

# RIGHTEOUS FRUIT AND ITS ROOT.

## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17th, 1875.

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*"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."*—1 John ii. 29.  
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THE everlasting love of the Father, the precious blood of the Son, and the gracious operations of the Spirit, comprehend the whole of salvation; for we are saved by the Triune God. It may, therefore, be said of the Holy Spirit that he is the internal and indwelling Saviour of sinners, and he saves the redeemed family of God efficiently and experimentally. He takes the love of God, and sheds it abroad in the heart; and the blood of sprinkling, and drops it upon the conscience of every saved person; and, therefore, love, blood, and power being inseparably connected with salvation, we shall praise a triune God for ever; for this trinity of blessings. In relation to salvation, experimentally considered, it is said, "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." There is, therefore, no uncertainty in salvation, for love is eternal, so is redemption, and the teaching Spirit abides with the saints for ever. If the Spirit of the living God is the Guide and Leader of his redeemed people, accompanying them all the days of their life, and dwelling in their hearts for ever, then it is a fact that they shall find their way through this world to a better, and being taught of the Lord himself, they shall have accurate and consistent views, and conceptions of sin, and salvation, and shall not sink into everlasting darkness nor be left in fatal ignorance.

John seems to have had some such thoughts as these, when he penned the chapter out of which we have taken our text this morning. Having spoken of certain apostates who had withdrawn themselves from the church, he proceeded to say, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." The Holy Spirit has not obliged or bound himself to teach the people of God anything but what is spiritual and saving; and therefore there are thousands of them who are ignorant of politics; who know little or nothing about philosophy; and who, concerning many matters of natural science are altogether in the dark; hence when it is said the Spirit-taught believer "knows all things," we are to limit the "all things" known to salvation and the spiritual things of God. Being taught of God's Spirit, they know all things essential to their salvation, and their knowledge is sufficient for that object. They know themselves to be sinners, and Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. In due time they are brought to know that Jesus died for them, that they are covered with his imputed excellences, and that

No. 19.—NOVEMBER 15, 1875.

possessing a meetness for, and a title to, heaven, that world is their eternal home. Having made this assertion, the apostle proceeds to say—"The anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you ; and ye need not that any man teach you : but as the same anointing teacheth you." It is a fact that the Lord raises up and qualifies men to preach the Gospel of his grace, and that many of his dear people are instructed by the ministry of the Word into the mysteries of the kingdom. And, therefore, what does John mean when he says, "Ye need not that any man teach you ?" Read the verse thus :—"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you but as the same anointing teacheth you ;" and, therefore, that teaching in the pulpit, through the press, or otherwise, which does not harmonize with the teaching of the Spirit and those impressions which are made and left by him upon the mind, is to be rejected. "And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming;" for "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

Now, first, the apostle assumes, or asserts, a fact,—viz., *that Jesus Christ is righteous*. And secondly, he *draws a conclusion from that fact*, knowing that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Christ produces Christians. A righteous root produces righteous branches and fruit. A righteous Saviour produces righteous saints ; and, therefore, if he is righteous, everyone that is righteous, and that doeth righteousness is born of him. I shall not, however, treat my subject in this way this morning, but will try to make a few observations in the first place on *practical righteousness or righteous doing* ; and secondly, contemplate the root and spring of this righteousness,—viz., the *new birth*, for every one that doeth righteousness is BORN of him ; and thirdly, I will shew the order in which the new birth, or the principle of divine life in the heart, produces deeds of righteousness.

I. In the first place, let us consider *practical righteousness*. I do not know that I avoid that subject. I am not, it is true, always dwelling upon it. It forms one of the themes of our holy religion, but I sometimes fancy that men of truth, as they are generally called, do not sufficiently dwell upon this part of gospel truth. "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Now, although our attention at the present moment is to be directed to practical righteousness, I shall not separate questions of practice from those of experience ; for I apprehend, and believe, that all acceptable practice, springs from experience, just as experience springs from union to the Lord Jesus Christ ; and, therefore, what God has joined together, let not man put asunder. I will not, if I can help it, separate anything from the connexion in which God has placed it.

In the first place, I notice that *repentance* is an act of righteousness, and that he that repents of sin, does righteousness. This position, I think, cannot be controverted. This fact, I think, cannot and will not be denied by the highest Calvinist, nor by the deepest and the lowest freewiller or Arminian on earth. To repent of sin is right, and he who is a humble penitent in the sight of God is in a righteous position ; and as a repenting sinner, he is doing a righteous work, or performing a righteous deed ; and such a man therefore is born of God. Now, the question here arises,—What is repentance ? We know very well where it comes from ; for God hath exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sin. What is repentance ? Many sermons have been preached, and many books have been written on the subject. Well, literally it means a change of mind and of heart, attended with godly sorrow. Let us tarry here a few minutes, and look at this great sight, for we cannot afford to pass it by, without giving it some solemn attention. A change of mind towards—what ? A change of mind towards—whom ? Why, repentance is a change of

mind towards sin, towards self, towards the world, towards God, towards the church, towards the law, and towards the gospel. It is a change of mind concerning all that is bad, and towards everything that is good, holy, and divine. You see, Christian friends, that repentance is a very comprehensive grace, and that a humble and praying penitent is in the sight of a holy and heart-searching God, a marvellous and favoured character. A repenting sinner's mind has been changed towards sin : hence he confesses it, and prays for an application of atoning blood, that his guilt may be removed. Repentance is a change of mind towards self. Lord, I abhor myself. Does what? He abhors himself. This was not his feeling yesterday, or last week. He was then on good terms with himself, loving sin, and exalting himself. Ah! but he is doing works of righteousness now. The new birth has taken place, and his mind having thereby been changed, he is now a penitent before God. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and in ashes. Thus the mind is changed towards sin and towards self. And, thirdly, repentance relates to the world. He has been plucked out of the fire, and the world is now behind him, and a better one before him: hell is at his back, and heaven is before his face. He is *in* the world, but not *of* it now. He was *of* it yesterday, or the day before; but having been called by grace, he has discovered its true character and can no longer love it; therefore he is doing a righteous deed in relation to the world. Repentance involves a change of mind towards the law. I am sure it does; for the law is holy, just, and good; and it reveals the sinner to himself. He sees himself as in a glass, and is consciously lost, ruined, and undone. It is a change of mind concerning the gospel. "Hear him say, Blessed Bible!" What a treasure! O that its sacred promises were mine, and I were interested in the glorious doctrines it discovers. It is a change of mind towards God. He is no longer an enemy. He has thrown away the sword with which he fought, and cast off the armour of the devil; he cannot take another step towards hell, nor curse God's name again. That holy name which he used to blaspheme is most solemn to him now, and he is kneeling before God, with "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Ye know that if Jesus Christ is righteous, every one that doeth righteousness, (and this repenting sinner is doing righteousness,) is born of him." Christian brethren, the Christian or spiritual penitent, appears surrounded by God's attributes, and two of them are solemnly important in his estimation. And which are they? He kneels and weeps between stern justice and sweet, soft, and sovereign mercy. Why, justice is on one side of the penitent, and mercy on the other. One moment his eye is turned towards justice, and another towards mercy. And he says, "Have mercy upon me;" but having regard to justice, he says again,—

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

There is mercy,—may I hope for me? Again: thou art a just God, and I am a sinner, and may with equity be eternally damned. The penitent turns his eyes towards Calvary, and the dear Redeemer; contemplates with ardent hope the fact that sin was laid upon Him, that He was punished for sin and sinners, and, still appearing between mercy and justice, with his eyes flowing with tears, and his heart bruised and broken, he says, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." I should say, then, my Christian brethren, that a repenting sinner is one whose heart, having being spiritualized and bruised by grace, and who, appearing between God's justice and mercy, pours forth the griefs and sorrows of his mind before God; one who loathes himself, detests sin, desires to love God, and be like him; in one word, one in whom godly sorrow works true repentance in the presence of the God of mercy and justice. Do you think such a character is a doer of righteousness? I do, indeed. And the text says that he is a regenerated person? John,

the beloved disciple, says it is so. "Ye know that if he is righteous, every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Then if one is in this position, he is born again? Yes. If this is one's experience, he is one with Christ? Yes. O, there is everlasting consolation in the everlasting gospel of our God. Repentance is a combination or a compound of, at least, two sentiments, viz., hatred and love. Hatred and love; two extremes, or opposites, both exist and operate in the heart of every penitent sinner. Sin is hated, loathed, and detested. But if that were all, there would be no *gospel* repentance. Therefore, whilst on the one hand sin is hated and detested for its own vile sake, on the other there is a fire of love to God in the heart, that strives and struggles to break forth. That love is spiritual, and is one of the fruits of the new birth; and in due time it breaks forth into a clear, vehement, and blessed flame. Does the sinner when forgiven and led into liberty go on his way rejoicing, and never experience sorrow again? No. Repentance is an every-day work, and the child of God, if his heart is right, is a penitent all the days of his life. Why, is that how you square matters with God? sin and repent? sin and repent? It seems to be a very convenient and easy way of going to heaven. Do not speak sneeringly, my fellow-sinner. It is a fact that we sin every day; and if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; and it is also a fact that there is godly sorrow on account of sin in the heart of every true believer; but he is, nevertheless, one of those mourners who are pronounced blessed by Christ himself. Deep repentance in the atmosphere of Calvary, and while the everlasting love of God is flowing into the heart is a solemn and an ineffable pleasure which none but new-born souls can know. Sin is loathed, and the dear Redeemer is loved, and one has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings; therefore love and hatred break the heart, and open the mind, and the streams of godly sorrow flow, while one is far from being absolutely miserable. The child of God wishes to be found in this condition all the days of his life, and many (perhaps most of my hearers) know what I mean when I say that some of the most happy, solemn, and sacred moments of your lives were those which you spent under the shadow of the cross, filled with sorrow and love, with grief and joy,—grief that your accursed sins procured the dolorous sufferings of the dear Redeemer, and joy and love arising from the fact that he bare them in his body on the tree.

"Was it for crimes that I had done  
He groaned upon the tree?  
Amazing pity! grace unknown!  
And love beyond degree!"

This is one righteous deed.

2. My leading ideas on other points are very simple,—I have not gone far for them; and therefore in the next place I observe that *faith* is a righteous act. To believe in the Son of God as sinners saved is a deed of righteousness. Faith in the heart is the result of divine life and light, and is based upon divine testimony; for where there is no testimony of God, divine faith is not required. Divine testimony limits faith, and constitutes the ground thereof; and there is no being in the universe, save Almighty God, that can furnish the soul with such testimony as is sufficient to produce saving faith; and when God gives life and light, and furnishes the soul with divine evidence, the state of things in the mind amounts to that which is described by Paul as the demonstration of the Spirit. Hence the sinner guesses at nothing; there is no conjecture, or peradventure, or uncertainty in connection with the things of God. For as two and two are most clearly and certainly four, so that faith which God produces in the heart is fixed, steady, certain, and positive; and thus when God gives his own testimony concerning sin, the mind does not guess, and fancy, and imagine,—the thing is demonstrated to it; and when God's testimony concerning the power that is necessary to take away sin is given, the

individual no longer guesses, he is no longer in a state of uncertainty, but he sings the beautiful language of the seraphic Toplady:—

“ Could my tears for ever flow,  
 Could my zeal no respite know,  
 All for sin could not atone,  
 Christ must save, and Christ alone

Are you sure of that? As sure of it as you are sure of your existence? Yes. Why, this is a righteous deed; and thus to believe is the exercise of that new, living power which is inseparable from the divine nature in the heart, and which is the gift of God. That holy operation of the mind which apprehends the existence of invisible things, believes in them as positively from their influence upon the soul as in the existence of things which are tangible and visible. This is doing righteousness, and an evidence that one is born of Christ; for Christ as the righteous One produces righteous doers. Now, my friends, faith is connected with repentance, and cannot be separated from it; indeed, it governs godly sorrow, so that its intensity and depth are in proportion to the strength of faith. When faith is strong, repentance is deep; and when it is comprehensive and vigorous, repentance is most intense; therefore the stronger one is as a believer, the deeper is his repentance. The one grace influences and governs the other. If one should believe slightly that he was a sinner, his repentance would be shallow; and if he should feebly believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his feeling would be weak, and on the surface only; but when faith goes far down into the solemn fact that he is a sinner, oh how he loathes himself! and when his faith enters the sweet region of a Saviour's sufferings, how deeply he repents of sin! for repentance is always according to the measure of one's faith. Faith believing, therefore, in connection with repentance is an act of righteousness. Again, faith renounces all the righteousness of self, which is another righteous deed. All self-righteousness is renounced, for faith throws it off, casts it behind her back, tramples upon it, and leaves it for the righteousness of another. What is this self-righteousness? *Rags*. It is good, then, to renounce them! *Filthy rags*. It is just and proper to renounce them! He does righteously, who, having discovered that his own righteousness is filthy rags, throws it behind him, and comes to Jesus Christ as he is. Such an act is a righteous one, and performed by faith only. Faith having thus dealt with one's own righteousness, another work is ascribed to her which may be thus illustrated. A bather throws off his clothes, and if he is a skillful swimmer, he plunges into the water; and faith having thrown off all creature righteousness, comes naked to the Lord Jesus Christ, and plunges into the vast ocean of his precious blood for cleansing and salvation; only there is this difference between the bather and a believer,—the former returns to his own clothes, and puts them on again; but the latter, having bathed, receives, puts on, and wears the beautiful garments of salvation, and the robe of the Saviour's righteousness, and then proceeds, clean and clothed, into the presence of God, expressing his adoring gratitude thus:—“He loved me, and gave himself for me;” and this is doing righteously. First, then, repentance; and, secondly, faith, are righteous deeds.

