the will of the Lord, and make you suddenly start, and stand still? Does God's Word ever, as it were, put its finger up to silence you just as you are going to speak? Does it ever seem to lay its hand upon your arm just as you are going to stretch out your hand unto iniquity? Does it ever warn you? Does it operate upon you as a drag, a check, a restraint? If it does not, then you have yet to learn the first elementary lesson of true piety. You are not as David was, you are not yet taught of the Spirit of God; for, if you were, you would frequently be warned by God's Word, and you would love to have it so. May God, in his mercy, grant that we may all learn, experimentally, the meaning of this first sentence of our text: "By them is thy servant warned"

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, in which I take much delight.It tells us that Obedience To The Scriptures Brought To David A Great Reward.

Holy writ was very precious to David, and he says, concerning God's commandments, "in keeping of them there is great reward."

He does not say, "for keeping them." That is the old legal system,-so much pay for so much obedience. It is a poor system even if it could be worked out, and it is not God's plan at all. "Ye are not under law, but under grace." We are to do nothing for payment, but everything for love. Observe the difference between the two sentences. "For keeping them there is great reward." That is beggarly; it is a hireling's utterance. "In keeping them there is great reward." That is the language of one who loves obedience; it is a child's sentence,-the sentence of one who is perfectly free in his obedience, and who does not render it because he must, but because he delights to do so. That is the difference between the legal spirit of bondage and the evangelical spirit of holy freedom before the living God.

So, then, there is a great reward to gracious men in the keeping of God's commandments; and that reward consists, first, in the pleasure of obedience. To those of us who love the Lord, it is a great delight to do what God bids us do. For instance, he bids us draw near to him in worship; and I can confidently appeal to many of you who are here, and I am sure that you will sympathize with me when I say that the happiest moments of my life are those that are spent on this spot where I am now standing, or down in the prayer-meetings or at the communion table; for, when I begin to worship and adore the Lord, my heart finds wings, and I soon rise above all cares, and troubles, and carnal considerations, into a high, holy, happy, spiritual condition. I am certain that I have experienced more true happiness on this platform than can have been enjoyed in any other place on the face of the earth. Whether you have been happy while I have been praying, I cannot tell; but I know that I have seemed to be in the immediate presence of God while I have been leading you in supplication; and, therefore, I judge that it has been much the same with you. And when you have a happy time alone in prayer, or in singing God's praises, or reading his Word, is it not the very vestibule of heaven to your soul? Well, that is an illustration of the truth that, in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward.

That refers to one part of the commands of God,-the drawing nigh unto him in worship. Now turn to the second table, where you are bidden to love your fellow-men, and see how far you have obeyed its commands have you done all you could to help the poor? Have you distributed alms among them! Have you been a nurse to the sick? Have you taught the little children! Have you tried to instruct grown-up people whom you have found under soul-concern, and sought to lead them to Christ? What have been the happiest evenings that you have ever spent when you have reviewed the engagements of the day? Have they been those in which you have had a season of gaiety with your friends,-I do not mean anything objectionable or wrong, but ordinary amusement; a day, for instance, when you have been in the country, and you have been full of mirth and merriment! Has that been your happiest day? I do not think so; I believe that the happiest days you have ever lived have been those in which you have been downright weary in the cause of God. You have put your head on your pillow, and you have slept, oh! so sweetly; or, if you have been too tired to sleep, you have had joy-bells ringing in your heart because you have been doing somebody good. It is a great delight to give away money,

for Christ's sake, to help the poor, and to succor such as are unable to help themselves. Just try to relieve a poor widow of part of her burden of care, or seek to supply the needs of an orphan child, and see whether it will not bring you joy and gladness. It is a whole day's holiday to be permitted to spend a day in doing well. In saying this, I am not dreaming, I am merely telling you what I know to be a matter of fact. Those who love the Lord do find that, in keeping his commandments, there is great reward; there is a pleasure in the obedience itself.

Then, dear friends, there is a reward in the healthiness of this exercise. Either in worship and serving the Lord, or in loving and doing well to your fellow men, there is most healthful exercise to your spirit. There are some forms of physical labor that quickly wear out the human frame; and there are some processes of thought that bring on brain weariness and mental exhaustion; but, in the service of God, there is a refreshment which makes the labor light. If we could have a machine that would manufacture its own oil, and provide its own coal, and repair its own waste, it would be a wonderful triumph of mechanism; but the spiritual mind is, by God's grace, made something like that. It bears within itself a well of living water springing up into everlasting life. It is an engine that creates its own fuel, and oil, and water as it runs along its way. God, by his infinite power, gives to the believer such spiritual strength within him that, even "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." There is nothing that does a man so much good as to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. A little heavenly excitement is a blessed refreshment and revival for the entire manhood; and turning again to the other side of the subject, - to walk uprightly towards our fellow-men, to forgive those who injure us, and to bless with our beneficence all those who need anything at our hands, is a kind of exercise that is eminently suitable to our renewed manhood; and, the more we have of it, the more are we refreshed. If you want to grow to be what you ought to be, keep God's commandments, for in keeping them there is this blessed healthiness of spirit that comes to the obedient. He who would be whole, must be holy. Holiness is, indeed, a kind of wholeness or spiritual health.

Let me give you a few specimens of the way in which some of us have found the keeping of God's commandments to be truly profitable to us.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,

'I am this dark world's light;

Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,

And all thy day be bright.'"

I obeyed that command, and I can bear testimony that a great reward was at once given to me. Oh, how quickly the heavy burden rolled from my shoulder! How my soul did leap, like a roe or a young hart, the very moment that I obeyed that command of the Lord, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Then there is that command, "Trust in the Lord," which is the perpetual precept for a believer's whole life; have not many of you found a great reward in keeping that command! Why! that trust in God has enabled you to cast upon him your burden of daily care, and every other burden that has been upon you; and when you have trusted him, you have been placid, and calm, and joyful, and strong, and fully equipped for all your labor and service. What a great reward faith brings to all who exercise it! It is a most soul enriching grace; and, where it is in active operation, untold spiritual wealth comes pouring into the coffers of the saint.

Now take another command; for instance, "Pray without ceasing." In keeping that command, have you not had a great reward? True prayer is true power. Prayer brings every blessing from on high. There is no need to do more than just mention it, for many of you know that, when you have kept that command, there has been given to you a great reward.

Let me remind you of a command which is often forgotten, - the command to forgive them that trespass against you. If you have done that, have you not found a great reward in the fact of having done it? Someone well said, "If my fellow-men do not praise me for what I have done, I do not mind; I am quite satisfied to have done that which deserved their praise." So should it be with you, and those who's wrong-doing you have forgiven. If you have borne long with their ill manners, and your kindness has only increased their enmity, so that they have reviled you more than ever, feel that it is quite sufficient reward for you to have done the right thing in forgiving them.

Or suppose it is not the duty of forgiveness that is in question, but some other, such as that of holy self-sacrifice, how do you stand with regard to it? Have you made sacrifices for Christ! Have you given of your substance to his cause until you have pinched yourself in doing so? That is one of the sweetest things a Christian can ever do, and there is a great reward in doing that. Have you denied yourself some pleasure in order to spend your time in doing well to others? If so, I am sure it has proved to be one of the best things you have ever done. It does not breed boastfulness or self-conceit, but there is a kind of moral sense within the spirit that makes our heart feel happy whenever we are doing a right and noble thing. We do not ask that we may be praised for it, or rewarded for it; it is quite sufficient delight for us to have had the privilege of doing such a thing as that. One of the greatest rewards that we ever receive for serving God is the permission to do still more for him. The reward for a man who has faithfully served God as the head of fifty people is to be permitted to serve him as the leader of a hundred; and, in the case of a man who has lost a

great deal of money through being faithful to his conscience, perhaps the greatest reward that God can give him is to let him lose twice as much by being still more faithful if that is possible. He who has been honest and upright, and who has been slandered,-it may be that he shall be rewarded by being slandered still more. The highest reward that God ever gives his servants on earth is when he permits them to make such a sacrifice as actually to die in his service as martyrs. That is the highest reward of which I can conceive,-the acceptance that God gives to the very body, and blood, and bones of his servants, as a whole burnt-offering unto him. Do you remember what reward the Spartans had when they fought most valiantly? A Spartan was once asked, "Suppose you fight like a lion today, what reward will you have?" He answered, "I shall have the honor of always being in the front rank, where there is the most danger." A coward would have preferred to be in the back rank, where there was the least danger; but the brave Spartan said, "If I have proved my courage, I shall have the permission to suffer more, and to venture more for my country." And this is the kind of reward that God will give to us. If we keep his commandments, we shall be permitted to have more to do for his dear sake.

