

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 5th JUNE, 1887.

"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. . . . I am the Vine, ye are the branches."—John xv. 1 and 5.

THE Apostle Paul commences his Epistle to the Hebrews by remarking, that God has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. If God has spoken, it becomes all intelligent creatures to listen to Him. The words of God are always important, whether He speaks to saints in heaven, or to saints and sinners on the earth. God is continually speaking in nature, and in providence; but the most important of all His words are to be found in the glorious Gospel of His grace. Nature proclaims His eternal power and Godhead, and providence proclaims His omnipotence and His omniscience, and His goodness, and also the fact that all things are managed and controlled by His infinite wisdom, love, and power. But providence does not discover salvation, and nature reveals no atoning blood; therefore we do not see all of God in nature, nor hear all His words in creation. We do not see enough of God, nor do we hear enough of Him in nature or in providence, or in His general reign. God has therefore spoken again to us in these last days by His Son. His dear Son is the great repository of the Gospel, or the great embodiment of all the saving purposes of God, and He holds and reveals them all. It pleased the Father to communicate, so to speak, His mind to His dear Son; and having charged Him with all His purposes and intentions, He sent Him into the world to proclaim these saving facts gradually and progressively unto dying men; and Paul says in relation to this, "God has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." He spoke to Adam in the garden of Eden. But there was nothing about salvation in what God said to Adam before he fell. And He spoke to the children of Israel in Egypt by Moses and Aaron, and he spoke again and again to them in the land of Canaan by the prophets, and poets, and priests; but at last He sent His Son, and the message He has brought from heaven is a very wonderful one, even good news and glad tidings to guilty men, who deserved to experience the curse of God for ever. God has spoken to us from His throne in the height of His sanctuary in heaven. He has opened His mind to us, and He authorised our great Prophet and Teacher to reveal unto us what He in eternity thought and purposed,

"Infinite years before the day
And heavens began to roll."

He hath spoken in these last days of the ceremonial dispensation ; for Jesus came just before the abrogation of the ceremonial law, and the close of that system. When Christ commenced His public ministry, the last days of the ceremonial dispensation had arrived, and Christ went forth with the Gospel.

The Gospel dispensation also might be said to be the last days of time. Eighteen—nearly nineteen-hundred years of this dispensation are passed and gone. How much longer time will last we do not know, nor do we want to know ; for “ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The full Gospel, however, is proper to this dispensation. Anything clearer we could not have had, and anything more satisfactory to right-minded believers, we could not have received from heaven. The faith has been finally delivered to the saints of God, and another revelation is by no means necessary. The present revelation, as applied by the Holy Spirit to the heart, has fitted and prepared thousands, and perhaps millions for heaven. I have no idea that there will be half-a-dozen ways to heaven, or that the Holy Ghost works differently in one age from the manner in which He works in another. I am quite willing to be found a follower of them, who through faith and patience, now inherit the promises. Oh that my faith were as deep and warm as was the religion of the early church, or as strong and vigorous as was the faith of the apostles of Jesus. The way to heaven is God’s way. It is a Divine contrivance, and infinite wisdom arranged and planned the whole from first to last. Jesus stands between man and God, not only as a Mediator, and to atone for sin, but as a Messenger, even the Messenger of the covenant. He brings to us the mind and purposes of His Father, and also the love of His heart. Let it be mine, and let it be yours, to listen to this great Speaker to men, for God speaks to His people in these last days by His Son. Jesus, however, in speaking to men, always speaks of Himself. We inferior, weak, and insignificant servants of God, and ministers of the Gospel, are obliged to say, we preach not ourselves to you, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. No mere creature can say as did our Lord, “ I am the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, or the Way, the Truth and the Life.” It is ours to proclaim the greatness, the graciousness, the mercifulness, and the work of another. It is ours to point with John to Jesus and say, “ Behold the Lamb of God, which take away the sins of the world !” Our Lord, therefore, in preaching the Gospel, necessarily preached Himself. He could not otherwise set it before the people, for He is the sum and substance of the Gospel : He is in the whole of it, and the whole of the gospel is in Him. Christ and the Gospel are inseparable, and can never be divided. Without Christ the Gospel is an empty name—an unmeaning representation of empty doctrines and promises, if I may so speak. Christ is the fulness and the reality of the Gospel of God. It was for Him to say when the people appeared in the temple, “ If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” But it is mine to say, If any man thirst, let him go unto Christ and drink. When the five thousand were fed, it was for the Master to say, “ I am the Bread of Life.” And when He sat upon the well of Samaria, it was His prerogative to say, “ He that drinketh of the

water that I shall give him, shall never thirst. The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

Perhaps a vine was seen by the Saviour as He walked, and He took advantage of that circumstance to preach that glorious doctrine, "I am the Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman." We say concerning Christ, "He is the Vine, and we are the branches: but He says, concerning Himself, "I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman;" and "I am the Vine, and ye are the branches."

Now, I do not know that I shall preach a sermon this morning, neither do I suppose that you will expect me to do so. Having been ill three weeks, and confined to my bed, it takes one some time to get well into harness again. However, I hope the Lord will strengthen me in my weakness, favour me with light, bring my soul somewhat into the liberty of the Gospel, and help me to say a few things in His name.

In the first place, we have here *the doctrine of the Church's union to Christ*. The leading point in the text is, union to the Lord. "I am the true Vine;" and again, "I am the Vine, and ye are the branches." I love to meditate upon this truth, especially when the unction of the Holy One drops upon my heart. This is a glorious reality; union to the Saviour, or the church's oneness with the dear Son of God, is essential to life eternal. It is a *secret union*. I wish, my dear friends, that when ministers of the Gospel preach on this, and similar themes, but especially on this, they would go a little further than they do. They are all very willing and anxious to speak of the believer as one with Christ, and as being found in Him, but I am sure they do not go far enough to satisfy many hungry souls. I believe, my dear friends, that the church of God was secretly in the Lord Jesus Christ before her existence became visible. Just as the branches were originally in, and grew out of the vine, so the church of God was originally, secretly, and intentionally on the part of God, in Jesus Christ the Mediator, the great root and head of grace,

"Before the day-star knew its place,
Or planets went their round."

You take an acorn, and plant it in the earth. If it should strike and grow, and become a tree, it is a fact that the living growing oak was originally in the acorn. Look at Adam and Eve, our first parents, in the garden of Eden; the human family was in them seminally and secretly, and was perfectly known to Jehovah. You and I were there, and all his sons and daughters were originally and seminally in them. You think of Abraham, the father of the children of Israel, the national people of God. All Israel were originally in him, and are called his seed; and though sometimes those words apply to Christ, yet the children of Israel are represented as the seed of Abraham, for the whole nation were in him, and God saw them there. Abraham was the root of that special people, and they were in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, before they came into actual being, or had any visible existence. And is it so with you and me in relation to Christ? (I am not very loud or rapid, but I trust we shall quietly give our attention to this point.) And was it so, that before our Lord came, before there was any actual necessity

for His coming, before the first hour of time, when God lived alone,—was it so, that in that root the glorious person of Christ, the everlasting God saw the whole of that future vine which shall fill heaven itself, and grow everywhere in that world of blessedness and glory? All were secretly and seminally in the person of our Lord. I know that sometimes we are referred to the soul as coming to the Saviour; but never forget that Christianity comes out of Christ, and that Christian men and women are the seed of Christ. I want you to remember that, as that tiny branch, that shoot, or the little bud on the vine, which will, by and bye, become a very considerable branch, and bear fruit, was originally in the vine, so every believer, during the first stages of his belief, and during the last stages of his triumph, was originally in the glorious Christ of God. “I am the Vine, and ye are the branches;” having had a decretive existence, and a decretive life in Me, before the foundation of the world.

Let us, however, leave that point, and notice, in the next place, that this union, as set forth in my text, *is a very close or near one*. Nothing can be closer or nearer than the union between the vine and its branches. They are not two, but one. The branches, the stem, and the root, constitute one vine. The branches may be very numerous, they may spread very far, and cover a good deal of ground; but wherever they may be, however far they may be from the root, being in the vine, and united to the root, they constitute, notwithstanding distance, a part of the vine. There is a union, an indestructible oneness, between Christ and His people, which is not a figurative oneness, it is a great fact. The church is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. You say, I do not know whether I am in Christ, but I am in the church. It is something to be in the church, but it does not follow that because we are in the vineyard that therefore we are in the vine. It is possible to be in the vineyard, and yet to have no union to the vine. You say your thoughts are in the Bible, and they are stable, fixed and rooted there, and that you are a firm believer in the Word of God. That is very well, and I am glad of it. Atheism I hate, and scepticism in all its forms and aspects is to be condemned. Yes, I am glad you are a firm believer in the Bible, but there is a difference between an historical and a vital faith. Your thoughts may be in the Bible, and the Bible may be in your thoughts; and yet you may not be in Christ the Vine. This is the grand essential. “I in them, and thou in Me,” and “they are Mine.” Brethren, where are we? You may bring a branch to the vine, lay it against it, tie it to it so neatly and skilfully that it may appear to be really a part of it; but if the union be not natural and vital, it will be barren and dead; so, if there be no union of heart and soul to Christ, there can be no spiritual life, and living and dying in this state we shall be lost, for we are not the Lord’s. The union between you and your wife is close and near, the union between you and your children is close and near; but it seems to me that the nearest, dearest, and closest union in the world, is that which exists through grace divine between Christ and a Christian, between Jesus, the root of all grace, and every gracious man and woman. It is a close and living union, else there will be no fruit; and I am sure there will not be any real, natural, or proper foliage, for the sap that produces the fruit produces

the leaves also, and both leaves and fruit are good. Is Christ in your heart and mine? The indwelling is mutual, the root is in the branches, and the branches are in root, and separation between the two in relation to Christ can never take place. Christ is in the Christian, and this constitutes one a Christian. The Christian is in Christ, and this constitutes him a living and an acceptable character.

"O may my soul be found in Him,
And of His righteousness partake."

I will not say much about myself; but when one is laid aside by the hand of God, and his condition, for the time, is said to be somewhat critical, it brings him into a serious mood and frame, and he looks about for the character and nature of his profession, and for satisfactory evidences of an interest in Christ. Oh Christian brethren, when the countenance changes, when health has left us, and pain shoots through the body from head to feet, and there is a difficulty in breathing, and one fears that his last breath may be not far off; then solemn reflections follow! Then one feels he is in a solemn position, and the great question then relates to my subject this morning. Where, and what am I? If I am not in Christ, a part or a branch of the Vine, whatever else I may be, whatever else my friends may have supposed I was, and am still, I am lost, and have nothing for God, or for eternity. Life is the grand qualification, the grand power and requisite for heaven, for its enjoyment, and for God. The life may be limited and feeble, but there must be life; heaven is not a world of death. Dead ones, and deadness are there unknown; life, and life eternal everywhere prevails in heaven. All is life, from the glorious Majesty of heaven, to the last arrival there. "All is life, but "without Me ye can do nothing." My religion may be talked about, my preaching may be spoken of, my profession of religion may be accepted, and my theory or views of divine truth may be quite scriptural. Have I life? Is the life of Christ in this poor heart of mine? "I am the Vine, and ye are the branches." This is a vital union. Do not go away and say, The preacher was very severe and bitter this morning. I am not so, but I feel in a measure the importance of the absolute necessity for union to Jesus Christ. My dear friends, this union is essential; for "without Me, ye can do nothing." We can sin, we can fall, we can slip, we can be barren, we can be cold, and we can yield to temptation; but without union to Jesus Christ, there cannot possibly be a single bud of spiritual power, nor a single swelling in the heart of heavenly life. As time, however, is going, let me mention one more point, and then I will proceed to another branch of the subject.

This union, which is vital and essential, is *indissoluble*. Nothing can separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Christ's Father is the Husbandman. He holds the pruning knife, but He was never known to separate a branch from the vine, it was never His intention to separate Christ and the Christian. There are suckers here and there which threaten to waste, so to speak, a very considerable amount of sap, and it is necessary that they should be removed, and the pruning is by the hands of the great husbandman. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; for the removal of the superfluous

growth is painful. Sometimes that which enfeebles us by absorbing that which should flow elsewhere, is some sweet comfort which we hold very dear, and off it comes, and our heavenly Father knows what he is doing. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it." You know what He does with every branch that beareth not fruit; but oh, you fruit-bearers, expect to be pruned and to be purged by the God of infinite wisdom and love. I remember, some time ago, reading, I think, in a sermon preached by a minister on this point, that he said, while watching the proceedings of a gardener who was pruning a vine, "Are you not removing too much? Are you not using the knife too freely?" The man said, "You mind your business, sir, and I will mind mine. You go and preach, and I will not interfere with you. I will prune the vine, and know how to do it, and you are not to interfere with me in my work." And the following season proved the excellence of the man's knowledge and work. Our God is wise, and what should be removed He removes, and He removes it as He pleases. The knife may be some bitter affliction, or some sharp word. One says, Oh, the Word was preached, and it cut me down, for it went into the very depths of my spirit, and seemed to be all against me! Yes, the pruning knife is sometimes the Word. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Indeed, no sanctifying blessing can attend the operations of our God, without the Holy Spirit. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it." It is not His intention to separate from the Vine, though the pain be bitter, the darkness dense, and your feelings be misery itself. Mine have been so. Oh that it were always otherwise with me! Your sufferings may be great; yet, if you are in Christ the Vine, you are there for ever, for a separation between Christ the Vine, and the branches, can never take place.

Our second point will be, *the place occupied by this Vine*. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches," and "My Father is the husbandman." Well, this heavenly Vine was not planted in Eden. There was a vine there, but there was a worm at the root of it, and the whole died and became corrupt. The Lord has a vine which belongs to another system, to another branch of His dominion, character, and government; and where does it stand? In Canaan? No, a national vine was there. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt," found room for it and planted it here; but that vine has been destroyed, and the vineyard broken up, and it lies in wretchedness and ruin. Where is this Vine, then? "My Father is the Husbandman." What do you think about the everlasting purposes of God? Christ the Root is there, and if you are united to Him, you are united to Him, who, as the Root of this Vine, is in the eternal purposes of God. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ, in God." Your life is in Christ the Root, who possesses all fulness, and is in God Himself, even in His eternal love. What do you think of the covenant of grace? There the Vine stands. There Jesus has been planted, there He lives, and His people live in Him. The union between Christ and believers is a covenant union. What do you think of God's everlasting love? My brother, this Vine is in God's heart, and is it not sweet to be thus united to Him? It grows in His heart, for His dear Son, the Son of His love, is in His own bosom, and there

He will remain for ever. And the Vine of which we are speaking is Christ made visible. The existence and character of the Root are revealed. This vine is visible as to its branches, but not as to its Root, and yet we know that that vine yonder has a root, because it is a living reality. If all the men in the world came to reason us out of the belief, that there is no root to that vine, they would fail. That there is life is evident, for see the leaves, and look at the grapes, and these would be impossible without a living, and life-giving root. The root of the matter is in every believer, but it is concealed. The world cannot see it, but they see its branches and its out-growth in his walk and conversation. You know, by your own personal experience, that your religion has a root, and that that root is divine; not in the ordinary sense of that word, but that it is a special, a gracious, a spiritual root. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Thirdly, the text indicates *the unity of the church of God*. "I am the Vine. Then believers, or Christians and Christ bear the same nature. That little branch of the Vine is of the same nature as the root. There are not two natures here; sameness is here a leading fact. The unity of the church appears in its sameness of nature, and sameness of name—Christ and Christians. The root and the branches have only one name. "There is a vine;" and we do not enter into particulars and say it has a root, and so many branches. It is a vine, and the name includes the whole of it,—all that is invisible as to the root, and all that is visible as to the branches, and so we have a growing, a visible church, which is more or less fruitful; a church that lives because Christ lives, and that lives the life which He lives. "Because I live, ye shall live also." A few thousand years back, one of the first branches of this Vine appeared in Abel. He belonged to this Vine, and not to a different one, or another order of things. Enoch, who walked with God, was another branch; and Noah, who was accepted by God, was one with us. Moses and Aaron, and all Old Testament saints, were branches of this Vine. Then came the apostles, who were followed by the early churches of Christ, and ever since the Vine has been growing and bearing fruit. Yes, it is a growing Vine, and Jesus will produce all that He engaged to produce, before the foundation of the world, and the Vine will be beautiful and glorious at last. Beauty characterizes it even now; but when all God's people have been made visible, and all the branches are of full and perfect growth; and when fruit hangs on every branch everywhere, the vine will be marvellous indeed. It will fill all heaven, as Israel in Canaan, and as the posterity of Adam fills the world in which we live. The unity of the church of God, for there are not two churches.

Fourthly, shall I say a word *on the fruit it bears*. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." Ah! I wish I were a fruitful branch; and yet, let me not complain, let not ingratitude and unthankfulness, or hardness of heart prevail; if I bear some fruit I would be thankful, and bear still more. Every tree bears fruit after its own kind, and Jesus Christ will see that *this Vine* bears fruit after His kind. True Christianity is from Christ, He produces it all. He brings the Christian as such into existence, and fills him from Himself. The best life on the earth is that which is lived

by the Christian in fellowship with Christ. He draws supplies of grace silently, day by day, from Christ the Lord. The life that is in the Vine circulates quietly. I will not now say anything about the noise of an "army" in the streets, nor how much holy life there is in connection with drums and fifes, and the rest of it. I do not think the grace and life of Christ circulate with show and noise. The branches, I do not think, become any more beautiful for that. They grow in Jesus Christ, and the life that flows from the great root in God's almighty heart, silently and secretly rises up through Christ, and circulates through all the Vine, even in every branch thereof; and the branches, as I said some time ago, spread far and wide. I am not bitter nor bigoted, believe me; therefore I say, I believe that some of the branches in this Vine are to be found amongst other Denominations than our own. Not a few of them are wrong in their heads, but right in their hearts, having the one thing needful. One in Christ, the great Root, though time and space may separate them. I do not believe in all that one and another says, but I do believe that the Lord knows His own people, and will save them all. Well, they all meet and unite in Christ, the great and glorious Root of life and fruit. What do you think of faith? Union is before faith, and faith springs from it. What do you think of repentance? The eyes filled with tears. Union precedes repentance, and repentance proves it. If you will take a bunch or two of good works, have them by all means; but good works, as such, can never be found, unless there is union to the dear Christ of God.

Fifthly and lastly, *the great Proprietor*. "My Father is the Husband-man." It follows, therefore, that this Vine is not a spontaneous growth; it did not spring up accidentally, but was planted by the Father. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word." So that here is the Christian, and the Christian is in Christ, and Christ is in God; and God, therefore, is the great Proprietor of all. May the Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE PERPETUITY OF DIVINE GOODNESS.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 16th OCTOBER, 1887.

"The goodness of God endureth continually."—Psalm lii. 1.

THE whole of David's life was a Divine illustration of the fact that the Lord reigneth, and it is our privilege to watch His hand in the operations of His providence; for "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." The providence of God works in the closest possible connection with His reigning grace, and hence we speak of the gracious and merciful providence of God. Nothing proceeds from chance,—accidents, strictly speaking, are unknown in the government of Him, who is doing all His pleasure; and during the past 6000 years, He has executed His good will and pleasure in the world, and in His church, and among His people. Famines have formed a part of the mysterious government of God, as peace and plenty have fulfilled His purposes, and individuals and families appear prominently here and there in connection with the operations of His hand. There was a famine in the land of Canaan before David was born, which led to the removal of a certain family of Israel into the land of Moab. Two of the members of that family married two Moabitish damsels. Both the husbands died, their father having died previously, and the widowed mother and her two daughters-in-law left Moab for Canaan. Oh it is most instructive and edifying to watch the mysterious and wonderful operations of God's hand, in the circumstances which led up to the birth of David! Ruth and Naomi returned to Canaan, and they entered the land about the time of the barley harvest. Ruth proceeded to glean. This brought her into contact with Boaz, who eventually married her, and a child was born, whose name was Obed; he became the father of Jesse, to whom a child was born, whose name was David. When David came into this world of sin and sorrow, he was taken, so to speak, in a very special manner under the omnipotent wings of his God. His father, Jesse, was comparatively poor: he had a few sheep. The other members of the family entered the army, and the young son David became a shepherd. The Lord called him by His grace, covered him all the day long with His feathers, and worked so mysteriously and wondrously, that he found himself at length on the field of battle. Goliath came forth and blasphemed the name of the God of Israel. David met him, and slew him. That circumstance brought him into prominence, and connected

him with the court. Samuel was sent eventually to anoint him, and to give him a promise that he should one day reach the throne. The man after God's own heart passed through various scenes of sorrow and joy, darkness and light, trouble and deliverance from trouble. Sometimes his faith was low, at other times it rose very high : but God had made with him a covenant of royalty, and our God changes not. The good man was covered and defended in the midst of fires and floods, and flames, and at length God fulfilled His gracious promise ; the people anointed him with fresh oil, and he eventually became the King of Israel : but before he was crowned, he passed through many stormy seas, yet the God of heaven and earth kept His gracious eye upon Him, and did not fail nor forsake him.

The psalm out of which our text is taken, is connected with one of the trials of this good and gracious man. Having resolved to leave the land of Israel, through fear of the wrath of Saul, he entered the city of Nob, without bread, without money, and without human help. Abimelech the priest supplied him with holy bread, which was used in the temple ; and Doeg, one of the herdsmen of Saul was there, and saw what was done, heard what was said, and being an exceedingly mischievous man, he proceeded to give Saul information, and David said concerning this in the Psalm before us, "Why boastest thou thyself [in mischief,] O mighty man ! The goodness of God endureth continually." It is true I was supplied with bread, and through my own folly and fear, found myself in the land of the Philistines, (for some of the troubles through which David passed, he brought upon himself;) yet the goodness of God did not desert me, and the God of heaven and earth did not leave me : and notwithstanding the mischief you have been the means of inflicting upon the priests of the Lord God, His purposes have not been nullified, nor His promises broken, for the God of heaven remains the same : the goodness of God endureth continually."

Now I want this morning, if the Lord will enable me, to try to *illustrate the subject indicated in the text* ; and in the second place, to *draw a few inferences from it*.

In the first place, let us try to illustrate the subject,—and our illustrations will be very faint and feeble; for there is no greater subject in the Word of God than this—"The goodness of God endureth continually." I have two things to notice in illustrating the subject, viz., *Divine goodness*, and *the fact asserted in relation to it*,—"that it endureth continually." In the first place, a few observations upon the goodness of God. Where shall I begin, and how shall I begin? 'Tis an endless theme, and we thank our God for having revealed that fact unto us. It is as great as God Himself. That there is a God, is a fact which presents itself to us every day, and in every place. But further, God is good, and His goodness is unchangeable. Shall we speak in the first place for a few minutes of *the goodness of our God as a Triune God* ? We are not Socinians, and I think, we never shall become so. We are believers in the triune God of heaven and earth. The Father is good—infinately and unchangeably, and eternally good ; the Son of God is good, and He is the great embodiment of the Father's goodness, and of all the goodness

of God. Whoever knows the Son of God, knows for Himself in some small measure, that God is good; for it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell in His dear Son: "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." God the Father is good therefore, and the Son is good, and the Holy Spirit is good. The Father's goodness appears as infinite in the gift of His dear Son. He is infinitely liberal. The goodness of God flows in this respect perpetually and everlastingly. All that God could give—I speak advisedly, and thoughtfully, and solemnly—He resolved to give to men, and all that He could bestow upon us, He did bestow, when He said to His dear Son, Go into the world and die, and bring the people near to Me. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also, freely give us all things?" I hold that God in creation does not fully appear. In creation, and in providence, we have parts of His ways. God has not equalled Himself in creation; and if the stars above our heads are worlds, His eternal power and Godhead appear in connection with the creation of those worlds. Nevertheless, God has not equalled Himself in creation; but I hold that He has equalled Himself in the great business of redemption and salvation. He has not given us a world merely, nor worlds; He has given us Himself, and an interest in Himself, and constituted us His children, and Himself our Father, and has said that He will be a Father to Israel, and to His people for ever and ever. The goodness of the Father. Look at the goodness of God in the Person and work of His dear Son. See Him coming as it were, from His Father's bosom, Oh, how good! He did not hesitate to leave, did not hesitate to come, did not hesitate to receive by imputation the sins of His people, did not hesitate to appear at once before His Father, and did not shrink from the blows that fell upon Him from the hand of Divine justice. Oh He was good to enter Gethsemane! good to go to Calvary, and good to put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. And since He is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the goodness which shone so gloriously in Gethsemane and Calvary, will flow and shine in a better world without interruption for ever and ever. And all this, my dear friends, is revealed to us in a measure by the good Spirit of God. "Thy Spirit," said David, "is good." Oh! it was goodness Divine and inexhaustible that led the Holy Ghost to arrest your heart and mine, that led Him to open our blind eyes, and unstop our deaf ears; and to open our hearts and minds to receive the atonement. And some of us will never forget the happy time when our burden was removed; when the sting of guilt was extracted from the conscience; when our filthy and polluted souls were washed, and when our nakedness was covered by the imputation of the righteousness of the Saviour. Oh, what moments of peace and joy! and what hours of sacred pleasure and delight we experienced under the influences of the good Spirit of God, when He was gradually fulfilling to us the Saviour's promise, "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." "The goodness of God endureth continually."

Now I want my friends to bear in mind that *the goodness of God is to be measured only by His greatness*. If you can say how great He is, then you will be able to say how good He is. All His greatness is in His

goodness, all His goodness is in His greatness, and all His attributes and perfections are good. Sometimes people contemplate with wonder and astonishment, the sufferings of the lost; and in the day in which we live, the existence of hell is denied, and it is said that God is so good that He will not and cannot eternally punish sinners as sinners. My dear friends, it is good to punish for crime; it is good not to overlook guilt; it is good to keep a check upon evil; and evil persisted in should be punished, will be punished, and must be punished. If God could look with indifference upon guilt; if He could tolerate sin; if He could free transgressors without an atonement, He would not be good; there would be something solemnly and seriously defective in His character. He is just, and that constitutes a part of His goodness: He is holy and true; and if He were not so, He would not be good. But since He is infinitely true, infinitely holy, infinitely and unchangeably just,—since He is unalterably righteous, He is a good God. If His righteousness became dimmed, or His justice relaxed her claims, He would cease to be good. I honour, I lean upon, His justice; I rest upon His righteousness, as a sinner saved by His mercy, and sovereign and divine grace. He is good as to all His attributes and perfections; His power, His unchangeableness, His holiness, and His truth, are all inseparably connected with the fact indicated in My text, “that God is good, and that His goodness endureth continually.” It is good on the part of God to put a bridle into the jaws of enemies, and to limit and restrain the power and operations of all people, and it is sovereignly good and divinely merciful on the part of God, to save poor sinners like you and me. My dear friends, goodness in the creature is measurable as to time and quantity, but the goodness of God is immeasurable and infinite. He was good before He made a world, and He made the world because He was good; He did not make it because He needed it, neither did He create angels because He needed them. His goodness broke forth and spoke, and there was omnipotence in that word. Let there be matter, Goodness said; and matter came into existence out of nothing. Let it take certain forms and shapes, and matter took those forms and shapes which the word of Divine Goodness gave them. And God brought angels into existence because He was good; filled them with His goodness, for He had formed them as angelic vessels; and thus He was good before He made the world, and His goodness is the source of creation, and providence, and redemption, and of the consummation of all things.

But in the second place, we have a fact stated in connection with the goodness of God: “*The goodness of God endureth continually.*” This well suits you and me, and all the poor, tried, and travelling children of God. I often look round about upon the changes which are perpetually taking place, some of which are wonderfully deep, dark, and mysterious; and I am obliged to try to reach the throne of my heavenly Father, and lean against it, and take refuge in the fact that the Lord reigneth, for I can find comfort nowhere else, than that His goodness endureth continually. It is an unchanging goodness in the midst of change, like the unmovable mighty rock in mid-ocean. The tempest rages, the waves and billows rise and roar; everything round about is terrible and fearful; vessels are

crushed, hundreds it may be go to the bottom ; but there stands the rock, and the waves and billows dash against it, and lose their force, and spend their power there. Not like an iceberg which might be as large as a rock, but which is tossed and tumbled by the wind and sea; that would be like a creature. But like a rock deeply rooted in the bottom of the sea, and which the waters, and the roaring tempests cannot move. And such is the ever-enduring goodness of God in the midst of changes. And this unchanging goodness manages all changes which are taking place round about it. God wills a change, and wills a multitude of changes, and brings them to pass. He presides over every change as it takes place; but He Himself changes not. "He is in one mind, and none can turn Him; and whatsoever His soul desireth, even that He doeth." He cannot change, because He is God; and there are some things which our God cannot do, and inability in this respect on His part is a Divine excellency. He cannot change, He cannot lie, He cannot deny Himself, He cannot do wrong. "The goodness of God endureth continually." He changes wills, but not His own: He changes natures, but not His own. He changes words, or brings to pass events which falsify words; but no events ever falsify His own word. Firm like a rock His promise stands: firmer than heaven and earth stands His glorious throne. And since God is infinitely good, goodness and mercy and eternal grace are connected with all He permits, and produces, with all He brings together, and links together; and although there are mysteries which lie beyond the reach of our knowledge—grasp this fact as well as you can,—behind every cloud, and in every depth there is a good God; and in connection with every deep and bitter sorrow, there is a good God. Changes within and changes without, all tend to verify the purposes of the unchanging God. If it were not that His goodness endureth continually, He would not be, I had almost said a safe,—well, He would not be (let me speak it with reverence) a worthy object of confidence. If His moral perfection, His eternal goodness were changeable; if there might come a period when God could cease to be good, every angel would tremble, and every saint upon the earth would fear; but here in this ever-raging and changing world there is one thing that changes not, and that is the goodness of God.