3. Now, lest it be thought that I am partial in my views of divine truth, I have in the third place to notice *obedience*. Some of my hearers are ready to say, You ought to have mentioned that before. Well, I have paved my way to it, and been as brief as I could. Spiritual, gracious, loving obedience is a righteous deed, and the person who lives a life of spiritual, loving, and gracious obedience is regenerated. Repentance and faith are the principles and operations which prepare the heart for spiritual obedience, and they invariably result therein. If there is neither repentance nor faith, obedience is natural only; but that is not the righteousness indicated in the text. If there is neither repentance nor faith, the obedience is legal or merely moral; and, indeed, the three may be taken together,

natural, and legal, and moral obedience ; and such is very beautiful and desirable in its place, only it does not amount to the righteousness which is indicated in the text ; and, therefore, there must first be repentance and faith, and then a life of righteous obedience will follow. Call the acts of this obedience good works, if you will ; for he hath "purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" it is according to the gospel to designate them good works, "living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world." Only you must go to an apple-tree for apples, and to a fig tree for figs ; for men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles ; and you cannot find spiritual obedience as a fruit on a natural tree, nor gracious obedience on a legal or a merely moral tree ; therefore every one that doeth righteousness in this department of God's government is born of Jesus Christ, and is like (not Adam, but) the Lord. How beautifully both Paul and John have put together the great facts of the Gospel ! What is obedience ? How shall we define it ? Well, the obedience that I am trying to set before you is love expressing itself, and that in God's own way, and according to his revealed will. If your obedience is not an expression of love, it is not right. But if your minds are full of life and light, and your hearts are full of love, then your feet will run with avidity and delight in the ways of God's commandments ; and, prompted by love, you will sing as you hasten on,

"Hinder me not, ye much-loved saints,  
For I must go with you."

And again,

"I to this place am come to show  
What I to boundless mercy owe."

The love of God in one's heart, having been shed abroad therein, produces love in return, and makes one anxious to know his will ; and having ascertained it, since his yoke is easy and his burden is light, he runs in the ways of God's commandments, and serves him not from a legal, but from a free and gracious spirit, and this is righteous obedience, and is acceptable to his Father. He that doeth righteousness is born of the righteous One. Now, it is certain that this obedience constitutes no part whatever of the foundation of the sinner's salvation, and does not form the ground of his acceptance in the sight of God ; for just as he casts away his rags for the righteousness of Jesus Christ, so he loses sight of his own Christian obedience when the question is, How can I stand accepted before God ; but when he has left the Court of Divine Justice covered with the righteousness of Christ, he enters that of everlasting love, and says, "What shall I render unto thee for all thy benefits unto me ?" When he goes before God as a Judge, he is accepted and saved in that righteousness which Christ puts upon him ; and then he goes into love divine, and falls down and asks his God in what way he can show and express his gratitude to his dear name ; and therefore this obedience is a righteous act, and he that doeth righteousness is born of him.

II. Now, a word in the second place on the root and spring of these righteous acts. First, *the new birth*. What is that ? I do not think I can describe it, my friends. I can only speak of its fruits and effects as they are experimental and visible ; but the mystery, the thing itself, lies beyond the reach of my mind, although I hope it has taken place therein. How the Spirit dwells within, I am not required to say. This deep mystery, or the metaphysical bearings thereof, it is not a minister's business to solve or set forth ; and therefore all I can say is this, — it is that operation of God by which a person is brought into spiritual existence, and I am sure I am correct, and you may receive that idea, and carry it away with you with safety. A sinner is brought into spiritual being, and receives a new life at the new birth. When a child is born, a person comes into the world, a

little one, it is true, nevertheless, it is a new being, or person ; and when the new birth takes place, a child of God comes into visible and actual existence. It is a personal change. When regeneration has taken place, one ceases in some respects to be what he was, and becomes through grace divine what he was not. He is still a sinner, but before his regeneration he was nothing but a sinner ; but having been born again, the person is a new creature, even a son or a daughter of the Lord God Almighty. In regeneration the Father's Spirit is given, which is the Spirit of adoption, and his indwelling and operation give the individual the life of a son and the nature of the Father ; and hence we are made "partakers of the divine nature." I cannot dwell further on that. In the second place notice that *the new birth must precede or go before works of righteousness*. Nature cannot rise beyond itself—any more than water, unless it be mechanically forced, can rise beyond its own level. But nothing applied to nature can cause it to rise beyond itself. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Train it, educate it, polish it, restrain it, lead it, do what you will, it is *flesh*, polished flesh, educated flesh,—it remains flesh, and lives in its own natural and proper region. But grace is supernatural, and lives in a higher region than nature, and nothing can enter that higher region, but the new creature or the newborn child of God. By our natural birth we came into this world and into sin, but the spiritual birth introduced us into Christ's kingdom, and a state of spirituality and grace. And as man, as a rational creature, is very far above the brutes that perish, so the child of God, as such, possesses a far higher life than the natural and carnal man ; and, therefore, until this change takes place, good works, that is works that are spiritually good cannot be performed. God proceeds upon the principle that in order to have good fruit, the tree must be made good ; and accordingly he makes the tree good, and then calls for and finds good fruit also. Thus every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Now, a word which perhaps may reach some of my trembling friends, and it is this :—that *righteous deeds are certain evidences of the new birth*. A great many people are always looking for evidences ; and I confess that I am among them. I love good evidences. They are not my salvation ; but that which proves that I am a saved sinner is very important and precious. Well, then, let me say a word or two to my hearers who are evidence-seekers. Everyone that doeth righteousness is a new born person. There are two or three facts to be noticed here. First, here is a *limitation*—with regard to the deeds themselves—righteous deeds. Everyone that doeth righteousness. To hope ; to desire ; to weep for sin ; to long for God's salvation ; to pray ; and to feel in the dark, are righteous deeds ; and if they are in you and abound, there is life. Ah ! yes, eternal life. And if there is life, the new birth has taken place. Let me say, it is as right to weep on account of sin, as it is to sing praises to a sin-forgiving God. It is as righteous to pray for mercy, as it is to praise God for mercy received. Sorrow is as righteous as joy, my brother. Grief and pain are as righteous as pleasure. Are there no degrees, then, of righteousness ? None as to its quality. Sorrow is not less righteous than joy, and joy is not more righteous than godly sorrow ; and I believe in my heart that it requires the blood of Christ to produce both spiritual joy and sorrow ; and, therefore, every one that thus doeth righteousness is born of him. Then, again, we have the idea of *universality*—"every one." The whole family is considered individually and distributively ; he that is in the dust down here, and he that sits on the throne up there ; for otherwise we shall not have every one, you know. He that is in heaven, and he that is in conflict with hell on earth, he that is singing the song of redemption in a better world, and he that longs here for its application—every one. And then we may notice, lastly, as time is gone, that the new birth ever *manifests itself in the deeds of righteousness*, for life will grow, and the child of God cannot suppress the divine nature that is

within. Jesus Christ will not and cannot cease to be its head and root. The life will manifest itself; and consequently the text looks as it were with a smiling face, or rather God looks smilingly through it, upon even the little one in Zion.

III. Now *the order in which the new birth produces deeds of righteousness*. If time permitted I would have shown that they come from it *naturally*, for they are not forced. The child of God is not reluctant in his righteous walk and conversation, he is not forced contrary to his will. They grow from the principle of divine life in the soul as fruit grows upon the tree—naturally, silently, seasonably, perpetually. No noise—you hear nothing, human hands contribute but little if anything to the production of fruit in the orchard; and so when the root of the matter is planted in the heart by God's Spirit, that being a vital root, it grows, shoots out its branches and bears fruit, and there is repentance, and faith, and hope, and a holy walk and conversation; and thus holy flowers and fruit are produced by that which is planted in the heart in regeneration. But there is opposition, for there is unbelief and faith, fear and hope, and sin and holiness. Every grace has its opposite, and, therefore, there is a constant struggle. But again, it produces deeds of righteousness *invincibly*. The conscience of a good man sometimes demands sacrifices; and hence one says, "Sir, I cannot take your situation, or become your servant, if you require me to be on the premises or in the shop on the Lord's-day." Hundreds a year may be promised, but I have a conscience and a God, and cannot do it. It is not a matter of policy or human will with me. I cannot do this and sin against God; and, therefore, in the child of God we have deeds of righteousness performed invincibly. Look at the glorious martyrs! There were the stake, and the fire, and there was from Popery or Paganism and a promise of life. That promise of life on the terms named was trampled upon; and pain, flames, and death were accepted for Christ's sake; and thus deeds of righteousness were done invincibly. And, lastly, these righteous deeds will be *perpetually* performed. Prayers, groans, tears, while travelling here; and in heaven the everlasting song which will be a deed of righteousness that we shall never cease to perform. May the Lord water us every moment, and keep us night and day; that being fat and flourishing, we may show forth the praises of Him from whom our life is derived; that by doing righteousness we may represent our righteous Lord on earth: for his name's sake. Amen.

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# THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 7th, 1875.

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*"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."—Hebrews vi. 19.*

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IN the latter part of this chapter, the children of God are considered as passing through various scenes of persecution, affliction, and sorrow, towards their heavenly home ; and since it is the will of God that the righteous shall be tried, their sufferings are frequently great and numerous : for he has left in the midst of Zion a poor and an afflicted people, whose life is one of trust in himself, and for whom he has provided strong consolation. It is very certain that if we speak of the trials of the saints in connection with omnipotence merely, we must believe that God might conduct his people to heaven without taking them through trouble : an Almighty Being might, and could if he pleased, sweep trial and trouble away : but it is his sovereign and (we ought to say) his merciful will and pleasure, that his children should be tried while on the earth, and until they reach and enter into their heavenly rest. What we know not now we shall know hereafter. In the present state we are unable to fathom God's reasons for his conduct. Why a gracious man, an object of everlasting love, should live for twelve months or two years, or for ten or twenty years, in darkness, affliction, and woe, are questions which we cannot now answer, and mysteries which we cannot solve here. However, the consolation provided by God is great, and the riches of divine mercy various ; hence the Apostle says that "God is willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel," and therefore he has "confirmed it by an oath." That the people of God are considered as passing through affliction, appears by reference to the 10th verse,—*"God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which he have showed toward his name,"* and so on. "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end ; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And then the Apostle took very high ground ; because it was his intention to direct God's beloved people to that strong consolation which he had provided for them. Having introduced Abraham and the promise which God made to him, he said, "Because God could swear by no greater, he sware by himself." Men sware by various objects or by various facts. Sometimes the Jew swore by the temple, sometimes by the altar, or by that which was offered

NO. 20.—DECEMBER 15, 1875.

to God upon it; but God, because he could swear by no greater, swore by himself. There is no being above Jehovah. He is the great and glorious Supreme, and, therefore, in order that we might have strong consolation, he swore by his own life, his own honour, his own attributes and perfections, that in blessing he would bless his people, and that in saving he would save them for ever. One would have thought that God's simple promise would have been sufficient without his oath, since he is a God that cannot lie. We have, however, not his promise only, but the promise followed by an oath, and both followed by an announcement of the fact that God cannot lie; and therefore the promise confirmed by the oath for ever shall stand, and the consequences to us are strong consolation:—"that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Now the blessings of the gospel belong to certain persons, and the riches of divine grace are announced as the property of certain characters. Hence this strong consolation having been provided for such as "have fled for refuge," if you, my fellow-sinner, have not discovered the fact that you are lost, if you are not fleeing to Jesus Christ for refuge, and are not deeply conscious of the fact that there is a storm pursuing you, you have no right whatever to this consolation, for the promises of God do not belong to you, and you ought not to apply your lips to the oath of God for this milk of consolation. The comfort provided by God is for such as have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them, which hope such persons have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

I wish to make a few observations this morning on three points,—the *nature*, the *object*, and the *use* of the believer's hope. The nature of his hope: it is thus illustrated:—Hope is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. The object of this hope:—It enters into that which is within the veil. And the use of it, which, if we have time, we will point out to you as it is suggested by the illustration:—Which hope we have as an *anchor* of the soul.

