

Spurgeon on Psalms-Pt3

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C. H. Spurgeon Sermons on Psalms Part 3 Psalm 45:5 The King's Sharp Arrows

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“Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.” — Psalm 45:5.

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ is represented as a King, we delight to think of him as the Prince of Peace, whose dominion shall put an end to all war, and make it unnecessary for the nations of the earth to learn the arts of war any longer. Meanwhile, however, in this present state, evil is in the world; sin is all round us, and thus sin is the curse of mankind. Christ, therefore, for our good, is a fighting King, combating evil, and contending against sin in every form and shape; and, in that aspect, we regard him as standing in his glorious war-chariot, riding through the world in the power of his gospel, smiting right and left, with the great sword of the Spirit, and, at the same time, shooting his sharp arrows of gospel-truth to the very ends of the earth. The truth of God is the weapon that Christ uses. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal any more than are ours. The truth is his sword, and the truth is his arrow.

There are some truths which Jesus Christ proclaims in the gospel, and which he bids us also proclaim, which are like sharp arrows, wounding, piercing, killing, and of these I am about to speak, hoping and trusting that those arrows may, in all their sharpness, pierce all hearts that have not felt them yet, and that where they go, they may kill sin; and that then, he may come in to heal who has wounded them, and to give life to those whom he has slain.

First, we shall ask and answer the question, what are those truths which are like sharp arrows? Secondly, why are they arrows? And thirdly, how come they to stick fast in human hearts?

I. First, then, What Are Those Truths Which Are Sharp As Arrows In The Hearts Of Men?

There are many of them, but I shall only mention such as are most usually felt when men are convinced of sin. One arrow that is always sharp is this, the spirituality and holiness of the law of God. Many men read the law of the ten commandments, or hear it read in their churches on the Sabbath, but they do not know that that law means a great deal more than the mere words seem to convey. For instance, it is written, “Thou shalt not commit adultery;” but, Christ tells us that, even though no act, of unchastity be committed, the very thought of it is condemned, and he who indulgeth an unclean look hath broken the command already. The law of God not only deals with the overt acts, but also with desires, and even with those imaginations which scarcely amount to desires, in which a man pictures the sin, and feels a pleasure in the picture, though he has not actually committed the sin. Now, when a man comes to understand in his heart, as well as to hear with his ears that God looks thus at his thoughts, and imaginations, and desires, and words as well as at his actions, then he stands in awe and amazement of the law, and says, “I cannot keep this, law of God, for I

am already condemned by it; and being condemned, what way of escape is there for me? How can I get my sins forgiven? By what means can I be reconciled to God?" This truth is indeed a sharp arrow, and well do I remember when first it pierced my heart and conscience. I felt that I could not stand the test of such a law for a single moment; and that, if called to stand before God's bar to be tried on such grounds, I should not require a trial, but must plead guilt at once, or stand there in silence to hear his righteous sentence of condemnation.

**"How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toil'd the precept to obey,
But toil'd without success.**

**"Then, to abstain from outward sin,
Was more than I could do:
Now, if I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too."**

Another of the truths, connected with Christ's gospel, that is like a sharp arrow, is this, the utter impossibility of self-justification. This is one of the truths of the gospel that we must never fail to proclaim: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Having offended against God, you cannot expiate the past by any actions of yours. If you should henceforth keep the law without a single breach or slip, the fact remains that the sentence of condemnation has already gone forth against you. It is often said that this life is a life of probation, but that is not true. We have passed our probation, we have been proved guilty, and we are condemned already; and we shall abide under that sentence of condemnation unless we have help outside of ourselves to rescue us from it. Lost, lost, lost, utterly lost is the entire human race apart from the power supreme and divine which has been put forth in the person of Jesus Christ. Well do I remember when I first learned that no works of mine, no repentance, no prayers, and no tears could deliver me from the horrible pit into which I was cast through sin. Then was I indeed pierced as with a barbed shaft that went right through my soul to the killing of all my proud hopes and boastings. May such an arrow from the King now pierce to the heart anyone here who still cherishes any hope of self-justification!

A third shaft from the King's bow is this, the certainty of the judgment. If there is any one truth that Christ proclaimed more often than another, it seems to me to be this, — that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, and that the actions of this life will be reviewed in another life, and that rewards and punishments will be meted out by the great Judge who cannot err. Kind and gracious as was the mighty prophet of Nazareth, who has ever described in more graphic words than he did the separation of the sheep from the goats, and the blessing of those on the right hand and the cursing of those on the left? What words could there be more terrible than his when he spoke of the worm that dieth not and of the fire that never shall be quenched? O sinner, your sin is immortal; at least, there is only One who can kill it, and put it away, even Christ Jesus. You shall live again, sir; it shall not be the end of you when you are carried to your grave, and green grows the grass above you. You shall live again, and your thoughts, and words, and actions shall live too. Let them live in your conscience now, let the recollection of them alarm you even before they arise and accuse you before him who shall sit on the great white throne at the last tremendous judgment day. I know this, let a man be thoroughly convinced that he has sinned against God, that he cannot deliver himself from his sin, and that as surely as he lives there is a day of judgment awaiting him, — he has an arrow sticking fast in his heart which he will be compelled to say is sharp as long as he is one of the King's enemies.

Another sharp arrow is the sense of the need of an entire renewal of our nature if we are not to be condemned at that judgment.

**"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven.**

**"The sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace;
Born in the image of his Son,
A new peculiar race."**

Christ's words are clear and positive, "Ye must be born again." Some perhaps ask, "But Master, may we not reform and amend?" Yes, ye may as far as ye can, but that will not suffice. "But, Master, may we not observe certain ceremonies which thou hast ordained, may we not attend to thy precepts, and so modify our present nature, and make ourselves fit for heaven?" Jesus says to them, as he said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above," (for so stands the original,) "he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Holy Spirit must come upon you, and create in you new hearts and right spirits; there must be as total a change in you as though you actually became new creatures; otherwise, from hell you can never escape, and into heaven

you can never enter; and this is true not only of the debauched, the dissolute, and the depraved, but also of the most moral, and amiable, and honorable of the whole human race. "Ye must be born again," or ye cannot enter into heaven. I remember how this sharp arrow stuck in my heart, and how I wandered to and fro, hoping that I might yet be born again, and sighing and crying in my soul because I lacked the one thing needful, which I could not give to myself, but for which I must look up to that great God whom I had offended, and who, I feared, would never deign to grant so great a boon to so unworthy a rebel. May that sharp arrow pierce other hearts just now!

Another arrow from the bow of King Jesus is the sovereignty of God. God has the right to bestow his mercy where he wills, or to withhold it if so he pleases. His grace is in no sense the discharge of a debt which he owes to us. If he had determined to destroy the whole race of men, we must admit that they had deserved such a doom. As he has chosen to save some, it is his grace that has done it, so let him be forever adored for it. The apostle Paul, writing under inspiration quotes God's words to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" and adds, "So these it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." What humbling words are these! They make the sinner lie all broken and helpless at the feet of the God whom he has offended, tell him that he cannot save himself, and that now his only hope lies absolutely in the sovereign will of that God who can destroy him in a moment if so he wills. Men do not like this sharp arrow, and will do anything to get rid of it. They will try to deny the truth of it if they can; but let the Lord once drive this arrow right home through the heart and conscience, and I do not know any shaft out of the divine quiver that is more killing to human pride, and more deadly to self-righteousness than this eternal truth which has already brought many to Christ, and will bring many more, God blessing it.

**"Praise the God of all creation,
Praise the Father's boundless love;
Praise the Lamb, our expiation,
Priest and King enthroned above.**

**Praise the Fountain of salvation,
Him by whom our spirits live;
Undivided adoration
To the One Jehovah give."**

Further, the Lord Jesus Christ often drives the arrow of conviction home in this form, — the aggravation of the sin of men when they sin against light and against love. It is no little evil to break God's law at all; but to do it knowingly is far worse than to do it ignorantly. To do it after many admonitions to the contrary, to continue to offend against God after being frequently rebuked, to refuse all the invitations of his mercy, to resist the strivings of his Spirit, to be resolved to be lost, to be resolute upon damnation, — this is the very worst form of sin. There are some of you in whose hearts this arrow might well find a place, for you were brought up by godly parents, you were dandled upon the knees of piety, you heard the name of Jesus among the first sounds that saluted your infant ears. You were carried to the house of God before you were old enough to walk there, and your mother's tears have fallen upon your infant brow as she has wept out her prayers to God that the soul of her child might be precious in his sight. Some of you remember when the Word used to prick your conscience as you heard it preached, and you would go home, and shut your bedroom door, and kneel down and pray; and there was a time when, for weeks or months together, you could not sin as you used to do, but felt obliged to give up one evil and another. Yet you resisted the conviction that was then upon you. You struggled against it, you overcame it, and you went back into sin. You have never had so severe a contest with grace since then; still, you have had some struggles, and by dint of awful perseverance, — oh, that we had half the perseverance to be saved that some have to be lost! — by dint, I say, of awful perseverance, you have managed to remain a servant of Satan until now, nor can we bring you to accept the gospel of Christ. If you remain as you are, the Lord Jesus tells you, as he told the people of Capernaum and Bethsaida of old, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment than for you. It would have been better for you if you had never been born; it would have been better for you, sir, if, when you were yet a babe, unconscious of right and wrong, a millstone had been hung about your neck, and you had been cast into the depths of the sea. O man, I pray that this sharp arrow may strike thee now, and wound thee, and that God may bless it to thee! If you and I should be lost after having such mothers and fathers as we had, if you and I should perish after such Christian training as we have had, when we meet each other in the lowest depths of hell, our miserable salutation would surely be something of this kind, "What fools we were, with so much light to prefer the darkness, with so much love from God to resolve to hate him! Knowing so well as we did our duty, what arrant fools we were to have neglected it! Knowing that sin was folly, how could we choose it; and knowing that holiness was happiness, for we saw it reflected in the faces of our dearest relatives and friends, how was it that we did not seek it for ourselves?" How we shall wring our hands in unutterable anguish if this should ever be our portion! The Lord prevent it, by his grace!

The last sharp arrow that I shall mention is one which Christ himself has often shot, it is this, — that condemnation for sin is a matter of this present time. Dear hearers, if you have never heard this truth before, hear it now, and tremble at it. You have not to wait until you rise from the dead to receive your condemnation. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in

the name of the only begotten Son of God;" and as "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," so we may solemnly say, "There is therefore now a most weighty condemnation upon you who are not in Christ Jesus, who are walking, not after the Spirit, but after the flesh." Your sentence is already passed, like that of the poor wretch who is now lying in the condemned cell, tomorrow to suffer the extreme penalty of the law; such is your lot, "condemned already."

All these truths are the sharp arrows from the bow of King Jesus.

II. Now, secondly, let us inquire, Why Are They Called Arrows?

First, they are called arrows because they are far-reaching. Some people, who have never heard the gospel, have nevertheless unexpectedly found one or other of these arrows rankling in their hearts. We have known men, who have been at their ordinary work, when one of these arrows has suddenly struck them. Where the voice of the minister could not go, there the arrow of Christ could find its mark. Never give up hope for the world, even in its darkest days. The world was once in a very midnight, and there was a monk, named Luther, on his knees, going up the so-called staircase of Pilate at Rome, and repeating a prayer on every step in order to try to win his way to heaven; and there came to him, while on those very stairs, an arrow from the King that pierced him right to his heart. The arrow bore this inscription, "The just shall live by faith" — a sentence which had previously been discovered by him in a Bible in the monastery at Erfurt. He was attempting to justify himself by works like that of climbing the so-called holy stairs, but he found that it was of no use; and, through faith in Jesus, he became the great leader of the Reformers of his day. Perhaps, at this very moment; while we are assembled here worshipping God, there may be men, similarly deluded, in places where an idolatrous system has usurped the name and place of Christianity, yet the gospel may reach them even amidst the mummeries of the mass; ay, and at the ale-bench, and in worse places still, if God so wills it, the arrow from the Prince's bow may find its target, and reach the human heart. Pray, my brethren and sisters, that the King may be lavish with his sharp arrows, so that many may fall under his power.

They are called arrows, again, because they are penetrating. These truths enter a man's heart whether he likes them or not. There are some of these arrows that are aimed at a man, but he seems to be clad in steel, and they cannot gain an entrance for a time; but, by-and-by, they pierce him to the heart, and cut him to the very quick. We have known some sinners to be very angry when this has been the case with them. That is of very little consequence so long as they do but get wounded by the arrows of King Jesus. Because these truths wound people, penetrating their hearts, they are rightly called arrows.

They are also called arrows because, if they once get in, they rankle, and you cannot get them out. Often have I heard something like this said by those who have come here to make a profession of their faith in Christ, "I was utterly godless, and never went to any place of worship; but, one evening, I stole in here, and listened to a sermon. I was angry to the last degree at what I heard, I could have cursed the preacher to his face; yet, I do not know how it was, I soon found myself in this place again, wanting to know more about this religion that I detested all the tirade." I have often heard a man say, "I could not help thinking of it, sir; it haunted my dreams; it kept with me at my work; I loathed it, yet there it was always near me. Certain questions arose within me that I could not answer, and difficulties came up which I could not solve; so I was obliged to let this strange new influence, which had got hold of me, still rankle within my heart." I have sometimes likened an unconverted man to a wild giraffe in an African forest and Christ's gospel, like a mighty lion, leaps upon him from the thicket, fastens its powerful fangs in his flesh, and begins to tear away his very life. He strives and struggles, dashes hither and thither, and tries to rid himself of the awful load that he bears upon his back, but all his efforts are in vain.. The poor giraffe in the grip of the lion is distracted, and the man under conviction of sin cannot imagine what is to become of him. He thinks that he is lost, and that he must feel the full force of divine wrath against sin; yet this is the way of mercy, it is thus that men are saved. Down falls the man at last, and then he, who seemed to be his enemy, stoops down, and nobly gives back the life that appeared to have gone from him; or, rather, gives him an infinitely nobler life, and so the forgiven sinner lives forever. Oh, that the power of the gospel may thus be exerted upon some wild, untamable spirit that may be here just now!

The gospel message is specially called an arrow because it kills. What does it kill? It kills many things. Gospel preaching, when applied by the Holy Ghost, kills in men their carnal ease. A man, when he first hears the gospel, may perhaps say, "What is the need to bother oneself about that? It will all come right, I have no doubt." Ah! but let one of these truths that I have mentioned — that truth, for instance, about the judgment to come, — get into his heart, and rankle there, the man will not talk any longer about not bothering himself; he must care. "Why!" saith he, "to-morrow, I may be before God's judgment throne, and I am unprepared to meet him. My brother died only last week, and my sister was taken away only a fortnight ago, and I may be called away at any moment. I cannot bear the thought of being in hell for ever; I must begin to think; I must begin to care about my soul." Carnal ease is one of the first things that is killed by the arrows of Christ.

I will tell you another thing that is killed by these sharp arrows, and that is, the foolish skepticism which some people think we ought to nurse and cuddle up in our places of worship. I do not believe that the skepticism of this age has so much to do with people's heads as with their hearts. If they were not wicked, they would not doubt; but because they will not be holy, they will not believe. To

answer many of their questions would be as foolish as to do what a boy did, according to a fable which I read in an old book the other day. A boy, in a scavenger's cart, was so, badly-disposed, that he said he would throw dirt in the face of the moon; and another boy, who, I suppose, was a great deal better, but certainly not any wiser, fetched a basin of water and a piece of sponge to wash the moon's face. When I read that story, I thought of those who are always finding out some reason to doubt the authenticity of the Bible, or who throw dirt in the face of the gospel in some other way; and then there is some well-meaning but foolish divine, who leaves off preaching the truth, and runs with his sponge and his basin of water to wash the face of the blessed gospel, which is as clean as the sun or the moon, and needs none of his washing, for it is not defiled with the dirt that any fool may choose to fling at it. I believe that, at the bottom of your hearts, you do not really doubt, for you know that God will bring you before his judgment-bar to give an account of your actions; and when the King's sharp arrows pierce your hearts, all your whimsies die, your idle fancies flee away, and your cry is, "Do I not believe? Indeed I do. Oh, that I could but doubt in order to get a little rest to my troubled spirit; or, rather, blessed Spirit, come and teach me if there is not something to be believed by which a lost and condemned spirit may find peace with God!"

