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C H SPURGEON ON 1 PETER

1 Peter 2:8 Stumbling at the Word

NO. 3258

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.

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“And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient.”-1 Peter 2:8.

Yonder is a wreck; after a terrible tempest, that is all that remains of a once fine vessel, and on the wreck, lashed to the mast, I see clinging a number of mariners, almost frost-bitten with the cold, and drenched through and through with brine. But shore goes the lifeboat so I trust they will soon all be rescued from their perilous position. I am absolutely certain of one thing with regard to all those who are clinging to that poor wreck of a ship, that there is not a man among them who will raise any objection to being saved. No; whatever may have been their previous position in life, or their habits, or tastes, or anything else, they will all be equally glad to welcome the friendly lifeboat, and to be taken on board the vessel of mercy. Yet is it not a strange thing, dear friends, that when poor humanity has become a total wreck, and poor souls are clinging to the sinking ship with hopes that must certainly be disappointed, and when Jesus Christ, appears within hail, willing and able to save, unto the uttermost, there are multitudes who raise all sorts of objections to being saved by him. He is not the sort of Savior they would like to have, or his way of saving sinners is not the one that they approve, and there are all manner of difficulties which they invent, which they imagine to be evidences of their wisdom, but which are really only proofs of their folly and vanity. They prefer to be lost rather than to be saved by such a Savior in such a way as he has ordained.

Men in a dungeon do not take exception to the man who breaks open their prison, and sets them free; men who are dying do not generally object to the physician who is seeking to save their lives; a man who is condemned to death does not quarrel with the king who gives him a free pardon; and there is nothing which shows the strange infatuation of sin more than this, that a man quarrels with his best Friend, puts away from him the plan of salvation which God has made with infinite wisdom, and will not come unto Christ that he may have life. I want, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, to plead with all those in this assembly to whom Christ himself has hitherto been “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense,” those who still “stumble at the Word, being disobedient.”

I shall try, first, to plead with you against your objections; then I will endeavor to plead with you for Christ; and after that I will plead with God's people for you, and ask them to plead with God on your behalf.

I. First, then, let me Plead With You Against Your Objections.

What is it that makes you think so little of Christ, or that makes you think so badly of Christ? Shall I take the words out of your mouth? It may be that one reason of your quarrel is that, Christ's commands seem to you to be so strict. He will have you pluck at

your right eye and cut off your right arm if they would prevent you from entering into life. He lays the axe to the root of the tree, and not only condemns your overt acts of sin, but tells you that a look or a word is sufficient to condemn you. He would have you turn at once from all those pleasant but seductive things which will ruin your soul unless you forsake them. You do not like such strictness as this; if you could be permitted to keep some of your sins, if now and then you might be allowed some sinful indulgence and yet be saved, you would be quite content; but to give up all, to be separated at once from the world and from mammon, is more than you can endure. But, my dear hearer, is this objection of shine founded upon the belief that Christ denies thee anything that is really good and pleasant? Is it a good thing for a man even occasionally to do that which his Maker condemns? Does not God desire your happiness, and would he deny you anything which would be for your highest enjoyment? No, sirs, he is too good to do that; his very name is love. Why, if sin were far your eternal welfare, he would not only permit you to indulge in it, but he would command you to commit it; but knowing it to be a deadly poison, he forbids you to touch it. More fatal than an adder's sting is sin, more terrible than the conflagration which fire devours the peasant's cottage, and then wraps a whole city in its fiery embrace; and God, in commanding you to forsake it, and Christ, in entreating you to leave it, do but consult your real welfare and lasting happiness.

After all, what is the gratification which you derive from sin that it should make you quarrel with Christ for taking it from you? How much sorrow does it bring you afterwards? What pleasant fruit have you had from sin up till now? Are you a happy man

or a happy woman? If you have so long sought the pleasures of sin, and have been in no wise the better for them, wherefore do you still pursue such a profitless counsel? Can it be worth while to sin yourselves into hell? Can there be any supposable pleasure that can ever compensate you for everlasting pain? If so, then choose the pleasures of sin for a season; but rest assured that, for all these things, God will bring you into judgment. But if, on the other hand, it be a wise decision to think more of eternity than you do of time, I pray you be not angry with my Master because he is willing to cure you of your fatal diseases, to pluck from your hand the poisoned cup, and to kill the venomous reptiles that would destroy you. Surely you can see abundant reason why you should drop your objection that Christ's commands are too strict; may the Holy Spirit enable you to drop it, for ever!

Perhaps, however, you say that you do not so much object to the strictness of Christ's commands as to the severity of his threatenings. Well, I freely admit that my loving Master did say some of the sternest things that ever fell from mortal lips; none of his servants have ever uttered more terrible warnings than he did concerning the worm that never dies and the fire that cannot be quenched. But why are you angry with him for speaking thus? Is it not the duty of an honest and sincere friend to give warning of impending danger? Are you such fools as to wish to be flattered with false words concerning your immortal souls and their eternal interests? Do you want men to come to you in soft raiment, and to use dulcet notes to charm you to the pit. Your own hearts will flatter you quite enough without my Master doing it. It is his great love that moves him to speak what you call harsh words; he foresees the ruin that awaits you if you continue in your present course of sin, so be not angry with him because of his faithfulness. It pained him more to say those words than it can ever pain you to hear them; he never uttered a threatening without first feeling its force in his own heart. If you could have looked into his tearful eyes, if you could have gazed upon his sympathetic countenance as he pleaded with men, you would have seen and heard ineffable love speaking in every word that he uttered. O sinners, quarrel not with Christ for warning you of a hell from which he would fain preserve you. Be angry with yourselves, rather, for choosing the path to destruction; be vexed and wrathful with your own sins for dragging you down to ruin; but oh! be not angry with the loving Savior for telling you, once for all, that you cannot escape if you neglect this great salvation. Let your objection to the severity of his threatenings drop for ever; that very severity ought to make you fly to him, and not drive you from him.

Possibly there is one, here who says,

"I do not like the spirituality of Christ's teaching. If he would tell me to take the sacrament, if he would bid me go to such-and-such a church so many times a day I would do it; but he tells me that all these things count for nothing unless I worship God in spirit and in truth, he tells me that I must be born again, and that the Holy Spirit must dwell within me, or else I am none of his. Now sir, all this kind of teaching is too difficult for me to grasp; it is a sort of invisible, impalpable thing, that I can neither see with my eyes nor touch with my hands, and this causes me to stumble at the Word." But sinner, such talk as that is utterly unreasonable. If you will but think seriously for even a minute or two, you must see that no drops of water, no priestly incantations, no cups of wine, no loaves of bread, not even your own prayers can take away your sin.

**"No outward forms can make you clean,
The leprosy lies deep within."**

You know that it is a, spiritual diseases from which you are suffering; so why should you be angry because the great Physician prescribes a spiritual remedy for you? Suppose that, in Christ's teaching, there "are some things hard to be understood," they are well worth understanding, and it is quite possible for you to understand all that is necessary to make you wise unto salvation. Some very simple-minded persons have comprehended the meaning of the gospel message, and have been saved; many a man who never went to school has gone to heaven, and he who is willing to understand the gospel can understand it. Besides, the Holy Spirit is waiting and willing to instruct all who desire to be taught. It was he who inspired the apostle James to write, "If any of you

lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him;" and the Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" It is your own fault if you remain in the darkness of ignorance when the Spirit is ready to illuminate you, and to guide you into all truth; may he graciously shine into your hearts now, and then you will welcome the spirituality of Christ's teaching instead of stumbling at it.

I hardly imagine that there is one here who will raise the objection that the gospel is too simple. Yet we do sometimes get people here who seem to think themselves much too important or too learned to listen to our simple story of the crucified Christ of Calvary; they want something more philosophical, something that ordinary people cannot comprehend, something that they can monopolize and keep to themselves. The gospel is too simple for such as these, who regard themselves as the elite of society; and, sometimes, those who have neither rank nor education get similar whims into their heads. They do not like to be told that they must come to Christ as guilty sinners needing to be washed in his blood, and as helpless sinners needing to receive everything from him. No; many of you want to do something, or to be something, you want to learn something mysterious; and that simple message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"-that plain, understandable gospel, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is too easy, too ABC like, too childish for you. Now, sirs, why do you talk thus foolishly? Suppose the gospel had been of such a philosophical character that it could only have been understood by those who had high intellectual powers, what would have been the use of it the nine persons out of ten ? Suppose it had consisted of some very recondite revelation, how would any of the poor and the simple minded have been saved ? We thank God that the way of salvation is so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." The gospel is so simple that many, who have had but feeble intellects, have been able to understand it, and have been saved by it. I bless God that the gospel we have to preach is the gospel for the illiterate, the gospel for the poor, and that we can still say, as our Master did, "the poor have the gospel preached to them;" and that many of them have, through that gospel, become "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that have him." Do not quarrel with my Master because of the simplicity of the: gospel, lest your pride should hang you on a gallows as high as Haman's.

A more common objection, however, which is raised against Christ is on account of the doctrine that he teaches. Some do not like the doctrine of election, others do not like the doctrine of final perseverance. Some kick at one thing, and some at another, but one doctrine at which many stumble is the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They cannot see how it is possible for Christ to be a Substitute for sinners; they cannot understand how God can punish Christ in the place of men, and that men shall be saved because Christ died in their stead. Well now, suppose I was in a burning building, and a man brought, to the house a fire-escape of a very unusual shape, but one that he assured me had been the means of saving thousands of lives, do you think that I should object to trust myself to it because it was such a peculiar shape? Of course, I should not be so foolish; then why are sinners so foolish as to object to the shape of the fire-escape which God has designed to rescue them from everlasting burnings? What could be better than the divine plan of substitution? God must punish sin, he could not be God unless he did; it is a necessity of his nature that he should hate sin with an infinite hatred, and he must punish it. Yet, as he had loved his people with an everlasting love, how could he better show his love to them and his hatred of sin than by giving up his well-beloved Son to die instead of them, making him, who knew no sin, to be sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him? This seems to me to be the most beautiful thing I ever heard of, and it delights my soul to preach it. There is something so fresh about the gospel that, if I were to preach it every day in the week, I do not think I should grow weary of telling it over and over again. See what wisdom and love are here combined so that we have a just God and yet a Savior; sin punished, and; yet love magnified; mercy free to go about her gracious errands, and yet the faithfulness of God glorified to the highest degree. To my mind, the most glorious work that God ever performed was when God incarnate died that sinners might, live. You surely cannot object to that doctrine of substitution; if you do, and if you persist in that objection, let me tell you that you will perish, for he, who rejects the Savior who died upon the cross brings eternal ruin to his soul.

There are many who raise objections to Christ because of the character of his people. They say that, there are so few of them, and that they are such a poor lot, and they are not all of them what they should be. So, sirs, you object to go to heaven because you think there are so few going there; but if you go to hell, it will be no relief to you to know that many are sharing the agony with you. It seems to me to be wisdom to be saved even if I were the only one, and eternal folly to be damned even though everyone else should be lost with me. So do not raise any objection because of the number of the saved; and as to their being poor, what of that? Would it not be better to go to heaven side by side with a poor old almshouse woman, or a chimney-sweep, or a pauper from the workhouse, than to go to hell with a lord, a duke, or a millionaire? I can always find the best of company among the Lord's poor people. I am glad to be associated with all of you in your various works of faith and labors of love, but I have often learned more about Christ from the poor than from the rich. Besides, if Jesus Christ was willing to be, reckoned amongst the poor, there is no man who needs to be ashamed of his poverty unless it is brought on by his own sin. I will not say more upon that point, for I can scarcely imagine that I have any simpletons in this congregation who are foolish enough to raise such an objection as this.

Some, however, object to Christ because, if they take up with him, they will have to break of their friendship with others. One of

them says, "If I become a Christian, everybody will laugh at me." Well, who minds being laughed at when he is in the right? "But all my old companions will forsake me." It, will be a good thing for you if they do unless they also will join you in following Christ. "But when I go to the workshop or the market, they will point me out as a Christian." I hope they will, or I hope you will be such an out-and-out Christian that they will not need to point you out. I trust that your life will be of such a character that, wherever you go, men will be compelled to say, "Yes, that man is a Christian." Why should you want, as it were, to sneak into heaven by some back way where nobody could see you? There is nothing in Christ of which you have any need to be ashamed; so I hope you will have the grace, to say, "I will take my stand with Christ. If he is despised, I will be despised; if he is spit upon, I will be spit upon; if he bears the cross, I will bear the cross; I am not ashamed of him, and I pray that he may not have reason to be ashamed of me."

Now, though I hope some, of your objections have been removed, I feel that the great objection, with which we began, still remains, -that is, you stumble at Christ's word because he bids you repent, and turn from your sins. There are some of you of whom I almost begin to despair; you continue to come where the gospel is preached, but sometimes you sing the song of the drunkard, or you join the ranks of the profane, or indulge in other sins that I need not name, yet you would not like to give up the hope that you still cherish that some day you will be converted. O sirs, I implore, you to delay no longer! Christ and your sins will never agree, so come to Christ, and leave your sins. However stern may be the conflict, draw the sword, and fling away the scabbard; let it be war to the death with sin, for Christ's sake and your soul's sake. May the Spirit, of God, who alone can separate, you from your sin, proclaim the divorce this very hour, that you may be saved now and saved for ever!

II. Having pleaded with you against your objections, I pray now for power from on high that I may Plead With You For Christ.

I have tried to show you that you have no reason to object to Christ; I want now, just for a minute or two, to remind you that you have many reasons for yielding to him. First of all, let me ask, How is it that you are still alive? If stern justice had dealt with you without the interposition of mercy, you would not now have been living upon the earth. You remember that long and serious illness from which you scarcely expected to recover, yet here you are in robust health and strength; why were you so wonderfully restored? You recollect that time when you were in the river, and you gave up all hope of being rescued, yet you were saved as if by a miracle; why was that? You have had many marvellous escapes from accidents in which others have been killed; why were you spared? It may be, soldier, that the bullets whistled close by your ear, yet you came back from the war unscathed. It may be, sailor, that, your ship was almost gone, or possibly she was a total wreck, and you only escaped to tell the tale; why was that? Well, let this great mercy that you are still alive move you to repent of your sins, and that in Christ as your Savior; as he has been your Preserver, may he also be your Redeemer, your Lord, your All-in-all!