I have not time to speak of the peace that comes from the keeping of God's commandments, or of the ennobling character which it produces; but I must just mention the great reward which this obedience brings to us in the power and capacity which it is gradually breeding in us for the perfect service of heaven. God can make a man fit for heaven in a minute, if he pleases to do so. That I am sure of, for Christ took the dying thief there; but, as a general rule, the education of God's children is a matter of time; we have to be prepared for the enjoyments and the employment's of heaven by processes of discipline here on earth. Now, brother, when you get to this state of spiritual experience,-that it is your one joy and delight to glorify God,-when you can bless God for suffering, when you can praise him for heaviness of spirit if he chooses to send it,-when your Will is entirely subject to the will of God, and your whole life is entirely absorbed in seeking the glory of God, then you are fit for heaven, for heaven principally consists of perfected natures, with the capacity to do the will of God without let or hindrance for ever.

Now I must conclude with two observations. The first is dear friends, that you may know the profitableness there is in keeping God's commandments by considering the opposite thing. Do not try it, but just think of it. Suppose that you Christian people do not keep God's precepts,-suppose that, in certain ways, you violate them, what will happen? I am not now referring to your eternal safety; but I am quite sure that you will never derive any benefit from disobedience to God. You may get more money, perhaps, by a certain course in business, but that will not be true profit; it will be bad money, which will canker all the rest that you have. Whatever you get, in that way, will be infinitely worse than losing. Look at David when he broke God's commandments. It was an evil day for him when he looked with lustful eye upon Bathsheba; and, from that first moment in which he turned aside, there was a cloud over his entire life. Although God had made with him, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," yet that last part of his life was full of grief and sorrow; and you can trace it all to that turning aside from keeping the precepts of his God. O brothers and sisters, do you want to curdle your whole life? Then, let a drop of uncleanness fall into it. You may do, in half an hour, what will embitter the next twenty years of your life,-ay, and will make your dying pillow to be full of thorns. There can be no possible profit to a child of God in disobeying his Lord's commands.

This is my last remark; there must be a great reward in keeping God's commandments, for I never yet heard anybody say that he was sorry that he had kept them. I have met with many persons who have, for a time suffered because of their faithfulness to conscience; but they have taken that as a matter of course, and they have found such a great reward in obeying Christ, and following their conscientious convictions that, if it had cost them a hundred times as much, they would cheerfully have submitted to the loss. Never has there been a man who, on his death-bed, has regretted that he has followed the Lord fully. Is there one here who has kept God's commandments, and who regrets that he has done so? Is there one such person on earth? Was there ever one who could truthfully say, "I served God with all my heart, and he has cast me oil, and I am sorry that I ever had such a Master"! No, there has not been such a person, nor shall there ever be one who can say that, so long as the world stands; for in keeping God's commandments there is great reward.

God bless you, dear brothers and sisters, and give you that reward, according to the riches of his grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

Psalm 22:29 Life's Need and Maintenance

NO. 1300

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 18TH, 1876,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"None can keep alive his own soul" — Psalm 22:29.

We must commence by noticing the connection, that we may arrive at the first meaning of the words. There is a day coming when the true God will be acknowledged as Lord and God by all mankind, for the twenty seventh verse tells us — "All the ends of the

world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” In that day the greatest of men will bow before him. The verse from which we cull our text says: “All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship.” The prosperous ones, those who have grown rich and great, shall receive good at the hands of the Savior, and shall rejoice to adore him as the author of their fatness. Kings shall own him as their King, and lords accept him as their Lord. Then shall not only the riches of life, but the poverty of death also, render hind homage, for as men shall go down to the dust of the grave, in their feebleness and weakness they shall look up to him for strength and solace, and shall find it sweet to worship him in death. Men shall know that the keys of death are in his hands. “All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him,” and it shall be known all the world over that the issues of life are in the hands of Jesus Christ; they shall understand that he is appointed as Mediator to rule over all mortal things, for the government shall be upon his shoulder; he shall open and no man shall shut, and shut and no man shall open, for it is his sovereign prerogative to kill and to make alive, and “none can keep alive his own soul.” I pass on from; this meaning with the hopeful belief that this dispensation is not to end, as some suppose, without the conquest of the world to Christ. Surely “all kings shall bow before him, all nations shall serve him.” The shame of the cross shall be followed by honor and glory, “men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed.” The conviction grows with me every day, the more I read the Scriptures, that the disheartening views of some interpreters are not true, but that ere the whole of prophecy shall be wrought into history the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

Leaving this, we come to consider a more spiritual meaning, which we believe to be as truly the sense of the passage as the other. You will notice, if you read the psalm carefully, when you come to its close, that our Savior seems to delight himself in being made food for the saved ones among the sons of men. In the 26th verse he says, “The meek shall eat and be satisfied.” Here he is thinking of the poor among men, to whom he has ever been the source of abounding comfort: to them his gospel has been preached, and thousands of them have found in him food for their souls which has satisfied them, filled their months with praise, and made their hearts live for ever. The poor from the highways and hedges feast to the full at his royal table, yea, the blind, and the halt, and the lame, the very beggars of the streets are among his household guests. Christ is very mindful of the poor and needy, he redeems their soul from deceit and violence, and their blood is precious in his sight. Especially do the poor in spirit feed on Jesus; over them he pronounced the first benediction of the sermon on the mount, and of them he declares “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What a feast do poor perishing spirits enjoy in Jesus when his flesh becomes to them meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

Nor is this all the feeding upon Christ, for in the 29th verse we hear of it again. Not only the poor feed upon the bread of heaven, but the great, the rich, and the strong live upon him too: “all they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship,” there is no other way of life for them, for “none can keep alive his own soul.” The saints, too, when they have grown in grace, when they have supplied their hunger, and are fat and flourishing in the courts of the Lord’s house, must still eat of the same heavenly food; the fat need Jesus as much as the lean, the strong as much as the feeble, for none can do without him, “none can keep alive his own soul.” Thus the rich and the poor meet together, and Jesus is the food of them all. The empty and the full alike draw near to the Redeemer’s fullness and receive grace for grace.

Among those who feel their need of Jesus there are some of a mournful type of character, who count themselves ready to perish. They dare not number themselves among the meek who shall eat and be satisfied, much less could they think of themselves as the fat upon earth who shall eat and worship, but they stand back from the feast as utterly unworthy to draw near. They dare not believe themselves to be spiritually alive unto God, they reckon themselves among those that go down into the pit, they bear the sentence of death in themselves and are prisoners under bondage through fear. Their sense of sin and personal unworthiness is so conspicuous, and so painful, that they are afraid to claim the privileges of the living in Zion. They fear that their faith is expiring, their love is dying out, their hope is withered, and their joy clean departed. They compare themselves to the smoking flax, and think themselves to be even more offensive than the nauseous smell given forth by the smoking wick. To such comes the word which precedes my text — “They that go down to the dust shall bow before him.” Christ shall be worshipped even by them; their last moments shall be cheered by his presence. When through depression of spirit, through the assaults of Satan, and through inability to see the work of the Spirit in their souls, they shall be brought so low as to be down to the dust, they shall be lifted up from their misery and made to rejoice in the Lord their Redeemer, who will say unto them, — “Shake thyself from the dust; arise and sit down: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” When souls are thus brought down they begin to learn for themselves that “none can keep alive his own soul.” A poor broken-hearted spirit knows this, for he fears that the inner lilt within his soul is at its last gasp, and he is afraid that his faith and love, and all his graces will be as bones scattered at the grave’s mouth, and then he learns what I trust we shall believe at this time without such a painful experience to teach it to us, namely, that none of us can keep our own soul alive, but that we must have food continually from above, and visitations of the Lord to preserve our spirits. Our life is not in ourselves, but in our Lord. Apart from him we could not exist spiritually, even for a moment. We cannot keep our own soul alive as to grace, That is to be the subject of this morning’s meditation, and may the Holy Spirit render it profitable to us!