The arrows of Christ, wherever they come, always kill self-righteousness. There was never a shaft shot from Christ's bow that was not fatal to all trust in our own goodness. Christ abhors that abomination, and kills it wherever he finds it. Hardness of heart, want of feeling, — this also is slain wherever Christ's sharp arrows come; so also is procrastination, that great ruiner of the souls of men. Oh, that some sharp arrow might fly from Christ's bow into the heart of any sinner here who is saying, "There is time enough yet!" Instead of talking like that, he would say, "I want to be forgiven to-night; I cannot bear this terrible burden of guilt any longer. If there were no future, my present agony is so great that I long for immediate deliverance from it." Jesus, thou blessed Divine Archer, shoot forth thine arrows now into men's hearts, that all these ills that they have — unbelief, and hardness of heart, and love of sin, and delay, may fall down slain at thy glorious feet, and then come thou, and save the sinners by thy grace, and thy head shall wear the crown forever and ever!

How gladly would I, if I could, say anything that might encourage any of you to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I know that my feeble voice is not sufficient, to help you. It is the almighty Spirit who alone can do this, and I earnestly pray that he may. My grief is not so much concerning you who are seeking the Savior, as concerning you who are not seeking him. You may think that it is a trifling matter to preach the gospel, or to listen to preaching; but the hour cometh, and every moment brings it nearer, when you will know that the truths of which I have been speaking are the only real things this side of heaven and hell. When you lie a-dying, and are brought face to face with the mysteries of the next world, you will count all your money-getting, and your amusements, and all else to be but foolery. Oh, do not trifle any longer with your eternal interests! If any of you must play the fool, do it with your money, or your estates, or your bodies; but do not do it with your immortal souls, for these, if once lost, can never be recovered. Once let the divine sentence go forth, "Depart, ye cursed," and it can never be reversed, and changed into a benediction. Once let the iron bar that shuts up lost spirits in hell be driven home by the hand of infinite justice, and there is no hand in heaven, or earth, or hell, that can ever slide that iron bar back. Once done, 'tis done forever; so, sirs, I beseech you, escape to the cross while you may. Look to him who died upon it. Trust yourselves wholly to him. Forsake your sins, walk in his ways, and live as his followers should; for then, but not till then, will you be safe.

III. And now, to conclude, having examined the King's sharp arrows, and seen why they are called by that name, let us inquire, How Do They Get Into Men's Hearts?

Many are the times that I have handled these arrows of the King, and many are the times that, from this my watch-tower, I have shot them from my bow; and the, Lord knoweth with what intense desire I have longed that they might enter the hearts of those at whom I have aimed them. I could, with my finger, — but I shall not, — indicate some of the targets at which I have aimed. I will mention no names; there is no need for me to do that; you know very well to whom these personal messages have been addressed. I suppose I cannot have been a good shot, for, with many of you, I have not yet found the joint in your harness through which I could reach your heart. Oh, that I might speedily be able to do so!

But, according to my text, the arrows which are there spoken of, and which are shot by the King, do get right into the hearts of his enemies; and I suppose this is for two reasons, — first, because the Lord Jesus Christ always takes good aim. We cannot do this except as he puts his hands on our hands; for then, the aim will be his rather than ours, like the shots of certain eminent people, on great public occasions, who have the sighting done for them by experts. It is only when the Lord Jesus Christ does this for us that the arrow of the truth goes home to the heart and conscience of the hearer. Christ's aim is always true. If the truth should come home to any of you, believe that it was meant for you. Do not be vexed, or think that there has been a mistake. It was meant for you; and although it may pain you, bless God for the pain. It will be better for you thus to be pained, and afterwards be fitted to enter into heaven, than to be left to get a seared and hardened conscience, and to be cast into hell.

The other reason why these arrows of the King get into the hearts of his enemies is that, together with the good aim, there is always almighty strength at the back of the bow. It is said that the bow of William the Conqueror was so strong that no man in England,

except himself, could bend it; and the great bow of King Jesus is such as none of us can bend. It has the power of the Holy Ghost in it; it is the Holy Ghost himself who gives force and power to the Word so that it pierces through all the sinner's armor, and the most vital part of his being, and smites him even in the heart.

Bearing this last thought in mind, I say to you who love the Lord, do you not see how dependent we are upon the Holy Spirit? There lie the arrows, but they will kill nobody till the Holy Spirit gets them into the hearts of sinners. There is much precious truth in this blessed Book, but there it will lie till the Holy Spirit takes it, and shoots it right into the hearts of men. So, what is our duty as Christian men and women? Why, dear brethren and sisters, let us never grieve the Holy Spirit. You know that we can do it by neglecting to honor him, by falling out amongst ourselves, by cherishing unlovely dispositions, by being unholy. As church-members, we can easily drive the Holy Spirit away from us; but, instead of grieving him, let us honor him, and let us entreat him to work with us.

"Brethren, pray for us." I believe I am the constant subject of the prayers of the different members of this church, to whom I feel the deepest gratitude; but I also beg you to pray for all the ministers of Christ, and for one another, and for all work that is being done for Christ. Remember the Sunday-school teachers. Think of those good men who, all the week, are doing the hard work of City-missionaries, and those good women who are working as Bible-women; — pray for all such laborers, and for all who are doing anything for Christ, and ask that the Holy Spirit may be with them to make their labors a means of blessing to the people. Whenever you seek to do anything for Christ, as you begin, and as you go on, and when you conclude, let it all be done in real dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Blessed be God, the Holy Spirit is not far away from us, nor is he hard to find; for he dwells within the true Church of Christ. We are not to think of him as if he were some mysterious being, very far distant from us, and not easily to be brought to us, to whom we need to cry as Baal's priests cried to their idol-god, "O Baal, hear us!" The Holy Spirit is always at work in the Church, and it is a wonder that he does so much while the Church often does so little. Oh, if we were but all awake, all alive, all full of zeal, all full of love, all full of self-sacrifice, then, depending upon him, we might expect to see the King's sharp arrows flying from his bow to the right and to the left, behind and in the front, while tens of thousands would fall down before him, and London, and Great Britain, and the world at large would behold the King riding in triumph in his glorious chariot of salvation.

The Lord send it! The Lord send it! I know your hearts say, "Amen!" But you must work for it, and watch for it, and pray for it, and then it will come, and unto Christ shall be the glory forever. Amen.

Psalm 48:8

Experience Confirming Testimony

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"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God." — Psalm 48:8.

"As we have heard so have we seen." This is not always the case, but frequently it is the very reverse. Things are exaggerated; the imagination is largely drawn upon, and we hear great things, but when we come to look at them, or try practically to enjoy them, the great things have become very small. It is so in the world generally. We have heard, and were told in our youthful days by those who have been before us, that the paths of sin are pleasant, that there are great enjoyments to be found in the indulgences of evil passions, and that if we will give ourselves up to the general run and current, we shall find ourselves very smoothly floating along on a stream of happiness. Ah! how many who have sown their wild oats, and looked for a happy harvest, have discovered that nothing but mischief comes of this! Jaded by the satiety of their lusts, and at last utterly destroyed by their own wickedness, they have sat down, and wrung their hands in despair at finding out that things are not what they heard they were. As they have heard, so do they not see, but the very opposite — for pleasure, pain: for happiness, misery: even here remorse, and afterwards an anguish that shall know no end.

Nor is it any better with the teachers of false doctrine. As we have heard, so have we not seen. We have sometimes been told that philosophy will civilize a nation: that the spread of education will most certainly cure the human heart: and that the bias and propensity to sin will be put down by an increase of mental light. But as we have heard, so have we not seen, for philosophy has thrown many burdens upon men, but it has not touched those burdens to remove them, with so much as its little finger. We hear a great deal of what is to be done for society by this scheme and by that, but nothing is done. Theories are propounded: wind-bags are blown out and brought forth, bubbles are blown, but do not see much that is solid and valuable produced. One after another of

these eminent theorizers have arisen who were about to revolutionize and reconstruct society. Instead of making the causes of evil in the world to increase, they were to uproot them, and turn the desert into the garden of the Lord. But so it has not been; our eyes have never seen it. Rather has the bad been made worse, and the good has been impeded by those who were so pretentious and loud in their professed benevolence. Take any of the false doctrines which are often affiliated to our holy faith, and you will find that when you come to examine them and put them to the test, they do not hold water. How often have we heard about “the dignity of human nature”; how congenial the heart of man is to that which is noble, and to that which is Christlike. We are told that we have only to hold up Christ, and there is such a beauty in him that all the world will be sure to love him. But as we have heard, so have we not seen, but we have seen men to be as God saw them — corrupt. There is none that doeth good, no not one, and in the perfect light of Calvary we have seen that even the perfections of Jesus will not be seen by a blind world, nor will they attract a corrupt world. “Crucify him! Crucify him!” will be the verdict of humanity, even upon the perfections of the incarnate God. We have heard a great deal about the power of free-will. We have heard sometimes that men come to Christ of themselves; that there is no power of irresistible grace which turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God. Ah! we have heard this, but we have never seen it. To this moment, though we have mingled with all classes of Christians, we did never yet meet with a single believer who declared that his conversion was the result of his own efforts, and that his coming to Christ was entirely through the motive-power of his own free will. We have been told, too, that God forsakes his people, that real saints, after all, turn back and perish. But we bless God that, though we have often heard this, we have never, never seen it.

**“If ever it should come to pass,
One of his sheep should fall away:
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day.”**

But being kept in safety by another and greater power than our own, and preserved in the midst of appalling temptations, we still hold to it that he doth keep his people. We have heard it, and we have seen it, but the other doctrine we have heard, but, thank God, we have never seen. And so there are many other things that pass current in certain sections of Christendom as being true, which, if they were brought to a practical test, might be seen not to be so. We have heard them, heard them delivered with a glowing eloquence that might have convinced us, if we were to be convinced, but we have referred to the Old Book, and the Old Book has been more to us than all the siren-songs that sweetest oratory could raise. We have nailed our colors to the mast, and could not take them down. We have found all here in this blessed Bible to be true; but man’s word, when it has come into conflict or even competition with God’s Word, we have found to be light as chaff, and as easily consumed as the fat of rams upon the altar’s fire.

Now, just for a little time I thought we would illustrate this general truth, that in the things of God, and in the church of God,” as we have heard, so have we seen.” Now, mark: —

I. It Has Been So All Down The Line Of Revelation.

Could a man have lived a sevenfold Methuselah-life, and have stood at the gates of Paradise, and listened to the first promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, if he could have beheld Noah shut in in the ark, and marked the covenant rainbow when for the first time it spanned the clouds; could he have lived in Abraham’s day, and have seen the father of that seed in which all the nations of the earth should be blessed; could he have marked all the types and ceremonies which Israel saw in the wilderness, all pointing onwards to a coming Savior; could he have listened to the prophetic utterances of David in some of those matchless Psalms, which are full of the Messiah; could he have heard the notes of Isaiah when he spoke of him who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; yea, could he have heard every prophecy, and beheld every symbol, and listened to every sacred portent — when he came to behold the person of Christ, to see him living, dying, rising, ascending, and to mark the Pentecost, and to see the history of the Church right down until now, such a grave and reverend man, revered and venerable above all other men through the long lapse of years that had passed over his snowy head, would say, “As I heard during the first portion of my life, so have I seen in the latter days thereof: God has always kept his promise: as was the shadow, so was the substance: as the type, so was the antitype: as the word that flowed from prophetic lips, so was the Christ who, in the fullness of time, came into this world to bless and redeem mankind.”

This is not merely a great general truth, but, mark you, it is true in every jot and tittle. We do not expect men, when they speak frequently, so to speak that every particle of what they say may be correct. We admit them to be fallible: we always make some allowance for some slips of the tongue. But all through these thousands of years, in which God spake of Christ and of the gospel kingdom, there never was a single trifling word that was not fulfilled.

There have been no slips of the tongue, no drops that blot the page. Everything has been accurately, minutely, precisely, what if I say, microscopically fulfilled in Christ. As the casket-key exactly fits the wards of the lock, so the life of Christ, and the history of the Church, exactly fits all the types and all the prophecies. Sometimes it has been said that if anybody doubts the inspiration of the four

gospels, it would be a very pretty puzzle for him to try to write a fifth gospel which should have in it some new details that would be congruous to the rest and that would fit in with the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. That is a task we propound to those wits who seem to want something to do in these days, since they are impugning everything that is held sacred by us. Let them attempt that. If this problem could have been put to the wise in all ages — Now there is the Old Testament, and, whether it is true or not, construct the life of a man who shall fit all that; use your poetic powers, or whatever other abilities you choose to employ; imagine a man that shall fit the lamb, the scape-goat, the passover, Noah's ark, the Psalms of David, the prophecies of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel — why the enigma must have been given up in despair. It would not have been possible for the united abilities of men and angels to have discovered an ideal Messiah that would have exactly met all this. But our Lord did in every jot and in every tittle, so that as we read some parts of the Old Testament, we often say to ourselves, "This looks as if it were written after the event." We read the twenty-second Psalm, and if we did not know that it had been composed many, many years before our Lord came, we should look at it as history rather than as prophecy. One can only comprehend this by admitting inspiration, and by rejoicing in the wondrous truthfulness of God. Even such little points as the casting of lots for the vesture of Christ, things which seem insignificant, God took care should be fulfilled, and though our Lord died, and as yet he had not been pierced as to his heart, at any rate, yet after death there must be a piercing of him that they "may look on him whom they have pierced," and weep and wail because of him. "As we have heard, so have we seen." The life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ certainly carry out the prophecies which God had uttered before concerning him. But now, shall go on to speak of: —

II. The Church Of God — Christward And Godward — As To Our Own Experience.

Some of you have thoughts of Christ, but as dead or as far away. We have come to deal with him as a living Savior. Now the question is, whether, in so dealing with him, we have found all true that we were told concerning him.

Now, when we first enlisted in the Christian army, we were told from Christ's own Word that we must count the cost, and should have to suffer a degree of persecution. We were warned not to take upon ourselves hastily, to carry out that for which we should have no power unless we sought it from above. We were warned, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Have we found it so? "Oh!" says one, "abundantly that has been true to me; from those of my own household I first met with opposition; the gospel has set those against me that were once my fondest friends." Just so, but now that it has come to pass you will see how sincerely he dealt with you; that he would not entrap you into his service as though it would be altogether a thing of pleasure, but he warned you that it was a conflict, that it was a pilgrimage. You have found it so, and now that it has come to pass, let this help you to trust him for the future.

But you were also told that if you trusted him, you who were burdened with many sins, you should have them all forgiven, and that this forgiveness would bring about a solid peace of mind. Have you found it so? Can you not stand up and add your name to the long roll of witnesses who say, "We looked unto him and were lightened, and our faces were not ashamed; this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and delivered him from all his fears"? I bless the Lord I can say that the joy of the pardoned sinner is a sweeter and a better thing than I ever dreamed it to be, and the peace of conscience, which reflection upon the atonement always brings, is better and more enduring than one could have fancied could have fallen to the lot of so unworthy an one as he whom Christ had called.

Our Lord Jesus told us, too, that if we came and trusted him, he would give us the victory over our sins. Now, has he done that? I know you will confess sometimes that you have not conquered your sins as you would desire.

The battle is still raging: there is still a need for yonder watchtower. But, brethren, if a sin has not been conquered, has that ever been Christ's fault Has it not been ours? "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb," is true of all the saints with regard to their struggles with sin. There is no sin that we cannot pray down and weep down if we live at the foot of the cross. The worst temper that ever a soul was plagued with is to be controlled and softened if one looks to the griefs of Christ, and becomes like him in temper. It matters not how constitutional the sin may be, though you may say, "It is my easily-besetting sin"; you may be delivered from it. Christ Jesus, when he comes into the island of our nature, can drive out all the cruel and deadly reptiles that are there, or if they remain there, he can give us abundant grace, so that they can make no headway, but we shall be kept as "holiness unto the Lord."

Now, you and I have read and heard from the saints of God that our Lord Jesus, when he is really known and understood, is inexpressible sweetness itself. They have told us, some of them — writing like Rutherford of his wonderful Master — that the joy of heaven is to be possessed in a measure even here below that in contemplation on, and communion with, Christ, the heart can be made to dance with joy eternal and full of glory. Now, brethren, have we found it so? Oh! some of us can set to our seal that in this thing the saints of God have been true. He hath ravished our souls with his presence, and made our hearts to melt while he spoke into our ears the marvellous story of his love. Perhaps in our unbelief we think that this is fancy, or fanaticism, or some high-strained sentimentalism, but it is not so. It is the sober fact that when a man getteth to lean upon the arm of Christ, he laughs at trouble, defies persecution; he passes through temptation all unhurt; he walketh here below, and his conversation is in heaven; he sitteth down with the sons of men, and yet he is "raised up and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." I would say to you saints

who have not proceeded far in the college of Christ, who have only just begun to study his precious character and the divine virtues that flow out of him, never be content until you have, for as you have heard from the song of the Canticles as you have heard from the saints who, out of their experience, have told you of Christ's love, so will you find it. Do not harbour the idea that the further you go the less will you have of enjoyment in religion. Oh! no! it has deep draughts of great bliss. The shallow draughts will sustain, but oh! it is sacred intoxication with the love of Christ, which brings the highest joy and the divinest mirth.