Then let me further ask, How is it that you are in a place where the gospel is being preached? Suppose that to-night, instead of a preacher of the gospel being on this platform, there had come here some stern prophet, like Moses or Elias, and that he had turned to you who are out of Christ, and had said to you, "The day of mercy is over, justice now reigns supreme. Hear, ye, despisers, and wonder and perish; for God will rend you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver you;" what could you have said in arrest of judgment? But this has not in the case; I have not pronounced a curse upon you, I have not spoken a hard word to you; but I have pleaded with you-oh, that the Lord would teach me how to plead with you more earnestly and more effectually!-to turn unto him, and live. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The fact that there is a proclamation of mercy still made to you ought to cause you to weep tears of penitence for your sin, and to move you to turn believingly unto him who died upon the cross, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Then, again, should you not run to Jesus when you remember that he tells you that he will hear your prayers? What! will he hear your prayers, and yet will you refuse to pray unto him? He says to you, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," so will you not believe that your sin and your blasphemy shall be forgiven for his sake? Oh, that you really knew him! But you do, not know how full of love and grace he is. I wish that you could hear his voice saying to you, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Whenever I repeat my Master's words, I feel vexed with myself because I cannot utter them as they ought to be uttered. I know that he must have spoken them with a majesty of tone and with a melting melody of earnestness that must have, put more force in them than I can ever hope to do. He lived for sinners, he died for sinners, he rose again for sinners, he pleads in heaven for sinners, ah, how can you refuse to trust him, and love him, and serve him for ever?

III. Now I close by Pleading With The People Of God For Sinners.

I know that there are, in this assembly, not merely hundreds, but thousands who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is with them that

I am now going to plead. Brethren and sisters in Christ, while I have been talking to those who stumble at the Word, have you not been reminded of what you used to do. I have been thinking of my own experience, for I also stumbled at the Word, being disobedient; and I feel some comfort in preaching to those to whom Christ is “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense,” by reflecting that he who could save me can also save them; and as Christ has quickened you “who were dead in trespasses and sins,” you cannot doubt his power to quicken others.

Probably most of you remember that, when you were dead in sin, there were some who prayed for you. My mother and father and many others prayed for me, and I feel that this is one of the, many reasons why I should pray far others. Most of you had someone who thus cared for you, so ought you not to care for others in a similar fashion I feel sure they you do care for others, there is in your heart an earnest longing to see them brought to the Savior; may I therefore urge you to be more earnest than ever in prayer for the salvation of sinners? I rejoice that we are a praying church, but I am always jealous lest we should lose the spirit of prayer which the Lord has so graciously poured out upon us. Some of us recollect times when we have grip the Angel of the covenant, and we would not let him go until he blessed us. Many of you were given to us in answer to these effectual fervent prayers, and this makes me the more urgent in pleading with you to pray for others.

Nor must you be content with praying for them, for others very earnestly sought to bring you to the Savior, and this encourages me in pleading with you to grow more completely devoted to the blessed work of winning souls for Christ. We must all be up and doing for our glorious Lord and Master. Members of this church, you will be ungrateful for all that the Lord has done for us in the past if you slacken your efforts in the future. In your homes, in your workshops, in your mission-rooms, in your street-preaching, in your tract-distribution, in your Bible-classes, in your Sunday-schools, wherever you are, anywhere and everywhere seek after souls as diligently as the hunter seeks his prey. There are many reasons why you should be earnest in bringing sinners to the Savior. The terrible doom of the lost, is reason enough by itself; but you can find abundant reasons in the back streets and alleys of this great city and in the sin that abounds in the splendor of the West End as much as in the squalor at the East End. Do you want arguments for soul-winning ? Look up to heaven, and ask yourself how sinners can ever reach those harps of gold, and learn that everlasting song unless they have someone to tell them of Jesus who is “mighty to save.” But the best argument of all is to be found in the wounds of Jesus. You want to honor him, you desire to put “many crowns” upon his head, and this you can best do by winning souls for him. These are the spoils that he covets, these are the trophies for which he fights, these are the Jewels that shall be his best adornment. O Christian men and women, if any of you have been negligent of late in your Master’s service, may the Holy Spirit make you more diligent! I would like to make a personal appeal to each one of you to consecrate yourselves and your substance more and more to the advancement of the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ your Lord, so that, you shall live wholly for him. To be a true Christian is something higher and nobler than simply sitting in our pews twice on the Sabbath, or even teaching in a Sunday-school or giving away tracts. It is the laying of one’s whole self upon the altar, offering your body, soul, and spirit as a living sacrifice unto, God, which is our reasonable service, so that, whether we live or whether we die, we shall be the Lord’s, and live or die for him. I do plead with you, Christians,-and I wish I had more power to do it effectually,-for the sake of sinners, to stir yourselves up to pray for them, and to labor for them that, through the mighty working of the Spirit of God, they may no longer stumble at the Word, but may yield themselves to Christ, and be saved.

1 Peter 2:9 Marvellous Light

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“His marvelous light.”-1 Peter 2:9

Everything about a true Christian is marvelous. He is a marvel to himself, and a marvel to all who are round about him. Mere professors-men-made Christians-people who have made themselves Christians by their own free will apart from the Spirit of God, have nothing marvelous about them. You can make professors of that sort by the score, and you can see them dissolve by the score, for what man made, man can unmake, and what is merely natural has its season, like the leaves on the trees; and, by-and-by, it withers away because its time to fade has come. But a true Christian is a God-made man, a twice-born man; and he is a partaker of the divine nature. He is a mass of marvels, for he is dead, and yet he is alive; he is one who lives here, and yet his life has gone away up yonder; he is one who is a citizen of earth, and yet his citizenship is in heaven. He is a true man, but he is more than a man, for God has lifted him up above the level of other men, given him a life which other men do not possess, revealed to him secrets which others do not know, and prepared for him a place into which the ungodly can never enter. The longer he looks at himself, the more he wonders at God’s grace, and at what God’s grace has done, is doing, and will yet do for him. He is a riddle to himself,-an enigma made up of a thousand enigmas. Probably, he does not fully understand all that has happened in any single day

of his life, and there are certain days in which God's dealings with him quite stagger him; and though faith seeth all things to be plain, yet, to mere human reason, things often appear to be in a snarl, and intertwined, and he knows not what to make of them.

Everything about a true Christian is marvelous, as angels know, who often desire to look into the things which concern them., and as he knows who is our Leader and Commander,-who was a Man wondered at, and whose faithful followers are all wondered at still He himself is the greatest marvel of all; and among the many marvels that surround him is the marvelous light in which he dwells. Those of us, who are now in Christ, lived at. one time in the gross darkness of ignorance. I mean even those of us who were brought up in Christian families, and knew the letter of the gospel well. We did not know its inner meaning, and we never felt its power. We were in darkness; though, indeed, there was a certain measure of light which had come to us, which made us responsible for our wrongdoing; yet, still, our heart remained in gross darkness.

And, by-and-by, this darkness was attended with much misery. There came to us a little light, just sufficient to make our darkness visible; so that we perceived the darkness in which we dwelt, and we began to sigh and cry, like prisoners shut up in an underground dungeon, to whom light and fresh air cannot come. Then everything about us seemed to blacken, and the gloom around us deepened. We were in the dark as to our apprehensions of the future. We knew that we must die, yet we feared to die. We clung to life; yet, sometimes, we did not desire even life itself, but said, with Job, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life." The prospect of annihilation would have seemed almost like heaven to us, if we could, thereby, have got rid of our sinful, sorrowful being, clouded with apprehensions of the wrath of God, and of judgments yet to come upon us. I know that I am talking about something, which many of you understand. It was a thick Egyptian night in which you were then enveloped, a darkness that might be felt; and you tried your utmost to escape from it, but you could not, for it was in you. Your soul was in darkness, the light within your spirit was quenched, and all around you seemed to darken, and darken, and darken, as though an eternal midnight were surely descending upon you.

Well, at that time, it happened unto me, and I know that it also happened unto some of you, as it did to Peter, that the angel of the Lord suddenly smote us on our side, and a light shone into our prison-house, and we arose, scarcely knowing what we were doing, but we girded our garments about us, and followed our angelic leader, while the prison gates, which had formerly shut us in, opened before us of their own accord, and we found ourselves to be free, and in broad daylight, too; although, for a time, we. could scarcely realize those blessed facts. We saw what we had never seen before; we enjoyed what we had never even hoped to enjoy. Ay, as in an instant, we possessed what we thought must for ever be denied to us, and we scarcely knew how to contain our joy; but we made our way, as fast as we could, to the house of Christ's disciples who had prayed for us aforetime. And how we gladdened them as we told them the story of God's delivering and enlightening grace, and so showed forth the praises of him who had called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Truly, it was marvelous light to us at that time. Many day have passed since then with some of us, but it is marvelous light still; and as we look upon it now, it is not any less marvelous than it was at the very first. It is of that marvelous light that I am going to speak; and as I tell of my own experience of it, I pray God to grant that some of you, who have never known its power in your own souls, may be made to rejoice in it.

I. I have already touched upon the first point., of which I want now to speak somewhat more fully; that is, This Light Appears Marvelous Because Of Our Former Darkness.

Out of darkness, light comes not. Out of our dark nature no marvelous light ever shone. This light came from above; but how marvelous it was! Imagine, if you can, the condition of a man who has lived all his lifetime in a coal mine. Suppose him never to have had a brighter light than his flickering candle; and then, after a while, to be brought up the shaft, and to see the brightness of the sun at mid-day. I can scarcely picture his amazement; you may fancy what it would be like, but you can hardly realize it. Or suppose a worse case still, that of one born blind, who had heard of a thing called light, but who could never imagine what it was like till a skillful oculist took away the film that was blinding him, and his eye was opened so that he could perceive the light. It would be very difficult to describe all the emotions of one who had never enjoyed the light before; but, certainly, such a person would be full of wonder and amazement. It would be, indeed, marvelous light to him.

You who have never been converted, who never were regenerated, do not know any more about the light of God than the man in the coal mine knows about the sun, or that man born blind knows about the light of day. Perhaps you talk a good deal about it, and, possibly, you write about it; and you form judgments about it; and they are just as wise, and just as accurate, as the verdict of blind men would be concerning colors of which they have no conception. You say, sometimes, concerning the gospel, "It is all nonsense; there is no such thing as the light of truth,"-just because you never saw any, which is a very poor method of argument. I once heard a man say, "I have lived in the world sixty years, and I never had the apprehension of anything spiritual." When I looked at his face, and especially at his red nose, I thought that what he said was very likely to be true; but I did not, therefore, conclude that there was nothing spiritual because he had not seen it. Any blind man might say, "I have lived so many years, and I have never seen the sun, so there is not any;" but you would not accept negative evidence of that sort. So, my dear friend, whenever you are

going to speak about something which you do not know anything about, just keep silence, and let somebody else talk who does know. If you never knew what it was to be converted,-if you never felt the divine life go coursing through your soul,-if you never had the divine light flashing in the midst of the darkness of your spirit, pray speak with bated breath if you speak at all; and when you are going to write one of those famous articles of yours, just say to yourself, "Perhaps I had better take some subject that I do understand for this I do not know, as I never had the light." If you ever had received it, then you might comprehend something of the wondrous change which conversion makes in a man, and you would agree with us that the light of the gospel is indeed marvelous light.

II. Secondly, we perceive that it is marvelous light When We Consider Its Origin.

Our text tells us that it is God's light: "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." What is God's light? Can you imagine how that light existed before he made the sun or the moon? Light shone on this world before the sun and the moon were created, for light comes not from them except as God has stored it up in them, or continually supplies it to them. But there is always light in God. He is the great Light-Creator; yet I never read that the light which God created in the world was called his marvelous light. God made the light, but it was not his light even then. There is another light which is natural to him,-a light of brightness and knowledge, clear and heavenly,-a light such as mortal man attains not unto except as the supreme gift of the grace of God shall visit him. It is this light which rests upon the people of God. There is a light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, but God's marvelous light comes only to his chosen, and gladdens only those whose eyes have learned to look to Jesus, and who find their souls confidence and salvation in him who is the very Light of God.

"Oh!" asks someone, "can a man have this light? I do not believe it." Again I tell you, my friend, that I did not expect you would believe it. He who has never had any experience of it may well doubt its existence; but he who has ever had the light of God shining into his soul is as conscious of becoming a new man,-as conscious of seeing after another fashion than he ever saw before,- as a blind man would be if his eyes were suddenly opened. I know that this world is not to me now the world that it once was. All things were then seen, if seen at all, as in a mist so thick that I took the transient to be the eternal, and I highly prized trifles while I despised that which was most precious. I put light for darkness, and darkness for light; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; for my foolish heart was darkened, and I knew it not. But, now, such a change has come to me that all things have become new; and in speaking of my own experience, I am also telling of the experience, not merely of some of you, but of hundreds of you upon whose hearts the divine light has come changing all things around you. They are not what they seem to others to be, for they are all now seen in the clear white light of God himself, and you know even as you are known.

III. Thirdly, this is marvelous light, Because Of Its Excellence Over All Other Light, this light, which God gives to his people, is far superior to the light which comes of education, or of meditation, or which can be produced by any human effort.

When you have gone through a street lighted with the electric light, I have no doubt you have smiled to see, side by side with it, the gas lamp with its little yellow attempt at showing that it could not shine. But how bright was the electric light at the side of it! Yet, if it is left to burn at mid-day, how dim it seems compared with the sun; and how the sun must smile at all our attempts to light up this world without him! Well, now, the best light that a man ever gets by his own unaided effort is no better than that of a candle, or, if you will, than flickering gaslight; but the light-the marvelous light, is the illumination caused by the Holy Ghost shining into the inmost recesses of the soul in full meridian splendor. It is the light of God, and there is no other light that is like that. He who has but a spark of that light may not know so much about some things as the worldly-wise man knows, but he is well acquainted with many things to which the other man is an utter stranger. Cowper said, as some of you may remember, when contrasting the infidel Voltaire with the poor, godly lace-maker, she-

**"Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew."**

Perhaps you smile, and think within yourself,-"That is not knowing much." Ah! but, to know the Bible to be truer, to live in that Bible truth, and to have it all round about you, peopling the air, filling your own soul, filling earth and heaven with wondrous things that the spirit's eye can see,-this is truly marvelous. He who sees even the most of this world has but the same sort of eyes that birds and beasts have; but he who knows his Bible to be true, and who realizes the truth of it in his soul, has another set of eyes that can peer into another realm altogether. He sees spiritual things, and around him there shines a light which is indeed marvelous.

IV. Fourthly, this is marvelous light Because Of What It Reveals, for that man, who has the light of God shining in his soul

sees that which is invisible.

“O utterer of paradoxes!” cries someone. Yes, but I cannot otherwise express the truth. This illuminated man sees God, whom ordinary human eyes can never see. He looks back into the ages past and gone, and he sees God making all the worlds that ever existed; while those, who are reckoned as wise men, but who are without that light, spin ingenious but worthless theories about how those worlds grew. These men have such wonderful theories that it really seems surprising that they do not themselves make a few worlds, since they profess to have found out so many ways of making them. But the opened eye sees “that the worlds were framed by the word of God,” and it sees God’s hand in all the histories of all the centuries,-and it even sees God’s hand in the things recorded in the newspaper that most startle us. The man, who has his eyes opened, sees heaven and hell, eternity and everlasting life. He sees them,-not with dull optics, like these eyes of ours which, after all, do not really see, for it is the soul behind the eye that really looks out through that window, and perceives what is to be seen; but, in this marvelous light of God, the soul sees without any optics and without any glass; it has flung away its telescope, for it has come so near the object upon which it is gazing that there is no need of any intervening medium. It walks and talks with the angels; and, what is far better, it speaks with God himself. This is indeed marvelous light which has made us to see the things that, to ordinary mortal eyes, are invisible.