I. The first point of consideration out of which the rest will come is this — The Inner Life Must Be Sustained By God.

We are absolutely dependent upon God for the preservation of our spiritual life. We all of us know that none of us can make his own soul live. Thou hast destroyed thyself, but thou canst not make thyself to live again. Spiritual life must always be the gift of God; it must come from without, it cannot arise from within. Between the ribs of death life never takes its birth; how could it? Shall the ocean beget fire, or darkness create light? You shall go to the charnel house as long as you please, but, unless the trump of the resurrection shall sound there, the dry bones will remain in their corruption. The sinner is “dead in trespasses and sins,” and he never will have even so much as a right desire towards God, nor a pulse of spiritual life, until Jesus Christ, who is “the resurrection and the life,” shall quicken him. Now, it is important for us to remember that we are as much dependent upon the Lord Jesus and the power of his Spirit for being kept alive as we were for being made alive at the first. “None can keep alive his own soul.” Do you remember when first you hung upon Christ for everything? That same entire dependence must be exercised every day of your life, for there is need of it. You remember your former nakedness, your poverty, your emptiness, your misery, your death apart from Christ; remember that the case is not one whit better if you could now be separated from sin. If now you have any grace, or any holiness, or any love, you derive it entirely from him, and from moment to moment his grace must be continued to you; for if connection between you and Christ should by any possibility be severed, you would cease spiritually to live. That is the truth we want to bring forward.

Here let us remark that this is not at all inconsistent with the undying nature of the spiritual life. When we were born again there was imparted to us a new and higher nature called the spirit. This is a fruit of the Spirit of God, and it can never die; it is an “incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.” When it is imparted to the soul it makes us partakers of the divine nature, and it keeps us so that the evil one toucheth us not so as utterly to destroy us. Yet this fact is quite consistent with the assertion that we cannot keep our own soul alive, for though it is because the Lord keeps us alive. The newborn nature is safe because the Lord protects it; it survives the deadly influences of the world because the Lord continues to quicken it. Our new nature is united to the person of Christ, and we live because he lives. We are not kept alive by independent power, but by perpetual renewal from the Lord.

This is true of every man living. “None can keep alive his own soul” — no, not one. You young people think, perhaps, that old Christians get on better than you do; you imagine that their experience preserves them, but indeed they cannot keep their own souls alive any more than you can. You tried and tempted ones sometimes look with envy upon those who dwell at ease, as though their spirituality was self-supporting, but no, they cannot keep their own souls alive any more than you can. You know your own difficulties, but you do not know those of others; rest assured, however, that to all men there are these difficulties, and that no man can keep his own soul alive.

This is the truth at all times: at no one monument can we keep ourselves alive. While sitting in this house of prayer you may dream that assuredly you can keep yourself here, but it is not so. You might sin the foulest of sins in your heart while sitting here, and you might grieve the Holy Spirit, and cloud your life for years while worshipping among the people of God. You are not able to keep your own soul alive in your happiest and holiest moments. From your knees you might rise to blaspheme, and from the communion table you might go to the seat of the scorner if you were left to yourself.

“All our strength at once would fail us, If deserted, Lord, by thee Nothing then could aught avail us, Certain our defeat would be: Those who hate us Thenceforth their desire would see.”

I seldom find myself so much in danger as when I have been in close communion with God. After the most ecstatic devotion one is hardly prepared for the coarse temptations of this wicked world. When we come down, like Moses from the mount, if we encounter open sin, we are apt to grow indignant and break all the commandments in the vehemence of our wrath. The sudden change from the highest and holiest contemplations to the trifles and vexations of earth subjects the soul to so severe a trial that the poet did well to say —

“We should suspect some danger nigh

When we perceive too much delight.”

Even when our delight is of a spiritual kind we are apt to be on our guard after having been filled with it, and then Satan avails himself of the opportunity. We are never safe unless the Lord keeps us. If we could take you, my brethren, place you in the society of saints, give you to keep perpetual Sabbath-day, make every meal a sacrament, and set you nothing to say or do but what should be directly calculated to promote the glory of God, yet even there you could not keep your own soul alive. Adam in perfection could not keep himself in Paradise, how can his imperfect children be so proud as to rely upon their own steadfastness. Among angels there were those who kept not their first estate, how shall man then hope to stand except he be upheld.

Why is this? How know we that our text is true? We gather arguments from the analogies of nature. We do not find that we can keep our own bodies alive. We need divine preservation, or disease and death deftly will soon make us their prey. We are not self-

contained as to this mortal existence, any one of us, nay, not for five minutes can we live upon ourselves. Take away the atmospheric air and who could keep himself alive. The heaving lungs need their portion of air, and if they cannot be satisfied, the man soon becomes a corpse. Deprive us of food, leave us for a week without meat or drink, and see if we can keep our natural soul alive. Take away from us the means of warmth in the time when God's cold rules the year, and death would soon ensue. Now, if the physical life is not to be sustained by itself; much less can the higher and spiritual life; it must love food, it must love to Spirit to sustain it. The Scriptures present to us this figure of similes of the body which dies if severed from the vital organs, and of the branch which is dried up if cut off from the stem.

Toplady versifies the thought and sings —

**“Quickened by thee, and kept alive,
I flourish and bear fruit;
My life I from thy sap derive,
My vigor from thy root.
“I can do nothing without thee;
My strength is wholly thine:
Withered and barren should I be
If severed from the vine.”**

Yonder lamp burns well, but its future shining is dependent upon a fresh supply of oil; the ship in rapid motion borrows force from the continuance of the wind, and the sails hang idle if the gale ceases; the river is full to the bank, but if the clouds should never again pour out their floods it would become a dry trackway. All things depend on others, and the whole upon the Great Supreme: nothing is self-sustained save God himself no being necessarily exists, and even immortal souls are only so because he has set his seal upon them, and declared that they shall inherit life eternal, or in consequence of sin shall sink into everlasting punishment. Hence we are sure that “none can keep alive his own soul.”

But we need not rely upon analogy, we can put the matter to the test. Could any believer among us keep any one of his graces alive? You, perhaps, are a sufferer, and hitherto you have been enabled to be patient: but suppose the Lord Jesus should withdraw his presence from you, and your pains should return again, ah, where will your patience be? Or, I will suppose you are a worker, and you have done great things for the Lord: like Samson you have been exceeding strong; but let the Lord be once withdrawn, and leave you to attempt his work alone, you will soon discover that you are as weak as other men, and will utterly fail. Holy joy, for instance, take that as a specimen: did you rejoice in Lord this morning when you woke? It is very sweet to wake up and hear the birds singing within your heart, but you cannot maintain that joy, nay, not even for an hour, do what you will. “All my fresh springs are in thee,” my God, and if I am to joy and rejoice thou must anoint me continually with the oil of gladness. Have you not sometimes thought in the morning, “I feel so peaceful and calm, so resigned to the divine will, I think I shall be able to keep up this placid spirit all day long.” Perhaps you have done so, and if so I know you have praised God for it; but if you have become perturbed you have learned again that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which you would you find not. Well, if for any one fruit of the Spirit we are dependent upon the Lord, how much more will this be true as to the essential life from which each of these graces springs?

This truth is equally illustrated by our need of help in every act of the divine life. Dear friends, have you ever tried what it is to perform any spiritual act apart from the divine power? What a dull, dead affair it becomes! What a mechanical thing prayer is without the Spirit of God. It is a parrot's noise, and nothing more; a weariness, a slavish drudgery. How sweet it is to pray when the Spirit gives us feeling, unction, access with boldness, pleading power, faith, expectancy, and full fellowship; but if the Spirit of God be absent from us in prayer our infirmities prevail against us, and our supplication loses all prevalence. Did you ever resolve to praise God, and come into the congregation where the sweetest psalms were being sent to heaven, but could you praise God till the Holy Spirit came like a divine wind and loosed the fragrance of the flowers of your soul? You know you could not; you used the sacred words of the sweet singers of Israel, but hosannas languished on your tongue and your devotion died. I know that it is dreadful work to be bound to preach when one is not conscious of the aid of the Spirit of God! It is like pouring water out of bottomless buckets, or feeding hungry souls out of empty baskets. A true sermon such as God will bless no man can preach of himself; he might as well try to sound the archangel's trumpet. We must have thee, O blessed Spirit, or we fail! O God, we must have thy power, or every action that we perform is but the movement of an automaton, and not the acceptable act of a living, spiritual man.