As time is going, let us pass away from this part of the subject, and try to draw a few inferences from it. In the first place, *the child of God finds comfort in the midst of changes*. The world we live in is a changeable world; the creatures we are surrounded by are feeble and fickle. We cannot promise ourselves any abiding state of things out of God, and out of Christ. The sun shines in the morning; but the day may become very tempestuous. Everything here seems to be, humanly speaking, unsettled and uncertain. The comforts we hold to-day, we may drop, or they may melt away in our hands to-morrow, and the force and strength with which we held them may even tend to melt them, like ice in a warm hand. There is nothing fixed or permanent here, but the fact that the goodness of God endureth continually. Yonder is your wife, you love her deeply and dearly, and have thanked God for her many times. She sickens, and dies, and your heart and

your home are full of sorrow. But she has left the goodness of God behind her, for that endureth continually. Yonder is a minister of the Gospel, who has been long with his people; they have loved him well, and he has been useful among them, and they have said, "What shall we do when he is dead and gone?" But he dies, for there is nothing abiding here. But the Gospel does not die with him; God does not change in connection with the departure of that servant of His. God was as good in taking him from the church, as He was in bringing him into connection with it. "The goodness of God endureth continually." Joseph said to his brethren, "Am I in the place of God?" Well, no creature can take God's place, or be a substitute for God; but the Lord can always take creature's place, and He will always be more than a substitute for him. Your wife cannot take the place of God; but her departure has left a void in your home which God is capable of filling. He is able to stand in every gap, and to fill it well. The minister that is called to be with his Lord, may be followed by another equally good; but whether it be so or not, "the goodness of God endureth continually." Creatures may be ours; their existence, and our possession of them, may seem to be essential almost to our life; they are essential to our comfort and enjoyment; but they are removed. I do not know whether cases similar to that of Job be taking place in the day in which we live; that servant of God, one of the richest men in the East, and one of the best men then living upon the face of the earth, applauded as it were by God Himself, as "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil;" yet God permitted the whole of the comforts of life that surrounded Job, to be swept away, and nothing left but a dreary desolate wilderness. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!" Changes take place; some of them fill us with bitter sorrow, break our hearts, and fill our eyes with tears, and constitute the pathway home a rugged one indeed; but

"He never takes away our all,
Himself He gives us still."

The abiding goodness of God supplies us with comfort amid the changes of life; and thus all is well. The gospel I preach is better than my faith, at least it surpasses my spiritual experience. I can murmur, and rebel, and find fault; I can pity myself, and try to take hold of the helm, and move it a little way in this direction, or in the other; but our God will hold it Himself, He will not surrender the reins to another; He will steer the ship and guide all the affairs of the world, and will have my confidence in the fact that He is unchangeably good. Well, then, if the house be stripped, or nearly so, my God, my best Father, my dearest Friend, remains the same. If the church wastes and dwindles, and the congregations almost disperse; even then with that cheerless prospect, "the goodness of God endureth continually." You lose your position, and are thrown down all at once from a condition, if not of affluence, yet of comfort, into one of poverty. Deep mystery! Why does God permit it? I do not know. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter. But behind it all, and through it all, there runs this precious fact of the

enduring goodness of our God. If it endures continually, it runs through every day, it runs into and through every place; it runs into and through every circumstance. If there were a day untouched by God's goodness, that day would see me perish. If there were a place visited by myself, but unvisited by God's goodness, there I should come into want or die. But "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me *all* the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Oh, God snatches away a comfort, because He sees that my possession of it would endanger me. He hedges up my way with thorns, because he sees I must go no further that way, and I am self-willed, and nothing but a thorny hedge, or impassable barrier would prevent me from running into danger and death.

Then, secondly, we infer, that as the goodness of God endureth continually, it supplies us with *comfort in our holy conflict*. Sin entered into the world, and the fall took place; but God did not cease to be good because man ceased to be holy. Born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, but God's goodness remains the same. Saul of Tarsus was a wicked man—a cruel persecutor—loving to shed the blood of the saints, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than taking care of the clothes of the persons who stoned the Nazarenes to death; but God loved him, and God's goodness covered him during his unregeneracy. And the man in the pulpit can also declare in connection with this matter, that before I knew the Lord, and loved His dear name, my spirit said, Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways; but God's goodness followed me, and I did not die, and could not die, because God had resolved to save me. His goodness broke forth and saved me, and it has followed me to this day, for it endureth continually. It is the same before calling, in calling, and after calling. There can be no increase or diminution of it. Do not think, my brother, that because now you love His name, therefore God loves you better than He did before you loved Him. No, there can be no change in our God. If He is God, He must be good; and if He is God and good, He must remain so for ever. Well, then, does sin dwell within? Yes, and it rages there also. Are my evidences bright? No, I have lost them, they are gone. My spirit says, Shew me a token for good, if I am Thine, reveal the fact to me again. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." My evidences are lost, but I myself shall never be lost. My assurance leaves me, but my salvation has been secured to me by my covenant God, and His goodness abides for ever.

"Unchangeable His will,
Whatever be my frame;
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same;
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

I intended to have enlarged a little more upon these matters, but our time is gone. Let me, however, just observe here, that it furnishes us with *comfort in relation to our trust in our God*. "The goodness of God endureth continually;" therefore the children of men put their trust

under the shadow of His wings. I go into a place, and my feeling is that it is only a temporary one. I take the position, and thank God for it, although I know it will not abide. But there is a refuge that will ever stand, and will ever save ; there is a position which is taken by the true believer which will never give way, never vibrate, and never shake, even the eternal goodness of our God.

Lastly, with regard to *the future*. How will it be with me to-morrow ? I do not know in some respects, in other respects I do. Circumstantially and as to matters of detail I do not know how it will be, but with regard to the grand reality itself, it will be with me to-morrow as it is to-day, and as it has been hitherto. "God's goodness abides continually." And when I come to die, how will it be with me then ? I do not know where I may die, or when ; and I do not want to know. I do not know the circumstances under which I shall die, and I do not want to know ; but underneath are the everlasting arms ; and just as a dear mother or father would not and could not possibly withdraw their arms from under the child in danger, especially if the danger were great ; so neither will God withdraw His everlasting arms from underneath my departing soul when heart and flesh give way. Therefore, Doeg, although you succeed in getting all the Lord's priests slain except one ; although you are a wicked man, and are strong in office, do not suppose that you will go on day by day through a long life unopposed ; but if you do, hear this great fact which cheers my soul, and comforts my heart : "The goodness of God endureth continually." The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE LORD'S VOICE IN THE GOSPEL.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 11th APRIL, 1886.

"Hearken unto Me, My people; and give ear unto Me, O My nation: for a law shall proceed from Me, and I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people."—Isa. li. 4.

WE are exhorted to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." We are also told that the church applied in a season of trouble to her Lord for His protection and assistance; and He said, "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." It is a blessing that we have here below the footprints of many who are now before the throne of God. The character of Old Testament saints is drawn, the paths wherein they walked are described, the conduct of our gracious God towards them is set forth, and their experience is portrayed for us by the Holy Spirit; therefore in these and in other important respects it may be said, that New Testament believers have advantages which were not possessed by the Old Testament Church. Abel had not the written word of God; and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not favoured in this respect; but they occasionally met their covenant and loving God, and received from His own lips intimations of His will and expressions of His gracious purpose. We have, however, the whole of the word of God, in which we discover many of the footprints of the flock; and the Apostle encourages and exhorts us to be followers of them who are now in a better world. The chapter from which I have taken my text opens in a very striking manner. "Hearken to Me, ye that follow after righteousness; ye that seek the Lord." They that follow after righteousness are seekers of the Lord; and they that seek the Lord are followers after righteousness. To all such persons God has an important word to speak, which is, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." We are not only to bear in mind that we are the children of God to-day, but we are to remember the fact that once we were dead in trespasses and sins. We can, as it were, see the fire in which we were being consumed, and the hole of the pit from which we were digged by the grace of God, and the rock from which we were hewn; and if we are not of that rock now, we are deeply indebted to the sovereign mercy and rich grace of God, which might have been withheld from us. Those that are still in the pit

are no worse than we were when we were digged out of it ; and the rock which remains, and from which we have been brought, is not harder than we were when we were separated from it ; and therefore it well becomes us to remember that once we were far from God by wicked works. But the Lord proceeds, and mentions His servant Abraham, the spiritual father of the faithful. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you ; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." Abraham differed from his family, his countrymen, his kindred generally, and also from the world. But who made him to differ ? The Lord claims the honour for Himself, for all the glory belongs to the God of grace. Abraham would never have left his native country, had not God called him out of it. He would never have believed in God, had not the great Author of faith imparted that grace to his heart ; and therefore the Lord did everything for Abraham by which he was so favourably and so gloriously distinguished from his fellow-men. I called him alone ; and having done so, I blessed him. I am quite sure that Abraham, now before the throne of his saving God, ascribes all the honour and glory of his personal and eternal salvation to that which is so despised and hated in the present day, the absolute, sovereign and unmerited grace of God. "I called him alone." People in the present day set their minds and their eyes, if possible, upon multitudes ; but "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." The Lord did not require a large beginning, nor did He need a pompous and splendid commencement ; hence He called him alone. And what was Abraham doing when God called him ? Doubtless he was an idolator, and probably a maker of idols ; yet God called him out of darkness into light, and out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of eternal grace. Remember him, and remember, also, that you are descended from him ; and that everything that distinguishes you from surrounding nations is owing to God's sovereign grace ; for "the Lord shall comfort Zion ; He will comfort all her waste places."

Now let us concentrate a few thoughts and feelings, by the help of the Holy Spirit, upon this interesting portion of the word of God. Notice, in the first place, *the Divine command* : "Hearken unto Me, My people, and give ear unto Me, O My nation." Persons attend to speakers more or less seriously and earnestly, according to circumstances. If an angel appeared and spoke to us this morning, we should hear him with most profound attention. But an angel is a creature—though high, and great, and glorious—a creature only. God, however, is the Creator of heaven and earth, the great Maker of angels, and the Lord, Proprietor, and Ruler of the whole universe ; and if He has been pleased to speak, it becomes the world to listen. The world, however, do not listen ; and therefore He addresses Himself to His people and His nation, saying, "Hearken, and give ear unto Me, O My nation." God has spoken ; let us learn, if possible, what He has said ; and as He continues to speak, let us be all earnestness ; for if the great Jehovah on His throne, or upon the accursed tree, has uttered anything, let us adoringly listen. What has He been pleased to say ? Well, His words are recorded in this book ; and hence, the book itself is called the word of God ; and happy is that person in whose heart it dwells richly, whose affections have become

entwined about Divine truth, and in whose conscience and soul the glorious revelation dwells :

“Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith with treach’rous art,
I’d call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.”

Well, here we have a Divine command : “Hearken unto Me, O My people; and give ear unto Me, O My nation.” Let me just say here that you may lay the emphasis on the pronoun Me. “Hearken unto *Me*, My people.” Are we prone to listen to others? If I may speak for you, we are prone to do so; and exceedingly prone to read, not so much the word of God, as the words and works of men. Happy is that person who in godly simplicity opens the glorious volume of heaven, and meditates therein day and night. You may always open the Bible with safety and with confidence, and I had almost said with pleasure and to the comfort of your hearts. If you take a volume written by man, and read it, some paragraphs seem to settle your hearts and fix your thoughts, and you receive, or think you receive, what you read; but as you read paragraph after paragraph your thoughts become somewhat unsettled, and you do not concur altogether with the writer; for he casts a doubt upon this point and that which you have been accustomed to hold as parts of God’s truth. The word of human authors very often tends to unsettle one’s thoughts, and not only so it often tends to corrupt or defile one’s mind and feelings. But open the word of God, the volume of heaven, and you may very confidently read therein wherever you will; and if God its great Author is pleased to bless you, your hearts will not become unsettled, nor your feelings cast into disorder and confusion, and your spirits will not be defiled; for there is something exceedingly purifying and peculiar in the word of God. Whoever you may hear, listen to Jehovah. Whatever works you may read, never forget the glorious gospel of God’s grace. You may have read that psalm a hundred times; it will bear reading a hundred times more. You may know all the Gospels by heart, yet you may go through them again and again. No wonder that there is a perpetual freshness and novelty, if I may so speak, in the Bible. This is not at all surprising, because it is the word of God. How precious is one promise or one doctrine, and how sweet and soul-enriching is a single declaration of the love of our God. My people, there are many voices to be heard, but hear ye My voice; there are many words spoken, but hear ye the words of My mouth. Moses speaks: hear Me when you listen to him. Elijah speaks: hear Me when you listen to him. Isaiah; but I speak by him. People tell us now-a-days that Old and New Testament writers cast a good deal of themselves into their writings, and that their personal characteristics and peculiarities appear therein. I care not for anything of that sort myself, having passed beyond all such niceties. I desire when I read the word to read it as the word of God, and to lose sight of all that which ordinary writers would introduce to distract my thoughts and divert my attention from the glorious gospel of God’s grace. God might have remained in everlasting silence, but He has spoken. He might have spoken in a voice of thunder,

but He has spoken in a still, small voice of softness, compassion, tenderness and love. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you. I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him," and the promises I gave to him belong to you. The manner in which I blessed him you may take as the rule for your hope and faith, for I will bless you likewise. Therefore remember your father Abraham, and Sarah that bare you.

How are we to hear the word of God? Let us tarry here a minute or two. "Hearken unto Me, My people." Do you know what it is to hear the word? not the preached word merely, though I do not exclude that. Do you hear the word of God *attentively*? Let me tell you that ministers of the gospel, who stand before congregations from time to time, have a great variety of impressions whilst they are preaching. They know, or think they know, when their hearers are attentive, and when they are not. They sometimes think they know when the service is tedious and irksome to certain individuals, and also when the word is attentively listened to. There are persons whom you cannot induce to read or to hear the word attentively. You tell me it is their duty to do so. Well, you may introduce that duty, and try to force it upon the attention of the people until you are hoarse and tired. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." I should be very deeply surprised if the unregenerate, the worldly, and the carnal, really received the word of God. It must clash with the unrenewed mind, for the word is spiritual, and such a mind is carnal; and when carnality and spirituality meet, there must be opposition. No; it is, "Hearken unto Me, *My people*." If the grace of God, or a spark of Divine life is in the soul, a deep concern is felt, which is spiritual, heavenly, and Divine. Such a person will creep into the chapel or the church, or any other place of worship, desiring that he might not be seen, and take his seat in some corner. Although no eye sees him but the eye of God, yet that poor, sin-troubled one is all earnestness and attention. He distinguishes between word and word; and if a word somewhat comforting and encouraging to a sinner's hope be dropped, he is the first to receive and take hold of it. This is not surprising; for God has called and blessed him in a measure, so that he is in sympathy with the gospel of God: in other words, he has an ear to hear and a heart to receive God's word; and as he takes his seat, he says, "Speak, Lord, to me, for thy servant waiteth to hear." "Hearken unto Me, My people; and give ear unto Me, O My nation." Then, again, such persons hear the word of God *honestly*, or in godly simplicity and sincerity. They do not sit in judgment upon the Bible, nor upon the minister, neither will they make him an offender for one nor for half-a-dozen words. Their hearts are full of want, their consciences are lacerated and bleeding, the preciousness of their souls is felt, and they hear the word of God as honest men and women. They are prayerfully willing to be judged by the word; they are tractable, teachable, and a little child shall lead them. But the proud, carnal mind comes into the house, and blusters with self-conceit. This thing and that being out of harmony with his opinions and prejudices, whilst the people of God enter His house with honest hearts, and hear His word in godly sincerity. They hear it also *prayerfully*. That person

is a good hearer, whether young or old, male or female, who hears the word of God prayerfully : " Lord, give me a blessing to-day." As he opens the word to read a portion thereof, he sends, or tries to send, his heart up to the Author of the Bible, with this prayer : " Anoint me with fresh oil ; put holy eye-salve on my eyes, that I may see and bring my heart, O God, Thou great Author of truth, into holy and happy harmony with Thy word." Such persons hear the word of God attentively, honestly, and prayerfully. " Speak to us, for we are waiting to hear." These persons, sooner or later, receive the word they hear, whether written or preached. They receive it in the love of it, and hear it for themselves and not for others. Sometimes people hear for others. Do you not think the preacher came down in a very appropriate manner upon Brother So-and-so, when he was setting forth such a matter ? Oh, it is important that each one should hear for himself, and hear prayerfully ; and, if I may so speak, hear as if he almost felt he was the only person in the place ; for religion is a personal thing. Well, " hearken unto Me, My people," and the word is received. The services close, the people are dispersed, and return to their homes, their hearts being filled with rich comfort and consolation. Do you not remember Sabbath days, and other occasions also, when, having received the word of God, you scarcely felt the ground you walked upon as you returned home ? A great deal of noise, confusion, and disorder prevailed round about you ; but your hearts were calm, tranquil, and serene. It gives me pleasure to believe that many of you know the fact that there is Divinity in the Bible, and that comfort and consolation are inseparable from a heart-felt reception of the word. " Harken unto Me, My people ; give ear unto Me, O My nation."

Then, what effects does a reception of the word of God produce ? The word, it is said, is a law and a light. It produces *purity*. I may repeat what I have sometimes before said. I have read books which I now wish I had never seen, and writings which I now wish I had never come into contact with. The mind may soon be shaken, and the soul become unsettled. I would say to my young friends and hearers, Be very careful as to how you read controversial works. " Oh, sir, we must know what is thought and what is believed here and there." I do not know that there is any necessity for that. Be very careful. Much of the literature, and the religious literature of the day, is calculated to unsettle simple minds. Yes, and strong ones too ; for the serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field. Satan, if permitted, employs some of the greatest and mightiest intellects in his own interest, and against the cause of God and truth ; and if he can introduce something to unsettle one's faith, and unhinge one's mind, his purpose is in a measure fulfilled, and his end is gained. Controversial works can do you but little good, and sceptical writings may do you great harm, therefore avoid them, and sit down and read the word of God. Aye, the word of God rather than human literary works ; for an application of the word will go through the heart, and purge and purify it, and leave no stain and no sting behind. I have never risen from a reading of the word of God with a wish that I had not not come across such and such a sentence ; but I have risen from reading other books with many wishes that I had never seen such and such a

page. Emphasize the "*Me*." "Hearken unto *Me*, My people ; give ear unto *Me*, O My nation." Then, again, it will *establish the heart*. To hearken to the word of God, and to receive it, is a spiritual operation which establishes the soul. He whose delight is in the law of God shall be like a *tree*, not a weed ; a tree *planted*, not a self-produced one ; planted by the *rivers of water* ; not in a wilderness merely, or in a state of everlasting drought. His roots secretly and silently derive nourishment from the word. "He bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." If these are some of the effects of hearing the word of God, then let me pray for myself, and for you also, that God would give us the hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart. If I have enlarged too much on this part of the subject, I had one or two reasons for doing so. One is, the fact that this exhortation occurs thrice in the early part of this chapter. The first clause of the first verse is, "Hearken to *Me*, ye that follow after righteousness." Then in my text we have the exhortation the second time. And thirdly, in the 7th verse, "Hearken unto *Me*, ye that know righteousness ; the people in whose heart is *My law*." Here, then, we have the great Divine Speaker addressing His people, and calling for their attention.

In the second place, let us look for a minute at *the promise*. "A law shall proceed from *Me*, and I will make *My judgment* to rest for a light of the people." Is this the moral law ? No, that had proceeded from God. Is it the ceremonial law ? No, for that had already proceeded from God. What law does He here refer to ? The glorious gospel of His grace. The word looked forward into the then distant future. The law which God then promised has been framed and promulgated ; and we, now living under the Gospel dispensation, are under the influence of this promised law. "A law shall proceed from *Me*." I need not say much on this point, having dwelt on this aspect of Divine truth not very long since, when speaking of the word of God under the idea of a Divine law. It is not the moral law which comes from the nature of God, nor the ceremonial law, which was a system of shadows, and did not rest for a light of the people ; but the gospel which proceeds from God's sovereign will. The moral law was absolutely necessary, but the gospel might never have been given. The first law having been broken, the Lawgiver might have left every transgressor under the curse. But he says, "I have a people whom I have loved with an everlasting love, and I will call them by *My grace*, and speak to them all. Hearken unto *Me*, for there is another law in *My heart and mind*, and it shall proceed from *Me*, and I will cause *My judgment* to rest for a light of the people. This law, then, is the law of love ; and it is framed for love. You know what I mean. The Lawmaker is the God of love ; the law He has made is the law of love ; and the people ruled and governed by that law are the people that love this loving Lawmaker. Thus we have love addressing love, and love commanding the obedience of love. My dear friends, do not think that religion is a gloomy, melancholy thing, and that the people of God are in a state of bondage. Do not imagine that they are strangers to happiness and pleasure. There is love in heaven on the throne, and God rests in His love, and there is a little love here also in

the hearts of His people. The only thing that grieves them and fills them with sorrow is the fact that they do not love Him more, and cannot serve Him better. Well, between the Lord and the people He loves is the law of love, or the glorious gospel of His grace. "Hearken unto Me, My people; for a law shall proceed from Me." Now, this is said to be the law of liberty. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty," and so on. Again, James, who is very practical, says, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty;" so that if we look into the law of liberty, we should walk according to that law by which it seems we shall be judged. We are now to walk and talk as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. Why is it a law of liberty? Because God from all eternity loved His people; and because, in the second place, an application of this fact or law by the Spirit, leads the poor soul into liberty; and because, in the third place, he that walks according to the word of the blessed God, walks at liberty; and because, in the fourth place, it is the law of pardon and of justification. It is not a law by which God curses, but by which He blesses; a law which moves His own heart and hand, and a law which moves the hearts, the hands, and the feet of all His beloved people. You say you would not be a Christian for all the world. I daresay you would not, my friend. You see no beauty in the Saviour, and you do not love Him, and you hear no music in His voice. You are blind and deaf. You have no heart whatever for this kind of thing. Of course you have not, for you are lost and ruined, "and dead in trespasses and sins." "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." But if He of whom you now speak so strangely should ever open your eye, and unstop your ear, and cause you to receive His word, you will stand and sing with all the fire of Divine earnestness—

"Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall o'er His beauties rove;
And endless ages I'll adore
The wonders of His love."

The law of liberty, of love, of pardon, and of justification. And it is a light, or daylight: "I will set My judgment for a light of the people."

Thirdly, we have the idea of *perpetuity or permanence*. "My judgment shall rest or abide. My judgment shall rest for a light of the people." Where is the ceremonial law? That was good, but it was not to abide. It has vanished away, and ceased to exist. It did not rest; but the gospel is the everlasting gospel of God, the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.

Fourthly, we have *an operation* here in connection with the promise. "I will make it to be so." What a blessing it is that there is order somewhere in this disordered world—a law that is good in this world of lawlessness and confusion. "For ever, O Lord, is Thy word established in the heavens." Our legislature is framing new laws for the empire every year. We are all short-sighted creatures, and know not what events may occur next year to render the formation and enactment of other laws necessary. God has once for all completed that business, for the whole of His law has been given finally. "I will cause My judgment to rest. I will bring it all forth, and apply it to My people for ever and

ever." A new gospel shall never be needed; no repeal shall ever be required, and no change shall ever be introduced. "I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people." We have order in God's government, notwithstanding the disorder, confusion, and agitation which prevail among men. Let us give attention to this. "We have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." A more sure word—a more sure word than what? Peter had been speaking of visions, transformations, and marvellous appearances; but were not Divine visions and transfigurations sure and certain? According to Peter—and I follow him—there is nothing so sure and certain as the word of God: "We have a more sure word of prophecy." Visions have disappeared, and important dreams are not visible; but the word of God is here, and it rests and lives and abides for ever. Dreams and visions, and changes of that kind, existed for a few minutes or hours, and then passed away, and we cannot see them now; but the word, the judgment of God, rests and abides for ever. We do well to take heed to that light which cannot be removed or be extinguished. Where is it? It shines in a dark place, even in this dark world; and oh! it would be dark without it. In the dark place of bondage I saw a heavenly light, when my poor soul was bound, and I wanted to be set free. In the dark place of trouble and in the chamber of affliction it shines, and cheers many an afflicted one; and in the dark place of death also God makes His judgment to rest for a light of the people. And we have an insight into God's heart, and a foresight of future things, too, in this light of God's word.

I would have said a word or two, in the fifth place, on *the people addressed*, had not my time been gone. I will just close by observing that God addresses Himself to His people. He has a people registered in heaven, bought with the blood of His dear Son, and called and quickened by His Spirit. A people who have surrendered themselves unto Him with, "Be Thou our all in all." A people whom He has loved with a sovereign love, and whom He has saved, but whose presence He did not need. He resolved, however, to have a people, and wrote their names in heaven, and gave them to His Son. He is leading them in a way which they have not known, and in paths which are sometimes strange; and as He does so He says, When you turn to the right hand or to the left, hearken unto Me, and listen to My voice. Ye do well to take heed unto it as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until all the darkness, doubt, and fear are passed. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE ROYAL PREACHER'S COMFORT AND COUNSEL.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, 23rd APRIL, 1874.

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."—Ecclesiastes ix. 7.

OUR beloved Lord has told us that it is life eternal to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent; and this has ever been the experience of God's people. The apostle Paul tells us that he counted all things but loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." You observe that he, as it were, heaps words upon words; for his heart was full. He once thought very much of his Pharisaism, but that he had cast away. The apostle was also a very learned and gifted man; but he attributed no particular importance to that fact; for he says, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." You see he takes up all the names of our dear Lord. "Christ," the anointed,— "Jesus," the Saviour,— "Lord," the Governor. And that is not all; He is *my* Jesus, *my* Lord, *my* Ruler. And thus the knowledge which the Apostle possessed was an excellent one. It had a very excellent influence upon his mind, and was inseparably connected with everything that is excellent in God and in heaven. The excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is a personal blessing which can never be lost, and it is inseparably connected with salvation. The Holy Ghost has bound Himself as one of the persons in the adorable Trinity to lead every elect vessel of mercy to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give to every ransomed mind a saving knowledge of the Son of God; and when the Lord is thus known, the world appears in its true character, and the person so taught is able to form a somewhat correct estimate of all things out of Christ. A worldly man does not see the world as it is, or know its character, nor does he stand in a proper position for viewing it. I have no idea that anything short of a real knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ can mortify sin, or crucify us to the world, or the world unto us. A man may shut himself up in a monastery, or seclude himself from society, or impose a multitude of duties upon himself, and live in wretchedness, sorrow, and misery all his life; and yet sin may be rampant and triumphant in his mind, and the world may occupy the whole of his heart, although he seems to be shut out from it; and therefore the Holy Ghost leads the soul to Jesus Christ, and gives every saint of God some saving knowledge of the beauties, excellencies, charms, and attractions of the Son of God.

Solomon was a good man, and had been made wise unto salvation, although there were a great many bad things connected with his life ; and when he was advanced in years he penned this important Book of Ecclesiastes. He had tried almost, if not quite, everything in the world. He had gone so far with his experiments, that he said, "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" I have had palaces, and these have been filled with servants ; and I have had silver and gold in great abundance, and gardens filled with all kinds of plants and flowers ; and in those gardens I have had magnificent fountains of water continually springing ; I have had music and dancing ; and I have studied madness, and folly, and wisdom ; I have gone with my experiments as far as it is possible for a creature to go in relation to the world, and now I sit down to pen the result of my experience. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher ; all is vanity!" and so Solomon went about the world, if I may so speak, with a multitude of jars ; he gathered all that he could, and put some worldly matter into this jar, and some into that one, and some into another, and took them to his palace, and placed all these vessels on a shelf, and labelled everyone, and that which had gold in it was labelled "Vanity ;" and that which had pleasures in it was labelled "Vanity ;" and that which had long life in it was labelled "Vanity ;" and those which had palaces and gardens and fountains and musical instruments in them, were all labelled "Vanity ;" so that Solomon was ultimately completely and blessedly taught by the Lord, and so was drawn from everything that was terrestrial and worldly, and brought to sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to experience something of the blessedness declared in my text, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart ; for God now accepteth thy works ;"—the only ground on which he might be merry ; the only connection in which he might be joyful.

In looking at these words, we will glance at two things ; first, the text contains holy and heavenly *comfort* ; and secondly, very necessary and important *counsel*. The great comfort is thus expressed, "God now accepteth thy works ;" and the counsel which the royal writer founded upon that comfort is this,—"*Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.*"

In the first place, a few thoughts on the comfort indicated in the text : "God now accepteth thy works." We are to speak to-night, then, a little about the works, and the good works too, of a child of God ; for of course the works here which God is declared to accept, are those which in various portions of the word are said to be good. Others cannot be accepted. The question is this—what is it that constitutes a person's works acceptable to God ? Now certainly that is the door that opens into the temple of eternal truth. "God now accepteth thy works ;" and therefore there must be something connected with them which constitutes them acceptable to a holy and heart-searching God—and what is it ? We are told generally they are good works, and God accepts them because they are good. Ah ! but let us put things together as God has been pleased to reveal them, and to connect them in the covenant of His grace and mercy.

The first thing that is necessary to constitute a work good in relation

to the government of God, is *the character of the worker*; and here I would say that I wish all Christendom saw and believed this one great fact, that God accepts a person before he accepts that person's work. Now if that were believed, should we not have a theological revolution? Why, this order of things is inverted, and we are told that if a man will do good works, then God will accept the man himself—that is turning the Gospel upside down, and beginning, so to speak, where God ends. A person's works eventually become good, because God accepts and approves of the person himself. And scriptures in confirmation of this are very abundant. God had respect unto Noah, and then to his offering. God had respect unto Abel, and then to his sacrifice. And may I not apply it to the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in relation to God the Father? for He may be taken as our example in connection with this fact—was not Christ's person accepted by God before His works were accepted? and were not His works accepted by God, because His person was perfect and acceptable in the sight of God? And therefore God first puts a person into a peculiar position; and if you enquire what that position is, I say he puts such a one into His own heart, He writes his name in the Book of Life, He unites him with the person of His dear Son, and such a one is said to be approved in Christ; and then the works of that individual are said to be good, and acceptable to and accepted by God. This is how we have learned Christ, and how we love to hear Him preached, and to hear set forth the great doctrine of divine acceptance of the person before the offering, and the offering acceptable because the person is so. God is first in this great matter; He united the sinner to His dear Son, and eventually the works of the one so united become spiritual works, and so acceptable to God. But that is not all: I have been dwelling on the doctrinal aspect of the subject. I quote another portion of divine truth, uttered by our Lord, "Make the tree good, and his fruit good." Now the order of things in the day in which we live, is this—you may and you ought to look for grapes on thistles, and for figs on thorns. The unregenerate and the dead are exhorted to bear fruits of righteousness, and told that they will be condemned because they do not bear such fruit. Make the man a Christian, and then he will bear good fruit; make the man a saint, and then he will bear fruits of holiness. Let the brier become a fir-tree, and the bramble a myrtle-tree, and then it will bear corresponding foliage, and fruit acceptable to God Himself. I may be thought very high in doctrine, but I do not hesitate to say that God does not require of an unregenerate sinner, as such, those fruits which He looks for in a regenerate man or woman. He does not require saving faith or spirituality of mind in that man whom He has never quickened into spiritual life; and therefore in order that there may be good works, and such as He can accept; He breathes life into the mind, imparts spiritual powers to the heart, plants a good tree in good soil, and expects to gather figs from the fig-tree, and grapes from the vine; He never asks of the bramble and the thorn figs or grapes, or any fruit of the kind; and therefore the tree is made good, the character is changed, the heart is regenerated, the mind is transformed, and the individual is rendered capable, through the reign and influence of divine grace, of producing that which God demands.