And it is such marvelous light because it enables us to see them so clearly. To the man who has this light, God does not appear to be sitting like the heathen Jove is represented, upon a distant Olympus, and sleeping while the world is troubled. He who lives in this marvelous light sees God here, there, everywhere; within him, and about him, he feels the presence of God, he has an immediate consciousness that God is with him,. And, better still, such a man as that sees God to be reconciled by the death of his Son, he sees God to be his Father, for he is made a partaker of the divine nature, “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” It is indeed marvelous light to see God that enables us thus.

A further characteristic of this light is that it enables us to see right into the heart of things. By his world’s light, you only see that such-and-such a thing is, you see the appearance it presents; but this light lets you see into the innermost heart of truth and, what is better still, it brings the truth right into your soul. By this light, you not only see the doctrine of election, but you also know yourself to be elect. You see the great truth of redemption, and you know yourself to be redeemed. By this light, you see regeneration, and you feel the pulsings of the life of God within your spirit; and, though mortal eye hath not seen heaven, neither hath the ear of man heard its rapturous harmonies, nor has the true conception of heaven entered into the heart of man, yet the Spirit of God brings heaven down to us, and raises us up to heaven, so that we sit among the heavenly in Christ Jesus; and “our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” All this proves that it is a glorious light, does it not?

The man, who has not this light, may believe there is a God. Yes; and he believes that there is a Chain of Tartary, but he does not care about him. He believes that there is a heaven, but it never enters as a factor into his life to operate upon him. He believes that there is such a thing as sin, and he says, “Oh, yes, yes, yes! we are all sinners, no doubt.” But he, who has this marvelous light, sees sin so as to tremble at it, and to hate it. It is a present thing with him which he abhors; he also sees the atoning blood of Jesus, and knows that, by it, he is cleansed from sin, and he rejoices in this as a blessed matter of fact.

“Oh! “says someone, “that is all fancy.” Of course it is only a matter of fancy to you; did I not tell you so when I began my discourse? To a blind man, a picture by Kaphael or Titian is all fancy. You say to him, “How splendidly the colors are laid on there! Do you see that wonderful effect of light and shade?” but your wise blind man says, “I do not believe a word of it.” Of course he does not; we cannot hope that he will do so all the while that he is blind; and, in like manner, he who knows nothing of God’s marvelous light, will ask, “Who is he that bears witness concerning this strange thing?” “Well, sir, he is one among a great number who have as much right to be believed as you have, for he is as honest a man as you are” Hundreds of us, thousands of us, can bear witness concerning the phenomena of grace,-the mysteries of the new creation,-the putting into a man of a new life,-and we have as much right to be believed as gentlemen who bear witness about the backbone of a fish, and who would feel insulted if we said that they told us lies. We have never examined their fish, but we believe their testimony, because we know they have studied the question of which they speak. They have never looked into our inner life, but they have as good reason to believe our testimony as we have to believe theirs; and this is our witness,-that there is such a thing as God’s marvelous light, that the light of divine grace has broken in upon our souls, and brought us to see a new heaven and a new earth, and to live in a new creation altogether, waiting for the time when Christ shall come to take our body, as he has already taken our soul, into that new world, and make us perfect with himself for ever.

V. Fifthly, this light is marvelous, Because Of What It Produces. I have already shown you its marvelous character in that it reveals a new world to a man, a world he once despised,-and it makes him value it, and live worthy of it.

Thus it produces a great change in that man, for it makes him love the things he once hated, and hate the things he once loved. I heard someone say, “Take care of Number One, is a capital rule. Self-love is the first law of nature.” But, when this marvelous light breaks in upon a man, that law of nature ceases to operate, and he says, “No; the first law of my new nature is that I should honor

my God, that I should do that which is right, that which is just, that which is true, that which is loving, that which will be like the life of Jesus Christ my Lord." If you carefully watch that man, you will see him beginning to give up many of the pursuits that once delighted him. Perhaps you will say, "Poor man, he is denying himself;" but he will answer, "No, I am not. I could not enjoy those things now; in fact, I hate them. They were very pleasurable to me once; but, then, I was a blind man. Now that I can see, they give me no pleasure." Such a man, before his conversion, may have enjoyed a spicy song which had just a little touch of what should not have been in it; but, now, if he hears the sound of it in the street, he is ready to stop his ears, for he cannot bear it. "Sing us one of the songs of Zion," he says now;-the very songs that he used to call "Methodistic cant, Presbyterian hypocrisy," and all sorts of evil names. There are new tastes developed now that he has the new life within him.

If this were the proper time, I could tell some remarkable stories of marvelous changes that have been wrought in so many people whom I know. I am sure they would not recognize themselves if they were to meet their old selves as they were five years ago; or, if they did, they would cross the road, and get on the other side of the street, so as not to come into contact with their old selves. They would say, "Thank you, no; I would rather not walk with you. You are not good company for me. I hoped you were dead and buried, and I never wanted to see you again. I am dead with Christ, I have been buried with Christ, I have risen from the dead in him, and I am a new creature in him," This marvelous light makes a wonderful change in a man's character; that is to say, if it really comes to him; because, you know, there are some who go into the enquiry-room, and kneel down, and cry a good deal, and all the good that can possibly do is to take away some of the superfluous fluid from the brain, for there is no heart in their repentance; it is mere excitement, and nothing else. But it is a very different thing to have the light of God,-to have the Holy Ghost really shed abroad in the heart. Do not any of you be satisfied with saying, "I am converted. Happy day!" Mind that you are converted; be sure that it is heart-work, soul-work, and that the Spirit of God has wrought it,-not the preacher,-not an excited evangelist,-not a book you read;-but that God himself has come to you, and made you a new creature in Christ Jesus; for, unless this is the case, I shall not be able to speak of the change as I have spoken, and which, to my intense joy, I have seen in hundreds, and in thousands, who have passed from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan into the kingdom of Christ. One change that always takes place, as the result of receiving this light, is great joy. The joy is not always as great in all to whom the light comes; but, still, it does bring great joy wherever it shines. Talk of true happiness; it is nowhere to be discovered till the light eternal breaks in upon the mind and heart; and, then, heaven has begun below. Some of us have our full share of pain of body and depression of spirit; yet, in our worst moments, we would not change places with the happiest worldlyling that lives. Not even when most depressed and weary, would we exchange our position, even for a minute, for that of the greatest emperor in the world who does not know that Inner Light. I can truly say, and so can many of you,-"I would not change my blest estate For all that earth calls good or great; And while my faith can keep her hold, I envy not the sinner's gold."

VI. Lastly, it is marvelous light, Because It Will Never Go Out.

As it is the light of God, the devil cannot blow it out. If all the devils in hell were to try to blow out one single spark that is in a true believer's heart, they might puff till they died of puffing, but they would never put that spark out. God has lit it, and they cannot quench it. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." If you do not keep this everlasting life, it is quite clear that you never had it. If you really have eternal life, it must be eternal life, and it shall abide with you forever.

But, what is better, not only shall you never lose it, but it will continually increase. If you have God's marvelous light, though it seems only like starlight now, it will be like moonlight soon; then it will be daylight, and soon it will be noontide; for, to whomsoever God has given a little of this divine light, more is sure to follow, for the light of God, which is given to us by the Holy Ghost here, is the very light of heaven; it has only to be fully developed. You have all the elements of eternal happiness within your own spirit now, if the Holy Ghost has truly enlightened you, and made your character like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. As to death,-well, at the moment of death, you will leave your body behind, and you will leave with it all tendency to sin. The root of eternal blessedness is in you now, if the Lord has really looked upon you in love, and you have looked to Christ by faith. You have the upspringing plant of grace; some of you have leaves and buds; so, all that will happen to you in heaven is that the buds will open, and the flower will be perfected, but it is all there now. Christ said, "I give"-not, "I will give," but "I give unto my sheep eternal life." You have eternal life if you believe in him; the same life that will develop in glory is in you now.

"I did not know that," says someone. Well, did you think that you were going to be born again a second time? That can never be. To be born again, is mentioned in Scripture; but to be born again, and again,-I never did read of that in the Word of God; though I have heard certain people talk about falling from grace and being restored; as if they could be born again, and again, and again, and again, no end of times; but there is nothing like that in the Bible. The great change takes place once, and that change is final. If you are born again, you receive the life that you will live in heaven. Just think of this; Christ has gone to heaven to prepare a place for

you, but he has left within your bosoms now the life that is to be in heaven. Pray God to develop that life; entreat the Lord to increase it. Think a great deal of it; value it highly; suffer not your body, which is its temple, to be dishonored by sin. God dwelleth in you; the life divine is within you; so, I beseech you, live as those should live who are not only heirs of heaven, but who have the life of heaven already abiding in their hearts. Come, my brethren and sisters, let us rejoice and be glad as we thus think of this marvelous light which is to be our light for ever and ever; for, up there, the Lord God giveth them light, and he giveth light to us even now; and it is his light, and there cannot be any light better than his; so, in it let us rejoice, and magnify his name.

I wish that some here, who have not this light, could be set a-longing for it. Mr. Bunyan says that, even if we do not invite the sinner to come to Christ, if we spread a good table before him, it makes his mouth water, and that is the next best thing to an invitation. Does any poor soul begin to say, "I do not know anything about that light; I am not going to deny that it may exist, but I should be a fool if I were to go upon negative evidence; I wish I did know it"? Well, you may know, it. Do your soul this piece of justice-go and pray to God to make you know it. Go and bow before him, and say, "Lord, if thou dost indeed reveal thyself to men by thy Spirit in Christ Jesus, reveal thyself to me." He will hear you; I am sure of that. Even if he did not, there would be this reflection on your mind, that, having listened to the testimony of one who has no motive for deceiving you, you have at least given enough credence to it to try it, and test it; and you will feel all the easier in your mind even if the experiment should fail. But it will not fail; for never did a soul, in honest, guileless. heartiness, seek the light and love of God, and seek in vain; nor will you do so. Go, then, to God through Jesus Christ, and this marvelous light shall break in upon you. God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

1 Peter 2:24 Our Lord's Substitution

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"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."-1 Peter 2:24.

Peter had almost incidentally mentioned his Master's name; and, having done so, he felt that he must enlarge upon that theme, for the name of Christ was very dear to him. He seems again to hear that thrice-repeated question ringing in his ears, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and he can still answer, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." So, having mentioned his Master's name, he feels that he must say something about him. Oh, that we also may have such love to Christ that a touch of his hand, or a glance of his eye, may suffice to detain us! May we never be weary of hearing about him! May his name exercise a sacred fascination upon us! May it cheer us in life and in death, and be the theme of our song throughout eternity!

There is, perhaps, a special reason why Peter wrote, in this place, concerning the vicariousness of Christ's death. He had just been alluding to another aspect of that death. In the 21st verse, he had said, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." "Ah!" thought Peter, "they may, from my mentioning his death by way of example, draw the inference that Christ only died as our Exemplar. They may say"-as, alas! so many in modern times have done,-"that the death of Christ was merely the completion of his life, and that he is simply the Savior of men by setting before them a higher ideal of what men should be than they would otherwise have had." The Holy Spirit forewarned Peter of this danger, and taught him how to avert it, in the best possible way, by adding this most significant sentence, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." It is quite true that Christ is our Exemplar, but no man can ever follow Christ's example until he has first believed in him as his Substitute and Savior. Christ did not come merely to be an example. When we are dead in trespasses and sins, of what use can his example be to us? It is life that dead men need, and Christ came to bring us life. In our natural state, we are condemned already, because we have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. Of what use would an example of perfect innocence be to those who are already condemned? None whatever; but Jesus comes to bring us pardon bought with his own precious blood, that then, through gratitude to him, we might begin a new life, and then his example might be of service to us. It behoves us, first and foremost, to view Christ as the Sin-bearer; for, if we do not receive him in that capacity, we have missed eternal life altogether, and all our professed imitation of Christ will be but mere empty formality, which will fall far short of the righteous requirements of God.

We are going, therefore, to meditate upon the great central doctrine of our Lord's substitution. I shall have nothing new to say upon it; but I find that "the old, old story" has an endless charm for believers, and I wish to tell it out again in such a way that, if it should have been hitherto unknown to any hearer, he may give heed to it, and, this very hour, find peace and pardon through believing in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. First, I shall speak upon the blessed fact mentioned in our text: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" and then, secondly, I shall call your attention to some points of practical instruction which may be found in this blessed fact.

I. First, then, let us think about The Blessed Fact Itself.

That fact is, that Christ himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. This fact is the sum and substance, the pith and marrow of the whole gospel; so, lay hold of it; feed upon it, and live by it. God, of old, in infinite justice, determined that sin must be punished, but he also determined to save his people, whom he had given to his Son by an everlasting covenant. How could both these results come to pass? Divine wisdom devised the plan of substitution; and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man, that he might be able to be the Substitute for sinners. It was fitting that he should take that position, for he had, by his covenant with the Father, assumed the place of Head of the race of mankind,-the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. The people, whom he had chosen as his own, were all represented in him; therefore, he was fully qualified to stand in their stead, and to serve and suffer in their room and place.

And he did so, first, because the sins of God's people were laid upon him. What saith Isaiah? "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." If you carefully read through that 53rd of Isaiah, you will notice that, several times, in so many distinct words, the sin of Christ's people is said to have been transferred to him, and borne by him. I remember, once, hearing a certain divine assert that sin could not be transferred; but it was, for Holy Scripture again and again declares that it was. "Blessed is the man," says David, "unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." The man has committed iniquity, but it is not imputed to him because it has been imputed to Christ Jesus, his Substitute, who stood in that sinner's stead, and took upon himself that sinner's sin. In vision, I can see the Christ of God coming forth from the Father, bearing upon his shoulders the enormous load of his people's guilt. It well nigh crushes him with its awful weight, but he presses on. He is himself perfectly innocent; but sins not his own are reckoned to him, for "he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many."