To go in up to the ankles in the sea of Christ's love is well; but oh! to pass up to the loins, and to get further still, until you find it "a river to swim in," this is to know the true delights of godliness. As you have heard of these things, though they seem to be too high for you, and you tremble at them, yet if you will but ask for more grace that you may press forward, so shall you see. There are no exceptions about Christ. He offereth nothing in the market that hath been proffered to catch the eye, but is not worth the purchase. His diamonds are never trashy paste, his gold is not mere gilt. You may buy bread from him, and put it in the scales, and find it ounce for ounce. The water that he giveth turneth neither stale nor sour; it is ever fresh and cool: the further you shall go in the enjoyment of it, the more shall you prize the well of water springing up in your souls unto everlasting life.

Now, I might just turn this same point round in another form, and say that as we have heard of Christ in his life upon earth, so have we found it in dealing with him. When Christ was here on earth, he was all tenderness and love, and so have we found him. We went to him covered with the leprosy of our sin, and ready to die of our iniquities; but one touch of his hand was freely given, and that touch healed us. When he was on earth he was holiness itself, and so he is now, for he will not walk with us if we fall in love with sin. He is quick to tell our faults, and he gently chideth us till conscience awakens us, and we turn from the evil with abhorrence. Christ was in this world as a very faithful friend. Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end. And we have found him just such until now. There was never an hour in which he left us naked to our enemies. When we have been tempted, his intercession has always been like a brazen wall around us to keep us from being devoured by the foe. When we have been bewildered he has, like a good shepherd led us by ways that we knew not, but that he well understood. In the days of famine we have been fed: in the times of want we have been satisfied. We can speak well of his name. If any of his saints have anything to say of him that is high and comely, that will exalt him and set him on high, we after our measure can endorse it all.

So far as our experience has gone, he is a better Christ than we thought him to be. Oh! he is altogether precious, altogether lovely. Up to this day we have never discovered a spot in him. We have tried him — oh! how sadly, and our sins have tried him — oh! how heavily. But he is always true, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We can only bless him and praise him, for "as we have heard, so have we seen."

How my heart desireth that some of you who are here would just now, at this very moment, come to my Lord and try him. Oh! I so remember when I first came to him. They told me he was ready to pardon, and that a look at him would move my crushing burden from my weary heart. I could not think it true, but: —

**"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad."**

And did he disappoint me? Ah! no; I can happily join in with the rest of that verse:

"I found in him a resting place, And he has made me glad."

If any of you think that Christ will cast you out when you come, I wish you would come and try him; it would be the beginning of a new method with him; the turning over of a new black leaf. "Him that cometh unto me," saith he, "I will in no wise cast out." He never did find it in his heart to do so to any sinner that has sought his mercy; and I will not believe it, though all the angels in heaven swear it, that he ever cast away a soul. I'd call them liars. It cannot be; it never shall be. While the heavens are above the earth, and God is true, and Christ is God, no sinner that comes and puts his trust in him, shall find him unable or unwilling to save him. Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good, and as you have heard, so shall you see. Now, in the next place, I think: —

III. This All Stands Good With Regard To The Church Of God Itself.

Some have been apt to find fault with the church, and some Christians seem to act on the principle of getting to heaven one by one. "Sheep," God's people are called, and I suppose one reason is because sheep are gregarious and go in flocks, but there are Christian professors who seem to like the one by one principle. Well now, speaking of the Church of God as we have seen her, she has many faults — many faults — but Jesus Christ loves her, and she is his Bride, and I dare not find fault with her. If she is the Princess Royal, if she is His Imperial Highness's own betrothed one, I would rather see her with his eyes than with my own, and while it may be very striking to rail about ministers and their defects, to sneer at church-members and all sorts of other things, and there may be sometimes good reason for it, yet we may say much on the other side, too. "As we have heard, so have we seen."

When we joined the Christian Church first, we were told very plainly in the Scripture that there would be tares among the wheat. That there would be some among us who would go out from us, because they were not of us. Christ taught us that, among his twelve disciples, there was one Judas, and if some hypocrites do intrude amongst us, it need not astonish us. We knew it would be so. He forewarned us, and admonished us, of it. We have heard it, and so have we seen: and if the seeing of it has been painful, we can at least say that God was truthful and frank in warning us that so it would be.

Well, there were good things spoken of the Church of God, and we have found them true, too. I expected to find in the Christian Church some holy, prayerful, devout Christian men and women, and I have found them, and have rejoiced to be among them, to mingle with them, and to be of their company, joining with them in holy worship, the washing in the blood that has washed them. I can truly say that I have found a Peter — many a bold, earnest brother like Peter; many a loving John; many a busy Martha, and some communing Maries. The Church of God always seems to me as I have seen it, to be a vast deal too good for me to be a member of it, if I did but judge myself, and, instead of finding fault, I would join with David and say, “Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” I know the world will often find fault, and rail, and tell us there are no such things as ancient Christians. I have seen as glorious Christianity as even the apostles saw, and as good works of the Holy Ghost in members of this church as ever gladdened the eyes of those apostles; suffering endured with a patience astonishing, labor done with a perseverance that was most commendable, liberality evinced with a freedom that showed that the love of Christ constrained; prayer kept up with a fervency that marked the indwelling Spirit; and souls cared for, sought after, and won, too, with an indefatigable love that only the love of Christ could inspire. I know we always think we live in the worst times, but we do not.

There were worse times than these, and there will be again yet. These may not be the best, but they are a long way off from being the worst. I think it was when Dr. Newton died that the good divine who preached the funeral sermon took some such text as this, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof,” and he deplored that now this eminent saint was gone they had no great divines left like the great preachers of the olden time. That went on very prettily for some time, but it was too much for an old Methodist woman, who stood in the aisle and cried out, “Glory to God! that’s a lie!” And oftentimes when I hear people crying down the times and saying there are no good people left, and that Christianity is at a low ebb, and that there remains no true zeal, I can say from what I myself see in the people amongst whom I dwell, “Glory be to God, that is a lie: it is a slander upon the Church of God!” For as we have heard, so have we seen: we have seen the gracious, fair fruits of the Spirit, and we honor God by testifying to that fact.

I would, however, dear brethren and sisters, that we were always conscientiously concerned never to give the lie in any degree to statements made in Scripture concerning the holy living of the saints. Alas! there are some professors who, if you could track them to their business, are so much given to loose trading that as we have heard, so can we not see. If you go into their houses, their maidservants, their children, and their wives are obliged to say, “We have heard what Christian fathers, and mothers, and masters ought to be, but as we have heard so, we do not see.” It all ends in talk, in profession. Now, while I stand up for it that there are many that do adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things, and so prove that they are God’s true people, yet do we sorrowfully confess that many walk “of whom” we would say with the apostle, “We have told you often, and now tell you even with weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ,” though they are professed members of the Church of Christ. Their lips honor God, but their inconsistent lives degrade the Church, and bring upon it much loss of spiritual power.

“As we have heard, so have we seen.”

I think some of us can say that we have heard of the church’s glorious assemblies. We have heard that they said they were glad when they went up to the house of the Lord. We have heard that the people of God are happy in their assemblies, and that they long for the place where God’s honor dwelleth. Well, and so have we seen, for our Sabbaths have been our happiest days, and we have often said: —

**“My willing soul would stay In such a frame as this
And sit, and sing herself away To everlasting bliss.”**

It has been so.

We have heard that the preaching of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and the great means of comfort and edification to the saints; and “as we have heard, so have we seen,” for oftentime when the truth has been preached in our hearing, it has been as marrow and fatness, and other times a rebuke has come just as we needed it to quicken us from our spiritual sloth.

We have heard that the ordinances of God’s house have a blessing connected with them. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. That in the keeping of his commandments there is great reward, and as we have heard, so have we seen. I am sure that the blessed Supper of the Lord, though many of his people come to the table every week, never seems to grow stale.

There is always a freshness in it. Oh! that blessed ordinance! Some, I know, make a God of it, and an idolatrous mystery of it, but because they misuse it, we dare not depreciate it. It is to us none other than the very gate of heaven full often. "As we have heard, so have we seen." Let us press on in our Church-fellowship, and increase in our love and earnestness, and then as we have heard of the Zion that travails and becomes like the mother of children, so shall we see; as we have heard that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy, so shall we see; as we have heard that there is great pleasure connected with the winning of souls for Christ, so shall we see. In a word, all the glorious things that are spoken of Zion, we shall have fulfilled to ourselves.

Brethren, before I close, I want to say that there is a dreadful side to this truth. As we have heard, so have we seen. There are some of you here who are not saved. You have hitherto loved your sins, and have not repented. You have heard of Christ, but you have put off all thoughts of him. Now, you have heard oftentimes that he that believeth not shall be condemned, and from this Book you have heard that condemnation is something terrible and overwhelming, for there are words like these, "Beware, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver"; and these, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment"; and these, "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Now as you have heard, so will you see. Depend upon it you shall not find the pit of hell to be less awful than this Book describes. God sets up no bugbear to frighten souls. They are all realities of which he speaks, and that they are realities many dying sinners have been made to know before they have been dead, for their horror, their alarms their fears have been premonitions of that wrath to which they were drawing nigh. I have seen some death-scenes which I dare not try to picture before you: and the memory of which would unman me if I were to continue to contemplate them — hearers of the gospel who had neglected Christ, and who died conscious of their sins, unable, however, to seek mercy, and whilst we prayed with them, telling us that our prayers would never be heard, for they were given over, and now they were cursing God, even while they were feeling the anguish of lost souls. Yes, and though there be some that become the advocates for evil, by trying to make out the punishment of sin to be little, settle it in your souls that, as it took the blood of the dying Son of God to wash out the sin of those who were pardoned it will take an anguish such as no heart can conceive, ere the sinner shall have suffered for his sin what God will certainly pour upon him. Think not lightly of the doom of the lost, lest you think lightly of sin, and lightly of Christ, for as you have heard, and infinitely more than you have heard, shall you see. Oh! unhappy spirit, unless you will turn to Christ, and believe on him, and live. Oh! that you may do so. to-night, for another night may never come to you; but one long, endless night may be your portion.

But there is a bright side to it, too. The saints in heaven might all say, "As we have heard, so have we seen," only that I think they would make a great improvement in our text. 'Tis true, ye heard that heaven was full of joy and mercy, and so have ye seen. Ye heard of its pearly gates, and its streets of shining gold. Ye heard of its foundations of jasper, and its walls of chrysolite and all manner of precious stones. Ye heard of its eternal rest, and of the presence of God, and the glory of the overflowing bliss, and all ye heard ye have seen! But I say they would make an improvement upon this, for, like the Queen of Sheba, methinks their glorified spirits would say, "The half has not been told." Yes, brethren, we have heard things, but "what must it be to be there" — to be there? The enjoyments transcend description, and though the words of Scripture portray the bliss that remaineth, we alas! are dull of understanding, and cannot find out all the meaning of the golden sentences. But we shall soon be there, and once there we shall, as I have said before, declare, "As we have heard, so have we seen, only that the half was not told us of the splendor and the glory of the court of our heavenly Solomon." May we be there to find all true, and join in the everlasting song of, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Psalm 48:9

A Worthy Theme for Thought

NO. 2783

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 15TH, 1902,
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"We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple."-Psalm 48:9.

WHO were these people who declared to the Lord that they had thought of his lovingkindness in the midst of his temple According to the title of the Psalm, they were the sons of Korah. And who were the sons of Korah? They were the singers in the house of the Lord, those who took the principal part in sounding forth the praises of Jehovah. I think it is suggestive that they did not say, "We have sung of thy lovingkindness." They had done that, and it was their constant employment; but they said, "We have thought;" and there are some singers who have not done that, for they have sung solemn words thoughtlessly, caring only for the music, and not for the meaning. One who is not a skilled musician, or trained vocalist, can tell when his ear is pleased with what he hears, and I

think that such a person will say that the very sweetest music he has ever heard has come from sincere hearts, even if the voices have not been in complete harmony. If you hear Christians sing when they are in the spirit, and sing what they really feel, their singing may not be artistic, and it may not be accurate; but, if your own heart is right with God, it will have such an effect upon you as no other music can have. Singing from the heart is the noblest form of praise to God. Some people would not shout so loudly where the words should be uttered softly, or sing so harshly where pathos is required, if they were thinking while they were singing; but it is quite possible for us to be uttering sweet sounds without our mind and heart being really occupied in the exercise. Let it not be so with us, dear friends; but, whenever we sing, may we so praise God in our spirit that, at the close of every psalm and hymn, we may be able to say, with these sons of Korah, "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." But why did they write this? For, according to the title, is "A Psalm of (or for) the sons of Korah." It was, probably, written by them because this fact was so refreshing to their memory. Possibly, at the time the Psalm was written, they were not in the house of the Lord, nor able to go there to sing, so they recorded their past experience to cheer them under their present trial: "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God. There have been, in days gone by, happy times when we have rejoiced in thy great love to us; and although we are now debarred the privilege of sounding forth thy praise in the midst of thy temple, our memory recalls the glad seasons of the past, and our soul is, for a while, content to sup upon these cold meats, and to look forward to the day when once more we shall be banqueted in the house of the Lord." Sometimes, dear friends, when you get into the wilderness, it is sweet to remember that you were once an inhabitant of Zion; especially when you feel such an inward longing to get back again that you can say, with the psalmist,

"As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God!"

In this very house of prayer, have not our hearts burned within us, many a time, as we have praised our great and gracious God! Have not our souls then been ready to dance with ecstasy! If so, we may well pray to the Lord, and say,

"Renew thy former mercies to us. Quicken us again, we pray thee. O restore unto us the joy of thy salvation, and cause our hearts again to shout aloud with grateful thanksgiving for all thy lovingkindness towards us!"

To help us to receive an answer to the prayer, which I have just uttered on your behalf, as well as for myself, let us look at our text very carefully, and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in explaining it. Doing so, I think we shall learn, first, that the occupation of these sons of Korah was gracious: "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God." Then, secondly, the place was appropriate. Where could they be, to think of the lovingkindness of the Lord, better than in his temple? When I have spoken on these two points, I will try to show you, thirdly, that the result was beneficial. The Psalm itself shows us how much they were profited by thinking upon the lovingkindness of the Lord, and it also reveals to us the blessing which came to others through them.

I. So, first, we learn that Their Occupation Was Gracious: "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God."

Thought is a noble faculty; the power to exercise it distinguishes men from the brute beasts. We grovel when we are under necessity to perform the acts that relate only to the body; we rise as we are able to perform the functions of the mind and heart. Really to think, is an ennobling employment; yet it is not everybody who cares to think. There are many, who regard themselves as religious people, who like to pay somebody else to do their thinking for them, so it is theirs only at second-hand. They are not like the noble Bereans, who "received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so;" thus going to the fountain-head, instead of drinking of the streams which have, probably, been polluted in their course. You may rest assured of this that you do not really know anything until you have thoroughly thought it out. You say, perhaps, "I believe such-and-such a creed;" yet you hardly know what is stated in that creed, and you certainly do not know what the words mean; and, therefore, you do not really believe it in the right fashion. If you would truly know it, you must study and labor to understand it; in fact, you must think over it. But the singular thing is, that many people will do almost anything except think. A pretty service, to which the flowers from Covent Garden lend the chief attraction, or in which the millinery makes the greatest show, pleases a great many; and to have the ears charmed with the melodious sounds of vocal or instrumental music producing a sensuous feeling which they suppose to be true devotion, but is not-how many there are who will give almost anything for this; but as for thinking, they cannot do that. Such work is too hard for their mental constitution; they do not think, and they cannot think. Yet, brethren, no man can be a strong Christian unless he is able to say, in the words of our text, "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God." What is needed is that we should believingly think in harmony with the great thoughts of God, thinking them over again after him, as it were; not endeavoring to think anything contrary to what is revealed, or seeking to be inventors of truth,-which we can never be; -but reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting what we find recorded in the Sacred Scriptures. This is the kind of thought that we must exercise if we are to grow in grace, and to make advance's in the divine life.