God calls for a certain thing of a certain mind, and the mind on which He calls, He transforms by His grace, and good works flow naturally and spontaneously. Just as it is natural for an apple-tree to produce apples, and for a plum-tree plums; so the spiritual mind produces, not so much as it could wish, not sufficient to satisfy itself; but it brings forth fruits of righteousness which are acceptable to the Eternal God. From this it appears that that which is necessary to constitute a work good and acceptable in the sight of God is, first the person's interest in God's love, secondly, union to the Lord Jesus Christ, approved in Him; and thirdly, the indwelling Spirit of God, the operations of divine grace upon the heart.

Those so favoured do a great many bad things, and some things which they may think to be good when they are not so, and are unaccepted by the Lord. God does not accept all our works, or thoughts, or feelings, and we do not accept them ourselves. You loathe yourselves, and that loathing is one of the works God accepts. I hate, much that works in my poor heart; I cannot accept it, I turn from it, would tear it away and be holy for ever, if I could. God does not accept those abominations, but He does accept that hearty rejection of them on your part and on mine. Those works are acceptable to God, however few they may be, and however many their shortcomings may be, which flow from a renewed mind, and are in harmony with God's holy word. The Christian's course of obedience must be regulated by the word of divine truth, or otherwise God, who accepts him, may meet him with, "Who hath required this at your hand?" Elijah's works were accepted when he slew the four hundred prophets of Baal, and stood and thundered among the thousands of Israel the will of the everlasting God; but when the mighty prophet became faint, and fled from the woman Jezebel, then God met him in the Mount of God, and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Those works which are acceptable to God are produced by union to Christ, and are regulated by the word of God Himself. It is my desire, though I come very short of it, to do everything in the name of the Lord. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Do you contribute to the cause of God? What is the object of the gift or the motive that leads you to present it? Is it grudged? It is not accepted then by God. Is it given for the Lord's sake, for the sake of His church? Is it given because you owe a debt of gratitude to the everlasting God, and feel—

"Here, Lord, I give myself to Thee,
'Tis all that I can do."

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."

Then, in the second place, *what place do the works of a believer hold in the estimation and government of God?* He accepts them. But what place do they occupy. Not that of a payment or a price. Some say, we do good works to atone for our sins, and pacify God. That is not the place our poor little tiny works occupy in the government of God. What is there in such works as yours and mine to atone for sin? that very idea vitiates them. You offer it as a payment.—God will not have it.

You offer it as a price,—God will reject it. You offer it as a something to influence the Divine mind,—God will not accept it. No, there is only one peace maker, one great influence that can render God propitious. What, then, is the place occupied by good works? There are two courts, my friends, in connection with God's government, and the sinner saved by grace goes into both of them. There is the Court of Divine Justice, and there everything is as exact as justice itself. There the good works of a sinner cannot be put into the scale, for

“The best obedience of my hands,
Dares not appear before Thy throne.”

In the Court of Justice I stand, poor, wretched, miserable, and undone; and like Joshua, when he was covered with filthy garments before the angel, I am dumb. Joshua did not open his mouth; the devil did, and accused him, and the angel pleaded for him; but we do not find that the accused spoke a word; Joshua stood by, in filthy garments; and in the Court of Justice our lips are closed, and we have not a word to say but this:

“If my soul be sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well.”

“All Thy children shall be taught of the Lord.” Having been brought to that point, there is someone else who appears in the Court of Justice. Jesus is an advocate, and appears in the presence of God for us; He brings near His righteousness and presents His blood, and that blood has a voice, and that speaks; and then in the Court of Justice the Judge says, “Loose him, and let him go.” Now we have done with that Court; the debt is paid, we are at liberty; life is spared, punishment is now impossible; and we enter the Court of Sovereign Grace, where there is the mercy-seat, and God on His throne, and we approach the mercy-seat with

“A debtor to mercy alone, of covenant mercy I'll sing;”

and

“Dissolved by Thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found.”

Lord, I bring no price, but I bring a few thanks; I bring no payment, but I bring gratitude; I bring my poor little heart, and if I had a thousand hearts I would bring them all and give them all to Thee; for,

“Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of hell.”

In the Court of Sovereign Grace, God accepts the penitent; but in the Court of Justice He condemns to hell; but Jesus takes our place and obeys for us there, and the Holy Ghost leads us into this other Court, where we bow as debtors to rich, free, and sovereign grace. What, then, is the position occupied by good works, in the estimation and government of God. Why, He sees in the adoring mind, the swimming eye, the holy gratitude, the results of His own sovereign love in the heart. What does He see in the Court of Sovereign Grace and Salvation? An offerer with a thank-offering in his hands, and a secret thankfulness in his heart,

and He sees in that gratitude the fruit of His own Spirit, the result of His own love ; and though the flower is a very imperfect one, God waters it, and watches it and will not have it plucked, at least, not by any hand but His own ; and though it is a little one, and he that offers it is ashamed because it is so small, and its fragrance so unsatisfactory ; yet inasmuch as it is a living flower, it is dear to God and precious in His sight ; and we may say, that if this is our experience, the text is applicable to us. But our works are so few, and little, and short. A straight line is a straight line, whether it be a foot long, or a mile long ; and that which is spiritual in its nature is so, whether it be compared to an infant a day old, or to an aged saint. A rose is a rose, whether it be tiny or large, and if there is a grateful will, a thankful wish, and a pleasingly unhappy feeling—if you will allow me to use the word—in the heart, because gratitude is so little, and love so cold, those feelings are acceptable to God ; yes, it is not the quantity but the quality. “Go thy way, for God now accepteth thy works.”

What does God's acceptance of our works involve ? A great many things, and among others, a decided difference between the Christian and the world ; for he whose works are accepted by God, differs in a wonderful and visible manner from the world ; and then, he whose works are thus accepted, is a very incomprehensible being to the world. “Oh, how strange you are ! You seem to be a moping, melancholy creature ; you have no spirit, no heart for pleasure. If I did not know you well, I should feel it impossible to believe what you say, when you talk about your joy. I cannot understand your pleasure, it is a mystery ; it seems to me that you are deluded.” Now if our works are accepted by God, that will be the opinion which the world will form of us. Should our conduct be otherwise, if we are favourable to the world, and in harmony with it, finding our pleasure there, God does not accept that, I am sure. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” The best position that you ever occupied, was taken when your sins were pardoned, and you saw ten thousand beauties in the Saviour's face ; and the world, for the first time, appeared to you like a great bubble ; for surely it is a bubble that will burst under a touch of the finger, and, strictly speaking, contrasted with Christ and eternity, the world is a great empty nothing : but if we are accepted by God, and God accepts our works, there will be a conflict within, and that conflict is accepted by God. “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” We fight our way to heaven, the road is one of conflicts and wounds, earthquakes and heartquakes. And as there is a devil, and the world, and violence in the heart, is it not a mercy to be in conflict, and not in sympathy with them ? Be thankful you are in conflict with iniquity and corruption, and with hell, and with all that torments and disturbs. “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart ; for God now accepteth thy works.” What works are accepted ? Repentance—Is that a work ? Christ is exalted to give it, and He accepts that which He gives. Faith—is that a work ? Well, we read of the work of faith,

and that is the work of faith. I do not know how better to define it, than by saying that it is to fetch all from Christ, and carry all to Him. Faith fetches all for time and for eternity out of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read of the labour of love, and the work of faith, and the patience of hope, and the exercise of the grace of repentance in the heart. What else? Well, we read of inward groans and falling tears, and we read of thoughts: "A book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." Are thoughts among the works that God accepts? They are so far accepted that He writes them in the book of His remembrance.

And are there any *evidences of divine acceptance*, and if so, what are they? Well, I mention a very satisfactory one. Have we not sometimes been favoured very blessedly with the presence of the Lord when we have been at work—I mean at work in connection with salvation, say on one's knees? Prayer is a work, and I am sure it is a good one. It is an evidence of His acceptance of the act. He would not be there if He did not approve it. He would not lift the light of His countenance upon the kneeling soul, if He did not accept the prayerful spirit. The feelings of the heart in the presence of the Lord, are evidence of Divine acceptance. Now let us take a look at the bright side of the question. Has His blessing ever followed what we have done? Take for instance the Christian ministry, and here may I allude to myself for a moment? I can say that I am anxious to lift the Lord Jesus Christ high, and to speak well of His name, and to present Him scripturally to my fellow men. I am anxious to preach the Gospel, and to benefit my fellow-men and my fellow Christians; I cannot do this as I would, but I am bound to believe that during my twenty-three years' experience here, and a good many years' experience in the ministry elsewhere—God has accepted my works; for sinners have been called, and saints comforted, and the church blessed; and if I had been wrong, I do not believe the blessing of God would have followed my poor labours. The same observations will apply to the labour of the deacons. A plan was formed and carried out, and the result was success. God's blessing followed, we say. The same may be said concerning churches and private individuals also. Yes, Christian friends, there are evidences of Divine acceptance of our works from time to time. But to take lower ground, have the hearts of God's people been made glad at any time? Have you taken a cup of cold water to a saint in circumstances of privation, and poverty, and deep sorrow? Was it a consolation to that tried child of God? When you had left his room, though you may not know it—he blessed God from the depths of his spirit, for putting it into your heart to pay the visit, and to do what you did for him on that occasion. And if our poor little visits and expressions of love evoke from the heart warm gratitude to God, does it not show that there is communication between God and myself, and those whom we have been favoured to help. It is all acceptable, from first to last. And then you see, my dear friends, that nothing connected with grace is lost, not even the works which it produces; for God receives and accepts them. The tear that is shed is put into His bottle, and the thought that is in the mind is written in His book, and the groan that is never uttered He knows

and accepts; and thus nothing is lost in connection with the grace of God.

The counsel. "Go thy way."—Some think that this is as if the Lord just reproved the murmuring soul—do not be complaining and hanging thy head. Others take it as an expression of approval, "Go thy way," for it is a right way; be not stationary, for God accepts thy works, and He accepts thee. The bread and the wine are ours, not only as gifts of Providence, but on the ground of heirship. "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Take it socially as referring to temporal things; eat thy bread with joy, do not be immoderately careful about to-morrow. My income is small, and my health is weak, and what shall I do for to-morrow if I lay out all this to-day, and so on. It is proper to be provident and careful; but there is a point even in that respect beyond which the child of God should not go. Live joyfully, cheerfully, and carefully upon the provision God has made for you to-day, and since He accepts thy works, and provides for thee to-day, expect a supply to-morrow. But take this provision spiritually as the doctrines of the Gospel, the promises of God's love. Go thy way into his house, and take thy seat at His table, there eat thy bread and drink thy wine; the flesh and blood of Him who has made thee acceptable. God's liberality—it is bread and wine, not bread and water. Bread and water is prisoners' fare; it is the fare of poverty. God accepts thy works. You are not poor, at least not spiritually, so the bread and wine of the kingdom of God are yours. Bread and water—and this is perhaps the leading idea—is the miser's fare; he hoards up his money, and starves himself, living on bread and water; do not play the miser; enjoy what God gives you spiritually, and with holy feeling, eat your bread; and drink your wine with joy and with gladness. Finally, bread and water is a kind of fasting fare; if one fasts, I suppose he should not either eat or drink, but just by way of helping poor Nature a little, persons are sometimes said to fast when they take nothing but bread and water. Do not fast, says the prophet; it is a feast, and should be a feast all thy life long. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." Amen.

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THE DIVINE PRIVILEGES OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 10th JULY, 1887.

"Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Thess. i. 1, 2.

THE circumstances connected with the calling of the Thessalonians, and the formation of the church in Thessalonica, are very interesting and important, as they always are on such occasions. In the sixteenth chapter of the Acts we have a full description of the manner in which Divine grace reigned in the salvation of Lydia, the Philippian jailor, and the soothsayer. You remember that Paul and Silas were both of them cast into prison; but the Lord was present with them during the night, so that they were happy, and sang praises; for true happiness, as the poet says, has no localities. Paul left Philippi, and went to Thessalonica, which was a very considerable city, and the metropolis of Macedonia; and there the word was greatly blessed. Paul went into the synagogue on three Sabbath days, as his manner was, where He opened and alleged that the glorious Person whom he and his brethren preached, was no less a Being than the promised Messiah. Some sneered, and not a few persecuted; but others consorted with Paul and Silas; and we are told that a great multitude of devout Greeks believed, and of the chief women not a few. This church, therefore, was formed at an early period of the Christian dispensation, and it appears that it possessed some power and had some influence; for the Word of God sounded out from them, and their faith was so spread abroad in all parts, that the Apostle said rejoicingly, "We need not to speak anything." Your character is known in Macedonia and Achaia. Wherever we go, we hear of your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope; and therefore we are prepared to say, in penning this epistle to you, that you are in God the Father; and in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we pray that you may receive grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall say but little about the city of Thessalonica, and the church of the Thessalonians; for I want to look at the subject in connection with the people of God generally, and may the Lord help me so to do. Although the text is rather longer than my texts usually are, I shall not have a multitude of divisions and sub-divisions. I think we may say that the subject before us divides itself into two branches. In the first place, *the Divine privilege*—"the church in God the Father, and in the

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Lord Jesus Christ;" and, secondly, *the Apostolical benediction*: "Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

In the first place, let us offer a few remarks upon *the privilege of the people of God*. They are in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. The question was sneeringly asked some considerable time after the triumphs of Luther, Where was your church before the days of Luther? and the reply was, In the Bible, and in God. The church has always been been in the Bible descriptively, and in God secretly, vitally, and savingly. We dwell sometimes with special pleasure and delight upon the fact, that the church is in Christ, as branches are in the vine, and members are in the body. We dwell with pleasure on that theme, but we do not hear so much about the fact that the church is in God the Father. And why not? How is it that our attention is almost invariably limited to the church's union with the Saviour? The Apostle here says, "The church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, we are to try this morning to take as comprehensive a view of this great subject as we can. Our minds are limited, and our powers are few and feeble; therefore, perhaps, we are not quite justified in using the word "comprehensive." When I say comprehensive views, I want you to bear in mind, that if you are what you profess to be, you are in God the Father, as well as in His Son, Jesus Christ. Now in the first place, the people of God are said to be in the Father, because they are *in His love*. I wish I could explain this to my beloved hearers and friends. To be in the love of God, is to be in all the love of God. But how? I am sure I do not know, I cannot illustrate the subject, it is so grand and so deep. The fish is in the sea, it came into existence there, it grew there, it lives there, and if not caught and carried away, perhaps it will die there. May we not by this illustrate the glorious truth that the people of God are in His eternal love. You are in the love of God, in some respects, as the fish is in the sea. Love brought you into being, and did not cast you out of itself after it had called you forth. Having made you new creatures, you grew in the love of God. I do not mean by that, that your love increased, although perhaps that was so. I mean by growth, that you increased, and persevered from day to day in grace and knowledge, and went from one degree of strength to another, *as in* the everlasting love of God. You are in the Father's love to-day, and will be therein to-morrow, and if God's word holds good, you will never be out of love eternal. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." I sometimes think of Gabriel's message to Daniel, it was a wonderful one, and that is not surprising since it came from a wonderful being, and related to a wonderful subject. Daniel was praying when the angel arrived, for it does not take an angel long to come from heaven to this world. I do not know how rapid the angel's flight was, but he was caused to fly swiftly, and touched Daniel about the time of the evening oblation, and said, "O Daniel, thou art greatly beloved." It would have been a great thing if the angel had been authorised to tell Daniel that he was beloved or well beloved, but the God of love instructed

him to say, "Thou art *greatly* beloved." Some persons with whom I have been more or less acquainted, have professed not to care about being loved by their fellow creatures. Truly, it is no credit to be interested in the love of some persons; but it indicates a miserable state of things, not to be interested in the love and affections of anyone. There may be persons so narrow-minded and cold-hearted as to like to live in such a state of things as that. I do not; I like to know that I am interested in the affections of persons whose affections are worth something; and therefore I hold it is a favour to have even the natural love of our natural friends and relations. What is a family without natural affection. A father or a mother having no love to each other, and none to their children, and none in the children to their parents. Home—such a house is not a home. Family—such a group is not a family at all. Oh natural affection is a great favour, being one of the common temporal blessings which are so numerous falling from God. Daniel, however, was an object, not merely of natural love, he was more greatly beloved than that. He was interested in the spiritual affections of those who knew the Lord; and I quite believe that that very important personage, Daniel, in the Babylonish empire, was interested in the most tender and affectionate prayers of perhaps hundreds and thousands of captives there. For they loved their brother in his high official position. But he was better loved than that. The angel who touched him, and brought the message from heaven, loved him well, and so did all the angels in heaven; for I suppose they all knew him. They are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation; and it is a great thing to be interested in angelic love. Daniel knew a great many who were then before the throne, with whom he had taken sweet counsel when they were here on the earth, and they all remembered him, and all loved him. But all that would not have been enough for Daniel, and the message would have been far too limited had it gone no higher than the love of angels, or the love of creatures. Why, the angel expressed wonderment and joy. O Daniel, thou art greatly beloved. Both down here, and up there in the world I have just left. Your prayer is heard, and He who heard it, loves you with all His heart. You are in God the Father, Daniel, even in His heart, therefore you are greatly beloved. Trace love from its lowest point up to the heart of Deity, then you will have some faint idea of the meaning of the Holy Ghost in my text, "The church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father. Let me ask this of you who are parents, Where do your children live. You answer, if they have not reached years of maturity, They live with us at home. That is as it should be, but that is not enough. Where are Thomas and Mary, and the rest whom you love. They are in your hearts; I know they are. And the people of God are in His heart, they dwell in love. The fact that you are parents has given a place to all your children in your breasts, and your heart's best natural affections are entwined around them all. God has taken all His people into His heart, and said that He will love them for ever. This, however, is not known as to individual experience before calling. Paul said, "I went to Thessalonica in hope, but I now know your election of

God ; for our gospel came unto you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, and therefore I write very confidently unto you concerning your dwelling-place ;” you are in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. A family dwell in both places ; in the hearts of their parents, and in their home also. And God’s family dwell in God’s heart, while He is also their home now by faith ; and He has provided a great and glorious home for them all in heaven. Your children have a right to dwell with you at home. “ Do not carry that too far, sir.” I will not do so, simply because I cannot. I am justified in carrying this point thus far. Go home and turn your little ones out of doors, and the world will justly and bitterly condemn you. They have a right to live with you, and if they are in your heart you cannot turn them out. You have no right, no heart, no power to do it ; and as God’s church is in His heart, He will never turn them out of doors. Being in Him, they have a right to the protection of His shadow, and are justified in claiming their right as children of their great and glorious Father. This relationship is not a mutable one, or one that is formed one day and destroyed another. This relationship takes me, if I am interested in God, up to the highest Being in the universe, and gives me a place in Him. If I say, God is my Creator, I say much, but not enough. If I say He is my Preserver and Benefactor, I say much, and I bless His name for the benefits He confers upon me. If I rise higher, and say He is my God, I say very much indeed ; but that is not quite enough. I must go higher than that if possible, and say, *my Father*, and not merely my God. Whilst we are in the heart of love divine, sitting beside John the beloved disciple, he and we have fellowship in the love of God, in these words, “ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” The church of the Thessalonians in God the Father. In Him before the Father became a Creator and made the world ; then His people were in His heart, in His mind, in His thoughts, in His purposes and intentions, and they are there now. And when they are called by grace, they give themselves to one another and to the Lord. The formation of such persons, however, into Christian churches, does not alter their state or standing in the sight of God. It brings them, however, in that respect, into conformity with God’s will ; for every believer ought to be a member of a Christian church. It was so, I apprehend, in the days of the apostle ; but whether they are so or not, all the objects of love divine are in God the Father’s heart. That was an interesting fact, when Moses just before his departure for heaven, said, “ Yea, He loved the people : all His saints are in Thy hand, and they sat down at Thy feet, everyone shall receive of Thy words.” That is where the church is, and what it is, and what it shall receive. Where are they ? He loved the people, therefore they are in His heart. And they are also in His hand, for to be in His heart, is to be in His hand, in His eye, in His mind, and in His thoughts. “ O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me.” Love is a wonderful power, and its operations are marvellous and mysterious. If a person is once taken up into one’s affections and heart, it appears to me that there is no power in existence, certainly not in connection with

the things of God, that can rend that individual out of that heart again. That is all I have time to say on that point. To be in God the Father is to be in love Divine.

Secondly, in the Lord Jesus Christ, *that is to be in life*. The first will be *love*, and the second will be *life*. If we are in Christ, we do not cease to be in the Father. If we are in Christ, we have life in eternal love. A life which can never, never perish, never decay, and never change as to its qualities and properties. "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Union to Jesus Christ is threefold, that is, we are obliged to take such views of Divine truths, because our powers are so limited. All is one, and only one with God. But union to Christ is first *secret*, secondly, *open and visible*, and thirdly, it is *eternal*. In the first place, union to Christ is *secret*, or we have so to consider it. When a sinner is quickened, and brought to the Saviour, and enters into Christ for eternal salvation; that is not the first moment God sees that sinner in His Son. That is not the commencement of that individual's connection with the Saviour. "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." How and when did the Father love His Son? when did He not love Him? Before there was an angel to sing His praises, there were holy love, fellowship, and communion between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And Christ says in His intercessory prayer, "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." There never was a period in the far distant past when the Father did not view you in His Son. That, however, was not sufficient though it is a fundamental truth, out of which all other glorious truths grow. Therefore, secondly, union to Christ is *experimental and open*. What took place in the mind of God, takes place in some degree in the minds of God's people. His decree is fulfilled, and becomes a reality in the human mind, so that, as God gave us life in Christ before He spread the starry skies, the Holy Spirit comes in time, and imparts that life to the soul. You see how the church at Thessalonica was in the Father, and in Jesus Christ. This union thus becomes an open one and experimental. One says, "What has happened to Mr. So-and-so, you never see him now on Sundays where he was always to be seen. I have made enquiries, and have learned that he goes to chapel, and has taken a seat there, and it is really believed that he has become a religious man." How often has this taken place! The secret union between Christ and such a person becomes manifest. Then buds are growing on that branch of the vine which are producing leaves, and fruit will appear presently. The union will become more and more manifest and plain, and by and bye he will avow himself as a disciple of Jesus Christ and be called a Christian. "The church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ." In life because in Christ as a Priest. I have sometimes thought with peculiar feelings of the all comprehending character of Aaron, or of the Jewish High Priest. He was at times, the most important person in the nation, for he represented all the people to God, and God to all the people, and he was the great official link which united God and the people together. Without the High Priest, there was no person authorised to appear before God on the people's behalf, and

when God had anything to communicate to the people, He communicated it through the priest. The church of the Thessalonians in our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. He represents our persons; He represents our cause; He presents our prayers before His heavenly Father; so that if we are in the Father, or in eternal love; we are in Christ and have eternal life also. Thirdly, to be in the Father and in the Son, is to be in *perfect safety*. I have not the slightest hesitation as to avowing the fact that I am safe, when I realise my interest in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Those words which I so frequently quote, I may quote again :—

“More happy, yet not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”

I know it is said, one may fall out of love, and out of the covenant, and finally become a castaway. That is not how earthly parents deal with their children, and I am quite sure that the God of heaven, the Maker of parents, and the Author of parental affections and feelings, will never cease to love His children. I mean, He that planted maternal love in the woman's heart, and paternal love in the heart of the man, has love Divine in His own heart in infinite fulness, and having once taken a person into His heart, will hold that individual fast for ever and ever. Plagues may prevail, pestilence may walk in darkness, the arrow may fly by day, the earth and the pillars of nature shake, and the mountains be carried into the depths of the sea; the church shall remain in the heart of everlasting love as long as God Himself shall live. There are no degrees of safety. This fact has been somewhat opposed, persons have asked me a question or two about it when I made the observation. Why, do you not think one is safer in heaven than on the earth? Why should it be so? Is not God on the earth as well as in heaven? Is His power here less than almighty power? or is His eye something less than an all-seeing one? Does He love His people less because they are in this world? Can you love your child less because it is in Australia or because it is poor? You almost wish you had wings and could fly across the ocean to the beloved one. My brother, God's people being in God Himself, are safe wherever they may be. Their fears may be high, their doubts may be many, and the darkness of their minds may be dense; yet since they are in God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son, they are as safe as they will be in heaven. They are not so happy here as in heaven, for the perfection of pleasure is in the future. The joy is to come, but in Christ one is as safe here as he will be when he is with Him above. Where are your graces? Well, I have faith, and hope, and love. Where are they? My faith is in God, He will keep it; my hope is in Him, He will keep it. My love is there, at least—

“Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it from Thy courts above.”

My brother, your name is in Him, your character is in Him, your person is interested in Him, and your graces being in Christ, if the everlasting love of God all round you can sustain all that you are spiritually the subjects of, you are safe and secure, according the Master's own

words, "None shall pluck them out of My hands." Fourthly, to be in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ *involves perfection*. It is to be in perfection. Are we perfect now? Yes, in one respect at least, "Ye are complete in Him." Not as you shall be, for the perfection will be experienced by and bye, when you reach heaven. The verb is in the present tense. Ye *are* complete in Him. Jesus Christ our Lord is the root of life, and all His people's names are on His breast; all their sins were on Him, and He died for the sin He was bearing, and was buried to complete the abolition of the curse. He rose from the grave and all of them rose in Him, and are in Him in heaven. His righteousness is imputed to them, and as they are made manifest therein, they are all that Christ's obedience is capable of constituting them, and if that righteousness is all that God requires, and is ours for ever, —then being in this glorious Christ, we are in that respect complete before God.

Fifthly and lastly, all this will be followed by *the blessedness of being finally with Him*. In God the Father's love, in eternal life, in safety, and in perfection, will be followed with, "For ever with the Lord." Not with Him yet experimentally and personally so, but we shall see Him. These eyes of ours, like John's, will see Him, and we shall be like Him. Oh what a wonderful transformation! what bliss and blessedness it will be to be like Him! And we shall be with Him also, which is followed by the two words, "For ever." For ever see Him, for ever with Him, for ever like Him. That will be heaven, that will be the consummation of salvation to you and me.

In the second place, a word on *the Apostolic benediction*. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Had I time, I would make a few remarks on this part of the subject in the following way. *The fountain* of grace and peace from the Father and Jesus Christ; *the order* in which these blessings are presented to us. Grace first, then peace; *the connection* between the two, grace and peace. First *the fountain* of grace and peace. Will it be hair-splitting to say that the grace may be regarded as coming from the Father, and the peace as coming from the Son. Well, I do not care about niceties of that sort, I think they both come from the Father through Christ. Grace and peace from the Father and from His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace has its spring in the heart of Deity, and it never ceases to rise and flow, and it is the greatest and best of blessings that God can enrich a man or a church with. Grace and peace from Himself, through His well-beloved Son. Grace, my dear friends, is the root of peace, and not the fruit thereof. Grace precedes peace, which brings me secondly to notice, *the order* in which these two blessings are presented; grace first, and then peace. Grace, to repeat what I have just said, is the root of peace, and peace is the fruit of grace. Grace is the ever-springing fountain of peace, and peace is one of the streams of the ever-rising fountain. There may be grace without peace, and there may be peace without grace. If you are a saint and have never tasted peace, you are a possessor of grace, and the peace is coming, wait for it. But if you are filled with peace, and have no grace, the sooner you get rid of that peace the better. It is a false peace, if it does not spring from

grace. If your peace is not from grace, this passage of Scripture hangs over your poor head and heart, "When they shall say 'peace and safety,' then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." Some persons, therefore, have only one of these blessings, grace; and others, being deceived, have, as I have already said, peace without grace; and some have neither peace nor grace, being dead in trespasses and sins. But some have both; that was Paul's wish for the Thessalonians, and he expressed it in God's order; he did not put peace first and then grace; but grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Thirdly and lastly, *the connection* between the two. If I have already set that forth, let me just remind you that if you have grace and not peace, the peace is coming, for it must follow grace. You can get to heaven without peace, but not without grace. There may not be peace in a Christian church; God forbid that that should ever be the case here. There may not be peace in the Christian church, but if there be not grace therein, the community is not a Christian church at all. If you are ever so dark, and dreary, and barren, and cold, and hesitating as to your interest in Jesus Christ, yet having the grace of God in your hearts, sooner or later the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall fill your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord." For He that has given you grace, will not finally withhold peace. Wait, tarry His leisure, wait the appointed hour, for you are interested in love and in blood. You possess a life that will never die, you are perfect in Christ the Lord, you are safe and are going to heaven, where you will be for ever with Him. You have grace already in your heart, for you are alive from the dead; and some of you I know have some realization of your interest in pardoning love. You lose your peace, or it sinks and rises, for sometimes it is on the surface, sometimes it sinks down to the bottom; but having the grace of God, permanent, substantial, everlasting peace must be yours sooner or later. The Lord give you the comfort of these great facts, for His own name's sake. Amen.

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THE ORIGIN, CHARACTER, AND PRIVILEGES OF A CHURCH OF GOD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 4th JULY, 1886.

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth; to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's.” 1 Cor. i. 1, 2.