In due time, in consequence of this imputation, our blessed Master bore our sins in another sense, namely, by answering for them at the bar of God. As Joseph Hart sings,-

**"Came at length the dreadful night;
Vengeance with its iron rod Stood, and with collected might
Bruised the harmless Lamb of God,"-**

because he was the Sin-bearer. Christ thou appeared with his people's sin upon him; so, when divine justice came to punish sin, and found it upon Christ, it arrested him, and bruised him so sorely that he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. Justice took him off, like a malefactor, to the hall of judgment, and there was no one to declare his innocence, and to plead for his release. He was brutally scourged, and given over to the Roman soldiers, that they might treat him as they would; for nothing was thought of him, even as he had made himself of no reputation. In the hall of the Praetorian guards, all manner of insults were heaped upon his blessed person. Then they took him out to the hill of doom; they nailed him to the transverse wood, they lifted him up on high, they fixed his cross in the earth, and there they let him die, hanging by his hands and feet. Thus was he, "his own self," bearing, "in his own body on the tree," the sins of all his people, and, all the while, his soul was being tortured with sufferings that cannot be described in human language. We must be perfectly pure, as he was, before we can even begin to understand how sin must have affected him. We must be perfectly happy, as he was, before we can comprehend how he suffered when he was enduring the wrath of God for our sakes, and was forced to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That was because he was bearing the consequences of our sin. He took the sin upon him; and, therefore, he also took the sorrow, which resulted from the sin. He took the place of the guilty, so he must suffer the penalty which they had incurred; and the text tells us, as a matter of fact, that he, his own self, bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

Before we pass on, let us draw the right inference from this blessed fact; namely, that, if Christ bore our sins, we need not bear them;-nay, we do not bear them. If, as a believer in Jesus, I know that he bore my sin, it cannot be on my back and also on his. It cannot be that he took the sin upon himself, yet left it upon me. A thing cannot be in two places at one time; so, if he bore my sin, I am clear. Again is verified the text I quoted to you just now: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." How can he impute it to him when he has already imputed it to Christ, and caused Christ to suffer in that man's stead? So there, again I say, is the very core of salvation, the heart of the gospel,-Christ suffering in the room, and place, and stead of all who believe in him.

Note carefully the words of the text. It saith, not only that Christ bore our sins; but, from the full, unqualified expression that is used, it is implied that he bore them all: "Who his own self bare our sins;" that is to say, whatever sins a believer has ever committed, or ever will commit, Christ bore them on the tree. Sins original and sins natural; sins actual and practical; sins of thought, and word, and deed; heinous sin,-blasphemies, uncleannesses; those that are thought to be the minor sins,-evil imaginations, hasty words; I will not go on with the list, for time would fail me to get to the end of it; but when you have mentioned all the sins you can think of, I can still say that the text covers them all: "Who his own self bare our sins"-not some of them, not the greater ones, not the lesser ones to the exclusion of the greater, but all our sins,-in his own body on the tree."

"Covered is our unrighteousness,

From condemnation we are free.”

And the text, from its unguardedness, teaches us that Christ completely bore all our sins: “Who his own self bare our sins.” They were all laid upon him, and he did effectually carry them away, and make an end of them. He bore them “to the tree,” says the margin, and crucified them there; he carried them, upon his shoulders, up to the cross, and there, once for all, annihilated them, so that they have ceased to be. O my soul, rejoice as thou dost look upon the Sin-bearer, who made a full, complete, and absolutely acceptable atonement, finished transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, as it was foretold that the Messiah would do. In this, we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

The text also implies, from its being free from any kind of limitation, that Christ alone bore them: “Who his own self bare our sins.” There was no Peter, or James, or John, to help him in his hour of deepest need; nor did an angel tread that winepress side by side with him. Alone and single-handed, our great Champion entered the arena, and won the victory for us. Let this be one of the chief articles in our creed henceforth and for evermore. I say to the man who calls himself a priest, “No, sir, I do not want any absolution from you, even though you may be a lineal descendant of the apostles,-through Judas Iscariot,-for I am perfectly satisfied with the forgiveness which I have obtained by faith in Christ Jesus. You say that you can offer for me the unbloody sacrifice of the mass in order to help in the putting away of my sin; but I need nothing of the kind, for Christ, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” On that tree, he himself said of his atoning sacrifice, “It is finished.” “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Let these words roll out like a thunder peal, and let all men know that there is no need of any addition to that sacrifice,-either of penance, or purgatory, or human merit, or priestly power,-nor can there be any repetition of it. Love’s redeeming work was done by Christ alone, and in him we rest, and in him alone.

The sweetness, however, of this passage lies in the fact that Christ bore our sins. Come, brethren and sisters, can we all say that,-“Christ bore our sins”? I am not now talking of the general aspect of the work of Christ, for it had a special aspect to believers, and the full blessings of the atonement only come to them. “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Can we say, then, “Who his own self bare our sins”? Let me put it in the singular, and pass it round to each one here; can you say, my friend, “Who his own self bare my sins in his own body on the tree”? My sins, so many and so heavy, and once so terrible to me,-he bore them, bore them all, and I am clear, and free from every charge because he bore them. This is being saved. I trust Christ, and know, in consequence, that he bore my sins,-then I am saved. How many of you are thus saved? May the heart-searching Spirit of God go from soul to soul, and constrain you to give a true answer; and if you cannot reply in the way we wish, give the other answer, and say, “I do not know that Christ did bear my sins.” When you get home, write that down, and look at it: “I am not trusting in Christ. I have no part nor lot in him. My sin is pressing upon me, but I have no saving interest in Christ.” I think that, if you were to write that down legibly with pen and ink, and then sit down a little while, and think it over, it might be much more useful to you than any word of mine. “No, sir,” you say, “I should not like to write that.” But, surely, you may write what is true. A man ought not to be afraid to know the truth about his spiritual state, nor yet to write it for his own eye to see. I do not ask you to print it in the newspaper or in a book, but just to put it down for your own information: “I am without Christ; I am an unbeliever; I am still in my sins. If I die as I am, I shall be lost.” Oh, may God grant that you may see your true condition, and feel it, and not rest until you can say, “Now I have believed, and I know that Christ, his own self, bore my sins in his own body on the tree.” If you are trusting him, you know that he did so. Your faith is the evidence of your election, and the proof of your redemption; and if you do but simply and completely trust him, he has saved you, and you may rejoice in the fact that, in the sight of God, you are fully and freely forgiven.

II. Now, secondly, I am to call your attention to Some Points Of Practical Instruction which may be found in the blessed fact mentioned in our text. I always like to be as practical as possible in my preaching; and I think there are, in this great truth of our Lord’s substitution, some practical lessons which we shall do well to learn.

The first is this. See the self-sacrifice of Christ, and imitate it.

Jesus Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He was not constrained to do it. He might still have remained in heaven, sharing in all his Father’s glory, for ever; but, out of love and pity for us, he descended from his divine eminence, veiled his Godhead in our humanity, and came to earth among the sons of men that he might bear his people’s sins up to the tree, and away from the tree. Can anybody measure the self-denial of the Savior in acting thus? Is it possible for us to estimate the stoop of love, and the amazing suffering which he endured for us? Then, let us learn from, him what self-sacrifice means. I do not believe in our service for Christ always being pleasant. If we are truly his servants, there will sometimes be a galling of the shoulders by the yoke of our servitude, and we shall delight to be thus galled for his sake. Has any Christian man ever given what he ought to give until he reaches the pinching point when he has to deny himself in order that he may give to God’s cause? Has a Christian man ever done for his Savior what he ought to do, if he has not come to the point of real self-denial in it? To go to the Sabbath-school class when it is a pleasing duty, is all very well; but, in the service of our Master, we ought to keep on at such work, even if the brain should be

weary, and if, in such trying weather as we often have, it should seem to be almost impossible to get through it. I have sometimes heard it said, "Oh, but the Lord cannot expect us to do that! There are two ways of looking at that expression. I do not expect much from some people; but from those for whom Christ died, from those whose sins he bore, we ought to expect anything and everything of which they are capable, if they act up to the measure of their sacred obligations. Many servants of our Lord Jesus Christ have been content to be poor, or have been satisfied to abide in a very lowly station in life, or have been willing to go to distant lands, and suffer great privations and hardships; and the secret of their willingness to deny themselves has been that each of them could truly say, "Christ denied himself for my sake; he bore my sin on Calvary's cross; and if his blessed and perfect shoulders could bear the load of my sin, shall I not bear the far lighter load of his service? Shall I not take his yoke upon me, and learn of him, as he has bidden me do?" Are you worried by the little troubles of the family? Are you getting tired of trying to bear a testimony for Christ in the workshop? Are you becoming weary, my brother, or my sister? Then remember what Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Think how he bore your sins, and from this moment feel, "I will count self-denial to be a luxury if I may but exhibit to him my love, and let him see that I am not altogether oblivious of that which he endured for me." Come, beloved, can you not be stirred up to some nobler form of love than you have ever before known? Is there not something more that you could do, or something more that you could suffer, by way of proving your love to him who, his own self, bore your sins in his own body on the tree? In the next place, see what abasement there was in Jesus Christ bearing our sins. Up, up, up, our soaring thoughts may fly, but we can never reach the height of his magnificence in the eternal world with the Father; yet down, down, down he comes, till he is a poor man,-nay, more, a despised man, a suffering man, a condemned man, a crucified man, a dead man, lying in a borrowed tomb! That is a wondrous stoop, but the greatest condescension of all is indicated by that expression in our text "Who his own self bare our sins." Well, then, what say we concerning this abasement of our Lord? Why, surely, that we ought to be ready to be despised and reproached for Christ's name's sake. I think we get off wonderfully easy, in these days, compared with what some Christians have had to bear for Christ's sake and the gospel's; yet, in days gone by, some of us have know-n what it was to have all manner of evil spoken against us falsely, and to be reviled again and again for Christ's sake. It is a good thing when a Christian minister feels that he has given up his character and everything else to Christ, so that, if men choose to slander and abuse him he will bear it all so long as he may thereby but honor Christ, and keep his conscience clean. If you are a Christian, you must expect to be dragged through all the muddy pools that your persecutors can find. If you do even a little wrong, they will magnify it a thousand times; and if you do no wrong at all, the most blameless' life will not enable you to escape from the envenomed tongue of slander. If that is your lot, just bear it; be willing to be Christ's servant, to be, as the apostle Paul was, Christ's branded slave, bearing in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Say, to your Lord, as Thomas Haweis wrote,-

**"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproaches, and welcome shame,
If thou remember me."**

I know that some of you young people get dreadfully frightened at the ugly epithets which have been applied to you. Perhaps you say that you do not like to be ridiculed because you are a Christian. Why, you ought to be proud of such treatment! Just adopt the very nickname that they give you, and let it be to you what the stars and garters are to the nobility of England; bear it as the insignia of a Knight Companion of the Cross of Christ. The Lord grant you grace, in this matter, to account the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt!

Those two things are, I think, clearly enough set forth in the text-our Savior's self-sacrifice' and self-abasement; and it is equally dear that those who would be his followers should imitate him, as far as they can, in both these respects.

Notice, next, our Savior's willingness, as it is set forth in the text. "Who his own self bare our sins." There was, in his self-sacrifice and self-abasement, the utmost spontaneity, freeness, voluntariness. Nobody pressed him to it; he his own self did it, and he did it of himself, unprompted, unsolicited. No sinners followed at his heels, crying, "Blessed Savior, bear our sins for us." No necessity, except the wondrous love' of his own great heart, constrained him to be a Sin-bearer. He could truly say, "Lo," I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." He told his disciples that he had a baptism to be baptized with, and that he was straitened until it was accomplished. He loved us so much that he could not be content without dying for us. Now, mark, this is the way in which we ought to serve God,-freely, cheerfully, gladly. I dislike, above all things, that kind of holiness into which a man has to be flogged, for it could only be a mockery of holiness; I loathe that generosity which only flows through much pumping, and that work for Christ which results from such a remark as this, "You must do it, somebody will think ill of you if you don't." Bear your fruit to Christ freely; do not need to have it forced, like hothouse grapes. Grow on the wall, and bear your fruit freely. The best juice that comes from the grape is that which leaps from it on the first pressing; and the best grace in the world, the best piety, the best virtue, the best service, is that which a man freely yields to Christ and his cause. We say that one volunteer is worth five pressed men in the defense of one's country, and I am sure that he is. The mercenary is but a poor tool compared with the noble citizen who grasps his sword to defend his hearth and home; and, in the service of Christ, troops of slaves may be urged

forward, but they never do anything for him. It was said, of the Persians, that, whenever they went to battle, you could hear the sticks of the captains who were beating the soldiers to make them fight; but they won no victories. Look, on the other hand, at the brave Spartan; he was glad at the very thought of fighting, he lived in it. He was a born lion, and he rushed to the fray, delighted to be in the fiercest conflict. He was the man to win battles, and so is it with the Christian, to whom the service of God is his holiday,- his holy day. To serve the Lord Christ, in any way that is possible to him, is his highest ambition. He does not wish to be excused; he desires to be invited. As the eagles gather to the place where the carcass is, so do men of this stamp gather to the spot where the service of God can best be carried on. Leap to the front, Christians, leap to the front, and let no one hold you back; for, if Christ willingly suffered for us, we ought willingly and gladly to serve him.

I ask you, next, to notice the actualness of our Lord's substitution:

Who his own self-what? Proposed to bear our sins? Oh, no; that rendering will not do! We must try again. "Who his own self promised to bear our sins"? No, no; that is not correct. "Who his own self began to bear our sins, and then became tired of the task"? No; yet I have read, in somebody's book, something very like that. "Who his own self talked about bearing our sins"? "Who his own self had a good word to say in commendation of somebody else who would bear our sins"? No; none of these are correct readings, for our Lord's substitution is something actual and real. He bore our sins, and bore them, not according to fiction or imagination, but "in his own body,"-in his own hands, his own feet, his own side,- "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." The bearing of our sins was as real as our sins themselves were.

Well, then, let us take care that we render to the Lord Jesus whatever actual service we can in return for his actual sacrifice for us.

Did you ever hear a very thrilling sermon or a very stirring speech about serving the Lord; and, as you listened to it, did you keep on saying to yourself, "Yes, I will do that; I will excel others in earnestness; I will make great sacrifices for the cause of God; I will be very prayerful; I will be one of the most devoted Christians who ever lived"? So you talked, and patted yourself on the back and said, "Well done!" but you never did anything, yet you gave yourself the credit for doing it. I have heard of a man, who owed great deal of money; and when a bill became due, he got it renewed, and then he came away, and said, "There, that is all right now;" and when the bill became due again, he did the same, yet he never paid sixpence of the debt, but he always walked away, and seemed as pleased as if it had been paid. We have far too many professing Christians of that kind; they are great at moving and seconding resolutions, and making fine speeches, but nothing ever comes of them. Now, in our Lord's case, there was actual, solid service and suffering for us; so, do not try to put him off, brother, with good determinations, and with the repetition of those determinations again and again. Come, now, for the love we bear his name, let us really get at actual service for him. If it is only the teaching of one poor little boy to read his Bible, it will be far better than talking about what we mean to do, even if we utter it with commanding eloquence which might move the nations. To drop two-pence into the offering box will be better than writing a fine essay on liberality, and never giving anything. To breathe one real fervent prayer to God will be better than a long parade of your own excellencies, or a doleful talk about the sad declension of the church, and I know not what beside. There is nothing that can take the place of real service for Christ. We have a great deal of talk from some people who do very little work. I sometimes wish that those who write me long epistles about various plans and schemes, and who draw out elaborate details of what could be done if everybody gave so much, would only give their share, and not make any plans at all. We can all make plans when we want them, but a more important thing is to take our share and to do our part in the actual work. If we all do that, some of us will be following our Lord better than we are now doing.