I. In the first place, let us make a few observations on the *nature* of the believer's hope,—“which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” Now hope as expressed in the preceding verse differs in some respects from that in the verse which we have read for our text this morning. In the former verse, it is the *object*, and in my text it is the *grace* of hope in the hearts of God's regenerated people. We cannot, however, separate the grace of hope from its object; and blessed be God, there is no power that can do this. What shall we say concerning the nature of the believer's hope? I will just make one announcement; and if, having made it, I sat down and said nothing more, I should have said enough for your meditation for a whole day; it is this:—The believer's hope is as to its nature altogether *divine*; from first to last it is of God. Probably you do not see much in this assertion. Well, while you look at the subject for a few minutes, let me try to assist you, and may the God of hope help us both. The believer's hope, however small, feeble, and trembling it may be, is a good hope through grace, and is altogether of God, and hence he has been pleased to assume a very special character in relation to it. “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” God is the God of salvation; therefore salvation is divine; he is the Author and Giver of faith; faith, therefore, is divine; and he is the God of hope, for he creates it and attends to its operations, and becomes its object; therefore hope is altogether divine. And do you think that a hope in the breast that is divine can be lost—a hope that is a creature so precious and important to the Almighty God and to yourselves can be drowned? Oh no! it is sure and steadfast, given and formed by God for the purpose of entering within the veil, and taking hold of great objects and facts in another world. Hope forms an essential part of the believer's character, which is said to

be God's workmanship. "Ye are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." There can be no Christianity without hope, and a good hope through grace demonstrates the existence of vital and imperishable Christianity. A tree cannot grow unless it be rooted in the soil, and there can be no growing and working hope, no clinging and cleaving of the soul to Christ unless the root of the matter is in the heart. Hope is in that root and will be produced by it; and it will grow and increase until the hoping heart reaches its object great and high, and becomes united thereto. This gracious and divinely-formed anchor indicates a twofold operation on the part of God; one performed by him for his people in another world, and the other a preparedness of them here for that which he has prepared for them above. The Father has prepared for them a city, and the Holy Ghost prepares us here for that city, and gives us to hope for that which our covenant God and Father has prepared for us elsewhere. This brings me to notice that, looking at hope as the anchor of the soul, it is made by God himself; that it is altogether heavenly, as being the workmanship of God the Holy Ghost. The anchor hope is made by God. Well might the Apostle call it "sure and stedfast," an anchor made by God in the sinner's breast to hold the soul and conscience through all the storms of life. The Father made and prepared heaven, the Son made an everlasting atonement and redeemed us from death and hell, and the Holy Ghost comes into the breast and gives us a good hope, which, as an anchor, takes hold of that atonement, and that prepared glory, and the invisible realities of the eternal covenant, and enters even into God himself. The Spirit makes the anchor hope to take hold of Christ, and through him to enter the heart of God's everlasting love, and therefore the text says it passes through the veil, and takes hold of that which is within. And we must not forget the fact although we thus speak, that vitality or spiritual life is inseparable from this hope. This anchor is unlike that great instrument which is carried by vessels, and made of iron, and which is perfectly cold and dead. That of which we are speaking is a living one, and in sympathy with its object. The object of a believer's hope is a living one, and the life that is in the anchor, and that which is in its ground or hold is as to its qualities identical, and thus there is a living anchor cast out or upwards by the living soul into a living object, and Paul calls it, altogether considered, both sure and stedfast. Now such an anchor and such an anchor-hold imply that in order to fulfil the merciful purposes and intentions of divine love the Christian shall pass through storms and tempests to the shore of rest and glory. Should our hope be lost, God would be disappointed. Should our anchor break, God's glory would be dimmed and moved: and should it not fulfil the divine hopes and the requirements of the sinner, there will be confusion, disorder, and loss in God's gracious government. But O my brother, this cannot happen; for he who constituted himself the object of your hope, made it to be as an anchor of the soul, and enabled you to cast that anchor into himself, will sustain it firmly to your latest hour; and in the deep solemnities of death, you shall, with your anchor within the veil, shout Victory! Victory! through the blood of the Lamb.

Now let us pass away from this point, to notice in the second place that, according to this view of the subject, *hope connects the soul with its object*, or a hoping heart is connected with God himself; for this anchor entereth into that which is within the veil. There is a *natural* hope of heaven; and the natural, carnal, and wicked always tell us they hope to go to heaven; but there is no connection whatever between their hope and heaven. The hope of the hypocrite shall perish, and a *natural hope* does not enter within the veil. It is neither in God's hand, nor in his heart, nor in the person and mediation of Christ. What is the object of a natural hope? The general goodness of God only. I heard a preacher in the street some weeks ago declare for a fact that God could not send

his creatures to hell and punish them for ever, because he was too good a Being. Thus men dwell upon the general and universal goodness of God. This is not that which is with the veil—or it is not having a hope within the veil. The general goodness of God is that which we see down here in this world, and which is apparent to everybody, for every one here touches and receives the general mercy of God. He that blasphemes the name of God and curses the character of his Maker, is connected with the general mercy of God. Surely that which is within the veil and is one of the unseen objects of faith, is more than that general goodness is which apparent and obvious to all, even the worst and vilest of men; and, therefore, a natural hope entering or taking hold of general goodness and universal mercy is not a good hope, or the hope indicated in my text. Then again, many are casting their hope into their *virtues and creature doings*, ignorantly concluding that they will hold them fast at last and be all that will be required. Then again, there is an undefined something in the minds of men which they are resting upon. I say it is *something undefined*, and perhaps it is undefinable. They have a hope that all will be well with them at last and for ever and ever. But the hope of which we are speaking is intelligible and definable; it is clear, plain, and obvious to the spiritual mind. We can give a reason for the hope that is in us with meekness and with fear. It is true that we cannot describe all the glories of that Being that our hope has entered into; but we can say with Paul—"I know whom I have believed," and where my anchor is, and that he is "able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." A natural hope in the general goodness of God connects the heart with general goodness only, and that is terminable and not eternal. There is no general mercy in hell; that leaves the sinner at the threshold of eternity; and if your hope is there only, when that ceases you will drift away, my fellow man, without an anchor, from God, and heaven, and peace, into eternal darkness and despair. Now, then, as to the fact that hope connects the soul *with God himself*. Hope, or the grace of hope, gives us the idea of something that is absent, something that is future, something that is unenjoyed, something that is unseen. As the anchor-hold is invisible, so the object of a believer's hope is unseen. Hope has respect to that which is future and absent from us. There can be no hope without faith. Faith believes in the existence of the blessed object or fact; and hope goes out and expects to possess it; and it might, therefore, be said that faith comes upon the threshold of the soul, and looking out, says, "He has promised heaven to me;"—hope follows faith, and standing by her side says, "Do you believe that he has promised heaven,—that he is my Father and my God? Then I will expect and long for all; and Paul says, "That hope centreing in God's covenant character, is both sure and steadfast, and shall hold the soul as an anchor holds the vessel in a storm.

Thus, my Christian friends, your hope connects you with God. I have been very much instructed and helped when, standing on the sea-shore, I have seen a vessel moored or a boat fastened to a fixed object, and the man or the men that were in it, taking hold of the rope which secured it and drawing themselves to land. Sometimes an anchor has been cast out and the men have gradually drawn the boat towards it. I have thought, while watching the operation, that is how the believer sometimes draws near to his God. Hope being in God, the good man holding the cable of faith, draws himself, as helped by the Spirit, into the Holiest of all. I think some of my hearers are ready to say, It would be better if you said that God having received the hope of his people draws them towards himself. Take it both ways, and we shall be sure to be right. Yes, God being the hold of the anchor, draws the hoping soul towards himself. Thus, as one hopes in his God, and as he is helped to believe in Jesus Christ, he is drawn towards the shore of peace, and fellowship, and communion with him; and this

is one purpose for which hope connects the soul with God. *Distance* is nothing, the anchor that is cast out of the vessel passes through the waves and billows of the water, and sinks until it reaches the unseen bottom of which it takes hold; so the hope of a child of God passes through guilt, darkness, trial, trouble, and temptation; and through all, not downwards but upwards, and ascends until it reaches heaven, and then it passes beyond all the angels of God, not resting on Gabriel, nor any other glorious creature, but takes hold of its one great and proper object, the everlasting and triune God. Here we have a very peculiar privilege of the soul of a child of God. A vessel at sea whether in a storm or in a calm may sink, notwithstanding the goodness of its anchor and the strength of its hold. It may spring a leak and fill with water, and sink, and be lost; or a storm may rage, the cable may break, or the vessel may drag its anchor: fifty things may happen, and the vessel may, after all, be lost. But the soul with its anchor-hope not in the world, nor in anything out of heaven; but up yonder in Christ; however much it may be tossed, however heavy the waves may be, whatever its fears at times may be; cannot sink if the cable should not break, and hope and God should each retain its hold of the other; and, therefore, the soul is saved from sinking into despair by or through this good hope, which is one of the creatures or fruits of God's good Spirit. *Distance*, we have said, does not affect the operations of hope. I do not know anything about the locality of heaven, and if I did I do not know that any description thereof would be profitable to you. Some persons have said it is in the sun, and others that it is in some distant planet. We accustom ourselves, however, to think of heaven and of our inheritance as beyond the skies. Jesus, it is said, has passed into heaven for us, passed within the veil: he ascended up on high, and a cloud received him out of their sight. Well, wherever heaven may be, there you will find the hope of the believer. And then with regard to its distance *morally* considered. How far we are from perfect conformity to Christ! What base, vile sinners we are! Although we are, morally considered, at a distance from God, yet we cast our hope into him; our souls anchor into that God so far from whom we seem to lie.

Then again, with regard to *mysteries*:—It doth not yet appear what we shall be. Who can set forth or conceive the glories of the invisible world? My dear friends, we are almost as much in the dark as regards the glories of the heavenly world as the sailor is with respect to the bottom of the sea which his anchor takes hold of. There is a bottom he knows, when the anchor has taken hold. There is a heaven; Christ is there, and my God has promised it. We have the firmest confidence in the fact that such a state and such a place exist. God has given us powers and principles which are in sympathy with that glorious state, and whatever and wherever heaven may be, there we hope to be by-and-bye, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the power of his blessed Spirit.

Just a word in last place on the fact that it is *sure* and *stedfast*. If the object of hope is future, and unseen, and unenjoyed, there is no uncertainty whatever connected with it. All is sure and stedfast, and this is the only hope in the world that is so. We cannot be sure that we shall realise the fulfilment of any other expectation. We may have a thousand hopes respecting many things, but we cannot say positively that we shall have what we hope for; but my dear brethren, we may speak positively with regard to our God, our crown, and our heaven. I would not say anything for the world calculated to harden the heart or sterilize the minds of my hearers, nor anything tending to open a door for licentiousness; but on the other hand, I would not for the world say anything contrary to the glorious facts which are stated here, and out of which strong consolation flows. Heaven is certain, God's character cannot change, the hope of a believer cannot be broken, neither can it be lost; and, therefore, a good hope in heaven will secure—or is

evidence of the fact, that the salvation of the hoper has been secured by God—beyond the possibility of a failure. It is sure and stedfast with regard to its *object*,—the character of God; he is sure and stedfast. It is sure and stedfast with regard to its own *nature* and *qualities*. I have already said that God is the Author and the Maker of the hope of his people. It is sure and stedfast with regard to the *fulfilment* of your expectations. We have seen some of God's people go home, some that we walked and talked with, and have noticed that they died in peace. They were calm, tranquil, and resigned when the moment came, although their life had been one of darkness, doubt, and fear. They never got beyond hope. They hoped they were Christians, they hoped God was theirs, they hoped their religion was genuine. They shrank from death; they were afraid that when they reached death all their religion would ooze out and flow away. We have seen some of these die, and have wondered and been confirmed, for all came right at last. There is no disappointment in the deep solemnities of death; for he whose hope (I will not speak of the full assurance of faith) is within the veil is as sure of heaven as are the angels and saints who are already there. Let me tell you, my fellow saint, that you are safer with your hope than Adam was as an innocent man in Paradise: he was not so safe in his innocency and perfect conformity to God as he whose hope as an anchor enters into that within the veil. He did not want what was within the veil, and was not held fast by anything there; therefore, when temptation reached him, he gave way, and by disobedience and sin he drifted out of a state of innocence and righteousness into one of wretchedness, misery, woe, and condemnation. But you are safe. Your God holds you, he holds and preserves your hope, and you can never therefore fail. It is both sure and stedfast. And I should like to add just another word, and that is this:—However great your tossings may be, however fierce and furious the storms of life may be that beat about you here on earth, you are as safe as those spirits are who are already in heaven,—the spirits of just men made perfect; and, therefore, blessed Toplady did not go too far when he sang,

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

The soul that is thus on the sea of time, with its anchor in heaven, is as safe as the spirit which has reached the shore of eternal glory. Thus much for the nature of this anchor hope.

II. A word in the second place on its *object* as indicated in the text,—“which entereth into that within the veil.” First we are told where it is—viz., within the veil; for assistance here we must go to the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon, and look at both these buildings, and we shall understand the meaning of the text. There was a holy place, and a most holy place, and a veil that separated the one from the other. I need not dwell upon the fact that the altar, and the candlestick, and other furniture were in the holy place. Let us go within the veil into holiest of all, and we shall see two or three important objects which I shall have to mention presently. Now the hope of a believer is not in the holy place, much less is it in the outer court; and, less still, is it in the world. It goes from the world through the outer court, into the holy place, and thence into the holiest of all, or within the veil. Therefore the believer's hope fixes itself on nothing here below, on nothing out of heaven. Now, you say, you are ignoring the cross. Stop a minute; we shall come to that presently. I say that the object of a believer's hope is wholly in another world. In the first place: in the most holy place there was the ark of the covenant, and that typified the mercy-seat, or the THRONE OF GRACE, and a believer's hope enters into that. “An anchor in the throne of God, sir!” In one of our cemeteries, I have seen a certain

significant emblem on a tomb—"An anchor strongly made and fixed in a rock,"—an anchor in a rock—very significant and beautiful emblem of a very important fact. But here is a peculiar anchor fixed in Jehovah's throne of divine grace; and this seat of reigning mercy contains ten thousand divinely-given anchors. Ten thousand living hopes have struck themselves into the throne of our saving and smiling God. Look at the publican. He went into the temple, looked through the holy place, and sent his hope into the most holy place. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and his hope entered into that which was within the veil, even the throne of God. Then, secondly, our heavenly Father is upon the throne, sitting between the cherubims, waiting to be gracious to the coming suppliant; and hence you have the hope in God's mercy dropping down before the throne, and singing in the confidence of faith, "My Father, God, I bless thy name." The Father says "Son," and the Son says "Father;" and here is a hold, a firm, a sure, and steadfast hold for the anchor indicated in the text. That is not all. Within the veil we have the *Priest*—whither Jesus, the forerunner, has for us entered. And now just a word on the fact that I passed by and was thought to ignore—the cross. What is that which is within the veil? *The atonement* is there. It was made here, and taken there. The blood was shed here, and it was taken by Christ within the veil. The salvation was accomplished here, but it was taken by Jesus Christ to heaven; and, therefore, that which is within the veil is the atonement, and the Atoner, the Intercessor, and our Forerunner, our dear Saviour, and our loving Brother. Hence, then, hope strikes itself into the person, office, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not all that is within the veil. There is another thing, another fact there which I do not think was symbolized or represented in the holiest of all that was made by hands, and that is *the rainbow* round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. This is a symbol of God's covenant of everlasting grace. David on his dying bed sent his hope into that covenant. "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Put all these facts together, and contemplate your anchor-hold. Here is the throne of mercy where grace reigns. Here is our covenant God and Father seated thereon. Here is our Saviour-Priest, our Lord Jesus between us and our God and Father, and all encircled with the bow of the everlasting covenant. "I will give unto thee the sure mercies of David." Here is the anchor-hold of hope. Lastly, what do we hope for? I give you Paul's words—"In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Now, then, here is the blessing hoped for, forgiveness through Christ's finished work; the fulfilment of God's promises through his intercession and reign; and perfection, not here, but there; not now, but then.