It is perhaps necessary that every spiritual student of the Word of God should read Paul's Epistles to the churches in connection with the Acts of the Apostles. The circumstances connected with the formation of the church at Corinth, are set forth in an interesting manner in the chapter which I read at the commencement of the service. You have not forgotten that the Apostle went to Athens; but he remained only a short time there, and although he spoke in the Master's name, not much spiritual good was done in that city. He left Athens and went to Corinth, and proceeded at once to preach the gospel there. The Jews as elsewhere were riotous and uproarious. They hated Paul, and Jesus, and also that system of Divine truth which the Apostle preached; therefore they contradicted and blasphemed whilst the Apostle proclaimed his great Master's name. As they persisted in opposing, the apostle “shook his raiment, and said unto them, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles;” and he turned and preached to Gentile sinners. We are told that “the Lord spake to him in a vision, Be not afraid but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city.” Thus encouraged by a word from heaven, he remained eighteen months in Corinth, teaching the word of God among them.” A church was formed there which appears to have been very considerable as to numbers and gifts, and there is reason to believe that some of its members were spiritual persons, although others were very irregular and carnal, and perhaps I ought to say that some few of them were very sinful. The apostle, however, did not unchurch them because there were foul blots upon the character of some of its members. They remained, notwithstanding this fact, one of the churches of Jesus Christ, and while Paul condemned the conduct of some of them, he says in this epistle, “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints. Paul introduces another while speaking of himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ,—“and Sosthenes our brother. Sosthenes was the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, yet he was taken and beaten in the confusion and disorder which prevailed in connection with the preaching of Paul. When God

however, has put His grace into the heart of a sinner, neither man nor the devil can extract it therefrom. The grace of God is an immortal principle, which is not placed anyhow in the soul. It becomes a rooted life within, and is, as I believe, inseparable from the mind in which our God is pleased to plant it. The Greeks, therefore, might beat Sosthenes, but they could not destroy the grace of God which was in him, nor force him to turn his back upon his Lord ; and hence Paul speaks of him as "Sosthenes our brother." Perhaps he preached, but he was not a brother apostle. Paul speaks of him here as in the covenant of grace, and as a child of God. Paul, as his name indicates, was a little one, though in point of fact he was great. Speaking of himself and of his experience he says, "I am less than the least of all saints," and the chief of sinners. He had no objection to lose his original name Saul, and to be called Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, for he was satisfied that he was, where he was, and what he was, by the will and grace of God. It is a blessing to feel satisfied in our own minds that we are where God has placed us, and are doing what God has commanded. This was the case with Paul in the city of Corinth ; they hated and persecuted him, and some of the members of the church, after a while, sneered at him ; but he comforted himself in his God, with the recollection that he was officially what his Lord and Master had made him, and that he was as a Christian, what His grace had made him. Well, he says, I write "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints."

The divisions of the text are very obvious. We have in the first place, *the persons addressed* ; "the church of God, which is at Corinth : " in the second place we have *the sanctification of its members in Christ*, "sanctified in Christ Jesus." Thirdly, *their vocation* "called to be saints : " fourthly, *the acceptable invocation*, "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. In the next place, for the text is a large one, we have the fact that *the church of God has one common Lord*. Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. I do not know whether I shall have time to make a few remarks upon all these, but I will try to do so.

In the first place, let us look at *the persons addressed*, the church of God which is at Corinth. The universal church of God is one thing, and individual churches, like that in the city of Corinth are another. A church has been gathered together within these walls, and we form a part of the one universal church of God. We have to do this morning with one of those visible organizations called churches, or the churches of God. Look first at *the place* where the church existed—Corinth. I cannot say how the Apostle felt when the Redeemer said to him, "Hold not thy peace, but speak ; for I am with thee, and I have much people in this city." He did not know that, until the Master told him so. He did not say, I *shall* have, neither did he say, If they will be willing to be saved, I have much people in this city. No church then existed ; very few of the Corinthians had been called by grace ; some of the men who then perhaps were very uproarious, and helped to beat the good and godly, were subsequently called and saved ; for the grace of God is sovereign, free and rich, and in every respect worthy of God Himself. A good old

minister, who died and went to heaven many years ago, used to say concerning Saul of Tarsus, "It was like the Lord Jesus to save that man. I would not have saved one who had shed so much of the blood of the saints, and one who so cruelly and bitterly hated my name and cause. Well, it was just like Christ to save him. The same remark might have been made, under the influence of a selfish and carnal spirit concerning the Corinthians. The riot, uproar and confusion were considerable, and they took Sosthenes and beat him, and no doubt they beat him severely. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus said, Stay here, Paul, be afraid of nothing, and continue to speak; for I have much people in this city. Angels did not know that fact before the Master gave utterance to it, and Paul I think was surprised when he took into consideration the character of the city and of the Corinthians. Judge nothing, my dear friends, before the time. That abominable blasphemer may be called by grace before he dies. That lewd and unclean wretch may be constituted a miracle of mercy before he dies. Do not adjudge a Magdalene to hell, for it may be God's intention to save her; and as for the thieves on the crosses on Calvary, do not condemn them both to punishment and wrath; because the name of one of them was in heaven, and because Jesus was actually expiating his guilt when he himself reviled his Saviour. My dear friends, we are under the covenant of God's grace, and grace is a most surprising, sovereign, and free blessing, else you and I had never been called. You do not know what grace will do for that brother, that sister, that father, that mother, that wife, or that husband of yours before you go to heaven, or when you are there. Therefore judge nothing before the time; hence I have much people in this city. What sort of city was it? Passing over the fact that it was a Gentile city, and the capital of Achaia, we observe that it was a city of idolaters, and the idolatry which prevailed there was of the worst and most unclean description. I cannot go far into these matters, delicacy prevents it; but it was so filthy that Paul could not refrain from saying concerning such cities, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." Idol temples stood here and there, and the idolaters met together from time to time to worship their gods, and observed the most obscene and filthy rites in connection therewith. But they were for the most part a learned and gifted people; and not only so, the place abounded in wealth, for it was one of the most affluent cities then existing in the country of Greece, and as is frequently the case, affluence and wealth become the parents of vice and profligacy, and these evils prevailed there. But those unclean sinners and idolatrous men and women before their gods of gold and silver and stone, who would have crushed the Apostle, and united with the Jews against Paul, were under the merciful eye of God, and secretly in His loving heart. There were mansions in heaven to receive them in due time, and Jesus had put away their guilt and sin when they were reviling and blaspheming His dear and holy name. "Paul and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth. Then contrast the church of God with the city of Corinth, or believing Corinthians with the unbelieving of the place, and shall we not say, "As a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters." God's church at Corinth was His garden, wherein he walked and worked. A garden in a

desert, a garden in a waste howling wilderness. The devil raged all round and to some extent he occasionally raged in the garden itself. Nevertheless it was a church of God, and one of His gardens concerning which He sometimes said, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. It was an oasis in the desert, a small green spot surrounded by the barren scenes of ignorance, vice, and infamy. "For the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." It was one of Christ's sheepfolds, where some of His sheep were gathered and folded, some of which were favoured to go into green pastures, and lie down beside the still waters; but round about this heavenly fold were lions, dogs, and wolves. O my brethren, the church of God at Corinth would not have been allowed to stand a day, had not its God been on the throne and said, but "no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city;" to whom He says, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." I often think of the words of David, "My soul is among lions." How helpless was this lamb amidst his roaring, raging, and blood-thirsty enemies. What can a lamb or a sheep do before lions? and what could the church of God at Corinth have done had not the Lord Himself been in the place and among them? Abominations surrounded the church, and a moral stench everywhere else prevailed. Disorder and confusion by the devil seemed likely to become triumphant in the city; but the church at Corinth might have sung had Watts' words been penned at that time, —

"We are a garden wall'd around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace,
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

But it was not only a church situated in the city of Corinth, it was a *church of God*. I wish to lay considerable stress upon the words "the church of God." It was God's church though it was imperfect, and though the imperfections of some of the people were very glaring, and though some of its most gifted members denied the true apostleship of Paul. "Ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me: examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves." He was obliged to defend himself against some of the members of the church by declaring that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. He did not speak these words in a spirit of pride but in a spirit of justice; he defended the work of God in his own heart, and also his Divine call to be an apostle. There are times when we may defend ourselves on the ground of the fact that we are what we are by the grace of God. It was a church of God *as to its origin*, for it originated in His thoughts, and in the love of His heart. "My kingdom," said the dear Redeemer, "is not of this world." A prosperous church not originated by God is not His church. Its members, some or many of them, may as individuals be God's people, but as an organization it is not a church of God. I have lived many years in the world, and I have seen churches formed and dissolved again; I have watched the operation of the spirit which I think has prevailed in connection with their formation and downward progress. Sometimes the spirit which prevailed was of God, and some-

times it was man's own spirit ; and when the spirit of man leads in the formation of churches and congregations, sooner or later they will come to nothing, or something worse than that. But notwithstanding the state of things which existed at Corinth, Paul said, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth. He originated it ; he might well say so, for the Master had said, "I have much people in this city ;" and of course having said as much as that, Paul knew that the Lord did not mean to leave them to perish, but to take them out from among the people to show forth His praise and glory. It was a church of God *as to its nature*, and hence a little lower down it is said, "Called to be saints." I hold, and shall hold this truth all the days of my life, that a church of God is a body of spiritual persons or of saints, and that no other persons have any right to be therein. I wonder what good a person dead in trespasses and sins can be to a Christian church by becoming a member thereof. Half-a-dozen corpses in your house in coffins very expensively decorated can never do a living household any good, but they may do it harm ; so persons spiritually dead can never do a church of God any good, but they may do it much harm. "Called to be saints." Hence the church of God is a holy body composed of holy men and women, having been called to holiness by the God of salvation and life. Then notice the church of God *as to the circumstances by which they were brought together*. I think we live in a day in which great laxity prevails in regard to church membership. No doubt in many places there are members in Christian churches who ought not to be there, but on the other hand there are I know many persons connected with Christian congregations who ought to be in the church, and their presence in the church and union to it is as important an obligation on their part as any obligation that devolves upon them. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Why, my dear friends, the house of God is the place for His children, the sheepfold is the place for His sheep, the garden is the place for His plants, even if they be little ones and ever so small ; and if I may so put it, the heavenly and Divine museum is the place for all the wonderful works of God in connection with His grace. All the mysteries connected with salvation should be exhibited, and appear in this heavenly repository to the world, to angels and to devils, as long as Christians live on the earth. Thus we see a church of God as to its origin, as to the character of its members, and as to the circumstances in connection with their coming together. It was the church at Corinth, and they were to remain in that city, for it was not necessary that they should leave that place and their vocation because they had become Christians and believers. They were called in Corinth from among the ungodly, but not called by providence to leave Corinth. Notwithstanding that they were hated and persecuted there, and could not possibly have the sympathy of the citizens, they were to remain in the city, they were to shine as lights. Oh ! the importance of being the children of light. If we were masses of light, and walking abroad at night when it was dark, what strange persons we should appear to be. Such is the idea of the Lord ; "ye are the lights of the world ;" "let your light shine before men." Here, then, were the Corinthian believers, sons and daughters of living light, united together as a Christian church, walking towards heaven as a band of men

and women, whose hearts the Lord had touched, and they shone as children of the day and of the light. I have tarried rather too long on that point.

Now let me notice in the second place, *one or two things concerning the sanctification mentioned*. "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus." I take the word sanctified here to mean not only that operation of the Spirit by which God's people are made holy, but to be set apart for God and for His service. God sanctified or set apart the seventh day; and Aaron, and prophets, and kings, and the vessels of the ministry were set apart from a common to a special and Divine use; so that if Aaron that saint of the Lord, had taken one vessel out of the tabernacle, and used it in his own home for common and ordinary purposes, he would have incurred God's displeasure. Now Paul says, "sanctified in Christ Jesus." I suppose that a sense of this fact influenced the mind of Nehemiah, when he said in allusion to the conduct of others, "So did not I because of the fear of the Lord." This feeling prevailed in Joseph when after having been fiercely tempted again and again, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" Well, from all eternity,—for we must have that old-fashioned truth, having no idea that we can dispense with doctrine. Doctrine is important and holding it to be so, I will preach and love it as long as I live. Well, God set apart His people in His dear Son before the foundation of the world, by an act of sovereign grace and love, in order that they might in due time be redeemed and called to be saints. To be sanctified, therefore, is union to Christ, or to be set apart in Him; not set apart in the world, for the world can give them nothing that God requires them to possess; not set apart under the law, for that can give them nothing that they need; not set apart so as to constitute them what Adam was before he fell, for that would have left them too low and in uncertainty; and not set apart as the Jews were in Abraham, who became by the arrangements of heaven the father of the whole nation of Israel, the national, but not the spiritual church of God. Their relation to him did not save them, for salvation did not come from that source. "Say not among yourselves, we have Abraham to our father;" but say rather the God of heaven is our Father, and His dear Son is our Lord Jesus Christ, and we are set apart in Him. Christ was set apart to redeem, and we were set apart in Him to be redeemed. He was set apart to be the Saviour, and we were set apart in Him to be saved and to take the results of His salvation. He was set apart to make good and to verify the whole of the covenant of grace, and we were set apart in Him, that we might receive all the blessings of that covenant. Set apart for God to fill, to uphold, to own, and to bless. Is there anything dangerous in this doctrine, or is it unpalatable? Surely our God knew His own mind in eternity, and surely there can be nothing wrong or unscriptural in ascribing a fixedness of decree and knowledge to the Most High. In tracing my salvation back to eternity, and regarding myself as having been chosen to eternal life in God's dear Son, I sing,

"Dissolved by His goodness I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

Now, as time is going, we will notice in the third place, *the vocation*;

"called to be saints." A saint is a holy one, and the people called at Corinth were God's holy ones. I am tempted to make a critical observation or two upon the distinction which should be observed between the new birth and calling ; although I do not care for critical and certainly never for hypercritical remarks ; but a great deal of light upon the subject would be obtained if people would take the trouble to distinguish, not separate, between the new birth and calling. God calls sinners that are dead in trespasses and sins!! Does He? Where does it say so? "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." "He that hath ears, let him hear." But have all men hearing ears? "Whereas I was blind, now I see." Does God call men while they are dead in trespasses and sins? Does He not first give life in regeneration? The new birth takes place, and then there are ears to hear, and eyes to see, for a spiritual living being is then in existence, and this new-born being God calls to be a saint. He is born a son, and then God calls him to holiness and saintship. Sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints. Not invited, but *called* to be saints; not required to make themselves saints, but called by God they become saints by the mighty power of the word of Him who calls them. Whose saints are they? They are the saints of God who calls them. We have minister's saints, and Rome's saints, which are multiplying wonderfully. I do not know what it costs to canonise men and women in the church of Rome ; but all this work of God is done in a wonderfully silent manner, and we pay nothing whatever to be constituted saints of God. When one is regenerated by the Spirit of God and called to be a saint, a transaction takes place between God and the soul, and grace is as free as the air we breathe. "Gather my saints together unto me," says the Lord, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Called by God to be holy ones or saints, and not invited. I will be faithful if I be thought severe,—we have many saint-makers in the day in which we live. Sunday-school teachers are told it is their duty to convert their pupils, parents are told that it is their duty to convert their children, and preachers are regarded as responsible for the conversion of their hearers. Holiness, however, is of God only, and a saint is one of His new creatures in Christ Jesus. "Ye are God's workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works." I would as soon believe that you could create a human being as that you could transform a sinner into a saint of God. It is a greater work to convert a sinner into a saint than it was to bring Adam into existence. They are God's saints and such persons constitute His church, whether it be located in Corinth, or in London, or elsewhere.

Fourthly, *the invocation*. With all that in every place call on the name of the Lord. Only one name for every place, and for all the spiritual inhabitants of everyplace. That simplifies our religion very blessedly. One name, yes and our friends in India,—and thank God there are some in that country in this spiritual condition,—our friends in India knowing themselves as lost in sin, and saved by grace, know something about the preciousness of this one name Jesus, which is to all holy ones here in London as ointment poured forth. India and England are united in this respect, for Indian and English saints are one. Call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours. It appears from this that

prayer may be, and is, offered to God everywhere, and that we are not limited as to place. If we might not pray without coming to chapel, or going to some central place as the Jews went to the temple at Jerusalem three times a year, we should sometimes be solely troubled; but wherever there is a saint there may and must be prayer. "With all that in every place call upon His name: in Corinth, Cenchrea, Ephesus, Athens, Philippi, Thessalonica, and in all other places, for in every place Christians want mercy, and covenant blessings, and Jesus Christ. God is the object of worship, and our prayers go to Him, through the name and mediation of the dear Redeemer. And what is the result of this? Why our prayers passing through his mediation are cleansed and perfumed, and lose their imperfections. He sweetens every humble groan and adds the incense of His own merit to the petitions and praises of His dear people, so that when they reach the Father's ears; though we think but little of them, they are accepted by Him. Invocation—calling upon His name.

We have *one common Lord*; our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours. The saints at Corinth were distinguished from atheists and infidels and others by the fact that they prayed, and they were distinguished from the Jews by the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was their Lord and Saviour. They did not speak of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as being of any importance or value in the great business of salvation. Now we all meet in one place and around one centre, which is the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the Apostle included himself, "*He is ours*, there were the private members of the church, but it was both theirs and ours. There were the Jews, a highly favoured people, but the spiritual among them had the same Jesus for their Lord. Here are the Corinthian believers and English believers, and He is their Lord and ours. All that call upon the Lord, both theirs and ours. One will not be brighter, or purer, or greater, or higher, or more glorious than another. We shall all be like Christ, the great model, pattern, and standard, to whom all are to be conformed.

"Nor doth it yet appear,
How great we must be made;
But when we see our Saviour here,
We shall be like our Head."

As to *the remarks*. Places cannot destructively effect the church of God,—the church of God at Corinth. There it remained. Corinth could not destroy it, and the church could not convert Corinth. Then secondly, how sovereign and rich was the grace of God, as we observed before, in saving sinners such as the Corinthians, and sinners such as we were. Just remember three points,—what we were, what we are, and what we *shall be*. What we were; enemies and afar off. What we are; saints and members of the church of God on earth. And what we shall be; for ever with and like our Lord. The Lord add His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

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GOD GREATER THAN MAN.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 20th MARCH, 1887.

"Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man." Job xxxiii. 12.

THESE are the words of Elihu, who, it appears, was a young man, or young compared with Job and his three friends, between whom a very long conversation had been carried on. Job, however, was constrained to say concerning them, "Ye are physicians of no value; miserable comforters are ye all." In their opinion Job was so far wrong, and his heart was so hardened, that they ceased to reason with him, and it was laid upon the mind of the young man Elihu to take up the subject, and to reason with that tried servant of God. Elihu was faithful, and perhaps he was occasionally rather stern; but he commences in a very courteous manner, because Job was advanced in years, and he himself was a young man only. Therefore he says in the text, "Behold, in this thou art not just." Do you not see humility, and pity, and courteousness here? Elihu might have said, You are wicked; he might have said, You are most unjust; he might have said, The positions you have taken are in every respect exceedingly wrong. That would not have been speaking kindly or courteously, and therefore the good young man said, "In this thou art not just." He put the truth in a negative, and not in a positive form. He would not use a harsher or a heavier word; he was most courteous, and his heart was toward Job. The influence of the Spirit of God warmed and softened him, and produced the kindest feelings in his breast, and therefore, looking at the dear sufferer in the ashes, clothed with rags, and covered with sores, he said, "I am in God's stead, according to your wish, and will take leave to say, Job, that in this thou art not just." And then again, observe how he limits the matter. "Behold, in this,"—he might have referred to many matters, but Elihu confined himself to one or two, or three facts, and said, "Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, or tell thee that God is greater than man." But what are we to understand by "Behold, in this thou art not just." What is the antecedent, or what are the antecedents here. "Behold in this?" Read the preceding verses. "Surely thou hast spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, I am clean without transgression. In this, Job, thou art not just. I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me. In this, Job, thou art not just. You have also said, Behold, He findeth occasions against me, He counteth me for His enemy. Behold, in this thou art not just. He putteth my feet in the stocks, He marketh all my paths. Behold in this, Job, thou art not just. I will answer thee, that God is greater than man."

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Now, having made these introductory remarks, let us drop at once on the text, or the subject indicated in our text this morning, and try to make a few general observations upon it. And the fact I have to notice is this, and it is an almighty, an inexhaustible, and an infinite subject; and therefore I trust I shall lose myself in it, and that you also will be lost therein; viz., *the greatness of God*. "I will tell thee, Job, that God is greater than man." Some of my hearers, perhaps, are ready to say, the text you have brought this morning is a very ordinary and common one, and one that is universally received and almost universally believed, that God is greater than man. It might almost be said of that as is said of a great many other things, that it goes without saying, that God is greater than man. Well, let us tarry here a few minutes and try to look at God's greatness. I notice, in the first place, that *whatever God is, He is great therein*. Now, there are great men, and great women, but they are not great everywhere, nor great in all relations or in all respects. One is a great man in this or that, or the other matter, but in relation to other things he is feeble and weak; but our God is great in all respects, even in all He has been pleased to become, whatever it may be. Shall I mention three or four facts? God has been pleased to become a Maker, or a Creator, and the worlds were made by Him. And is He not glorious and great as the Maker of the universe? His infinite greatness appears in all His works, and it meets us everywhere in creation. Does littleness or imperfection appear anywhere? Is there anything in connection with the operations of our great Maker's hand that is not worthy of the attention of both angels and men? What do you think of a blade of grass? God's greatness appears in that. What do you think of a grain of sand? neither you nor all the angels of God in heaven could make a grain of sand. And what do you think of the wind, or a drop of rain or dew? All these are the productions of almighty power, and a being less great than God could never possibly produce them. "Behold, and I will answer thee, that God is greater than man." Our God is great, then, as a Creator. Not, however, to tarry too long in a place, for we shall have some experimental remarks to make presently,—contemplate your God as the Ruler and Governor of the universe, and as the King of kings, and Lord of lords; He is great everywhere in His kingly and royal and reigning character. A blunder has never been committed. That state of things which among men is sometimes said to be a hitch, has never taken place in the government of our God. He has never made a mistake, He has never had to retrace His steps. Worlds are governed by Him, all the events of time are controlled by Him, and all the multiplied and various circumstances of your life and mine are subject to His eye. How very wonderful is this! do you believe it? I am afraid, that, like myself, you do not half believe in the greatness of God as to the ruling operations of His hand. I love those words which I so frequently repeat:—

"The fictitious powers of chance
And fortune I defy;
My life's minutest circumstance
Is subject to Thine eye."

I am sure I am not going too far, for my Master has said, (and His lips

are the lips of truth, and nothing but truth ever fell from Him,) "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Oh how minute is God in the wonders of His providence in the world, and as to His management of the affairs of His people! You are worth more than many sparrows. They are so numerous, and of so little value, that five of them are sold for only two farthings; yet not one of them can fall to the ground without your heavenly Father's notice. "I will," said Elihu to Job, "answer thee, that God is greater than man," and we are confident that He is great in His works as the Creator and Ruler of all upon His throne. But what shall we say about our God who has been pleased to become our Father? Although our bodies are sinful, yet are they fearfully and wonderfully made, and they proclaim the fact that He that made them is great. That we are surrounded every day by evils and perils unseen, proves the fact that God is our Protector and Preserver, and that, as a Ruler, He does all things well. But are we in His family? Do we belong vitally and experimentally to His church? Are our names in heaven? Were our sins charged upon the Saviour, and do we express the truth, and give utterance to a fact when we fall before the throne, and calling upon God, say, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." You remember the time when you were afraid thus to address the great God of heaven and earth. You used to call upon Him as a gracious God, as the glorious Ruler of heaven and earth; but you could not address Him as your Father, for the Spirit of adoption had not then revealed the precious fact to your poor troubled mind. But now you are in the family, and not only so, you now possess the Spirit of adoption, and you know in some measure, that He that made you has become your covenant God and gracious Father. My dear brother, carry the greatness of your God with you when you thus contemplate Him, and connect it all with His Fatherhood and covenant character, and with every relation in which He stands to you; for if He is your Father He cannot be too great; while, on the other hand, as an enemy His greatness will crush for ever and ever. In whatever He is, He is great. If He is our Father, He is an infinitely great one; but if He is our enemy, in consequence of sin and transgression, all His greatness is against us. He cannot be too great for you, if He is your God; but if He is your enemy, and you are His, His greatness will terrify and surround you, it will bear and keep you down in torment for ever. "Behold," said the young man to Job, "I will answer thee, that God is greater than man." I might proceed to speak of our God as a Judge; but the time is going, and the subject is a large one. We do not yet know much about God as a Judge, we know more of Him as a Father. He is, however, a Judge, and will be our Judge at the last day; and all the essential greatness of His person will appear then in His judicial character, and also in His judicial proceedings and decisions.

In the second place, *God is great in all His attributes.* His greatness runs through them all, so that every one of them is infinite to the true believer. One attribute is not greater than another. I dare say some of you have at times heard ministers in the pulpit speak of the darling attributes of God, for the expression is quite common, that mercy is His darling perfection. There may be differences in the excellencies of men,

and for argument's sake I might admit for a minute the possibility of there being differences in the excellencies of angels, although I do not know whether it be so or not; but there is no difference between one divine attribute and another as to its greatness. Oh, you say God's tender mercy is boundless and infinite, and so is His grace also. But are His justice, righteousness, and holiness limited and bounded? Does not Divine greatness shine as brightly in His justice as in His mercy? Is it not so? In this men are not just, for God is great everywhere, and His greatness runs into, and characterises all that He is. Let me mention a few points. Perhaps I might pass over His omnipotence, it being generally admitted that He is infinitely great in power. Omnipotence means all power, and this belongeth unto God. There is no power in angels, nor in devils, nor in men, nor in animals, nor in elements, nor in any other part of nature; but God is the head of all. The scattered degrees of power in the world and in the universe, are only parts thereof. One possesses one measure, and another possesses another portion; but all the power of creatures is measured and limited. All power, however, is in God, who is the great source of it all. His power is Almighty, and He is your God for ever and ever? Shall we mention His love. Sing for joy, my brother; for He is as great in His love as He is in His power; therefore His love must be almighty love. Yes, truly it is so. Let the notion perish that God wants and desires to save man, but he refuses to be saved; that God wants to extricate and deliver sinners, which they will not allow Him to do. Shall a God whose arm is almighty, and whose love is boundless, look on and long to save, and then turn away disappointed? "I will tell thee," said Elihu, "that God is great, and that He is so in the love of His heart." He cannot love a little, and who can measure the love of God? I speak it with reverence, but with fearlessness, that God cannot limit the measure of His love to His children. To love one with a limited, and another with an illimitable love is not like our God, and it is not possible unto Him. My dear friend, if you are interested in Him, you are surrounded by a love that cannot be measured, a love that angels cannot describe, a love that is boundless like God Himself, and His greatness is unsearchable; therefore it is well understood that He is greater than man. His wisdom is equal to His love and power, and divine greatness characterises His wisdom at all times, in every place, and in every operation. Some of you have somewhat large families, and a complicated business perhaps, and you cannot attend to all the numerous points that are pressing upon you at the same time. You are often bewildered and perplexed, and feel that your knowledge, wisdom, and power are limited; but

"God's eternal thought moves on
His undisturbed affairs."

There are intricacies, complications, and difficulties on the earth,—the world, in fact, is brimful of them; for ever since sin entered into the world there have been human disorder and confusion around us, and nothing but the gospel can cast a tranquilizing light upon sinful men. The world is, as it were, upside down, and moral and natural evil prevails everywhere, and all would have gone to utter ruin had not God restrained the destructive powers which are in constant operation. God, however, is not

confused ; He is the God of peace, and He sits serenely upon His throne and manages all the affairs of the universe, so that

“ All shall come, and last, and end,
As shall please our heavenly Friend.”

Bless His name, His wisdom is boundlessly great ! Shall I say a word to anxious sinners ? Who, or what are you, my friend ? A grasshopper, a worm of the earth, a creature of a day,—so helpless, and so mortal, that you are crushed before the moth. Who are you, that you should exalt your sins above God's mercy, and tell me in His presence that you are too great a sinner to be pardoned ? Who are you that you should talk like that ? Behold, God is great. “ Yes, sir ; but you do not now about my sin.” Yes, I do ; and I know also that if your sinfulness were a thousand times deeper than it is, God is greater than man, and His grace is infinitely deeper, and rises infinitely higher than all the mountains of your guilt. If your guilty conscience were bathed in the love and the mercy of God ; all the piercing of guilt would cease at once. God can overturn mountains, or cause them to melt away. They disappear before His mercy. You are a creature ; God is boundlessly great, and His greatness is in His pardoning mercy. I might speak in the next place of His gifts, for His greatness appears in them also. Every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh down from above, and He gives like a God. His gifts are numerous, but they are to be distinguished, if I may so speak, one from another. We have the gifts of His providence, or temporal favours. His mercies are new every morning, and His faithfulness is displayed every night ; but all that we require, and all that He demands for time and for eternity, is deposited in one great gift, even the gift of His dear Son, which has been bestowed upon us. “ Yes, he gives like a God.” Said one, to a great monarch who had made him a large present ; “ That is too much for me to receive.” “ But it is not,” said the royal giver, “ too much for me to give.” Salvation may seem too much for such sinners as we are, to receive ; but it is not too much for the infinitely great God to give. You give, or you are supposed to give according to your ability, and when your heart is engaged, your hand gives according to your ability. Kings give, or should give, in a royal manner, and according to their ability. God gives like a God, and according to His greatness. “ He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him also, freely give us all things.” Not only so, there is much in the spirit and manner in which gifts are conveyed by the giver to the receiver. You may throw something in a very cold, and perhaps repulsive manner, into the lap of a poor friend, and he may be very thankful for what you have given to him, since he may have great need of it ; but the manner in which you gave it has not left a very sweet and grateful impression upon his heart. You may speak a word to a friend, but there may be something in the tone of your voice, or in the aspect of your countenance which chills the feelings of the hearer. There is so much in the manner, the tone, the spirit, in which we do a thing good in itself. A good thing may be done in a bad mode, or in a bad spirit. This is not like our God, He has given us His dear Son, and given Him with all His heart, and with a thousand smiles ; He has given us Himself—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the

triune God, with all His heart, and with all His soul. How marvellous are the loving kindness, mercy, and pity of our God! He is great—God is greater than man. Is He not great also as to what He conceals? If He is great in what He reveals, He is equally great I am sure as to what it pleases Him to conceal and withhold from man. I will tell you what He has concealed, and that is Himself. Do you say, He has revealed Himself? I reply, He has revealed the fact that *He is*, and that He is *infinitely great in every respect*; but *how great* He is He has never revealed, for He never can reveal the whole of Himself. There is no being but Himself that can ever fathom or comprehend the great God. You can never get beyond Him, nor search out this unsearchable One, and He can never show you the whole of Himself. It would be a terrible thing for us in eternity to reach a point where it might be said you have seen the whole of God. The finite can never see, can never fully realize the Infinite. Hence,

“Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall o’er His beauties rove;
And endless ages I’ll adore
The wonders of His love.”