My last observation is this: Notice the strong personality of our Lord's substitution: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He did not employ anybody else to accomplish the great work of our redemption, but he did it himself, in his own proper person. You and I do not believe in sponsors; but, assuredly, one of the worst forms of sponsorship is that of a man getting somebody else to do his work for Christ. I sometimes admire the way in which certain persons, who have no special gifts, will try to get others to do what they themselves cannot do; that is quite right. A friend said to me, "I have often wished to preach the gospel, but I am slow of speech, and I have come to years at which I cannot expect ever to become fluent; so I want to find somebody who has a ready tongue, and who can speak well for my Master. I wish you could tell me of such a man." I said that I thought I knew several, but what would be the good of them? "Because," said he, "I will keep one; I will find the means for his support so long as he will go about, and preach Jesus Christ." That seemed to me to be a right thing, especially when the gentleman said, "I do speak for Christ as much as I can." Many Christian people say, "We are doing a great deal at our church; we have an excellent Sunday-school; we have an admirable Tract Society; we have a capital Young Men's Institute." Wait a moment, friend, and let us sit down, and figure it all out. What class do you take in the Sunday-school? "Oh, ahem! ahem! I don't take any." I thought so, but what part do you take in the tract-distribution?

Oh, there are fifty or sixty distributors, sir!" Yes; but what part do you take in it? None at all, I can see. "Well, our church does a great deal for home missions." But what do you do for home missions? I see that some of you smile at this personal question; I wonder whether that is because you would not like to be pushed into a corner in that way! But I want to push you into that corner; I want to get you to answer-without any personal questioning from me,-by taking stock of yourself. An owl is a fine bird to look at, but

he is a very small bird when he is plucked; he is nearly all feathers, and I think that a great many Christian professors are very like owls. They are fine birds to look at, but it is mostly feathers; just see whether it is mostly feathers with you.

Let me remind you of our text: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." There is a poor Christian woman lying bedridden; she very seldom has a visitor, do you know her? "Yes, I know her, and I got a city missionary to call upon her." But the text says, "Who his own self bare our sins." Poor Mary is in great need. "Yes, I know, sir, and I asked somebody to give me something to give to her." Listen: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." There is your sister, who is unconverted. "Yes, sir, I know it; and I-I-I have asked Mrs. So-and-so to speak to her." "Who his own self bare our sins." Can you not get to that point, and do something your own self? "But I might do it badly." Have you ever tried to do it at -all? I do believe that personal service for Christ, even when it is far from perfect, is generally much more efficient than that sort of substituted service which so many prefer. Oh, if we could but get all those who are members of our churches personally to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, what a powerful church we should have! Would not the whole South of London soon feel the power of this church of more than 5,000 members, if you all went to this holy war,-each man, each woman, by himself or herself? But it is not so; many of you just talk about it, or propose to do something, or try to get other people to do something. "Well, but really, sir," says one, "what could I do?" My dear friend, I do not know exactly what you could do, but I know that you could do something. "Oh, but I have no abilities; I could not do anything!" Now, suppose I were to call to see you, and, meeting you in your parlour, I were to say, "Now, my dear friend, you are no good to us; you have no abilities; you cannot do anything." I am afraid that you would be offended with me, do you not think that you would? Now, it is not true, is it? You can do something; there never yet was a Christian who had not some niche to occupy,-at least one talent to lay out in his Master's service. You young people, who have lately joined the church,-little more than boys and girls,-begin personally to serve Christ while you are yet young, or else I am afraid that we shall not be able to get you into harness in after life. And even those who are encumbered with large families and great businesses, or with old age and infirmities, yet say, nevertheless, "We must not sit still; we must not be idle, we must do something for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we must serve him who, his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." In the spirit of this text, go forth, and, even before you go to bed, do something to prove your love to Jesus; and unto his name be glory forever and ever Amen and Amen.

1 Peter 4:18 If So, - What Then?

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"If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" — 1 Peter 4:18

Some people suppose that it is a very easy thing to be saved; but our Lord said, "Strive ("Agonize" is the original word) to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." When men hear a simple gospel sermon, of which the pith and marrow is the great soul-saving message, "Believe and live," they say, "If it is such a simple matter, will not all believe?" But the prophet Isaiah spake not so, for his sad inquiry was, "Who hath believed our report ("our doctrine" is the marginal reading)?" Faith seems so easy that one might ask, "Where will it not be found? But our Savior thought not so, for he asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" He who knows where to look for it, and who has the quickest eye to discern it, asks whether he shall be able to find, anywhere on the earth, that scarce thing called faith, — "the faith of God's elect." Believe me that, though "the way of holiness" is so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein," yet on account of the hardness of our hearts, it is no easy thing for any of us to enter that way, and to continue in it until it leads us to our everlasting home above.

I do not intend to keep strictly to my text, but to give you the meaning of it in this way. First, here is a fact stated: "The righteous scarcely are saved." Then, secondly, there is an inference drawn from that fact; if they are truly saved with great difficulty, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" When we have considered that inference, we shall take the liberty to draw two other inferences which may afford us further instruction.

I. First, then, Here Is A Fact Stated: "the righteous scarcely are saved;" that is to say, they are only saved with great difficulty.

This is not because there is any deficiency in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, or any lack of efficacy in his atoning sacrifice, or in his intercession for transgressors. God be thanked that there is no difficulty there! It is not through any want of power to save on the part of the Holy Spirit; nor is it through any failure of God's faithfulness that "the righteous" are only saved with great difficulty;

but it is for two reasons which I will now give you.

The first reason is, because of the strictness of divine rule. Read the first clause of the verse preceding our text: "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God," and that judgment is so severe that even "the righteous are scarcely saved." When Christ comes even to his own people, he comes to purge and purify them. The prophet Malachi wrote, concerning his first coming, "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness;" and John the Baptist said, concerning Christ, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Judgment must always "begin at the house of God;" and there is, as good Archbishop Leighton very properly says, both "equity and congruity in such an arrangement." There is equity in it; for Christians profess to be better than others, and so they ought to be. They say they are regenerate, so they ought to be regenerate. They say that they are a holy people, separated unto Christ; so they ought to be holy, and separate from sinners, as he was. It is right that, where there is a high calling, and an honored name, there should be a life proving the accuracy of these two things. So, when God begins to test that which professes to be gold and silver, who can say that he does not begin his testing at the right place, and with the right material? There is also a congruity or fitness in this arrangement. The Church of God is his house; and where does a man begin cleansing and reforming? Why, in his own house, of course; he might perhaps feel that he must have some filth in the farmyard, but not in his own sitting-room. There may be much evil abroad that he cannot remove, yet he can begin cleaning up at home. If we want to do any good in reforming the world, the very first duty for each of us is to begin reforming at home; and the Lord, when he means to clear away the dross, begins at home by setting up his "fire in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem."

The tests to which God subjects those who profess to be his people are not easy ones. When his fan is in his hand, woe be unto those who are: "like the chaff which the wind driveth away." The Lord says, by the mouth of the prophet Amos, "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth;" nor shall an atom of chaff be left in the sieve. When omnipotence and omniscience unite to sift the chaff from the wheat, you may depend upon it that the sifting will be thoroughly done. There is also the testing by fire; and if any are not able to endure that test, "reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." Then God will weigh us; we shall be put into the balances of the sanctuary, and if we are found wanting, how terrible it will be! We often judge by appearances, but God looks at the heart. We may be deceived by the outward profession, but God sees what is within. He looks for the Truth in our inward parts; and in our hidden parts there must be the true Wisdom, or else we are not saved.

Now, dear friends, as the tests are so severe, you see how it is that the righteous are only saved with difficulty. Oh, if I may but come out of that scale full weight, if I may but come out of that fire as pure gold, if I may but remain with the wheat in that sieve, and not be blown away with the chaff, I shall bless God forever and ever that I was saved, even though it was with great difficulty.

Further, the experience of all Christians proves that the work of grace in their hearts is not easily accomplished, and that their pilgrimage to heaven is full of difficulties. At the very beginning of the Christian life, some find it hard to lay hold on Christ. We truly sing or say, —

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

Yet there was a time when I felt that I would gladly give my life in exchange for that look. Easy as it seems to be to cast ourselves into the Savior's arms, there are Satanic doubts, and evil questionings, and fierce temptations that cause even that simple act to be accomplished only with great difficulty. Indeed, wherever it is accomplished, it is a miracle of divine mercy, and in every case saving faith is "the gift of God."

"Then, how difficult it is to overcome the flesh! Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Then I need not ask whether you find it so. You love holiness, yet unholiness tries hard to make you its slave. Perhaps it is a fiery temper that is your "thorn in the flesh," or some constitutional sin, or some lust that you thought had been subdued. You may have said, with David, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped;" and I know that, if your life be that of a true child of God, you have to fight hard in order to "put off the old man with his deeds," and to lead a godly life in the midst of this ungodly generation.

The temptations that assail you from without are equally hard to overcome. There are temptations of wealth, and temptations of poverty; temptations to turn aside to the right or to the left; and it is not easy to keep to the middle of the King's highway, and to walk in the footprints of Jesus, who has left us an example that we should follow his steps. When the world, the flesh, and the devil combine to assail us, — if the Lord doth not cover our head in the day of battle, how can we gain the victory? With some Christians, it is a very hard struggle from day to day, and even from hour to hour; and then we are like Mr. Stand-fast, who, when he was in what Bunyan calls the Enchanted Ground, was assailed by Madam Bubble, and who could do nothing but fall on his knees, and cry to God for help. There are many of us who have felt like that, and who, in the bitterness of our agony, have had to cry to God to help us, for it is only with difficulty that we are saved. I can say, with good John Fawcett, —

**“Temptations everywhere annoy,
And sins and snares my peace destroy;
My earthly joys are from me torn,
And oft an absent God I mourn.**

**“My soul, with various tempests toss’d,
Her hopes o’erturned, her projects cross’d,
Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end.**

**“Is this, dear Lord, that thorny road
Which leads us to the mount of God?
Are these the toils thy people know,
While in the wilderness below.**

**“ ’Tis even so, thy faithful love
Doth thus thy children’s graces prove;
’Tis thus our pride and self must fall,
That Jesus may be all in all.”**

How difficult is it for a true Christian even to perform needful duties in a humble and holy spirit! It is a simple matter to pray; it is just going, like a child, to tell God all that you feel, and all that you want. Yet I ask you, Christian, whether you do not sometimes find it hard work to pray. When you are on your knees, all sorts of cares come buzzing about you, like so many hornets. You want to wrestle with God as Jacob did; but you find that your wrestling has to be with the devil. I know what it is to long to pray when I cannot find a prayer in my soul! I make this confession because I believe there are many of God’s people who get into that state. And, moreover, I know that we often pray best when we think we are not praying. Perhaps, those groanings, that come from the lowest depths of our spirit when we think we are not groaning at all, are just the most potent prayers that ever reach the throne of God. But there are seasons when one can only say, “May the Holy Ghost feel for me what I cannot feel, and utter for me what I cannot speak, and do for me what I cannot perform!”

And if such ordinary acts of devotion are so difficult, how much more difficult is it to reach gracious attainments in the divine life! If any of your graces come to you very easily, suspect whether they are genuine; for, in the Christian life, all that is worth having has to be fought for in sternest conflict. So determined are the powers of darkness to prevent the Christian pilgrim from entering the celestial city that all the way to heaven will be more or less a Hill of Difficulty. You will have to go often upon your hands and knees because the road is so rough, and the ascent is so steep, that you cannot advance in any other way. We would be holy as God is holy, but there is another law in our members warring against the law of our renewed minds. God knows that we yearn after perfection; but, alas! like the bird that would fain fly, there is something that holds us down. Many of you have seen an eagle in a cage, and you know how he looks up, with that bright eye of his that was made to gaze into the sun; if he stretches his wings, and tries to fly, he only wounds himself against the bars of his cage; and, oh, what wounds some of us have had when, in our aspirations after better things, to will has been present with us, but how to perform that which we would, we found not! Often have I had to cry, with Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Yes, it is hard work for any of us to get to heaven. God, the Eternal Spirit, helps us to overcome our infirmities; but we are often made to feel those infirmities, and to confess that our weakness is no match for the strength of sin, and to admit that, were it not for God himself, we should certainly perish after all. I delight to sing, with holy John Newton, —

**“Beyond a doubt, I rest assured
Thou art the Christ of God;
Who hast eternal life secured
By promise and by blood.**

**“The help of men and angels join’d
Could never reach my case;
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in thy boundless grace.”**

Do you not, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, sometimes feel how hard it is for you to be saved, when you put your soul before the tribunal of your own enlightened conscience? Our own conscience, at the best, is a poor partial judge compared with the impartial and infallible Judge who will, by-and-by, sit upon the great white throne; yet I ask any Christian here, who is really aware of his own frailties and infirmities, when he comes seriously to take stock of himself, whether he finds any reason in himself for

glorying? I have turned over my sermons, and my many labors for the Lord, but there is scarcely one of them that I dare to think of without tears, — they are all marred by sin and imperfection. As I think of every act I have ever done for God, I can only cry, “O God, forgive the iniquity of my holy things!” But what about our unholy things? Brethren, look well to the evidences of your new birth; and as you examine them, see, if you do not have to say, with the prophet, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” If so, then let each one of us pray, with penitent David, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” If we are really God’s people, it is a great consolation for us to know that, — notwithstanding our many infirmities and iniquities, our many anxieties, and doubts, and fears as to whether, after all, we have been self-deceived or devil-deceived, — God will never forsake us.

II. This music suffice concerning the fact that Christians are only saved with great difficulty. Now, secondly, let, us consider The Inference From That Fact.

Peter says, “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” by which he means, I think, first, that if even the righteous are so severely tested, what short work will God make with the unrighteous; — if the wheat must thus be winnowed, how certainly will the chaff be destroyed; — if the gold must pass through the fire, how assuredly will the dross be consumed! The God who tries and tests the best will certainly not wink at the worst.

