

Spurgeon on 1 John-Pt1

SERMONS ON 1 JOHN

by

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1 John 1:3 Fellowship with the Father and the Son

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"And truly our Fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." — 1 John 1:3.

THE twelve apostles were favored with the most intimate intercourse with our blessed Lord; but I can hardly say that they entered into fellowship with him during his life on earth. Each of them might have been asked the question that our Savior put to one of them: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" But after Christ had ascended to heaven, and the Spirit of God had rested upon his disciples, and in proportion as the Spirit did rest upon them, all that they had seen, and heard, and handled of their Lord became a means of communion between himself and them. They were then able to realize what a very near, and dear, and deep, and familiar communion had been possible to them through having spent some three years or so with him in public and in private, and having actually seen him, and heard his voice, and felt the touch of his hand.

Now, since their literal hearing, seeing, and touching Christ did not create communion with him apart from the work of the Spirit, we need not so much regret, as we might otherwise have done, that we never saw, or heard, or touched the Savior, because we also, without seeing, or hearing, or touching him, can believe in him, and rejoice that he said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And, further, as it is through faith, rather than by sight, or hearing, or feeling, that the Spirit of God operates upon us, when we believe the witness of the apostles concerning Christ, the Spirit of God will bless their message to us, and we shall enter into the apostles' fellowship. What the apostles learnt, they learnt in order that they might tell it to others. All that John saw, he was prepared to speak of according to his ability, that others might have fellowship with him; and, dear friends, remember that, if you ever learn anything of Christ, — if you have any enjoyment of his presence at any time, — it is not for yourself alone, but for others also to share with you. When fellowship is the sweetest, your desire is the strongest that others may have fellowship with you; and when, truly, your fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, you earnestly wish that the whole Christian brotherhood may share the blessing with you. My great desire, just now, is not so much to preach to you as to lead you, by the Holy Spirit's gracious assistance, into the actual enjoyment of that which the apostles possessed, that, believing, as we do, their testimony, we might thereby enter into their fellowship.

First, I am going to try to answer this question, What is this fellowship with the Father and with his Son in general? Secondly, I want to show you how we can enjoy this fellowship in meeting, as we do, to celebrate the sacred supper in memory of our ascended Lord.

I. First, then, What Is This Fellowship With The Father, And With His Son, Which The Apostles Enjoyed, And Which They Wished Us To Share With Them?

Let me give you an illustration to show you what fellowship is. Yet, while I use it, I regret that it falls so far short of the truth I wish to illustrate, yet I know not of a better one. Suppose that a great plague raged in London, like that which carried off so many of the population in years gone by; and suppose that there lived, in this city, a father and a son, whose one care was for the healing of others. Suppose you lived in the same house as they lived in, and that you saw the intimate affection existing between them, and that you were in their council-chamber when they consulted together as to what was to be done for the perishing citizens. You marked the resolve of the son to make a sacrifice of himself, from day to day, by going into the homes of those who were smitten with the plague. You observed him as, with his father's smile resting upon him, he went forth to his work. You were privileged to live in the house while the work of rescue was going on, and you saw how the sick ones were being plucked from the grip of the terrible disease, like brands from the burning. You watched the father's love, and the son's self-sacrifice, and you were filled with admiration

of them.

Now, that being taken as a supposition, feeble as it is I want to ground upon that my description of what is meant by fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. You must not, however, confound fatherhood and sonship, as they exist among men, with these relationships as they stand towards God, for it is the eternal Father and the eternal Son with whom we are to be brought into fellowship and the terms that are used in speaking of them are accommodated to our poor understandings; but they are not to be literally construed; and, especially, they are not to be understood in any carnal sense, nor to be applied to the unregenerate.

Well, suppose we are living in such a house as I have tried to describe to you, the first thing necessary for fellowship with such a father, and such a son, would be mutual communication. To live in the house where they were, yet never to speak to them, or to be spoken to by them, would be no sort of fellowship. Merely to know that there were such persons in the house, and to know that they were engaged in such blessed work as that, would not make us partakers with them, and would not give us communion with them. We must speak to them, and they must speak to us; and the speaking, on both sides, must be of a kind, loving sort; — not, on our part, that which would offend them; nor, on their part, that which would imply anger towards us. That is the very beginning of our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. There must be mutual communication between us. We must have heard the voice of God in our hearts, and we must have spoken to God from our hearts. Thou canst not enjoy this fellowship, my friend, whatever thou sayest, unless thy soul has learnt to speak with God in prayer and praise, and unless thine ear has learn to listen to whatever he saith unto thee through his Book, and by his Spirit, through his ministers, and in creation and providence. His voice is sounding everywhere; and, in order to fellowship with him, thou must have the ear that hears, and the heart that believes what he says unto thee; and thou must also have a tongue that responds to his voice, for there can be no true communion without mutual communication. Do you not perceive the kinship of the two words, communion and communication, communion and converse? This there must be, or there will be no true fellowship.

Now think of our illustration again, but transfer it to the higher sphere. You are living in the house, and you are yourself sick of the plague; yet, suffering in that fashion, in the house where the one business carried on is the healing of the sick, I will suppose that you refuse to put yourself under the care of the Son, who is the great Physician. If you despise his remedies, or delay receiving them, you cannot be said to have any true fellowship with him. Evidently, you do not appreciate his efforts on behalf of others, or you would be willing to accept his services on your own account. It is his business to save, yet you are not saved. He is quite close to you, and he is able, with a single touch of his hand, to heal you, yet you will not permit his sacred skill to be exercised upon you. Then, clearly, you do not believe in him, for you do not desire to submit yourself to him, and it is equally clear that you have no fellowship with him, and cannot have any. If we are to have any fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we must, first of all surrender these poor sinful souls of ours into his dear hands, and we must go to the Father, and say to him, "Father, we have sinned;" and as we gaze, by faith, upon the atoning sacrifice, we must say, "But, although we must confess that we have sinned, there is the blood that makes atonement for sin; therefore, Father, accept us, because we put our trust in thine only-begotten Son." This is essential to true fellowship, and, as you will see, it is a part of it. So, here you are, first of all, in communication with the Father and the Son, and, secondly, reconciled to God by the death of his Son, — healed of the awful, soul-destroying plague of sin; and thus you have taken two steps upon the great- highway of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; and you can sing, with Toplady, —

"For thy free electing favor,

Thee, O Father, we adore!

Jesus, our atoning Savior,

Thee we worship evermore!"

But it is needful, further, supposing us to be living in the house with this Father and Son, and desiring to have full fellowship with them, that we should have an intelligent apprehension of the work they are doing. Suppose we know, as a matter of general knowledge, that they are healing the sick, but we are not aware of the self-denials to which that well-beloved Son has exposed himself, or of the bountiful heart of that generous Father, who was willing even to yield up his Son to endure all the perils of the plague for the sake of those who were smitten by it. If we do not know as much as this, we cannot have anything like full fellowship with the Father and the Son; but, in proportion as we study the details of their working, and perceive the adaptation of what they are doing to the great end they have in view, we shall be sure to have fellowship with them. So, beloved, when you are yourselves saved, study to know more and more about both Christ and the Father. Dive deeply into the great mystery of the divine purposes of love and mercy. See how the Father ordained, before the foundation of the world, that, in the race of mankind, he would find exponents of his boundless love, who will make known to principalities and powers, in the heavenly places, throughout eternity, the manifold riches of his grace. See, too, how he laid upon his Son the work of healing this sin-smitten world. Study every detail that you can ascertain concerning the Father and the Son; the minutest touch upon the canvas is worthy of a century's study, so full is every point of deep mystery and rich instruction to the soul. And I am persuaded that, as you increase in the knowledge of the

Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ, through the revelation of the Divine Spirit, you will also increase your fellowship with the Father and with his Son.

We advance still further when this work, which is being done by those whom we are in such close contact, commands our intense approbation and admiration. Turning, for a minute, simply to our illustration, think of the heroic father and of his self-denying son, and say to yourself, "How wonderful it is that these plague-stricken people should be allowed to come, and howl and rage against him under his very window; yet, all the while, he is living for them; — how strange it is that these very people, who, in the madness that follows from their disease, even seek the life of his son, the great physician, nevertheless are the objects of that great physician's sedulous care, and he is ready to lay down his life for them if haply he may save them." You would thus find your heart going out in admiration of that father and son, and such undeserved and disinterested love as theirs would bring you into fellowship with them. Now lift the illustration again into the higher sphere, and see, through it, the grand design of God to make his foes his friends, to change rebels into loyal courtiers, to make ingrates into sons and daughters, and to uplift the heirs of wrath, and cause them to sit with him as kings and priests upon his throne. When you see how Christ comes down to raise this world up from the gulf into which it had fallen, and, like another Atlas, only greater far, to bear upon his shoulders the weight of the world's sin, you cannot help admiring him, and as you admire and approve, you enter into a still higher measure of fellowship with the Father and with his Son.

You get to a stage yet further on when, at last, you are able to enter into sympathy with the Divine Workers. Suppose (to go back to our illustration,) you lived in the house with that father and son, and saw this work of mercy going on day after day, — poor starving and dying people being picked up, placed in the hospital, and healed, and that great physician, the son, perpetually suffering in order that he might heal them, enduring all manner of insults and ignominy at their hands, yet ever determining to save them, — you would come, at last, to feel such sympathy with both father and son that the plague-stricken people would be almost as much the object of your care as of theirs. You would be worked up into enthusiasm for the poor sufferers, and you would feel that it was such a blessed work to help in caring for them that, if it were possible, you would wish to be engaged in it. You begin to take an interest in all the details of the service, and you rejoice as you hear of one and another of the sick ones being restored. You feel that you must love the self-denying physician who is giving up comfort, ease, honor, everything, to save the suffering and dying people. You feel such sympathy with him in the work that he is doing shall, you could kiss his feet; and when you hear of his being despised and rejected, you feel that you could wash his feet with your tears of regret that he should be treated in so shameful a fashion. You are getting into fellowship with him now; and when I look at my dear Lord and Master, and think of the Father and the Son planning and working with heart and soul for the salvation of the chosen, and when I see sinners saved one by one, or even by hundreds delivered from sin, and made fit for heaven, my soul feels a deep sympathy with this glorious work. Do you not also feel it, dear friends? Do you not wish that sinners may be saved? Do you not pray that they may be? Does not your heart feel intense sympathy with the eternal purpose of the Father, and the gracious work of the Savior? If so, you are having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

I can suppose that, living in the house with that father and son, you would want to go further still, and to share their work. If you had been cured by the skill of the physician, you would feel yourself so intensely sympathetic with him in the great work that he is carrying on that, somewhat timidly and humbly, you would venture to say, "Can I be of any use? Can I carry the medicine, or put on the bandages, or give a cup of cold water to a fevered lip, or wipe a tear from a weeping eye, or sit up at night with the sick who need to be watched and tended? Or, can I even clean the floor of the house, or unloose the ratchets of the physician's shoes?"

"My God, I feel the mournful scene;

My bowels yearn o'er dying men;

And fain my pity would reclaim

And snatch the firebrands from the flame."

And if, as will be sure to be the case when you are doing some thing for Christ, some of the patients begin to mock at you, as they mocked at him, that will reveal to you another phase of fellowship with him. Then you will understand why he was so patient, for you will need to ask him to make you patient; and when your words of warning, or instruction, or comfort are rejected, as his were, you will go to him, and say, "O Savior, I understand now a little of what thy griefs were when thou wast despised and rejected of men, for they have rejected thy Word which thou didst put into my lips." In struggling to do good to others, you will meet with such rebuffs, misrepresentations, difficulties, and direct oppositions, that you will go to the Savior, and say to him, "O my Lord, I can understand thee better now; — not that I am anything like what I ought to be, but even my failures help me to see more of thy sovereign patience and thy mighty love. O thou Divine Self-denier, — thou wondrous Self-sacrificer, — I should never have had such fellowship with thee as I now have if thou hadst not permitted me to take some humble part in this thy great and glorious work!"

So now, you see, you have reached a point a long way ahead of where we started. You are now enjoying fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, because you have become a co-worker with God. We put our puny hand to the great work which he has undertaken, and he strengthens our weak hand to do marvels for his name's sake. He worketh mightily within us, and so we are able to work for him, and to have fellowship with him.

To come to the climax of all, I will suppose that you are living in that house of mercy which has been my figure all along, and that you throw your whole soul so completely into the work that is carried on there that you say to the father and son, "This work so fully commands my sympathy, and so delights my heart, that I am quite carried away with enthusiasm for it. I admire the characters and I love the persons of those with whom I dwell; and now I ask that all I am, and all I have, may be used for the furtherance of this work, that I may not be reckoned merely as a lodger in this house, but be regarded as one of the family, and that, from henceforth, I, in my poor, humble capacity, — for I am less than nothing, — may never be personally mentioned again, but may be considered as part and parcel of this great mysterious firm, whose existence means nothing but good to the city, and whose influence is all being employed for the health of the inhabitants." You know what I mean, — lifting the illustration to the higher sphere, — and it is well if you can say to the Lord, at last, "My Lord, henceforth for me to live shall be to do what thou wilt, and to give myself wholly up to seek those objects for which Christ lived here below, and upon which the Father's heart has ever been set. Father, thou wilt that the truth should be known wherever lies have at present the dominion; then give me grace, I pray thee, to will it too, and to publish thy truth everywhere according to the treasure of my ability. Thou wilt that the nations of the earth should be subdued unto thy Son, and become his loyal subjects; then, I pray thee to put me into the ranks of the legions by whom thou wilt achieve this glorious victory." Brethren and sisters in Christ, you will indeed have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, when you are nothing, and Christ is everything; — when you do not live to make money, or to attain to earthly honor, or to gain comfort, or anything else for yourselves; but when — each of you can say, "This one thing will I do, for Christ will I live, and for Christ will I be content even to die, so that, to the utmost bounds of the earth his name and fame may be made known."

"I want to live as one who knows Thy fellowship of love; As one whose eyes can pierce beyond The pearl-built gates above.

"As one who daily speaks to thee,
And hears thy voice divine
With depths of tenderness declare,
'Beloved, thou art mine!'"