Have you never, dear friends, had to know that you cannot keep alive your own soul by your own blunderings and failings, when you

have resolved to be very wise and correct? Did you ever get into a self-sufficient state and say, "Now, I shall never fall into that temptation again, for I am the burnt child that dreads the fire," and yet into that very sin you have fallen. Have you not said, "Well, I understand that business; there is no need to wait upon God for direction in so simple a matter, for I am well up in every particular relating to it, and I can manage the affair very well?" And have you not acted as foolishly in the whole concern as the Israelites did in the affair of the Gibeonites, when they were deceived by the old shoes and clouted, and the mouldy bread, and asked no counsel of the Lord? I tell you our strength, whenever we have any, is our greatest weakness, and our fancied wisdom is our real folly. When we are weak we are strong. When in a sense of entire dependence upon God, we dare not trust ourselves, we are both wise and safe. Go, young man, even you who are a zealous Christian, go without your morning prayer into the house of business, and see what will befall you. Venture, my sister, down into your little family without having called upon God for guidance, and see what you will do. Go with a strong resolve that you will never be guilty of the weakness which dishonored you a few days ago, and depend upon the strength of your own will, and the firmness of your own purpose, and see if you do not ere long discover to your shame how great your weakness is. Nay, try none of these experiments, but listen to the word which tells you none can keep alive his own soul."

And now, should any think that he can keep his own soul alive, let me ask him to look at the enemies which surround him. A sheep in the midst of wolves is safe compared with the Christian in the midst of ungodly men. The world waylays us, the devil assaults us, behind every bush there lurks a foe. A spark in mid ocean is not more beset, a worm is not more defenceless. If the sight of foes without be not enough to make us confess our danger, look at the foes within. There is enough within thy soul, O Christian, though thou be one of the best of saints, to destroy thee in an hour unless the grace of God guard thee and keep thy passions in check, and prevent thy stubborn will from asserting its own rebellious determinations. Oh, what a powder magazine the human heart is, even at the best; if some of us have not been blown up it has been rather because Providence has kept away the sparks than because of there being any lack of powder within. Oh, may God keep us, for if he leaves us we want no devil to destroy us, we shall prove devils to ourselves, we shall need no tempters except the dire lusting after evil which now conceals itself so craftily within our own bosom.

Certainly, dear brethren, we may be quite sure that "none can keep live his own soul;" when we remember that in the gospel provision is made for keeping our soul alive. The Holy Spirit is given that he may continually quicken and preserve us, and Jesus Christ himself lives that we may live also. To what purpose would be all the splendid provisions and the special safeguards of the covenant of grace for the preservation of the spiritual life if that spiritual life could preserve itself? Why doth the Lord declare, "I the Lord do keep it," if it can keep itself? The granaries of Egypt, so full of corn, remind us that there is a famine in the land of Canaan: the treasures laid up in Christ Jesus assure us that we are in need of them. God's supplies are never superfluous, but are meant to meet real wants. Let us, then, all acknowledge that no man among us can keep alive his own soul.

II. This brings me, secondly and briefly, to notice that This Truth Brings Glory To Christ.

"None can keep alive his own soul." Weakminded professors are prone to trust in man, but they have here an evident warning against such folly. How can they trust in a man who cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I crouch at the feet of my fellow man and ask him to hear my confession and absolve me, when I know that he cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I look up to him and call him "father in God," and expect to receive grace from the laying on of his hand, when I learn that he is a weak, sinful being like myself? He cannot keep alive his own soul, what can he do for me? If he lives before God he has to live upon the daily charity of the Most High: what can he have to give to me? Oh, look not to your fellow virgins for the oil of grace, for they have not enough for themselves and you, and whatever name a man may dare to take, whether he be priest, Father, or Pope, look not to him, but look to Jesus, in whom all fullness dwells.

The glory which redounds to Christ from our daily dependence is seen in his becoming to us our daily bread, his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, and we must feed upon these continually, or die. Eating is not an operation to be performed once only, but throughout life, and so we have to go to Jesus again and again and find sustenance in him as long as life lasts. Beloved, we honored our Old lit first when he saved us, and through being daily dependent upon him we are led to honor him every day, and if we are right hearted we shall honor him more and more every day, as we more and more perceive our indebtedness to him. He is our daily bread whereon we feed continually, and the living water whereof we continually drink; he is the light which everlastingly shines upon us, he is in fact daily to us our all in all, and all this prevents our forgetting him. As at the first he saved us, so he saves us still; and as at the first we prized him, we prize him still.

More than that, as our life is maintained, not only by him, but by our abiding in union with him, this leads us to abide in love towards him. Union is the source of communion and love. The wife remains a happy wife by loving fellowship with her husband. When the betrothed one is married to her beloved, the wedding day is not the end of it all; the putting on of the ring is the beginning, not the end. And so, when we believe in Jesus, we are saved, but we must not idly feel "it is all done now." No, it is only begun. Now is the

life of dependence, the life of faith, the life of obedience, the life of love, the life of union commenced, and it is to be continued for ever. This makes us love, honor, and adore our Lord Jesus, since we only live by being one with him.

We have also to remember that our life is daily supported by virtue of what the living Redeemer is still doing for us, as well as by receiving the fruit of his death, and of our spiritual union with him. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and therefore he is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." The life of the ascended Redeemer is intimately bound up with our life; — "Because I live ye shall live also." How this honors Christ, for we are thus led to realize a living Savior, and to love him as a living, breathing, acting person. It is a pity when men only think of a dead Savior, or of a baby Savior, carried in the Virgin's arms, as the church of Rome does; it is our joy to have a living Christ, for while he lives we cannot die, and while he pleads we cannot be condemned. Thus we are led to remember him as a living Savior, and to give him honor.

But oh, my brethren, what must be the fullness of Christ when all the grace which the saints have must come out of him, and not merely all they have had, but all they obtain even day comes from him. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be anything heavenly, if there be anything divine, of his fullness have we received it, and grace for grace. What must be that power which protects and preserves myriads of saints from temptation, and keeps them amid perils as many as the sands of the sea! What must be that patience which watches over the frail children of God in all their weaknesses and wanderings, in all their sufferings, in all their infirmities! What must be his grace which covers all their sin, and what his strength which supports them under all their trials! What must the fountain head be, when the streams which flow to any one of us are so deep that we cannot fathom them, so broad that I cannot measure them! Yet millions of happy spirits are each one receiving as much as any one of us may be, and still there is a fullness abiding in Christ the same as before, for it has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. Not a saint lives a moment apart from him, for none can keep alive his own soul." The cries of babes in grace and the shouts of strong men who divide the spoil, all come from the life which he lends and the strength which he gives. Between the gates of hell and the gates of heaven in all those pilgrims whose faces are towards the royal city all the Life is Christ's life, and all the strength is Christ's strength, and he is in them, working in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus, who thus supplies all his people. Does not this display the exceeding riches of his grace?

III. Thirdly and practically, This Subject Suggests The Path Of Wisdom For Ourselves. None can keep alive his own soul," then, my dear brothers and sisters, what manner of persons ought we to be?

Let me have your earnest thoughts on this point for a minute. Do not let any one among us look back to a certain day and say, "On that occasion I was regenerated and converted, and that is enough." I fear that some of you get into a very bad condition by saying, "If I can prove that I was converted on such a day that will do." This is altogether unjustifiable talk. Conversion is a turning into the right road; the next thing is to walk in it. The daily going on in that road is as essential as the first starting if you would reach the desired end. To strike the first blow is not all the battle; to him that overcometh the crown is promised. To start in the race is nothing, many have done that who have failed; but to hold out till you reach the winning post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as necessary to a man's salvation as conversion. Do remember this, you not only want grace to begin with, but grace with which to abide in Christ Jesus.