Let us notice secondly, *the fact stated in our text*. I have been dwelling upon the greatness of God; now, a fact is stated, *God is greater than man*. That is very easily explained, is it not? The infinite is greater than the finite, and that which is eternal is greater than that which is temporal. But there is something else here. God is greater than man. There have always been great men on the earth, and there are men who are supposed to be great now; and there are great creatures perhaps in all worlds. But let me particularise a little. The first man that ever appeared in the world was a great man, and his greatness was perfect, though not infinite. When Adam came out of the hands of his Creator he was without spot or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. God looked at him with approval, satisfaction and delight. He was pure enough, innocent enough, and upright enough for God. All that God required He beheld in Adam. He was His workmanship; Adam was His creature; but God is greater than His work. “I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.” Adam’s innocence was loseable, and he himself was a measurable finite being, while his Maker and Master was infallible and infinite. Adam became a great sinner,—and I wish I might be the means of helping someone here,—man is a great sinner, and the greatness of his sinnership arises from the fact that he is a sinner against God. “Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight.” I may sin against a fellow creature, and the sin, or the fault, or the evil might not be considered very great; but every act of sin is an arrow aimed at God. Every transgression is in defiance of God’s authority; and sin, if it could possibly carry itself out to its utmost extent, would dethrone God and annihilate Him altogether. Man, therefore, is great as a sinner, or he is a great sinner. Yet people tell me that they do not know much about sin, and do not think that they are very great sinners. I tremble for them. At all events the preacher is a great sinner, and he needs a great Saviour, and anything less than the salvation of the Son of God would be too limited and too shallow for him. God is greater

than the sinner. There is more in the merit of Christ to save from hell than there is in the demerit of sin to sink one into eternal woe; and more in the blood of Christ and the mercy of God to pardon sin, than in sin to damn the soul. Behold, God is greater than man as a sinner. But let us leave that, and go ever so much higher. Men are in Christ, and they are very great there. "Thy gentleness hath made me great, and Thy salvation hath set me up on high." I hold, that to be in Christ is to be in the highest and best state in the universe. I would rather be in Jesus Christ than I would be related to all the monarchs of the world. I am dignified, I am magnified, I am honoured, and I shall be glorified if I am in Christ. "I will answer thee that God is greater than man." If to be in Jesus Christ so magnifies the Christian, what must that Christ be who does so magnify him? How vast must be His merit, how great must be His power! But God is greater than man, even when man is considered as one with Jesus Christ. In heaven man is great, and cannot be greater. The human vessels there are large, and they are full; no cloud or shadow of a cloud of sorrow will ever cross their minds. God, I had almost said, and I will say it; God could not raise them higher, or make them greater. He has given them the best world, and Himself therein, yet I declare to you that God is greater than the highest man in heaven. Go further, for there is a step beyond that, and it is a very high one. God is greater than the man Christ Jesus, "for My Father is greater than I," Christ spoke as a man, and as a Mediator when He said, "My Father is greater than I." I can go no further than that. The dear Son of God became incarnate and took our nature that He might raise us high. Mediatorially and officially considered, and considered as to His human nature, the Father is greater than the Son, or greater than the man Christ Jesus. The time, therefore, is coming, when Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power; for he must reign until His enemies be made His footstool, and when that has taken place, He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God will be in all. This God is your God and mine.

Thirdly, God is great, but the comparative is used here; "greater than man," therefore the text *indicates a source of comfort*. "God is greater than man." What a mercy it is to be in Him! What a blessing it is to belong to Him, and what a privilege it is to be born of God, and for Him. I pity princes on their throne when I can call Him mine;

"I tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good and great."

while I realize the sweet fact that the infinitely great God is my portion and my God. A poor suffering believer is reported to have said, once, when he had little or nothing more than bread and water, "All this, and Jesus Christ!" Surely his heart must have been marvellously influenced. I do not think there are many of my friends, and I include myself with them, who could naturally and readily say of bread and water, "All this and Jesus Christ too!" Yet if our hearts are quite right, and we enter experimentally into the grandeur and magnitude of our honour and our glory, we shall be able to say of bread and water, "All this and the great God of heaven and earth!" How much we have to be thankful for. Well, "Behold, God is greater than man," and that is our comfort. Under the

shadow of His wings rejoice. Do men cover and comfort us? Have a care, human wings do not quite cover you; and if they did, they do not cover all the day long. The wings of God, however, quite cover the believer, and they cover him all the day long. You have received a very strong assurance from your friend, and you rest upon his word and believe that he will fulfil his engagements, and that your circumstances will soon be different. Have a care, walk thoughtfully and prayerfully. Honour your friend, but, "Behold, God is greater than man." Man sometimes reaches a point at which he stops, and where all his engagements are broken, and all his obligations end in nothing except disappointment to those that were interested in them. "God is greater than man." He issues a command, and it is fulfilled. He gives a promise, and such a promise as it were presumption, and daring presumption on the creature's part to give. He gives a promise, and it is fulfilled. What is His promise? Take one. "In all places whithersoever thou goest, I will be with thee." You that are fathers and mothers of dear children in America, or Africa, or Australia, would you not think it a rich treat and a privilege to visit them there? To fly across the 13,000 or 14,000 miles, and drop down in their midst? I will come and see you if the Lord spare me, and if I have the means to do so, is your language to your dear ones. "But God is greater than man." "In all places whithersoever thou goest, I will be with thee." O, here man disappears, and God's greatness shines. And what else? "I will deal well with thee." What else? "I will surely do thee good." And what else? "I will not leave thee until I have done that good thing which I have spoken to thee of." Man promises, and God promises. Two promisers, and two promises. "In this thou art not just, Job." You have been measuring God by yourself, and by creatures. "I answer thee, that God is greater than man." I intended to have introduced another point or two, but the time is gone.

The fourth point would have been to consider the text, *as an argument or motive for submission to God's will*. "God is greater than man." Let me be dumb and silent when I know not what He is doing. He cannot do wrong, He must do right; but He is very mysterious in His conduct. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because Thou didst it." What else? "Thy will, O God, not mine be done." What else? "God is greater than man;" let man, therefore, never come between my God and my conscience. My conscience is for my God, and God is for my conscience; therefore, no man, however great or learned, has any right to come between me and my God. The Lord add His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

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OUR MASTER IN HEAVEN.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 21st JANUARY, 1883.

“Knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him.”—Eph. vi. 9.

In the former part of this important epistle we have very clearly and comprehensively described some of the great and glorious doctrines of the everlasting Gospel. The apostle Paul, the writer of this letter, had a naturally great and powerful mind, which having been deeply sanctified by the Holy Spirit, he brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. As one of the apostles of Jesus Christ he was favoured with a large measure of grace, and also of the gifts and power of the Spirit of God. On one extraordinary occasion he was caught up, as he tells us, to the third-heaven, where he heard unspeakable words, which it was not lawful for a man to utter. Of course, therefore, they are not expressed in any of his letters. Nevertheless, while his soul was in Paradise, before the throne of God, and immersed in the glory of his Master, he became filled with a peculiar power which never left him, and under which he preached the glories of his Lord, and wrote important letters to the churches. Therefore, on reading the first chapter of this epistle one at once feels that its writer was a great and gifted man, and one who had much to do with God, with Christ, with heaven, and with the gospel and its glorious doctrines of salvation. Paul soared very high, and went very far back, not only to the commencement of time and the foundation of the world, but into the past eternity, and contemplated the infinite glories of Jehovah's character, and the infinite mysteries of His everlasting love; and then he set forth before the church of God the wondrous manner in which the work of salvation was being carried on, and what its glorious consummation shall be in a better world, for ever and ever, in the experience of all whom He hath quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Having set forth a number of the great doctrines of the gospel, and described a measure of the experience of God's people, he was divinely inspired to close the letter with words of exhortation. In doing this, he first of all directs himself to wives, then to husbands, then to children, then to fathers, then to servants, and lastly to masters. The Word of God has something to say to every class of persons, and almost every class was represented, it appears, in the church at Ephesus. We have no words of exhortation in this letter to kings, princes, or magistrates, for persons in these grades were not members of that church. Had there been royal personages and magistrates in membership, it is my belief that Paul would have given words of exhortation to them also. First, he addresses

those members who were married, and says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord." Then he has some most important exhortations for husbands: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Then, "Children obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." And I would just say, in passing, that the apostle was here addressing members of a Christian church, and therefore the children here spoken to should be considered as members of the church. "Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right: honour thy father and thy mother." Then there is a word for fathers, for servants, and for masters. "And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him."

There are four or five points which invite attention. First—*The relation in which Christ stands to His people*: He is their Master. Secondly—*The Master's residence*: In heaven. Thirdly—*His character or perfection*: There is no respect of persons with Him; and Fourthly—*The confidence expressed*—knowing this.

In the first place—*The relation in which Christ stands to His people*: He is their Master. Our Lord said to His disciples, "Be ye not called Rabbi, neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ. He is an everlasting Master, whose authority and power are unwasting, and He will never vacate the position He occupies, but continue to hold His seat till the end of time, and then He will be surrounded by His happy servants for ever. It is not an honour to serve some persons, and earthly service is not always pleasant; but it is always an honour to serve the God of heaven; and when our services are deeply spiritual, and we are divinely favoured and helped, it is a sacred pleasure to come near to our Master's throne, and serve Him with every power we possess. Jesus is His people's Master. In the margin it reads, and Dean Alford gives the same rendering, "For their Master and yours is in heaven;" for Christ is the Ruler of both servants and masters. Jesus is Master of His one universal and beloved church. I should like first to show on what ground the authority of Jesus over all the saints of God rests. We pass by the fact, which is universally admitted, that our great Redeemer is the mighty God and the everlasting Father, and therefore has a right to exercise unlimited authority over all the creatures He has made. We do not now regard Christ as the everlasting God only, but notice Him in His mediatorial character—as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; as our elder Brother, and intimately and inseparably connected with us in the kingdom of heaven, and of God. God says, "Yet have I set my King on my holy hill of Zion." Our heavenly Father having taken into His eternal thoughts and love all the millions of beings that shall appear in heaven for ever, and constituted Himself their covenant God and them His peculiar people, gave them to His beloved Son; committed them into His hands, and authorised Him to save them, to keep them, to gather them, to rule over them, to lead them through the world, and to instate them in eternal blessedness and glory. On this ground the great Redeemer is the authoritative and rightful Ruler of the Church of God. But, besides this, our Lord has acquired a right to rule, and be

the Master of the family of God. I do not know how to enter into the mystery, for it is profoundly deep; but it relates to this subject, and is truly sweet. Although our Lord "was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore, God also hath highly exalted Him." Before our Lord could ascend to heaven and take His seat at the right hand of His Father, and exercise universal and saving authority, He had to become a servant Himself. He served His Father and He served for us, and in our room and stead, in order that He might take possession of His church, and be in a position to call by grace, to rescue sinners from Satan, and from disgrace, and exercise that power which was necessary to bring them to His feet, to break their hearts, and to draw confessions of sin from their spirits. Jesus is our Master, on account of the fact that He died for us. What a pleasing thought is this, that our ruling and teaching Master and Proprietor does not preside over a multitude of slaves! He that loved us and bled for us; He that served God for us and achieved our salvation; He that closed the gates of hell against us, and opened the gates of heaven for us, has taken His position at the right hand of Infinite Majesty, and said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Besides, in the next place, our Lord makes all His own servants, which is more than other masters have been able to do. Servants have been born in their master's houses, and trained more or less carefully, and many of them have served their masters faithfully, but our great and glorious Lord forms all that serve Him. You have servants because you require them and need their services, and cannot get on without them; therefore, in a great measure, you depend upon them. Christ has servants because He will have them, and not because He needs them. Jesus has a multitude of servants, but He does not depend upon any of them. He demands their services, but His greatness and blessedness are not increased by them. He is the unchangeable God, and became what He is for our sakes, and what He is now doing in heaven is for the glory of His own name and for the welfare of His people. When, some years ago, a mysterious and unseen power arrested your minds, and stopped your feet, and called you by grace, it took place under the eye and by the authority of your ruling Master.

"But thus th' eternal counsel ran,
Almighty love, arrest that man."

And Almighty grace arrested you. It broke your heart, and brought you to the feet of Him whom you now own as your ruling and loving Lord and Master. Thus, Christ makes His own servants. His angelic servants are the work of His own hands. He formed them for Himself, and qualified them to serve Him in a particular way. There is not an angel in heaven but what received all his gifts and abilities from his Maker, and there is not a servant of Christ on the earth but what has received his qualifications from Jesus Christ his Saviour, who is the fountain of gifts, as the Spirit is the giver of them. If the Master resolves to save a sinner, it is done; and if that saved sinner is to preach

the Word of Divine Truth, the Master, and not men, imparts the necessary gifts and qualifications for that official work. We have not a word to say against learning or intellectual power and activity, but we have to say on this point, that Jesus, who saves His people, and thereby constitutes them His servants, is the only Being in the universe that can make a spiritual and successful minister of the gospel. He is the Master of every spiritual servant, and of every official servant, inasmuch as they are His workmanship, created in Himself unto good works. A good character is very important in a servant, and there are not many masters or mistresses who would like to take a servant without one. A safe character you deem necessary, and it is an important matter; and you would be chargeable with folly, if not with something worse, to take anyone anyhow into your service. But our Lord takes His people from slavery, from a distance, from the service of an enemy, and without a character. He takes the lost, the wrecked, the disgraced, and the ruined, and forms their character Himself. He takes them without qualifications, and gives them all that He requires them to possess. Are they to be righteous? He makes them so. Are they to possess holiness? He imparts it to them. Are they to resemble Himself? He sends His Spirit and conforms them to His own image. Are they to walk in His ways? He is their Leader and their Guide. Are they to abide by His side? He puts His fear into their hearts, and they depart not from Him. Are they to be obedient servants and children? He enlarges their hearts, and they run with cheerfulness in the way of His commandments. "Knowing this, that you have a Master in heaven."

But it will be interesting and important to notice the extent of His authority. He is Master of His own work, and I think we cannot affirm as much as that of any other being in the world. He never made an experiment; He does not sit upon His throne to learn what can be done. He did not come to make sinners salvable, but to save them; He did not come to try to do them good, but to do them good; and He did not go to heaven until he had laid an everlasting foundation for their salvation and welfare. When He came under the law, He knew His own personal ability to go to the end of it, and resolved to do so; and when sin was imputed to Him, He knew His own personal ability to stand up under it, and so put it away. "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree," and by the sacrifice of Himself He made an everlasting end of them; and He did not leave the premises on which He had lived and laboured until He was able to say, "It is finished; the work is completed, the word is fulfilled; my engagements have been honoured, and my people are for ever saved." One is your Master—even Christ. What is the extent of His authority? Let me say a word to the little ones. You say sin is mixed with all you do; whether you pray, or sing, or read, or be in the house of God, or obey or meditate on God, and the word, and everlasting things; sin is mixed with all you do—you cannot control it. You hate vain thoughts, but cannot exclude them; they enter in and defile your mind, pierce your conscience, interrupt your peace, and spoil your fellowship with God. Your Lord is the Master of sin. His authority is rightful and saving, and there is not a lust but what He can control, nor

a sin but what He knows the existence and operation of. There is not a sting in your conscience but what He is acquainted with ; nor a corruption moving or latent in your nature but what He has a perfect knowledge of ; and He is powerful, and so far your Master, that He controls, restrains, and over-rules all for the fulfilment of His own wise purposes and the glory of His grace in His beloved people. Blessed be His name ! our heavenly Master can control the evils which are within, the fears which distract your minds, the doubts which trouble your hearts, and the unbelief which casts so much dishonour on His holy character and name. He is the Master of consciences, and the only Master of them. I am not a bigot, and I dislike bitterness and censoriousness ; but I think I may say for myself, and speak positively too, that I will not give place, no, not for a moment, to anything or anyone that would step in between my conscience and my Master, my conscience and my God. There are points in connection with which I may yield a little without violating my conscience or breaking the Master's rule ; but with regard to all vital and eternal matters, and the salvation of my soul, He only is my Master. To His authority I bow, to Him and Him only I yield and submit ; and the Lord alone I own as my Master in heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with Him. He is the Master of your faith. Well, let us be faithful ; we will try to be so. *There* is a word one frequently meets with now-a-days, I mean *freethinking*, and every one, we are told, has a right to think and believe what he pleases ; but we have a divine Master who exercises a solemn and rightful authority over the thoughts, the will, the faith, and the religion of His servants. "Is there, then, no such thing as freethinking, sir ? Well, in His service there is holy freedom," and when we are near His throne or under His cross, serving Him with every faculty we possess, we think freely enough ; true freedom is experienced by us then. We think, and our thoughts are pleasant, but we think within the lines of truth. We think, and feel, and believe ; but our faith and consciences and thoughts all travel within the limits which are prescribed by our Master, and we have no desire to overstep or transgress the will of the Great Person I am speaking about. Knowing that we have a Master in heaven, if I may so put it, we do not wish to think nor to believe without Him, we do not want to have a hope that He cannot and will not recognise, nor possess a religion which has no vital connection with Him. The world is getting into a fearful state, and the professing church into a loose condition ; and were it not that the Lord is on the throne, and that He is an Almighty Master in heaven, I think I should despair as to the glorious facts of the gospel ; but when I think as I do, believingly, that our Lord is the Master of minds, and consciences, and faith, and thoughts, and of thinkers also ; then I have hope, and build my expectation high that those words shall be fulfilled, "I will do all My pleasure." Whilst there is so much laxity here and there, may it be the honour of this church and congregation to live and to believe within the Master's limits, and never for any consideration depart from the truth as it is in Jesus the Lord. The commencement of our spiritual service was of Him, and its termination here on the earth is also of Him, for He will employ us here as long as He pleases. He is too wise a Master to do what some people suggest.

He occasionally does,—take His servants away in the midst of their usefulness. No, He brings His servants into certain positions, and He says, “Go, labour in my vineyard,” and they go; and sometimes the night comes upon them early and unexpectedly; but it is all a matter of purpose and design: they are immortal till their work is done. He is master of our persons, our minds, our faculties, and our graces. How sweet it is to feel, whilst we are before Him, that we are not our own, but that we are bought with a price! He has not a slave in His service, I mean in His spiritual service, for all are free; and if you are His servant, my doubting, trembling brother or sister, you are not under the dominion of sin, and Satan is not your master; you are divinely free. I am about to say a strong thing,—supposing that you are a living servant of this living Master, should you die to-night, that portion of divine truth will be fulfilled in your experience, “Where I am, there shall also my servant be.” The extent of His authority.

The condition of His servants. It is interesting to dwell on this point. We have already said they are all free, but there is something more and greater than that. All the servants of the Lord are related to Him, they are His spiritual brethren; and therefore He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are said to be all of one. We have one Father, and Jesus is the elder Brother, exalted above all blessing and praise; and all the younger branches of the family are destined to serve God in Christ for ever. At the last-day, when His servants shall be gathered together on His right hand, He will say, “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of my brethren, ye did it unto Me.” Thus all the servants of Christ are related to Him. Their interest is one. It is not so with many servants and masters. All servants do not study their master’s interest, and, on the other hand, masters are not always interested in the welfare of their servants. But what interests Christ interests the Christian, and what is of moment to the Christian is of moment to Christ himself; our interests are identical and cannot be separated. In this respect Christ and His people are truly united. We must dismiss this point, otherwise I intended to say a word on His method of ruling. He cannot err nor be unkind, He cannot make a mistake, nor issue wrong orders. He cannot lead His servants in a wrong path, and is incapable of committing an error. His will is the rule of the family, and hence, “Thy will be done.” If every servant did His will, I mean by practical obedience, how wonderful would the church appear! His secret and unalterable will is being gradually executed, and since He occupies the throne, and brings events and circumstances to pass which fulfil His grand purposes, the world and the church go on from age to age. Oh, it is well that Jesus is on the throne, that He holds the reins and sways the sceptre, and uses the sword when it is necessary. Our Christ is managing all the affairs of the church for eternity. Perhaps there have been times when you would have liked to have been your own masters and taken the reins and driven yourselves in another direction; but your Master rules all. Knowing this, that your Master is in heaven, and He will have His own way and fulfil His own purposes, and His servants are eternally safe under His management and control.

Just word, in the second place, on His *residence*. He is in heaven—personally He is there. He was here, and tabernacled and sojourned with us three-and-thirty years; but He said to His Father, “I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee.” His influence is here, but His person is there. His spiritual presence is with His servants on the earth, but His personal presence is in heaven, and His servants are being gradually gathered together around their Master’s throne.

“Millions of years my wond’ring eyes
Shall o’er His beauties rove,
And endless ages I’ll adore
The wonders of His love.”

He is in heaven, deservedly so. He was His own way thither, and He went in His own name, for He had a right to go. Justice and righteousness admitted Him and seated Him on the throne of majesty and power. He deserved His honours in heaven. What is He doing there? He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. He is managing the affairs of the universe for the advantage of His people and the glory of His name. He never loses sight of one of His servants, angelic or human, and has never yet lost one. No servant has ever been crushed or destroyed. “I am with thee always, even unto the end of the world,” and thus He is working on His throne now. He is spiritually present with His servants, but He is there to receive them as they arrive, to admit them into their eternal rest, to crown them with everlasting happiness and glory, and to fulfil all their expectations. During the thirty-two years, or thereabouts, I have been connected with this congregation, many and important changes have taken place, and I think I am within the truth when I say that hundreds of Christ’s servants have left us here for their eternal home in heaven during that period. Heads and faces, and hearts, and hands, and names, dear to us all, are gone. We well remember their seats, their presence, their prayers, and their counsel. They were the Master’s servants, like ourselves, and have been gradually called away, and

“We are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die.”

Our Master is in heaven, having taken possession of that world to receive His servants as they arrive.

In the third place, what is His *character*? There is no respect of persons with Him—this will apply to all. First, nations; Jew and Gentile—no respect of persons in relation to them. It will apply to social and civil distinctions; men and women, young and old, rich and poor, servants and masters. Distinctions necessarily prevail here; but there is no respect of persons with our heavenly Master. The master employing a hundred hands does not sit higher in the kingdom of God than the servant, and the servant is not lower than the master. There is no respect of persons with our perfect Lord. This will at once appear if we just notice what He says, “And him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” No sinner is admitted on account of his goodness, and

no sinner is rejected on account of his badness. No, goodness does not open the door, and badness does not close it. "I will in no wise cast out him that cometh," it may be one who has been a trim and clean Pharisee, or it may be an unclean Magdalene, and bless His name ! having once admitted and received us, He will hold us for ever, and in no wise cast us out. There may be, and there are, imperfections which wound and make us moan and weep, and loathe ourselves ; the Master does not, however, discharge His servants, for He will in no wise cast them out. To do so would be to violate the Father's purpose, ignore His own claims, and reject also the work of the Eternal Spirit.

One word more, and I have done. *The confidence expressed ; " knowing this."* The apostle represented them as knowing their Master, and that He was in heaven. They knew this by the Saviour's own testimony. It is expedient for you that I go away, and that having gone away he would send them the Holy Spirit. That they knew had taken place, and therefore you know that your Master is in heaven, and that He is no respecter of persons. But it was known experimentally. Now, I have just a word to say to my doubting and fearing friends. You know that your Master is in heaven. You know that the influence, authority, and power which most effectually move your minds are in heaven, and that they *descend* upon you. You know your Master in this respect is not on the earth. You know you are not the slave of sin, nor the willing follower of the devil. You know that Satan does not preside perpetually over your minds, but that the loadstone which most powerfully attracts you is above. You know and you feel this. It is your real experience. Do not hesitate—do not deny it. The centre towards which you are drawn is in heaven. You may not have passed into liberty, nor have enjoyed much peace, yet the language of your spirit is, " Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee."

"Come nearer, nearer, nearer still;
I'm well when Thou art near."

Knowing that your Master is in heaven; for the authority and power that move your spirits are divine; and there is no respect of persons with Him. Amen.

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SALVATION THROUGH BLOOD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 24th FEBRUARY, 1878.

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you."—Ex. xii. 13.

WE are taught to believe that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; and, therefore, that there never was a period when there were not intentions of mercy in the mind of the everlasting God; and that there will never be a period when there is no mercy for them that love and fear the Lord. Mercy, however, before time, took a peculiar form; it takes another form, in time, for special purposes; and it will take other forms, or appear in other associations and connections, when time shall be no more.

The whole of God's mercy appears in the salvation of sinners, which may be said to consist of several important branches. The first great operation of love occurred in connection with the complexity of the person of God's dear Son. The second great work of mercy in salvation was that of making a veritable, sufficient, and glorious atonement for sin. The third great branch is that of transforming the redeemed sinner's mind, or regenerating his spirit, even that important change which the Lord Jesus himself speaks of as the new birth. Ye must be born again; for except a man be born again he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God or heaven; therefore the spiritual transformation of a sinner's soul is absolutely necessary. Translation invariably follows transformation; therefore God's people are said to be translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The mind having been thus transformed by the Spirit, and received impressions of eternal truth, is guided and defended from year to year, and from hour to hour, by its great saving God. Such a mind is sometimes carried through changes great and many, and is affected more or less deeply by the trials and afflictions of life; but God, having saved and sanctified it, has sealed it unto the day of eternal redemption, there being a place prepared in heaven for it; and, therefore, we sing—

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep."

Hence the sanctified person progresses and perseveres in a course of holiness. Sometimes he ascends the hill, and again goes down into the valley; occasionally he sinks into a horrible pit, and again he is exalted, and his feet are placed upon the Rock of eternal ages. Sometimes he is spiritually buoyant, and soars above

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like an eagle ; at other times he is greatly depressed, being burdened ; but he is as safe as the glorified in heaven, for God is the same in earth as in heaven. He is not less great here than there, nor less omnipotent here than there, nor less loving here than there, nor less omniscient here than there ; therefore there are no degrees of covenant safety. The believer progresses until he reaches the Jordan of death, that narrow stream which now divides that heavenly land from our's. When heart and flesh are failing, and all around his regenerated mind is giving way, then the Saviour of minds is his strength and portion for ever. Then follows the grand secret, that secret of which here our knowledge is so limited and faint,—for ever with, and for ever like, the Lord. Therefore, looking at the constitution of Christ's person, looking at the work performed by him, looking at what takes place in the hearts of lost sinners, and looking at the continuous operations of Divine power in guarding the saved on earth, we observe how truly wonderful are the salvation and the experience of believers here ; and how rich is their joy and rest hereafter. Now this great salvation involves, not only the communication of grace and the personal possession of the principle of eternal life, it involves the shedding of the Saviour's blood, and the application of that blood to the persons for whom it was shed ; and so important a branch of salvation is this, that numerous types thereof were given by God under the Old Testament dispensation, and one of them we have in the chapter out of which our text is taken this morning. I have not time to go through the whole of the connection in which the text stands. The paschal lamb as it is usually called is a subject very well understood by my hearers ; for this and kindred portions of the word have been read by you many times ; and, therefore, I shall not now set forth the character and peculiarities of the passover lamb. "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us ;" and as the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled upon the door-posts and lintels of the houses of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, so the precious blood of Jesus is, sooner or later, sprinkled by God's good Spirit upon the consciences of his people: "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you."

I will call your attention to a few observations—in the first place, *On what the type or the fact before us implies* ; and, in the second place, *I will look at this Divine arrangement in relation to God and to Israel*. First, in relation to Israel, "*The blood shall be a token to you ;*" and, secondly, in its relation to God, "*And when I see the blood, I will pass over you.*"

I. First, let us look at what this important and interesting type implies—the blood sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of the houses of all the children of Israel. First, it implies God's method of salvation ; that was God's plan of saving the nation of Israel, who were his covenant people, and whom he was now constituting his national church. He resolved to save them from Egyptian slavery, poverty, degradation, and darkness, and also from the plague which was that night to go through the length and breadth of the land, and which was to enter the house and home of every Egyptian. Having resolved to save every Israelite, he said, Take a lamb, keep it a certain time, then slay it ; catch the blood in a basin, and with a bunch of hyssop sprinkle it upon the two posts of every house, and also upon the lintel. None was to be sprinkled upon the threshold, for it was to be over the people, and round about them ; but it was not to be trampled upon ; and a child of God cannot trample upon the blood of the everlasting covenant. Here, then, we have several very interesting and instructive points to contemplate. God's method of saving sinners is by the death of a lamb—by the death of his own Lamb. The darling Son of God is his precious, spotless, and amiable Lamb ; and, therefore, John said, pointing at

an interesting Personage who appeared before him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Without being too doctrinal on this occasion, I may call attention to the fact that death forms a most important feature in the government of God. I do thank God that he has taken death under his own government, and included it within the influence of his own reign. Now death is twofold ; it should, first of all, be regarded as the natural and necessary penalty of sin ; and, secondly, as the source and fountain of pardon, purity, and eternal life. If we look at the death of the sinner, how hideous ! how repulsive ! how cold ! and how terrible it is ! and no wonder, for death is the offspring of sin, the child of moral evil, and not the creature of God at all. God had no active hand in the production of the monster death with its terrible sting. A just and holy God could never have created such a monster as death. No, death is the offspring of sin, and its natural penalty also. Causes produce effects according to their own nature, and sin being the cause of death, an enemy to God and man appears. Death, however, has been taken under the government of God. The saving, gracious reign of our God has been sovereignly connected with this evil. The dear and blest Redeemer comes into the sinner's place, and meets this very death which is the offspring of sin, and enters into a conflict with this monster with its mighty sting, and its burning poison. Death meets the dear Son of God, and stings every member of his body, and every power of his mind. It stings him from head to foot ; and this great Saviour, the Lord Jesus, extracts the poison and the sting from the foe, and thus death is swallowed up in the Mediator's victory. Out of the death of Jesus Christ we have not eternal punishment and woe ; but pardon, purity, peace and perfection freely flowing : we have, in fact, eternal life from the death of the Lamb of God, its principle here, and the certainty of the fullest development of that life in another and a better world. God said to Moses, I will save Israel, but I will save them by the intervention of a lamb and its blood ; therefore take a lamb and slay it, and sprinkle its blood upon the door-posts, and the lintel of every house. This is the first point that it seems necessary to notice here—Salvation is by the death of the Lamb of God.

Then, still dwelling on God's method of saving his people, in the second place, *the blood shed was to be sprinkled*. I apprehend that the destroying angel would have entered the houses of the children of Israel notwithstanding the dead lambs and the basins of blood that were therein, if the blood had not been sprinkled on their lintels and on the door-posts ; for God is a God of order. However disobedient his people may be, bless his name ! he will save in his own way, or not at all. Salvation is honourable, or impossible. God is full of pardon and forgiveness, and the disobedience of his people is forgiven ; but he never disregards his own ordinance, but always saves by atoning blood ; and, therefore, the second order was, "Sprinkle the blood upon the houses where ye are, and it shall be a token to you : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you." Consequently the blood was sprinkled ; and this leads us to view a most interesting and delightful fact in our salvation. There are two sprinklers of blood. Only one person shed the blood ; but two persons sprinkle it, in order to complete salvation. First, blood is sprinkled by Christ himself, and, secondly, it is sprinkled by the Holy Spirit. The atoning blood of Christ is, or was, sprinkled by Christ himself. It is not his personal or official work to sprinkle his blood on the hearts of sinners ; that is the office of the Holy Spirit ; but he has entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us ; and he entered into heaven, not by the blood of others, but by his own, and there he appears in the presence of God for us. Now two objects were to be sprinkled with blood, and peace and salvation were to result therefrom. First, God him-

self, Jehovah in his legislative and judicial character ; and, secondly, sinners' hearts or consciences. The blood of the lamb had to be carried into the Holiest of all, and sprinkled upon Jehovah's throne, to hush the thunder and quench the lightnings, that the rainbow might appear. God had been insulted and offended, and his honour and glory demanded an atonement for human guilt ; and Christ carried his own blood into heaven, and sprinkled it upon his Father's throne, thus becoming the propitiation for our sins. The blood of Christ, therefore pacified God, propitiated Divine justice and eternal truth, cleared all the storm away for ever, and produced a state of everlasting harmony and serenity in the moral government of God towards all the redeemed.