II. Now, in the second place, I have briefly to answer the second question, — How May Fellowship With The Father, And With The Son, Be Enjoyed In The Celebration Of The Lord's Supper?

As you all know, the Lord's supper is the memorial feast in which we are to show, or proclaim, the Lord's death "till he come." Come he will, and our hearts cry to him, "Even so, come quickly, good Master! This supper sets forth his death, and the way in which we derive benefit from it, namely, by receiving him spiritually into our souls even as we take the bread and wine literally into our bodies, and assimilate them so that they become part of ourselves. Well, then, how can we have fellowship with God in showing forth the death of Christ by means of this memorial supper?

I think we can do so, first, by coming to the conclusion that the sacrifice of Christ was an absolute necessity. We are fully persuaded that God the Father would never have given up his only-begotten Son to die for human guilt, if there had been any other way of saving lost sinners; and also that Jesus Christ would never have taken upon himself the awful burden of human guilt, and agreed to be bruised of the Father, if it had not been absolutely essential that he should die, or that man should, or that justice should; it must have been one of the three. God the Father agreed with God the Son that this colossal sacrifice was necessary; my soul, dost thou also agree that it was necessary? dost thou see that there was no loophole for thine escape except through the bleeding Savior's wounds. Wilt thou admit now, with all thine heart, that the Father's wisdom was right, and that the Son's wisdom was right? Has the Spirit of God taught thee that this was the best plan of salvation that could possibly have been devised? Looking all around, hast thou come to the conclusion that there is no salvation by works, and no salvation by tears, and no salvation anywhere but by the blood of God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son? If any of you have come to that conclusion, you have thereby entered into fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, for they have long ago come to the same conclusion.

Then, next, dear friends, while you are sitting around the communion table, endeavor so to think of the sufferings of Christ, that you will, in your measure, enter into the moods of his mind while he was suffering for you. As he felt a great horror of sin, pray the Lord to make you feel intense horror of it, and let the very thought of it wound you as it wounded him. He felt the shame of sin; then ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how shameful it is. In your mind and heart, crown sin with a crown of thorns like that with which it crowned your Lord; and spit at sin, and scoff at sin, even as sin did scoff and spit at your Lord. Yet further, our Lord Jesus felt that

justice must be honored; so feel in your soul, as you come to the communion, that the justice of God must be honored, and magnified, and glorified. Have fellowship with Christ in feeling that, cost what it may, God must never be unjust. Agree to that in your heart of hearts, and you will be having fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, while you are so agreeing. Go over, in your mind, all the griefs and woes that your dear Lord endured, and recollect how he resolved that, for the joy that was set before him, they were all things to be despised. Do you feel that any losses and cross which you may have to bear for his sake, or any scorn or persecution that may ever come upon you because you belong to Christ, are things that are only to be reckoned as the small dust of the balance in comparison with the glory of God? Then, you are drinking of Christ's cup, and being baptized with his baptism, and having fellowship with him in his sufferings. Let your thoughts travel along the road to Gethsemane, and from Gethsemane to the accursed gibbet on the hill of Calvary; in your meditation, follow your Lord, and ask him to let you drink of the brook by the way, as he did, that you also may lift up your head; and in that way you will have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. You may even adopt the rapturous language of Father, and sing, —

“I love to kiss each print where
Christ Did set his pilgrim feet;
Nor can I fear that blessed path
Whose traces are so sweet.”

Then, again, beloved, I pray the Holy Spirit to help you, and to help me, to glorify God concerning the death of Christ while we are at his table. As you eat the bread, and drink the wine, think of what Christ suffered, and of the mysterious way in which his sufferings have brought glory to the Father's name. I do verily believe that, when Christ bore the sins of his people up to the tree, and away from the tree, the justice of God was more honored than it would have been if all the elect had been sent to hell for ever. If our sins had been punished upon ourselves, with the utmost rigour of the divine law, that law would not have been as honored, throughout the entire universe of intelligent beings, as it now must be when they hear that God himself would sooner pay the penalty of sin than allow his law to be broken with impunity. O august death of Christ, in which God himself becomes the sacrificial Victim, and bleeds and dies sooner than that, on the spotless tablets of his law, any stain should be made, even though it should be by the finger of his mercy! Glorify God, then, praise him, and let your whole soul extol him for this wondrous arrangement of grace,

—

“So just to God, so safe for man,” —

for so you will be having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. You probably remember that the line I just quoted was written by Dr. Watts in praise of the gospel, and I hope that you can say with him, —

“What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan,
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so safe for man.
“How well thy blessed truths agree!
How wise and holy thy commands!
Thy promises, how firm they be!
How firm our hope and comfort stands
Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.”

Next, you can enter into fellowship, at the communion table, by loving Christ, your Mediator, as well as by glorifying God the Father. You know that God loves Jesus Christ; I mean, the Man Christ Jesus, God and Man in one person. He loves him, not only in his essential Godhead, as he ever must love him, but he also loves him for his work's sake. With what delight do the Father's eyes ever rest on his Son! How sweetly does he say to him, “Well done!” How does he delight to honor and glorify him! Do not you also feel something of the same sort of love to Christ as you gather around his table? Ask the Spirit of God to cause you to be enamoured of

Christ, and to make him to be “altogether lovely” in your eyes. Pray for such a view of him that your inmost heart shall melt under the divine passion of love to your dear Lord. Let his wounds be the charm to win you, let his spotless character be the beauty to enthrall you; and when you thus love Christ, you will perceive that, as God the Father loves Christ even more than that, you will have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We do not invite you to come and kneel around the communion table, for there is nothing upon it to be worshipped; but when the breaking of bread is being celebrated, we ask you to sit as much at your ease as you can, just as the last supper was instituted by our Lord. Those who gathered round that table reclined in the Oriental posture of repose. We cannot do that, nor would it be in harmony with our usual idea of what is reverent and seemly. At the paschal feast, they stood with their loins girded, and their staves in their hands, for they wore about to depart in haste into the wilderness. You have no need to do that, but you may sit at this table as one who is at rest, and so you may have fellowship with God, for do you not, know that, this feast celebrates Christ’s rest? His blood has been shed, his body broken, he has become food for our souls, his redemption work is finished. He has gone his way until he shall come, the second time, to drink the wine new in the kingdom of his Father. Christ rests; so, if you also rest, you will be in sympathy with his finished work.

Remember also that God rests. When Noah offered a sacrifice to God, Jehovah smelled a sweet savor of rest, — not in Noah’s sacrifice, but in what Noah’s sacrifice typified and symbolized; that is, in the sacrifice of Christ. If I may use such an expression concerning thee, O blessed God, thy Sabbath was broken by man’s sin. It grieved God that he had made man, because he so rebelled against him, and dishonored him; and, therefore, the Lord had no rest. But when he saw Christ on the cross, — a Man, who had done all his will, suffering all his will, — God, as well as man, bearing human sin in his own person, — it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief; but when he had done it, and the Son had finished his sacrifice, and come home, then the Father rested. He could rest in his love, and rejoice over his Church with singing, for the ransom price for her redemption was paid, the battle was fought, and the victory won for ever. Sin was overcome, the old serpent’s head was broken, hell was vanquished, and death was doomed to die; and it is now only a matter of time when the gleaming banners of Christ, lit with the light of victory shall be borne aloft after the final fight of Armageddon; and when that is over, there shall go up this mighty shout, which every star shall hear, while heaven’s heights shall echo and re-echo the strain, and the deeps of hell are stirred with the wondrous chorus of the redeemed, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,” — reigneth because of the cross, — reigneth because Christ was there able to say, “It is finished.”

Come then, beloved, and rest, for so you will have fellowship with God himself. Let no sense of sin disturb you, — no distracting thoughts annoy you. Say to yourself, “God is satisfied with Christ’s work, and so am I. God has said, ‘It is enough;’ and what is enough for the infinite God is surely enough for me.” The Lord bless you, as you come to his table, for his Son’s sake! Amen.

1 John 1:4 Fulness of Joy Our Privilege

NO. 3406

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. — 1 John 1:4.

VERY closely does the apostle John resemble his Lord in the motive that prompted him to write this epistle! You remember how Christ said, in his last discourse to his disciples on the eve of his passion, “These things have I spoken unto you that your joy may be full”; and how he counselled them, “Ask and receive that your joy may be full”; and how he prayed the Father for them, “that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” Here, then, the beloved disciple, moved by the Spirit of God, reflects and follows out the same gracious purpose: “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” What an evidence of our Savior’s deep attachment to his people that he is not content with having made their ultimate salvation sure, but he is anxious concerning their present state of mind! He delights that his people should not only be safe, but happy; not merely saved, but rejoicing in his salvation. It does not please your Savior for you to hang your head as the bulrush, and go mourning all your days. He would have you rejoice in him always; for this end he has made provision, and to this end he has given us precepts. Hence it appears: —

I. That The Christian’s Joy Needs Looking After.

We should not find the apostle John writing to promote that which, in the natural order of things, would be sure to occur. In this object of pastoral anxiety, he seems to include the whole of the Apostolic College with himself when he says, “These things write we unto you that your joy might be full,” as if your joy would not be full unless inspired apostles should be commissioned of God to further it. Your joy then, I say, wants looking after; I do not doubt but you have very suggestive proofs of this yourselves, in your external circumstances. You cannot always rejoice, because, although your treasure is not in this world, your affliction is. Poverty

will sometimes be too heavy a cross for you to sing under. Sickness sometimes casts you upon a bed on which you have not, as yet learned to rejoice. Losses befall you in business, failures of hope, forsaking of friends, and cruelty of foes; and any of these may prove like winter nights which nip the green leaves of your joy, and make them fade and fall off from your bough. You cannot always rejoice, but sometimes there is a needs-be that you should be in heaviness through manifold temptations. I suppose none of you are so perfectly happy as to be without some trial. Your joy will need to be looked after then, lest these water-floods should come in and quench it. You will need to cry to him who alone can keep its flame burning, to trim it with fresh oil.

I suppose, too, that you have moods and susceptibilities which make it no easy matter to maintain perpetual joy. If you have not, I have. Sometimes there will be deep depression of spirit; you can scarce tell why or wherefore. That strong wing with which you mounted like an eagle will seem to flap the air in vain. That heart of yours, which once flew upwards like the lark rising from amidst the dew, will lie cold and heavy like a stone upon the earth, and you will find it hard to rejoice.

Besides, sin will stop the beginning of your holy mirth, and when you would dance for joy, like David before the ark, some internal corruption will come to hamper your delight. Ah, beloved! it is not easy to sing while you fight. Christian soldiers ought to do it; they should march to battle with songs of triumph, that their spirits may be nerved to desperate valour against their inbred corruptions; but sometimes the garment rolled in blood, and the dust, and the turmoil, will stay for awhile the looked-for shout of victory. With trials many and manifold; trials from the thorns and briars of this fallen world; trials from Satanic suggestions; trials from the uprisings of black fountains of corruption within your own polluted hearts, you have, indeed, need that your joy, to keep it full and flowing at high tide, should be guarded and supplied by an influence above your own, and fed from a celestial spring.

I dare say you have learned by this time, my beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, how exceedingly necessary it is that this joy of ours should be abundant. When full of joy, we are more than a match for the adversary of souls, but when our joy is gone, fear slackens our sinews, and, like Peter, we may be vanquished by a little maid. When our joy in the Lord is at its full, we can bear that the fig-tree should not blossom, that the herd should be cut off from the stall, and the flocks from the field, but how heavy our sorrows are to bear, how impatient we become when the chains that link heaven and earth are disarranged, or the communication in any way intercepted. If we can see the Savior's face without a cloud between, then temptation has no power over us, and all the glittering shams that sin can offer us are eclipsed in their brilliance by the true gold of spiritual joy which we have in our possession Oh! what rapture!

"I would not change my blest estate

For all that earth calls good or great;

And while my faith call keep her hold

I envy not the sinner's gold."

Thus the Christian, by his holy joy, outbraves temptation and is strong to endure a martyrdom of vice. Why, you can do anything when the joy of the Lord is within you. Like a roe or a young hart, thou leapest over the mountains of Bether. The mountains cannot appal thee; thou makest thee a stepping-stone across the brook. The heaviest tempests which lower over thee cannot chill nor damp thy courage, for thy song pierces it, and thy soul mounts above it all, into the clear blue of fellowship with thy God. But when this joy is gone, then are we weak, like Samson when his hair was shorn. We become the slaves of temptation, if we do not yield to its treacherous enticements, at any rate, it harasses us, and so enervates the power with which we were wont to glorify our God. The Christian's joy wants looking to. If any of you have lost the joy of the Lord. I pray you do not think it a small loss. I have heard of a minister who said that a Christian lost nothing by sin — and then he added — "except his joy"; and one replied, "Well, and what else would you have him lose?" That is quite enough. To lose the light of my Father's countenance to lose my full assurance of interest in Christ, to lose my heaven below — oh! this is a loss great enough! Let us walk carefully, let us walk prayerfully, that so we may realize perpetually joy and peace even to the full. Let none of us be content to sit down in misery. There is such a thing as getting habituated to melancholy. My bias is toward that state of mind, but, by the grace of God I resist it. If we begin to give way to this foolishness, we shall soon weave forged chains for ourselves which we cannot readily snap. Take your harp from the willows, believers. Do not let your fingers forget the well-known strings. Come, let us praise him. If we have looked black in the face for awhile, let us brighten up with the thoughts of Christ. At any rate, let us not be easy till we have shaken off this lethargic distemper, and once again come into the normal state of health in which a child of God should be found, that of spiritual joy.

II. The Christian's Joy Lies Mainly In Things Revealed, otherwise it would not find its fitting sustenance in words inspired.

If the Christian's joy lay in the wine-vat and in the barn, in the landed estate, or the hoarded purse, it would only be necessary that the vineyard should yield plenteous clusters, that the harvest should be crowned with abundance, that peace should prevail, and trade should prosper; forthwith the heritor and the merchant have all that heart could wish. But the Christian's joy is not touched by

these vulgar things. These common-place satisfactions do not suit the noble mind of the believer. He thanks God for all the bounties of the basket and the barn, but he cannot feast his soul upon stocks or fruits that perish with the using. He wants something better. The apostle John seems to tell us this when he says, "And these things write I unto you" — nothing about prosperity in this world, but all about fellowship with Christ — "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." From which I infer that everything which is revealed to us in scripture has for its intention the filling up of the Christian's joy.