Learn, also, that we should diligently use all those means whereby the Lord communicates fresh support to our life. A man does not say, "Well, I was born on such and such a day, that is enough for me." No, the good man needs his daily meals to maintain him in existence. Being alive, his next consideration is to keep alive, and therefore he does not neglect eating, nor any operation which is essential to life. So you, dear friends, must labor for the meat which endureth to life eternal, you must feed on the bread of heaven. Study the Scriptures daily — I hope you do not neglect that. Be much in private prayer, your life cannot be healthy if the mercy seat be neglected. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. Be eager to hear the word, and endeavor both to understand and practice it. Gather with God's people in their; more spiritual meetings, when they join in prayer and praise, for these are healthful means of sustaining the inner life. If you neglect these you cannot expect that grace will be strong within you, you may even question if there be any life at all. Still, remember that even if a man should eat and drink that would not keep him alive without the power of God, and many die with whom there is no lack either of air or food. You must, therefore, look beyond the outward means, to God himself to preserve your soul, and be it your daily prayer, "Oh Savior, by whom I began to live, daily enable me to look to thee that I may draw continuous life from thy wounds, and live because thou livest." Take these things home and practice them. Keep, dear friends, also clear of everything which has a tendency to destroy life. A sane man does not willingly take poison: if he knew it he would not touch the cup in which it had been contained. We are careful to avoid any adulteration in our food which might be injurious to life and health: we have our chemists busily at work to analyse liquids, lest haply inadvertently we should imbibe death in the water which we drink. Brethren, now let us be equally careful as to our souls. Keep your chemist at work analysing the things of this life. Let conscience and understanding fit up their laboratory and prove all things. Analyse the sermon of the eloquent preacher, lest you drink in novelties of doctrine and arrant falsehoods, because he happens to put them prettily before you. Analyse each book you read, lest you should become tainted with error, while you are interested with

the style and manner, smartness and elegance of your author. Analyse the company you keep; test and try everything, lest haply you should be committing spiritual suicide, or carelessly squandering life away. Ask the Lord, the preserver of men, above all things, to keep you beneath the shadow of his wings, that you may not be afraid for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction which wasteth at noonday, because his truth has become your shield and buckler, and you are safe.

Watch your life carefully, but look to Jesus Christ from day to day for everything. Do not become self-satisfied, so as to say, "Now I am rich and increased in goods." If ever a child of God imitates the rich man in the parable, and says, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," he is a fool as much as the rich man was. I have known some become fiery exalted in spiritual things, the conflict is almost over with them, temptation has no power, they are masters of the situation, and their condition is of the most elevated kind. Well, ballooning is very pleasant to those who like it, but I think he is safest who keeps on the ground: I fear that spiritual ballooning has been very mischievous to a great many, and has turned their heads altogether. Their high conceit is falsehood. After all, my friend, to tell you the truth very plainly, you are no better than other people, though you think you are, and in one point I am sure you miserably fail, and that is in humility. When we hear you declare what a fine fellow you are, we suspect that you wear borrowed plumes, and are not what you seem. A peacock is a beautiful bird, what can be more brilliant? But I am not enraptured with his voice, nor are you; and so there may be fine feathers about certain people, perhaps a little too fine, but while they are showing themselves off, we know that there is a weak point about them, and we pray that it may not cause "honor to the cause of Christ. It is not our part to be hunting about for the failings of our fellow Christians, yet boasting has a tendency to make us examine the boaster. The practical thing is to believe that when we are proud ourselves there is something wrong about us. Whenever we stand before the looking-glass and think what fine fellows we are, we had better go at once to the great Physician and beseech him to give us medicine for our vanity. Mr. Peacock, you are certainly very handsome, but you should hear yourself croak. Professor, there are fine points about you, but there are sorry ones too: be humble and so be wise. Brother, if you get an inch above the ground you are just that inch too high. If you have anything apart from Christ, if you can live five minutes on past experience, if you think that you can live on yesterday's grace you make a mistake. You put the manna by so very cannily, you stored it up in the cupboard with such self-content. Go to it to-morrow morning instead of joining the rest of your brethren in gathering the fresh manna which will fall all around the camp. Go to the cupboard where you stored up yesterday's manna! Ah, as soon as you open the door you close it again. Why did you shut that door so speedily? Well, we need not look inside the cupboard, the smell is enough; it has happened as Moses foretold it; it has bred worms and it stinks as he said it would. Cover it up as quickly as you can. Dig a deep hole and throw it all in and bury it, that is the only thing to do with such rottenness. Day by day go to Christ and you will get your manna sweet, but begin to live on past or present attainments and they will breed worms and stink as sure as you are a man. Do not try it, for "none can keep alive his own soul."

IV. Last of all, This Subject Indicates A Way Of Usefulness for every one here present who is a child of God.

I think the great business of the Christian's life is to serve God, and that he can do mainly by aiming at the conversion of sinners. It is a grand thing to be blessed of God to turn sinners from the error of their ways; but listen, brethren, there is equally good work to be done by helping struggling saints. The old Roman said he thought it as much an honor to preserve a Roman citizen as to slay an enemy of his country, and he was right. There is as much acceptance before God in the work of instrumentally preserving souls alive as in being made the means of making souls to live at the first; the upholding of believers is as needful an exercise for Christian workers as the ingathering of unbelievers. I want you to think of this. If there is a person nearly drowned, a man will leap into the water to bring him out, and he gets great credit for it, and deserves it, and so when a man saves a soul from death by earnest ministry, let him be glad and thank God. But if a man be starving, and ready to die, and you give him bread; or if he be not reduced to that point, but would have been so had you not interfered, you have done as good an action in preserving life as the other friend who snatched life from between the jaws of death. You must never think little of the work which instructs the ignorant Christian, which clears the stumbling-blocks out of the way of the perplexed believer, which comforts the feeble-minded and supports the weak. These needful works must be done, while soul-saving must not be left undone. Perhaps some of you never win be the means of the conversion of many; then try to be the means of comfort to as many as you can. To be the means in the hand of the Holy Ghost of nurturing the life which God has given is a worthy service, and very acceptable with God. I would urge the members of this church to watch over one another. Be pastors to each other. Be very careful over the many young people that are come among us, and, if you see any backslide, in a gentle and affectionate manner endeavor to bring them back. Do you know any despondent ones? Lay yourselves out to comfort them. Do you see faults in any? Do not tell them of them hastily, but labor as God shall help you to teach them a better way. As the Lord often preserves you by the help of others, so in return seek to be in God's hands the means by which he shall keep your brethren from going astray, from sinking in despair, or from falling into error. I hold it out to you as a good and blessed work to do — will you try to accomplish it?

Now, if you say "Yes," and I think every Christian here says "Yes," then I am going to speak to you "concerning the collection, brethren." This is Hospital Sunday, and we must contribute our full share. Do you see any connection between this subject and the collection? I think I do. Here are these poor sick folk who will die unless they be carefully looked to, unless medicine and a

physician's skill be provided for them. I know you are ready enough to look after sick souls; the point to which I have brought you is one which involves such readiness. Well, now, he who would look after a sick soul will be sure to care for a sick body. I hope you are not of the same class as the priest in the fable who was entreated by a beggar to give him a crown. "By no means," said the reverend father, "why should I give you a crown? "Will you give me a shilling, holy father?" No, he would not give him a shilling, nor even a penny. "Then," said he, "holy father, will you of your charity give me a farthing? "No, he would not do anything of the sort. At last the beggar said, "Would not your reverence be kind enough to give me your blessing?" "Oh yes, my son, you shall have it at once; kneel down and receive it." But the man did not kneel down to receive it, for he reasoned that if it had been worth a farthing the holy father would not have given it to him, and so he went his way. Men have enough practical sense always to judge that if professed Christians do not care for their bodily wants, there cannot be much sincerity in their zeal for men's souls. If a man will give me spiritual bread in the form of a tract, but would not give me a piece of bread for my body, how can I think much of him? Let practical help to the poor go with the spiritual help which you render to them. If you would help to keep a brother's soul alive in the higher sense, be not backward to do it in the more ordinary way. You have an opportunity of proving, your sincerity, and Gratifying, your charity, for the boxes will go round at once.

Psalm 23:1 The Good Shepherd

NO. 3060

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"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." — Psalm 23

Does not this sound just, like poetry or like singing? If you read the entire Psalm through, it is written in such poetic prose that, though it is not translated into meter, as it should have been, it reads just like it. "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." It sounds like, music for this, among other reasons, because it came from David's heart. That which cometh from the heart always hath melody in it. When men speak of what they do, know, and from the depths of their souls testify to what they have seen, they speak with what we call eloquence, for true eloquence is speaking from the soul. Thus David spake of what he knew, what he had verified all his life long, and this rendered him truly eloquent.

As "truth is stranger than fiction," so the truth that David spake is more sweet than even fancy could have imagined; and it hath more beauty than even the dream of the enthusiast could have pictured. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." How naturally it seems to strike on the ear as uttered by David, who had himself been a shepherd boy! He remembers how he, had led his flock by the waters in the warm summer, how he had made them lie down in shady nooks by the side of the river; how, on sultry days, he had led them, on the high hills that they might feel the cool air; and how, when the winter set in, he had led them into the valleys that they might be hidden from the stormy blast; well could he remember the tender care with which he protected the lambs, and carried them; and how he had tended the wounded of the flock. And now, appropriating to himself the, familiar figure of a sheep, he says, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." I will try to preach experimentally tonight, and I wonder how many of you will be able to follow the psalmist with me whilst I attempt to do so.