Not only, however, is thought a noble faculty, but God's lovingkindness is a theme that is especially worthy of thought. If there is any subject that may be neglected in our meditations, this must never be. The commonest ties of gratitude bind us at least to think about

the great goodness of God to us. It is an amazing thing that he should ever have so highly favored such unworthy persons as we are, and favored us so long, so tenderly, and so perseveringly. Truly, the mercies he hath bestowed upon us should never be-

**“Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die.”**

Besides, if we do not at least think about God’s lovingkindness to us, we may well tremble lest he should no more think upon us for good, and find more grateful recipients of his lovingkindness. Not think of his lovingkindness? Why! there are some of us who cannot help doing so, for it continues to be manifested to us every day. We cannot forget the past mercies, for the present ones are so abundant. Fresh oil to anoint us is ever flowing from the good olive tree, which is one of the symbols of our Savior. How can we forget what the Lord has done for us? I might slightly alter that striking expression of captive Israel, and say, “If I forget thee, O thou lovingkindness of the Lord, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.” The beam out of the wall, and the stones on which we rest our feet, might well cry out against us if we did not think of the lovingkindness of the Lord. If we cannot tell all about it; if we cannot properly weigh and value it; if we cannot give any adequate return for it; yet let us at least think of it. Let every one of us think of it now, so that we may be able to say, at the close of the service, or even before,

**“We have thought of thy lovingkindness,
O God, in the midst of thy temple.”**

Further, such thought as our text describes is essential to all true worship. Be not startled if I say that it is very much in proportion to our thought that we do really worship; and, without thought, there is no true worship. Suppose we sing the praises of God without thinking what we are doing; is that praising him? Nay, no more than if we could have taught a parrot, or constructed an automaton, to make the same set of sounds. Suppose we preach without thought; of what value is such preaching? I am afraid there is much of that sort of preaching to be heard. One minister said, some time ago, that he could preach two sermons a day, six days in the week, and think nothing of it; and somebody, who knew his style of speech, said that he was quite right in thinking nothing of it, for there was nothing in it to think of. If the preacher shall talk, and talk, and talk, but does not himself think, his words will not be acceptable even to his hearers, much less can he hope that they will be accepted by God. If you say that you worship God without thought, I answer that you worship not God at all, and that you rather mock him than worship him. If you kneel down to pray, ere you retire to rest, and when you rise up, you say to yourself, “I never thought of what I was saying,” then, sir, you did not really pray, there was no true prayer in the act, it was all a mockery and a sham. We must make the whole of our devotion an exercise of the inward spirit, not so much an act of the vocal organs as of the thoughtful part of our being, so that we may be able truly to say, “We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.” Now, this task of thinking of God’s lovingkindness ought to be a very easy one, for there is abundance of material to think of in God’s lovingkindness.” Well did Joseph Addison sing,-

**“When all thy mercies,
O my God My rising soul surveys;
Transported with the view,
I’m lost in wonder, love, and praise.”**

Each one of us, who has been the subject of saving grace, may say to the Lord, “I have thought of thy lovingkindness to me in thine eternal counsels, or ever the earth was; and of thy lovingkindness to me long before the members of my body were curiously wrought by thy mysterious power.” Some of us can say to the Lord, “I have thought of thy lovingkindness in having committed me to the care of a godly mother and a Christian father; of thy lovingkindness to me, in my infant days, when I could not protect myself; of thy lovingkindness to me, in my wayward youth, when I ran into divers follies, knowing not myself or thee; and of thy loving kindness to me, when I grew up to manhood, and, alas! my folly ripened into sin. I have thought of thy pitying, restraining, forgiving lovingkindness, that watched over me in all my wanderings, ever tracking the lost sheep that the good Shepherd might always know where it was, and in due time bring it home; and that lovingkindness which, at last, lovingly grasped me, laid me upon thy shoulders, and bore me home rejoicing. Thy lovingkindness, O my God, where shall I end the story of it? Surely, it shall last, not only as long as my existence here, but it shall be continued throughout eternity. Since the new birth of thy servant, how great have been thy lovingkindnesses in instruction, in deliverance, in forgiveness, in comforting, in strengthening, in guiding, in answering prayer, in removing temptation, in conquering infirmity, in leading on from strength to strength! “Oh, if we had to write the complete record, the roll would need to be written within and without to hold the list of all the Lord’s lovingkindness, and it would need to be long enough to belt the whole heaven as with a zodiac of light, for his lovingkindness is without end, and altogether untellable. No man can truly say, “I have thought that subject dry; I have worked it threadbare.” Oh, no! We have thought, and we still will think of Gods lovingkindness to us; but that is a theme not only worthy of thought, but beyond all thought.

If any of you, brethren, think there is likely to be any lack of material for thought, I beg you to consider the various acts of divine grace, all of which are full of the lovingkindness of the Lord;-the everlasting covenant, personal election, redemption, effectual

calling, adoption, sanctification, final perseverance. Touch on any point you please, and you may think with joy and gratitude of God's marvelous lovingkindness.

Then, each one of you turn to your own personal experience. I need not again remind you how gracious God has been to you; I have already given you a sort of outline sketch of it. But, oh! there are some of you who could tell-no, you would not like to tell, but you know-some wonderful things about the Lord's lovingkindness to you. As for myself, I know that my Master has done for me that which, if I were to tell it, would never be believed; and, therefore, I shall keep the story of it till I get where doubt and incredulity will never be admitted. The lovingkindness of the Lord is amazing. Oh, what blessed secrets there have been between him and some of his most highly favored people! When they have been locked up in the darkest dungeons of the prisonhouse, then have they discovered that they were in the King's wine cellars, and he has said to them, "Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." When they have been shut out from all natural light, they have found that they did not need the sunlight, for their Lord's presence has given them all the brightness they have needed. I warrant you that the Covenanters and our Puritan forefathers knew more of the lovingkindness of the Lord than many of us do; though some of us know so much of it that we shall need all eternity to tell the wondrous story. Oh, he is a good and gracious God! If you do not think so, it is because you do not know him. Perhaps you have not yet seen him in the right light. Possibly, you have been living under the law; if you were living under grace, you would understand him better. Or perhaps you have been trying to live with just a little grace; whereas, if you had more grace, you would know the Lord better, and then you would adore him more. It is never with him as it is with certain earthly masters; the less they are known, the better are they liked; and the shorter the service under them is, the sweeter is it considered. Oh, no! our blessed Lord is better loved the better he is known; and the longer we serve him, the easier does his yoke prove to our shoulders. Personally, I can testify that I find it an ever-increasing joy to be his servant; and it is to me the source of pardonable pride that my two sons are in the service of the same Master; and I should not say that if I had found him to be a bad master. I know what some of you say, "I have such a hard taskmaster that I will never bring my boy to him, to be apprenticed;-not I." But when you serve the Lord Jesus Christ, if you do but know him as he really is, you will wish to have all whom you love to be beloved of him, and it will be your heart's delight to see them all earnestly engaged in his blessed service.

Talking thus of the Lord's lovingkindness to any one of you personally, we might, in time, get to the end of the story; but, beloved, there are thousands of you here, who, unless you have grossly deceived yourselves, have a similar tale to tell. The lovingkindness of the Lord to any one of his children is a theme of wonder; but, to hundreds, to thousands, to millions, to a multitude that no man can number, O my blessed Lord, thy lovingkindnesses are like the sand upon the seashore, or like the stars of heaven, innumerable! None but thyself can fully understand thyself.

"God only knows the love of God."

It is beyond all the bounds of human thought, or speech, or calculation, or imagination.

I think, dear friends, that I have now shown you that there is plenty of room for thought upon the subject of the Lord's lovingkindness. So now let me go on to say that this is a kind of worship in which all of you, who are God's people, may engage. When I go home, after this service, I shall be able to say, "I have preached thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." You will not all be able to say that, for, if we were all preachers, where would be the hearers? But I hope you will be able to say, "I have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." Perhaps your singing does not count for much, like mine,-more of a growl than a song, our musical friends say. Never mind if it is so; if you cannot sing, you can say to the Lord, "I have thought of thy lovingkindness; " and that, after all, being the very essence and soul of worship, will be more profitable to you than if, without thought, you had spoken with the greatest eloquence, or sung only with your lips the sweetest notes of music. Ah! my dear sick sister over yonder, hardly fit to be out of your room, I hope you will be able to say, "I have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God." My poor old friend, up there in the gallery, who cannot even read the Scriptures, you also can join with us, my brother, in saying, "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God." Yes, my friend, though you have not the talent of communicating anything to others, for you feel so bashful, and are almost hiding your head even now while I am speaking, and although you scarcely think yourself worthy to come to the communion table with the Lord's people, yet you know that you can chime in with us when we say, "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God." I do delight in any form of worship in which everybody can join; and this is such that no one, who really loves the Lord, need keep himself out of the happy united assembly.

Yet, brethren, this practice of thinking of God's lovingkindness is not universally followed. I am afraid that, in all congregations, there are many people who do not think at all; and many others, who do think, but they think about almost anything except the lovingkindness of the Lord. You missed your ring from your finger! You say to yourself, "Where did I leave those keys?" You are wondering how that sick child is! You are thinking about that pair of horses to be sold to-morrow! Oh, yes, under the most faithful ministries, these odds and ends of daily life will force their way in if they can; but they must be rigidly excluded when they take the place of that one theme that is really worthy of our thought. When the birds came down to eat the sacrifice that Abraham was offering, he drove them away. Try, dear friends, to do the same with all that is carnal, frivolous, worldly, that your sacrifice's unto the Lord may be well pleasing in his sight, and that you may be able to join with the sons of Korah in saying,

"We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple."

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that the place as appropriate: "in the midst of thy temple."

The temple at Jerusalem stands no longer; it is gone, but are there not temples of God now? Yes, a good many. Of what are they composed? They are composed of living men and women; there are no other temples of God. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" But those handsome buildings with spires and towers, and those barn-looking structures called Nonconformist places of worship, are they not temples? No; or if they are called temples, then to them Stephen's words may be applied, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." So let us cast aside the superstition which regards any particular place, or any set of bricks, and mortar, and stones, and iron, as being in any sense or degree holy. Holiness is not an attribute attaching to material substances. God says, "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"

But there is still a temple of the living God, and that temple is made up of the aggregate of all the temples; the temples are the bodies of his people; and the whole Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, is the temple of God. By the term, the Church, I mean the whole body of believers throughout the world, and in heaven, too, for they together form the one "general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." This is the temple of the living God, and I hope that many of us can say that we are in the midst of it. If we are numbered amongst God's people, the tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands, all over the world, who love the Lord, surely we are in the most appropriate place to think of the lovingkindness of the Lord. And, first, if we are in the midst of God's spiritual temple, his true Church, we may well think of his lovingkindness in permitting us to be there. "What!" says one, "am I really one of the Lord's chosen people? Dare I hope that I have a part and a lot with his saints? Who would have thought that such a thing was possible? Who would have dreamed that it could ever be so?" Ah! beloved, of all the wonders you will ever see in the Church of God, if you really know yourself, the greatest wonder of all will be to find yourself there. I am never tired of singing, with good Dr. Watts,-

**"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?

"Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."**

Cannot many of you say the same thing? Some of your old companions are not here; perhaps they even ridicule the idea of coming to such a place as this. Possibly, some of your former associates are now where hope and mercy can never reach them. Why was it not your lot to reject Christ, and to perish in your sin? What, but the sovereign grace of God has made the difference between you and them? So well may you say, "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple; we have thought of thy lovingkindness in putting us into thy temple, and even making some of us to be pillars in that temple."

Standing in the midst of that temple, which is the true Church of God, we cannot help thinking of the lovingkindness of the Lord, for every stone in that temple testifies to his lovingkindness. These are the living stones that are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." And, brethren, the very quarrying of every stone out of the pit of nature, and the soaring of every stone so as to make it fit to be built into God's temple, is such a work of lovingkindness that, as we look upon our brothers and sisters, - the living stones that lie in the same course with ourselves, we may well think of God's lovingkindness.

We may also think of the lovingkindness of the Lord, in the midst of his temple, because everything that temple reminds us of his lovingkindness. There was, for instance, the altar of burnt offering; and we can say, "Thank God for the lovingkindness which has provided for us the one great atoning sacrifice by which our sin is for ever put away." There stood, too, the golden altar of incense; and every thoughtful believer says, "Thank God for the lovingkindness which has given us Christ to be our Intercessor before the throne of God on high, where his prevailing prayers are continually ascending on our behalf." There also stood the shewbread upon the sacred table; and we say, "Thank God for him who, as the Bread of life, is the ever-present and ever-satisfying food for his people." There, too, was the golden candlestick, or lamp-stand; and we can say, "Thank God for his lovingkindness in having provided all-sufficient light for his people."

There was nothing, on which the intelligent, thoughtful eye of a believer could rest, in the tabernacle or the temple, that would not

remind him of the lovingkindness of the Lord; and I think I may say the same concerning the Church of Christ, to which we belong. Look where you will, everything speaks of the lovingkindness of the Lord. There is, first of all, the great Head of the Church, your Lord and Savior, and mine. Oh, what lovingkindness there is in him! His incarnation, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his intercession, his promised second advent-all these are full of lovingkindness. Then look at the feet of that same mystical body; for the very poorest of the saints will also tell you of the lovingkindness of the Lord. See how, in our baptism, the Lord shows us his lovingkindness by teaching us that the way to life lies through death and burial. Then see how, in that sacred supper which we are about to celebrate, the Lord further shows his lovingkindness by teaching us how the divine life that he has imparted to us is to be nourished by the very body and blood of Christ received into us in a spiritual sense. It is lovingkindness everywhere, brethren, in the temple of the Lord; turn which way you will, it is all lovingkindness, and nothing else.

Will you kindly pick that long word to pieces for a minute? It is a most expressive and instructive word;-loving-kind-ness; not only kindness or kinnedness,-God acting towards us as if he were near akin to us;-but, loving-kindness,-the kindness of a brother to his brethren and sisters, the love of a father towards his children;-nay, these are poor things compared with the lovingkindness of the Lord. Sing of it; tell of it; and, as the sons of Korah did, think of it in the midst of the temple of the Lord.

III. The third thing I was to prove to you was, that the result was beneficial: “We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.” Having done so, what was the result?

First, according to the context, they were made joyous: “Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.” You know how you may think over a subject until you can produce within yourself the state of mind, which naturally grows out of it. You may take your troubles, and pore over them, again, and again, and again, and again, until you make yourself as thoroughly miserable as a human being can be. I recollect someone writing to me to say that he had attended the Tabernacle, on one occasion, but that he should never do such a thing again, for he was certain that the tried and afflicted people of God did not meet there. He said, “As I looked around, and saw the happy faces of the congregation, I said to myself, ‘These are not the tried people of God.’” Then he went on to inform me that he had found a brother, under whose preaching he could profit, for there were only eight people gathered to listen to him, and they all looked so wretched, and the preacher unfolded such a deep and sorrowful experience, that the brother felt himself quite at home. I was glad that he did, for I like everybody to be where he feels at home; and if anyone is most happy when he is most miserable, I hope he will enjoy himself all he can. That state of mind would not suit me; yet there are persons, of that sort, who never are contented till they are dissatisfied, who never are pleased with anything unless they can grumble and growl at it; and who never seem able to sing,-

“My willing soul would stay.”

In such a frame as this,-until they feel that they cannot stay in it any longer. But, brethren and sisters, I trust we are not “cut on the cross” after that fashion. We delight in being joyful in our God, and we wish that our countenances could always shine as the face of Moses shone when he came down from the mount. So, beloved, think of the lovingkindness of the Lord to you, and see if that does not make melody in your heart unto him, and cause the big bells in your soul to ring carillons of praise so full of jubilant gladness that your very body shall seem as if it could hardly bear the joy. I have sometimes seen an old church steeple rock and reel when a marriage peal has been rung out from the ancient belfry; and, in like manner, at times, one has felt so happy that the poor physical frame seemed as if it could scarcely endure such excess of bliss as the soul was delighting in the lovingkindness of the Lord.

Now, my dear sister, you have talked about that rheumatism of yours to at least fifty people who have been to see you, suppose you tell your next visitor about the lovingkindness of the Lord to you. Yes, my dear brother, we all know that trade is bad, for you have told us so, every day, for I do not know how many years. And you have always been losing money, though you had no capital when you started; yet, somehow or other, you have managed to have something left even now. Well, we know that old story; could you not change your note just a little, and talk about the lovingkindness of the Lord? Yes, my friend, I know that many professing Christian people are not all that they profess to be; I have heard you say so ever so many times. You say also, “There is no love in the church.” Well, so far as we can see, you are not overstocked with it. You say, “There is no zeal among the members,” But have you any to give away to those who need it? Now, henceforward, instead of always harping on the faults and failing of God’s people,-which, certainly, are numerous enough, but have not become any fewer since you talked so much about them;-would it not be better to think and talk of the lovingkindness of the Lord?

I would like to have this for my theme until I die. If there could be such a sentence as this passed upon me now, “You are never to preach again except upon the lovingkindness of the Lord,” my soul would be delighted to have such a commission. I am sure that I should never exhaust the subject, though I would try my hardest to do so. When I had gone as far as I could, I would call on some of you to tell what God had done for you, and so I would start a fresh band of preachers, for each one of you would have a new story to tell of the lovingkindness of the Lord, and the telling of that story would make your own souls glad.