What is Scripture all about, then? Is it not, first and foremost, concerning Jesus Christ? Take thou this Book, and distil it into one word, and I will tell thee what it is — it is JESUS. All this is but the body of Christ. I may look upon all these pages as the swaddling-bands of the infant Savior, and if you unroll Scripture, you come to Jesus Christ himself. Now, beloved, is not Jesus Christ the sum and summit of your joy? I hope we do not utter a falsehood when we sing, as it is our want: —

"Jesus the very thought of thee with rapture fills my breast,

Tho' sweeter far thy face to see And in thy bosom rest.

Jesus — man yet God; allied to us in ties of blood. Why, here is mirth! Here is Christmas all the year round. In the Nativity of the Savior there is joy for us — the babe in Bethlehem born; God has taken man into communion with himself. Jesus the Savior: here is release from the groans of sin; here is an end to the means of despair. He comes to break the bars of brass, and to cut the gates of iron in sunder.

"Jesus. the name that charms our fears,

That bids our sorrows cease!

'Tis music in the sinner's ears,

'Tis life, 'tis health, 'tis peace."

Scripture, surely, has well taken its cue. Would it make us joyful, it has done well to make Christ its head and front.

All the doctrines of the Bible have a tendency, when properly understood and received, to foster the Christian's joy. Let us mention one or two of them. There is that ancient, much-abused, but most delightful doctrine of election, that "all worlds before" Jesus elected his people, and looked with eyes of infinite love upon them as he saw them in the glass of futurity. What, Christian, canst thou believe thyself "loved with an everlasting love," and not rejoice? Was it not the doctrine of election that made David dance before the ark? When a Michel sneered at him for dancing, he said, "It was before the Lord who had chosen me before thy father (Saul), and all his house." Surely to be chosen of God, to be selected from the mass of mankind, and made favourites of the heart of Deity — this ought to make us, in our worst moments, sing with joy of heart. Oh! that doctrine of election! I wish some of you would acquaint yourselves with it in the psalmody of the Church, rather than in the wrangling of the schools. It is a tree that puts forth its luxuriance in the tropical climate of divine love; but it looks dwarfed and barren in the arctic regions of human logic. Then there are the doctrines which like living waters, drop from this sacred and hidden fountain. Take, for instance, that of redemption. To be bought with a price — a price whose efficacy is not questionable; bought so that we are now Jesu's property, never to be lost; bought, not with that general redemption which holds to the sinner's eye a precarious contingency, but bought with an effectual ransom which saves every blood-bought sinner because he was redeemed — his own proper self, of God's own good will. Oh! here is occasion for song!

"Jesus sought me when a stranger

Wandering from the fold of God

He to rescue me from danger,

Interposed his precious blood."

Canst thou see the blood-mark on thyself, and not rejoice? Oh! Christian, surely thy joy ought to be full! Or turn to the doctrine of justification, and consider how, through faith, every believer is "accepted in the beloved," and stands, wrapped in Jesu's righteousness, as fair in God's sight as if he had never sinned. Why, here is a theme for joy! Know and acknowledge thy union with Christ: —

"One with Jesus,

By eternal union one."

Members of his body, "of his flesh, and of his bones," and what? — not a song after this! How sweet the music ought to be where this is the theme! Then, too, to mention no more, there is one doctrine which is like a handful of pearls — that of eternal

preservation unto glory which is to be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ. You are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” You shall be with him where he is. You shall behold his glory. “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Oh! canst thou put on this robe of splendor, and go up to the throne where Christ has already made thee sit representatively in his own person, and canst thou not begin to-night thy song which shall never end. Truly we have but to mention the truth and you can think it over for yourselves — every doctrine of revelation is to the Christian a source of joy.

Well, and every part of Christian experience is to further our joy. “Why,” says one, “all a Christian’s experience is not joyful.” I grant you that, but remember that all a Christian’s experience is not Christian experience. Christians experience a great deal which they do not experience as Christians; but experience it because they are not such Christians as they ought to be. I believe that much of that groaning which some people think such a deal of, is rather of the devil than of the Spirit of God. Certainly that unbelief which some people seem to look Upon as such a precious flower is rank herbage, never sown in us by the hand of God the Holy Spirit. Beloved, there is a mourning which comes from the Spirit of God; that is a joyful mourning, if I may use such a strange expression. Sorrow for sin is sweet sorrow; I would never wish to miss it. I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that it would be his only regret in going to heaven, that he could not repent any more. Oh! repentance, true evangelical repentance, is not that half-bitter thing which comes from the law. It is a sweet genial thing. I do not know, beloved, when I am more perfectly happy than when I am weeping for sin at the foot of the cross. I find that to be one of the safest and best places where I can stand. I have sometimes thought that the raptures of communion, I have known, are not altogether so deep — though they may be higher — not, I say, so deep as the pensive joy of weeping over pardoned sin; when: —

“Dissolved by his goodness, I fall to the ground

And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”

Yes, sorrow for sin is a part of the Christian’s experience which helps to fill his joy. And though your cares and anxieties, dear friends, with regard to the things of this world, may be very distressing, yet remember, in every drop of gall which your Father gives you to drink, there is, if you can find it, a whole seaful of sweetness. God sends you trials to wean you from the world — a happy result, however grievous the process. Oh! that I might never desire to suck of the breasts of her consolation any more! Oh! to come to Christ, and find my all in him! Believe me, beloved, our joy ends where the love of the world begins. If we had no idols on earth — if we made neither our children, nor our friends, nor our wealth, nor ourselves, our idols — we should not have half the trials that we have. Foolish loves make rods for foolish backs. God save us from these, and when he does, though the means may seem severe, they are intended to promote our joys by destroying the eggs of our sorrows. But there is much of a Christian’s experience that is all joy, and must be all joy. For instance, to have faith in Christ, to rest in him — is not that joy? To sing from one’s heart: —

I know that safe with him remains,

Protected by his power,

What I’ve committed to his hands

Till the decisive hour.”

Is not that joy? And even that humbler note: —

“Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to thy cross I cling,”

has the germ of heaven in it. Truly, there can be no more delightful place for the soul to stand than close to the cross, covered with the crimson droppings of blood, and clasping Christ himself! And then hope is another part of the Christian’s experience. What a fountain of joy it is! We are saved by hope. Sweetly does the Psalmist express himself, “My soul fainteth for thy salvation, but I hope in thy Word.” To the followers of Christ there is a full assurance of hope; “which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.” Above all things, Christian fellowship is the chief auxiliary of Christian joy. Read the verse that immediately precedes our text, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” Ah! now we hit the mark. This is the center of the target. Fellowship with Christ is the summum bonum; it fills up the measure of joy. All other graces and gifts may help to fill our cup of blessedness but fellowship with saints in their fellowship with the Father and the Son — surely this of itself must suffice to fill our vessels to the very brim. Fulness of joy! Did you ever prove it, my beloved? I think some of you have. Nay, I know you have. You could not have contained more joy — you were full to overflowing. You know that a little joy is healthful? be it relief from anxiety, pleasure after pain, or even a cheerful thought in breasts to sorrow prone; but to have a fullness of joy, joy that pulsates through our every nerve, and paints the entire universe of God’s goodness before our eyes in a meridian glow this is a myriad of blessings in one. If I held in my hand a glass, and poured water into it till it were full, right to the very brim, till it seemed

as if the least touch would make it run over — well, that is how the Christian sometimes is. “Why,” says he, “I could not feel more happy! If anyone should make me rich, if I could have all that the worldling craves, I could not be any happier; I am rich to all the intents of bliss since thou, God, art mine.” It is not every man that can go home, and say, “There is nothing on earth I want, and there is nothing in heaven that I yearn after beyond the endowments my God has already bestowed on me. “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and who is there upon earth I desire beside thee?” Go to, ye that pine for joy, and traverse the wide earth round in fruitless search, my soul sits down at the foot of the cross, and says “I have found it here!” Go, like the swallow, fly across the purple seas to find another summer now that this is over; my soul would stop just where she is. Living at the foot of the cross, my sun is in its solstice, and stands still for ever — never stirring, never moving; without parallax or shadow of a tropic; evermore the same, bright, and full, and glorious. - Oh! Christian! this is a blessed experience. May you know it all your life long!

Never doubt, my dear friends, that every precept in the Word of God is intended to further the Christian’s happiness. When I read the ten commandments, I understand them to be, just, and salutary directions not to do myself any harm. The spirit of the law seems to be benevolent in its warnings. If I were commanded not to put my finger into the fire, and did not know that fire would burn, I ought to be thankful for the prohibition. If I were commanded not to plunge into the sea, not having known before that the sea would drown, I should be thankful for the Interdict. God’s precepts are designed to enlighten our eyes and preserve our feet from falling. They forbid what is dangerous, hurtful. God never denies his servants anything that is really for their good. His laws are freed-men’s rules; they are never fetters to the Christian. And as for the precepts of our blessed Christianity, they, every one of them, promote our happiness. Let me take one or two of them. “Love one another”; that is the first. Well now, when are you happiest? When you feel spiteful and bitter towards everybody else, or when you feel charity towards the faulty, and love towards your fellow-servants? I know when I feel best. There are some people who seem to have been suckled upon vinegar; wherever they go, always see some defect. Were there to be men on earth again such as Chrysostom, and others of his day, who have been portrayed in history, or like the Nazarites of Jeremiah’s plaintive hymn, “Purer than snow and whiter than milk,” they would say, “Ah! well, though their reputation is unsullied, we do not know what they do in secret! — we cannot scan their motives!” Some people are always in a cynical, suspicious humor, but they who “love one another” can see much to rejoice in everywhere. We are told in Scripture to “serve the Lord with diligence,” and I am sure it is “the diligent soul” that is made fat. The do-nothing people are generally those who say: —

“ Lord, what a wretched land is this

That yields us no supplies.”

It ought to be a wretched land to lazy people. Those that will not work, neither shall they eat, neither in spiritual things or in temporal shall they be fed. If, in the winter, you complain of cold, get you to the plough, and you will soon be full of warmth; sit ye down, groan, and complain, and blow your blue fingers, and you shall soon find the cold starve you yet more and more. Holy activity is the mother of holy joy. And growth in grace, again; why, when is a man happier than when he grows in grace? To be at a standstill, to contract one’s self — why, this is misery! To force one’s understanding, like a Chinese foot into a Chinese shoe, is torture; but to have a mind that is capable of learning, to be able sometimes to say, “There I was wrong”; to be able to feel that you know a little more today than you did yesterday, because God the Spirit has been teaching you, why, this is joy; this is happiness; this is such as God would have us know!

All the writings of Scripture, whether they be doctrinal, experimental, or practical, have the drift which John indicates in these words, “That your joy may be full!” Having thus shown that the Christian’s joy needs looking after and that it is mainly fed upon things revealed in Scripture, the inference clearly must be that: —

III. We Should Constantly Read The Scriptures.

Read the Scriptures in preference to any other book. What a deal of reading there is now-a-day! But how large a proportion of what you call popular literature is mere chaff-cutting — nothing more. Why, I am really ashamed to state the fact that I am bound, as a Christian minister, to denounce. You cannot publish a religious newspaper, or a religious magazine, as a rule, to make it pay, without a religious novel in it, and these religious novels are a disgrace to the Christianity of the nineteenth century. People’s minds must be in a queer state when they can eat nothing but these whipped-creams and syllabubs; for people who would be healthy should sit down to something solid, and their stimulants should be consistent with sobriety. You will never attain the mental growth of men and women by feeding on such stuff as that. You may make lackadaisical people in the shape of men and women, but the thinking soul with something in it the woman who would serve her God as a true helper to the Christian ministry, the young man who would proclaim Christ and win souls, need some better nutriment than the poor stuff that modern literature deals out so plentifully. Oh, my dear friends, read the Bible in preference to all such books! They only deprave your taste. If you want these books, have them. We would not deny pigs their proper food; and I would not deny any person living that, which his taste goes after, provided it does not shock decent morals. I lament the taste rather than the indulgence of it; if you have a soul that can appreciate

the pleasures of wisdom, eschew the trifles of folly; and if you have been taught to love verities, and substantial truths, you scarcely need that I should say, "Search the Scriptures." Search them diligently, frequently, and statedly.

Prefer the Scriptures to all religious books. In our books and our sermons — we will say it of all of them — we do our best to give you the truth, but we are like the gold-beaters, whose brazen arms you can see out over their doors — we get a little bit of gold, and we hammer it out. Some of my brethren are mighty hands at the craft. They can hammer out a very small piece of gold so as to cover a whole acre of talk. But the best of us, those who would seek to bring out the doctrines of grace in love, are poor, poor things. Read the Bible for yourselves more, and confide less in your glossaries. I would rather see the whole stock of my sermons in a blaze, all burned to ashes, than that they should keep anybody from reading the Bible. If they may act as a finger pointing to certain chapters — "Read this! read this!" — I am thankful to have printed them. But if they keep you away from your Bibles — burn them! burn them! Do not let them lie on the top of the Scriptures; put them somewhere at the bottom, for that is their proper place. So with all sorts of religious books: they are a sort of mixture, their human thinking dilutes divine revelation. Keep you to the revelation of God, pure and simple.