First of all, there are some preliminaries before a man can say this: it is absolutely necessary that he should feel himself to be like a sheep by nature, for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep. Secondly, there is a sweet assurance; a man must have had some testimony of divine care and goodness in the past, otherwise he cannot appropriate, to himself this verse, "The Lord is my Shepherd." And thirdly, there is a holy confidence. I wonder how many there are here who can place, all their future in the, hand of God, and call join with David in uttering the last sentence, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

I. First, then, we say There Is A Certain Confession Necessary Before A Man Can Join In These Words; we must feel that there is something in us which is akin to the sheep; we must, acknowledge that, in some measure, we exactly resemble it, or else we cannot call God our Shepherd.

I think the first, apprehension we shall have, if the Lord has brought us into, this condition, is this, — we shall be, conscious of our own folly; we shall feel how unwise we always are. A sheep is one of the most unwise of creatures. It. will go anywhere except, in the right direction; it will leave a fat pasture to wander into a barren one; it will find out many ways, but not the right way; it would wander through a wood, and find its way through ravines into the wolf's jaws, but never by its wariness turn away from the wolf; it could wander near his den, but it would not instinctively turn aside from the place of danger; it, knoweth how to go. astray, but, it, knoweth not how to come home again. Left to itself, it, would not know in what pasture to feed in summer, or whither to, retire in

winter.

Have we ever been brought to feel that, in matters of providence, as well as in things of grace, we are truly and entirely foolish? Me-thinks, no. man can trust, providence, till he distrusts himself; and no one can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," until he has given up every idle notion that he can control himself, or manage his own interests. Alas! we are, most of us wise, above that which is written, and we are too vain to acknowledge the wisdom of God. In our self-esteem, we fancy our reason can rule: our purposes, and we never doubt our own power to accomplish our own intentions, and then, by a little maneuvering, we think to extricate ourselves from our difficulties. Could we steer in such a direction as we have planned, we entertain not a doubt that we should avoid at once the Scylla and the Charybdis, and have fair sailing all our life long. O beloved, surely it, needs but little teaching in the school of grace to make out that, we are fools. True wisdom is sure to set folly in a strong light.

I have heard of a young man who went to college; and when he had been there a year, his father said to him, "Do you know more than when you went?" "Oh, yes!" said he, "I do." Then he went the second year, and was asked the same question, "Do you know more than when you went?" "Oh, no!" said he, "I know a great deal less." "Well," said the father, "you are getting on." Then he went the third year, and was asked, "What do you know now?" "Oh!" said he, "I don't think I know anything." "That is right," said the father; "you have now learnt to profit, since you say you know nothing." He who, is convinced that he knows nothing as he ought to know, gives up steering his ship, and lets God put. his hand on the rudder. He lays aside his own wisdom, and cries, "O God, my little wisdom is cast at thy feet. Such as it is, I surrender it to thee. I am prepared to renounce it, for it hath caused me, many an ill, and many a tear of regret, that I should have followed my own devices, but, henceforth I will delight in thy statutes. As the, eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so shall mine eyes wait upon the Lord my God. I will not trust in horses or in chariots; but the name of the God of Jacob shall be my refuge. Too long, alas! here I sought my own pleasure, and labored to do everything for my own gratification. Now would I ask, O Lord, thy help, that I may seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and leave all the rest to thee." Do you, O my friends, feel persuaded that you are foolish? Have, you been brought to confess the sheepishness of your nature? Or are you flattering your hearts with the: fond conceit that you are wise? If so, you are indeed fools. But if brought to see yourself like Agur when he said, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man," then even Solomon might pronounce thee wise. And if thou art thus brought to confess, "I am a silly sheep," I hope thou wilt be able to say: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I cannot have any other, I want none other; he is enough for me."

Again, a sheep is not only foolish, but it is a very dependent creature. The sheep, at least in its domesticated state, as we, know it, must ever be dependent. If we should take a horse, we might turn him loose upon the prairie, and there he would find sufficient few his sustenance; and years after we might see him in no worse condition than that in which we left him. Even the ox might thus be treated, and still be able to provide for itself. But, as for the silly sheep, set it alone in the wilderness, let it pursue its own course unheeded, and what would be its fate? Presently, if it did not wander into places where it would be starved, it would ultimately come to ruin, for assuredly some wild beast would lay held upon it, and it, hath no means of defense for itself.

Beloved, have we been brought to feel that we have of ourselves, no means of subsistence and no power of defense against our fees? Do we perceive the necessity for our dependence upon God? If so, then we have learnt another part of the great lesson, that the Lord is our Shepherd. Some of us have yet this lesson to learn. Fain would we cater for ourselves, and carve for ourselves; but, as the good old Puritan says, "No child of God ever carves for himself without cutting his fingers" We sometimes fancy that we can do a little for ourselves; but we shall have that conceit taken out of us very soon. If we indeed be God's people, he will bring us to depend absolutely upon him day by day. He will make us pray, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and make us acknowledge that he openeth his hand, and giveth us our meat, in due season. Sweet, is the meal that we eat, as it were, out of his hand. Yet some will rebel against this dependence as very humiliating. Men like to vaunt their independence; nothing is more respectable in their eyes than to live in independent circumstances. But it is no use: for us to talk of being independent; we never can be. I remember a dear Christian man, who prayed very sweetly, each Sunday morning, at a certain prayer-meeting that I once attended, "O Lord, we are independent creatures upon thee." Except in such a sense as that, I never knew any independence worth having. Of course he meant, "we are dependent creatures upon thee." So we must be. We cannot, be independent even of one another, and certainly we are not independent of God: for, when we have health and strength, we are dependent upon him for their continuance; and if we have them not, we are, dependent on him to restore them to us. In all matters whatsoever, it, is sweet, it is blessed, to see the tokens of his watchful care. If I had a thing of which I could say, "God has not given me this," I hope, by divine grace, I should turn it out, of doors. Food, raiment, health, breath, strength, everything, cometh from him, and we are constantly dependent upon him. As Huntington used to say, "My God gives me a hand-basket portion. He does not give me an abundance at, once; but, he gives it, basket by basket, and I live from hand to mouth." Or, as old Hardy once said, "I am a gentleman commoner on the bounty of God; I live, day by day upon morning commons and evening commons; and thus I am dependent upon him, independent of the world, but dependent upon God."

The sheep is a dependent creature, always needing some help; and so is the Christian; and he realizes the blessedness of his

dependence when he can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

These are the two principal points upon which we vicar this truth with regard to providence. I might, wander from what I wished to be the subject of this evening, and I might be doing good if I were to show you some other points of comparison between the Christian and the sheep. O beloved, there are some of you here present, who know yourselves to be sheep by reason of your frequent wanderings. How often have we made this confession, "We, have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep," and we do feel it this night, bitterly rueing the waywardness of our hearts. But it is well to be the sheep of God's pasture, even if we have been wandering sheep. We do not read of wandering dogs, because dogs are naturally wild, while sheep are always accounted to be someone's property. The straying sheep has an owner; and however far it may stray from the fold, it ceases not to belong to that owner. I believe that God will yet bring back into the fold every one of his own sheep, and they shall all be saved. It is something to feel our wanderings, for if we feel ourselves to be lost, we shall certainly be saved; if we feel ourselves to have wandered, we shall certainly be brought back.

Again, we are just like sheep by reason of the perverseness of our wills. People talk about free-will Christians, and tell us of persons being saved and coming to God of their own free will. It is a very curious thing, but though I have heard a great many free-will sermons, I never heard any free-will prayers. I have heard Arminianism in preaching: and talking, but I have never heard any Arminian praying. In fact, I do not think there can be any prayer of that sort; it is a style that does not suit prayer. The theory may look very nice in argument, and sound very proper in discourse, though we somewhat differ from it; but for practical purposes it is useless. The language will not suit us in prayer, and this alone would be sufficient reason to condemn it. If a man cannot pray in the spirit of his own convictions it shows they are a delusion from beginning to end; for if they were true he could pray in that language as well as in any other. Blessed be God, the doctrines of grace are as good to pray with as to preach with! We do not find ourselves out of order in any act of worship when once we have the old fundamental doctrines of the blessed gospel of grace. Persons talk about free-will Christians coming back to Jesus of themselves. I intend to believe them when, they find me a free-will sheep that has come back of itself; when they have discovered some sheep, after it has gone from its fold stand bleating at its master's door, asking to be taken in again. You will not find such a sheep, and you will not find a free-will Christian; for they will all confess, if you thoroughly probe the matter, that it was grace, and grace alone that restored their souls,—

"Grace taught our souls to pray,

And made our eyes o'erflow;

'Tis grace that keeps us to this day,

And will not let us go."