I have partly anticipated what I was going to say upon the next point; which is that, thinking upon the lovingkindness of the Lord would unloose our tongues. Notice what it says in the 12th and 13th verses:

“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.”

If you have really tasted of God's lovingkindness, you must tell others about it. You cannot keep as a secret the love of God to you. The first instinct of a new-born soul is to tell its joy to somebody else. Think over this theme, and you will find a tongue that you thought you had not got. “While I was musing,” said David, “the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.” My sister, you will take a Sunday-school class yet, if you will only think upon God's lovingkindness to you. My dear brother, you can talk to those few poor people in that hamlet where you live. You have been afraid to try to speak to them, and so you have let them remain uninstructed; but you will not be able to be silent if you think upon God's lovingkindness to you. There is a string that ties your tongue; get your heart so red-hot that it will burn that string; and then, off you will go; and when once your tongue is unloosed by such a process as that, it will be said of you as it was of Naphtali, the hind let loose, “he giveth goodly words.” Tell to all around you that the Lord is good, and that his mercy endureth forever.

Does someone ask, “Is there any need to tell that?” Yes, there is, for it has got abroad that our Master is austere, and hard to his servants. I should not wonder if there are some young people, even here, who imagine that religion is a very dull, dreary, miserable thing, and who say that they do not want to be Christians, for they would rather see a little life. They would not mind being converted afterwards, but they would like to have a little happiness first. Well, young people, it is a very good resolution; only let me tell you that it is a pity to look for life in the purgatory of death, for there is none there. It is advisable to have a little happiness, and more advisable to have a good deal of it; and it is most of all advisable to have the greatest happiness possible. I, for one, will speak of the lovingkindness of the Lord, and I do not think any believer here will contradict me; and I can say that I never knew what real happiness meant till I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. I have had plenty of trouble since then, and much pain of body and depression of spirit; but I can testify that my Master's service is the grandest possible service on earth, and his love to me, and his tenderness and gentleness to me, make me feel that, if I had even to die for him, I would rejoice to do it; and if I had to live as long as Methuselah did, I would only pray that, during every hour and minute of the time, I might consecrate every faculty I had entirely to his praise. We must tell to the generation following the truth about the lovingkindness of the Lord that they may not be deceived by the great enemy of souls, and be made to think that Christ's service is a bondage to the soul.

Last of all, as we think of God's lovingkindness, we shall be confirmed in our loyalty, to him. How does the Psalm finish? “For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our Guide even unto death.” There are some here who have known my Master for fifty years. I have preached him to you for nearly twenty-five years, and I knew him a good while before that. Do I want to change my Master for a better one? Yes, if you can find a better one for me, but that you never will be able to do. Christian, do you believe that you will ever have a better Master than Christ, and a better service than his? No; I know what you will say, “I only want to know him more, and to serve him better, He has bored my ear to his door-post, and I shall not go away from his service ever; for he is mine, and I am his, for ever and for ever.” “This God is our God;” he was our father's God, and our mother's God, and the God of the dear ones whom he took from us, to be with him in heaven; and “this God is our God.” He is the God to whom we looked in the day of our soul's distress, when we saw him in Christ Jesus, reconciled unto us through the death of his Son: “this God is our God for ever and ever.” He is the God who wiped our tears away, and filled our hearts with gladness, and started us on our pilgrimage to heaven with new life in our souls, and new songs on our lips: “this God is our God.” He is the God who has heard our prayers, the God who has been with us in our direst extremity, the God who spoke to us words of healing, words of peace, and words of salvation, when we lay on the verge of death, and looked into eternity; he is the God on whom we have cast our unworthy selves, trusting him with our souls, and our all, for this world, and the world to come, “this God is our God for ever and ever.” Place your hand on the altar's horn, my brother, and say, “I am his forever and for ever; never to draw back, never to backslide, never to apostatize, never, his grace enabling me to be steadfast, to dishonor his sacred name, or to do despite to the precious blood of his Son, or to the purity of the indwelling Spirit. Thy lovingkindness, O God, has bound the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.” So let it be, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

Psalm 48:12-14

Beholding God's Church

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” — Psalm 48:12-14.

THE proper study of the Christian is Christ. Next to that subject is the Church. And though I would by no means ever urge you so to think of the Church as for a moment to put her in comparison with her Lord, yet think of her in relation to him. You will not dishonor the sun by remembering that there is a moon, you will not lessen the glory of “the King in his beauty” by remembering that the Queen, his Consort, is “all glorious within.” You will not think any the less of Christ for thinking much of his Church. So tonight I shall invite you to a consideration of the honor, and glory, and dignity of the Church of God, as set forth in these verses. And our first point will be the survey which should be taken of the Church — “Walk about Zion; go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider well her palaces.” Secondly, here is the object of this survey — “That ye may tell it to the following generation.” And here is, thirdly, a very excellent reason given for over seeking to accomplish this object — “For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” So, then, let us think awhile of: —

I. The Survey Which We Should Take if we would become practically useful to coming generations — the survey we ought to take, of the Church of God.

And let us begin by saying it should be complete. “Walk about Zion go round about her” — go completely round the wall. The Church is set forth as a walled city. The description calls to my mind the city of Chester. There you have the old wall standing, with here and there a most picturesque tower or turret. Now Jerusalem stood in that way, and the Church of God is likened to Jerusalem. “Go round about her” — make a complete circuit of all her walls, try to be acquainted with all of Church history, with that which concerns apostolic times, and that which had to do with the ages of the first Christian persecution; with the Reformation with the sufferings of our fathers, and covenanting sires, and then on to the present day. Let your survey of the Church, as far as possible, include all portions of it. Remember that your denomination is not the whole of Zion; that, although you do well to look carefully to the quarter in which your house is situated, yet there are other houses of God’s servants in other parts of the city, and you should take a survey of those regions, as well as those in which you immediately dwell. See how your brethren fare, and take their pledge and report. Let it never be a joy to a Baptist if he hears that some Congregational Church does not prosper. Let it always be a joy to a Presbyterian when he hears that a Wesleyan is doing good. Let it be a great joy to us if any part of the Church of God prosper, and if in any place there be decay or decline, let us bear in our prayers that particular portion of the Church of God, and pray him to strengthen that part of the city wall against the foe. Let your survey of the Church be as complete as you can make it. “Go round about her.” Let it also be frequent. I am afraid that some persons think very little indeed of the Church of God. I mean that, while they know how the shop, and the State, and the world generally are getting on, they could scarcely tell how many members were added to the one Church to which they belong. Certainly they know little about other sections of the church, and, perhaps care as little as they know. It should not be so with the citizens of Zion; the time to favor Zion will come when God’s servants take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof, when the very least thing that concerns the Church of God shall be important to the citizens of Zion. Frequently, my dear friends, look not on your own things only, but also on the things of others. Does not the text say first, “Walk about Zion”? Then it adds, “Go round about her,” as if, after having done it once you were to do it again, and yet again, and again. So, caring always for the Church, and making constantly an earnest, enthusiastic inspection as to the prosperity of the great cause of Christ in the land.

And let your inspection and survey be deliberate. “Tell the towers thereof.” Look out the detail, count the towers, bring your careful pondering into the business. Do not give a mere glance, hurrying round, and then saying, “I saw the city, but really do not know how many towers there were.” Study the details of the Church of which you are a member; try to look after the individual interests of your brethren. There may be a backslider to recover and rejoice over; there may be a mourner to comfort a seeker to direct, or a faint heart to encourage. Mark well the towers. “Set your heart towards them, saith the Hebrew; do not regard the interests of the Church of God as secondary to anything. If the Church prosper, and Christ be glorified, all things else are little; but if there be defeat to the armies of Israel, nothing can console the Christian.

And let your inspection of the Church of God be always earnest. “Consider her palaces” — not a mere superficial look at the Church — reading the weekly paper — the weekly religious paper — which recounts the little events in your Zion, but consider well. I would to God we had many who in secret would so consider as to sigh and groan over the want of love and earnestness that there is just now. The wave of revival seems now to have passed over us, and we are now like the shore when the sea retreats from it with the fullness of its strength. There need be some men of wisdom to discern the times, and “to know what Israel ought to do.” Each one of us who loves the Lord, and has a stake in the city as citizens, should seek to consider well its interests, and endeavor to promote them earnestly and strenuously. Seeking first to know thoroughly what they are, that we may render our share towards their serving.

Although this exhortation may seem to some to be very tame and tritely commonplace, yet how much I wish we were all obedient to it, and surely, then, great practical results would follow therefrom. There are some who manifest a keen interest in all that happens in the Church. If there is a missionary going abroad, their prayers go with him: if there is a new voice lifted up for Christ, they are much more pleased than if they found a bag of gold. These same persons are often mourners in Zion when the gospel is not fully preached, when prayer-meetings are thinly attended, when no conversions are made, when worldliness sweeps over the Church; and the more we have of such men, the better: they are sure to be the very pick and cream of the Church, those that walk round Jerusalem: that go round about her; that mark well her bulwarks and consider her palaces.

But now let us be obedient to one of our own rules namely, to take a matter in detail. So, taking the text in detail, We have, first, to walk about Zion, which I so take to mean, let us inspect the Church herself; let it often be a theme with us — a theme of study. What is the Church of God? On what is it founded? It is built upon a rock, and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The Church of God stands fast in the immutable love of God according to his eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. The Church of God was designed by infinite wisdom. It is not a corporation of men that come together according to their own agreement and will, and so at haphazard. It is not an organisation framed by the shrewd wit and wisdom of man. God designed the true Church in Eternity. He is the architect and builder of the temple, in which he is himself to dwell. Not only the great outline of that plan did he mark and settle, but every line of it. Ay, and every stone of it; and when that stone shall be quarried and how it shall be quarried, and where it shall be placed, and when it shall be placed in the appointed spot. The divine will of God, and the Eternal purpose, may be seen running through the whole of the Church, and it is well for us to look often to her foundations and look to the Designer, the great Artificer, who buildeth all things. This Church of God, as far as it is already built, has been built by divine power alone. Instruments have been used but all the power is of God. There have been builders and wise master-builders, but still these have been the servants employed by the great Builder of all. He that built all things is God. That is especially true in the Church of God. If there are any other buildings which have been put up by human might, they will assuredly crumble from their plate. Only that which God built will endure. All men’s work will pass away, and, perhaps, the sooner the better, for wood, and hay, and stubble would but destroy the beauty and the completeness of that building whose foundations are of precious stones, and whose walls shall glisten with gems in that day when the top stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it.” The Church is a wonderful piece of architecture, and well worth our walking round because, unlike any other, her strength is not merely material. The Church is built up of living stones. Life flows through the whole. We have seen marvellous buildings. As I have looked at the cathedral at Milan, I could hardly help thinking that it looked as if it had sprung up from the earth, watered by some miraculous shower, it seemed a thing of such beauty; but every stone was, after all, a stone. But the Church of God has grown under a divine, miraculous hand, and every stone from the foundation to the pinnacle glows with life. Wondrous temple for a living God to dwell in! Now should he dwell in temples made with hands, and pillars of iron, dust and ashes: things that were created but for baser uses? But he can live where hearts glow with emotion, where intelligence brightens with instruction, where holiness, peace, and joy are the polished stones, the glory with which they glitter. It is a temple of living stones; you may well go round about it.

The temple has a glorious history, too. Strange histories have been connected with buildings. What would the stones of Stonehenge tell us if they could speak? What secrets might not the Pyramids reveal if for once they could break their solitary and solemn silence! Those far away temples of Carnac and Baalbec — what have they beheld? What armies have marched by them! What nations and generations have perished and passed beneath their shade! But this Zion, this habitation of the living God — her history how grand! When does it begin? In old Eternity trod has ordained her. Along the whole page of human history you trace her most distinctly. How gloriously does she shine forth at the Red Sea, when God works plagues on Zoan, and breaks the dragon in the midst of the sea! How brightly does the Church shine when you mention such names as David and all his victories, or Sennacherib and his hosts slain by the avenging angel! The history of the Church of God is an aggregation of histories, all of them miraculous, for the Christian Church is a miracle so far as its life is concerned — it is life in the midst of death — not only life in the sepulcher, but life in the very midst of death itself. Spiritual life in these poor bodies is just such, but oh! brethren, I am afraid that we are too silent about the history of the Church. We hear continually of patriots singing of the brave days of old, when their fathers fought the foe. We ought to sing more often the songs of Moses and the Lamb — that the Lord God hath gotten to himself the victory, and given to his people rest and conquest. The Church is worth going round, for her history is so bright.

But best of all, the Church should be surveyed by us, because of him who dwells within. It shall be said of no other place “Here Jehovah specially and radiantly resides.” I know men think of their fretted roofs and of their lofty pillars in their cathedrals, and think these ensure the divine indwelling, but he is no more inside that building than outside. God is to be found on the loftiest mountain, as well as in the valley, and where the preacher stands upon a log of wood upon the village-green, the place is just as consecrated as though a thousand years it had heard nothing but the song of praise and the voice of prayer. There are no holy places now: these are done with. They are the beggarly elements of the law, but in the living Church, built up of men and women who have been born unto God by his Spirit, there Jehovah peculiarly dwells — in heaven and in the little heaven below, in the midst of his elect people, whom he hath ordained according to his purpose. There might be whole hours spent in talking about the Church, but enough of that first word, “Walk about Zion.”

Brethren, I shall invite you next, in your survey of Zion, to observe her conspicuous towers. "Tell the towers thereof." Shall I be counted fanciful if I say that these towers may guard the doctrines of the gospel which stand prominently round the Church of God, for the protection and succor of the citizens? I shall not, certainly. The enemy have always looked; upon these as towers, for attacks have been made one after another upon the different parts of our most holy faith. For a long time our Reformers stood like a wall round the tower of justification by faith, and the whole battle seemed to be waged around that particular portion. After a while the conflict shifted, and it continues to do so from year to year and day to day. Sometimes we have had to contend for the true Deity of our blessed Lord, sometimes for the full and divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. There is not a tower in the whole compass of the walls that guard the Church, but what has had to maintain siege after siege, and bear upon it the brunt of the attack; and, what is better, the shields of the mighty have been vilely cast away when Zion's troops have put the enemy to rout.

May not these towers also represent the place of observation of the church? "Tell the towers thereof." Where do God's watchmen go to observe the times, and to see what is coming? Do they not go to the chamber of communion to the place of prayer, to the teaching of Holy Scripture, and get near to God? Then are they not able to see afar off, and to mark where the foe will make his next assault? Surely I shall not be wrong if I say that in our times the pulpit has to become the tower of the watchmen. While that is well and faithfully maintained, no assaults of the foe shall prevail. As the Roman Catholic priests once said to Krummacher, "Unless you put the talking-box out of the way, we shall never be able to put you down." Let the Christian, then, go and count the towers of the Church: let him watch the doctrines: let him learn them: let him understand them: let him know how to defend them. Let every Christian pray for the minister of the gospel. Brethren, pray for him; count the towers, and if you see one that seems to be badly manned with watchmen, ask that God's grace would raise up other and mightier men for the defense of Holy Zion. And if there be aught else, if there be any place that may not have a tower, think of it, think of it prayerfully, and carefully regard it in your prayers before God, as an object of your solicitude.

But I must conduct you on, for our time flies. You are invited to an inspection of the ramparts of defense. "Mark ye well her bulwarks." The bulwarks go entirely round the city; they are lines of circumvallation, ditches, trenches, and fortifications. Now mark well the fortifications of the Church of God. God the eternal Father has thrown up a line of ramparts — the eternal purpose — who shall frustrate it? The everlasting covenant — who shall make it void? The promise and the oath, the two immutable things by which it is impossible for God to lie — who shall storm these two? Who shall break upon these two? We are safely defended behind them. The power of God — who shall defeat it? The wisdom of God — who shall outwit it? The presence of God — who shall deprive us of it? The love of God who shall separate us from it? All these are the entrenchments of our Zion. When our foes have once looked upon them, they may well turn back with dismay. God, the blessed One, has been pleased to make lines of circumvallation too. He has offered his precious Sacrifice, and between the Church and destruction there is the full stream of his atoning blood. Who, by any means, shall make the atonement void, or the cross of none effect? Between the Church and the foe stands the brass wall of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God is not unfaithful to forget the work of his dear Son. Stronger than iron is the intercession of Jesus Christ. For Zion's sake he will never cease or hold his peace, but will plead day and night for his people when they are tempted, that their faith fail not. But there is the mediatorial work of Christ, like a wall of fire about them. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Who shall break through, upon the Church, through all power? Surely these: —

**"Munitions of stupendous rock
Our dwelling-place shall be"!**

And then there is the kingdom of Christ in the latter day promised to come: the promise of God to come with power, and take his people to himself. That is a sure guarantee of the security of the Church until the day of manifestation and the appearing of the Son of God.