III. What is *the use* of this anchor? To save the soul from *sinking*. Were it not for hope we should, having a knowledge of sin and the law, sink into despair; but hope keeps us hanging on that within the veil. We are buoyant, float upon the great and deep sea across which we are sailing, and into which we should sink if our hope were not in heaven. I say nothing now on the storms and tempests of life, but there are times when the anchor is cast out of the vessel as a *stay in calm weather*, when it has entered the harbour, and there are no waves nor tossings, but it lies at anchor. Does this illustrate the experience of a child of God? His hope must always be up there within the veil, and it is necessary that his anchor should be in Christ and his work in calm weather, when he is as it were in the harbour? What do you understand by this state of calm? Why, that general course of things when the duties of life are fulfilled in the ordinary way, and our daily concerns and matters are uninterrupted by storms and tempests; when nothing particular occurs to cast us out of the common and customary course of life: then our anchor must be within the veil. Then our hope

must be on high. What for? Because otherwise we should drift away into the world and worldliness, and become unspiritual and carnal. As it is, we sometimes depart from God, and have not that heavenly-mindedness which a constant clinging to Christ generates and preserves; and, therefore, we need to lie at anchor in the calm, having the hope given by grace at all times within the veil. And lastly, friends, with such a hope in heaven, it will not matter *how*, or *where*, or *when we die*. On the sea, or down at its bottom; on a railway being crushed, and our spirits sent in a moment to eternity; if we go to bed at night, and in the morning are found dead, as was almost the case with our dear aged friend who had been sitting here for the last few months, and was worshipping with us last Lord's-day I believe; he was with us in the evening, but to-day he is where his hope was last Lord's-day. His spirit is now in full possession of that which as a believer he hoped for. Therefore, if our hope is there, and God holds it, it matters not where our dying bed may stand, nor when death may put its cold hand upon us, we are, and shall be the Lord's.

Of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum; God's people are made conscious of the fact that they are guilty in his sight, and that the storm which their sins have incurred is following them. God, in the riches of his grace, gave his beloved Son, imputed our guilt to him, and inflicted the curse of the law upon him; and Christ having made an end of sin and saved millions, has entered into the holy place with his atonement, there to plead his merits, and demand the salvation of every sinner that flees for refuge to him and his work. The Spirit of God produces such a hope in the soul of the quickened sinner as follows Christ as the Lamb of God, the Priest between God and man, and the Forerunner of all that flee to him for life eternal; this hope as an anchor takes hold of the name, blood, righteousness, and glories of the risen Saviour within the veil which was rent when he triumphed; and thus connected with him and with God in him, the soul sings,

"Then let the wildest storms arise,  
Let tempests mingle earth and skies;  
No fatal shipwreck will I fear,  
Since hope has fixed its anchor there."

May God grant his blessing, for Christ's sake.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON JANUARY 15TH.

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# GOD'S PROMISES FULFILLED.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 2nd, 1876.

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*"There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel ; all came to pass."*—Joshua xxi. 45

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THE apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews reminds his readers that the Gospel of God was preached to the children of Israel in the wilderness and in the land of Canaan: "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them." This will appear if we contemplate the emancipated people at the Red Sea. The sacred host, having killed the passover and sprinkled its blood, received there a marvellous exhibition of the character, love, power, and glory of their God ; his gospel being strikingly preached to them while they stood upon the salvation shore thereof. Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea which had been divided, and its waters returned to their original and natural position ; and thousands of hostile men, and horses, and chariots were at once overwhelmed and drowned. So strangely did the waters of the Red Sea return to their natural strength, that whilst the Egyptians themselves were drowned, Israel became enriched by their arms, which, it appears, were washed on the shore ; and all this was a revelation of gospel facts. They went to Elim, where were seventy palm trees and twelve wells of water ; and then they encountered the Amalekites : when Moses ascended the hill and prayed, Aaron and Hur holding up his hands, and whilst they sustained his arms and Moses prayed, Israel prevailed : Amalek prevailing only as the intercessor fainted. All this indicated the Gospel to the children of Israel. Then again : the Gospel was preached to them in connection with the cloudy pillar over their heads in the day, and the fiery pillar which illuminated, guided, and warmed them in the night. Moses also preached the Word to them in hundreds of discourses delivered to the people. Gospel discourses were delivered by Aaron also, and by their priests generally, and very marvellously did gospel truths shine forth when Jordan was divided and the whole host of Israel crossed the river and took possession of the land of promised rest.

The connection in which my text stands commences at the 43rd verse,—*"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers ; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein."* Every word of God is pure and  
No. 21.—JANUARY 15, 1876.

powerful; and in this verse every word is most evidently and clearly the Word of God. In the first place, we have God's oath,—he swore that he would give the land of Canaan to Israel. And is not the oath of God connected with his promise and his covenant, and the salvation of his people? Then we have the marvellous gift indicated: He gave the land according to his oath and promise to the children of Israel. Finally, observe the result of God's gift;—The people went in, and possessed what God gave. God swore that they should have Canaan; at the appointed moment the gift was bestowed upon them, and they entered into the land, and took possession of it; and the gift was of such a nature, that they not only possessed the land, but dwelt therein, and the Lord gave them rest. These blessings flowed from the promise, and oath, and faithfulness of God. He gave them Canaan: they possessed it, and dwelt there, and he gave them rest roundabout, as he swore unto their fathers. Mark what follows!—for it was the gospel which was preached to them:—"And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them. The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand, and there failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."

Let us look at our text this evening (which I admit is very similar to that which I gave you in the morning) first, *in relation to God himself*; and, secondly, *in relation to his saved and beloved Israel*.

I. First: let us look at the words of our text *in relation to the great Speaker or Promiser himself*. "There failed not aught of any good thing which *Jehovah* had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." I do not know whether I shall be able to add anything fresh or new to the observations which I made in the morning. That subject was suggested to my mind by the fact that this would be the first Lord's-day of the new year, and having looked at our morning text,—*"Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good,"*—and reading on from Genesis and through portions of the other books of Moses, my eye alighted and my mind rested upon this verse. I do not like, if I can avoid it, taking two texts so like each other as my two texts are to-day. However, I could fix upon no other theme for this evening, and I have therefore brought a few thoughts to add to the subject.

We are to look at the text or the promise in relation to our promising and covenant God and Father; and the first thought is this,—the promises of our God *reveal him in both the past and the future*. It will be well to tarry here a few minutes, for this is a pleasing truth, with which are connected some very important and delightful facts. The promises of our God reveal him in the past as well as in the future. I apprehend that not a few of my hearers look upon the promise as if it revealed God in the future only; since history tells us what he *has* done, and the promise tells us what he *will* do. You should, however, look at the promise in connection with the past portion of your life; for it shines as brightly in the past as in the present or the future. Well now, what is behind you? You say, "Not promises, surely." Wait! You make a mistake: there are promises, and a large number of them, too, in the retrospect. A little while ago a friend said to me, "It is thirty-nine years to-day since I joined the Christian church." Now thirty-nine years constitute a very considerable portion of one's life; and if that friend and myself (for I have been connected with the church about thirty-nine or forty years) look back upon that long period, we shall not fail to see many exceeding great and precious promises. But how are the promises of God behind the saints. They are behind you in one form, and before you in another form. Behind you they are fulfilled, and before you they remain to be fulfilled. Looking behind us we see sin, such as rebellion, impatience, corruption, and a thousand other evils of which we ought to be ashamed. Just so; these are facts and we see them; but other facts rise and appear behind you also. Is there

nothing of God, nothing of mercy, nothing of promise, nothing of blood, and nothing from heaven? You look at that which is hellish, and worldly, and carnal; and the devil tempts you to give the greater part of your attention to these things, whereas it should be your aim and mine at such a time as this, the first Lord's-day of the new year, to look not merely at that which is vile and hateful, but at what might have a tendency to excite feelings and sentiments of the deepest gratitude and praise to our covenant God and Father. Let us attempt to sketch the past of our life,—not the whole of it, but the whole of our spiritual existence. Contemplate the distance which lies between your position to-night and your new birth, the time when you were called by grace, and made a new creature in Jesus Christ. What do you see? Gardens and deserts; hills and valleys; nights and days; conflicts and victories; enemies and friends; barrenness and fertility; the shameful on your part, and the faithful and the affectionate on the part of God. It has not been all desert; it has not been all garden. You have not always been on the mountain; you have not always been in the valley; you have not always wept; you have not always sung; and therefore behind you there are places where you sang, and places where you sighed; there are hospitals (so to speak) wherein you suffered, convalescent homes where you were restored to health and strength, and fields wherein with cheerfulness you laboured in the name of the Lord. In connection with all these changes, you may see a bright line of divine and clear light running through your forty years. From this second of January, eighteen hundred and seventy-six, back to the time when you first cried for mercy, there is one unbroken line of divine favours. A faithful Friend, the ever faithful God, went with you through the garden and through the desert; he was with you when you ascended the mountain and when you descended into the valley on this side; and when the next mountain and the next valley were reached, he was a very present help; and thus you have sighed and sung from year to year. Having obtained help of God we continue unto this day; and if there be people on the face of the earth who ought to adopt the language of the text, we should do so. "There has not failed aught of any good thing that the Lord has promised to the house of Israel." In our experience hitherto, all, all has come to pass.

"And we hope by his good pleasure  
Safely to arrive at home."

Let us ask another question in relation to the past. You turn and look behind you, and what do you further see? We are used to talking about having a few years on our heads. I have not as many years as a good many of my hearers, but of course I have a few more than I once had. Therefore when we review the past how many Ebenezers, how many "stones of help" appear set up by our grateful souls on the road? I think you will remember Ebenezers in many and various places. Some of you are tradesmen,—and I shall not ask forgiveness for mentioning that fact,—and you have set up memorials of divine help in your shops, the Lord having appeared to and for you when you were embarrassed in business, and deep, it may be, in other trouble and affliction. The good Lord appeared, and you set up an Ebenezer on the spot. Others of you have set up Ebenezers in your families, or rather, in your homes; perhaps in the bed-room, and by the side of the bed. Your heart was ready to break, your hands hung down, and your knees were feeble in consequence of the sorrow and affliction with which you were overwhelmed; and deliverance came unexpectedly, mercifully, and wondrously. God came through all the dismal depths, darkness, and terrors, and you said, This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in my eyes; and you set up an Ebenezer in the bedroom. Again, you came to the house of God cast down, broken-hearted, and tempted, and the Lord met with you, and so blessed you, that you actually set up

stones of help by offering yourselves to the church for membership, coming before it, relating what great things he had done for your souls, by being baptized in his name, and becoming members thereof; and thus you expressed your gratitude for help in the way. Then in various other places your Ebenezers stand, and God's dear name is engraved with the finger of gratitude on them all. "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." Hence you see the promise in one particular form in the past as well as in the future. But, secondly, I am to observe the fact that the promise reveals God in the future. We shall have his presence and assistance to-morrow, my brother. How is that known? May we be sure of it? We can not be so certain nor speak so positively concerning anything else. How do you know we shall have him to-morrow? We have had him to-day, and we had him yesterday; and he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "But"—yes, I know there are a great many "buts" with us—"we may have darkness of mind and trouble, and in the house there may be bereavement, and want, and privation, and other sorrows." But you will have God, my brother; you will have your covenant God to-morrow, for the promise casts a hope-inspiring, a peculiar light upon the future. A clear stream of love runs into and right through the future, like that which has already followed us, caused by the expressed intentions and purposes of our covenant God. I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee. But do you wish to know what God has said about the future? Having the Word for my guide, I will tell you, or remind you of what you may most confidently expect. What kind of path will he lead me in? On this point God is comparatively silent; at least, he has not revealed the circumstances of your future life. What has he said, then? Why, this; that he will lead you in your journey whatever the road may be. That is better than knowing the minute particulars of the way itself. Since he has promised to lead you, leave the path, or the nature and character of the road, with God. What has he said about the burdens of life? Has he described them? No; but what is better, he has said they shall not be heavier than can be borne, and that he will sustain and support us under them, whatever they may be. What has he said about the duration of life? When shall we die? How much longer shall we live and travel here? That is not revealed; but he has said what is most excellent and like himself,—that he will be with us as long as we live, that he will guide us down to the waters of death, and that in the deep solemnities thereof, everlasting arms shall be underneath us. Thus, my brethren, you have God behind you, God attending you at the present moment, and God before you also. "There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel; all came to pass."