It only now remains to have it sprinkled upon the door-posts and the lintel of the house of the poor, lost, and ruined sinner, and the destroyer shall pass over him. When the Holy Ghost enters a sinner's heart and communicates life, one of the first wants that springs up therein is an application of Christ's blood. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is then wanted. The sinner then begins to talk about the fountain ; and shortly after regeneration, the regenerated one says, " Wash me, Saviour, or I die." Oh the blood is wanted, and it shall be applied. Therefore the Holy Spirit, if I may so speak, dips the hyssop into the precious blood of this Paschal Lamb ; and at the appointed time he meets the sinner and sprinkles it upon his conscience ; and such sinners rise in adoring gratitude, saying, " And not only so, but we joy in God also by Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the atonement."

This leads me to notice a third point, viz., *that the blood of Christ is interposed between God and the soul.* I beg my hearers to receive this fact, and to reflect upon it with pleasure if they can. What was it that separated the destroying angel and the Israelites in their houses ? The door ? That and the walls of the house might have been ten feet thick, and all might have been of iron and granite ; all would have failed to exclude the destroyer had not blood been there. No, nothing but the blood of the lamb was a valid and safe barrier between the plague and Israel. And we sometimes sing in relation to this fact—

" He, to save my soul from danger,
Interposed his precious blood."

Consider God going forth for the purpose of punishing the guilty ; consider him going forth with the bill, demanding payment of every debtor ; consider him going forth in quest of law-breakers, with curses to pour upon every transgressor, and coming to a sensible sinner who is leaning on the atonement, and trusting in the precious blood of Jesus. He passes over him, as if there were no guilt in him, as if that sinner owed him nothing, as if there were nothing in that person for his curse to light upon. There is blood interposed between God and that offender, and God respects and honours it ; for " when I see the blood, I will pass over you." This leads me to notice again the interesting position of the church of God, or all true believers. They are behind the blood. Is it so with all my hearers this morning ? Are you behind the law ? God will not pass over you if you are hiding there. Are you behind your own works ? your own repentance or your own faith ? God will not pass you if you are hiding there. Are you behind the atonement ? behind the cross ? behind the blood ? Are you holding the paschal Lamb, or his blood, between your hearts and God ? endeavouring to cover your whole selves with the atonement of God's dear Son ? It is a token ? " The blood shall be a token to you, and when I see the blood I will pass over you." Just an observation here. I will not dwell upon it, but it is important ; the absence of blood is not the cause of condemnation. That is the point where the great divergence which divides Christians com-

mences. O that professors of religion, and all the children of God could see the almost, if not quite, vital importance of this fact. That the absence of blood is the cause of condemnation is what almost everyone believes. Was the absence of blood from the Egyptians' houses the cause of death therein? Was it not the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and the cruelty and oppression of the people? No, my friends, it is not the absence of blood that causes condemnation and eternal death. Had there been no Lamb, and no blood, and no atonement, there would have existed a sufficient, a terribly sufficient cause of condemnation and ruin. Oh, I cannot regard the precious blood of Jesus Christ as augmenting in any respect the sufferings of the lost, or as increasing the intensity of the force and power of the cause of condemnation. No; blood is the cause of salvation. Sin is the cause of condemnation. The Lamb is the author of eternal life; The lion, the devil, the old serpent is the author of death, and ruin, and woe. I will not tarry on that point. May all of you see the importance of this fact in connection with our holy religion. Man is not punished and sent to hell because there is no blood upon him, but because he is a breaker of God's law, and an offender of the infinite Majesty of Heaven. Let me have the precious blood of Christ upon my conscience, and my offence is obliterated; my guilt is removed, and I am a debtor to rich, free and undeserved mercy.

Secondly, in relation to the method of salvation the text implies not only God's method of saving sinners, *but the importance of Christ's blood*. Its importance is unspeakable and inconceivable. It is, first, important to *God himself*. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It pacifies him, and limits, so to speak, the expressions of his wrath. It influences his justice, and gathers together into beautiful harmony all his attributes and perfections. It so influences him that he regulates his conduct by its preciousness and power. Whatever may enter the blood-besprinkled house; whatever he may do to a blood-besprinkled soul, he can never curse it. Bitters he may put into the hands and cups of redeemed ones, but penal evil shall never fall on any being whose heart is sprinkled with precious blood. God may use a rod, a very heavy one, for half or for the whole of one's life; he will never use a sword. He cannot consistently with his justice, righteousness and truth ever penally smite a blood-besprinkled man or woman. When I see the blood I will pass over you. It is important, therefore, to God. And the blood of Christ *is important to the sinner*. The blood of the paschal lamb was important to the children of Israel. It was their *all* that night. It was blood or death; blood or destruction. And blood is the all of every poor sensible sinner. To repeat what has already been said, "Wash me, Saviour, or I die." Get behind your resolutions, good intentions, past life, or what you intend to be, and you are not safe. Get behind your faith and love, and hope and joy; and all the graces of the Spirit, and even then, without atoning blood, you would not be safe. There is not enough in your faith to save you. Your hope is a staggering power, and your affections rise and sink continually as sinners. You need a barrier that is altogether divine and immutable, and meritorious. That barrier you have in the blood of the Lamb, and in nothing else whatever in the universe of God. It is the blood that is important to the sinner. Oh, if thousands of gold or bank notes were shot down before a law-condemned sinner whose conscience is lacerated by the power of divine truth, he might, were he poor and needy say, "I thank my God for meaner things, but these are not himself. Still my cry is, Wash me! Wash me, or I die." It is not gold that is wanted, nor position, nor honour, but blood. This is unspeakably important to the sinner. What shall I say about *angels*? What have they to do with blood? "Which things the angels desire to look into." They never saw so much of God before he became

a babe, and gradually grew into a man. They followed him all the days of his life, and the poet has expressed the fact correctly and scripturally, where he says they wondered where the scene of love would end. They saw him in Jordan; they heard his sermons, and perhaps learned more from them than men; they saw him grovelling in Gethsemane, and hang on the cross, and heard him groan, and they saw him die. Now they see the blood sprinkled upon the throne, and the sinner, and how it purifies the human conscience and tranquillises the guilty mind, and they wonder what its power must be; and therefore the blood of the Lamb is an important matter to angels, inasmuch as they learn therefrom. And is it not important *to the devil*? Ah! he cares for nothing else. This is the power that carries the slave into liberty. This is the power that redeems a man from all evil. Across the blood of Christ the devil cannot pass. Over this barrier Satan can never go. It is an all-sufficient and perfect barrier between the child of God and the destroyer. It is important *to ministers*. I see one or two present this morning who, like myself, are favoured to open their mouths in the great Master's name. There is no gospel minister without blood. A bloodless Gospel minister is a contradiction. A bloodless gospel is not the gospel of our God. But for the blood of the Lamb the gospel ministry had never been known. There is no gospel sermon unless it contains the blood of the Lamb, the precious blood of God's dear Son.

Thirdly, notice that the fact implies not only the importance of blood, but its *marvellous power*. Now this is not merely an arrangement by which God has decreed to attribute as it were peculiar importance to blood. We are not thus to take the subject, nor are we thus to believe it. There is a power; an actual, substantial, intrinsic power in the blood of the Lamb. As a divine ordinance and appointment, of course God himself will not disregard it; but the power of the Saviour's blood is not typical, nor ceremonial, nor shadowy, nor merely the result of divine appointment. The power of Christ's blood is living, legal, meritorious, absolutely and necessarily saving. It is all this, or, as I read the Bible, it is nothing. What does its power come from? From the dignity, worth, and greatness of the Person that shed it. All his dignity and glory are inseparable from the life he lived, and the death he died. Between a peasant and a monarch there is perhaps no natural, no moral difference. The soul of a peasant and that of a prince are naturally and morally the same; but socially, civilly, and politically considered, there is a difference. It might be, and it is an important event, when a poor person dies, but people attribute extraordinary importance to the death of a prince; and therefore, rightly or wrongly, it is felt, there is a difference between the life and death of the two. Now, here is incarnate God; God's darling Son, the highest Being in the universe that was capable of dying; and a marvellous work was done to render it possible for him to die. He could not have died had he not assumed our nature. This he assumed, and the Highest became capable of dying. The death of all the world would have been little compared with the death of the Prince of life and peace. "It is Christ that died!" O that I could enforce the fact upon your minds, and feel its power myself! Christ died for us. Had all the angels been given to die, their death would not have met the case, and the gift would have been comparatively small. Here, however, is the Lamb; that great Being, who was and is the embodiment of all excellencies, divine, natural, spiritual, legal. His life is given, and his death fills the scene, in all possible perfection of suffering tears, sweat, blood, and agonies, and in all God's government the blood and death of the Lord Jesus is the most precious. When I see it, I will pass over you, and you shall regard it as a peculiar token. Now, just one word more, and I shall have done on this part of the subject. There were two facts that supported the faith of Israel; viz., *the*

blood of the Lamb and the word of God. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." There was the blood, and God saw it. The second thing was for God to be true, and he could not do otherwise than keep his word; and the result proved the sufficiency of both the blood of the Lamb and the word of God, and it justified the faith of Israel, for they were delivered, according to the Word of God. Sinner, if you are trusting here, you are as safe as Israel were in Goshen that night, and as safe as God's people that are now in heaven. The Lord, the Spirit sprinkle afresh the blood of the paschal Lamb upon your consciences, and give you the sweetest possible confidence in its heavenly efficacy and saving power.

II. Just a word before I close on the second particular: viz., *this arrangement in relation to God and man.* It shall be a token or a sign, not only to you, but to Myself also. Let me just thread thoughts together here. In the first place, the blood of the Lamb was considered as a *token of covenant relationship*. There was a covenant between God and Israel, and blood was to be regarded as a token of the fact that God had constituted himself their God. My friends, are you behind Christ's blood? If so, the blood that screens and shelters you is a token of your new covenant relationship. God is your God, and you are his sons and daughters; and he says to you, "Regard the blood as a token of the fact that I will perform the part of a God to you. All that a God can become I will become to you, and all that a God is required to do for his people I will perform for you; and a token not only that God would perform the part of a God, but that we, being his people, resolve to follow, obey and serve him. The blood. Important mark. Are we marked with it? Let me ask the question seriously and solemnly. Are we marked with blood? Many of you are ready to rise, and say, "No; we have never yet been marked with blood." Stay, I do not know whether I can convince you of this error of your judgment, if not the error of your ways. Listen to me. Perhaps the mark of blood is upon you, although you have never been able to say, "Christ is mine, and I am his;" or "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Well, let us see. There is a hope in your heart; is there not? And what is its object? Well, it is the blood. O, your hope is therefore connected with the blood of the Lamb, and that causes your hope to be what it is; and depend upon it there is not a great distance between that grace and Christ's death, for they are united. Your hope then is in blood. Again you are praying for its application. Thus prayer is connected with the blood, and your hearts are burning with desires to be sprinkled with it. Hence, the blood is upon your desires, your hopes, and your prayers. And do you believe too in the efficacy of that blood; and that that only can set you free? Believe it. I believe in nothing else. Then blood is upon your faith as well as on your love; your hopes, your desires, and your prayers. The people who were in the house could not see the blood themselves, when the door was closed, so there are many of God's dear people who cannot see the blood, though it is upon them. It is not what you see, or what you feel; but when God sees the blood he will pass over you. Faith and hope are God's creatures, and their connection with blood is of him, and he will see his own work. A token, then, of covenant relationship. And, secondly, it is a *token or sign of liberty*. That night a very large host, even all Israel, went out of Egypt. The blood shall be a token to you, for though I destroy the first-born of Egypt, I will deliver you; and that night they all came out of bondage into liberty. Blood is a token of the believer's freedom. Free from curse, and wrath, and condemnation and death. Blood demands liberty, and gives it, even the best of liberty, for ever. Thirdly, a *token of peace between God and the soul*. What a blessed state! Is there any sign of it? Yes; the blood is a sign of peace. There is a beautiful scripture in Isaiah's prophecy, which reads thus, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of

righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." Now, observe the gradient: there may be liberty where there is not peace; there may be peace where there is not quietness; there may be quietness where there is not assurance; and there may be assurance where the idea of eternity is not present. Now look at it. The blood shall be to you for a sign of liberty, and then of peace, between God and his people. The child of God as such is in a state of peace with God, but he may not have quietness of mind. We in England to-day; (I suppose I am stating a fact, but circumstances however arise so suddenly and so rapidly that I do not know)—to-day England is in a state of peace—war has not been proclaimed; but we are not quiet. There is peace, but not quietness. The whole country is agitated. Christ's blood, however, is not only a token of peace, it produces quietness and tranquility of mind. If there be a measure of quietness in the country, I do not think any one would say there is assurance. But here behind the blood there is liberty, peace, quietness, assurance, and that for ever. The blood shall be a sign to you, and when I see it I will pass over. *A sign of consecration.* God's sacred host, his sacred church, was brought out of Egypt by his blood and power. Lastly, *a sign of the certainty of the fulfilment of all God's promises.* To-night I shall come and fulfil my promise, respecting your deliverance out of Egypt, and thence went all the people, brought out with a high hand, and an outstretched arm. The blood was a token that God would do so. "I have promised to lead you to Canaan. The blood is a token that I shall do that; and then I have promised to give you Canaan. The blood is a token that I will give you the land." Friends, God has said that he will be our God for ever, and that we shall be his people. The blood is to us a token of his love and faithfulness, and of the fact that every word of promise shall be fulfilled. May the Lord help us to rely on this precious saving blood until we reach that blessed world where we shall sing, Unto him that hath loved us and washed us in his own blood, be endless glory ascribed. Amen.

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THE LOVE AND LIBERALITY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 29th, 1882.

"The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—John x. 10.

THE Saviour said to His disciples on one occasion, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto others it is not given." The mysteries of the kingdom are numerous and great, and many of them will remain mysteries for ever; for who "by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" These mysteries include the essence, the character, and the personalities of the glorious Godhead, and also the complexity of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Saviour further said to His disciples concerning the covenant work of the Spirit,—When I am gone I will send the Comforter to you, who is the Spirit of truth, and he shall lead you into all truth. He shall glorify me, for He shall take of mine, and show it unto you. According to that promise, the Comforter came, and proceeded to glorify Jesus, in the experience, and in the official work of His Apostles, and He has been glorifying Him in the experience of the living Church of God ever since. It is the work of the blessed Spirit to sanctify the mind, and fill it with spiritual life and heavenly power; to conform it to the image of the Lord, and bring it into holy sympathy with and union to him; to reveal the eternal love of the Father, and shed it abroad in the heart: hence the Apostle says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." As a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven; he can possess no saving knowledge of the Saviour's person unless it be given by the power and grace of the Spirit of God. We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit for our knowledge of Christ; for our conformity to Him; for our meetness for heaven, and for our daily progress and perseverance in a course of holiness. It is an unspeakable mercy to have been made savingly acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom, and the Saviour took care to tell His disciples that it was given to them to know them. The eternal love of God is in Christ, who is the embodiment of salvation; the expression of all grace, and the medium through whom all our life perpetually flows. The outlets of love divine are the offices and characters Christ has assumed, and the names by which He is known. Sometimes we see Him as the great Prophet promised by the Father, and predicted by Moses, and love eternal flows from that outlet. Sometimes He is seen as the great High Priest of our profession, and in His sacrifice the love of God flows. Then He is beheld as a King, and out of that office

eternal mercy flows into our hearts. In the chapter out of which I have taken my text, our Lord appears as the Shepherd of the sheep, and also as their door. A twofold character he here assumes, and a twofold position he occupies in connection with salvation. He says in the ninth verse, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Christ is the door into the church, the door into life and peace; the door out of condemnation into justification, and the door of heaven through which we must pass into the world of glory. And Jesus is the Shepherd of the sheep as well as their door; and I believe I should be correct if I said that He is the Shepherd, the door, and the pasture of the sheep. In the verse, therefore, that precedes our text we read, "By me if any man enter in;" it is a blessing to have to do with Jesus, to enter into Him believingly, and to realize the fact that we are in the Lord. If we are in Christ, we may have pain; we may be deeply conscious of sin, we may be sorely tempted, and many almost crushing afflictions and sorrows may fall upon us; still, if we are in Him, we are as secure as saints in heaven. But what is the meaning of the expression. "If any man enter in, he shall be saved?" He may not be happy. He may not be free from doubts and fears; he may not be able to appropriate salvation: but "he shall be saved." This is the declaration of eternal truth; the testimony of the Lord himself; He shall be saved from all penal evil, from all moral evil, and ultimately from all circumstantial evil. Salvation is progressive, and is always flowing. The work of the Lord Jesus was finished, as to its meritorious branches; but spiritually and providentially, and graciously considered, salvation is a progressive work. God saves us by His eye, by His hand, by His ear, by His heart, and by the light of His countenance. I will guide thee with mine eye. Well "he shall be saved: and shall go in," which is security; "and out" which is liberty; and find pasture, which is plenty. What more can a sinner need or want? He shall go in, and be for ever safe; He shall go out, as a man goes out of his house, or as a flock of sheep go out of the fold into the pasture; "he shall go in and out, and find pasture." And have we not found satisfaction and plenty, and pasture in the Lord? "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Perhaps we cannot do better—for simplicity is an excellence—than contemplate *the love* and *the liberality* of Jesus our Shepherd, for I shall limit my attention to the latter part of the verse: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

A few thoughts in the first place on *the love of Jesus*, as it is expressed in the text. He came that His sheep might have life. Although I intend to confine my attention to the latter part of the text, it may be as well to look at this part in connection with the former, and observe the contrast. The Saviour contrasts himself with a thief: the thief comes, and the Shepherd comes, both come; but "the thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." What a difference between the thief spoken of, and the blessed Shepherd of the sheep! The thief cometh stealthily, silently, secretly, and wishes not to be observed. I am come publicly; all see me, all shall hear me. I am not ashamed of myself, nor of mission, nor of the work which I am doing. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal;" the Shepherd comes to claim His own sheep; to

put His mark upon them, to lead them out, and to lead them in; to feed them from day to day; and to guard, and preserve, and protect them. "The thief cometh not but for to kill." I am come, not to kill them, nor to injure them, but that they might have life. The thief cometh to destroy; but I am come to save them with an everlasting salvation. Having made these few remarks on the connection between the two branches of the verse, let us look at the latter part of it—the love of Jesus, as displayed in the great purpose for which He came into the world, that His sheep might have life. We will look at this in two relations. First, *in relation to Christ*, and secondly, *in relation to His sheep*. First, in relation to Christ Himself. "I am come that they might have life." This was the design of His incarnation, and advent into this world,—the great purpose for which He became a babe in Bethlehem,—the great object He had in view when He submitted to be spat upon, and crowned with thorns, and scourged, and nailed to the accursed tree,—the great end He intended to accomplish by bearing there the guilt of millions, until it was all melted away, and death itself, as a penal evil, was for ever destroyed. He came that we might have life. Look, first, at the *infinite benevolence* of the Saviour. He came to give us no ordinary life, but an extraordinary one; not a measurable life as to duration, but one that is eternal. "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." When an army leaves one country for another, the soldiers go for the purpose of killing their fellow men. When, however, the blessed Redeemer came from heaven, it was for the purpose of procuring life,—of entitling sinners to live,—of acquiring for himself a right to give life, and of putting His beloved people into possession of this blessed and inestimable privilege—eternal, spiritual life. Some persons, though I do not care to be controversial, some persons suppose that since the Lord Jesus came, the condemnation of the guilty will be deeper than if that event had not occurred, owing to the fact that since He came to give life, and to die for sin, they will not accept His sacrifice, nor embrace His salvation. No; the result of the advent of our dear Lord will not be to intensify the curse, or to increase the sufferings of the lost. He came with blessings, without a curse,—with salvation, without condemnation,—with smiles, without a frown. He came to give us life, and not to render death more terrible. "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." I have sometimes thought, that if preaching the gospel to unconverted sinners might intensify their sufferings, and the curse of the law, it might be better not to preach to them at all, nor to send missionaries to the heathen world; for, if you preach to them, and they do not believe, and the fact that they have heard the gospel will intensify their sufferings hereafter, it seems to me that you may be doing them harm. No, my friends, there is enough in the law, and let me use a strong word very solemnly,—there is enough in a broken law to damn the sinner, without coming to the Gospel of the grace of God for the sinner's eternal ruin. I am come with the most benevolent intention and design—not to increase the torments of any, except it be the devil, whom I will cast out, and whose works I will destroy; but my loving visit and gracious work shall not enlarge the curse nor increase the power of condemnation and ruin. Christ came, 'tis true, but He brought nothing with Him but grace and love, and life; and these flowing from

Him shall rescue sinners from deserved ruin, and raise them to the glorious heights of heaven. "The thief comes to steal, to kill, to destroy:" I am come to claim my own, to give life, and to save. Blessed for ever be His name! He was prompted and moved by the most benevolent intention, and the most loving motive, when He left His Father's bosom, and came into this world of sin, and death, and woe.

In the second place, *the Saviour expresses His intention or design absolutely*. The assertion is not conditional. He did not come to make an experiment. Oh, away with all ideas and utterances that seem to indicate that our God is making experiments. Who would or could have thought that men would have attributed such a thing to Omnipotence? Does God ever try to do a thing? What did the Saviour come for? Was it to make life and salvation, and the possession of heaven possible? Was it to bring the power of grace to bear upon the power of sin, that He might ascertain which was the stronger of the two? This is not the way of life, nor the salvation of the Gospel. I am come, not to try to give them life; not to procure a conditional life for them; not to put them into a position to accept life; but that they might *have* life, and that they might have it more abundantly. And did He fulfil His design, and accomplish His purpose before He left the world, and returned to heaven? Was there any failure on the part of this great Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep? I apprehend that during the three-and-thirty years He was here He procured eternal life for His people. No error, no wrong step, and no wrong feeling or thought, at any time marked His course. Our Lord left behind Him a path of living light and perfection; and having reached the end of the law, and its penalty, He saw eternal death sink into the sea of His blood, and said, "It is finished!" The sheep shall live! And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. My friends, the design was benevolent on the part of the Saviour, and His fixed purpose and resolution He never departed from. I am come that they might have life. Dear hearers, we are, as compared with many other congregations, a small one; but it does not follow that therefore we are in error, or that we do not hold the glorious truth of God. The day will come when the tables will be turned, and guilty creatures will believe that God is Almighty, and that His salvation is absolute, and not conditional. "Well, but the sinner may have life if he comes for it." Yonder is a cemetery, full of corpses, and can they come at the bidding of a thousand individuals,—can they come forth from the grave? "But if they desire to live they may live." They that desire to live are alive; for the desire comes from life, and there would be no desire without it. People do invert God's appointed and established order of things. Only desire, only pray, only believe, and you shall live. I say, and I have the Bible before me, and base my remarks upon it: if you desire to live, if you believe, if you are coming to Jesus as lost sinners, you are alive from the dead. And the fulfilment of that purpose of our Lord involved His sufferings and death. He could not give us life without dying Himself, therefore He says, "I am the good Shepherd," and "the good Shepherd giveth" and layeth down "His life for the sheep." The Redeemer came to destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; to abolish eternal death, and then to bring in everlasting life. Well, penal death faded away, disappeared like a fog before a strong wind, like

mists beneath the shining glorious sun; it was extinguished by the Shepherd's atoning work. Thus the flood of everlasting life came flowing in; and where sin abounded, grace now much more abounds. The Shepherd died, and the sheep shall live. They are in my Father's hand, and they are Mine too, and none shall pluck them out of either His hand or Mine. The salvation of the flock involved the sufferings and death of the Saviour. He came to procure life, to entitle us to live, to put us in possession of life, and to glorify the life He imparts by His Spirit to His beloved people. He came to entitle Himself to give life, for He could not have given it had He not come; and indeed there would have been none to give. I am come that they might live. Dear Jesus, was it not possible for the sheep to live without Thy coming here. Couldst thou not have given us life in the bosom of the Father, or on Thy throne? Was it necessary that thou shouldst become a helpless babe, a few spans long, and a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. No, He could not give life without so doing. The sheep were His, and He was bound to redeem and to present them, not as dead, but as alive; not as an imperfect flock, but in faultless perfection. He could not do this without coming. "Hence, I am come." The porter has opened the door, and has admitted me, and I am come as a Shepherd, not to kill and destroy, but to give life, and to save; and to acquire a right to claim my sheep, and to fold them.

As time is going, and the subject is large, let us just observe one thing more—*That Jesus is our life.* He came that we might have it; and every living soul, therefore, belongs to Him. I like to preach the great things of God's law as well as I can, but I like also to descend into the low places where some of the little ones are. Every living soul belongs to Christ, however small, faint, and feeble that soul may be. Justice could not give life without Christ. Mercy could not give it without Him; the law of God could not give life; the sinner could not give it to himself, nor deserve it. If you are alive from the dead you may know most readily where your life came from. There is only one Life-bearer, one Life-bringer, one Life-giver, one Root of life. "When Christ, who is *our* life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." Dear friends, sometimes your eye moistens, whilst contemplating the things of God, and your hearts are full of sweet sensibility, having a savoury experience of the power and preciousness of eternal things. Oh how sweet it is to feel, for I despise not feeling, but wish there were more of it. If there were more faith perhaps there would be more feeling. Well, my friends, with sensibilities and with feelings, such as those which you possess there is life, and that life proves you to belong to Jesus. You are in contact with Him, connected with Him, and one with Him; you are a sheep or a lamb, for I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Now, secondly, let us look at the subject *in connection with the sheep.* First, *what is the nature of this life?* What kind of life is it? It is spiritual; for He came that they might have spiritual life. There is a vast difference between natural and spiritual life; a great distance between the two. A fine robust, well-formed man or woman, brimfull and running over with natural life and spirits, and withal beautifully and attractively moral, is surely the person that has "the promise of the life that

now is, and of that which is to come." Nothing of the sort. The life which Christ came to bring was not a natural one, nor a moral one merely, but a spiritual one. To be spiritually-minded is life and peace; and there is a great distance and difference between nature and grace, between the natural and the spiritual, between the legal and the evangelical. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," old things are passed away, and all things are become new." It is spiritual life, and its properties are unchanging and unchangeable. I mention one only. The life that Christ came to give is a holy life, and that is its prevailing, or one of its prevailing characteristics. It cannot be contaminated, it abides in the heart, but it does not become sinful. Gold cannot be changed or rendered worthless by lying in the dust, or being covered with the deep waters of the sea. It is gold even there, and so the life of God in the soul is ever a holy principle, a holy power; a pure and holy blessing. "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." This life is unchanging in its properties, and it is powerful in its development. I do not know, for I am not a philosopher, yet I think I am not wrong in saying, that life is one of the most powerful principles in existence. Life! Cast a grain of wheat into the earth, and let it be buried five or six inches beneath the heaviest clods; the tender blade will force its way up somehow or other through the soil towards the sun. What a wonderful power there is in life. And there is power in spiritual life. It developes in the heart under the hand of God's Spirit, and sends its possessor to the throne in secret with God be merciful to me. Although he has only a spark of life that spark is sufficient to warm and influence his whole heart, and he must go to God. And then, though he has been a rough character and his heart has been very hard, and he has called everybody that wept a fool with soft feelings and a superficial nature, yet for the life of him he cannot now help weeping himself, rough, hard, and coarse, though he has been. Life in its development will fill the eye, open the mouth, expand the heart, enlarge the mind, and send the sheep that possesses it into some retired corner there to remain in close connection with God in humble prayer and hope until the blessing comes. The nature of it is spiritual. The properties of it are heavenly and holy, and it is powerful in its development. But some of you are thinking that I have scarcely touched the point yet. Well, the life that Christ gives answers to the death which followed the fall, and so we get rid of all the consequences of the fall, and find ourselves in possession of all the honourable consequences of the death of Christ. Man died legally as a criminal under the broken law. "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and the sentence of the law must be executed. When a criminal has been tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death, he is dead in law. The sheep are by nature children of wrath, even as others, and under the sentence of a broken law. I am come to rescue them, and that they might have life. The law they have broken I am come to magnify, and make honourable, and to give them a righteousness infinitely better than that which they lost. The Redeemer magnified the law, and made it honourable, and wrought out a righteousness which is cast over the whole flock, and now

the law can curse no more. This is the life of *justification*—the end of condemnation. Then, secondly, man died a moral death. “You hath He quickened who were *dead* in trespasses and sins.” Christ came that they might have a spiritual life, as I said just now, and this is *sanctification*. The Holy Ghost enters the heart, and sanctifies the mind, and thus we have an internal life, and so we lose two forms of death. There is physical or corporeal death, or the death of the body, for that is one of the consequences of sin. “Thy brother shall rise again.” “*I am the resurrection and the life.*” This is the will of Him that sent me, that of all which He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” Then there was eternal death and woe; but that also is for ever gone, and now we have or shall have eternal *life and happiness in glory*. A fourfold life from Christ instead of the fourfold death which was the consequence of sin. I must leave the subject, as time is almost gone, by just observing that this life is necessary. The sheep are in the fall; in its ruin, disgrace, degradation, and uncleanness, and Christ came to rescue them therefrom. God’s decree of conformity to Himself requires life. “He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Therefore they must have life, or they will not be like their Lord. Communion with God requires it. The sheep are to be brought near to God, and to feel they are near to Him, and to have fellowship and communion with Him in Christ and in glory, and that communion is to give them pleasure, and fill them with joy; and all this requires life, or there would be no feeling, no experience, and no fellowship with God. “I am come that they might have life.”