Around the Church of God, too, the Holy Spirit has thrown up his rampart. He was pleased, first of all, to create the Church, and since that day he has preserved it safely. It is his to provide spiritual teaching; it is his to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto it. It is his to comfort: it is his to sanctify: it is his to perfect. And all his gracious influences and operations are so many protections against the attacks of the foe. Aha! aha! thou enemy of Zion! If thou hadst to do with poor puny men like us, thou mightest soon put us to the rout. Thy sophistries and worldly wisdom might soon bring us to the non-plus, but the Holy Ghost is with us, and is in us, and we shall answer you with a wisdom that you shall not be able to gainsay.

"The best of all is," said John Wesley, "that God is with us." "God with us! God with us" is the shout of our victorious host. "Emmanuel": in this name we conquer; by this name we overcome. So you see, brethren, you may mark well her bulwarks: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have securely garrisoned and bulwarked the Church of the living God. You are called to notice in the fourth place, her palaces. On which, but a word. Of course, the houses of Zion were inside the walls, and so the dwelling-places, the meeting-places, of believers are inside the line of defense. What kind of dwelling-places are these that belong to the citizens of Zion? Are they cottages? Is it, "Mark ye well her cottages"? No, not so. Is it, "Consider her almshouses"? No; it is, "Consider her palaces." Palaces are the abodes of those of the greatest wealth, of those having rank and dignity in life. Then am I to understand that the people of God are rich. They are not in earth's wealth full often: not in perishable gold and silver. But in what is infinitely

better, they are rich in faith, rich in favor rich in the loving-kindness of the Lord. Then I have to understand that the people of God are honorable? They are not with worldly honor, but God has said, "Since thou wert precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable. And I am to remember that the people of God are even royal? They are kings and priests. They are the true blood-royal of the universe. The blood-Imperial is not in the veins of those who claim it, but in the veins of the descendants of the King of Kings. Their ancestry is the highest under heaven; they are God's aristocracy. Consider then her palaces. Where are the palaces, and what are they? Consider then, my brethren, the place where the saints worship, for where the saints meet together for prayer and praise, there are the palaces. Consider them and mark them well, to love them and say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, oh! Lord of Host, my King and my God." Consider the palaces of Christian fellowship, for if it be in a barn, when Christians meet together, they make a palace of it. Consider the palace of fellowship with Christ. Wherever we meet with him, we are at once in a palace. Consider the palaces of the promises — that it is better than a promise which is spoken of in that word, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust." These will be our dwelling-places in all ages, and it is infinitely better than any earthly palace can possibly be. "Consider her palaces." Thus I have gone into detail round the walls of Zion. Now, the second thing, very briefly, is: —

II. The Object To Be Attained By Our Making Ourselves Thus Acquainted With The Church Of God.

It is this: "That ye may tell it to the generation following." The Church of God should take care that what God has done for one generation is told to the next. How much have you and I been helped by what our fathers told us! Those wonderful deeds that are kept on record — what God did in the days of old — have ministered great consolation to us in this present age. Let us take care that we hand down to our sons a record of what God has done. The pith of the matter is just this: each Christian ought to take a deep interest in the work of God in his time, that he may know how to teach his children, and especially to teach those that are born unto the family of God. Teach the young Christian what God has done, is doing, and will yet do, for his Church. I am very thankful that I have around me a number of Christian people that take a deep interest in the cross of Jesus Christ. I believe that you are the people who will be sure to be succeeded by a generation who will take an equal interest in the same work. But if you were not yourselves interested, I could not suppose that it would be any concern to you to hand down the sacred traditions of your experience to the next generation. But now I trust that you will take care that there shall be kept alive in the world the record, the experimental record, of God's mighty acts towards his people in our day, even as in olden times. They speak of what the Lord did. Go ye each of you and tell to others what God has told you. Never hide the precious things that God reveals to you. What he speaks to you in the closet proclaim you upon housetops. Of course, it is well to learn first; do not try to teach before you have learnt, but when you have learnt, it is well to teach it immediately. Always mark well — "consider," says the text — "that ye may tell it out to others." May we train up in all our churches studious Christians, intelligent Christians, well versed in all that concerns the Church of the living God. I believe that in proportion as Christian people are well instructed, the attacks of the adversary will be repelled and defeated. But if we only gather together undisciplined bodies of men and women, who merely come to hear preaching, but receive little or no instruction, they will become like flocks of sheep, the prey of the wolf whenever he shall come. Mark well, then the bulwarks of Zion, that when your turn comes to defend them, you may be at home in the battle: not come into the Church like a stranger, knowing nothing of what it is to do for Christ, or what Christ is doing for it. And now, lastly: —

III. There Is A Reason Given Why We Should Seek To Transmit The Records Of The Church To Other Generations.

The story of God's love to his Church is to be told from one generation to another, and the reason is this — because "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide, even unto death." Observe, if Israel could change their God, it could as well forget what had occurred, but as she will have the same God for ever and ever, let her remember what God did for her of old. And as that God will be the same to us, let each of us treasure up remembrances of what he has wrought for us; for these are instructive as to what we may hope for in the future. He that helped you in years past will not fail you now. He that proved himself faithful twenty years ago is faithful to-day. Is God all-sufficient in your childhood? Is God all-sufficient in your old age? With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Remember, then, the past mercies are as forge ashes, from which you may gather the spark that may light the fire of to-day, and that even the future may be indebted to the same blaze.

Besides, we may well recollect what God has done, for if we tell it to others, we shall never have to retract, for God will continue to do the same as he ever did. I am afraid that the Church has grown very faint-hearted as to the dealings of the Lord with her. We hardly expect to see such things done, as in the first age of the Church. "That was the heroic period," it is said, "but now we are in our decline." It is not so with this God of the Apostles, this God of the martyrs, this God of the Reformers this God of Wesley and of Whitfield- this God is our God not for time only, but for ever and ever; and I dare not give you any restricted sense of "ever and ever." There are some people who expect the Lord will want to turn us out of heaven at the end of a certain time, or they must think so to carry out their belief that "for ever and ever" may mean only for a limited time That is one of the modern heresies of these boasted times. But for my part I believe "for ever" means for ever and ever; and this God is our God, not for ages and ages, but for ever and

ever, world without end, beyond any possibility of coming to a conclusion, and he will be the same God right through the ages, onward. "And he will be our guide even unto death." Now, the text is not altogether correct in the translation of the Hebrew, for "unto death" might very well be rendered "out of — beyond — death." He will be our guide to the River Jordan, and he will be our guide through it: he will be our guide into Canaan, where we shall rest for ever, and never more be driven out. Well, then, may we talk of what He has done, because he will always go on to do the same. We may keep on talking even to Eternity, about what the Lord has done, for no period in Eternity (if periods there can be) can ever witness any change in the Most High. He will still be the same just God to the ungodly, and the same gracious God to his own people for ever and for ever. Oh! talk ye, then, of his mighty acts, study them, and learn them, and then speak them out with the tongue like the pen of a ready writer, or if you go stammering, let the tongue of the dumb sing with you. Oh! to speak of the everlasting mercy of our God! On such a theme as this, they who have been heretofore silent may grow into orators, for the history of the Church of God and the story of God's love might well unloose our stammering tongues and make us tell his love, immense, unsearchable. Would to God that all the Church were orators for him; would that you who belong to this Church were Many, I know, belong to divers sections of it, but alas! some are, perhaps, members of this church, yet not members of the Church of God. And some of you are not even professedly members of God's Church. May you be converted! May you listen to the gospel, whose message you doubt! It is a message even to, you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. This is the gospel that he has sent us to preach, saying these words, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned." God bless and save you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Psalm 50:5

The Two Gatherings

NO. 3216

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"Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." — Psalm 50:5.

JUST a few sentences must suffice concerning the first meaning of the text. I think there can be little doubt that we have here a prophecy of our Lord's second advent, and of the gathering together in one assembly of all the chosen people of God, both those who shall then be in heaven and those who shall then be alive and remaining upon the earth. Having made a covenant with Christ by sacrifice, these shall all be gathered together unto him, to be partakers of his glory when he reigns at the latter day in all the splendor of his millennial kingdom here below.

The text, however, seems to me to have two other meanings. I believe that it relates, first, to the gathering together of all God's chosen people by the preaching of the Word, and by other means; and that, secondly, it has also a bearing upon the great gathering of all the chosen around the throne of Christ in everlasting glory.

I. So, first, I have to speak concerning The Gathering Together Of All God's, Chosen People By The Preaching Of The Word, And By Other Means.

The text appears to me to be a message to God's people from the living lips of him who redeemed us by his blood. He speaks to the heavens as though he would make all the providences of God to be his servants for this great work, and to the earth as though the willing hearts of his people there would gladly obey the summons,

"Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

My first question will be, who are to be gathered? I think we must understand the text as relating to all the chosen people of God, including those who, as yet, have not been called and quickened, and have not, in the strict, sense of the term, by faith made a personal covenant with God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the divinely-appointed Representative of all the elect; whatever he did, he did as their covenant Head, their Sponsor, Surety, and Substitute. When he made a covenant with God on behalf of his people, they virtually made that covenant too. As Adam's covenant concerned us all, and was practically our covenant, with God, so Christ's covenant concerns all who are in him, and is reckoned as the covenant that they also have made with his Father; and I believe that the mission of the gospel is to gather out from among the rest of mankind all those whose names are written on the roll of the everlasting covenant, those who were given to. Christ by his Father before the foundation of the world.

I know, of course, that the gospel is to be proclaimed to all, and you know that I have not shunned to declare, it in all its freeness and fullness. When we are giving the invitations of the gospel that we find in the Scriptures, we never think of limiting them. Though we believe the special purpose of Christ's atonement was the redemption of his Church, yet we know that his sacrifice was infinite in value, and therefore we set the wicket gate as wide, open as we can, and we repeat Christ's own invitation, "Whosoever will, let him take the wafer of life freely." Yet we do not flinch from the solemn truth that none will ever be saved but those whom God foreknew and predestinated, whom in due time he calls, justifies, and glorifies; and the great object of the gospel, whatever other ends it may have, is to gather together unto Christ these chosen ones who are to be his in the day when he makes up his jewels. I come into this pulpit, and I trust that you, dear friends, go forth to your various spheres of service, with the comforting thought that we are not laboring in vain, or spending our strength for nought, because there are some who must be saved, or, to use the expressive words of Paul concerning the rest which so many missed, "it remaineth that some must enter therein." We read concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, "He must needs go through Samaria," because there was one poor sinning woman there who was ordained unto eternal life, as well as many others who, through her instrumentality, were to be brought to Christ, and to believe on him. We also must needs preach, or teach, or serve the Lord in other ways, because; it is written concerning Christ, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." The gospel is to be preached to every creature in order that Christ's chosen ones may be gathered unto him. We cast the net into the sea, for we do not know where the fish are; but God knows, and he guides into the net those he means us to catch for him. You know that a magnet will attract steel to itself, and the gospel attracts souls that have an affinity to itself, and thus Christ draws his chosen ones unto himself with the cords of a man, and bands of love.

My next enquiry is, Who is to do this work of gathering Christ's chosen ones unto himself? Brothers and sisters in Christ, you know that every true child of God is to be employed in this blessed service. Some seem to think that this work devolves upon ministers only, or upon them and their brethren in office, their deacons and elders, but that it is to extend no further. We hear much, about "lay agency" nowadays, but we know nothing of any distinction between "clergy" and "laity" in this matter. All God's people are God's kleros God's clergy or if there be any laity, any common people, all God's people are the laity, "a, peculiar people, zealous of good works." Nothing has been more disastrous to the cause of Christianity than the leaving of the service of Christ to comparatively few of his professed followers. We shall never see the world turned upside down as it was in apostolic times until we get back to the apostolic practice, and all the saints are filled with the Holy Ghost, and speak for Christ as the Spirit gives them utterance. My dear brother, surely you will not say, "I pray thee, have me excused from serving Christ." Remember your Lord's own word, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." Every one who has heard and heeded the gospel invitation is under a solemn obligation to repeat that invitation to others. Every Christian, whatever his talents, or abilities, or circumstances, or opportunities may be, should realize that he has a commission to help in gathering together Christ's saints unto him. All are not required to do the same work, but each believer is bound to do some work for the Master who, has done so much for him, and every one should enquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do."

Some of you can distribute tracts, and there are some tracts that are worth distributing. I met with two, this afternoon, which, will help me in my sermon presently; and if you get such tracts, and give them away discreetly, they may be read, and may benefit the readers. Some tracts are never likely to be read; but good, pithy, striking narratives, tracts with much of Christ and the gospel in them, may be distributed with the prayerful confidence that a blessing will rest upon their perusal. There are some people who have special qualifications for this kind of work for Christ. While travelling, last week, I was delighted to see, at every station where the train stopped, a gentleman moving from carriage to carriage, and offering a tract with the air of a man who was a practiced hand at the business. At a junction where some of us had to change, there were no less than four trains, and he was as busy as he could be giving his tracts to passengers in each train. I watched an American gentleman get out on to the platform, and go up to the tract-distributor, and begin to balk about the war, and other topics; but, very soon, the earnest servant of Christ had brought the conversation round to the subject of personal godliness. By-and-by, he came to me, he was glad to see, a minister of the gospel, and I was glad to see him, and I hoped that I might be as faithful in my sphere of service as that good man was in his.

But some of you can go a little beyond tract-distributing; you can stand up at the corner of the street, and preach the gospel in a simple but earnest style. I thank God every time I recollect the scores of young men we have here whose mouths have been opened to speak for Christ. Go, on, my brave sons, bearing your testimony for the Master. Even if the police should sometimes move you off, be content to be moved, and go and blow the gospel trumpet somewhere else; but take care still to proclaim the good tidings of salvation, for you have your Lord's commission to do so. When a man receives a commission from the Queen, he is not a little, proud of it; but you have a commission from the King of kings, empowering you to gather together unto him all who are included in the covenant of his grace.

Those of you who are not able to preach may find opportunities of talking to individuals one by one. There is great power in "button-holing" people, and speaking to them personally about their souls. Some of you can visit the sick, and read and pray with them; or you can look out, for those in distress, the brokenhearted and hopeless ones, who need to be directed to him who alone can deliver and heal them. Try to say something for your Master wherever you go, remembering that he has sent even the humblest and

feeblest of you to gather together unto himself those, who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice.

My third question is, Where are they to be gathered? The Lord says, "Gather my saints together unto me." We are not told to gather them into the Baptist denomination, or into the Presbyterian kirk, or into the Episcopal establishment, or into any particular church, our Lord's command is, "Gather my saints together unto me." I have never been ashamed of being called a Baptist since I became one; and if I did not believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ordained the immersion of believers on profession of their faith, I would not preach and practice it; but, dear as Christ's own ordinances ought always to be to all Christians, our main business is not to bring men and women to baptism, but to bring them to Christ. Our principal object is not even to bring people into church-membership, and to communion at the Lord's table, but to bring them, by faith, to Calvary, where the one great sacrifice for sin was offered, where the precious blood of Jesus was shed, where his perfect righteousness was for ever completed, where the tearful eye may see the suffering Savior, and where the broken heart may find healing and salvation in his grievous wounds. Labour, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, in all that, you do or say, in your personal dealings with sinners, in your tracts, in your preaching, in your teaching, to set forth the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for so will you best obey your Lord's command, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

Perhaps someone asks, "Where are the chosen ones that are to be gathered unto Christ?" Where are they? Why, some of them may be sitting in the same pew where you now are; if you really want to gather Christ's saints together unto him, begin with those who are close beside you now. If you want to bring Christ's chosen ones to him, you can find some of them, just outside this Tabernacle, you can find some of them as you are walking to your homes, you can find some of them in the streets, and courts, and alleys all around us, you can find some of them, in Whitechapel and others of them in the West End. I verily believe that missionaries of the cross are just as much needed in Belgravia as in Shoreditch, and perhaps some who live in the biggest houses in the wealthiest parts of London are less likely to have the message of salvation carried to them than are multitudes of the poorer citizens of this great city. Then there are the people in our suburban towns and villages, where so many neglect the ordinances of God's house, or have not the religious privileges which abound in this metropolis; and beyond them are great, masses in the country for whom few or none are caring, and the almost innumerable hosts of heathens, Mohammedans, and others in distant lands who have never yet even heard the name of Jesus, and know nothing of the glorious gospel which he commanded his servants to preach to them in his name. So dear friends, wherever you may be, seek to gather some to Christ. Begin with those who, are in this congregation now, or with those who are in your own household and then cease not from this blessed work as long as you live. As long as there is another jewel to be found to adorn Christ's crown, as long as there is another wandering sheep to be brought back to the good Shepherd who bought it, with his own blood, keep on at this blessed work in obedience to your Lord's command,

"Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that the text has a bearing upon The Great Gathering Of All The Chosen Around The Throne Of Christ In Glory.