II. The next thing is, The Assurance That The Lord Is Our Shepherd.

It is very easy to say, "The Lord is a Shepherd;" but how shall we appropriate the blessedness to ourselves, and be able to say, "The Lord is our Shepherd?" I answer, that he hath had certain dealings with our souls in the past, which have taught us that he is our Shepherd. If every man and every woman in this assembly should rise up and say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," I feel convinced it would be, in many instances, the solemn utterance, of an untruth; for there are, it is to be feared, many here, who have not God for their Shepherd. He is their Guide, it is true, in some sense, because he, overrules all the hearts and center. Is all the affairs of the children of men; but they are not the people of his pasture, they are not the sheep of his hand; they do not believe, therefore they are not of his fold. And if some of you should say that you are your own conscience would belie you. How, then, does a man come to know that the Lord is his Shepherd?

He knows it, first, because Jesus Christ has brought him back from his wanderings. If there be anyone here who, after a course of folly and sin, has been fetched back from the mountains of error and the haunts of evil, if there, be one here who has been stopped in a mad career of vice, and has been reclaimed by the power of Jehovah Jesus, such a one will know, by a happy experience, that the Lord is his: Shepherd. If I once wandered on yon mountain top, and Jesus climbed up, and caught me, and put me on his shoulders, and carried me home, I cannot and dare not doubt that he is my Shepherd if I had belonged to some other sheep-owner, he would not have sought me; and from the fact, that he did seek me, I learn that he must be my Shepherd. Did I think that any man convinced me of sin, or that any human power had converted me, I should fear I was that man's sheep, and that he was my shepherd. Could I trace, my deliverance to the hand of a creature, I should think that a creature might, be my shepherd; but, since he who has been reclaimed of God must and will confess that God alone has done it, and will ascribe to his free grace, and to that alone, his deliverance from sin, such a one will feel persuaded that the Lord must be his Shepherd, because he fetched him back from his wanderings, he snatched him out of the jaw of the, lion and out of the paw of the barn.

We know still further that, like a shepherd, he has supplied our wants. Some of you, beloved, know of a surety that God is your

Provider. You have been brought, sometimes, into such straits that, if it had not been for an interposition of heaven itself, you never could have had deliverance. You have sunk so deep down into poverty, and levees and acquaintances have stood so far aloof from you, that you know there is but one arm which could have fetched you up. You have been reduced, perhaps, to such straits that all you could do, was to pray. You have wrestled at the throne, and sought for an answer, but it has not come; you have used every effort to extricate yourself, and still darkness has compassed your path. Again and again you have, tried, till hope has well-nigh vanished from your heart, and then, adding vows to your prayer, you have said in your agony, "O God, if thou wilt deliver me this time, I will never doubt thee again?" Look back on the path of your pilgrimage. Some of you can count as many Ebenezers as there are milestones from here to York; Ebenezers piled up, with oil poured on the top of them; places where you have said, "Hitherto, the Lord hath helped me." Look through the pages of your diary, and you will sometime after time, when your perils and exigencies were such as no earthly skill could relieve, and you felt constrained to witness what others among you have never felt,—that there is a God, that there is a providence—a God who compasseth your path, and is acquainted with all your ways. You have received deliverance in so marvelous a way, from so unseen a hand, and so unlikely a source, under circumstances, perhaps, so foreign to your wishes, and yet the deliverance has been so perfect, so complete, and wonderful, that you have been obliged to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Yes; he is. The sheep, we know, fed day by day in good pasture, may forget its shepherd; but if for a time, it is taken from the pasture, and then brought home again, after having been nearly starved, it says, "Truly, he is my shepherd." If I had always been supplied with bread, without the pinch of anxiety, I might have doubted whether he had given it, and ascribed it to the ordinary course of passing events; but, seeing that "everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to, be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need," I own that it is my God who supplies all my need; yea, and with gratitude I will write it down for a certainty, The Lord is my Shepherd."

But, beloved, do not be distressed, even, though you should not have had these particular trials and deliverances, for there is a way whereby we can tell that the Lord is our Shepherd without encountering so many rough and rugged passes, as I will show you presently. I have heard it said, by some, that a man cannot be a child of God unless he has gone through a certain set of trials and troubles. I recollect hearing a sermon from these words, "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well." Certainly, the preacher did not make his sermon a well, for it was as dry as a stick, and not worth hearing. There was nothing like cheerfulness in it; but a flood of declamation, all the way through, against hopeful Christians, against people going to heaven who are not always grumbling, and murmuring, and doubting, fumbling for their evidences amidst the exercises of their own hearts, over reading and striving to rival Job and Jeremiah in grief, taking the Lamentations as the fit expression of their own lips, troubling their poor brains, and vexing their poor hearts, and smarting, and crying, and wearying themselves with the perpetual habit, of complaining against God, saying with poor Job, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." Such persons measure themselves by their troubles, and trials, and distresses, and tribulations, and perplexities, and no end of these, things that we will not stop to recount. We believe, indeed, that such things will come to a child of God; we, think every Christian will be corrected in due measure; we should be the last to deny that God's people are a tried people. They must all pass through the furnace, of affliction, and he has chosen them there, but still, we believe that religion is a blessed and a happy thing and we love to sing that verse,—

"The men of grace have found

Glory begun below;

Celestial fruits on earthly ground

From faith and hope may grow."

And what though some of my hearers have not yet had to swim through the rivers, though they may not have had to pass through the fiery furnace of providential trial, they have had trials enough, and trials that no heart has known except their own sufferings which they could not tell to flesh and blood, which have gnawed their very souls, and catered into the marrow of their spirits; bitter anguish and aching voids such as those who boast about their trials nearer felt, such as mere babbling troublers did never know, deep rushings of the stream of woe with which little bubbling narrow brooks could never compare. Such persons fear to murmur, they cannot tell their sufferings, because, they think it would be showing some want of trust, in God; they keep their trials to themselves, and only tell them into that ear which heareth, and hath no lips to babble afterwards.

"But," you say, "how can you tell that the Lord is your Shepherd if you have not been tried in any of those great deeps?" We know that he is, because he has fed us day by day in good pasture. And if he has not, suffered us to wander so, far away as others, we can lift up our egos to him, and each one of us say, "Lord, thou art my Shepherd; I can as fully prove that thou art my Shepherd by thy keeping me, in the grassy field, as by thy fetching me back when I have wandered; I know thou art as much my Shepherd when thou hast supplied my wants day by day as if thou hadst suffered me, to go into poverty, and given me bitterness; I know thou art as much my Shepherd when granting me a continuous stream, of mercy, as if that stream had stopped for a moment, and these had begun to flow again." Persons say, if they have had an accident, and been nearly killed, or have narrowly escaped, "What a providence!" Yet it is as much a providence when you have no accident at all. A good man once went to a certain place to meet his

son. Both his son and himself had ridden from some distance. When the son arrived, he exclaimed,

“Oh father! I had such a providence on the road.”

“Why, what was that?”

“My horse stumbled six times, and yet I was not thrown.”

“Dear me!” said his father, “but I have had a providence too.”

“And what was that?”

“Why, my horse never stumbled at all, and that is just as muck a providence as if the horse had stumbled six times, and I had not been thrown.”

It, is a great providence when you have lost your property, and God provides for you; but it is quite as much a providence when you have no loss at all, and when you are still able to live above the depths of penury; and so God provides for you. I say this to some of you when God has blessed, and continually provided for from your earliest youth; you, too, can each of you say, “The Lord is, my Shepherd.” You can see, this title stamped on your mercies; though they come, daily, they are, given to you by God; and you will say, by humble faith, the word “my” as loudly as anyone can. Do not get despising the little ones of the flock because they have not had so many trials as you have had; do not get cutting the children of God in pieces because, they have not been in such fights as you have. The Shepherd leads the sheep where he pleases, and be you sure that he will lead them rightly; and as long as they can say from their hearts, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,” do not trouble yourselves about, where or how they learned it.