And, when you read your Bible, do read it in earnest. There are several ways of reading the Bible. There is a skimming over the surface of it, content with the letter. There is also diving into it, and praying yourselves down deep into the soul of it: that is the way to read the Bible. Do not always read it one verse at a time. How would Milton's *Paradise Lost* be understood if read by little snatches, selected at random. You would never scan the purpose or design of the poem. Read one book through. Read John's Gospel. Do not read a bit of John and then a bit of Mark, but read John through, and get at John's drift. Remember that Matthew, though he wrote of the same Savior as Luke, is not more various in his style than he is distinct in his aim, and, in a certain sense, independent of the testimony he bears. The four evangelists are four separate witnesses, each giving a special contribution to the doctrine as well as the history of Christ. Matthew, for instance, shows you Jesus as a king. You will notice that most of his parables begin with "a king." "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened." Mark shows you Christ as the servant. Luke shows you Christ as man, giving sketches of his childhood; and his parables begin with "A certain man"; while John teaches you Christ in his Godhead, with a starting point far different from the three others, which have been styled the Synoptical Gospels. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Try, if you can, to get a hold of what the books mean, and pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you into the drift and aim of the sacred writers in so writing. I would like to see my church-members, all of them, good, hard, solid Bible students. Beloved, I would not be afraid of all the errors of Popery, Infidelity, Socinianism, Plymouth Brethrenism, or any other "ism" if you were to read your Bibles. You will thus keep clear of the whole lot. There is no doubt about your standing firm to the good old faith which we seek to teach you, if you do but keep to Scripture. The Book, the one Book, the Book of books, the Bible! That studied, not hurriedly, but with a determination to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and to observe the analogy of faith, you shall find a well-spring of delight and holy joy which men of letters who dabble in the proudest classics might envy, for Isaiah is better than Homer, and David is richer than Horace. But better still, you shall stand while others fall.

IV. But Are We All Believers? Is This Book Joy To All Of Us?

That is a significant pronoun in the text, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." To whom writes he? Is it to you? Young, woman, does the Scripture write to you that your joy may be full? Young man, does the Scripture speak to you to fill you with holy joy? You do not know whether it does or not; you do not care about it. Then, it does not speak to you. You get plenty of joy elsewhere. Well, it does not speak to you. It does not intrude upon you. It lets you alone. It offers you no joy. You have got enough. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."

But there are some of you here who want a joy, and you have not found it. You are uneasy. You cannot find a tree to build your nest on. You are like the needle, when it is turned away from its pole — you cannot be quiet. You have got a horse-leech in you, that is ever crying, "Give! give!" You are uneasy. Oh! dear friend, I am glad to hear it! May that uneasiness go on increasing. May you become weary of heart, and heavy-laden of spirit, for I have a whisper for you. Jesus Christ has come into the world to call to himself all those who labor and are heavy-laden, and when you are sick and weary with the world, come to him, come to him. What, you have been turned out, have you? The world has got all it could out of you, and thrust you away? Now, Jesus Christ will have you. Come to him! Come to him! He will receive you. So you are burnt out, are you? All the goodness that was in you is burned up, and you have become now nothing but smoking flax, a stench in the estimation of your once flattering companions? You are nowhere. They do not like you. You are mopish and miserable. Oh! come to him, come to him, come to him! He will not quench you. Your music is all over, is it? You were like a reed, like one of Pan's pipes. You could give out some music once, but you got bruised, and you cannot make one sound or note of joy. Well, poor soul, come to him! Come to him! He will not break you. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

"Weary souls that wander wide

From the central source of bliss,

Turn to Jesu's wounded side,

Look to that dear blood of his."

Here is peace, here is joy in Christ Jesus. Oh! if you are sick of the world, come ye to my Master! May God the Holy Spirit bless this sickness, and make you come, because you have nowhere else to go! Jesus Christ will receive the devil's cast-aways. The very sweepings of pleasure, the dregs of the intoxicating cup, those who have gone so far that now their friends reject them, Jesus Christ accepts. May he accept me, and accept you, and then in him our joy shall be full! Amen.

1 John 3:2 The Christian's Manifestation

NO. 3004

The earlier part at this sermon was revised by Dr. Spurgeon in reading for publication.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 5TH, 1866.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." — 1 John 3:2

THE text mentions "now", and then passes on to the future, and speaks of "yet." It does, however, speak of "now"; and, after all, despite our trials, there is much to make us happy in our present condition. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Our manifold temptations and infirmities cannot make us lose the blessings that come to us through our adoption into the family of God. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord. "Today, even today, we are the blessed of the Lord, and we find in godliness the blessing of "the life that now is." Yet, beloved, for all that, we are still forced to cry, —

"Alas for us if thou wert all,

And nought beyond, O earth!"

If this were all our life, it would have been better for us not to have lived. Woe unto us if we had to live here always! Young says, —

"Were there no death, e'en fools might wish to die;" —

and, certainly, wise men would do so; for, brethren, this is a life of distractions, cares, anxieties, disappointments, and, what is worse, it is a life of sins, and sorrows, and bitter repentances for wrong-doing. This life is to us a traveller's life, with all the inconveniences that we meet with in travelling. We are here today, and we are gone to-morrow. Sometimes the heat consumes us, and at other times the cold bites us. We are like men at sea; we have not yet cast our anchor, nor furled our sails, nor reached the port whither we are bound; and the sea in which we are sailing is rough, and tempest-tossed and beset with rocks, and shoals, and quicksands. Our soul is often half a wreck, and longs for the desired haven, where "the wicked cease from troubling," and "the weary be at rest." Ours is a soldier's life; we have to be constantly fighting, or else continually upon our guard. Think not, thou who hast just buckled on thy harness, that thou hast won the victory; for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ must fight from morn till eve, from, youth's gay morning till the eve of grey old age.

I would not paint life in sadder colors than it needs, but I dare not shut my eyes to the fact that this is a sad world, and that our path is one of sorrow, for it is "through much tribulation" that we "enter into the kingdom of God."

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,

Leads to the land where sorrow unknown."

It is to that other and better land that I would, for a little while, bear away your thoughts. We shall borrow the wings of our text; and, like the eagle, soar towards heaven.

We will begin with this sentence: It Doth Not Yet Appear What We Shall Be.

What we are to be, we can scarcely guess. Indeed, we cannot guess at all merely by the use of our senses. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" but only to our spirits. Flesh and blood, as they are, cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and

cannot even guess what that kingdom is like. This is not the place where the Christian is to be seen. This is the place of his veiling; heaven is the place of his manifestation. This is the place of his night; yonder is the place of his day. Our portion is on the other side of the river: our days of feasting are not yet.

Some of the reasons why "it doth not yet appear what we shall be" may be as follows. First, our Master was, to a great extent, concealed and hidden, and we must expect to be as he was. Is it not written, in this very Epistle, "as he is, as are we in this world?" Jesus said to his followers when he was here upon earth, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." My brethren, see that, man, wearing a coat "without seam, woven from the top throughout;" — the carpenter's son, the heir of poverty, the companion of the humblest classes of mankind. Can you see in him God over all, blessed for ever? If you can, you are not looking with the eyes of your flesh, I am sure; for, in that manner, you cannot detect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ beneath so humble a garb. The veil which the Savior cast about himself was not so thick but that some rays of his glory burst through when he trod the waves, and rebuked the winds, and raised the dead; but, still, it was sufficiently dense, for he cried, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head," You will see that Christ was concealed as you recollect that, although, as Dr. Watts says, —

"All riches are as native right," —

yet, when he had to pay the temple tax, he had to work a miracle that Peter might be able to catch the fish which had the exact amount required in its mouth. He was so poor that he had to live upon the charity of his followers. Would you have believed that he was the Lord of all creation if you had seen him up on yonder lonely mountain's side without a bed to rest upon, or sitting wearily upon Jacob's well at Sychar, and asking a sinful woman to give him a little water to drink? The Savior was, indeed, masked and hidden so that the vulgar eye could not detect his glory. Only such men eagle-eyed as John were able to say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." Our Lord's wisdom, and grace, and power, and all his other illustrious attributes were concealed beneath the veil of our inferior class. Dr. Watts was right, as I reminded you just now, when he wrote, —

"Worthy is he that once was slain

The Prince of Peace that groan'd and died;

Worthy to rise, and live, and reign

At his almighty Father's side.

"Power and dominion are his due Who stood condemned at Pilate's bar Wisdom belongs to Jesus too, Though he was charged with madness here.

"All riches are his native right,

Yet he sustained amazing loss;

To him ascribe eternal might,

Who left his weakness on the cross."

So fully did he veil his glory that some even ventured to call him Beelzebub, and to say that he was a gluttonous man and a wine bibber!

Now, Christian, as you think of all this do you wonder if worldlings do not know you, and only speak of you to slander you? Do you wonder if your integrity is questioned, and your most manifest virtue is misrepresented, and if the grace which really is within you is cavilled at and despised? How should the world know you when the saviour himself was not discovered? As the bright gleams of his divine glory were almost wholly concealed; surely the weaker gleams of your earthly and human glory must be altogether hidden. That, perhaps, is the first reason why "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

I think I may also remark, brethren, that we are not yet fit to let it appear what we shall be. "The son in the house," says one, "is treated as if he were a servant, and even worse than if he were a servant. A servant is not chastised; he may do many wrong things, and yet escape without a stripe, yet it is not as with the son. Why does not his father give him the honor and dignity which belong to his sonship? "Simply because he is at present only as child, and he must be treated as a child, for a time, in order that he may be fitted to adorn his sonship. It would spoil him to receive at once all that is to be his when he enters upon his inheritance. He is the heir to all his father's estates, yet he has to be thankful to his father for even a penny, and he receives his pittance week by week, as though he were a poor pensioner upon his father's bounty or a beggar at his door. Why does not the father give this heir to large estates a thousand pounds? Why does he not entrust him with a great store of wealth? Because he is in his nonage; and if he

were trusted with a large sum of money, at so early an age, he might grow profligate, and so be unfitted to use his wealth aright if he should reach riper years.

Brethren, you and I, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are kings; — not only sons of God, but kings who are to reign with him for ever. Then, why are we not treated like kings? You know that, in some earthly royal families, it is thought best for the prince, the heir-apparent to the throne, that he should be a soldier or a sailor, and serve his country in that capacity, so that, when he comes to the throne, he may understand how to wield his scepter for the good of all classes of his subjects. So, Christian, is it with you. You are so childish at present; you have so lately begun to learn the nature of divine things; you are so uninstructed; you know but in part, and you know that part so badly, that it would not be fitting that your greatness should be revealed to you at present. You must be held back for a while till you have been better trained in the Holy Spirit's school, and then it shall appear what you shall be.

A third reason why it doth not yet appear what we shall be is, I think, because this is not the world in which the Christian is to appear in his glory; for, if he did, his glory would be lost in this world. The multitude climbed to the tops of the trees, or the roofs of the houses, whence they might see Caesar or Pompey returning with the spoils of war, and the multitudes still clap their hands when a warrior has overcome his country's enemies, and so become a great man. But the world cares little or nothing about self-denial, about Christian love, about consecration and devotion to Christ and his cause; yet these things are the glory of a Christian. That more excellence, that spiritual worth which flashes from the eyes of the holy angel and the saints in glory, is almost unappreciated here. Your Master has had this glory, though it was usually veiled while he was here below; yet the people cried out, "away with him, away with him, crucify him;" and if you had hecd, to its full extent, the glory which will be revealed in you in heaven, people would say the same concerning you. This is not the world in which you are to display your full honors. When a king is journeying through a foreign country, he does not wear his crown, nor the rest of his regalties; he often travels incognito; and even when he reaches his own country, he does not put on his royal robe for fools to admire at every village wake and fair. He is not a puppet-king, strutting upon the stage to show himself to the common people; but he reserves his grandeur for great public occasions and grand court ceremonies. In this poor sinful world, you Christians would be out of place if you could be what you shall yet be. You also must go, incognito, through this world. So a large extent; but, by-and-by, you shall take off the travel-worn garments that you have worn during your earthly pilgrimage, and put on your beautiful array, and be manifested to the whole universe as a son or a daughter of "the King eternal, immortal, invisible."

And, to close this part of the subject, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," because this is not the time for the display of the Christian's glory. If I may use such an expression, this is not the time for the manifestation of a Christian's glory. Eternity is to be the period for the Christian's full development, and for the sinless display of his God-given glory. Here, he must expect to be unknown; it is in the hereafter that he is to be discovered as a son of the great King. At present, it is with us as it is with the world during the winter. If you had not seen the miracle wrought again and again, you would not guess, when you look upon those black beds in the garden, or when you walk over that snowy and frosty covering, crisp and hard beneath your feet, that the earth will yet be sown with all the colors of the rainbow, and that it will be gemmed with flowers of unspeakable beauty. No, the winter is not the time when the beauty of the earth is to be best seen; And, Christian, you also must pass through your winter season. Ay, but let that wintry weather once be over, let the bleak December winds howl into your ear, let the cold and cheerless January come and go, let, "February fill-dyke" also pass; and, behold, the springtime cometh. I might also say that grey hairs comes upon your head, like the snowdrops appear upon the earth, as the harbingers of spring and of summer, and your soul shall yet blossom "with joy unspeakable and full of glory," and all the graces and excellence of the Christian shall be revealed in you. It is winter with you now, but the summer cometh.

If you stand, as many of you have often done, at the seaside, you have noticed that, at certain hours of the day, there is a long expanse of mud, or of dry sand, and it, may not seem to one who sees it for the first time as though the sea had ever rolled over it, or that it ever will. Ah, but "it doth not yet appear" what it will be. It is ebb-tide now; but wait till the flood comes, and then you will see the whole of that black mire or that yellow sand glistening in the sunshine. So, the flood of glory is rising, Christian; can you not see the breakers in the distance, the white crests of the incoming wavest God's great sea of eternity draws nearer and nearer; can you not hear the booming of that mighty flood? Soon shall your ransomed spirit float and bathe in that sea of glory, where not a single wave shall cause you a moment's grief or pain. This is not the time, Christian, in which you are to be fully revealed. You are, today, like that ugly shrivelled seed; there is no beauty in it that you should desire it. Ay, but wait a little while; and when the sweetly-perfumed flower shall shed its fragrance on the air, and make the gazer pause to admire the matchless colors with which God has been pleased to paint it, then shall its full glory be known and seen. At, present, you are in your seed stage, and your sowing time is coming. Tremble not that it is so. There will be a time for your poor flesh to sleep in the silent grave; but, at the voice of the archangel, and the blast of the trumpet of the resurrection, you shall arise. Just as the flower rises in spring, the dead body, which was put into the tomb, shall rise incorruptible, in the image of the Savior.