II.—In the second place, we should say a word or two on the fact that the text indicates *the boundless resources of our God*. "There failed not *anything*." The Holy Ghost has said something more than that. There failed not *aught* of anything. We have had, if you will allow me to use the expression, not only the blessing promised, but the full weight thereof has been received. There failed not *aught* of any good thing. Hitherto we have had not only good things, and a certain measure of them, we have had all, the whole of each good thing that our God was pleased to promise to us. Here, then, we have his resources. What a God we have to deal and do with! His resources, like himself, are infinite, and, therefore, they are equal to his Word and promises—they cover the whole. You have sometimes got yourself into considerable difficulty by your loving promise. When you made the promise, without intending to do so you surpassed your power and resources; or, if your word at the time did not exceed your ability when its fulfilment became necessary, it was found that your resources were then inadequate to make it good, and you were plunged into embarrassments and difficulties. But

our God has never been in difficulty through the greatness and graciousness of his promise. The promises are not small, they have not dropped one by one occasionally, at distant intervals, from his mouth, for he has opened his mouth and poured out a whole river of divine promises by which he has committed himself—let me speak of it with reverence—to certain important and solemn proceedings. Our God having unlimited resources is never in difficulties through his word. For instance, a most embarrassing and distressing circumstance which we cannot touch, or, touching, cannot move or change, stops up our path. We have many sleepless nights on account of it, it occasions many prayers, and it exercises and tries our faith; and by-and-by our Lord comes and melts away the mountain and makes the crooked straight. Our God can never be embarrassed, or experience difficulty by terrible circumstances. Sometimes we are plunged into deep waters: the depth never embarrasses God, they constitute no difficulty to him. The difficulty is ours, and the experience of this serves to exalt and illustrate the wisdom, love, goodness, and power of God. You come into the fire, and it is intensely hot; God never says, "I did not intend it should be so hot." No; the hotter the fire the more favourable the opportunity for God to display his marvellously quenching influences. The fire shall not burn thee; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. The suddenness with which circumstances arise never embarrasses the Lord our God. Heaven has always been prepared for everything, and you and I have found it so down to the present moment. Oh, the resources of God cover the Bible, they cover your wants, and they cover the whole of your life, from your birth-cry to your dying groan; and beyond your dying groan, they cover the whole of eternity, and secure your everlasting blessedness in another world. God with an arm that is long enough to reach the ends of the earth, and strong enough to shake the universe itself, and with resources which are boundless in himself, stands connected with the word he has spoken; and therefore we sing—

"O that I had a stronger faith  
To look within the veil;  
To credit what my Maker saith,  
Whose word can never fail!"

"The voice that rolls the stars along  
Speaks all the promises;"

And our God can never be exhausted by the fulfilment of the vast and mighty promises he has made.

III.—Thirdly, the text indicates *his faithfulness and immutable veracity*. There failed not aught. A full but an unfaithful God, would not—I hope I am reverent—and could not be an object of my trust, and hope, and blessing. A full but an unfaithful God. No! Our Father is immensely rich, and unspeakably faithful and true. Are the riches of a father sure to the child, if the father's character is bad or doubtful? We have a God whose resources are boundless, and whose faithfulness is equal to them. God is faithful to himself—and that ought to be enough—for he will never break his word. He is faithful to his Son and must fulfil all the promises he has given to him. And he is faithful to you, his children. Our Christ is faithful in every capacity. Is he a Shepherd? He is faithful, and will never lose a little lamb. There failed not aught of anything that he spake; and do you think if God fulfils the dot of the *i* in the promise—and I am not going out of the Bible for that—"There shall not one jot or tittle fail," he will not guard the lambkin itself? The shepherd is faithful, and in order that the little lambs might not be lost, he puts them into his bosom and carries them

there. As a Husband, as a Friend, as a Saviour, and as an Intercessor, our Lord is faithful. Our Christ is immutably, essentially, and gloriously faithful; hence there failed not aught of any good thing that he spake unto Israel. But in fulfilling his promise he inflicted judgments upon his enemies and theirs. I should like to tarry here a moment, for it seems that he could not make good his word without overturning his enemies. The salvation of Israel out of Egypt involved the destruction of Egypt. The magnifying of Moses in the sight of the children of Israel involved the destruction of that proud monarch Pharaoh; and the fulfilment of God's promise to his Israel involved the destruction of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan. Yes; and the salvation of his dear people involves the destruction of the works of the devil, and it involves the fact that his enemies shall be clothed with shame. The perfect fulfilment of his word to his people involves, thank God! the destruction of Antichrist, the scarlet-coloured beast, that whore that has made the nations drink with the wine of her fornication. There shall not fail any good thing of all that the Lord has spoken to the children of Israel; all shall come to pass. If God fulfils the promise to David and gives him the throne, Saul must be slain. If he fulfils his word to Mordecai and raises him on high, Haman must be hanged. And if he fulfils his covenant to you, this, that, and the other sin, yea, all sin must die; and when all shall have been fulfilled, then you shall be found before his throne without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. We may say just one word here to the infidel, if there is one in the house of God to-night. ["What a leap you are taking from the deep experiences of the people of God to infidelity?"] Well, just a word on that point nevertheless. The fulfilment of the promises of God in the Bible may be, and ought to be, taken as an argument for the existence of God, and for the fact that the Bible is divine. You have not been in the habit of looking at these facts as constituting anything like an argument for the being of a God. Well, wait a minute and let us look at it. Take one of those declarations in the Bible which you do not believe in, but which we call God's promises, and go and fulfil it. Do something, go somewhere, and get some help for the purpose of making it good, verifying it, or bringing it to pass; for, infidel hearer, you know that Bible statements have come to pass, do you not? If you do not believe in the being of a God, you do believe that some or many things stated in the Bible have come to pass? "Well, yes; strange coincidences, to be sure, occasionally occur. What is stated in the Bible has sometimes been verified by circumstances and events." Well, is it not strange that there should be a continuous, uninterrupted, and progressive fulfilment of the Bible when there is not a creature on the face of the earth or anywhere else that we have ever heard of that can make the Bible good? I do not ask you whether it be truth or not. All the world cannot bring it to pass, and make it good, and yet, somehow or other, certain portions of it are continuously being fulfilled. Why, it is a coincidence! To be sure it is. "It is owing to chance." If the word was given by chance, and then comes to pass by chance, is it not strange that it should be so beautifully fulfilled in the experience of so many thousands of people from age to age? The Bible is God's word, and the Speaker has respect to it, and is progressively fulfilling it, and hence there failed not aught of any good thing that he had spoken to the house of Israel; all came to pass. Thus the promises connect God with his people. Why, my dear friends, the promise is like a living link between God, and the saint, uniting them together, and a broken promise would break the connexion between the great God and the true believer; but promises can never break; and, therefore, God and the saint will ever be what they are, except that by-and-by there will be this difference,—we shall see him as he is, and be like him, and be with him for ever and ever. Until that happy, happy change takes place, and that sweet and blissful world is reached,

the word, and the promises, and the Spirit in the word, unite and hold us to our eternal God. God communicates his mind to me through that promise, and through that word I breathe my thoughts and hopes to my heavenly Father.

Will you tarry two or three minutes longer while I look at the subject *in relation to God's Israel*? Many minutes cannot be taken, for time is gone. The settlement of the children of Israel in the land of Canaan was the complete fulfilment of God's word which had been addressed to them. And what shall we say about *our friends that are in heaven*? There is not one there but what will say—"There failed not aught of any good thing God spoke to me; all came to pass, and hence I am at home." And what have *we* to say to-night with regard to the past? I have already hinted at that. Say whatever hard things you like about yourselves. Say what you will about your minister, and about this man, and that, this creature and that, you cannot say anything about your Creator and God but what is good. You must, to speak the truth and grace has made you honest, speak well of his dear name. Take two or three forms of grace which you have received and by which God has fulfilled his promise. *Preserving grace*. Well, here we are. I should like to dwell on that fact, but cannot do so. We have been preserved to be sure. Well, that answers the question, and should be quite sufficient. Your character—here it is. Your reputation—here it is. Your principles—here they are. Your faith—you have not lost that. Hope—it is here, little and weak indeed; but here it is. Your love to God—it is very feeble, but it has not been quenched, blessed be the name of God. Faint, I am indeed faint. Still you are pursuing; and your spiritual tastes and desires, however weak and feeble, are still alive and in operation. Therefore you have been preserved. Secondly, *supplying favour*. You have had that also. Every saint is connected with the fulness of Christ, and the Lord lives to communicate his grace to his people. And let me just observe here, that if Jesus ceased to communicate his fulness, he would cease to be Jesus, and you would cease to be a Christian. Hitherto your cup has been filled, your mercies have been new every morning, and God's faithfulness has been displayed every evening. If you have not had what you wanted, your need has hitherto been supplied, and God's word has been made good. Therefore in the next place we have had *preventing mercy*, and I do not know that I can use a better illustration than by comparing some cherished plan to an egg that contained a very precious arrangement of yours: you anticipated a good deal from the hatching of that egg or its contents, and just as the chick which you had been expecting was about to come forth an "accident" happened, and it was crushed, and your hopes too. Do you think that was good? Well, I say this, and depend upon it, my friend, that had that chick been hatched, had it lived and could it have come to perfection, contrary to the will of God, it would have proved a stinging sorrow to you. It was best as it was. You put that egg into your bosom, and kept it warm, and thought what you would do when you brought your scheme to perfection, and God put his foot upon it and crushed it, because he saw it contained a viper. There has not failed aught of any good thing that God spoke; and thus far we have overcome, and had the presence of the Lord, and now there remains the future. Other needed forms of mercy, and we shall have them. The last is *consummating favour*. We shall meet our dear Lord, I hope, and I am bound to preach to you the fact which may be believed that you will meet your Lord in Jordan; and perhaps you will sing as you have sometimes sung:—

"Now, Lord of Hosts, the waves divide,  
And land my soul in heaven."

And then having been landed on the shores of a blissful immortality, we shall

bear testimony to the fact asserted in the text. There hath not failed aught of any good thing that the Lord hath spoken to the house of Israel; all has come to pass; for I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful." We shall therefore sing,—

"Now from all sin and sorrow free,  
We'll spend a long eternity;  
No more to strive with flesh and blood,  
But cease from sin, and rest in God."

Amen.

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THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON FEBRUARY 15TH.

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# THE EVERLASTING PRAISE OF ISRAEL'S GOD.

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## A Sermon -

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,  
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 12th, 1875.

(THE TWENTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THE CHAPEL.)

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*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen and Amen."*—Ps. xli. 13.

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"THEY shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God:"—so promised the Lord Jesus, the great Head of the Church and of all saving grace. The kingdom of God is two-fold :—the kingdom of grace here on the earth, and the kingdom of glory in heaven. And the people of God are coming from all kindreds and countries into the kingdom of God's grace here, and are sitting down, one by one, with those ancient and favoured patriarchs. When divine grace enters the heart of a sinner, and brings him under its reign and government, he finds himself with Abraham the father of the faithful, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and sits down and rests with them in the kingdom of heaven here, and follows them to the kingdom of glory above, where all rest for ever. Moreover, David, the man after God's heart, appears in the kingdom of grace ; and the children of God meet him therein, and sit down with him in holy fellowship and communion. In the Psalms of David we have recorded the diversified experience of that high and heavenly saint. Elsewhere in the Word we have the experiences of many of God's people portrayed, but the life of David is most fully exhibited by the Holy Ghost therein. Something is said concerning him as a poor shepherd boy, as one that was called early by the grace of God, as one who realized his interest in the pastoral character and care of Jesus Christ,—The Lord is my Shepherd, and therefore I shall not want ;—as one who experienced bitter persecution for years ; as the king of Israel, as a warrior, as a prophet, as a singer, as a writer, and very comprehensively as one of the saints of the Most High God. Sometimes we observe that David is in the valley, at other times we behold him on the top of the mountain. Sometimes we hear the good man crying in the dark, at other times he is dancing in the sunlight before the throne of his God. Thus David neither lived nor died to himself. "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad," said the good man. A portion of his experience is recorded in the Psalm out of which I have taken my text. He lays his cause before the Lord, and says, "As for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. "Therefore though my own familiar friend became treacherous,

No. 22.—FEBRUARY 15, 1876.

though Ahithophel gave counsel against me, though my enemies came round about me like bees, I have not been overcome, I have not been destroyed; for thou favourest me and settest me before thy face for ever: hence my foes have not triumphed over me. Wherefore blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen."

We will make a few observations, first, *on the terms of the text*; and, secondly, *draw a few inferences from it*.

I.—*We will illustrate the terms of the text*. If you look at the verse you will perceive that every word is fraught with high and heavenly meaning. There are four points in its terms which require our attention. First, *the character of God—the Lord God of Israel*; and, secondly, *his praise*,—*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*; and thirdly, *the fact that his praise will be perpetual and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting*; and, fourthly, we have the repeated response, *Amen and Amen*.