In his intercessory prayer before he suffered, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" and in the text Christ saith to his servants in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, "Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

I ask again, as I asked in the previous part of my discourse Who are to be gathered? They are these that have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, and here I take the text to mean those who have made a personal covenant, with God in Christ, Jesus, those who, by an act of faith, have accepted the covenant which Christ made with his Father on their behalf. This covenant, has been made by sacrifice, and through the mediation of the crucified Savior they have joined hands with the reconciled God. By his one offering Christ has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," those who are set apart unto him, to be his sanctified ones, or as the text calls them, his "saints." All of us who have been thus sanctified may boldly "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say; his flesh."

Dear friend, have you entered into this personal covenant, with God in Christ Jesus Have you, by faith, made a personal appropriation of what Christ did upon the cross when he suffered and died as the Substitute and Surety of all who trust in him? If you are one of Christ's chosen ones, you will accept him as your Savior. As long as you are content with your own doings, and trust in them, you cannot be numbered amongst his saints. So, —

**"Cast your deadly 'doing' down,
Down at Jesu's feet,
Stand in him, in him alone
Gloriously complete!"**

“He that believeth on him is not condemned;” so do you believe on him? If you do, you are not condemned, and therefore you are justified, and you shall in due time be glorified, and so you shall be among those who shall be gathered together unto Christ at the last. But the Lord expressly says, “Gather my saints together unto me,” those who have repented of their sin, and turned from it those who have been constrained by his grace to live holy lives, and who have entered into a covenant with him to hate the sin that cost him so much to redeem them from it.

Now I retreat another question that I asked before, Where are these chosen ones to be gathered? Let me beg you again to look at that little, all-important word “me” in the text, “Gather my saints together unto me.” The Lord does not say, “Gather my saints together unto heaven, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn.” They are to be gathered there, but he does not say so here; he says, “Gather my saints together unto me.” Is it not the very joy of heaven, the quintessence of its bliss, that we are to be gathered unto Christ? It is very delightful to think of heaven as the place of the perfect communion of saints, as the place of perfect worship, as the place of perfect rest and at the same time of constant unwearied activity; but, after all, though it may be a great comfort to us to think of heaven under any of these aspects, yet it is a far sweeter thought to us to remember that heaven is the place where Jesus is, and where his saints are to be gathered together unto him. So with delight we sing, —

**“There shall we see his face,
And never, never sin;
There from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”**

The very glory of heaven is that we shall see him, that same Christ who once died upon Calvary’s cross, that we shall fall down, and worship at his feet, nay more, that he shall kiss us with the kisses of his mouth, and welcome us to dwell with him for ever. There are ineffable delights in the very name of Jesus, it is indeed like ointment poured forth; then what unspeakable delights must there be in his presence in glory! If all his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, what must Christ himself be? For one glimpse of him, I would give a life of broken bones, fever, ague, and every conceivable pang; nay more, I think I may even venture to say, with Rutherford, that if there were seven hells between my soul and Christ, and he should bid me dash through them all, I would count the distance all too short if I might but get to him at the last, to behold his face, and to dwell with him, for ever. I do not know whether there are any degrees in glory, and I do not trouble about whether there are or are not; but this I do know, that all the saints shall be gathered together unto Christ, and that degree is high enough for any of them.

How are these chosen ones to be gathered? The verse before our text tells us that the Lord shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth beneath, so we may be sure that the work which he commands shall be accomplished. We sometimes say of a man, when he is very determined to do a certain thing, “He will move heaven and earth to do it;” and Christ will move heaven and earth to accomplish his great purpose of gathering together unto himself all those that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. Heaven shall have a part in this great work. The angels are intensely interested in the saints who, are to be their companions in glory for ever, for “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” God gives the holy angels charge over his saints, to keep them in all their ways, and to bear them up in their hands, lest they should dash their feet against the stones; and they act at last as a spiritual convoy escorting them to heaven even as Lazarus “was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” Even the devil himself and all his hosts are under the supreme control of Christ, and he can use them as he pleases in the accomplishment of his purposes concerning his saints; at all events, they shall not be able to frustrate those purposes, but they shall most certainly be fulfilled. Earth too shall have its share in gathering Christ’s chosen ones unto him. Every wind that blows will speed them to their goal. Every wave shall wash them towards their desired haven. Everything that happens shall be over-ruled to the same end, the gathering of Christ’s saints together unto him, in glory.

Sometimes you may lament when Christ’s saints are gathered unto him by death, but is not this wrong? They must go home to Christ, at some time or other, so why not go when God pleases, and as God pleases? I do not know that I would pray for sudden death, though sudden death is, to a believer in Christ, sudden glory, but I certainly would not pray that I might not be called home suddenly. So far as I am personally concerned, I would like to have a similar experience to that of good Dr. Beaumont, who was preaching the Word on earth, and just as he finished uttering a sentence of his sermon was singing the praises of God in heaven; or an experience like that of another minister, Brother Flood, whom I knew. He had just give out that verse, —

**“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of thine abode;
I’d leave thy earthly courts and flee
Up to thy seat, my God;” —**

when he fell back, for his desire was granted and he had gone from the earthly courts of the Lord’s house up to the seat of God on high.

Still, it does not matter how or when the saints are gathered unto Christ, — whether by plague, or fever, or long lingering affliction,

whether by accident on land or on the sea, or in any other way, — they shall all be gathered together unto him in due time, and when the muster-roll is called at the last, not one will be missing of all those that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. The great question for all of us is, shall we be among them? In order to answer that question, we must ask a few others. Have we entered into personal covenant relationship with God through relying upon Christ's sacrifice upon the cross I have we repented of sin, and trusted in Christ as our own personal Savior? Does he count us among his saints, those who are seeking, by his grace, to live in righteousness and holiness before him all our days? If so, then we may rest assured that we too shall be gathered unto him with all those whom he has redeemed with his most precious blood.

But what am I to say to those who cannot answer these questions satisfactorily? Possibly, the tracts I mentioned in the earlier part of my discourse will help to give me a message to them. There may be some people here who have no hope, no good hope, concerning the hereafter. Perhaps you do not even believe in any hereafter; if so, just listen to this little narrative. Some time ago, there lived in a certain market town a watchmaker, an honest, sober, and industrious man, but he was an infidel. He did not believe in the Bible, he said that it was a book that was only fit for old women. As for what some said concerning the terrors of hell, they never alarmed him; and as for what they said concerning the glories of heaven, he reckoned they were only fancies or dreams. Suddenly, in the midst of life, he was stricken down, and it was soon manifest that he was dying, and dying rapidly. On the day of his death, early in the morning, he began to say, "I'm going, I'm going, — I don't know where;" and then, as rapidly as he could speak, he continued, for the space of twelve or thirteen hours, to say the same words over and over and over again, "I'm going, I'm going, — I don't know where; I'm going, I'm going, — I don't know where." As his strength failed him, his voice became more weak and tremulous, but still his utterance was just the same, 'I'm going, I'm going, — I don't know where;" and, at last, he died with those words upon his lips, "I'm going, I'm going, — I don't know where." O my dear hearers, I do pray that this may not be the dying cry of any one of you, for if it is, the dreadful sequel is given in our Lord's declaration concerning the rich man, "in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." I cannot imagine anything, in the whole work of the ministry that is more, painful than trying to talk to those, who have neglected Christ until the last hours of their lives, and who, even then, feel no sorrow for sin, but pass out of this world into the next without the least ray of hope. There is, in my memory, a scene of this character which comes to me very vividly at this moment. Many years ago, when the cholera was raging in London, I was summoned, at three o'clock one morning, to go to a house near London Bridge, where a man was very ill. He had been attacked by the cholera, and knew that he must die; but although he was a godless, blasphemous man, he could think of no one but he whom he would like to see, so I had to be sent for in hot haste. I went to him, but he could do little more than express his horror at what was before him, and his utter despair of any hope of escape. He asked me to pray, and I did so; but, before I had finished, he was unconscious, soon he was in the pangs of death, and I left him a corpse. I remember that, for long afterwards, I felt sag and grieved concerning the state of that man's soul. Yet, by nature, we were the children of wrath even as that man was; and but for divine grace, we might have spent our last day on earth, as he did, in sabbath-breaking, and our last hour of life in despair. God grant that we may ever feel devoutly thankful for the sovereign grace that has made us to differ from others whom once we resembled, at least as far as; this, that we were all alike the children of wrath!

In the other tract, I read about a working-man, who was passing by an infidel lecture hall. He stepped in, although he was a Christian man, and as he entered, someone on the platform, who had the appearance of a gentleman, was saying that it was all nonsense for anyone to say that infidels died a miserable death. He had just been to see one of their number, and he could assure them, on the word of a gentleman, that he had died very happily. When the speech was over, the working-man asked whether he might be allowed to say something. "Yes," said the chairman, "certainly you may." So he rose, and said, "I have just heard something that has greatly surprised me, I have heard of an infidel who has died happily. I have never before heard of such a thing as that happening, but as the speaker assured us, on the word of a gentleman, that it is true, I must not question the statement. I am, therefore, under the necessity of admitting, that one infidel has died happily; but I feel sure that he must have lived a very miserable life, or else he could not have died so happily. Now I have a dear, loving wife, who makes my home right and cheerful; and when I come back from work, she always receives me with a smiling face, and with my meals tastefully prepared; so I am sure that, if I had to die and leave her, and to go I know not where, I could not die happily. I have four children, as smiling and happy children as you ever saw, and I love to hear their musical voices and their pretty prattle; but if I had to die and leave them, and to go I know not where, I could not die happily. So the only supposition that I can draw from the life of the man of whom this gentleman has told us is that he and his wife lived a cat-and-do life, so that he was glad to be free from her at any cost; and that his children must have been so wicked or tiresome that he was glad to get away from them even though he did not know where he was going. My wife and children make me so happy that I do not want to leave them, and the only thing which makes me look forward to death without sorrow is the thought that I am going to a better world than this where there is One who loves me even more than my wife and children do, and where I hope one day to meet my dear ones again, to be parted from them no more for ever."

When I read that tract, I thought that the working-man's reasoning was perfectly sound; and I wish that all of you, dear friends, had just as good cause as he had to live happily, and to die happily. You will have that if you will only trust in the same Savior in whom he trusted; may God the Holy Spirit enable you to do so now! This is the way of salvation. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He saves all who put their trust, in him. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." All who believe on him are his chosen ones, his saints, as our text calls them; and those who truly trust

him are known by the holiness and graciousness of their lives; they are gathered unto him here as they are, by his grace, called out from the mass of mankind; and, in God's good time, they shall all be gathered unto him in that great general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven. May God grant that every one of us may be there, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Psalm 50:14, 15

True Worship

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 1ST SEPT., 1870

"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." — Psalm 50:14, 15.

EVEN in the Christian Church we have great diversities of opinion as to what is the true form of worship. One stoutly cries, "Lo here," and another as earnestly says, "Lo there!" There are some who think that the more simple and plain the outward worship can be, the better; others think the more gorgeous and resplendent it can be, the better. Some are for the quietude of the Friends' meeting-house, some are for the stormy music of the cathedral. Some will have it that God is best praised in silence; others that he is best honored with flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and I know not what kinds of music. Is it so difficult, then, to know what kind of worship God will accept? It is very difficult if it be left to the guesses of men; it is not at all difficult if we turn to the Word of God. There we shall find, I think, great room for diversities of mode, but we shall find ourselves shut up by a consecrated intolerance to a few matters of spirit. We shall there be bold what is not essential, but we shall be certainly assured of what is essential to the two worship of God. And I suppose it will be enough for any one of us who are sincerely anxious to worship God, ourselves, if we find out for ourselves by the teaching of God's Spirit the way to do it, and we shall be content to let others find out the way also for themselves, satisfied if we be approved of God ourselves — for we have very little to do with sitting on the throne of judgment, and either condemning or approving others. Now on turning to this Psalm we shall find out what worship is not acceptable with God, and we shall find out what is; and these will make the main of our sermon this evening. In reading this Psalm to you, you must all have noticed: —

I. What Sort Of Offerings Are Not Acceptable To God.

You noticed with me, I dare say, that, first, those are not accepted in which men place the reliance upon the form itself; and are contented when they have gone through the form, though their hearts have had no communion with God, and they have brought to the Most High no spiritual sacrifice whatever. Lay it down, then, beyond all question, that formal worship which is not attended with the heart, which is not the worship of the spirit, can never be acceptable with the Most High.

And here we will remind ourselves, too, that even when the form is actually prescribed of God, yet without the heart it is not a worship of God at all in the two sense of language. With what indignation of eloquence doth God here speak to the Israelitish people, who imagined that when they had brought their bulls and their goats — when they had kept their holy days, consecrated their priests, presented their offerings, been obedient to the ritual, then that all this was enough. He puts it to them: he Inquires of them whether they can be so foolish as to think that there is anything in sacrifices of bulls and rams that could content the mind of the Most High. If he wanted bullocks and rams, he says, he has enough of them: all living creatures are his, and he has infinite power to make as many more as he would. Do they fancy that if he wanted bulls and goats he would come to them for them that the Creator would crave and turn beggar to his own creatures, and ask for bullocks out of their houses and goats out of their field? He puts it to them, do they really think that he, the Infinite God, who made the heavens and the earth, the great I AM, actually eats the flesh of bulls and drinks the blood of goats? And yet their idea was that the mere outward sacrifice contented him. Was God as gross as that, and what was involved in that? Now I All put it to you, you who profess to be Christians, and yet in your worship, whatever it may be rest in it. Do you really believe that Gad is honored by your eating a piece of bread and drinking few drops of wine? The thousand of creatures that he has in the world eat more bread and drink more wine. Do you really believe that your sitting at a table brings any satisfaction to him who is in the company of angels, and who has choicer spirits than you are to enter into fellowship with him? No, sirs; if you rest in the outward form, what you do can bring no amount of entertainment to him. He might say to those priests who think that they offer unto God a sacrifice in the Mass, "Do I eat bread that is noble by the baker, leavened or unleavened? Do you think that I drink wine, expressed from the grape?" Fancy you, you that find satisfaction in these things — oh! fools, and slow of heart — that the infinite Jehovah taketh any delight in these matters? And if you come to baptism as God himself

commands it — if you trust in that, might he not say to you, “Do you think that I am pleased with water, when the rivers, and the lakes, and the seas, deeps that lie beneath are all my own? Does that immersion in water bring any satisfaction to me, in itself considered? What can there be in it that can delight my infinite mind or satisfy my soul? If we rest in any outward form, though God prescribes it, we must have a very gross and carnal idea of God indeed if we conceive that he is served or glorified thereby. It cannot be so. If men were not idiotic, they would shake off from themselves all idea of sacramental efficacy and everything that is akin to it. They would see that what God wants is the heart, the soul, the love, the trust, the confidence of rational, intelligent beings — not the going through of certain forms. The forms are useful enough when they teach us the truth of which they are the emblems. The forms are precious, and, as ordains of God, to be reverently used by those who can see what they mean, and who are helped by the emblem to see the inner meaning, but by none besides. The mere outward thing is but the shell, the husk — useless, unless there be within it the living kernel, the embryo which the shell protects. The mere form of outward worship is just nothing: it is not acceptable with God.

Now if this be true — and we know it is — of even ordinances ordained of God, how much more must it be true of ceremonies that are not of God’s ordaining? I am not about to jute, but I will say of all ceremonies and absence of ceremony, if there be no divine prescription, we feel certain that there cannot be a divine acceptance, and even if that could be supposed, yet if the heart were not there, and there, were reliance in these outward things of man’s devising, it were utter folly to suppose that God accepts them. For instance, there are certain people who think that God is glorified by banners, by processions, by acolytes, by persons in white, in blue, in scarlet — (I know not what colors) — by golden crucifixes, or brass, or ivory — by very sweet music, by painting, by incense. Now what an idea they must have of God! What a thought they must have of him! I remember standing on the Monte Cenis one afternoon on a very broiling summer’s day, in a cool place where I could look all over the wide plains of Italy and see the blue sky — such a blue as we never see, and the innumerable flowers, and all the land fair as a dream; and then I Looked to my right hand and there stood: a shrine — a shrine to which there came a worshipper. There was a doll: they called it “the Blessed Virgin.” It was adorned with all sorts of trinkets — just such things as I have seen sold at a country fair for children. It had little sprigs of faded artificial flowers — little bits of paint; and I said to myself, “The God that made this glorious landscape in which everything is true and real — do they fancy that he is honored by this kind of thing — these baubles? What an idea they must have of God.” Sirs, if he wanted banners, he would deck his escutcheon with the stars. If he wanted incense, ten thousand thousand flowers would shed their sweet perfume, upon the air. If he wants music, the wind shall sound it, and the woods shall clap their hands, and every forest tree shall give out its note, and angelic harpers standing on the glassy sea shall give such music as your ears and mine have never conceived. If he wants an alb, (a full-length white linen ecclesiastical vestment with long sleeves that is gathered at the waist with a cincture), behold the snow! If he wants your many-coloured raiments, see how he decks the meads with flowers, and strews with both his hands, rainbow hues on every side. If he wanted garments, he would bind the sky’s azure round him with a belt of rainbows, and come forth in his glory; but your dolls, and your boys and men, and all their millinery! Sirs, do you know what you are at? I Have you got souls? If you worshipped a calf, calves, like you, might well worship him in such in style, but the great I AM, that builded heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say, in these buildings; and he is not worshipped by such trumpery as this. All this, of men’s inventing, never can be acceptable to the Most High. Common-sense tells us so — much more the revelation of God.