So, you see, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," because the Lord Jesus Christ was not fully revealed here, because we are not fit to appear in glory, because we are not here in the midst of the men and women who should see us in our glory, and because

it is not yet the right time for us thus to appear. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens;" but this is not the time for the full manifestation of Christians; and, therefore, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Having spent so much time over the previous clause, we will merely hint at the thing of the next words of the text: "But We Know That, When He Shall Appear."

So, than, it is quite certain that Christ will appear. John does not stop to prove it. He speaks of it as though it were perfectly understood that Christ would again appear, and he mentions what is to be the nature of that appearing.

Christ will appear in person. This is what the two angels declared to the disciples after his ascension, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven;" that is, as the incarnate God, he will come back from heaven.

When he comes, he will appear full of happiness. There will be no more sorrow to wrinkle his brow, no more furrows to be ploughed on his back, no fresh wounds to be made in his hands or his feet, no more offering of a sacrifice for sin; but he will come to rejoice with his people for ever.

Further, when he comes, he will appear in his glory; — not as the man of Nazareth, to be despised, and spit upon, but as "The mighty Go, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." If any of you are tempted to ask, "When will he come?" I give you his own assurance, "Surely I come quickly;" as go your way, and pray, as John did, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" yet do not forget Paul's inspired sentence, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape," Christ is coming, beloved, literally coming, — not figuratively, and by his Spirit, but literally, actually, really.

"Lo! he comes with clouds descending

Once for favour'd sinners slain."

He is coming in glory, to dwell in the midst of his saints for ever. This is our blessed hope, is the glorious appearing of the great, God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Now, passing on, "We know that, when he shall appear, We Shall Be Like Him; For We Shall See Him As He Is.

There are other passages, in his Word, where we are distinctly told that his manifestation will be coincident with our manifestation. Here, we are told that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him;" and the reason given for this is, "for we shall see him as he is."

Let us, while pondering the text, then, meditate upon this great truth: "We shall be like him." This afternoon, meditating upon this glorious assurance that I shall be like Christ, — and I fully believe that I shall be like him, — it did seem to me as if it were almost too good to be true.

Yet it is true that we are to be like Christ, first, as to our body. Here, we are like the first Adam; of the earth, earthy. But we shall, one day, have a body like that of the second Adam, a heavenly body. Like the first Adam, we are mortal now; like the second Adam, we shall be immortal by-and-by. Christ's body is not now subject to any pains, or to any decay or disease; neither shall our body be. It is quite true that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" yet it will be this very body of ours that will inherit the kingdom of God, only that which is corruptible in it, that which is mere flesh and blood, will then have been removed. As the apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, in that wonderful chapter about the resurrection, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." It is "a spiritual body" which the Lord Jesus Christ has today. I cannot imagine how glorious the Savior is in heaven; but I always think of him, even when he was upon this earth, as being far fairer than any artist ever depicted him. I have gazed a long while upon many paintings of Christ, both in England and abroad; but I have never yet seen one which appeared to me to be equal even to my ideal of the Savior. I have looked, and I have said, "Oh, no! he was far fairer than that; there must have been more beauty in his face than even that great master has portrayed." Well, brethren, if that is two concerning him as he was when among the sons of men, how true it must be concerning him as he is now! He is fairer than all the fair spirits that surround the heavenly throne. He is "the rose of sharon, and the lily of the valleys." Amongst the shining seraphim and cherubim, none can be compared with him; and, Christian, you are to be like him. Whatever are the characteristics of the Savior's glorified body, they are to be the characteristics of your body also. You are to have an immortal body, a spiritual body, a body incapable of pain, and suffering, and decay, a body which shall be suited to your emancipated spirit, a body having a wider range than this limited earthly sphere, having greater powers at locomotion, perhaps flying, swiftly as light, from world to world, or possibly having the power even to outrun the lightning's flash. I do not know how wondrous Christ's glorified body is; but I do know that, when he shall appear, we

shall be like him (even in body); for we shall see him as he is.”

But, far more important than that, we shall also be like Christ in soul. Have the eyes of your spiritual understanding or sanctified imagination ever looked upon Christ’s spotless, perfectly-developed soul; that equably-adjusted spirit, in which no one power or passion was too prominent or predominant; but in which his whole being was beautifully moulded and rounded, according to the perfect pattern of moral excellence, and beauty! Now, beloved, you are to be just like that; — not quick in temper, as perhaps you now are, but meek and lowly as he was; — not haughty, and prone to pride, but humble and gentle as he was; — not selfish and self-seeking, but as disinterested and as tender to others as he was; in fact, perfection’s own self. It was said of Harry the Eighth that, if all the histories of all the tyrants who ever lived had been lost, you might have composed them all with the material from the life of that execrable monster; and I will venture to say that, if all the biographies of all the good men and holy angels that have ever existed could be blotted out of existence or memory, they might all be written again with the material from the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in him dwelleth all excellence and all goodness. What a joy it is to us to know that we shall be like him! Brethren and sisters in Christ, this blessed truth is enough to make you stand up or even leap in the exuberance of your joy. I have heard of our enthusiastic Welsh friends dancing during some of their preachers’ sermons; and if it be this or a similar truth which makes them; dance, who can wonder at it, “We shall be like him,” — like him in soul, with no more infirmities of temper, or sloth, or undue haste. Our human nature shall be rid of all its rags, and we shall be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. Oh, that the blessed day had already come, and that we were like our Lord! But “we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

“Nor doth it yet appear

How great we must be made;

But when we see our Savior here,

We shall be like our Head.”

Time fails me to say what I should have liked to have said; yet I ought to add that we shall be like Christ, not only in body and in soul, but also in condition. We shall be with him when he is, and we shall be as happy as he is, as far as our capacity for happiness goes. We shall be crowned even as he is crowned, and we will sit upon thrones even as he sits upon his Father’s throne. He shall lead us to living fountains of water, and be our constant Companion, never going any from us again. He shall call us his brethren, and we shall share in his honor and glory. The joy of which we shall partake shall be his joy, and it will be in us that our joy may be full. O Christian, think lofty thoughts concerning the Lord in glory, and remember that thou shalt be like him! I cannot help repeating that quaint little ditty which Rowland Hill was so fond of humming over in his old age, —

“And when I’m to die, ‘Receive me,’ I’ll cry, For Jesus hath loved, I cannot tell why But thus I do find, we too are so joined, He’ll not live in glory and leave me behind.”

So, “we shall be like him;” and the reason why we shall be like him is thus given by John, For We Shall See Him As He Is.

How is it that we shall be like him because of that? Partly, by reflection. Perhaps you are aware that, in the olden time lookingglasses (if I may use an Irishism,) wore not looking-glasses at all, for they were made of polished brass. If a person looked into such a mirror when the sun was shining upon that mirror, not only would the mirror itself be bright, but it would also throw a reflection on the face of the person who was looking into it. This is only according to the laws of light. When a man looks into a bright mirror, it makes him also bright, for it throws its own light upon his face; and, in a much more wonderful fashion, when we look at Christ, who is all brightness, he throws some of his brightness upon us. When Moses went up into the mount, to commune with God, his face shone because he had received a reflection of God’s glory upon his face. He had looked into the blazing light of Deity, as far as a created eye could look there; and, therefore, that light was so brilliantly reflected in his own face that Aaron and the people were afraid to draw near him, and he had to cover his face with a veil while he spoke to them.

Further, beloved, we get to be like Christ by seeing him in type and symbol, as through a glass darkly. The Lord’s supper is one of the glasses; believers, baptism is another; the preaching of the Word is another; the Bible itself is another of these glasses. It is only a partial reflection of Christ that we get from all these glasses; yet, as we look at it, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,” or, “by the Lord the Spirit.”

But, brethren, if there be such a sanctifying influence about the very reflection of Jesus Christ, what a wondrous power it must have upon us when we see him as he is! When we shall gaze upon him with unveiled vision, and see him, as he is, do you wonder that John says that, then, “we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is?” Oh, that amazing sight, that unique sight of Jesus as he is! It would be worth while to die a thousand painful deaths in order to get one brief glimpse of him as he is. I do not think that Rutherford exaggerated when he talked of swimming through seven hells to get at Christ if he could not get at him anyhow else. A distant view of him, as we have seen him “leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills,” has so ravished our souls that we have scarcely known whether we have been in the body or out of thee body. When we have heard his voice, we have longed to be

with him. The very thought of him has made us, like the dove separated for a while from her mate, long to cleave the air with rapid wing, and fly home to our dovecote, and to our blessed Noah. What must it be to be there? What must it be to see our Savior as he is?

In some of the houses not far from here, I noticed some linnets in cages, in which there were tufts of grass, or small branches of trees as perches for the poor prisoners; yet they were singing away right merrily. I suppose that grass and those fragments of trees were meant to remind them, in this great, dirty, smoky Babylon, that there are green fields and wide forests somewhere. I thought, as I looked upon them, "Ah, you poor birds are very like what I myself am! My Master has put me in a little cage, and bidden me bide here for a while; and he has given me my little tuft of grass as an earnest of my inheritance in the

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood."

He graciously sends me a few comforts on the way. Ah! but that poor little tuft of grass, what is it in comparison with the fields and the hedges which are the proper home of the singing birds which have their liberty? And, Christian, you do not know what it will be for you to have your cage door opened, that you may fly away to that blessed land where the true birds of Paradise forever warble, from their joyful throats, the loudest praises to the great King who has set them free for ever. Let us begin the music here; Let us try even now to anticipate that happy day as we sing of —

"Jerusalem the golden,

With milk and honey blest; —

where —

"The daylight is serene;" —

and where —

"The pastures of the blessed

Are deck'd in glorious sheen."

I leave my text with you who love the Lord. As for you who do not love him, I dare not give it to you. Oh, that you did love him, and that you did trust him! He waiteth to be gracious. Seek ye his face, and he will be found of you. Fly to him, and he will not reject you. Trust in him, and he will wash you from all your sins, and bring you to his presence

1 John 3:3 The Hope that Purifies

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

THE Christian is a man of much present enjoyment. "Beloved, now are, we the sons of God; and, being God's sons, we cannot be altogether unhappy. Relationship to the ever-blessed God must, bring with it a measure of joy. "Happy art thou, O Israel," sang Moses, "who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" The men who can be truly called the sons of God are a blessed people. Still, the main portion of the believer's inheritance lies in reversion. It is not so much what I have as what I shall have that makes me joyful. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." To the unbeliever, all that is to come is in darkness. He may expect to go from the shades of evening to the blackness of a midnight that shall never end; but, for the, Christian, "light is sown." He is in darkness now,-the only darkness he shall ever know; and from the twilight of the morning he shall go on unto the perfect day, a day whose sun shall never set. We have the eyes of hope given to us, and, looking athwart the narrow stream of death, and beyond, that place where to carnal eyes hangs the curtain that shuts out the unseen, we, with these far-seeing eyes, behold the glory which is yet to be revealed, and we are blessed with the joys of hope. Let every Christian, therefore, when at any time he is downcast about the things of the present, refresh his soul with the thoughts of the future.

We have often discoursed concerning the pact, and I know that some of us have frequently been cheered and comforted by seeing how kindly God hath dealt with, us in bringing us up out of the hole of the pit whence we have been digged. Now we shall get further consolation by seeing what is to become of us in the future yet to be revealed; but, still, my object at this time will not be to impart consolation so much as to excite to holiness. Our text is a very practical one; and while it deals with hope, it has more to do with the result of that hope in the purity of the believer's life.

Let us go at once to our work. We shall note, first, the believer's hope; secondly, the operation of that hope; and, thirdly, use the operation as a test of the hope.

I. To begin, then, let us look at The Believer's Hope. The text speaks of men that have hope,-"hope in him,"-which I understand to mean hope in Jesus Christ.

The Christian has a hope peculiar to himself. As for its object it is the hope of being like Jesus Christ. "We shall be like him; for we shall see him, as he is." Now, some would not put it in that shape; they would say that their hope, as Christians, is to pass within the pearly gates, to tread the golden, streets, to listen to the harpers harping with their hope, and, standing upon the sea of glass, to be for ever free from sorrow, toil, and pain. But those are, only the lower joys of heaven, except so far as they indicate spiritual bliss. I do believe that there are, some professing Christians who would like Mahomet's heaven, and be perfectly satisfied if they could sit for ever on a green and flowery mount, and could drink from rivers of milk and eat from hives of honey, and so on, and so on.

But, after all, the real truth, the truth that is contained in these metaphors and figures, and underlies them all,-the truth is that the heaven a true Christian seeks after is a spiritual one, it is the heaven of being like his Lord. I take it that, while it will consist in our sharing in the Redeemer's power, the Redeemer's joy, and this Redeemer's honor, yet from the connection of the text, it lies mainly in our being spiritually and morally like him,-being purified, even as he is pure. I must frankly confess that, of all my expectations of heaven, I will cheerfully renounce ten thousand things if I can but know that I shall have perfect holiness; for, if I may become like Jesus Christ as to his character,-pure and perfect,-I cannot understand how any other joy can be denied me. If we shall have that, surely we shall have everything. This, then, is our hope, that "we shall be, like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Every man sees morally what he himself is. A man who is bad sees evil, he is blind to good. The man who is partially like Christ has only a partial view of Christ. You might almost, know your own character by your view of Jesus. If thine eye sees not inexpressible beauty in him, it is thine eye that is to blame, for he is altogether lovely; and when the eye of our inward nature shall come to see Jesus as he is, then we, may depend upon it that we are like him. It is the pure in heart that see God, because God, the inexpressibly-pure One, can only be seen by those who are themselves pure. When we shall be perfectly pure we shall be able to understand Christ; and when we understand Christ, or see him as he is, as we shall do at his appearing, then we shall be like him;-like him free, from sin, like him full of consecration to God, like him pure, and perfect. To-day, he, is Conqueror over sin and death and hell; he is superlative in his virtue and his holiness, he has conquered all the powers of evil; and one day we, too shall put our foot on the old dragon's head, we too shall see sin bruised beneath us, and shall come off "more than conquerors through him, that loved us." This, then, is our hope, that we shall be like our Head when we shall see him as he is.