Then, consider their possession of life. That they might have it in themselves, and have it as they hold nothing else. Have it in their hearts, their faculties, and powers; their thoughts, their prayers, their feelings, their motives, their praises, and their services. If our services are not living services, they cannot be accepted; but some, I trust are so, for there are living prayers, a living faith, a living hope, a living love, and living joys. Christ came not that they might get life, or deserve it, or that it might accidentally fall upon, and into them, but that they might assuredly have it in themselves as they possess nothing else. If you have property, you inherited it, it may be from your father, or some relative now dead and gone, or if you did not inherit you have acquired it, through God’s blessing upon the labour of your hands or your hands, but that is not how you have this life. The clothes you wear are your own; they fit you, and you need them, and you bought and paid for them. You do not have life that way. Your natural life. It is said to be *your* life; it comes from nature under the providence and power of God. But spiritual life does not come that way. You were born not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but by the will of God. You have a house. Having bought it, it is your own. But putting all things together, all these things are loseable, perishable. You must resign them all bye-and-bye; but here is a blessing that is altogether new, that comes in a new way, and is everlasting. “I give unto them eternal life.” We shall leave our garments, our houses, our families, our friends, and all of earth that we possess, and even this flesh worms will consume; but one thing we shall never lose if we are its happy possessors, and that is the life that Christ came to give us.

Now let us just look for a minute or two at *Christ's liberality*. I am come that they might have life, *and that they might it more abundantly*. I will just mention several points, as time is gone. More abundantly than *Adam* had life. His life was perfect, but its perfection and perpetuity were conditional. Our life is more sure, and more certain than His was. His life depended upon himself, but yours depends upon Christ. "Because I live ye shall live also." It is richer than Adam's life. That was the life of creature morality and conformity to the law. This is a spiritual life as we have already observed. The Paradise that this life opens is a better one than Adam lived in. He had the figurative tree of life; but we have Jesus the true tree of life that bears twelve manner of fruits, and will bear fruit for ever and ever. "Might have it more abundantly" than Adam had it. God "drove out the man, and he placed a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." It was not God's intention to restore us to the state we had lost, nor to immortalise that we had fallen into.

More abundantly than *Israel* in Canaan. They had a spiritual life, and so have we; but we have in some respects more abundant light and knowledge than they. They had the type, we have the substance. They had the promise, we have the fulfilment. They had the prophecy, we have the blessings predicted.

Paul says in the 12th of Hebrews, "We are not come to Mount Sinai." It is well to go to Sinai, for wonderful things were there. The Lord was there; the law was there; the thunder was there; Moses was there; the elders were there: but we are not come to the mount that might be touched, and burned with fire, but we are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, the church of the first born. And what else? To God, the Judge of all, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. More abundant life than the Jewish church had.

Fourthly, more abundantly than formerly. Some of you have known the Lord ten years. You live more abundantly now than you did then. Some of you have known him forty or fifty years, and you live more abundantly now than you did at first. As somebody says, "There is life in an acorn, but there is more in the oak which the acorn produces. There is life in a grain, but there is more in the thirty-fold, sixty-fold, or a hundred-fold, produced by that grain." Now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. The little sapling you plant has life, but when it has been growing twenty or thirty years its life is more abundant. Not only that they might have it, but that they might live more abundantly. O may God give us more abundant life. Be not satisfied with present attainments. Paul was all earnestness with regard to the future; he panted for more life, for more conformity, and that he might know Him. He did know Him, but not enough of Him. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." May I be found in Him. May we as a church, live more abundantly. We have life, for the Shepherd is here. May we live more abundantly than ever. May every individual member live, and grow in life and love abundantly every day, for Christ's sake. Amen.

HEAVENLY WISDOM PROCLAIMED AND RECEIVED.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 11th, 1881.

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought."—1 Cor. ii. 6.

THE circumstances connected with the formation of the church of God in Corinth are recorded by Luke in the eighteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It will be remembered by most of my hearers that the Apostle Paul went to the city of Athens, and that his spirit was deeply stirred by the idolatry which he witnessed there. "Therefore He disputed in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him," but the word spoken was not very generally received or blessed. The eternal God is an absolute Sovereign, and "he does according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;" and as the Apostle found it was not the will of God that he should remain at Athens, since He did not bless the gospel in that place, he left, and went to Corinth. We are informed that he preached in that city the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and that his preaching occasioned a considerable measure of confusion. So deeply did the Apostle feel in connection with the effects of his ministry in Corinth that he contemplated leaving the place, apprehending he was in danger. His doubts and fears rose so high that he said, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." The Apostle having formed the resolution to leave Corinth, "the Lord spake to him in the night by a vision: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." Encouraged by this word of God, the good Apostle remained in Corinth eighteen months, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and he tells us in the chapter out of which I have taken my text, that he "determined not to know anything among them, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified;" and he added, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." No doubt the Apostle realised the fact that that he was spiritually weak, and doubtless sometimes trembled on account of the body of sin under which he groaned; but when he says, I was with you in weakness and in fear, he refers, I apprehend, to that particular period when he contemplated leaving the city and going elsewhere to preach the Word. He was, however, encouraged by his God, and by the Divine assurance that there were many vessels of mercy to be called by grace there. Who would have thought that God had much people in a place so idolatrous, so degraded, and so unclean as Corinth! True, there were considerable learning, philosophy, and talent there; nevertheless their idolatry was gross, and their licentiousness abominable: yet the Lord had much people there,

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who were by the foolishness of preaching to be called by grace, and to be separated from their fellow men and women. Their hearts were to be broken by the power of saving truth, and they were to be brought as weeping penitents into the presence of the God of heaven and earth. Paul continued to preach; the Holy Ghost continued to bless the Word; the people that were secretly beloved by God were gradually called, and a gospel church was formed, which, of course, the Apostle regarded with very peculiar feelings; for he says elsewhere, "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you, through the Gospel." Well, he was determined, whilst with them, notwithstanding that many Jews were there, and many philosophers heard him, not to know anything among them save Christ, and Him crucified. Paul preached the glorious, the complex person of the Saviour, the dear Son of God, with the feeling that he himself was a debtor to the Jew, and also to the Greek, saying, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!" He never forgot his former Pharisaism, nor the condition he was in when grace found him, and from which it released him. The name of Jesus, which he had previously hated, so bitterly, was now most sweet and precious to his soul, and that dear Saviour, who had done so much for him, and done it so well, was the prevailing theme of his ministry. If learned persons went to hear him, he preached Christ to them; if an illiterate congregation surrounded him, he preached Christ to them. If masters or servants heard him, he had only one theme: "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." And he proceeds, "My speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power." The Apostle was himself a learned person, and a wide and well read man. Paul could have preached eloquently, no doubt; but he says, "I did not use enticing words that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, which come to nought."

In making a few remarks this morning on this portion of the Word, I will try in the first place to call your attention to *the nature of the gospel*; and secondly, to the *character of its receivers*. In the first place, we have *the nature of the gospel* indicated in our text, "We speak *wisdom*." The Gospel is here spoken of as being wisdom; and a little lower down it is said, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." Wisdom "yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, which come to nought." When Paul says, "Not the wisdom of this world," he means, not political wisdom; for it formed no part of his duty, no part of his official work to enter into politics. He means in the second place, not heathen nor human philosophy; for he was not sent by his great Master to explain or preach philosophical systems. Not the wisdom of this world nor of the princes of this world that came to nought." There is a better world than this, and there is a worse one also. From that world which is infinitely better than this, we have wisdom, the wisdom of God, a glorious revelation, and good news from the throne of its great King, and

this was what Paul preached. Now it is said that wisdom consists in proposing to oneself the very best end or object, and in appointing the best means for its attainment. God proposed, so to speak, a great object to himself before the foundation of the world, which was the eternal, the honourable, the heavenly, the glorious salvation of countless millions, in connection with his own eternal honour and glory. That was the great end which our God proposed. And He displayed His wisdom further in the appointment of all the necessary means for the accomplishment of His purpose. This great object, together with the means appointed are revealed in the gospel of His grace, which is therefore said to be the wisdom of God—the wisdom once hidden, but now revealed.

Let us notice in the first place, that the gospel is designated wisdom because it is *a revelation and display of Christ, who is at once the wisdom of God and the power of God*. I would here direct your attention to the complexity of His Person, which is the masterpiece of God's works; for the wisdom of God breaks forth and shines most gloriously and illustriously in the constitution of the complex person of His beloved Son. Who but a God, infinite in wisdom, and boundless in resources, could have thought of bringing two infinitely dissimilar natures together, and uniting them in one glorious person? In the person of Christ there are all the majesty of Deity, all the perfections of Jehovah, and all the eternal fulness of the Godhead, God has not lowered, degraded, nor lessened Himself by becoming man; and therefore the Child born, and the Son given, is the mighty God, the everlasting Father; whilst in that same person there is human nature: for Christ is man as well as God—a man like ourselves, with the exception of sin. He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, having a human mind with all its powers, a human soul, and all its properties; and thus our nature has been taken into inseparable connection with the infinite God; and therefore this complex person is said to be Christ, the wisdom of God. In this complex Redeemer we see how men are united to the eternal God. Remove Christ from between God and the creature, and there is nothing whatever in existence that we have ever heard of that can unite the mighty God with sinful men. The law cannot connect Jehovah with the sinner, at least not favourably so, and Providence cannot savingly connect fallen man with Him. In the complex Emmanuel, however, the gulf is filled up, and the distant are made nigh. There is that in the person of Christ which is in contact with the guilty sinner, and holds him fast, while at the same time the Mediator brings God down to man. We have God in the Man, and guilty men in Christ Jesus are reconciled to God, and God is reconciled to them; and hence the gospel is wisdom, even the wisdom of God in a mystery that was hidden for ages and generations from the sons of men. Christ is the great link which connects Jehovah with His church—not like one of iron, cold and insensible; but a living, sensible, tender, omnipotent link that unites God and man together for ever. “I am determined,” said he, “to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” In the complex person of the Redeemer we have what I may call a universal Representative. I do not mean that He represents every creature. I mean that He represents every interest connected with eternal salvation. He is the perfect representative of God, for He exhibits the whole of Him

to us. What we know of God is through Him, for He is the image of the invisible God, and we shall see God in Him: for "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They shall see Him for ever; but they shall see Him in the Lord Jesus Christ, who represents all the perfections of God. He represents the whole of man. He represents the moral government, and the moral law of God. He represents His whole church, and all the grace required to save them, and all the glory into which they shall enter, and which they shall possess for ever. This wondrous person, the blessed Christ of God, contains all; for "it pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell!" Oh how vast are the mysteries of our salvation, how profoundly deep are Jehovah's secrets in connection with eternal life! If they were scattered abroad, and were not united in one being, or one centre, we should not have half the knowledge that we now possess: but all are sweetly simplified by God for us. The mysteries that we could not have understood had they not been in Christ, God's dear Son, are savingly known by the person that embraces that great name; and he that believes in Him is interested in God, and the whole of His salvation. "We speak wisdom," said the Apostle, "among them that are perfect.

Not only the personal wisdom, but *the official wisdom of God*. It is important to dwell upon the glories of Immanuel's person, and it is equally important, I apprehend, to dwell upon the glories of His office. I need not say anything here about His prophetic office, character and work. Just look at His priesthood for a minute or two, and the wisdom of God in connection therewith. Christ appears officially as a Saviour and Redeemer, and here He stands alone; for, "of the people there were none with Him;" and no angel was with Him in His saving merit. Alone He stood; alone He suffered; alone He bore the guilt of millions; alone He put it away; and alone He saved them with an honourable salvation. His blood was shed, and the church was rescued. Justice sheathed her sword; the fountain for uncleanness was opened, and the blood that redeemed us is applied to our consciences and washes us clean, and makes us pure and white. Thus we have the official wisdom of God in the glorious gospel of His grace. He hath obtained eternal redemption for us. Adverting to myself, I shall never forget the wondrous hour when my soul first clearly saw, as I think I did, how God saved sinners—just as I shall never forget the hour when I first saw and felt that the Son of God had redeemed and saved me. What glories did I then see in God, and what glories did I then discover in His redemption! When I laid the hand of my faith on the head of the dear Saviour, and was enabled to say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me!" all other glorious objects faded from my view, for this eclipsed them all. Oh how sweet it is when Christ is all in all the faculties of a poor sinner's soul!

We speak *doctrinal wisdom*. Some professors despise *some* of the doctrines of the Bible; but they all display, set forth, and expound the wisdom of the eternal God. Take, for instance, the doctrine of imputed righteousness, for I cannot go into many this morning; therefore take one or two—the doctrine of imputed righteousness. Here is our Lord keeping and obeying the law, and giving such a glory to it, as Adam never could have given had he lived in innocency until now. Our blessed

Redeemer came under the law, and went from one precept to another, from the beginning to the end, and gave eternal glory and honour to it. Having reached the end of the precept, He offered His obedient life and His sacrificial death to His heavenly Father, and the Father accepted it, saying, "I am well pleased with Thee, for Thy righteousness' sake ; for thou hast magnified the law, and made it honourable." That obedience is cast upon the guilty sinner, and made His own. "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." It is long enough to reach from head to foot, and large enough to surround his guilty soul. Or, if it be compared to a bed, it is long enough for the tallest sinner to rest upon, and its covering is wide enough to wrap him in for ever. Take your own works, your own graces, your own personal religion, or the grace that is in you, and hide in them. They are not sufficient to cover you in the sight of God, so as to conceal your sin and guilt. Under this mighty name you must creep; behind this great Person you must be found; or lying and resting on this blessed bed, and covered with the glorious obedience of the Saviour, you are now safe, will be safe when you die, and eternal glory will follow death as the Lord declares.

The wisdom of God in the doctrines of divine grace, is again manifest in union to Christ. How wise an act was that on the part of God to unite His people to His Son before the foundation of the world ! What for ? Well, He loved them, and intended to bless them with all spiritual blessings for ever ; and therefore He united them to the great Repository of eternal life. He united His people to the root of all blessings in order that they like branches might derive from Him spiritual and everlasting life; for union to Jesus secures eternal salvation. Look at the intercession of our Lord. On the cross He put away sin, and in heaven He reigns, and before God He pleads the virtues of His blood, "Father, I will that all whom thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." He cannot be satisfied in heaven without you my dear friends, for His heart is set upon you, and He cannot be perfect unless you are in the place He has prepared for you. No husband ever loved his wife as Christ loves His people ; for the love of a husband on earth is that of a finite being, while that of the Redeemer in heaven, like Himself, is infinite. Thus there is no confusion or disorder in our salvation. All is a marvellous representation and demonstration of the wisdom and the power of God, in Christ.

In the next place *the Gospel implies Divine, infallible, infinite wisdom.* God has so manifested His wisdom in the gospel, that every word of it must be fulfilled, or that wisdom will be eclipsed and obscured. For instance, how positive are all God's declarations here ! I will do this and the other, and they shall be saved and blessed. This implies a well formed scheme, and a deeply laid plan, and having appointed all the means for executing it, God comes forth in the Word, and says thousands of years before the act is performed, I will do it. Why this leads us back into the councils of eternity, to contemplate the scheme of eternal wisdom, and the arrangements our God had made for Himself and for you. In the next place, look at the promises—our God has bound Himself by His own word, and placed Himself under peculiar obligation. I trust I am not wrong in using the word obligation in relation to the great God; He

has created bonds for Himself, and placed Himself beneath them; and every promise made to you is unconditional, and divinely absolute. By way of making that which was sure still more sure if possible, He has been pleased to say, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." Look at the promises. They are great, as to their magnitude and as to their number, and they require more than all God's angels possess to fulfil them, and more than all creatures hold to make them good. Ask yourselves the question, How can they be verified and fulfilled? There is enough in God to fulfil them all, and He has bound Himself to do it. The gospel implies wisdom in its great Author. I sometimes unwisely make a promise, and am obliged and forced to break it, because it was ignorantly and unwisely made. Every promise of God, however, is not only gracious and loving, it was wisely formed, wisely filled, wisely shaped, and wisely given. Expect the heavens to fall rather than to see the Word of God broken, for that can never take place.

Then, again, the gospel *expresses*, as well as implies, wisdom. Here I will just mention two or three points. Is it gracious to pardon sin? Yes. Is it right to punish it? It is. Has God done both? Yes. He has punished and pardoned too. By punishing He has satisfied His truth. "The day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die." By pardoning He has satisfied His mercy. Sin was punished on the Saviour, and is forgiven to the sinner, and hence we are pardoned for His sake. Death becomes the spring of life; and surely it was wisdom that made an arrangement to bring eternal life out of death. He died, that we might live. All our life as believers flows through the deeds and death of our beloved Lord. The devil intended that death should be the way to hell, and that it should convey all thither. Behold the wisdom of God. Jesus dies and dies really. He dies a violent, painful, and penal death, and out of that comes eternal life and glory to men. We speak the wisdom of God. Take the two attributes or diverse glories, if I may so speak, mercy and justice. Who can unite the two? If crime has been committed, who can satisfy both? Her Majesty exercises as it is termed, her royal clemency, and pardons a prisoner—that is mercy; but if justice had taken its due and proper course, he would not have been released. The Queen can have mercy if she pleases, and forgive a criminal; but then justice suffers. If she withholds mercy, and justice takes its due course then where is mercy? Law cannot justify a criminal. It is God that justifieth; He removes sin, and establishes the sinner's character, and thus satisfies His mercy and glorifies His justice. In Christ mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

In the last place, the gospel is called wisdom, because *it teaches wisdom*. I love those words in the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, wherein the way of life and salvation is described. "A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it: the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." The wayfaring man is not supposed to be a studious or a learned man, but though he be a fool, he shall not err therein, for he is made wise unto salvation. He that knows the way of life is in that way, or else he would not know it; and I am not here speaking of a mere theoretical knowledge.

Oh, you say, I fear I am not in the way of life. You know the way of salvation, and you go to God in prayer. Yes, yet I fear I have never done so acceptably. But you go and go, and go again, in the right way, pleading the right name, leaning upon the precious blood of Jesus, and acknowledging the sovereignty of Jehovah. My friend, you are in the way, notwithstanding your doubts and fears, and are as safe therein as our beloved friends who have reached their eternal rest and home. The gospel, it is said, makes wise unto salvation, and to nothing else. Now-a-days people want something in addition to the Gospel; but this holy book of heaven was intended to teach us spiritual things only. Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things—not political, philosophical, commercial or scientific things, and yet ye know all; but all the things the believer knows for himself are spiritual. He spiritually knows all things essential to salvation, and as much of them as is necessary to eternal life. Thus he knows all things. This unction from the Holy One, which falls from Christ, teaches us more in five minutes than we can learn in five months by reading the best human authors that were ever presented to the world. The gospel makes wise unto salvation. Let me sum up the whole in one or two words. The mysteries of divine wisdom are simplified thus. Now here is the wisdom of God, “But of him are ye in Christ.”—What is the result? “Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according, as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.” We speak wisdom.

Just one word, secondly, as I have a few minutes left, on *the appreciative receivers of this Gospel*. We speak wisdom among *them that are perfect*. Perfection is threefold—relative, comparative, and absolute. There is a perfection which is relative. Ye are complete in Him; perfect in Jesus Christ, so that as to your union to Christ, and viewing Him as your Representative and your Head, you are now wholly justified and righteous in Him in the sight of God. Your personal godliness is not perfected, for the Holy Ghost’s work is not finished; but being interested in the finished work of Jesus Christ, God sees you in His Son all fair and without spot. Secondly, perfection is comparative. Thirdly, it is personal and absolute. When we have reached heaven, and are seated on our thrones of undeserved honour, then we shall be personally perfect for ever and ever. Which of the three is meant? The second—comparative perfection. We speak wisdom among them which are comparatively perfect. Well, now this comparative perfection is, or should be, viewed in two connections. God’s called people are *perfect as compared with others*. The whole world lieth in wickedness, in the arms of the wicked one. We are not of the world, but of God. There is no holiness in the world, but there is some in the saints. There is no spiritual life in the world, but there is in believers; and we speak wisdom among them that are perfect. Now these persons are very few. I am not going to number the people; yet I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not. Fear not *little* flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Do you think the large numbers that make a profession of religion in the present day are all living souls? Well, I will leave them where they are. To their own Master they stand or fall. I am of opinion, and indeed I feel convinced, that they that are

comparatively perfect are few in number, compared with the mass, compared with the multitude. We cannot determine the excellencies of anything by the numbers that receive it and appreciate it, or otherwise. It frequently happens that the minority are right, and I think in relation to the things of God it is almost invariably so. We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, and they are the persons who dare not for a moment say that the preaching of Christ is foolishness, and who do not stumble at the cross of the Redeemer. Such persons are in the kingdom of Christ, and are in sympathy with God, with Christ, and with the Gospel. Indeed such persons are believers; the Gospel suits them as nothing else in the universe suits them. They have broken hearts, and here is the remedy. They are needy sinners; in the Gospel they see what they need, and what they want. Here is a pardoning God, and here is the guilty needy sinner, with his eyes full, and streams of godly sorrow flowing in his heart. He reads, prays over what he reads, and says, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Bring those promises to me, and apply that balmy blood to my soul. They are the men and the women that receive the Gospel as the wisdom of God. We preach the wisdom of God.

Secondly, I want to go a step further. They are *comparatively perfect in themselves*, and not only with respect to others. Are you going to preach perfection in the flesh? Comparative perfection I will, but not absolute perfection; for, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," says the Apostle John. The idea of sinless perfection in the flesh is from beneath, and not from above. What do you mean by comparative perfection in oneself? If you are a spiritual person, of course you have been born again, and the new birth was in itself a perfect act, completed at once, and you will never be more thoroughly regenerated than you are now. You will be happier, and by-and-bye you will be higher and absolutely perfect; but you are now a child, however young or weak you may be. You are now a son, a new-born child of God, and heir of heaven. Regeneration is a perfect act, completed at once. When the infant is born, supposing it to be naturally perfect, it possesses all its members and parts. Its eyes and arms and feet are perfect, though small and undeveloped, and growth and time are necessary. The child is a perfect being, but its perfection is comparative, and not that of a full-grown person, but of a natural being. We speak wisdom among them that are born again. The children of God have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. Have we this germ of glory in our hearts? If so, God is our Father and we are His children, and members one of another, and are capable of appreciating the glorious gospel of God, which is wisdom. Unto the perfect, the preaching of Christ is the power and the wisdom of God. God grant His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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FAITH; ITS OBJECT, GROUND, EXERCISE AND REWARD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

On LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 10th, 1885.

"The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."—John iv. 49, 50.

PROPHETS and apostles, who are our teachers of the gospel of God, and also of the things which concern His kingdom and His grace, enlarge frequently and blessedly upon the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah, who has always done as it has pleased Him, in "the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." It pleased Him to create angels, not because He needed them, but because he would do so. It pleased Him to prepare a better world than this, for a countless number of beings whom He had constituted the objects of His love, not because He needed either that place or the people, who will inhabit it for ever; but because it was His pleasure so to do. It was "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." And as He has always done as it has pleased Him in heaven, so He is always doing according to His will on the earth. His throne stands as it were in the centre of the universe, and the worlds he has made revolve around it; for, "He upholds all things by the word of His power." He is saving sinners in this world with an everlasting salvation; and hence saints are incessantly departing out of this life into heaven, while a stream of new-born ones is perpetually flowing into this scene of sin, sadness and sorrow. In this world God is fulfilling the purposes of His grace, and accomplishing the deep-laid plans of His mind; and while doing so we told, "that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." A great lady is reported to have said, that she should have to thank God for ever for the letter "m;" for the apostle, said she, says, "Not many mighty or noble are called. Had it not been for the little letter "m," it would have read "not *any* wise, not *any* mighty, not *any* noble are called." God hath chosen for the most part, "the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." Sometimes, however, he calls a monarch, and at other times a nobleman by His grace; and it appears that on this occasion the person who appeared before our Lord was a great man. I do not know whether he was wise after the flesh, but he had been blessed with a merciful measure of spiritual wisdom, while in social and civil life, he occupied a high position. Sometimes it was a centurion, or Roman soldier, that sought the healing power of Jesus but now it was a Jew, who occupied a prominent and exalted position. It is said by some that in all probability this nobleman was Chuza, one of Herod's household; and by turning to the 8th of Luke, 3rd verse, we learn that Chuza, was the husband of Joanna, one of those women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, and who ministered unto the Lord,

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and we are further told in that verse, that he was the steward of Herod's household. This nobleman had some knowledge of the Lord, and his wife probably knew Him better than her husband. Their son, however, was sick, for sickness and sorrow enter into every household, none are exempt from affliction. One may occupy an exalted political or civil position,—sin prevails everywhere, and suffering and sorrow always follow sin. Their child was sick, and at the point of death, and the nobleman came and said to Him, "Sir, or Lord, come down ere my child die. And Jesus saith unto Him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and went his way."

Now let us endeavour to draw a few encouraging facts from this portion of the word. Our subject is—living and saving faith, as it was exemplified in the character and conduct of this great man. In the first place, we have before us *the great Object of faith*. He appears in connection with the circumstances which brought the nobleman to the Saviour. This nobleman, as we have said, having a good woman for his wife, and perhaps a measure of grace in his heart, knew that the great and wonderful Being who was going about the country, was the promised Messiah; and therefore there was a measure of faith in his heart when he came from Capernaum to Cana, of Galilee; for he said to Him, "Sir, come down ere my child die." Now, looking thus, at the great Object of his faith, he regarded Jesus as the Lord of life and death, and of disease and health; and it is very interesting, and instructive, and comforting to sit at the Saviour's feet, and contemplate these marvellous features of His character. There is no character of our Lord more encouraging to the people of God than this, that He is the Lord of all. It is an infinite mercy to be savingly interested in such a Being: a Being, who can be, and is, everywhere; a Being that can do, and is doing, everything that He pleases, and everything that the circumstances and condition of His people require Him to do. His arm is long enough to reach the most distant danger, the most distant enemy, and the most distant blessing, and strong enough to sustain and support under the greatest possible weight. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and he is not dependent on the light of Nature, nor on anything in the creature for knowledge. His light is in His own eyes, which are as a flame of fire, and run to and fro in the earth; "and this God is our God for ever and ever, and He will be our guide even unto death." I have no doubt that the nobleman on this occasion had a steady faith from the first, in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Lord of life and death, and that sickness and health came and went at His command; and we sometimes contemplate this fact in the language of the poet:—

"Plagues and deaths around me fly;
Till He bids I cannot die:
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

Immanuel, who is Lord of all, is Ruler of all life, and all forms of death also. He is the Lord of all life. First, He is Lord of His own life, and He is the only Being in the universe of whom this can be affirmed. I lay down my life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Our Lord, as man and Mediator, had, and still has, a peculiar life, which was, and is His own; and He had a right to do what

He pleased with it; and since the objects of God's love were lost and ruined, and could not be redeemed, retrieved and restored unless he died for them; He, having perfect liberty and power to do so, said, "I lay down my life for the sheep: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now, He who is Lord of His own life is Lord of all life, or of the life of all. There is not an angel before the throne, but what lives by Him, and his immortality is of Him; and they all sing His praises and adore His greatness, as their Creator and their Lord. The angels of God in glory are as dependent upon our Lord, as you and I are here. Their pleasure and their joys are undisturbed and unruffled, but all the tranquillity and serenity of heaven, are owing to the presence and the ever-operating power of the Lord of life and glory. He is also the Author and Giver of all natural life. But let us come to spiritual life, for He is most surely the Lord of that. It is not for me to say whether you have spiritual life in your hearts or not. Perhaps I may be justified in saying that you know that better than I do; for you know your own experience better than others know it. If, however, there is spiritual life in your hearts, you have a sense of sin more or less deep, and you are a sensible sinner. I might go further, but I stop there however, because many of God's people have got no further than that. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." A miracle, then, has been wrought, my brother, or something very much like one has taken place upon you, and a great work has been done in your hearts. If you are not totally blind, the hand of Jesus has touched you, and the Lord of all has imparted a measure of spiritual life to your souls; and if this is so, you need not enquire, or feel any particular difficulty, as to where it came from; for there is only one fountain or spring of life. We are not the authors of our own being naturally, and we are not the authors of our spiritual being; neither is spiritual life an accident, nor does it come from beneath: but in whatever degree it may exist, it always comes from the Lord of life. Jesus is the Lord of the least measure of life, and if there be a little faith, as small as a grain of mustard seed in your hearts, give God the glory and the praise, for Jesus is its Lord. The vessel in which He deposits eternal life, is His property, as well as the life deposited; and He imparts the blessing because He had fixed His love upon the receiver before the foundation of the world. You observe, I am giving the subject a spiritual turn; for I do not want to dwell on physical disease and health all through the service this morning; but desire to say a few things on Christ as the great Object of the believer's faith. Jesus here appears as the Lord of life and death, of disease and health. It is a mercy and privilege that we may take our physical condition before God, and present it in prayer at the throne of grace. You are aware that during the recent winter I have passed through not a little suffering and pain; and if one might not pray concerning disease, especially when it seems to take a critical turn, one's heart would indeed be sad and heavy. We are, however, permitted and encouraged to take our physical condition into God's presence in the holiest of all. Some persons are said to believe that we have no authority for asking God for temporal or providential mercies. My friends, it is our mercy that we may bring all our circumstances to our Father, for we have unlimited liberty in this respect.

It is His will and pleasure that His children should bring all their wants and sufferings before Him. He requires no information from us ; but it is the method of His wisdom, and the way of His mercy. This nobleman had a houseful of sorrow ; for his son was at the point of death, and he presented his case before the Lord of life and death, disease and health. "Sir, come down ere my child die."

Now, another fact we learn from this, and that is the *personal* presence of Jesus Christ is not essential to salvation, nor even to the joys and pleasures thereof. In this respect the nobleman erred. "Sir, *come down* ere my child die." He had a measure of faith, but it did not go far enough. He thought, or seems to have thought, that the Master could not heal his son without going to Capernaum and entering his house. The Saviour, however, said "Go thy way, thy son liveth." There were fifteen miles between the Saviour and the apparently dying child. The Saviour, however, did not leave Cana of Galilee ; but in a moment He sent a stream of Divine influence in a manner which was peculiarly His own, into the sick room in the nobleman's house, and which entered the body of the suffering child ; and the fever instantly left him : but Christ was not personally present. We have heard some strange observations at times from professors of religion concerning the personal presence of our Lord. I trust we are thankful for the fact that we shall by and bye see Him face to face, without a veil between ; for heaven would not be heaven to us, if Jesus were not there, for it is His presence that constitutes that world the paradise of God, and a heaven of everlasting delights : but His personal presence is not essential to salvation on earth, nor to holy peace and joy. "Father, I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee." Our Lord is personally in heaven, but not so here ; and yet a wonderful work is going on in this world by His Holy Spirit. Sinners are pricked in their hearts, their spirits are bruised and broken, and they are as truly saved as if Christ were personally present. You have sometimes been blessed in the house of God in a most wonderful degree, so that your tears have been either wiped away, or your eyes have been filled with them ; and the blessings you have received have been as real as they could have been had the personal presence of Christ been with you in the sanctuary. Our saving Lord is Jehovah, and He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world ;" and, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Not that we have His personal, but His spiritual and Divine presence. That declaration indicates His Deity, as well as His spiritual presence. "There am I : " and in all places where I record My name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you. My friends, we can, while we are on the earth, do as well without the personal presence of Jesus, as with it. "It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." Our Lord came here in person, and did His work, and finished it, and saved His people with an everlasting salvation ; and then He went from earth to heaven ; and yet He is here to-day, and with His people, at all times and in all places, and has said, "I will work, and who shall let it ?" Having made these few remarks on the object of this man's faith, let us in the next place

Contemplate the ground and rule of faith. Give your attention to this.