First, *the text expresses the gracious character of God*. Blessed be Jehovah, who is the God of Israel, which is the covenant character of the Lord God. The children of Israel, literally considered, were surrounded by a considerable number of heathen nations. The Philistines had their gods. The Moabites had theirs. The Edomites had theirs. The Amalekites had theirs; and if we go into Syria, and towards Babylon and Nineveh, we have a considerable number of nations, all of which had their gods respectively. Hence we read of Baal, and Baal-zebub, and Dagon, and so on; and Israel, who was situated in the midst of these idolatrous nations, had also *their* God, who was not of wood, stone, silver or gold, the work of men's hands, but the great, the supreme, the Lord God of heaven and earth, the everlasting Jehovah; and therefore it is said, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord;" and, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun." Many were the gods of the surrounding people, but there were "none like the God of Jeshurun, who rode upon the heavens in their help, and in his excellency on the sky." Now there was this remarkable difference between the heathen nations that surrounded Canaan, and Israel,—the former made their gods, and brought them into existence for themselves, whereas the God of the latter made his people, and created his own worshippers: the worshippers of Baal and Dagon made the objects of their worship, but the worshippers of the everlasting God were produced by God himself. Now all this indicates God's covenant of grace. God in his trinity of persons is the covenant God of his chosen people, the God of Israel. The Father with all his eternal love is yours; the Son with all his eternity, fulness, worth, and merit is yours; and the Spirit with all his omnipotence, power, and reigning grace is yours: and thus Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Triune Jehovah, is in a covenant way the God of Israel, and will be Israel's God for ever and ever. Now let me just say here, illustrating the subject as well as I can, that the God of Israel is the Author of Israel's spiritual existence, or the fountain of the life of all his dear people. You are his by his will, his by his redeeming blood, and his by his almighty power. By eternal love, by unfrustrable purposes, and by all saving operations, you are the Lord's people. In every respect in which you can belong to God, you do belong to him; and in every respect in which he can be your God he is your God. Eternal wisdom framed the covenant of grace, eternal love fills every part thereof, and God has united his whole self, so to speak, with it for ever. You are, therefore, beneficially and savingly interested in God's inflexible justice, in his unbending righteousness, in his omnipotence, and in his eternal unchangeableness. All that God is and has is yours, and shall be yours as long as you live, even for ever and ever. Many persons talk about living up to their privileges; and we are told that we ought not to have doubts and fears. Well, perhaps we ought not, and we should be truly glad if we were free from them; deeply thank-

ful should we be if that were our experience, ever enjoying without interruption the pleasing fact that he that made the universe is our covenant God and Father. But whatever may be said concerning this question, it is a fact that we have fears, doubts, darkness of mind, and cannot always live up to our high and holy privilege. But if we cannot keep our hold of God, he keeps his hold of us; and if we cannot love him all the days of our life as we would, his love towards us never ceases or changes. We cannot always say "Father" when we pray: no power can prevent him from saying "Son" or "Daughter." If we cannot always see our God, he always sees us; and though our comforts flow away, and all our joys depart, and we are left in darkness and sorrow, all above the clouds is the same in relation to our salvation and glorification; and, therefore, with every faculty I possess, I believe in my text this morning,—“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.”

Let me come down a little lower here, and observe that your experience in relation to sin and God demonstrates your interest in the covenant of grace, and in the friendship of Jehovah. Since there are doubters and fearers in the family of God, let me try to reach and walk with them a little way this morning. In expressing your feelings you have sometimes said that you would give the world, if you possessed it, for leave and ability to call the great Jehovah your God. Well, permit me to prove that he is your God. I can do so, although I cannot induce you to accept the proof which I offer. It is easy to prove that you are interested in the covenant friendship of heaven. How so? Well, I cannot do better than quote the words of Watts:—

“They love the things their Father loves,  
And hate the works he hates.”

Now, if these words are descriptive of your experience, God is your Father, Jehovah is your God in covenant, and there is not a spirit before the throne that is more secure than you. Happiness I am not speaking upon just now. If sin is loathed for its own abominable sake, there is a holy life within; and having such a life, you are a child of the eternal God. An enemy did not produce that life. It was not in you when you came into the world. It is not an accidental possession. Nature did not generate it. It is the gift of God, and flows out of the heart of Deity. It came to you in a covenant way, and for covenant-fulfilling purposes; and, therefore, if you are a cordial hater of sin for its own sake, and a cordial lover of holiness for God's sake, the God of Israel is your God; he is the Author of your spiritual being, and you are born of him, and might sing,—aye! and perhaps you have sung even in the dark,—

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

Now this high and heavenly relationship requires a *special revelation*. Nature does not discover the fact that God is our covenant God, and unaided and unsanctified reason could never have climbed those great and glorious heights; therefore God having constituted himself our Father, gives a revelation out of heaven,—for the Bible is from heaven. The gospel is the outcome of relationship, the result of eternal love, and an epitome of that covenant by which God has constituted himself your God, and millions of human beings his beloved family;—all this comes out in the holy word of Israel's blessed God. Blessed, therefore, be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting. One word more. While the soul is realising this fact in some happy measure, the world recedes from the mind, troubles and trials are lessened, sin is embittered, Christ is endeared, the heart is melted, the mind is sanctified, and an experience fills the breast such as Gabriel never had; for—

"When I can say, My God is mine,  
 When I can feel his glories shine,  
 I tread the world beneath my feet,  
 With all that earth calls good or great."

Shut up nuns in nunneries, and monks in monasteries, and tell them to die to the love of money, to the love of the world, to crucify themselves, and be dead to sin; and they will remain unsanctified and the slaves of lust, notwithstanding all the privations and lacerations they may experience. But let our souls be brought to God, and immersed in everlasting love, and we shall pity princes on their thrones, and call crowns and sceptres empty baubles compared with glories so divine. This revelation produces an experience such as no other influence in God's universe ever generated in the breast. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.

Then notice in the second place, as we have a large subject before us, *his worthy praises*. *Blessed be the God of Israel*. He is essentially blessed, and his blessedness can never be augmented by creatures. It pleased the God of Israel to make millions of creatures, but they do not and cannot augment his blessedness; and it pleased him to have an Israel, a family, an inner circle of holy and happy beings immediately surrounding his throne; but that fact does not increase his blessedness. He makes millions blessed, but he does not thereby add to his own blessedness. And then there is the *obedience* of Israel; for the church of God are a loving and an obedient people, serving their God. Do you run in the ways of God's commandments with delight? God's blessedness is not augmented thereby. Are you obedient to the precepts of your God? You do God no good. Your obedience does not increase his blessedness: for he who is the source of all happiness is essentially and perfectly blessed himself. Now when God blesses, he confers favours; but when men bless God, they confer no favour upon him. God blesses Israel, and they receive a multitude of mercies. Israel bless their God, but they do him no kindness, but ascribe to him the glory that is due to his name. And how does God bless his Israel? Well, speaking experimentally, I am prepared to say that he blesses them in every way. He looks, and there is a blessing in his look. He speaks, and there is a blessing in every word he says. He works, and every operation of his hand is a blessing. He withdraws something that I hold dear, and that too is a blessing. He withholds that which I think would be a blessing, and withholding providence is a blessing. He turns away his face, or seems to do so, and that is a blessing. He puts bitters into my mouth or cup, and they are medicinal and useful blessings to me. Again, I say, Do you live up to your privileges? Your house is full of trouble, and your heart is full of sorrow in consequence thereof; and you do not think it good, do you? I have not felt it was good, and yet I have believed it; for we cannot help believing in a hard and dry way—we must do this when we cannot do otherwise: but when the heart and the home are full of bitters, all is for the best. O God of Israel, give thy dear people more grace, that their faith may be warm and vital, and not merely hard and forced when changes come and press them. Blessed be the God of Israel, then; he confers favours when he blesses, and we ascribe to him the glory due to his name. My dear brethren, there is action and reaction here,—the God of Israel pours his blessing down upon his people; and they, being blest, pour out their gratitude before his throne. He gives to them, and they express their grateful feelings before him for the fact that his favours are sovereign and divine. There should be—if you will allow me to use the word "should" here—continual intercourse between God's people and himself. He is always giving, and they should be always blessing. He is always pouring favours down, and they should be always ascribing praise and glory to his dear name. No; alas! too many of his mercies lie—

“Forgotten in unthankfulness,  
And without praises die.”

Were he man, or otherwise than he is, methinks he would certainly withhold his favours, close his hand, and turn his back upon us altogether. Praise is all he gets, and all he asks for, and all that we can give him:—“We thank thee, O God,” is all that we can give him; and yet with hands full of mercies, hearts full of salvation, houses full of favours, and an eternal heaven before us, we too often forget the God of Israel, the dear and blessed Donor of all. However, there are times when we are a little warm in this matter, and do bless the name of God, the God of Israel, as sinners saved by grace;—and do allow me to remind you of the fact that you have more to thank God for than angels have. They thank him for their creation, their preservation, their standing, glory, and happiness; but you are deeper debtors than they. You fell, but they never did. You were unclean and vile, they never were so. You could have no hope of heaven without blood; they are in heaven without blood, and do not require it to constitute heaven Paradise to them: and therefore you have more to be thankful for than all the angels of God. The God of Israel is so great, high, and glorious, that our praises will never cover the ground; and therefore we have here “from everlasting and to everlasting.” Here our hearts are sometimes full, and we send forth a few expressions of gratitude. How blessed! In heaven our hearts will be perfect, and our expressions of gratitude flow before the throne for ever. And there will be millions of us there, brethren, to spend a Sabbath that shall never break up, and enjoy a rest that will never be destroyed; but, notwithstanding the millions of perfected Israelites in heaven, and the fact that they will be assisted by the songs and powers of angelic minds for ever, the God of Israel will always remain beyond all blessing and praise; and therefore, Blessed be his name from everlasting to everlasting.

But thirdly, a special word on that point—the *perpetuity of his grace and praise from everlasting and to everlasting*. Where are we then? Why, standing between the two everlastings, or eternities. My dear friends, time is, so to speak, an island surrounded by the ocean of eternity. All before the creation of the world and the commencement of time had been vast everlasting, or eternity. God brought the world and time into existence to be filled with multitudes of beings, his beloved Israel being among them. Many of these favoured ones are now in time, surrounded by eternity and by their God, and when they are all saved and taken to heaven, and God has otherwise fulfilled all his purposes, time will sink again into the great ocean, and all will be one vast, boundless, and unmeasured everlasting. Here we stand, then, as on an island, and we look back upon the past everlasting and see God’s eternal decrees, and look up to him and say, “Blessed be thy name from everlasting;” we then believingly look at the future eternity, wherein those decrees will all be executed and fulfilled, and say, “Blessed be thy name *unto* everlasting.” The everlasting past is contemplated in connection with God’s purpose and plans, and the everlasting future in connection with their execution and fulfilment. The everlasting past when the people’s names were written in heaven; and the everlasting future when they shall personally be in the presence of their God. Hence, in the text, blessing is ascribed to Israel’s God from one everlasting to the other.

Lastly, *the repeated response, “Amen and Amen.”* It seems from this, christian friends, that all is, or shall be, harmony and concord, and that excess in praising God is impossible. “Amen and Amen!” And whence comes this repeated response? Take God’s church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, as blessing the Lord their God, who is from everlasting and to everlasting, and each responds, “Amen and Amen.” Consider the saved people of God on the earth “blessing

their redeeming Lord, and declaring him worthy to be praised from everlasting to everlasting ;" and all in heaven respond, "Amen and Amen." The glorified on high respond to their ransomed brethren in this world, who shout, "Blessed be our God," and they express their "So be it ; Amen, so let it be." Angels take up this delightful obligation as well as saints before Jehovah's throne, and unite with them in one unending "Amen ; so be it." But we may go higher than this. "Amen" from the past everlasting, and "Amen" in the future everlasting. Who, in the past everlasting, say you, responds "Amen?" Who is there that can respond? God was in the past eternity, and we, who are Israel, contemplate Him there, and falling before him say, "We bless thy glorious name for thou art good and worthy ;" and he accepts our praise, and says, "Amen." The Father that loved me, the Son that has bought me, and the Spirit that has sanctified me, all give their "So be it" to this expression of gratitude. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. Brethren, this blessed response comes from the heart by the Holy Ghost ; from Christ, the Mediator, in his humiliation and exaltation, and from our everlasting Father, also, "So be it in heaven above and on the earth beneath, and in the hearts of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Thus I have dwelt for a short time on the terms of the text.

II.—We have not much time left for the *inferences* deducible from the subject. The first is this. *The covenant acts of our God are all of them connected with eternity.* If this expression of gratitude is to be taken as indicating a fact and a truth, then eternity enters into all the covenant transactions of Israel's Lord. As we have already said, salvation was decreed, planned, and settled in the past eternity. Time is God's working day ; and whoever sits still, he is always at work, perpetually moving on his undisturbed affairs. The operations of his heart and hands never cease ; for during time he fulfils the eternal purposes and decrees of his mind : and therefore what he is now doing is connected with the future everlasting. Shall I mention one or two of his works? What is said concerning redemption? He has obtained *eternal redemption* for us. What shall we say of *justification*? for our God hath justified us. That act is also connected with eternity ; for the justified, having a perfect character, shall go into the future everlasting state of glory, and bless the God of Israel there for ever. And what may we affirm of the life that distinguishes you from the world? It is an everlasting life. And what is the consolation of which you have drops now and then? It is everlasting consolation. And what is the earnest of the Spirit in your hearts? It is a part which is inseparable from the great whole, and is an everlasting possession. What is heaven itself? It is an inheritance that is incorruptible, undetiled, and can never fade away reserved in heaven for you. My brother, do you believe this? I cannot give you faith. I can assure you, however, that all these things are facts. Believe that if God has given you a little grace, that grace must go into eternity and can never die, that principle of life within must last as long as its author—God. God is now working for eternity. Men work for time ; some for their own lifetime only ; others for two or three generations ; but while men's objects are bounded by time, our God builds for eternity. His temple is never to fall or decay ; and hence the foundation is in eternity, and is itself eternal, the stones of which the building is composed are eternal as to their life and duration, and the cement that holds all together is everlasting love.