III. Now, we finish up with, The Holy Confidence Of The Psalmist: “I shall not want.”

“There,” poor unbelief says, “ I am wanting in everything; I am wanting in spirituals, I am wanting in temporals; and I shall want, Ah! such distress as I had a little while ago you cannot tell what it was; it was enough to break one’s heart; and it is coming again; I shall want.” That is what you say unbelief, but you must write your own name at the bottom, and thee I will repeat to you this, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” That is what, David said, and I think David’s faith, far preferable, to your unbelief. I might take your evidence in some matters, but I really would not take it before David’s. I would accept your testimony as an honest man in some respects, but the words of inspiration must be preferable to your words of apprehension. When I find it written, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,” I would rather take one of David’s affirmations than fifty of your negations.

Methinks I hear someone saying, “I would bear the want of any temporal good, if I could but obtain spiritual blessings. I am in want this night of more faith, more love, more holiness, more communion with my Savior.” Well, beloved, the Lord is thy Shepherd, thou shalt not want even these blessings; if thou askest of him,, he will give them to thee, though it may be by terrible things in righteousness that he will save thee. He often answers his people in an unexpected manner; many of God’s answers to, our letters come down in black-edged envelopes; yet, mark you, they will come. If you want peace, joy, sanctification, and such blessings, they shall be given to you, for God hath, promised them. The Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want. I have often thought of that great promise written in the Bible,—I do not, know where there is a larger one,—” No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “No good thing!” It is a mercy that the word “good” was put in, for if it had said, “He, will withhold nothing,” we should have been asking for many things that would be bad for us, but, it says, “no good thing!” Now, spiritual mercies are good things, and not only good things, but the best things, so, that you may well ask for them; for if no, good thing will be withholden, much more will none of the best things. Ask, then, Christian, for he is thy Shepherd, and thou shalt not want; he will supply thy need; he will give, thee whatever thou requirest; ask in faith, nothing doubting, and he shall give thee what than really needest.

But still there are some who say, “The text applies to temporal matters,” and persist in it. Well, then, I will accept this sense, the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want for temporal blessings. “Ah!” cries one, “I was once in affluence, and now I am brought down to penury. I once stood among the mighty and was rich, now I walk amongst the lowly and am poor.” Well, David does not say, “The Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not come down in society;” he does not say, “The Lord is your Shepherd, and therefore you shall have five hundred or a thousand pounds a year;” he does not, say, “The Lord is your Shepherd, and therefore you shall have whatsoever your soul lusteth after.” All David says is, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” There are different ways of wanting. There are many people whose foolish craving and restless anxiety make them always in want. If you gave them a house to live in, and fed them day by day, they would always be wanting something more. And after you had just relieved their necessities, they would want still. The fact is theirs are not real wants, but simply fancied wants. David does not say, “The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I shall not fancy that I want,” for though God might promise that, it would need his omnipotence to carry it out; for his people often get fancying that they want, when they do not. It is real wants that are referred to. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not really want.” There are many things we wish for that we do, not really need, but there is no promise given that,

we shall have all we wish for. God hath not said that he would give us anything more than we need, but he will give us that. So, lift up thy head, and do not be, afraid. Fear not, thy God is with thee; he, shall prevent, evil from hurting thee; he shall turn darkness into light., and bitter into sweet. All the way he hath led thee, and all the way he shall lead thee; this shall be thy constant joy. He is my Shepherd, I shall not really want that which is absolutely necessary. Whatever I really require shall be given by the lavish hand of a tender Father. Believer, here is thy jointure, here is thine inheritance, here is thine income, here is thy yearly living: "He is thy Shepherd, and thou shalt not want." What is thy income, believer? "Why," you say, "it varies with some and others of us." Well, but, a believer's income, is still the same. This is it: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." That is my income, and it is yours, poor little one. That is the income of the poorest pauper in the workhouse who hath an interest, in the grater of God; the, Lord is her Shepherd, she shall not want. That, is the income of the poor foundling child who has come to know the Lord in early life, and has no other friend; the Lord is his Shepherd, he shall not, want. That is the widow's inheritance; the Lord is her Shepherd, she shall not want. That is the orphan's fortune; the Lord is his Shepherd, he shall not want. That is the believer's portion, his inheritance, his blessing.

"Well now," some, may say, "what is this truth worth?" Beloved, if we could change this truth for a world of gold, we would not; we had rather live; on this truth than live, on the finest fortune in creation; we reckon that, this is an inheritance that makes us rich indeed: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.." Give me ten thousand pounds, and one, reverse, of fortune may scatter it all away; but let me have a spiritual hold of this divine assurance, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," then I am set up for life. I cannot, break with such stock as this in hand; I never can be a bankrupt, for I hold this security: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Do not give me ready money now; give me, a cheque-book, and let, me draw what I like. That is what God does with the believer. He does not immediately transfer his inheritance to him, but lets him draw what he needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus. The Lord is his Shepherd; he shall not want. What a glorious inheritance! Walk up, and down it, Christian; lie down upon it, it will do for thy pillow; it will be soft as down for thee to lie upon: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," Climb up that creaking staircase to the top of thy house, lie down on thy hard mattress, wrap thyself round with a blanket, look out for the winter when hard times are coming, and say not, "What shall I do?" but just hum over to thyself these words, "The, Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." That will be like the hush of lullaby to your poor soul, and you will soon sink to slumber. Go, thou business man, to thy counting-house again, after this little hour of recreation in God's house, and again cast up those wearisome books. Thou art saying, "How about business? These prices may be my ruin. What shall I do?" When. thou hast cast up thine accounts, put this down against all thy fears, and see what a balance it, will leave, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." There is another man. He does not, lack anything, but still he feels that some great loss may injure him considerably. Go and write this down in thy cash-book. If thou hast. made out thy cash-account truly, put this down: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Put this down for something better than £.s.d., something better than gold and silver: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." He who disregards this truth, knows nothing about its preciousness, but he who apprehends it, says, "Ah, yes! it is true, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." He will find this promise like China wind of which the ancients said that it was flavored to the lip of him that tasted it; so this truth shall taste sweet to thee if thy spiritual palate is pure, yet it shall be worth not.hint to thee but mere froth if thy taste, is not healthy.

But beloved, we must divide our congregation before we send you away, and remind you that, there are some of you to whom this truth does not belong. Perhaps some of you professors of religion may want this truth badly enough; but, it is not yours. The Lord is not, your Shepherd; you are not the sheep of his pasture and the flock of his hand. You are not sheep, but goats;—unclean creatures, not harmless and undefiled as sheep, but everything that is the very reverse. Oh! it is not only eternal loss, it is not only everlasting injury that you have to regret,—it is also present loss, and present injury; the loss of a jointure, on earth, the loss of an inheritance below. To be deprived of such a comfort as this, is a terrible privation. Oh! it is enough to make men long for religion if it were, only for that sweet placidity and calm of mind which it giveth here below. Well might men wish for this heavenly oil to be cast on the troubled waters of this mortal life, even if they did not anoint their heads therewith, and enter into glory with the joy of their Lord upon their countenance. Beloved, there are some I know here,—and your conscience tells you whom I mean,—who have a voice, within your own hearts which says, "I am not one of Christ's sheep." Well then, there is no promise, for you that you shall not want the promise and the providence are for believers, not for you. There is no promise that all things shall work together for your good; but rather, cursed shalt thou be in thy basket and cursed in thy store, cursed in the field, cursed in thy house, cursed in thy goings out, and cursed in thy comings in, for "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." It doth not merely peep in at his window, but it is in his house. Yet God "blesseth the habitation of the just." If you do not repent, the curse shall follow you until your dying day, and not having Christ for your Shepherd, you shall wander where that hungry wolf, the devil, shall at last, seize upon your soul, and everlasting misery and destruction from the presence of Jehovah must be your inevitable, miserable, and inexpressibly awful doom. May the Lord in mercy deliver you from it! And this is the way of salvation: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "He that believeth and is baptized"—we omit nothing that God has said. "He that believeth and is baptized"—not he that is baptized and then believeth (which would be reversing God's order), but "He that believeth and is baptized"—not he that is baptized without believing, but the two joined together,—he that believeth with his heart., arid is baptized, confessing with his mouth,—he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do you neglect one part of it? It is at

your peril, sir! “He that believeth and is baptized,” says God. If any of you have neglected one portion of it, if you have believed, and have not been baptized, God will save you. Still, this promise saith not so. “He that, believeth and is baptized;” it puts the two together; and “what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder;” what he hath ordered let, no man disarrange. “He that believeth”—that, is, he that trusts in Jesus; he that relies upon his blood, his merits, and his righteousness,—”and is baptized, shall

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