He means next, I think, that if “the righteous” only attain to felicity with great difficulty, “the ungodly and the sinner” never can attain to it. Suppose there has been a terrible storm on a rock-bound coast; the lifeboat has gone out, and the men have nobly done their duty, and saved many precious lives; but as each man leaps ashore, he says, “I was never before out in such a storm; it is only by the merciful providence of God that we were able to get back.” When the people on the shore see that even the lifeboat so narrowly escaped destruction, they naturally ask, “What must become of those poor leaky and unseaworthy boats that are hardly fit to be in a mill-pond?” Or imagine a river, full of sandbanks, with a channel that twists and turns in a tortuous fashion, and there is a vessel on it with an experienced pilot on board; yet even he is very anxious, and is constantly heaving the lead, and frequently going at half-speed, or stopping altogether. Now, if a steamer, with a good pilot on board, can scarcely get up the river, what will happen to a small sailing-boat, in the charge of a reckless drunkard, who scarcely steers at all, but lets the boat drift wherever it will? Why, it must be lost! So, if “the vessels of mercy, ... afore prepared unto glory,” on which Christ is the Pilot, barely escape the rocks and quicksands, what must be the end of “the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” which have no pilot on board, and drift hither and thither at the mercy of winds and waves? If there is a great conflagration in the City, and there is a massive structure, built of stone, with iron girders, which the firemen can only with great difficulty save from destruction, what will be the fate of a wooden house, covered with pitch and tar, and full of oil? If a man, who has built for eternity upon Christ, the only true foundation, — and who has built, not with gold, silver, and precious stones, but with wood, hay, and stubble, — if such a man “shall be saved; yet so as by fire,” what will become of the sinner who is only like a dry log fitted for the everlasting burning?

My text does not tell us where “the ungodly and the sinner” will appear. This is one of the unanswered questions of Scripture: “Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” So I shall scarcely speak of that dreadful place where our Savior says, “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” These metaphors, terrible as they are in their grim suggestiveness, are only faint images of the awful reality; and I again remind you that they are the words of him to whom we teach our children to pray, —

**“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child.”**

In Psalm 50:22, there is this dreadful divine warning, “Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” If it is difficult for a Christian to be saved, — and I have shown you that it is; — where shall you, who are not God’s people, you who have no Christ, you who have no Holy Spirit to guide you, — where shall you appear? The apostle Paul wrote, “I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” If Paul entered heaven with difficulty, where will you be? Martin Luther’s biography tells us that he was the subject of grievous doubts, depressions, and soul anxieties; so, if he only reached heaven as a sinner saved by grace, where will you be who know nothing experimentally of the grace of God? If John Knox, after serving his God so faithfully that his epitaph truly says, “Here lyeth a man who in his life never feared the face of man,” — if he, on his death-bed, found it hard to cherish a hope of heaven, what will you do who despise Christ’s mercy, and riot in sin?

Before I close, I want to draw two other inferences; and the first is this, — If The Righteous Are Only Saved With Difficulty, What About Those People Who Are “Saved” So Very Easily? It looks as if they were not righteous, does it not? Perhaps there is a man here who is like Bunyan’s Formalist; this is his hope, — “I was ‘christened’ when I was a child, I was confirmed as a youth, I attend my church, and take the ‘sacrament’ regularly;” or he may say, “I regularly attend chapel.” He says, “Don’t talk to me about

anxieties as to my state; I have no such anxieties." No, I expect you have not; but, if you have no doubts about yourself, permit me to have my doubts about you; and let me go a great deal further than doubts, and solemnly tell you that a hope founded on ceremonies will lead to your "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

There may be another who says, "I have made a profession of religion, but I never have any questions about whether I am saved or not. I pray, — in a fashion; as to praising God, I always could sing; and I believe I am about as right as I can be; I don't see any cause for distressing myself." Yes, friend, but let me remind you that there is a great difference between presumption and "full assurance of faith." There is also a very great difference between believing that you are saved and being really saved.

Possibly there is another who says, "I believe I am one of God's elect, and that I am quite safe." Well, friend, if it is so, no one is more thankful than I am; but if that is your only hope of salvation, and you have never been born again, and know nothing of the new life, with its anxieties and joys, I would not give a bent pin for your hope of heaven, and the sooner you get rid of it, the better. A dead fish finds no difficulty in floating down the stream, it is only the living fish that can swim against the current. The broad road is very smooth, and there is a good deal of company in it; but it leads to destruction. There are few in the narrow way, and many difficulties there; but it leads to life eternal. You say that you never know any changes; no, nor do the statues in St. Paul's Cathedral. There they stand, year after year, upon their marble pedestals, because they are dead; and you are the same. "But I never have to fight that battle of which you have been speaking." No, of course not, because the world and you are friends; and because you are of the world, the world loves its own. If you were a stranger and a foreigner in this world, you would be treated as strangers and foreigners are in an inhospitable country.

I will draw only one more inference from our text, and that is a very comforting one. The Righteous Are Only Saved With Difficulty, Then Tempted Souls May Be Saved. That truth has given me comfort when I have thought, "Well, it is difficult for me to be saved, then it appears that I am numbered with the righteous, and that I am in the right road." "Oh, sir!" says a poor sinner here, "I am glad you said that; I hope I have cast myself wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and I thought I was going to have peace always; but, instead of that, over since I have believed, or thought I had believed, I have had more fightings in my soul than I ever had before." Well, the righteous are only saved with difficulty, so do not be depressed. "But I have been more tempted than ever I was before, and it seems, sir, as if everybody was against me, and tried to drive me back. I thought I should find cheerful companions who would help me on the road to heaven, but I seem to be alone in an enemy's land." My dear brother, it is so with the righteous always; no strange thing has happened to you. "But, sir," says one, "horrible thoughts and terrible blasphemies arise in my mind, even when I try to pray; and I say to myself, 'If I were a child of God, could it be thus with me?'" "Dear friend, be comforted; Satan is afraid of losing you, so he is putting out all his force to try to hold you. Now that you are a Christian, you are a target for all the devil's fiery darts; so do not be astonished, this is the lot of the people of God. When a man has been drowning, I have heard that his sensations have often been very pleasant; but when the circulation of the blood commences again, pain begins at once; and the more pain he suffers, the more surely is he being restored to life. It is just so with the spiritual blood that is circulating in your soul. You are not dead, so you smart and suffer because you are alive. If you imagine that, the moment you believe, your battle is over, you make a great mistake; your battle has only just begun; and because, while really trusting in Jesus, you have battles, and contentions, and difficulties, and troubles, conclude that, therefore, you are a child of God.

Recollect this, if the righteous are only saved with great difficulty, they would never be saved if they did not look right away from themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. There lies the one hope for sinners and saints, — in the finished work of the blessed Redeemer. "I know what you are at," said a good man once to one who was doubting, "Christ has finished the work of salvation, but you are not content with what he has done, so you want to patch it up with something of your own." Come sinners, and come saints, back to the foot of that dear cross where Jesus bought with his own blood the souls of all who believe in him; let us throw ourselves prostrate before him, and say, "Thou art all our confidence, our only hope, and our full salvation for ever and ever. Save us, O Savior; we are sinners, and thou art the sinners' Friend; save us now, and we shall be saved for ever!" Amen, so let it be!

1 Peter 5:1 A Witness and a Partaker

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"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." 1 Peter 5:1.

Kindly notice, dear friends, the apostle's great gentleness. Peter was not always thus gentle, but the Spirit of God had rested upon him, and now he writes with much tenderness He does not say, "As an apostle, I command;" but, "As an elder, I exhort." It is always

well to combine the suaviter in modo with the fortiter in re, that is, suavity in our method blended with strength in the thing itself. There are some who are very blustering in their style of speech, and there are others who, if they do not bluster, yet in the smallest matter always put forth their greatest force, or what they think to be so. They command and rebuke with all authority; yet here is Peter, who certainly was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, and he speaks, not by way of command, but, addressing the elders, he tenderly exhorts them. Oh, that we may always manifest such a meek and gentle spirit; — not drive men, but draw them to Christ; — not terrify and threaten, but entice and woo to the Savior those to whom we are speaking or writing!

Next, notice Peter's humility. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder." He was an elder, most truly, as are all those who, in word and doctrine, feed the flock of God, and who, at Christ's command, take the oversight of the souls of men. But Peter was much more than an elder, he was an apostle. There were but few apostles, and those who were called to that high dignity were greatly favored; yet Peter does not mention his higher office, but, with true humility, he puts himself on a level with his brethren. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder." My brother, if God has given to you extraordinary talent, do not exalt yourself on that account. If others willingly follow your leadership, and you have the privilege of rendering to the Lord greater service than they can give, what have you that you have not received? And should not the chief among the saints be the servant of all? Is not he really the highest in Christ's esteem, who is willing to be accounted the lowest? Therefore, let no man exalt himself, or think highly of himself, for this he ought not to do. We admire in Peter — the once headstrong, impetuous Peter — the gentleness blended with humility which leads him to say, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder."

At the same time, let us especially note the wisdom of Peter, for it would have been an unwise thing for him to speak to the elders as an apostle, for they might have replied to him, "You do not know the worry and toil and trouble of our service. You labor in a higher sphere; you, sitting on the apostolic benches, are far above us. We, poor plain elders, cannot hope to attain to such eminence as yours." "No, my brethren," sage Peter, "I am one of you, for I also am an elder; and, as a brother speaks to brethren, so do I exhort you. Knowing all your travail of heart, and all your hard service in the cause of the Master, I, sympathising with you, and altogether one with you, speak from my heart to your heart. Exhorting you, the elders, I who am also an elder say to you, Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

It will always be our wisdom, dear friends, to put ourselves as much as we can into the position of those whom we address. It is a pity for anyone ever to seem to preach down to people; it is always better to be as nearly as possible on the same level as they are. Paul knew this, and therefore he became "all things to all men." To the Jew, he was a Jew; among Gentiles, he was a Gentile, for it so happened that he belonged to both classes. He was one with all men, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. If he had to argue with the learned upon Mars' Hill, he could be a match for them. If he had to speak with the rough and illiterate, he eschewed all beauty of language, and talked to them in the plainest style. And you and I, if we want to win men to Christ, must act after the same wise fashion. Dear Sunday-school teachers, would you be the means of blessing to the children under your charge? Then, be yourselves children; keep a child's heart throbbing beneath a manly breast. If you are a mother, go to the girls in your class as though you were still a girl yourself, and you shall soon find the key of their heart, and enter into the innermost chambers of their spirit. A true man welcomes a fellow-man; he sees that he is a member of the great family of mankind, and he says to him, "Come in." But if thou, in thy majestic greatness, speakest to me like Jupiter thundering from a cloud, I shall not be likely to regard thee; or, if I do regard thee, thy message will be forgotten in the grandeur and glory of thyself. This is what never ought to happen, my brethren,— that people should think of us, and forget our message. Let us belittle ourselves, that we may magnify our God. Let the truth be borne before us like a shield; and though we be the Lord's armor-bearers, let us hide behind the great shield which we lift up before the eyes of men. "'The elders which are among you I exhort,' — not as Peter, the head of the College of Apostles,— but as one who is a fellow-elder with you." Therein, we see Peter's gentleness, humility, and wisdom combined, and we shall be wise if we imitate him in all those respects.

With this introduction, I now come to speak of the two great offices which Peter said that he filled; I cannot help calling them great, yet they are open to you and to me; and I hope that, by God's grace, we also have in our measure been what Peter said that he was: "A witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."

I. First, then, let us think of Peter as "A Witness Of The Sufferings Of Christ; 'and, as far as possible, let us be witnesses with him.

Peter was, what we have not been, an eye-witness of the suffering of Christ. He actually and in very deed saw our Divine Master in his terrible griefs. Peter could never forget that he saw the Lord. Jesus in his agony in the garden. He was one of the three disciples who failed to watch with their Lord even for one hour, and who, for very sorrow, fell asleep within a stone's cast of the place where Christ was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Peter remembered how, when the Master rose from prayer, and said, "He is at

hand that doth betray me,"he was there, and. saw the traitor imprint that cruel kiss upon the cheek of him who still called him friend. Peter was, about that time, drawing his sword, and cutting off the ear of Malchus; and he could not fail to remember the look upon his Master's face when he who had eaten bread with him did lift up his heel against him, and the Son of man was betrayed with a kiss from the apostate apostle. Peter was also an eye-witness of our Lord's being hurried away to the bar of Annas, where he underwent his preliminary examination. He remembered seeing one smite him on the mouth, he could recall how they charged him with blasphemy, he could recollect how, after the first examination was over, Annas sent him, bound, unto Caiaphas. Peter was in the palace of Annas, warming himself by the fire; so he was an eye-witness of all that transpired. I do not quite know how far that eye-witnessing went, for the time came when he denied his Master; but he could never forget that gaze of concentrated agony and pity when Jesus looked at him,— not so much reproachfully, perhaps, as mournfully, feeling in his own soul that sorrow which he knew that Peter must ere long feel. A spark from the torch of the Savior's anguish set the heart of Peter on a blaze, and he went out, and wept bitterly.

I believe — I cannot help believing — that Peter rallied, by-and-by, from his fit of cowardice, and that he came to the front again, and saw the Master in Pilate's judgment hall. You know the story of our Savior's griefs and woes, and I think that Peter and others of the apostles were eye-witnesses of his sufferings. They saw him after he had been scourged; they marked him after he had been despised, and flouted, and mocked; they saw him as the cross-bearer, and heard him say," Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."They watched him aa he went in awful anguish along the Via Dolorosa to the mount of crucifixion; and they stood and saw him nailed to the tree, to die there, like a felon, with no relief or succor, for God himself forsook him, and the bitterest pang of all was that he had to cry," My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Possibly, Peter saw it all; certainly, he was an eye-witness of Christ's sufferings; and I think, when he was writing to these elders, he seemed to say to them,"Feed the flock of God, for I saw the great Shepherd when he bought that flock; I was there when he purchased the sheep with his own blood. Then, after he had risen from the dead, thrice he said to me,' Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?'and when I answered, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee,"he said to me,' Feed my lambs. Shepherdize my sheep. Feed my sheep.'Therefore, O my brethren, by his agony and bloody sweat, by hie cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, by his glorious resurrection and. ascension, I beseech you,' 'feed the flock of God which he hath purchased with Juris own blood.'" I see great force in this exhortation by the eye-witness who is writing to his fellow-elders.