"What more could he say,  
Than to you he has said;  
You who unto Jesus  
For refuge have fled?"

Therefore, blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting.  
Secondly, *God's praise will be endless.* We know, then, how, if we are his

people, we shall be employed in eternity. Praise will be our work. Do you now like praise, my dear friends? What think you of spending a whole eternity in singing or expressing gratitude to the God of Israel? Do you think and feel that you would grow tired? If so you are not going to heaven, and you do not know our God. Would you, after a few years or ages, be otherwise employed? Then you are out of the secret. No; the child of God feels that he would, if he might, spend his eternity in blessing and praising the name of his covenant God. God will never forfeit his claim to your gratitude. He has not done so yet, and some of you have been led into deep trouble: he has smitten you very severely, and as we have already said, put many bitter cups into your hands; he has led you in rough paths, and visited you with sore disappointments, which have cut your spirits and rent your hearts, and now do you hate him? Have you turned your back upon him, or felt that he has forfeited his claim to your gratitude and love? "Perish the thought, Sir! No. I have rebelled at times against him; but, bless his name, I cannot turn my back upon him. He forfeit his claim to my gratitude! Why, in that deep trouble, had not everlasting arms been underneath me I must have sunk and been destroyed." Well, his praise, brethren, will be eternal. Blessed be his name from everlasting and to everlasting, Amen and Amen.

But that is not all. There will be harmony and concord. There is not one in heaven but what will sing, and all the expressions of gratitude there will be aimed at one Being. Our attention will not be divided; neither will our gratitude. We receive a present from half-a-dozen or perhaps a hundred friends here, and we express our gratitude to that number; but our gratitude in yonder world will all be addressed to one Being, the Lord God of Israel, whose glories and claims will absorb souls, minds, thoughts, and sentiments for ever and ever. Brother, it will be all God and godliness there—not a silent mouth nor an ungrateful heart, and nothing in that sweet world of glory to interrupt our rapturous songs. Here a good deal that is connected with our religion will and must cease, since it was designed to be temporal only. Hope will cease; prayer will cease; expectation will cease; confession of sin will cease; and faith will cease; but praise and expressions of gratitude will flow through time into eternity, and be transmitted, if I may so speak, from age to age, and never cease from everlasting unto everlasting.

"But oh! eternity's too short,  
To utter all thy praise!"

There will be harmony and concord there. Everyone will know the song, and how to sing it, and have what he has not always now, a heart to sing to his dear delivering and saving God. God is preparing us for this, for we are living here, only a few hours, and he is teaching us to sing. We are now learning the song which no man can learn, but the hundred-and-forty-and-four thousand which are redeemed from among men. It cost God more to produce such a song than it did to cause the song of creation—more to evoke this gratitude out of human hearts than it did to call forth the songs of angels in the morning of time. God is leading us about into those positions where we learn and see something new, and where our experience flows in various directions. Wonders of grace to God belong. We go to the sea in ships, do business in deep waters, sink into the depths and rise into the heights, or we go into the valleys and then to the tops of the mountains, or we lie down beside the still waters. And why all these changes? Why all these leadings? Why, because God intends to have our rapturous praises and grateful songs for ever and ever. He is getting the harp ready, preparing and getting it in tune; and in death the work will be finished, and the heart will be divinely tuned. And then, oh, in heaven, loud to the praise of Christ, our God, its every string will awake, and the soul will be in tune for ever and ever. Amen.

Then, in the next place, *God's sovereign acts of mercy will result in the gratitude of his people, and their present condition will be accounted for.* Why are some poor and others rich? Why do some walk in darkness and others in light? Why is the path of one crooked and that of others straight? He could lead all his people in one path and under the same circumstances to heaven if he pleased. Well, they are sovereign operations of his hand. He knows what he is doing, and all will come right at last—indeed, all is right now. “Yes,” people say, “if we could believe it.” Blessed be God, the righteousness of a thing does not depend upon our faith. All is right now, and all will therefore come right at last; and the poor and the rich, the weak and the strong, Mr. Ready-to-Halt and his daughter, Much-Afraid, Miss Despondency, and all the other pilgrims will arrive in safety on the shores of Canaan, and all will see and gratefully acknowledge the fact that the way in which they were led was the right way—to the city of eternal habitation and rest. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, then, from everlasting to everlasting. *How great he is!* We shall want no other object and no other theme in heaven for ever.

A last thought shall be—*our debtorship will never cease*, and that fact will constitute our heaven. We shall never be out of debt. If we could pay all the gratitude we owe, then, as you know the mind cannot be stationary, we should want another God. If we could get out of God's debt, and cease to be under obligations to the God of Israel, we should want another Being to worship, and other employment. But the Lord God of Israel will be our creditor, and we shall be his debtors for ever; and the sweet thought of being eternally in debt to such mercy and love will constitute a very considerable portion of our heaven and happiness when time shall be no more. May the Lord add his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# "CAST DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED."

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 20th, 1876.

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*"Cast down, but not destroyed."*—2 Cor. iv. 9.

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WHEN Saul of Tarsus was called by grace, Jesus Christ said to Ananias, "Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Saul was a vessel of mercy, having been chosen to life in eternity by the everlasting God; and the grace which was given him in Christ Jesus before time was communicated to his heart just before he entered the city of Damascus, and transformed him from a Pharisee into a Christian, from an enemy into a friend, and from a cruel persecutor into a saint of the Most High. The Apostle, therefore, obtained his religion from heaven; for those gracious principles which distinguished him from his fellow men came from the Lord Jesus as the Head of grace and of the church and people of God, and therefore he was able to bear the persecution which he suffered. He possessed that which could not be destroyed, because his religion, being heavenly, was imperishable. Nevertheless, according to the word of the Lord to Ananias, he was a constant sufferer for the sake of his Master, until the end of his life. He suffered as a Christian, as a Christian minister, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, and as that great apostle who had the care of all the churches. Wherever he went he preached the gospel, wherever he preached he was useful, wherever he was useful he was persecuted; and therefore he says of himself and his brethren,—*"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."*

In the first place, our text applies to the Apostle himself in connection with those good and godly men with whom he was associated in the gospel of his Master. Barnabas was at times with him, Luke was his companion, and Silas accompanied him from place to place; and speaking of himself and his brethren in the ministry he said, *"We are cast down, but not destroyed."* Then our text will apply to ordinary ministers of the Gospel. Perhaps I ought not to say much on this point, because I am not here to preach myself, or to portray my own sorrows and troubles. It is, however, a fact which is generally believed by private Christians, that their ministers are sometimes dejected. The godly man that occupies a pulpit, knows what depression means; his heart sometimes sinks very low; and he too can adopt the language of the text, and say, *"I am cast down, but not destroyed."* A minister is frequently cast down by the corruptions and depravity of his own heart and nature; for like Elijah, Isaiah, Job, and others, he is a man of like passions with his fellow men; and God never selects or chooses

No. 23.—MARCH 15, 1876.

an absolutely perfect and spotless man to preach the gospel of his grace. I suppose that an angel from heaven preaching the gospel would not profit the people of God ; and if my heart were absolutely free from sin, and I were perfectly pure, I should be useless to you as suffering pilgrims to a better world ; and therefore we have this treasure, not in golden, but "in earthen vessels ; that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." A minister is at times cast down in the very midst of Bible plenty. He is sometimes told there is plenty in the fountain, and Jesus Christ can never be exhausted. Why, notwithstanding the plenteousness of the Bible, and that divine abundance which we have in Jesus Christ, a servant of God is sometimes dejected. A sheep may have much pain in the midst of a field of clover ; and in a beautiful and rich pasture it may be sick, and weary, and worn. My soul is sometimes cast down in the midst of gospel glories ; for although the Word is so full, I am unable to put my hand on any portion thereof ; I am cast down in relation to subjects, to texts, and to sermons ; cast down whilst I am preaching, and cast down after I have preached. Yes ; a minister of the gospel has his dejections and depressions. However, our hair grows gray, years increase upon us, and we are favoured with spiritual power and ability to retain the same position year after year. Therefore the text applies to ordinary ministers of the Lord—"Cast down, but not destroyed."

This portion of the Word may also be accommodated to private or ordinary believers, and it is not necessary to twist it in order to make it express the experience of God's people generally ; and here let me say, this is the view which, by the help of God, I intend taking of our subject this morning. I shall leave Paul as an apostle, also ministers of the gospel, and their official and peculiar experiences, and limit my attention for a few minutes to the condition and circumstances of the church of God generally. I will not, however, dwell on all those operations and facts by which the people of God are cast down, nor attempt to depict the whole of the experience of one who is dejected and depressed. It appears to me that if I stood here three-quarters of an hour, and told you your own feelings, and set before you the darkness of your own minds, and the corruptions and depravity of your own hearts, I should not profit your souls : you know the workings of your hearts, and the Gospel is good news and glad tidings to perishing sinners, and a merciful message from the throne of God to those who are cast down. I shall therefore only glance at the dark side, and then proceed to take a brighter view of our subject this morning. "Cast down, but not destroyed." There are many things in this life by which a child of God is cast down ; but blessed be the name of God, there is a world where dejection is unknown, where depression is unfelt, and will be unexperienced for ever. There are no tears in heaven, no headaches, and no heartaches in that sweet and glorious world of bliss and joy. The best is to come, and it is not far off.

"A few more rolling suns at most,  
Will land us on fair Canaan's coast ;  
There we shall sing the song of grace,  
And see our glorious Hiding-place."

Heaven is worth weeping for, though we shall not have it for weeping. It is worth suffering for, though we shall not have it for our suffering. It is worth being cast or hurled down for, though we shall not have it for the sake of the persecutions and trials through which we pass. The child of God is cast down frequently by the evils of his own heart. Oh, brethren, much might be said on this point ; but this branch I will dismiss early. Sin dwells within, and "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things we would." And there are solemn minutes, or hours, or days, or perhaps even weeks, when the child of God says on having examined himself, "Can either God or good dwell there ?" He feels that his heart is as a cage of unclean birds, the fluttering wings of which

are constantly stirring up the moral dust and filth of his nature ; blinding, polluting, and defiling him continually. And this state of things casts him down ; his heart is dejected, and his spirit is depressed, and were it not for rich and reigning grace, despair would follow depression. But let us not dwell on these points. The temptations of the devil frequently cast down the heir of grace and God. How abominable, how like the infidel, to find oneself calling in question the existence of that which is divine, and heavenly, and good ! Have gracious persons never called in question the authority of this holy Book ? never called in question the wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and truth, or the being of a God ? Have they never called in question the genuineness of their own religion, and the certainty of their perseverance to the end ? never questioned God's faithfulness and fatherly care in relation to the future ? Yes, we are cast down by the temptations of the devil. Then again, we read that the children of Israel were cast down by reason of the way. Wilderness, wilderness everywhere ! No inviting spot appeared. Hot, burning sand beneath their feet, and a scorching sun above their heads. Wilderness, wilderness ; from January to December. A waste, howling wilderness for forty years ! Cast down by reason of the way. Well, as it was with the children of Israel, so it is frequently with the people of God now. The ever-varying or changing circumstances of life, many of which are bitter and painful, constitute the present scene a kind of wilderness, and we are cast down by reason of the way.

I might proceed further in this direction, and show that the Apostle possibly alluded to himself and his brethren here as earthen vessels, and I think this fact ought not to be lost sight of. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels ; that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." This gives the text very great force and beauty. An earthen vessel, so brittle and so likely to be cracked and to break, thrown or cast down upon the stones or the hard ground ; but not destroyed. Cast down by persecution, by hatred, by satanic rage, and by sin ; but both the vessel and its contents have been preserved. Cast down in body, and cast down in soul ; but having obtained help of God, I continue until now. Perhaps, however, the Apostle adverts to wrestling (we take as comprehensive a view of the subject as we can,) which was somewhat common in those countries and times. He says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, . . . against spiritual wickednesses in high places," and so on. And with whom do we wrestle, brethren ? You know, if not experimentally, by observation, what it is to wrestle. Two persons embrace each other, and each endeavours and resolves, if possible, to cast the other down. Now do we not know what it is to wrestle spiritually, or with spiritual powers ? Do you not wrestle with the powers of darkness, with the world, and with sin, to which I have already alluded ? And sometimes in our wrestling with the devil and hell, we are hurled down and trampled upon with a cruel force ; but although in our struggles with our enemies we have been cast down, we have not been destroyed. You therefore see that though my text is a somewhat unusual one for me, it is very sweet and comprehensive.

Let us, having *intentionally* made these lengthened prefatory remarks, come a little closer to the subject, and ask, and try to answer, two questions :—*Why is the believer cast down ?* and *How is it that he is not destroyed ?*

In the first place,—*"Cast down."* Let us ask the question, *Why is the believer, whilst passing through time to his heavenly home, cast down ?* He is under the covenant of God's grace, and in the everlasting arms of his heavenly Father. The everlasting God, the Monarch of the world and the universe, is a God of infinite wisdom, love, kindness, pity, tenderness, and compassion ; would it not be better for his child to go to heaven in a smooth path ? better for him to be perfectly free from affliction ? and better that he should sing all the way home ? Is it well, or proper, or necessary that he should shed floods of tears, that his heart should

be sad, that his spirit should be bruised, and that he should be cast down and wounded again and again? Well, we are in the hands of infinite wisdom. Eternal knowledge and kindness are on the throne. Our God is too wise to err and too good to be unkind; and though there are the deepest, profoundest, and most perplexing mysteries in the conduct of our heavenly Father, his heart is full of the softest pity, and tenderest compassion and love; and all that he has done and is doing is capable of an explanation; and what we know not now we shall know hereafter. The sheep of Jesus Christ

“ — neither know nor trace the way,  
But trusting to his piercing eye,  
None of their feet to ruin stray,  
Nor shall the weakest fail or die.”