But, mark you, my censure does not tell alone against them. Suppose a man should say, “Well, I am for enough from that. On the morning of the first day of tile week I resort to a meeting-house — whitewashed, a few forms, a raised desk at the end of it; and I sit down there. I have not any minister — nobody to speak, unless he believes the Spirit moves him. We all sit still many times sit still the whole morning. We worship God.” Do you believe you have. If your heart was there — if your soul was there am the last man to complain of the absence of form. I love your simplicity, I admire it; but if you trust it, I believe your simplicity will as certainly ruin you as the gorgeousness that goes to the opposite extreme; for if there be any reliance in that sitting still — if there be any reliance in that waiting — (take our own case) if there be any reliance in your coming up to these pews, and listening to me, do you think you have served God merely by coming here to sing those hymns, and cover your faces during prayer, and so on? I tell you, you have not worshipped God. You are mistaken if you suppose the mere act tells for anything. You know not what you think: you know not what your mind is drifting to. It is the heart that gets to God — it is the eye that pours out penitential tears — it is the soul that loves and blesses, and praises — this is the sacrifice. But all the outward, whether God himself ordained it, or man devised it — or whether it be a matter of mere convenience, it cannot be received by the Most High.

So let me add, beloved friends, a matter which may touch some of you. The mere repetition of holy words can never be acceptable sacrifices to God. There are some who from their childhood have been taught to say a form of prayer. I shall neither commend nor censure, but I will say this: you may repeat that form of prayer for twenty, forty, fifty years, and yet never have prayed a single word in all your life. I am not judging the words: they may be the best you could possibly put together: they may be the words of inspiration; but the mere saying of words is not prayer, neither does God receive it as such. You might just as well say the Lord’s Prayer backwards as forwards for the matter of its acceptance with God, except you say it with your heart. I believe some people fancy that the reading of prayers in the family, and especially that the reading of prayers at the bedside of this sick, has a kind of charm — that it somehow or other has a mysterious influence, helps to prepare men for life or for death. Believe me, no grosser

error could exist. When the soul talks with God, it matters not what language it uses. If it finds a form convenient, and it uses it with its heart, let it use it if so it will; but if, on the other hand, the words come bubbling up, and come never so strangely and irregularly, yet if the heart speaks, God accepts the prayer, and that is worship. So, too, in singing. If we have the sweetest hymn that ever was written — yea, though it were an inspired hymn, and if we sang it to the noblest tune that ever composer wrote, yet we do not praise God by the mere repetition of the words and the production of those sounds. Ah! no; the whole of it lies in the soul after all. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Let there be good music by all means, and noble words, for these are congruous to noble thoughts; but Oh! let the thoughts be there; let the song be there; let the flames of love burn on the altar of the heart. Be the outward expression what it may, let the praise be winged by the ardent affections of the soul; otherwise far from you be the thought that you have worshipped God when you have used solemn words with thoughtless hearts. Does not this touch some of you? You have never prayed in all your lives. You have said a prayer, but never talked with God. You have been to the house of God, perhaps, from your infancy, but never worshipped God. Though oftentimes the preacher said, "Let us worship God," yet have you never done so. O sirs, what! — all these formalities, all these routines, all these outward forms and yet no heart, no soul? — nothing acceptable with God? Alas! for you! and will you go on so far ever? You will, so long as you rest contented with the outward. I do pray that God may put in you a sacred discontent with the merely outward worship, and make you long and cry that you may offer unto him the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart through Jesus Christ the Savior, by the power of the eternal Spirit, for that will the Lord accept.

Thus I have mentioned one forms of sacrifice that God does not accept, namely, that of formalists. Now this Psalm shows us that: —

II. There Are Other Sacrifices Which God Rejects, namely, those offered by persons who continue their wicked lives.

Now some will preach and yet live in an ungodly manner. Some can lead prayers in the prayer-meeting, and yet can lie and thieve. There be those that, for a pretense, make long prayers. Their minds me occupied upon the widow's house, and how they shall devour it, while their lips are uttering consecrated words. Now observe no man's praying is accepted with God who is a hater of instruction. Turn to the seventeenth verse of the Psalm: "Seeing thou hatest instruction, and casteth my word behind thy back." Let me look a man in the face who never reads the Bible — who does not want to know what is in it — who has no care about what God's Word is: I see there a man that cannot worship God. If he says, "Oh! I am sincere in my own way" — sir, your "own way" — but that way is sure to be the way of rebellion. A servant does not have his own way, but his master's way. You are not a servant of God while you think that your will and your fancy are to settle what God would have you do. "To the law and to the testimony." Every devout mind should say, "I will search and see what God would have me to do." What does he say to me? Does he tell me that I am by nature lost and ruined? Lord, help me to feel it! Does he tell me that only by faith in a crucified Savior own I be saved? Lord, work that faith in me! Does he tell me that they who are justified must also be sanctified and made pure in life? Lord, sanctify me by thy Spirit, and work in me purity of life! The really accepted, man desires to know the divine will, and to that man there is not one part of Scripture that he would wish not to know, nor one part of God's teaching that he would wish to be ignorant of. The Lord does not expect you, beloved while you are in this world at, any rate, to know everything, but he does expect that you who call yourselves his people should also be as little children, who are quite willing to learn. Oh! it is an ill-sign with us when there are some chapters that we would like to see pasted over — when there are some passages of Scripture that grate on our ears — when we do not want to be too wise in what is written — do not want to know too well what the Lord's will is. If thou shuttest thine ear to God's instruction willfully, and wilt not listen to his will, neither will he listen to thy prayer, nor canst thou expect that thy sacrifice will be received by the Most High. Such things are not acceptable, and yet, how large a proportion of Christendom has never recognised the duty of learning the will of God from God's own Spirit! They take it from their party leaders: one borrows from this body of divinity, another from his Prayer Book; one borrows from his parents, and must needs be what his father was; and another borrows from his friend, or thinks that the National Church must necessarily be the right one. But the genuine spirit says, "Lord, I would have that which is thy mind — not mine, nor man's. Oh! teach thou me." And though he judgeth not others, he desireth ever to be judged of God himself — to stand before the Most High, and say, "Search me, O God, and try me, and know my way, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the right way everlasting."

The Psalm goes on to say that God does not accept the sacrifices of dishonest men. "When thou sawest the thief, thou consentedst with him." When a man's common trade is dishonesty — when frequently he excuses himself, as some servants do, in little pilferings — as some masters do in false markings of their goods — when the man knows he is not walking uprightly before his fellow-men, he comes to the altar of God and brings a sacrifice which he pollutes with every touch of his hand. No, sir! no; say not that thou hast fellowship with God when thy fellowship is with a thief. Thinkest thou to have God on one side, and the thief on the other? Surely thou knowest not who he is. If we be not perfect, yet at least let us be sincere; and if there be sins into which we fall through inadvertence and surprise, yet at least uprightness before our fellow-men is one thing that must not be lacking — cannot be lacking in a gracious soul — in a true child of God whom God accepts.

So next, the sin of unchastity prevents our worshipping God. You come and say, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us!"; or you say, "We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord"; or you stand up here and sing, "All hail the power of Jesus's name," and you have come from lascivious talking — perhaps from worse than talking. You have even now upon

your mind some scheme of what is called “pleasure,” and you think that “life” means what in this assembly and in the assembly of God’s people it were best not to mention, for you count it no shame to do what believers count it shame, even to think of. Polluted hands! polluted hands! how can you be lifted up before God? Use what forms you may, your praises are an abomination; your prayers, while you continue as you are, are a loathing, and a stench in the nostrils of God. Turn ye; repent ye; seek washing in the Savior’s blood, and then may ye offer acceptable praises, but not till then.

The Psalmist goes on to say that so it is with slanderers. Slanderers cannot be accepted with God — those (and oh! how many these are) who count it sport to ruin other people’s characters — who seem to take a joy and a delight in finding fault with the people of God. How canst thou expect that God will bless thee when thou art, cursing thy fellow-men; and while thy mouth is full of bitterness, how can it also be full of praise? Now these are not things that will cheer and comfort the people of God. I trust in my own ministry it is a main point with me to comfort God’s people, but the axe also must be laid to the root of the tree; and let it be known to all who come into these courts, that if they come here with defilement in their spirits and with lust or unrighteousness in their daily practice, and love to have it so, from this pulpit they shall find no apologies and gather no comfort, and from God’s Word, too, they shall have denunciation, but not consolation; they shall have threatening and judgment, but not the promised blessing. Now we must have a few minutes on the next part of our subject, on which I hope to enlarge on another occasion, which is: —

III. What Sacrifices Are Acceptable With God?

The text tells us, first, thanksgiving. “Offer unto God thanksgiving.” Let us come and worship then, brethren: let us come and worship. We were lost, but Jesus came to seek the lost. Blessed be his name. We were foul and filthy, but his mercy brought us to the fountain filled with blood. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might.” Since that very day in which he washed us he has given us all things richly in his covenant. “He maketh us to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth us beside the still waters.” “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.” Now if that be your spirit if you can even keep up that spirit when the husband sickens, when the child dies, when the property melts away, and you can say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord” — what if there be no hymn from your lips, if there be no bull on the altar, yet these are the calves of your lips — the offering of your heart; and they are a sacrifice of a sweet smell if they are presented through Jesus Christ, the great atoning High Priest. This is a sacrifice that God accepts, and I dare say it is often offered to him in a garret — often presented to him in a cellar — often, I hope, by you when your hands are grimy at your work, and, perhaps, even when your cheeks are scalding with tears you yet can say, “I am his child: I have innumerable mercies. When he smites me, yet it is in tenderness. Glory be to his name! Blessed be his name!” That is the sacrifice for a spiritual God: that is spiritual worship. Have you ever offered it, dear hearer, or have you been living on God’s favor and yet never thanked him? Have you had your life preserved, and your daily food constantly given, and yet have you never blessed God for it? Oh! then you have never worshipped him. I do not mind though you are a good singer — although you put on a chasuble, or whatever you have done; if you have not thanked him from your soul, devoutly and intensely, you know not what the worship of Jehovah is.

Next the text tells us that performance of our vows is worship. “Pay thy vows unto the Most High.” Now I shall interpret that not after the Jewish form, but adapt it to our own. You, beloved, profess to be a Christian. Live as a Christian. Say, “The vows of the Lord are upon me. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? I am a servant of Jesus: I am not my own: I am bought with a price. What can I do to praise him to-day? How can I win another soul for him who bought me with his precious blood? I declared myself, when I joined his Church, to be one of his, and, therefore, a cross bearer. Let me take up my cross today, whatever it is, though I may be ridiculed, separated, and laughed at. Let me do it — bear it cheerfully for his truth, and let me say: —

**“If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be;
I’ll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If thou’lt remember me.”**

Let me do everything as in his sight. I was in outward form buried in baptism: I profess then to be dead to the world. Oh! let me try to be so! Let not its pleasures cheat me: let not its gains enchant me. I profess to be even risen with Christ. Oh! God, help me to lead a risen life — the life of one who is risen from the dead with Jesus Christ, and quickened with his spirit. “Now if that be your thought, that is true worship, that is real sacrifice to the Most High — when a soul desires to walk before the Lord in conformity with its vows and gracious obligations, not with a view of merit; for it lays all its hope upon Jesus, and finds all its merit there, but simply cries, “I am his, and I wish to live as one that bears a blood-bought Name.”

We are told, too, in the text — and that is a very sweet part of it — (I wish I had an hour or two to talk of it.) — that prayer in time of trouble is also a very sweet form of worship. Men are looking for rubrics, and they are contending whether the rubric is “so-and-so according to the [use of Sarum](#).” Now here is a rubric according to the use of the whole Church of God bought with Jesus’s blood, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” You are in great distress of mind: now you have an

opportunity of worshipping God. Trust him with your distress: call to him as a child calls to its mother. Show how you honor him — how you love him — how you trust him. You shall honor him even in that; but when you get; the answer to your prayer, which will be a sure proof that God has accepted your offering, then you will honor him again a second time by devoutly thanking him that he has heard your prayer. O sinner, this is a way in which you can worship God. Does your sin lie heavy upon your conscience? Call upon God in the day of trouble, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" That is true worship. Have you brought yourself to poverty for your sin? Say, "Lord, help me." That is prayer. Worship, then, can never go up from all the pealing organs in the world if men's hearts go not therewith. Are you a Christian just now under a cloud? Have you lost the light of Jesu's face? Call upon him now in the day of trouble. Believe that he will appear for you. Say, "I shall praise him. His countenance is my aid"; and you will be bringing better sacrifice than if you brought he-goats, and bullocks, and rams. This is what the Lord loves — the trust, the child-like confidence, the loving seeking after sympathy which is in his children's hearts. Oh! bring him this!

Then he adds — if you will turn to the last part of the Psalm, which I must incorporate in the text — "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth him." True praise glorifieth God. I must confess that I do not particularly like to hear voices that jar in the singing, but I should not like to stop one voice, certainly not if it stopped one heart. I think it is said of Mr. Rowland Hill, that an old lady once sat upon his pulpit-stairs who sang so very bad a voice that the good gentleman really could not feel that he could worship while he had her voice in his ear, and he said, "Do be quiet, my good soul." She answered, "I sing from my heart, Mr. Hill." "Sing away!" said he, "and I beg your pardon. I will not stop you." And I think I could beg the pardon of the most cracked voice I ever heard if it is really accompanied with a real loving, grateful heart. God gets some of his richest praise amidst dying groans, and he gets delightful music from his people's triumphant ones. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" To praise God — to sing an excelsis in extremis — to give him the highest praise when we are in the deepest waters! this is acceptable with him! The best worship comes from the Christian that is most tried at least in this case. When the soul is most bowed down with trouble, if he can say, "I will praise him: I will praise him in the fire: I will praise him in the jaws of death itself " — ah! these are sacrifices better than hecatombs of bulls, and better than the blood of fed beasts. Not your architecture, not your musics not your array, not your ordinations or your forms, but your hearts prostrate, your souls with veiled faces, worshipping the mysterious, the unseen, but everywhere present great I AM — this is worship. Through Jesus Christ, it is accepted: it is of the Spirit's own creation: it only comes from truly spiritual, regenerate men, and wherever it comes it reaches the Majesty on high, and God smiles and accepts it.

Now, brethren, I send you home with this reflection. Some of you have never worshipped God. Then think of that, and God help you to begin! Others of us who have worshipped him ought to consider how large a proportion of our worship is good for nothing. Oh! how often you come and hear now on Thursday night! Why, have not you built a ship in the pew sometimes — mended a plough — darned your husband's stockings — seen to the sick child — done all sorts of things, when you should be worshipping God? Now these distracting thoughts mar worship, and I do pray God that you as a people never may get to think that coming here is of any use if you do not bring your hearts with you. Thomas Manton says that if we sent on the Sabbath day a man stuffed with straw to sit in our pews for us, and thought that was worshipping God, it would be very absurd, but not one whit more than when we bring ourselves stuffed with evil thoughts or dead, cold thoughts that cannot rise to God. I cannot always get to God, I know, but I at least hope I may groan until I do. Oh! it does seem an awful thought that some of us may have no more feeling than the pews we sit on — no more worship God than those iron columns and those lamp-glasses. Oh! may you never be that sort of slumbering congregation, with whom it is all form! We have read a strange poem of one who has pictured a ship manned all by dead men. Dead men pulled the sails, a dead man steered, and a skeleton eye kept a look-out. I am afraid there are congregations like that, where all is dead and all is form. Oh! may it not be so with you or me, but may we all realize, through Jesus Christ, who stands at the throne, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, "have fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ," and that evermore to God's glory! Amen. I speak on this theme but very feebly, but I do feel it from my very heart. I do pray that we may all be accepted worshippers because the heart is found in us. It was always a bad sign — by the Roman augurs it was pretended to be the worst sign — when they found no heart in the victim. It is a dreadful sign when in all our worship there is no heart. God forbid that it may be so! Amen