But why do we expect this? What is the ground of our hope? The context shows us that we do not expect to be, like Christ because of anything that is in us by nature, or any efforts that we ourselves can make. The basis of all is divine love; for, observe, the chapter begins, "Behold, what manner of love the, Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." We expect, to be like Christ, the Beloved of God, because we also are beloved of God. It is according to the nature and purpose of the love of God to make its object like God. We therefore, expect that divine love will work with divine light and divine purity and make us into light and purity too.

The apostle goes on to say that we, have, been called the sons of God, and that, we really are, God's sons See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,934, "And we are,-A Jewel from the Revised Version.". Well, that is another ground of our hope: we hope to be like Christ because the sons of God are like each other. It is the Lord's purpose that Jesus Christ shall be the firstborn among many brethren. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might, be the firstborn among many brethren." Very well then, since we are adopted into the divine family, and are to be made, like our Elder Brother, we, therefore, believe that we shall be one day like the Lord Jesus Christ in the perfection of his excellence.

Then we have this further buttress for our hope, if it be not a, main pillar of it,-that, we are now one with Jesus Christ, and, therefore, "when he shall appear, we shall be like him." There is an intimate connection between our souls and Christ. He was hidden from the world, and the world knew him not, and therefore we are hidden, and the world knoweth us not. He is to be revealed, -there is to be a day of his manifestation to angels and to men; and when he is manifested, we shall be manifested too. Knowing that we are united to, Christ, by sacred mysterious bonds, we, therefore, expect that when we shall see him as he is, we shall be like him.

Still, for simplicity's sake, it is well to say that, the basis of our hope lies altogether in him. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself." Beloved, all true hope is the hope in Christ. If thy hope lieth in thyself, it is a delusion. If thy hope resteth upon any earthly priest, and not upon this one great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, thy hope is a lie. If thy hope standeth with one foot upon the work of Christ and the other foot upon thine own resolutions or merits, thy hope will fail thee. "Hope in him" is the, only hope which can be acceptable to God, the only hope which will bear the stress of thy weight, the only hope which will stand the test

of thy dying hour and of the day of judgment. Our hope, then, of being like Christ is a hope in Christ. We are trusting him, we are depending upon him. If he does not make us like himself, our hope, is gone. If ever we are to get to heaven, it will be through him, and through him alone; our hope is in him from top to bottom; he is our Alpha and our Omega, the beginning and the end. There our hope begins, and there our hope ends. Thou, O Christ, art all our confidence! We know of none beside. This, then, is the believer's hope; a hope to be made like Christ, a hope based upon Christ.

II. But, now, coming to the practical business of the sermon, our text speaks of The Operation Which Hope Has Upon The Soul: "Every man that hath, this hope in him purifieth himself."

It does not puff him up, it purifies him. I know there are some who will say, "Well, if I had a hope, a, sure hope, a full assurance and confident expectation that I should go to heaven, I think I should feel myself to be, someone very great." Yes, very likely you would; but then, you do not possess such a hope, and God does not intend to give it to you while you are in your present condition. But when the Lord makes a man his child, then he takes away the evil heart out of his flesh; when he shows a man his great love to him, he humbles him, he lays him low, and so the expectation of heaven and of absolute perfection never exalts a man. If any man can say, "I am secure of heaven, and I am proud of it," he may take my word for it that he is secure of hell! If thy religion puffs thee up, puff thy religion away, for it is not worth a puff. He who grows great in self-esteem through the love of God knows not the love of God in truth, for the love of God is like the fish that the Lord put into Peter's boat; the more full the boat became, the more quickly it began to sink. O Lord, the more the glories of thy love shall strike my eyes, the humbler I shall lie!

Again, a man who has this hope of heaven in himself-let me correct myself, a man who has this hope of perfection in himself- finds that it does not give him licence to sin. I have heard a thoughtful person say, "If I had a good hope of being saved, and knew that I should go to heaven, I should; live as I liked." Perhaps you would; but then, you have not that, hope, and God will not give it to you while you are in such a state that you would like to live in sin. If a Christian man could live as he liked, how would he live? Why, he would live absolutely without sin. If the Lord would indulge the newborn nature of his own children with unrestricted liberty, in that unrestricted liberty they would run after happiness. The unrenewed heart would like to sin, but the renewed heart quite as eagerly loves to obey the Lord. When the Lord has changed thee, he can give thee not only a hope but a, full assurance that that hope shall come true, and yet thou wilt walk all the more carefully with thy God, for "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

This hope, then, does not puff up, and does not lead to licence. You can see why it is so. Gratitude leads to holiness. Any man who feels, "God has saved me, and I am on the way to being made like Christ," if he be a man at all, (and he must be to feel that,) will say, "Now that I owe all this to God, how can I show forth my gratitude to him?" He must be a brute, he must be a devil, he must be seven thousand devils in one who would say, "God is doing all this for me, and, therefore, I will continue in sin." Well did the apostle say of such men that their damnation is just. But where there is the good hope of heaven, the man naturally says, "O my Lord, hast thou loved me so much, and hast thou provided such a glorious portion for me hereafter. Then, now I will obey thee in everything, I will serve thee with my whole heart and soul. Help me to run in the way of thy commandments."

Such a man, when led of the Spirit, also feels that holiness is congruous to his expectations. He expects to be like Christ. Very well, then, he says, "I will try to be like Christ. If I am to be the possessor of a perfect nature, the most natural thing is that I should begin to seek after it now." If the Lord intends to make you heirs of immortality to dwell at his right hand, does it seem right that you should now live as others do? Suppose you know tonight (and I hope many of you do) that, ere long, you will be at God's right hand does it not seem a shameful thing that you should go and become a drunkard, or that you should be dishonest? King Lemuel's mother said to him, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink;" and, surely, it is not for children of God to drink the wines of sin, and go after the sweets of iniquity. It is not for princes of the blood imperial, descended from, the King of kings, to play with the filthy lewdnesses of this time and with the sins of earth. Surely an angel would not stoop to become a carrion crow, neither can we suppose it congruous, nor does it, appear seemly, that he who is brother to the Lord Jesus Christ, and who is to dwell for ever who Jesus is, should be found in the haunts of sin. The very natural fitness of things, under the, blessing of God's Spirit, leads the child of God to purify himself, since he expects to be completely like Christ ere long.

Now, without tarrying longer upon that part of the subject, let me notice that the believer is here said to purify himself. If we, are very orthodox, we can afford to use language that does not look so, but people who are heterodox usually have to be extremely guarded in their expressions. Now we do not believe that any man actually purifies himself, yet the text says that, "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." We believe that the Holy Ghost purifies sinners by applying to them the precious blood of Jesus. We sing,-

"Let the water and the blood

From thy river side which flowed,

**Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."**

We look to God for all purity, believing that he is the Creator of it. Still, the text says that "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself;" that is to say, God the, Holy Spirit so works in every man who has a true hope, that he labors to become purified and uses all possible means to overcome sin, and to walk in righteousness. While I am speaking upon this point, may each one of us be examining himself! When a man has a true hope in Christ, he begins to purify himself by the power of the Holy Spirit.

First, he puts away all the grosser sins. Perhaps, before conversion, he had been unchaste; he had been lewd in language and in act, or he had been dishonest, or he had been a blasphemer. Conversion does away with all that. I have sometimes been astonished and delighted when I have seen how readily these sins are put to death. They are taken out to the block and executed. Many a man, who had never lived a day without swearing, has never had a temptation to it from the moment of his conversion. So thoroughly does God renew the heart that these grosser sins go at once.

But there are sins of the flesh, which, though we are purged from them, will endeavor to return; and, hence, the man who has, a hope of heaven will purify himself every day from them; he will hate the very thought of those sins, and any expressions or actions that might tend towards them. He abhors them, he flees from them; for he knows that, if he begins to dally with them, he will soon go from bad to worse. He understands that, in this warfare, to fly is the truest courage; and, therefore, from such sins of the flesh he daily flees, like Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife, even though he should leave his garment behind him, that he may get away from them. So he "purifieth himself."

Then he purifies himself from all evil company. Those spirits that he once thought choice he now avoids. If they will go with him to heaven, he will be glad that they should join his company; but if they will neither repent of sin nor believe in Jesus, he saith to them, "You can be of no service to me." If he can help them to heaven, he seeks them, out, and tries to win them; but, when they ridicule him, he is afraid lest their example may be injurious to him, and he shuns them, and seeks better company. So he "purifieth himself."

Then he begins, from that day forth, and till he dies, he continues seeking to purify himself. Perhaps, first, he does not know some things to be sin which he afterwards finds out to be so. As the light gradually shines into his soul, he puts away this and that, and the other, with a strong and resolute hand; and if there was some sin that pleased him much, which was to him like a right hand or a right eye, he cuts it off, or tears it out; for, having a hope of heaven in him, he knows he cannot take any sin to heaven, and he does not want to do so. He puts it away; he knows that he must put it away before he can enter into life eternal.

Soon, he finds out that there are certain sins in his nature which more readily overcome him than any others do. Against these he sets a double watch. Possibly, he has a quick temper. Over this he grieves very much, and he earnestly prays to God, "O Lord, subdue my evil temper! Guard my tongue, lest I say bitter words, and my heart, lest I indulge in unkind feelings." He finds himself in a certain trade, and if in such a trade there is sin, (and most trades have some peculiar sin,) he feels, "Then I will have nothing to do with it. If I cannot make money without sin, I will lose money, or change my business, but I will not do what is wrong." He observes some sin that runs in his family; he knows that his household has some peculiar fault. Here, again, he cries to God, "Lord, purify me and purify my house from this evil thing!" He observes that there are certain sins in the district where he lives. Against these he cries aloud. He knows that there are sins peculiar to his position. Is he a rich man He is afraid of growing worldly. Is he, a poor man? He is afraid of becoming envious. He looks at his position, and he observes what the peculiar sins of that position are, and then, in the power of the Eternal Spirit, he seeks to purify himself from all these sins.

Perhaps he is travelling for his health, and he knows that many travelers, though they profess to be Christians, never observe the Sabbath, and forget to a large extent the regular habits of devotion which they had at home. So he sets a double watch over himself in that respect. Is he in great trial? Then he knows the temptation to impatience and murmuring will come, and he tries to purify himself from that. Has he great pleasure? Then he knows the temptation will be to make; this world his home, and so, he tries to purify himself from that. You see, brethren, under the power of God's Spirit, this purifying of the life is a great work to be done, but it is a work that every man that hath this hope in Christ will do. If he be indeed hoping in the Lord Jesus, this will be the great struggle and warfare of his life, to get rid first of this sin, and then of that other, that he may be wholly sanctified unto the Lord,-a holy man, fitted for a holy heaven.

Now, then, how does he purify himself? I have shown you what he does, but by what means does he do it? He does it, first, by noting the example of Christ. The hoping man reads Christ's life, and he says, "Here is my model, but I am far short of it; O God, give me all that there was in Christ! Take off from my character all the excrescences, for these must be excrescences if they were, not in Christ." Familiarizing himself with the life of his Savior, and getting to commune with Christ, he is thus helped to see what sin is, and where sin is, and to hate it.

Then he prays God to give him a tender conscience. Oh, I wish that all Christians had tender consciences! I have heard of persons who are blind beginning to read with their fingers; but, beginning late in life, they have had some manual labors to perform which have hardened their fingers, so they could not read. I am afraid that some of you have hard consciences, with two or three thicknesses or horny skin over them. You want to have the lancet used to make your conscience tender again. It is a blessed thing to have a conscience that will shiver when the very ghost of sin goes by,- a conscience that is not like our great steamships at sea that do not yield to every wave, but, like a cork on the water, that goes up and down with every ripple, sensitive in a moment to the very approach of sin. May God the Holy Spirit make us so! This sensitiveness the Christian endeavors to have, for he knows that, if he hath it not, he will never be, purified from his sin. He prays,-

“Quick as the apple of an eye,

O God, my conscience make!

Awake, my soul, when sin is nigh,

And keep it still awake.

“Oh may the least omission pain

My well-instructed soul

And drive me to the blood again,

Which makes the wounded whole!

He tries always to keep an eye to God, and not to men. That is a great point in purity of life. I know many persons whose man thought is earning other people's opinions. Their question is, "What will So-and-so say? What will the neighbors say? What will Mrs. Grundy say? What, will be commonly thought of it?" You will never be a holy man till you do not care a fig what anybody says except your God, for a thing that is right is right anywhere. If it is right before the Lord, it is right although all the world should hiss it down. Oh, that we had more moral courage, for moral courage is essential to true holiness! The man who has this hope in him will not say, "If the door be shut, and nobody hears of it, I may feel free to do evil," or, "I am in a foreign country where the customs differ from those at home, therefore I will do as others do." No, such hypocrisy shows a rotten heart. The man of God will say, "This is right before the Lord; and though no eye sees me to commend me, and though every tongue should speak against, me to blame me, I will do the right, and I will eschew the evil." This is one way in which the Christian "purifieth himself."

And then he notes the lives of others, and makes them his beacons. If you were sailing down the Thames, and saw a boat ahead of you that had run upon a shoal, there would be no necessity for you to go there to find out where the true channel was; you would let other shipwrecks be your beacons. So the Christian, when he observes a fault in another, does not stand and say, "Ah, see how faulty that man is!" but he says, "Let me shun that, fault." And when he sees the virtue of another, if his heart is right, he does not begin to pick holes in it, and say, "He is not as good as he looks," but he says, "Lord, there is a, sweet flower in that, man's garden, give me some of the seed of it; let it grow in my soul." So other men become both his beacon and his example.

A wise Christian tries to purify himself by hearing a heart searching ministry. If the ministry never cuts you, it is no use to you. If it does not make you feel ashamed of yourself,-aye! and sometimes half-angry with the preacher, it is not good for much.

If it is all smoothing you the way the feathers go, and making you feel happy and comfortable, be afraid of it, be afraid of it. But if, on the contrary, it seems to open up old wounds, and make the sores fester and the soul bleed before the living God, then, you may hope it is a ministry which God is using for your lasting good. The true Christian not only wishes the preacher to search him, but his prayer is, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts." He does not want to live in sin, thinking it not to be sin, but he wants to get away from it. I am afraid some Christians do not want to know too much of Christ's commands; there might be some very awkward ones, and they do not want to attend to some of them. They are very pleased if they can get some minister to say that some of Christ's commands are nonessential and unimportant. Ah, dear friends, he is a traitor to his Master if he dares to say that anything that Christ says is unimportant. It is always important for a servant to do as his Master tells him, and it is essential to comfort and to obedience that whatsoever the Lord has spoken we should endeavor to perform in, his strength.