But, dear brethren, you and I, never having seen Christ in his sufferings, might never have had a participation in this part of our text if there had not been another kind of witnessing, namely, the faith-witness. I do not place this second in importance, though I put it second in order; for, indeed, it is of the very first importance. There were thousands who were eye-witnesses of our Lord's sufferings who, nevertheless, saw not the true meaning of them. They saw the Rear Sufferer besmeared with his own blood; but into his wounds they never looked by faith. Thousands saw the Savior die, but they simply went their way back to Jerusalem, some of them beating on their breasts, but none of them believing in him, or really knowing the secret of that wondrous death. I trust that I am addressing many who could be grouped together as faith-witnesses of the sufferings of Christ. Speaking for myself, I do remember well when my sins, like an intolerable burden, crushed. me down. I dared not look up, and I never should have been able to look up, or to speak to anyone of the joy which is now within my bosom, if I had not, by faith, seen—

**One hanging on a tree, In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.
Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.
A second look he gave, which said,
'I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid, I die, that thou may'st live.'**

Then I saw, not only that Christ Jesus died upon the cross, but I also perceived who he was, and why he died, and what he accomplished by that death. I was helped to learn that he "loved. me, and gave himself for me." I understood that he took my place that I might take his place,— that he took my sin that I might take his righteousness,— that he bore my woe that I might share his joy. And when I saw that,— I do not mean when I heard about it,— I do not mean when I read of it,— but when I saw it with my soul's inner eye, and not only understood it, but perceived my share in my Savior's sacrifice, and believed in him to the saving of my soul, oh, it was a blessed day for me! Many of you, dear friends, know well what I mean, for you also had just such a, sight as I have described, you were faith-witnesses of Christ's sufferings. With some of us, many days have passed since we had that Erst sight of our suffering Lord; yet that sight has been often renewed to us. Sitting at the communion table, I have seen it most clearly; the bread and the wine have set forth Christ's broken body and poured-out blood, and my soul has realized within herself his Godhead and his manhood, his perfection and his grief, his sinlessness and yet his sin-bearing, his suretyship and the way he

smarted for it. And it has been a great joy to see it, and to be able to sing,

He bore on the tree the sentence for me, And now both the Surety and sinner are free;— for Jesus redeemed us completely and effectually when he died upon the cross. Many of you, beloved, have been in like manner faithwitnesses of Christ's sufferings.

There are some who depreciate this faith-witness; but, sire, it is faith that saves. You may be an eye-witness, and yet perish as Judas did. You may be an eye-witness, and yet be lost as Pilate was. You may be an eye-witness, and still hate Christ as Caiaphas did. But if you become a faith-witness, then shall you be included. among those of whom it is written, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Such a faith-view begets repentance, and hope, and love, and brings salvation to every soul that has it.

Peter, then, was an eye-witness, but, better still, he was a faithwitness; and this being the case, he went on to be a testifying witness. If a man sees anything happen, he is a witness of it; but he is more manifestly a witness when he comes and says that he saw it, when he appears in court, and bears a public testimony concerning it. I judge that the principal business of any minister of Christ, or of any elder of the Church of Christ, is to bear testimony to the sufferings of Christ. If the atoning sufferings of Christ are left out of a ministry, that ministry is worthless. "The blood is the life thereof," is as true about sermons as it is about animals and sacrifices. A bloodless gospel, a gospel without the atonement, is a gospel of devils, and not the gospel of God. Many are laboring hard, till their oars bend, to get away from the gospel of Jesus Christ; — I mean hundreds of so-called ministers of Christ; — but in proportion as they forsake the gospel, they cease to be what they pretend to be. They are not the ministers of God, or of his Christ; they are not ambassadors telling of reconciliation to men, if in their teaching the sufferings of Christ are beclouded, and their cause and motive and object are obscured. It is the glory of some of us that, whatever else we bear witness to, we certainly are witnesses of the sufferings of Christ. We declare to men that there is no hope for them but in Christ who died; we testify to them that we have ourselves exercised faith in his death, and have thereby received eternal life; we tell them that we know that what we say is true, we are as sure of it as was that disciple who, when he saw the blood and water flowing from Christ's side, bore witness to it, and added, "He knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." These things are not like dreams to us, they are part of our very being; we have believed in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, our troubled conscience has therein found peace, our soul has been filled with all the fullness of God; and therefore we are and must be witnesses to the sufferings of the crucified Son of God, to the reality of the atonement that he made on the cross, and to the effect of that atonement upon the heart and conscience of all those who receive it.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is not only the minister's work, but it is your work, too. We are all to be constantly bearing our witness to Christ, and saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." You know what the people said of John the Baptist when he was dead; it is a kind of epitaph which any one of us might be glad to have put upon our tombstone: "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true." He had no great talents, he was not noted for his eloquence, he was not a man of commanding presence, he had no recondite knowledge, he had no profound logical power; but all that he said concerning Christ was true. I would like to have John the Baptist's epitaph as my own, and I would be glad for you to have it, too; and that, in life and death, we might be known as true witnesses to the sufferings of Christ, the power of which we have felt in our own souls.

There is one other view of this witness-bearing, and that is, that Peter was, to a very large extent, a partaking witness in the sufferings of Christ. He does not say so in our text, but in the thirteenth verse of the fourth chapter he wrote, "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;" and he could write like that because of what he had himself endured for Christ's sake. He had been mocked, despised, persecuted; his life had been sought, and he knew that he would have to suffer a painful death, for his Master had said to him, "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wilt not." Putting all these things together, Peter could truly say that he was a witness of Christ's sufferings because he had, in a measure, participated in them. I hope I am addressing some who also can say,— though to a far smaller degree than could the saints of old,— "Yes, for Christ's sake, we have been accounted fools; we have been reckoned among those who have not the courage to advance with the times; we have been willing to be mocked at in the workshop, or in the pulpit, or wherever our lot has been cast among men; and we would cheerfully have borne far more if it had been imposed upon us." As the persecuted believer looks up to his Lord, he can truthfully say,— If on my face for thy dear name, Shame and reproaches be, All hail reproach, and welcome shame, If thou remember me.

Thus, you see how Peter was a witness of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. May each of us be appointed to the same high and honorable position!

II. The second thing which Peter says of himself is, perhaps, more remarkable than the first. He says that he was 'A Partaker Of The Glory That Shall Be Revealed.'

I like to see that word “partaker” coming after the word “witness”, for I do not think that any man can be a really useful witness for Christ unless he is a partaker. Can you go and talk to others about the bitterness of sin when you have never wept over it or repented of it yourself? Can you speak of the sweets of divine mercy of which you have never tasted? Wilt thou magnify “precious faith” when thou art thyself a stranger to the faith of God’s elect ? Wilt thou set forth Christ, evidently crucified among men, when thou hast never seen him thyself? Canst thou describe the love which has never cheered thine own heart? Wilt thou tell of communion with Christ; when thou knowest nothing of its blessedness ? Unhappy man! Thine office would be indeed terrible if thou wert called to such a work; it were better for thee to perform the most menial labor, with the most grievous sweat and wear and tear of thy very marrow and bones, than have to occupy a pulpit to talk of things which thou hast never tasted, and handled, and felt thyself. I would sooner not exist than be a preacher of truths which I had never believed in my own soul. The old writers used to speak of men who served in the shambles and butchers’ shops, and who saw and handled and sold the meat, but who themselves died of hunger; and they spoke of wretched folk who prepared dainties for their fellow-men, but who did not, as they expressed it, get so much as a lick of their own fingers, but died of famine while they were feasting others. Oh, horrible, horrible, must it be to be sick unto death, and yet to be selling medicines that will heal! Oh, dreadful must it be to be hammering away building an ark, as Noah’s carpenters did, and yet never to enter it, but to die in the deluge while the ship which you helped to build bears others over the wild waste of waters! Get thee home, minister; tear off thy gown, and lay aside the very name that makes thee appear to be a servant of God; get down upon thy knees, and cry, “God, be merciful to me a sinner, and forgive me for ever having dared to assume an office whose duties I could not fulfill; for how can I, who am blind, be the guide of others; and how shall I, who am deaf and dumb spiritually, make others hear; and how shall I tell of God, and of his covenant, and of his grace, while I know not God experimentally, and have no evidence that I am in the covenant, and I have never tasted of his grace?” That is right, brother; you are getting on the right lines; if you would be a witness, you must first be a partaker. And you who teach in the Sunday school, you who preach at the street corners, you who go from house to house with your tracts, whoever you are who profess to be witnesses for Christ, take care that you are both witnesses and partakers. Join the two together; you cannot witness if you do not partake, or if you do witness, and do not partake, you only witness to your own condemnation.

Very strangely, Peter here writes of himself as “a partaker of the glory.” Did he mean that he was on the holy mount of transfiguration, and saw the splendor of that sight when Christ was all aglow with a white light which gathered up all brightness and beauty into its solitary ray? Was he thinking of that memorable scene I know not; it may have flitted across his mind; but, in this passage, he says that he is “a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;” not the glory that had been revealed, but that shall be revealed. Is that possible? Can a man be a partaker of a glory that as yet is not revealed.

I answer that he may, first, by the closeness of his union with the glorified Christ. If I am, by faith, indissolubly one with Christ, then in his glory I am glorified; on his throne I am enthroned; by his victory I am “more than conqueror.” If we are one with him, then are we raised up together with him, and made to sit together with him in the heavenly places. Oh, it is grand when a believer does not so much think of himself as himself, but as part and parcel of his Lord! This is a very high attainment, yet Peter had reached it; and if you are vitally joined to Christ, you may reach it, too. If you have been indeed planted with him in the likeness of his death, you shall also share the likeness of his resurrection; and you do even now share it with him, for as he is so are you in this world. Was he humbled? Every saint underwent humiliation in Christ. Is he glorified? All his elect are virtually glorified in the glorification of their covenant Head. It is indeed a blessed thing to know your union with Christ so completely that you are made “a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” as far as you are personally concerned, but which is already revealed to Christ, and therefore is already yours.

I am sure that Peter also means that he had become a partaker of this glory to be revealed by the absolute certainty which he felt in his own soul that he should be ultimately in very deed a partaker of it. When a man knows that he has such-and-such a possession in reversion, if he be very poor, he discounts it, and begins to live upon its present worth. It is a very blessed thing when a child of God knows that, because he is in Christ by faith, therefore, whatsoever things God has laid up for his people in general, he has laid up for him in particular. Whatsoever Christ has prepared for his redeemed, he has prepared for this redeemed one. Often his faith does, as it were, appropriate the future glory, and cry, “It is mine.” The believer begins to glorify God for it, though as yet he has not actually partaken of it, for faith brings him the substance of things hoped for, and is to him the evidence of things not seen. Brothers, the next best thing to being actually in heaven is to be assured that you will be there, and also to have this thought at the back of the assurance,— that you may be there within the next five minutes! Oh, how speedily may you and I be in the glory! Before the clock ticks again, I may see the face of the King in his beauty, in the land that is very far off, in some respects, but very near in others. You know how John Newton puts it,—

**In vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint,
When yielding up his breath.**

**One gentle sigh the fetter breaks:
We scarce can say, 'They're gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne.**

Well, since this glory is certain, and may be so near, let us sit down, and look at the golden gates,— look until we do see them; until they seem to come nearer and nearer and nearer, until the vision becomes so vivid that it ceases to be a vision, and we are actually where we were thinking that we should soon be. It has so happened to many a child of God. There is one whom God. favored with great wealth, and. to whom a friend said, "What a paradise this lovely garden is! "Yes," he replied," and I bless God for the assurance that, when I leave it, I shall go from one paradise to another and a better one." Some have said to a poor Christian, "What an ill-furnished place your room is! How scanty are your worldly goods! "Ah!" the man, has answered," but I have enough to last me till I get home, for I have the promise that bread shall be given me, and water shall be sure, and. then I shall have heaven to crown it all." When we have faith like that, then are we partakers of the glory that shall be revealed.

There is a step even beyond this when we advance from faith to positive enjoyment. There is such a thing as anticipating the glory to bc revealed with such a full, realizing faith that we begin to enjoy it even now. Surely, you have, at times, sat down with your fellow believers, when the Word has been preached in the demonstration of the Spirit, and you have said, "Well, heaven must be glorious indeed to be any better than this. My soul is all ablaze with love to Christ, and even while my poor body is lingering here,—

**My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'**

And when the service has been over, you have said, "My soul was like the chariots of Ammi-nadib; whether I was in the body or out the body, I could not tell." On your bed, sometimes, or in the chamber of sickness, or sitting alone in quiet meditation after you have been enraptured with a vision of your Lord, has it not seemed as if God had taken some dainty dish from off the table of the angels, and passed it down to his waiting child below? Have you not heard stray notes of which you could almost say, "That is the angels' song, I am persuaded"? And sweet sounds have reached. your ears, like the music of "harpers harping with their harps," making you impatient of your exile here; but, at the same time, making you unspeakably happy until you shall be called up to join in the grand chorus of the Church of God. above: "Unto him that leaved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Yes, beloved, Peter could truly say that he was a partaker of the glory yet to be revealed. I have no doubt that, sometimes, when he preached the Word, his soul was all in a glow of holy fervor. I know that, often, I have been so graciously helped by the Holy Spirit to uplift my Lord and Master from this platform, that I have not wanted to go up those stairs any more. I would have liked to just finish up my discourse, and say, "Amen," on earth, and at ones begin to sing the everlasting song above. Have not you, dear friend, also reached that blessed state? I am sure that Peter was often in that condition; and when he was persecuted, and despised, and imprisoned, and his own brethren cast him out, there was often within his own bosom a company of the angels of God, Christ's sacred host a very Nahanaim; and, better still, there was the Prince of princes, the Angel of the covenant, the Lord and Master of all the angels, speaking deep bliss into his servant's soul, and filling him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, my brother or my sister, if you get that presence of Christ, and I pray that you may,— you will be qualified to be a witness for Christ. People will say, "What makes those eyes so bright? What causes that man to be so happy? What is it produces that calm, quiet spirit in the house? How is it that that man is not troubled as others are? He does not seem to have much cause for joy, but he is very serene and placid in spirit." They will perhaps say to you, "What is the secret of it all ?" Then you will have an opportunity of saying, "I am a witness of Christ's sufferings, but I am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Come with me, in thought, to Calvary; that you may learn the meaning of his sufferings, that you may afterwards be taught how you may share his glory."

I wish I could speak right to the very soul of some of you who do not know my Master; — how I wish you did know him! I cannot imagine what some of you have to comfort you, which you can for even a moment compare with the bliss of knowing my Lord. I have seen your joys, I know something of what mirth can do, and what relief laughter may be able to bring; but I also know that these things are of little use in the time of sickness, and when one is near to death. It is just at such times that true joy in Christ becomes more deep, more sweet than ever. The less there is of the creature, the more room is there for the Creator. The more of suffering and sorrow we have to endure, the more of content and bliss can we enjoy. And, oftentimes, when the body is weak, and the head is aching, and the soul is faint, there is, as it were, a sweet swoon of divine delight which comes over the spirit, which has more strength in it than strength, more joy in it than joy, and almost as much of heaven in it as there is in heaven. ofay you know this, for the sake of him who hath loved us, and given himself for us! God. bless you all! Amen,

1 Peter 5:7 A Sermon to Ministers and Other Tried Believers

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“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”-1 Peter 5:7

THIS season of depression in trade has brought great care to many a house and heart, especially to village pastors and their flocks. Their troubles have been heavy, and I am afraid their cares have not been light. Few have escaped the pinch of these hard times: the most prosperous have to watch the ebbing tide, and ask,-How long shall these things be? The subject will be seasonable to us all.