"And the man *believed the word* that Jesus had spoken to him, and he went his way." The ground and rule of our faith is the word of God, the word of Jesus Christ. Where God is silent, we exercise no faith, and want none, and if He is silent, we have no ground whatever for hope : for we hope for nothing that God has not promised, as we are required to believe in nothing, at least in connection with salvation, that God has not revealed. Divine revelation is the ground of Divine faith, and Divine promise is the ground of the believer's hope. My dear young friends, we live in a peculiar day. Be careful as to the literature you read, especially that half-and-half literature, which is partly scientific and partly religious and which is so abundant, and is being spread over the whole country. The Bible and Nature, only Nature must precede and explain the Bible. Be very careful here, my young friends. I think I said the other Lord's-day, that I had read some books which I wish I had never seen. It is very easy to get something into the mind that will defile, weaken and shake it; but it is not so easy to get it out again. I have often been invited to read controversial works on this, and that, and the other subject. The devil, like the serpent, is exceedingly subtle ; and he is on the side of error and works in connection with it ; and you may become enervated and polluted by that which you read from time to time. I do not say, limit your reading to the Word of God; yet I would have each say for himself :

"Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

"The man believed the word which Jesus had spoken unto him." Keep within the covers of this book, keep on the lines of Divine truth, which God has laid down, abide by the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and avoid the very appearance of doctrinal, as well as moral evil, and like the man, believe the word which Jesus has spoken. Go as far as the Bible goes, and no further. Go as far as the word of God warrants you in going, but do not take another forward step. Be sure you have the light of Divine truth and revelation in your hand, as you go through the world ; but let it be that light, and no other. Follow the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and pray, "Send out Thy light and Thy truth." I repeat what I have said,—Keep on the lines of revealed truth, and believe the word that Jesus hath spoken, for it is the ground and rule of faith. Few of us have knowledge enough and faith enough to go as far as the word of the Redeemer goes. The word of a speaker may in some respects be measured by his character. If the parent speaks parental authority comes with the word. "Where the word of a king is there is power," and if God speaks, His word is like Himself, Divine. What glorious ground to stand upon is the word of God ! He is in the Word, and its force, and power, importance preciousness, and firmness must all be measured by the glorious character of the Speaker. Now the text says, "The man believed the word which Jesus had spoken unto Him." Again ; the word of God is the medium through which He conveys Himself and His grace into the heart, and through which gracious and spiritual persons embrace the glorious Redeemer. The longer I live the more deeply impressed I become from day to day with the value and importance of the

Bible. Some of you have known me a good many years, and that I have been a reader of a great many works on Divinity : but now my reading is, the longer I live, narrower in this respect. I give nearly the whole of my attention to this one Book, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, for it really is the medium that God has laid between Himself and His people, and through and by which He pours His blessing into them, while that same word is the rule and the matter of their thoughts in prayer, and praise, and intercourse with Him. You never embrace Christ for yourself, only as your faith embraces the word, and God holds your hearts by His omnipotence through His truth. "My word shall not return unto Me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." I go into no critical matters here. I know it is said that life comes into the heart through the gospel. I take general ground, and most confidently and fearlessly affirm, that whenever a Divine blessing comes into the heart and produces faith and hope and holy sentiments therein, God gives it from Himself through the word. How was it between the nobleman and Christ? Had the Lord been silent, the man would have remained unsatisfied, and his faith would have continued to shake and tremble like an aspen leaf. Had Christ said nothing at all, there had been no confidence whatever felt by the applicant ; but Christ spoke and said, "Thy son liveth, go thy way," and the man believed the word which Jesus had spoken, and went his way." Contend for the fact that the word of God is the rule of faith as to what we should believe, as to the extent to which we should believe, and as to the firmness and fixedness of our faith in the subject revealed. I have already quoted the words "Where the word of a king is there is power;" and the word of our Lord opens and shuts, and He shuts and opens. For He opens and none can shut, and shuts and none can open, and it also constitutes a barrier between His people and danger, death and condemnation. "Hitherto mayest thou come, but no further ; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." When Jesus speaks, the prison opens, the fetters fall off, and guilt is removed from the conscience. When the precious blood which He shed is applied to the heart, its wounds are healed, and healed immediately ; and one sings,

"Now I have found the ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain ;
The wounds of Jesus for my sin,
Before the world's foundation slain."

Permit me to speak of myself. How I longed to hear the word of the great sin-forgiving God, when I appeared before Him, bowed down with the weight of guilt upon my conscience, and when He said, "Son, thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee," the word spoken gave me faith, "for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The word spoken gave me faith in the fact that my sins were pardoned, and that he who pardoned them was my God, and that I should never come into condemnation ; and I went on my way, leaping for joy in the presence of my Saviour and my all. Yes, He opens and shuts. Sometimes the word falls upon the heart as from the lips of the Redeemer Himself ; for I contend we must have some feeling and experience in connection with our religion and the profession we make thereof. Dear friends, the things

of God come upon us, not like a shower of rain upon a rock. No, His blessing and His word are as rain upon the thirsty and parched earth, which it cools, and moistens, and fertilises; so one's heart is comforted and softened when penetrated by the word which Jesus speaks. How confident was this man after having received the word "Thy son liveth!"

In the third place notice, *the measure of his faith*. Did he believe when he started from home? Yes, he had a measure of faith, and that measure was honoured by the Lord. But how did he come from Capernaum to Cana of Galilee? I am not sure that I can tell you. I am just now thinking of the language of the poet, which beautifully expresses the experience of the child of God, at a certain stage of his spiritual life,—

"Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives."

I think the nobleman came with a mixture of doubt and hope, and with a measure of faith, and perhaps some unbelief. He came from home wounded, wondering, doubting, yet trusting he might succeed. And what then? The Saviour had given him that little faith, for the least measure thereof is from heaven, and from the Redeemer Himself: He is the Author and the finisher of our faith, both as a system and as a grace and working power. The grace of faith never accidentally enters the heart, or falls into a human mind without the knowledge of the Lord of life. The Redeemer had by His Spirit given him that measure of faith, which brought him from Capernaum to Cana, where He presented himself to the Lord and gave expression to as much faith as he possessed, "Sir, *come down* ere my child die, for he is at the point of death." The Saviour seems to have been a little severe for a moment or two. The man however continued before Him, and the answer was obtained, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." Faith is confident or timid, and hope rises and sinks, for we are often affected by circumstances.

"Oh for a strong and lasting faith,
To credit what my Maker saith,"
Whose word can never fail.

Oh, for that measure of faith which the nobleman possessed, when he went his way, confident that his son would live and not die. And this leads me to notice in the fourth place,—

The exercise of his faith. He believed implicitly. "The man believed the word which Jesus had spoken." He asked no question, and did not attempt to reason with the Lord. He went further than Nicodemus went when he said, "How can these things be?" A word fell from the lips of Jehovah Jesus, accompanied by almighty power upon the troubled heart of the nobleman, and it produced fruit after its own kind, and the man believed implicitly, and took the blessing from the Object of faith just as he had it presented to him in His word. And he believed with satisfaction.

This question has been asked, and it not unfrequently appears in print: Is it possible for a good man, one who makes a profession of religion to know with certainty and satisfaction that he is going to heaven, and that God will receive him after he is gone from earth? Why not? Is not the Holy Ghost as strong as Satan? And grace as strong as sin? And cannot the devil, if permitted, influence the mind, and bring it to certain conclusions and decisions, and cause it to form certain resolutions. I say if he is permitted to do so? And is not the Holy Ghost God, and if He

bears witness with the mind, one becomes deeply and satisfactorily impressed with the fact that he is a child of God, and all doubts and fears are carried away, and a holy confidence takes possession of his heart, and like the nobleman in the text, goes his way with satisfaction. Now, what leads me to speak of the satisfaction with which he went his way is the fact that he did not make haste. This is one of the best literal illustrations of those words of God : " He that believeth shall not make haste." Having received the word of the Lord, the man did not return home till the following day. It was the seventh hour when he obtained the Master's word, and the next day he returned ; and his servants met him, and told him saying, " Thy son liveth, and he enquired what hour he began to amend, and they said unto him, Yesterday, at about the seventh hour." Yesterday ! why we might have thought that having received the assurance that his son should not die, he would have returned at once, making as much haste as possible to his home and his child. No, he tarried all night, and did not make haste ; for the man believed, the important business was quite settled. He went empty to the Lord, and He filled him ; he went wounded, and He healed him ; he went to pray, and the Saviour gave him a most satisfying answer : and the man sat down and rested, satisfied concerning the whole affair. The man obtained the blessing and went his way. May the Holy Ghost so bear witness with our hearts that we are the children of God, that like the nobleman on this occasion, we may rest and be satisfied. How great a blessing it would be for this congregation, most of whom are probably believers, if they were all brought to believe as this man believed, to the joy and satisfaction of their hearts, and went their way out of darkness into light, out of bondage into liberty, out of sorrow into joy, out of pain into holy pleasure, and eventually out of the wilderness into promised rest. The Lord having given you faith, may He increase it more and more. Well, the reward of faith at this time was this, " Thy son liveth."

And what *inferences might be drawn from this subject* ? The desires of the righteous shall be fulfilled ; not all of them, but those which are the production and fruits of the indwelling Spirit of God. A good desire is from the Lord, and it is not like our God to create a desire and leave it, or to produce a hope and disappoint it ; and hence all the holy hopes and desires of the righteous shall be granted. Then notice the work of Christ. He always fulfils His word : " Thy son liveth ;" and the consequence was, that fifteen miles off, the child that had had a fever and was at the point of death, was at once restored to health and strength. The blessing was a sovereign one, and according to the Master's pleasure : and it was a sudden one, for yesterday the fever left him. Medicine must have time to operate, but no physician heals or cures like our Lord. The fever left him yesterday, about the seventh hour ; and he compared the time with the hour the Saviour spoke, and himself believed and all his house. Joanna, his wife, had her faith strengthened, and he himself believed as he had never believed before. May the Lord increase our faith, and help us to watch His hand with an open Bible before us ; for the operations of His hand are the certain fulfilment of His word. We know what He will do, because He has told us. We know where He will be, for He has promised saying, " In all places whithersoever thou goest, I will be with thee." Amen.

CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL.

A Sermon*

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 18th NOVEMBER, 1883.

"But Christ is all, and in all." Col. iii. 11.

THIS chapter opens with an important exhortation. "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." The church's union to God's beloved Son is one of the most prominent and blessed truths in the Word; because it is the ground of salvation, and the ever-flowing spring of spiritual consolation. All earthly unions are giving way, for they are formed to be dissolved; but the union between Christ and His people, is as lasting as eternity, and as important as God's infinite grace and glory can constitute it. The church is represented as having risen with Christ, their Lord and Head, who is now in heaven, having passed through death and the grave, to the right hand of God. He died as a public Person, and as the common Head of all the millions that shall live with Him in heaven for ever. They died in Him when He died, and rose in Him when He rose from the dead. He is not to be regarded as a Person separate from other beings, but, as the great Representative of the Church, and the Head of all true believers. Wherever the Church is seen, there Christ Himself is prominent; where you see the bride, there you may see the Husband also; where you see spiritual beings, there you may see the Author of all spiritual life; and where you see living Christians, there you may see Christ Himself. When, therefore, the Lord of life and glory came out of the grave; countless multitudes came out in Him, and when He went to heaven, they went also, and when He took His seat at the Father's right hand, all His beloved people were seen there in Him. If ye, then, be risen with Christ representatively; experimentally in conversion; and emblematically in baptism; seek those things which are above. Above what? Above this poor empty world; above the ceremonial dispensation; above all creature wisdom and human learning; and above all those objects and conditions which hold the attention, and absorb the affections of the ungodly. Jesus is beyond the world. Remember that you are, or should be, there with Him. He is on the other side of death. Remember that you are in Him, and should be with Him there. Remember that He is in the new creation; that in Him you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Are we not prone to set our affections on earthly things, and to become closely wedded to objects which must pass away? Dr. Watts sings:—

* Preached with special reference to the decease of Mr. Robert Hoddy, for several years a beloved Deacon of the Church at Chadwell-street, and Editor of "*The Gospel Herald*." He departed this life, November 8th, aged 68 years.

The creatures "divide our wavering minds,
And leave but half for God."

Oh for grace so to live in Christ, that it may not be death for us to depart! May it prove a dissolution, and not a rending of us away from this empty dying state. Death is represented as a dissolution, and is it not as agreeable as anything in death can be agreeable, to be gradually dissolved; to feel the ties which now unite us to one another, to the body, and to this world, one after another gradually melt and dissolve? The wicked is driven away in his wickedness. He is torn away from the world, contrary to his hopes, desires, and feelings; he is driven out of the body, while he clings to this life, but the righteous hath hope in his death. The child of God will be dissolved when he goes, and the mysterious tie that unites his mind to matter, and his soul to the body, gradually gives way at the appointed moment. The language of our spirits is—"Let us die the death of the righteous, and let our last end be like his." Well, in this manner, the apostle offers this important exhortation to believers, reminding them of their interest in the risen Redeemer. There is, however, doctrine, experience, and practice in the chapter, especially in the verses which immediately precede our text to-night. Many persons attributed considerable importance to earthly distinctions, and the apostle deemed it necessary to say, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but "Christ is all, and in all."

A minister of the gospel is not his own master. I had thought of another portion of the Word for a text for this occasion; but, subsequently, our beloved Sister Hoddy informed me that our dear Brother, her husband, said during the last hours of his life, and when he was conscious, that he was not far from eternity, if Mr. Hazelton should feel inclined to say anything about me, when I am gone, I hope it may be from the words "But Christ is all, and in all." How characteristic of the man! How strikingly like him! He dearly and deeply loved his Lord, and would have Him honoured and glorified. He would not for a single moment so stand before His throne, as to cast the shadow of himself upon it. He would always, so to speak, leave the way open, in order that the whole of Jesus and His cross, and His throne, might appear; for "Christ was all in all to him, as most assuredly He is now. We cannot now see, nor hear him; but we are ready to shed tears, when we think that so very recently he occupied that desk, and with so much holy earnestness and fervour gave out the hymns of praise, which we sang to the glory of our God. We shall never forget how he emphasised certain words, as he so fervently read our songs. Our feelings were sometimes deep, in relation to his own personal experience, for he was no formal clerk. His heart was often in the hymn, and the hymn was in his heart, and hence he gave it out, generally speaking, in a peculiar and spiritual manner. Well, said the good man, just before he left the body, and his wife, and us as a church, "Tell my pastor that Christ is all, and in all to me."

Now look for a few minutes at this most comprehensive text. I shall in the first place contemplate it as *a great and glorious fact*. Christ is

all, and in all." Some people quote it thus,—Christ is all and all. It does not read so. The apostle does not so put it here; he does not say, "Christ is all and all," but "Christ is all, and *in* all." Earthly distinctions count for nothing in the kingdom of God's dear Son, and in fact they count for nothing in the moral government of God. Whether it be the king on the throne, or the carpenter in the shop, or the ploughman in the field, all are sinners, and have come short of the glory of God. The man that wears a glittering crown, and sits upon the highest earthly throne, is a sinner, like the mechanic and the ploughman; for there is no difference between kings and the common people, in this respect. And these remarks will apply to the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God's dear Son; all are alike there. God is no respecter of persons. The Jew is not in this kingdom because he is a Jew; and the Gentile is not excluded because he is a Gentile. The barbarian and the Scythian are as welcome there, as the most learned and refined. There is no difference between one and another, in the family of God; David on the throne, and the poorest inhabitant of Jerusalem, if a child of God, a true believer, were one in the Lord Jesus Christ; Christ is as much to the poor, as to the rich; as much to the ploughman, as to the king. David was a believer, and "Christ was all, and in all" to him, as He was to the poorest citizen of Jerusalem, that knew the Lord, and who perhaps scarcely knew how to live from day to day. Earthly distinctions obtain and prevail, and properly so, outside the kingdom of heaven, and of Jesus Christ; but within all are one in Christ Jesus the Lord. Have you not sometimes thought what a wonderful kingdom or state this is; it is a kingdom of kings. Think of that, and lose not sight of the fact, that all the subjects of grace are kings; for he hath made us kings and priests unto God. Who did that? He; even the Lord Jesus Christ, who "is all, and in all." All His subjects are princes, and priests, and brethren, and the family of the great God. There is no other kingdom like this; it stands alone, and differs in all respects from all the kingdoms of the earth; a royal kingdom, presided over by Jesus Christ who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice. My dear brethren, when grace brought you with trembling hearts and bruised consciences into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, you entered into it as princes. You do not quite believe this, that is not experimentally so. I tell you, however, the truth, whether you believe or not; you entered into the kingdom of Christ as princes, for it is a kingdom of kings and priests. They are all one in Christ, and bear His name; their life, their nature, and their state are one, and Christ is, not more to one than to another; and what He ever has been to His people, that He is to them now. There have been millions here to whom Christ was "all and in all," and there are thousands now living on earth, who experience the same great blessing. But, let us try to particularise a little.

First, *Christ is all in the whole of our salvation.* What is required in salvation? An infinitely great Saviour. Is there such a Person? Yes, one, and only one. Was and is He great enough to save all the millions written in the book before Him? Yes. Was He great and honourable enough for the Father's acceptance, as the Saviour of sinful men? Yes.

Was His character sufficiently great and glorious, to give validity and power to His solemn word? Yes; He pledged His word; gave His name; entered into covenant engagements, and bound Himself in the most solemn manner, to save all the objects of God's love, with an everlasting salvation. We want no other Saviour. The Pope, and cardinals, and priests, may remain where they are. There is no room whatever in God's salvation, for a second Saviour. Christ is all, personally and officially considered in our salvation. Then in salvation a perfect obedience is necessary. Is there such a thing in existence? Has the law been obeyed by this great Servant of the Lord? And is His obedience satisfactory? Entirely so; it covers the whole law, even all the ground. But is not the sinner to be obedient? Yes, surely he is to be obedient, and he will be so. Are not good works to be done by saved sinners? Of course they are; but keep them in their proper place, there is no room for them here; for as to merit and worth, "Christ is all, and in all. It is not His obedience and yours; not His life and yours; not His walk and yours united together; but His conversation, His life, and His obedience, that occupy the whole ground, and cover the whole of law; and more than Christ is not required for acceptance by the God of heaven. When Christ brought in His obedience, it was examined, and weighed, and measured; and the Father said, "I am well pleased with Thee, for Thy righteousness' sake, for Thou hast magnified the law, and made it honourable." In this obedient Christ, our dear Brother Hoddy rested, and on the obedience of his Lord he raised all his humble happy hopes for heaven, and wrapped in that justifying robe, he said as his poor heart was full of pain,* "Tell my pastor that 'Christ is all, and in all' to me." Then again, in, and for salvation, there must be suffering, and enough to meet all the requirements of Justice. Christ's sufferings are meritorious, and of infinite worth, for the dignity of the Sufferer is in His sufferings and His sorrows. Was He poor? His poverty was meritorious; ours is not. Was He persecuted? His sufferings as persecuted, were meritorious; ours are not; we deserve nothing for bearing persecution. Was Christ deserted by His Father? His sorrow then was meritorious. If God hides His face from us, we deserve nothing, even if we stand before Him without complaining. Christ, however, merited when He was in the dark, and deserved for us when He was persecuted. Through all the privations and poverty of His life, the dear Redeemer was infinitely worthy and meritorious. He brought all His invaluable sufferings to God, and put them into the scale of His justice, and they were declared sufficient, and well pleasing. And there is something more than an even balance, for by His sufferings Jesus deserves eternal life for His people; therefore, Christ is all, as to the suffering required. Is death necessary? There can be no salvation without it; and have we not the death of this great Being? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again. But how did He die? Voluntarily, the great God-man gave up the ghost. Did God die? We will not trouble ourselves with any needless criticisms on these points to-night, nor at any other time. He that died was Immanuel, God with us, and the majesty of Deity was inseparable from the death of our Lord. He died, not as a

* He died of disease of the heart.

mere man, but as the God-man ; and His death proved the end of all penal death and evil. And what then ? Are we to have no other person in salvation ? No ; not as to our acceptance by God. No other obedience, and no other sufferings, are required for our salvation. Are we not going to heaven in any degree, on account of our sufferings ? No, all is owing to those of incarnate God. Should we die in deep suffering and pain, we shall deserve nothing ; and God requires no merit whatever in us ; for Jesus died and obtained eternal redemption for us. " Christ is all, and in all." And then I might go to the grave, and what would that be without Him ! and I might try to go beyond the grave, for where is Jesus now ? Sitting at the right hand of God, and He is " all and in all, as seated there.

Again, look at the Holy Spirit ; for " Christ is all, and in all " the branches of His work. If I depart, I will send Him unto you, and if I do not depart, He will not come ; so that the very advent and presence of the Spirit, are owing to our Great Lord ; and therefore we may say, that the Holy Spirit works in and for Christ, in the hearts of those who are one with Him. He never works out of Jesus. There is nothing for Him to do savingly, out of Christ ; He always works in the Mediator, and for Him. He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you, and if you and I have been taught by the Holy Ghost, we have been led to Jesus, and in proportion as we have been thus led and taught, are we prepared to say feelingly, " Christ is all, and in all," or as one is represented as having said, " I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, and Jesus Christ is " all in all."

Then He is " all in all " the Word. For a minute, look at the types of the ceremonial dispensation ; " Christ is all, in all " them. If there is a kernel in every one of them, it is Christ ; and if there is life in them, He is that life. If there is a substantial meaning in these shadows, it is Jesus, our all. I have sometimes thought that when Abel offered the firstlings of the flock, the good man stood, as far as his body was concerned, on this side the altar, and the smoking victim, but his soul was on the other side. Abel's soul went beyond his typical sacrifice. He laid the victim on the altar ; fire gradually consumed it, and Abel's soul as a believer, went through the material signs, to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. There was nothing in the victim to satisfy Abel, considered apart from Christ. That which satisfied the offerer was the Person signified by the victim—Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Then look at the promises of the Gospel ; every one is full of Christ, and they are all in Him, and therefore they are sweet to the child of God. There is not an empty promise, nor one that contains anything different from the person, and work, and the grace and blessing of the Mediator. Take the promise, and if I may so speak, open it, or divide it into its component parts. Go into its interior, and enter into its very spirit, and you will find that Christ is in the whole, for He is all in all the promises of our God. In Him, they are all yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us ; also the doctrines of the gospel are the truth as it is in Jesus ; and that doctrine which you hold so tenaciously, which is not in Christ, is a false one, and the sooner you give it up the better ; for all the articles of faith, of which Jesus Christ

is not the fulness, will certainly leave you, or you must leave them. All the truths of grace are full of Christ the Lord. He is all in all the doctrines of grace; He is all in all the ordinances of God's house. When the pool is opened, and the servants of Jesus Christ follow their Lord, being baptized in the great name of God, nothing is felt, or enjoyed, and no substantial meaning can be attached to the seeming obedience of the saint, apart from Jesus Christ. He is all in believers' baptism, and He is all in the Lord's Supper. May He be all in all preacher's hearts, and all in all their sermons, especially in the day in which we live. Is He not all in this church? Oh that He may be experimentally all at all times, and in all the powers of the preacher's mind. Doctrinally, He is so, and with regard to my judgment He is so; but are there not times when I half forget this all glorious fact, that He "is all, and in all." I am never so happy as a man, as a saint, or as a minister, as when I lose the whole of my little self in the great and glorious Christ and God. You have heard our dear Brother Hoddy pray, and you know His peculiarity in that exercise. He had his own proper gift of God, and I am most sure that there were happy moments in the prayer-meeting, in his experience, when he lost himself as a petitioner in the glories of the Person, and the fulness of the dear Redeemer; then his words were peculiar, and his manner unusual, and we could not help feeling what we have since heard from good authority, even from her that knew and loved him well, that he lived very near to his Lord.

Let us in the second place *look at the subject as indicating the experience of the child of God.* "Christ is all, and in all," in the holy experience of believers. As to the experience of the saints, we may consider what Christ is in their estimation, and secondly, what He is in their realisation. What is Christ in the estimation of those who know Him? Do you say you have never received divine forgiveness? Perhaps not, my friend; you will receive it by and bye; it is ready for you. You say I have never been brought into liberty. Perhaps not; and I cannot open the door; if I could, you should remain in bondage no longer: but, you must remain in your present condition, until an infinitely greater one than a minister appears upon the scene. But though you have not received the pardon of your sins, nor been led into liberty, what is your estimation of the Saviour? What think ye of Christ? Well, if you put that question to me, I do believe with all my powers that He "is all, and in all," and that He is all I want. That is good. He is all you need, and all you desire. Why, you are where David was, when with regard to his experience on his dying bed, he said, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He maketh it not to grow." If Christ is thus all in all in your estimation, you are as safe as David was, and will soon be as satisfied as he is now. But, advance a step further. What is He as to the realisation of true believers? Well, hear what the church says, "His head is as the most fine gold; His locks are bushy, and black as a raven; His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars;" and having traced the excellencies of His person and character, from His head to His feet, embracing Him, she says, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!" How many are there in the house of God to-night, that can use these words, and thus em-

brace the Saviour? "This is my Lord and my God." Do you want another Lord, or another salvation? No; "He is all, and in all" to you; all that you want, or can desire, for time, and for eternity, for life, and for death, you believe, is, and shall be found in your beloved Lord, for ever. But, let us consider the hope of the child of God. He is all in all the heavenly hopes of believers, and here are four or five points which should be mentioned. And first, there is The foundation of the believer's hope. Oh God, what is my hope? I remember the last time I visited our late Brother Milner, not long before he went to heaven; shaking hands with me, he said, "John, look to your foundation, and be sure you are right as to that." "My hope, Sir, is a happy one." Look to your foundation, my friend. You say, I do not know what I should do if I could not hope for heaven. Well, what is your hope based upon? The strength and duration of a house, you know, are to be measured by the foundation beneath it. And what is the foundation of your hope and mine? Well, let us sing, for we can,—

"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

The foundation should be as large as the building, and Christ only is as extensive as the believer's hope. Build wholly on Him every year, and day, and hour of your life; for be assured that hope, however bright and brilliant it may be, that has not Christ for its foundation will crumble and die. And then, there is the object hope. Who is that? Christ is all, in this respect, not God in nature, not abstract Deity, but God in Christ. Oh, we rest and build upon Him, and all our hopes centre in His glorious Person and finished work. I might speak of the life of hope. Take Christ away and hope collapses and dies. Let Christ be connected with my hope and it will live until the moment of death, and not be destroyed nor crushed by burdens and crosses. And then, there is the fruition of hope. What will that be. I do not know and cannot tell you; for we must all die to know it. We hope day after day, and until the end, and then our hopes will be lost in all the bliss of being, and swallowed up in the full fruition and heaven of the Lord Jesus Christ. How sweet it will be when the candle of hope goes out, or when the little stream of hope loses itself in the great ocean of glory. The candle of hope go out? Yes, for hope is a kind of candle or lamp now, by which we are helped along on the road of life; but when we enter into heaven the great sun of that blessed and glorious world, that superior and mightier light will extinguish the candle, and hope will be lost for ever, in full possession of all.

In the third place, *take the text as a test*. There is nothing out of Him, all is in Him. Now, if you are a child of God, Jesus is all and in all to you; and if He is not so, allow me to say, I do not think He is at present anything to you. He is either, all or nothing. There is no room in your hope for a second Saviour nor for another salvation. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee." No: my character was formed by Jesus, and I can say with Toplady,—happy man, and happy woman if you can!

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Black, I to the fountain fly!
Wash me, Saviour, or I die:”

I want grace, I want a dress, I want to be washed, I want heavenly bread and wine; and all these are in Christ, who is all in all to me. We must, as time is going, pass over several other particulars. I thought I would have said that this glorious doctrine *simplifies divine mysteries*. How shall I illustrate this? Ye are complete in Him, or ye are made or filled full in Him. The idea is that Christ is the great sea, and all true believers as vessels are in Him and filled with Him. Thus they are complete in Him. When you draw water you raise the vessel with the water to carry it away. When the Holy Ghost conveys a sinner to Jesus Christ, He keeps him there and the saint is for ever filled with all the fulness of God, or complete in Him.

Lastly, this *indicates the blessedness of the saint in death*, especially when this sweet and heavenly fact is realized. Our dear brother was not permitted to drop many expressions during his dying hours or days. Such was the nature of his illness that he could not speak much; yet he said, “Tell him that Christ is all and in all.” A short time before he departed he said, “Christ is precious, and I am on the Rock of Ages.” But I do not think so much about the dying utterances of a saint, as about his life and conversation. It was Christ to our brother to live, and it was gain to him to die. I went to see our brother for a few minutes; he said, “Sit down, and speak to me for a few minutes, for I cannot talk. What in such a case could have been done had not the dear man’s peace with God been made. But if the body quivers, and the mind wanders, and is unable to fix itself upon anything special in a dying hour, “Christ is all and in all.” He knows the mind He has ransomed and saved. He takes possession of the soul in regeneration, and holds it fast for ever; and whatever ones dying circumstances may be, the text will apply to every true believer. And when we look down into the grave there is only one person in the universe that can reconcile us to it and that is Jesus, sometimes we think of it as a narrow, cold, dark place, but it is possible to be reconciled to that dusty bed, but this can be done by Jesus only; and soon when the heavens have passed away, and the elements have melted with fervent heat, the great white throne shall be seen and our great All in all shall appear thereon. Then will our brother rise again, and we shall rise also and meet the whole family of heaven, who will come up out of their graves, and all shall fix their immortal eyes upon their immortal Saviour, and realize the fact more fully than we can realize it here, that “Christ is all and in all.” The Lord command His blessing for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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