I might continue thus to show you the way by which the, Christian, who has a good hope, endeavors to purify himself; but I must just notice this one thing, that he sets before himself Christ as his standard. He purifies himself, even as Christ is pure. My dear friends, we shall make a mistake if we make anyone our model save the Lord Jesus Christ; for, in any other life but his there will be sure to be something in excess. I am sure it will be best for us, if we are Wesleyans, not always to try and do everything as John Wesley would as it; and if we are Calvinists, much as we honor John Calvin, to remember that we shall go wrong if we try to season everything with the spirit of John Calvin. No man is fit to be a model for all men except the Savior who redeemed men.

“Lord, as to thy dear Cross we flee,

And plead to be forgiven,

So let thy life our pattern be,

And form our souls for heaven.

“Help us, through good report and ill,

Our daily cross to bear;

Like thee, to do our Father’s will,

Our brethren’s griefs to share.”

In white, all the colors are blended. A perfectly white substance combines all the colors of the rainbow merged in true proportion but green and indigo and red are only the, reflections of a part of the solar rays. So John, Peter, Paul are parts of the light of heaven they are differing colors, and there is a beauty in each one of them but, if you want to get the whole of the rays of light, you must get to Christ, for all light is in him. In him is not simply the red or the blue, but in him is light, the blue light, the whole of light. You are sure to get a lop-sided character if any man shall be the copy after which you write. If we copy Christ, we shall, through the power of his Spirit, attain to a perfect manhood. O brethren, what a life-task is here for you! “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” We shall never be able, beloved, to throw down our weapons, and say, “Now I have no more in to fight with, no more evil to overcome.” I have heard of some brethren who say that, but I think it must be a mistake. If there be a possibility of getting to that condition, I mean to get to it, and I would recommend you all to try after it; but I think that, till you die, you will have some evil to struggle with. As long as you are in this body, there will be enough tinder- for one of the devil’s sparks to set it alight. You will have need to keep on damping it, and every moment be on the watch-tower, even till you cross the Jordan. This is our life’s business, and, brethren, I do not know that you can have a better business; for, while you are contending against sin, purifying yourselves by the precious blood of Jesus, you will be bringing honor and glory to God; your heart will become a field in which the power and grace of God will be displayed, for he will come and purify you, he will be this real Purifier while he is using you to purify yourself.

III. I must stay no longer; but, in the, last place, Use The Text AS A Test. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.”

Dear hearers, the question is, have we a true hope in Christ? If we have, we purify ourselves,-we labor to purify ourselves even as Christ is pure.

There are some professors of religion who do the opposite to this; they defile themselves. I repeat it, they defile themselves. It is a shame that I should have to, say it. They were baptized on profession of their faith, but they were never cleansed from their old sins. I have heard of persons who come to the communion, table yet go to the table off the drunkard too, but he that, hath the true hope in Christ purifies himself. How can you be said to have that hope if you love such sin? I have heard of professed Christians and my cheek has blushed when I have heard it of them, who could, sing wanton songs and do wanton acts, and yet say they had a, hope of heaven. O sirs, do not deceive yourselves; you do lie! If you are not pure and chaste, you are, none of God’s children. You may fall into sin by surprise; but if you calmly and deliberately go to that which is unclean, how dwelleth the love of God in you?

I have known a, man like to hear a good sermon, and also like to mingle with those who frequent the alehouse, and like to sing “a jolly good song.” He was a boon, companion of the wicked. Well, labor under no mistake, sir. “He that committeth sin is of the devil.” It is no use making excuses and apologies; if you are a lover of sin, you shall go where sinners go. If you, who live after this fashion, say that you have believed in the precious blood of Christ, I do not believe you, sir. If you had a true faith in that precious blood, you would hate sin. If you dare to say you are trusting in the atonement while you live in sin, you lie, sir; you do not trust in the atonement; for where there is a real faith in the atoning sacrifice, it purifies the man, and makes him hate the sin which shed the Redeemer’s blood.

After all, holiness is the test. So let the great, fan throw up the chaff and the wheat together, and let the wind go through it, and blow the chaff away. You come here, and sit as God’s people sit, and sing as God’s people sing; but, ah, some of you are a disgrace to the profession you make,-I know you are! May God forgive you, and give you grace to repent of this your sin, and come to Jesus Christ, and find pardon in his precious blood! This is, after all, the test, “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.” How can he have that hope in him if he defiles himself

But there are some others who, while they do not actually defile themselves, yet they let things go very much as a matter of course. They do not purify themselves, certainly, but they float down the stream. If there is a good tone at home, they do not object to it; if there is an evil one, they do not rebuke it. If they are in the show, and anybody speaks upon religion, they chime in. If anybody ridiculed it, perhaps they would not join in it, but they would get up in a corner, and say nothing. They never take sides with Christ, except when everybody else is on his side. True, they do not take sides with the devil, but they mean to be betweenites, and neutrals, and slippers-in. Well, you will slip, one of these days, into your appointed place, and shalt, I think, ought to be a particularly low place in hell; because a sinner who sins openly and honestly is a respectable son of a fellow, but those men creatures who try to get enough religion, to cheat the devil with, but never come straight out and avow Christ,-why, methinks, they deserve a double perdition. They know better, they prove their knowledge by a little sneaking affection to the right, and yet they cleave to the evil. The dead fish that float down this stream has only one fault, but down the stream it goes for that one fault; and the man who gives himself up to the current in which he is, proves himself to be spiritually dead. What, sir! Did YOU never say, "No"? Did you never put your foot down, and say, "I will not do this"? Others have to fight to win the crown, and you expect to get, it by lying in bed. Do you think there are crowns ill heaven for the who never fight their sins? Do you believe that there are rewards in heaven for those who never followed Christ, and never endured hardship for his sake, Nay, make no mistake; ye know not what the truth is.

The truth is in that famous picture of John Bunyan's. While I tell it you again in my own, words may some of you be moved so make that picture true! He tells us that the Pilgrim, saw, in the Interpreter's house, a beautiful palm, send on the top thereof there walked many persons clothed in gold; and from the roof there came the sweetest music that mortal ear had ever heard. He felt that he would fain be on the top of that palace with those that there so happily basked in the sun. So he went to see the way thither, and saw at the door that there stood a number of armed men who pushed back every person who sought to enter. Then he stood back in amaze. But he noted that there sat one at a table having a writer's ink-horn, and a brave man from the crowd, of stout countenance, came up, and said, "Set down my name, sir!"

And when his name was set down on the roll, he at once drew his sword, and began to cut his way through the armed men. The fight, was long and cruel, and he was wounded; but, he gave not up the conflict till he had cut his way through, making a living lane through those that, had opposed him. So he pressed his way in, and the singers on the top of the palace welcomed him with sweet music, singing,-

"Come in, come in!

Eternal glory thou shalt win."

Now, sir, if thou wouldst go to heaven, it is all of grace, and through the precious blood of Christ, it is all by simple faith in Christ, yet every man who, gets there must fight for it. There is no crown except for warriors, there are, no rewards, except for those who contend for the mastery against flesh and blood, against Satan and against sin. Whose name shall we set down tonight Is there a man of stout countenance whom, God has made resolute against sin? Let us set his name down. Only, when you put down your name, remember that he that putteth on his harness must not boast as though he were putting it off. There is much that you will never perform except, the Eternal God be, at your back; nevertheless, if you have this hope in you, if you have received this hope from God, if it is a, hope based upon divine sonship, upon divine love,-a "hope in Him," even in Christ, you shall win the day; you shall purify yourselves, even as he is pure; and when he shall appear, you shall be like him, for you shall see him as he is. I pray the Lord to bless this sermon, to the preacher, and bless it to every one of his hearers, and he shall have the glory. Amen and Amen.

1 John 3:16 God's Love to the Saints

NO. 2959

**A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26TH, 1905,
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"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." — 1 John 3:16.

True love cannot long be dormant. It is like fire, of an active nature; it must be at work. Love longs for expression; it cannot be dumb. Command it to be without expression, and you command it not to live. And true love is not satisfied with expressing itself in words. It does use words, but it is painfully conscious of their feebleness, for the full meaning of love is not to be conveyed in any human language. It breaks the backs of words, and crushes them to atoms when it lays upon them all that it means. Love must express itself in deeds, as our old proverb says, "Actions speak more loudly than words." Love delights, too, in sacrifices; she rejoices in self-denials; and the more costly the sacrifice, the better is love pleased to make it. She will not offer that which costs her nothing; she loves to endure pains, and losses, and crosses, and thus she expresses herself best.

This is a general principle, which is not only applicable to men, but it reaches even up to God himself; for “God is love,” and being love, he must display love, nor can he rest with merely speaking of his love. His love must manifest itself in action. More than that, God could not rest until he had made the greatest sacrifice that he could make, and had given up his only-begotten Son to die in the place of sinners. When he had done that, then he could rest in his love. God does not come to us, and say, “Men and women, I love you; and you must believe that I love you although I do nothing for you to prove my love.” He does ask us to believe in his love, but he has given us abundant proofs of it; and, therefore, he has a right to claim our belief in it. The apostle of love, who wrote the chapter from which our text is taken, tells us, “Hereby we are made to know” — for that would be the real translation of the original, — “Hereby we come to know, we do know, the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.” Just as we learn the love of others by seeing what they are prepared to sacrifice for us, so is it even with God himself, we discover, discern, perceive, and are made to know, the love which he bears to us by the fact that “he laid down his life for us.”

I. First, I want to show you that There Are Many Acts Of God In Which His Love Is Very Clear, But In Which The Most Of Men Fail To See It.

There are many of his acts, of which it might be sad, “Hereby the love of God is manifested;” yet many men fail to perceive the love which lies behind the actions. Let us examine ourselves, to see how we stand with regard to this matter. There are some of us, who ought to have perceived the love of God to us in the surroundings into which we were brought at our very birth. I am addressing many who, like myself, owe very much to Christian parentage. Many of us could truly say, in the words of the children’s hymn, —

**“I was not born, as thousands are,
Where God was never known,
And taught to pray a useless prayer
To blocks of wood and stone.”**

But, without being born slaves or heathens, it might have happened that we should have had to spend our childhood in the slums of London. Some of you think that you have been very good; but would you have been better than the boys that fill our reformatories, — would you have been better than those who crowd our prisons, — if you had had the same training, or lack of training, that has been their lot? If you had had such an example as they have had, — if the taste of strong drink had been familiar to you almost from your birth, — if the first thing you ever heard was blasphemy, — if you had lived in the thieves kitchen, — do you think that you would have been any more clear from guilt than they have been? When we look down upon others, and despise them, it may be that, if we knew all their temptations, and the conditions of their upbringing, we might almost admire them for not being worse than they are. It costs some people a great struggle to be honest; and there are many women, in this dreadful London, whom we, perhaps, think ill of, who, nevertheless, have suffered almost a martyrdom, and who have fought stern battles with temptation, if they have fallen somewhat, they are to be honored because they have not fallen still further.

But what a blessing it was to us that, when we woke up in this world, we looked up into a face that smiled upon us, and to lips that, by-and-by, spake to us of Jesus Christ. The first example that we had was one that, to this day, we wish to follow. Our companions, from our youth up, have been of a godly order; and there are some, who are in heaven now, who had much to do with the formation of our character, and for whom we should always thank God. Now, had we been wise, — had we understood the meaning of this gracious arrangement, — we might, in the very conditions in which we were born, and brought up, have perceived the love of God to us; yet many of us did not. I should not wonder if some of you thought that you were badly treated because you were placed in such a strict family, where you were checked, and kept from what you regarded as the pleasures of life. May a young man has felt that he has been tied to his mother’s apronstring a great deal too much. He saw other young men enjoying themselves, but he could not; his father, like a grim jailer, was always looking after him so closely. That is the way many of us put it in the days of our ignorance; but, now that God has opened our eyes, we can see the love of God is it all. Yet we did not see it then; and, as a general rule, young men and women, who have the high privilege of Christian parentage and training, do not perceive the love of God in it, but often kick against it, and wish they had not to endure what they regard as so great a hardship.

Then, dear friends, the love of God may be clearly see in reference to all of us in his giving us a wise and judicious law. That law of the ten commandments is a gift of great kindness to the sons of men, for it tells us the wisest and the happiest way of living. It forbids us nothing but what would be to our injury, and it withholds from us nothing which would be a real pleasure to us. The commands which say, “Thou shalt” or “Thou shalt not” are like the boards, which you sometimes at bathing-places, bearing the words, “Dangerous! Keep so many yards away from this spot.” God does not make laws denying us anything that would really be for our good. There is a poisonous berry growing in your garden, and your child has been told that he is not to eat it. If he is a wise child, he will understand that it is your love to him which has bold him not to eat of that poisonous berry. If you had no care about him at all, he might eat what poison he chose; but, because you love him, you say to him, “My child, do not this, and do not that,

because it will be to your serious injury, and possibly your death, if you disobey." We ought to see the love of God in the gift of the law, but nobody ever does that till he is led to the love of God in other ways. We cannot say of it, though we ought to do so, "Hereby perceive we the love of God towards us."