A very good preface to any sermon is the connection; let us look at the passage before us. The verse preceding it is, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” If we are truly humble, we shall cast our care upon God, and by that process our joy will be exalted. We are slow to submit to the hand of God, and oftentimes our care is fretful rebellion against our heavenly Father’s will. We determine to carve for ourselves, and so we cut our fingers. I saw upon a cart only yesterday the name of a tradesman who calls himself “Universal Provider”: do we not aspire to some such office? There is a Universal Provider, and if we are humble under his hand, we shall leave our matter in his hands. Oh, for more humility, for then shall we have more tranquillity. Pride begets anxiety, true humility gives birth to patience.

The verse which follows our text is this: “Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.” Cast your care upon God, because you need all your powers of thought to battle with the great enemy. He hopes to devour you by care. Cast all your care upon God, for if you are worried you cannot be sober or watchful. Satan rides on the back of carnal care, and so obtains entrance into the soul.

If he can distract our minds from the peace of faith by temporal cares, he will get an advantage over us.

The preface allowed of expansion, but I have compressed it with stern economy of time. I must condense with equal rigour all through my discourse. We will first expound the text, and then enforce it.

I. First, let us Expound The Text: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

It is noteworthy that, in the Greek, the two words for “care” are different; hence the Revised Version reads, “Casting all your anxiety upon him; because he careth for you.” The care which you are to cast upon God, is wearing you out, and you are to cast it upon God because, in quite another sense, “he careth for you.” The word used in reference to God is applied to caring for the poor and in another place to the watchfulness of a shepherd. Our anxiety and God’s care are two very different things. His care, though tender and comprehensive, causes no anxiety to him, for his great mind is more than equal to the task; but our care ferments within us, and threatens the destruction of our narrow souls. You are to cast your care, which is folly, upon the Lord, for he exercises a care which is wisdom. Care to us is exhausting, but God is all-sufficient. Care to us is sinful, but God’s care of us is holy. Care distracts us from service, but the divine mind does not forget one thing while remembering another.

If our care is to be cast upon God, we are hereby led to make a distinction; for there is a care which we could not dare to cast upon God, it would be blasphemy to attempt it. Anxiety to grow rich; can we impart that to God? Anxiety to be famous, to live in luxury, to avenge an injury, to magnify myself; can I ask the Most High to bear such an anxiety for me? If any of you are vexed with such care; I charge you to fling it off, for it is like the poisoned tunic of Hercules; and unless you can tear it away, it will burn into your very soul. All cares of covetousness, anger, pride, ambition, and wilfulness must be cast to the winds; it would be criminal to dream of casting them upon God. Do not pray about them, except that God will redeem you from them. Let your desires be kept within a narrow circle, and your anxieties will be lessened at a stroke.

“Casting,” says the apostle. He does not say “laying all your care, upon him,” but he uses a much more energetic word. You have to cast the load upon the Lord; the act will require effort. It is no child’s play to cast all our care upon our Lord when there are six little children, shoes worn out, cupboard empty, purse bare, and the deacons talking of reducing the scanty salary. Here is a work worthy of faith. You will have to lift with all your soul before the burden can be shifted, and the anxiety cast upon the Lord; that effort, however, will not be half so exhausting as the effort of carrying your load yourself. Oh, the burden of watching and waiting for help which never comes; depending on the help of man, who is altogether vanity. Oh, the weariness of carrying a heartbreaking anxiety, and yet standing up to preach! We have all seen statues of Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders, but we can hardly conceive of his preaching in that attitude. It would be better to make one tremendous effort, and have done with it, rather than

groan under a perpetual weight. If the fox is eating into our bowels, let us pluck it from our bosom and kill it at once.

Note, next, the words, “upon him.” You may tell your griefs to others to gain their sympathy, for we are bidden to bear one another’s burdens; you may ask friends to help you, and so exercise your humility, but let your requests to man be ever in subordination to your waiting upon God. Some have obtained their full share of human help by much begging from their fellow-Christians; but it is a nobler thing to make known your requests unto God; and, somehow, those who beg only of God are wondrously sustained where others fail. What a pleasant story is that in which we recount the lovingkindness of the Lord, and tell how “this poor man cried and the Lord heard him.” Quiet, patient believers have come under my notice who have carried their cross in silence, waiting upon the Lord alone. How they endured their trial I cannot tell, save that “they endured, as seeing him who is invisible;” but their necessity became known, it leaked out, they knew not how, and they were helped, and helped better than they would have been if their appeal had been to man. I am condemning no appeal to our fellow-believers; many are willing to help, and they cannot do so if the need is unknown; but do not place anyone in the office and throne of the great God, who alone is the Caretaker and Burden-bearer of his people. I am afraid that, sometimes, in our care not to alienate this great man who does so much for the cause, or that excellent lady who takes half-a-dozen sittings in the chapel, we may grieve the Lord and lose our true Helper. Cease, then, from man cast all your care upon God, and upon him only.

Certain courses of action are the very reverse of casting all your care upon God, and one is indifference. Whatever virtue there may be in stoicism, it is unknown to the true child of God. “I don’t care” may be an appropriate expression for an atheist to use, but it is not suitable for a Christian: it may sound well, and the man who utters the defiant word may think himself some great one, but it is an evil utterance for all that. I am afraid some brethren’s “don’t care” is very sinful, for they get into debt, and don’t care; they break their promises and engagements, and don’t care. Brethren, such men ought to care. Every man is bound to care about his life-duties, and the claims of his family. He that careth not for his own household is worse than a heathen man. Casting care upon God is the very reverse of reckless and inconsiderateness.

It is not casting care upon God when a man does that which is wrong in order to clear himself; yet this is too often tried. Under pressure, some men do very unjustifiable things. We ought to be slow to condemn since we ourselves also may yet be tempted in the same way, and may err in like manner; still, faith ought to be able to win every battle. He who compromises truth to avoid pecuniary loss is hewing out a broken cistern for himself. He who borrows when he knows he cannot pay, he who enters into wild speculations to increase his income, he who does aught that is ungodly in order to turn a penny is not casting his care upon God. An act of disobedience is a rejection of God’s help, that we may help ourselves. He who does the right thing at all hazards piratically casts his care upon the Lord. Acts are with us, but their consequences are with God: our care should be to please God, and all other care we may safely leave to him.

How, then, are we to cast all our care upon God? Two things need to be done. It is a heavy load that is to be cast upon God, and it requires the hand of prayer and the hand of faith to make the transfer. Prayer tells God what the care is, and asks God to help, while faith believes that God can and will do it. Prayer spreads the letter of trouble and grief before the Lord, and opens all its budget, and then faith cries, “I believe that God cares, and cares for me; I believe that he will bring me out of my distress, and make it promote his own glory.”

When you have thus lifted your care into its true position, and cast it upon God, take heed that you do not pick it up again. Many a time have I gone to God, and have relieved my care by believing prayer; but I am ashamed to confess that, after a little time, I have found myself burdened again with those very anxieties which I thought I had given up. Is it wise to put our feet into fetters which have once been broken off? My brethren, there is a more excellent way, a way which I have tried and proved. I have at times been perplexed with difficulties; I have tried my best with them, and I have utterly failed, and then I have gone with the perplexity to the throne of God, and placed the whole case in the Lord’s hands, solemnly resolving never to trouble myself about the aforesaid matters any more, whatever might happen. I was quite incapable of further action in the matter, and so I washed my hands of the whole concern, and left it with God. Some of these cares I have never seen again, they melted like hoar frost in the morning sun, and in their place I have found a blessing lying on the ground. Other troubles have remained in fact but not in effect, for I have consented to the yoke, and it has never galled my shoulder again. Brethren, Let the dead bury their dead, and let us follow Jesus. Henceforth let us leave worldlings to fret and fume over the cares of this life; as for us, let our conversation be in heaven, and let us carefully abstain from carelessness, being anxious only to end anxiety by a childlike confidence in God.

II. Accept this little contribution towards an exposition, and let us now proceed to Enforce The Text. I will give you certain reasons, and then the reason why you should cast all your care upon God.

First, the ever-blessed One commands you to do it. We need no other reason. The precept is akin to the gospel command, “Believe as the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is a blessed privilege, and it is, also, a command. He who bids us cease from idolatry, also bids us cease from care. The law of Sabbath-keeping is not more divine than that of resting in the Lord. He whom we call Master and

Lord bids us take, no anxious thought; his bidding has all the authority of law. Say to yourself, my anxious brother, "I may roll my burden upon the Lord, for he bids me do so." If you do not trust in God, you will be distinctly sinful; you are as much commanded to trust as to love.

Next, cast all your cares on God, because you will have matters enough to think of even then. There are sacred cares which the Lord will lay upon you, because you have cast your care upon him. When he has broken your painful yoke, you will have his easy yoke to bear. There is the care to love and serve him better; the care to understand his Word; the care to preach it to his people; the care to experience his fellowship; the care so to walk that you shall not vex the Holy Spirit. Such hallowed cares will: always be with you, and will increase as you grow in grace. In a sense, we may cast even these upon God, looking for his Holy Spirit to help us, for it is he that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure; yet not without our care and zeal cloth he operate upon us, and this is one reason why you are not to allow lower ends and designs to inundate your mind. Your spirit has another vineyard to keep, another capital to put out to interest, another Master to please, and it cannot afford to yield its thought to meaner pursuits. Ministers are shepherds, and must care for the sheep. "The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep;" but you have the care of churches laid upon you daily, and it is peculiarly needful that you should not be occupied with carnal care.

And, next, you must cast your care upon God, because you have God's business to do. It is a dangerous thing for a merchant to employ a man who has a business of his own, because, sooner or later, the master's business will suffer, or else the man's own concern will die out. "No man that warreth," saith Paul, "entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." There is sure to be a clashing of interests when a brother goes into business, unless he does it as Paul did, that he may not be chargeable to the church; for then, he attains to double honor. Paul carried his needle and thread with him wherever he went, for everybody had a tent is those days, and he was ready for work at any moment either upon small family tents, or tents to cover a great assembly. When he had finished preaching, he could turn to tent-mending, and so earn his own living, and preach the gospel freely. Paul did not make his preaching a stalking-horse to his trade, but he made his handicraft a pack-horse to his ministry, so that he could say, "These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." That is a very different thing from a minister deserting his charge to make a larger income by some other calling. The less we have to do with other business the better, for all our care is needed by the church.

Queen Elizabeth bade a notable merchant in the City of London go to the Continent on royal business. "Please your majesty, said he, "who will attend to my business while I am away?" The queen replied, 'If you will go abroad, and see to my business, I will see to your business.' I will be bound to say that it would not suffer if such a queen took it in hand. Just so the Lord says to us, "You attend to my work, and I will take care of you and your wife and children." The Lord pledges himself to do it; bread shall be given us, our water shall be sure. The testimony of many among you will bear me out in this. I come of a line of preachers, and though some of them have had to endure straitened circumstances, yet none of them were forsaken, nor have their seed been seen begging bread. The Lord has cared for us, and we have lacked nothing.

You ought to do it not only for this reason, but because it is such a great privilege to be able to cast your care upon God. If I am plunged in a lawsuit, and some eminent law officer would offer to undertake it all, out of love to me, how glad I should be! I should worry no longer, I should say to all who troubled me on the matter, "You must go to my solicitor; I know nothing about the matter." Do this to your cunning enemy, the devil, who is always glad to see you anxious and fretful. Let us say to him, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee." What a file that is for the old viper to break his teeth upon! Chosen! Chosen! And if chosen, shall we not be cared for?

Let me add, that you ministers ought to cast all your care upon God, because it will be such a good example for your hearers. Our people learn much from our conduct; and if they see us fretting, they will be certain to do the same. You preach faith, do you not? How sad it will be for you to be convicted of unbelief! Our own words may condemn us if we are anxious. Once when I was unduly depressed, my good wife said to me, "I have a book here which I should like to read to you." It did me good to hear her read, but I felt myself rebuked by every word. I half suspected what was coming when she said, "That is your own, recollect." She had been giving the doctor some of his own medicine. What a many things you have said, my brethren, that will condemn you if you do not trust God! Is it, after all, mere talk? Did you mean what you said, and is it true? Or have you merely been repeating official dogmas in which you have no personal confidence? Is the providence of God a myth, or a living, bright reality? "Here," said a quack in the market-place, "is a medicine that will cure coughs, colds, consumptions [the fellow coughed horribly at this point]. It is of such efficacy that it would almost restore the dead. [Here he coughed again.] Nobody need remain a sufferer, he has only to buy a box of the pills" [here the quack's own cough prevented him from speaking]; ah! laugh on, laugh on, brethren, only find that nobody laughs at you for doubting while you extol faith. We must show in ourselves that faith in our God is a healing medicine, or man will not believe us; we shall make Christ himself seem to be a pretender, unless we practically prove that we have been healed by him. Let your people see in you what comes of trusting Christ; let them see what cheerfulness, what hopefulness, what buoyancy of spirit, come to those who trust Christ, and cast all their cares upon him.

But the reason of reasons is that contained in our text, "He careth for you." After all, what a small matter it must be to God to care

for us, since he provides for the commissariat of the universe; the feeding of the cattle on a thousand hills, and the wild beasts of the plains. Think of those myriads of fish, those armies of birds, those enormous multitudes of insects! What a God must he be who cares for all! Compared with the demands of all these, our little wants are soon supplied. We want but little, and that little is scarcely a crumb from the table of the Lord our God. Surely if God says, "I will care for you," we need not give another thought except to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." It does not need two of us for this small matter, and certainly not two when one is infinite in wisdom and power. Even if we were wise, the Lord would not need our help. With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, when he built the earth, and piled the mountains, and spanned the sky? Let us, therefore, stand still, and see the salvation of God. The Lord thinks about us, plans for us, arranges for us, studies to make things right for us,-these are poor words with which to describe his care, for he does more than that, he loves us. That great, boundless, mighty heart loves us. This is fit matter for a heavenly song! Because he hath set his love upon us, we can surely cast our care upon him. He has given us Christ will he not give us bread? See, he has called us to be his sons, will he starve his children? See what he is preparing for us in heaven, will he most enable us to bear the burdens of this present life? We dishonor God when we suspect his tenderness and generality. We can only magnify him by a calm faith which leans upon his Word.

There, dear brothers, there is my word from the Master for you. I should like to have hammered out that little grain of gold so that you might have gilded your lives with it; but, please do it for yourselves. Now will you carry your cares away, or will you bow your heads in silent prayer, and throw them all off? Holy Spirit, the Comforter, lighten our darkness, we beseech thee!