We have also had, in the daily bounties of divine providence, abundant manifestations of the love of God. If our eyes were really opened, every loaf of bread would come to us as a token of our Father's care, and every drop we drink would come as the gift of our Father's bounty. Are we not clothed by his love? The breath that is in our nostrils, — who gives it to us but our Creator? Who preserves us in health but our great Benefactor? Is it not a proof of love that you are not to-night on a sick-bed, — that you are not in the lunatic-asylum, — that you are not do the borders of the grave; — ay, and that you are not in hell? We are a mass of mercies and a mass of sins, we seem to be made of mercy and ingratitude mixed together. But if the Lord will open our eyes, we shall then perceive the boundless mercies of which we are the recipients, and we shall begin to perceive his love; but this is not the first place where man ever sees God's love. The cross is the lancet window through which the love of God is best seen; but, until that window is opened, all the bounties of God's providence fail to convince us of his love. See how the mass of men reap their harvests, and yet never bless the God who gives the harvest. See how they drive the loaded wains to the granaries, and thresh out the wheat, and send it to be sold in the markets; but did you ever hear of a song of praise being sung in the market when they brought the first new wheat to be sold? Did you ever hear of such a thing? Why, they would think we were all gone mad if, at Mark Lane, on the arrival of a sample of new wheat, we were to begin to sing —

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

The probability is that there are many of them there - cursing because the wheat has gone down a shilling or two, and the poor people will, possibly, get their bread a little cheaper. Praising God seems to have gone out of fashion, and we are bold by philosophers, who ought to know, that the wheat springs up naturally, and that God has nothing to do with it. They say that, whether it rains or whether the sun shines, the processes of nature are ruled by iron law with which God has no concern at all; and they practically imply that he has gone out for a holiday, and left the world to manage itself, or wound it up, like a watch, and put it under his pillow, and gone to sleep. That is the philosopher's religion; and, as far as I am concerned, the philosophers may keep it, for it is not mine. My religion believes in the God of the showers, and the God of the sunshine, and the God of the harvests. I believe in "the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" and let his name be praised for it. Were our hearts right with him, we should "hereby" perceive the love of God, but we do not; that perception comes to us through a stained glass window, the window that was stained crimson by the precious blood of Christ. There, and only there, do we perceive the love of God, "because he laid down his life for us."

II. That brings me to my second point, which is this, In The Laying Down Of His Life, Christ's Love Is Best Seen.

I have already said that, in many acts of God, his love ought to be seen; but, according to the text, we "hereby" perceive the love of God, "because he laid down his life for us." It is universally admitted that there can be no greater proof of love than for a person to lay down his life for the object of that love. All sorts of sacrifices may be taken as proofs of affection, but the relinquishment of life is the supreme proof of love, which nobody doubts. A man says that he loves his country; but suppose that man should be in the condition of Curtius, in the old Roman fable, when a great chasm opened in the Forum, and it was declared that it could only be closed by the most precious thing in Rome being thrown into it. The story goes on to say that Curtius, fully armed, and riding his charger, leaped into the chasm, which instantly closed. Well, nobody could doubt the love of such a man for his country. If the question happened to be the love of humanity, we have the story — the true story — of the surgeon at Marseilles; and if we acted as he did, nobody could doubt our love to our fellow-creatures. The plague was raging through the city, and the people were dying by thousands. The good bishop remained among them, discharging the last offices to the dying, and cheering the living; and many of the surgeons of the town, who might have departed, lingered to wait upon the sick. At a consultation among them, it was resolved to make a post mortem examination of one of the worst cases of the pest; and the question was, who should make it, for, whoever did it must certainly die of the disease within a few hours. One of them, to his honor, said, "My life is of no more value than that of any other man; why should I not sacrifice it, if I can, by doing so, discover the cause of this terrible malady, and save this city?" He finished his grim task, wrote his notes about the case, and then went to his home, and died. Nobody doubted that he loved Marseilles, for he had laid down his life for it. And you probably read, the other day, the story of a mother's love, which nobody could doubt. In the late disastrous floods, a mother, who had her two little children in a cradle, climbed a hill, carrying them with her; she reached a tree, or some other frail shelter with these two dear objects of her love, and held them up till she found that the support, on which she was resting, was not strong enough to sustain herself and her two babes; so, placing them, as far as she could, out of harm's way, she leaped into the waters, and soon sank. Nobody could doubt that mother's love when she laid down her life for her children. This is the crowning proof of love; even "the devil's advocate" will not rise up to dispute this truth. They that can die for others must surely love those for whom they lay down their lives.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ has proved his love to sinners by dying for them. Do you need me to tell you the story again? O my brothers and sisters, read it for yourselves; read it often! You have it written four times, but not once too often, — the Story of the Son of God, who, for our sakes, died a felon's death, barbarously nailed to the cross to bleed away his life. Read that story, and see how he proved his love to us.

But there were certain points about Christ's death which are very extraordinary, and which are better proofs of love than those I mentioned just now. The first is this, Jesus need not have died at all. When the Marseilles surgeon died, he only did then what he must have done a few years afterwards. When the mother perished to save her children, she did but die a few weeks, or months, or years, before her appointed time; for, being mortal, she must die. If we do give our life for others, we do not really give our life; we but pay the debt of nature a little while before it is due; but it was altogether different in the Lord Jesus Christ's case. Over him, death had no power it is of him that Paul writes, "who only hath immortality." Who could, without his own consent, have laid his hand upon the Prince of life, the Son of God, and said to him, "Thou shalt die"? No one could have done that; it was a purely voluntary act for Christ to die at all; — not merely to die on the cross but ever to die, was a voluntary act on his part; and, consequently, a meet singular proof of his love to us.

Remember, again, that in our Lord's case, there were no claims upon him on the part of those for whom he died. I can understand a mother dying for her children. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? "I can see some reason why a noble citizen should be willing to die for his city. When the six principal burgesses of Calais put the ropes round their necks, and went, out to Edward III, to offer to die instead of their fellow-citizens, I can understand their action. Were they not the leaders of that community? Were they not put into a position of responsibility and honor which, if it might not exactly demand the sacrifice, yet, at least, rendered it a most likely thing that, if they were men of truly noble spirit, they would make it? But there were no such claims upon our Lord Jesus Christ. When Queen Eleanor sucked the poison from her husband's wounds, at the risk of her own life, I can see reasons why she should do it. I say not that she was bound to do it, but I do say that the relationship of a wife accounts for what she did. But Jesus Christ the Son of God, had no relationship to us until he chose to assume the relationship which he did assume out of infinite compassion. There was no more relation between him and us then between the potter and the clay; and if the clay upon the wheel goes amiss, what does the potter do with it but take it, and throw it into a corner? And so might the great Creator have done with us; but, instead of doing so, he sheds his blood that he may make us into vessels of honor fit for his own use. O Son of God, how couldst thou stoop so low as to take upon thyself our nature, and in that nature to bleed and die, when between us and these there was a distance infinitely greater than that between an emmet and a cherub, or a moth and an archangel? Yet, with no claims upon thee, of thine own free will, thou didst yield thyself to die because of thine amazing love to us.

Another extraordinary thing about Christ's love was that there were no appeals whatever made to him to die. In the other cases which I have quoted, you may remind me that there were no vocal appeals made. The little children in the cradle did not beg their mother to die for them. No, but the very sight of them was enough to plead with their mother. In the case of the city dying of pestilence, could the surgeon, — who believed that, by an examination, he might discover the secret of the evil, — go through the streets, and see the doors marked with the fatal cross, and hear the wailing of the widows and the children, without feeling that they did make most pitiful appeals to his heart? But man made no appeal to God to die for him. Our father Adam — and he was the representative of us all, did not fall down on his knees in the presence of God, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner. O God, whom I have offended provide for me a Savior, and deliver me from thy wrath!" No prayer came from Adam's lips, and not even a confession; only a wicked and men attempt to caste upon God the blame for his disobedience: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." That is all that human nature usually does; it will not own that it needs a Savior, and it will not confess that it has sinned sufficiently to need an expiatory sacrifice; and, consequently, the sullenness of man might have paralyzed the love of Christ if anything could have done it. You did not sue for mercy, — you did not ask for an atonement, — you did not desire expiation for your sin; yet Jesus came, unasked, undesired, unsought, to lay down his life for sinners.

Notice, again, that Jesus Christ well knew that, if he did lay down his life, he would get no love in return from those for whom he died, unless he himself created that love. This he has done in the hearts of his own people; but, in the hearts of others who have been left to themselves, there is no love to Jesus Christ. Here, Sabbath after Sabbath, it is our privilege to preach a dying Savior to dying sinners; but, of all themes in the world, it seems to make the least impression upon some of our hearers. If we were to come here, and talk of Howard's devotion in living and dying to ameliorate the woes of the prisoners in our jails, many would be moved to admiration of the philanthropist; but how little admiration have most men for our sweet Lord and Master! It is an old story, you say, and you have heard it so often that you care little for it. Now, that mother, who died to save her children, felt that they loved her. How often they had charmed her with their cooings and smilings while they were lying in her bosom, and she felt that she could freely give up her life for them. But our Lord Jesus Christ knew that he was dying for stony-hearted monsters, whose return for his love, if left to themselves, would be that they would utterly reject him. They would not believe in him; they would trust in their own righteousness rather than in his, and they would try to find a way to heaven by sacraments and ceremonies rather than by faith in the meritorious sacrifice which he made when he laid down his life for sinners.

Remember, too, that our Lord died by the hands of men, as well as for the sake of men. The surgeon at Marseilles was not to die by the act of his fellow-citizens. The mother was not to die at the hands of her children. Curtius, leaping into the gulf, was not forced there by the anger of his fellow-citizens. On the contrary, all would have been glad for them to continue to live. But it was this that made the death of Christ so sadly unique, that he came to die for men who wished that he should be made to die. "Crucify him, crucify him," they cried in their mad rage, foaming at the mouth. "Oh!" say some of you, "but we never said that." No, not then; but perhaps you are saying it now; for there are still many who hate the gospel of Christ, and to hate the gospel is to hate Christ himself, for that is his very essence and heart; and to reject Christ to choose your own pleasure, and to keep on delaying to repent, as some of you do, and to dive at enmity against Christ is very much the same thing as crying, "Crucify him," and comes to the same thing in the long run. You know that, if you could be quite sure that there is no Christ and no God, and no heaven, and no hell, you would be perfectly happy. That is to say, you would, if you could, crucify Christ and put him out of existence, with everything that has to do with him. Well, that is the very same spirit as that which made the Jews of old cry, "Crucify him, crucify him."

Yet once more, there was this remarkable thing about Christ's death, — that, in dying for us, he was taking upon himself an awful mass of shame and dishonor, and also a most intimate connection with sin. There was nothing shameful about the leap of Curtius into the chasm; had I been there to see him, I would have clapped my hands, and cried, "Well done, Curtius!" Who would not have said the same? But when our Lord died, men thrust out their tongues at him, and mocked him. His was indeed a shameful death. And, methinks, when that mother put her babes up in a place of safety, and herself sank into the raging flood, the angels might have smiled as well as sorrowed at such a deed of heroism. But when Jesus sank into the raging flood to save us, even God himself did not smile at him. Amongst our Savior's expiring cries was that agonizing utterance, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was because he had, as our Representative, come into contact with human sin, and so with human shame. The just and holy Son of God was made a curse for us; or, as Paul tells us, God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

All this helps to manifest to us Christ's amazing love, so I finish my discourse by asking, — as the text says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us;"—have you and I perceived that love? Do we know it? That is a very simple question, yet I take the liberty to press it upon you. I think it is Aristotle who says, — and he was a great master of thought, — that it is impossible for a person to know that he is loved without feeling some love in return. I think, as a rule, that is true; so, if you do really perceive that Christ loved you so much as to die for you, there will leap up in your heart somewhat, at any rate, of love to him. One Sunday night, I was reading, in Exeter Hall, the hymn beginning —

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,"

and, just at the time, there strayed into the hall a man of fashion, a man of the world, careless of all spiritual things; but that line caught his ear, —

"Jesus, Lover of my Soul."

He said to himself, "Does Jesus really love me? Is he the Lover of my soul?" and that line was the means of begetting love in his thoughtless heart, and there and then he surrendered himself to the love of Christ. Oh, that such a result as that might come of my repeating the story here, — that some, who have never loved the Lord Jesus Christ up till now, would say, "Did he thus love his enemies, — thus strangely love them even to the death? Then we, though we have hitherto been his enemies, can be his enemies no longer, but we will love him in return for his great love to us."

And you Christian people, who do love him, if you have perceived his love somewhat, try to perceive it still more, that you may love him more; and if you really love him more, try to show that you do. Notice the rest of the verse from which my text is taken; I did not leave out the latter part because I was afraid of it, but because I had not time to deal with it as it deserves: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." We ought to prove our love to our God by our love to our fellow-men, and especially by our love to our fellow-Christians, and to prove our love by our actions. I do not know what the love of some professors is worth; I suppose they do, if they put down how much it costs them in a year. I fear that it does not cost some professors nearly as much for their religion as it does for their ribbons, or for some foolish indulgence. They pay their shoeblacks better than they pay their ministers, and they take care to spend upon themselves in perfect waste, a hundred times as much as they spend upon spreading the gospel, saving the heathen, helping the poor, or rescuing the fallen. We do not believe in such Christianity as that, and certainly do not wish to practice it. If we profess to be Christians, let us be Christians in deed, and let us especially show our love to Christ by loving our fellow-Christians. If you see any of them in need, aid them, to the uttermost of your power. If they want cheering and comforting, give them good cheer and comfort; but, if they need substantial aid, financial aid, let them have that, too. In the old days of persecution, there were always some noble souls who tried to hide away the Christians from those who sought their lives, although they did so at the risk of their own lives; and many a Christian has given himself up to die in order to save the lives of his fellow-Christians. Some of the old people came tottering before to judge, because they thought that they would not be so much missed from the church as the younger ones would be; and, possibly, some of them

also thought that they had more faith than the younger ones had; and if they had more faith, they were more ready to die, and so to let the younger ones live on until they grew stronger in faith, and hope, and love. But, on the other hand, sometimes the young men would gently push back the fathers, and say to them, "No; you are old: you had better linger here awhile, and teach the young; but we young people are strong, so we will go and die for Christ:" and there was many a contortion, in the Church of God, in persecuting times, as to who should first die for Christ. They were all willing to lay down their lives for their brethren. Where has this self-sacrificing love gone to now! I would like to see some of it; I would even wear microscopes over my eyes if I thought that I could so discover it; but I am afraid I cannot. Why, if we loved each other now as Christians loved each other then, we should be the theme of the talk of the town, and even worldings would say, "See how these Christians love one another." Yet this is only what we ought to do; so, brothers and sisters in Christ let it be what we will do. God help you to do it, for Christ's sake! Amen.