Why, therefore, are the people of God cast down?

I notice, in the first place, they are cast down *to fulfil the purposes of their heavenly Father*. I quote a portion in confirmation of this position. “I write unto you,” says Paul, addressing the Thessalonians, “that ye should not be moved by the se afflictions; for yourselves know that ye were appointed thereunto.” And is it a fact, then, that our dejections and depressions, that our sorrows, trials, and troubles, fall under the appointing will of our heavenly Father? Is it a fact that they form and constitute a part of the great whole of God’s infinitely wise and glorious plan? If I did not believe this, I should be more frequently cast down than I am; and if this fact were not clearly revealed, I should not only be out at sea, I should be there without either chart or compass. But all is settled, and sometimes I can sing,—

“My soul approves it well.”

Now there are several things that might be mentioned as falling under the appointing will of our heavenly Father:—*Our salvation by Jesus Christ*. Oh, you say, when you mention that, we do not hesitate for a moment to declare that salvation by Jesus Christ was appointed by God. Well, it is a pleasant fact, and we pass away from that, by just observing, that Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Come to a second point. Do you think *your spiritual and heavenly experience was appointed by God*? that your salvation by the Holy Spirit, like your salvation by the Son of God, was and is a matter of Divine appointment. Oh yes, holiness comes from God’s purpose, sir; and my experience of the preciousness of Jesus Christ is a subject of divine decree and purpose. That being admitted, we will pass on. Do you think, in the third place, that *the circumstances which attend your pilgrimage are the results of the appointing will of God*. Do you not know, do you hesitate, or doubt? then I say you must, in all your needful unhappiness and misery, be doubly miserable, if you do not believe that. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” The very hairs of his head are all numbered; and God “performeth the thing that is appointed for him, and many such ways are with him.”

“My life’s minutest circumstance,  
Is governed by His eye.”

And, therefore, the castings down of a child of God are the constant and progressive fulfilment of the purposes and decrees of the everlasting Jehovah; and when the fulfilment of those purposes is nearly completed, you will find yourselves in the deep solemnities of death, and on the threshold of eternity. And does *one’s death fall under the arranging and appointing will of God*? One Scripture is as good as a hundred: “There is a time to be born, and a time to die;” and, therefore, we came into the world at the appointed moment, and we received salvation at the appointed moment. God’s appointments concerning the circumstances of our life surround us, and are being continuously fulfilled. At the appointed moment we shall close our eyes in death; and then

if children of God, (and that "if" will come in, and we cannot help it,) we shall enter triumphantly into all the bliss of being, and finding ourselves in that sweet and glorious inheritance,—

"Where waves of trouble never roll  
Across the peaceful breast."

And, therefore, you see the castings down of a child of God are the continuous fulfilment of the deep-laid purposes of Jehovah ; and that this is true is evident from other facts, and will appear if we contemplate them. Look at the promises of God ; almost every one points at dejection and trouble. I will be with you in the fire, in the water, in the valley, in the conflict, in the battle, in the night, and in the darkness. It does appear that since the promises point at trouble, trials and afflictions fall beneath the appointing will and mind of our heavenly Father. Moreover, look at the titles of your Lord. Many of his names and characters go to confirm the point,—that our castings down are the fulfilment of God's will. What is Christ ? He is a refuge: then there are storms to be experienced by the people of God. He is a fortress and high tower: then there are enemies to be encountered ; and this is known by painful and bitter experience. He is a very present help in every time of trouble: therefore there are times and places of trouble. Hence there is a helper—Christ, a refuge—Christ, a fortress—Christ, who is the munitions of rocks. Cast down, to fulfil the purposes of Jehovah. One word more, and I have done on this point. There is a great and infinitely wise mind superintending all circumstances and events ; hence the Apostle was able in the boldest possible manner to say, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose." Life consists of a multitude of changes, the least of which is sometimes more than you and I can manage, control, or overrule. Events are continually occurring, some of which are most cutting, bitter, and painful ; but since we are not destroyed nor carried away, it is a fact that above and beyond all, there is the great mind or the infinite wisdom of our Father superintending the operation of all the changes of our life ; and down to the present moment we attest the fact that "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose. We love to contemplate our God fulfilling his purposes on the mountain, in the sunshine, in a mossy path, or on a downy bed ; that is, fulfilling them without giving us pain, or causing us to weep ; but he fulfils them in the furnace, in the water, in the valley, in privation, and in the depths of darkness and distress. Cast down, to fulfil the purposes of Heaven, and to accomplish the schemes, the loving schemes, of the Most High.

But we must pass away from that, and notice, *secondly*, that the Christian is cast down, that he may receive important and heavenly information. Knowledge is a very important thing,—knowledge is power, it is said : and knowledge in the things of God is both life and power. For "this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Knowledge is essential to salvation ; for I cannot love a Being that I do not know, I cannot trust in a Being of whom I have no knowledge, and I cannot worship a God unknown ; and therefore a knowledge of God is essential to salvation. The acquisition of spiritual knowledge is sometimes a very painful process. It is always being said there is no royal road to knowledge ; therefore you must begin at the beginning, and wade carefully and laboriously through a multitude of difficulties, in order to obtain a correct and deep knowledge of facts. And there is no royal road to divine knowledge ; therefore the believer, in receiving fresh information and repeated communications of light from his God, must go into various places. He must go into valleys as well as upon mountains. It is very blessed to receive heavenly information on the mountain, but we must go and learn something in the valley also. The road to spiritual knowledge is steep, rugged, winding,

disappointing and depressing to one's fainting spirits here ; and we are led by our God in such paths. Listen ! God has said : " And they shall know the Lord." That is the reason, and they shall know the Lord. But might we not learn elsewhere ? O brethren, whilst I have the most unbounded faith in the love of God, often I find that my faith in his wisdom and knowledge is exceedingly limited, and yet when I think carefully and prayerfully over the matter, I am led to the conclusion that things are really best as they are, and that if I, or the church could alter them, destructive derangement and confusion would be introduced into the plan of the Eternal Jehovah. Let God have his own way, let his plan abide, and his scheme remain ; let his purposes be fulfilled, and let us contend for them in their entirety ; for every piercing sorrow, every bruise, and every wound, is precisely what it should be, and we cannot be in wiser, holier, more loving or tender hands. Cast down, in order that we may be instructed and informed. But let us look a little further. To what extent is information derived from the castings down of a child of God ? whose knowledge is increased thereby ? Well, I may refer to heaven for a minute or two, and say that the angels of God are instructed by the afflictions of a child of God. Do you grudge contributing anything to the knowledge of those benevolent beings ? Probably this thought had not occurred to you. Well, there is a portion of the Word which says : " To the intent that now unto principalities and powers might be known by or through the church, the manifold wisdom of God. Watts, singing of Christ, and of angels, says :—

" The first Archangel never saw  
So much of God before,"

as he saw of him in the death of his dear Son : and I may add, and I believe the Doctor would endorse the sentiment if he were here, that the first Archangel never sees so much of God in nature as he sees of him in the new creature, in that son or daughter that is " cast down, but not destroyed ;" and therefore while they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation, they continually learn something from those on whom they wait, as they did from their Lord. They learn the mysteries of God's wisdom and grace from your course and experience, and perhaps from your prayers also. I accustom myself to think, and indeed believe, that some of them are with us when we meet for spiritual worship, and although you may think it a matter of mere speculation, I doubt not some of our invisible attendants are here this morning. I will not say they are learning anything from my poor sermon, yet I do believe that they learn much of their God, much of his wisdom and of his love from what they observe in connection with the career and devotions of his dear people on the earth. And then, cast down, not for God's information, but to humble us. Sometimes a professor of religion, and even a possessor of the grace of God, is very high. I have known some who were exceedingly tall, great and strong, like Saul the son of Kish, head and shoulders above everybody else, and have lived to see some of them cast down : and we ourselves having conceived we were tall, mighty, and important, have been cast down too. The Lord tries us, that we may know what is in our hearts ; he casts us down or permits us to be cast down from the proud elevation that we assume, in order that the hideous evils of our hearts may be manifested, and then we say with Job, " Mine eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself in dust and ashes," not having known before there was so much evil and sin within.

" Hardly sure can they be worse,  
Who have never known his name."

Cast down, " that he might prove thee, and humble thee, and know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no." And then in the next place, the child of God derives information concerning the Word

in his trouble. Trouble is a good expositor of the Bible, or a good condition in which to receive useful expositions of the Word of God. The meaning of much of the Bible is concealed from the untried and the untempted ; and he that is a stranger to dejection is also a stranger to the spirit of a great portion of the Word of life. But being cast down, and whilst he is low and lowly, he receives from heaven a sweet exposition of divine truth. One says, How sweet that portion was to me when I was cast down on such an occasion ! I saw in it what I had never seen before ; the promise was sweeter to me than it ever had been. Oh, the Lord casts down, or permits his people to be cast down, that the fleshy tables of their hearts may become more impressible, and then he impresses the soul-sustaining and comforting truth upon the softened mind, and they learn experimentally the hallowing meaning of divine revelation. Thus the Word is expounded, and God himself is increasingly endeared through the sanctifying blessing of Heaven upon our dejections and afflictions. I once heard a man say, while talking about a large family that was greatly afflicted, " Ah ! well, notwithstanding all that, there are many worse things than a large family." That is many years ago, but I have thought of it many times since, and will now say to you, Well, by brother, there are many worse things than your castings down. Worse things ! Yes, you might have run into temptation, or into the world, or away from the truth, or from the ways of God, and become a foul, vile, offensive backslider. Oh my hearers, if our castings down tend to drive us near to the Lord, to keep us near to him, and to endear him unto our hearts ; the devil has nothing to congratulate himself upon in the fact of his having succeeded now and then in casting us down ; for though cast down, we are not destroyed. Then, in the next place, this information reaches the devil himself, as well as angels in heaven and the saint of God on earth. We are cast down, for the tormenting information of Satan. He made a great mistake when he appeared before God, in relation to Job. Thou hast set a hedge about him, said Satan to God, and I cannot reach him, nor can trouble touch him. Were it not for this fact, I would tempt, toss, and torment him until he cursed thee to thy face. Well, the Lord sovereignly permitted an opening in the hedge, and Satan went through it, and affected him to a certain extent, and then he learned what Job's character was. He went through the opening and laid his hand upon Job ; and when God and Satan met, again God said :—"Thou movedst me against my servant Job ; hast thou considered there is none like him, a perfect and an upright man, who feareth me, and escheweth evil." Then Satan was permitted to cover him with sores and boils, from the crown of his head to sole of his foot, and Job cursed the day of his birth and many other things ; but against the grace and love of his covenant God and Father, he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. The information which the devil obtains from the casting down of a child of God is most bitter, and no doubt it constitutes a portion of his sufferings ; for he is tormented when he is defeated by worms of the earth. The worm Jacob is taken by him, cast down, and even trodden upon, yet Jacob lives and goes forward towards his heavenly and everlasting home, "cast down, but not destroyed." Spiritual blessings are diversified by God to suit certain purposes and places. They are innumerable, but none of them are superfluous, either in Christ or the Christian ; our God having determined they shall be communicated to his people in different circumstances and places. Some of them break forth in the valley, and we must go down there for them. The Lord makes rivers in high places, and thither we must go in order to bathe therein and to drink thereof. We wish all favours were given in elevated positions, but some are for the saint when he is cast down. My Christian brethren, the Valley of Humiliation in the "Pilgrim's Progress," is a rich piece of ground between the City of Destruction and the Celestial City, and the pilgrim was as much benefited therein as on the Delectable Mountains. They were sweet, refreshing, and charming ; but the pilgrim was never safer, never more spiritually alive, and never perhaps in a more profitable or healthy state than when

he went through that valley : to be sure, Apollyon was there, and many abominable thoughts and feelings filled his mind occasionally ; but he was wakeful, prayerful, and strong for the struggle. From hour to hour, God visited him with peculiar blessings in the conflict, and therefore they flow in certain appointed places, and into those places we must be led or driven, or drawn, or cast down, in order that some special favour may be poured into the immortal mind. Time forbids our going further into this part of the subject, or I might say, *we are cast down to prove the strength of God's word.*

Only a word on the second question. Cast down, for the various reasons that I have mentioned ; *but not destroyed, and why not ?* First, *because Jesus Christ has destroyed destruction.* He has destroyed all that could ruin his people, and there is therefore no death anywhere for the child of God to be cast into:—Guilt is gone ; the curse has been exhausted, the wrath of God has been extinguished ; hell is impossible to a dear child of God, and he cannot be cast into condemnation ; for “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Therefore, brethren, distinguish between being cast down and cast out. Cast down you may be, but not cast out ; cast down, but not cast away ; cast down, but not cast from the Lord Jesus Christ. Cast down in mind, cast down in faith, cast down in hope, cast down in feeling, cast down in fears, cast down in doubts ; but never cast out of the presence of the Lord our God. There is no destruction into which a cast down one can be thrown ; then, secondly, however far we may be cast down, *we can never be cast out of the Lord's presence* ; for Jesus Christ is the Lord of every state and position, and consequently if we are at the ends of the earth, we are under the gracious government of the King of grace and peace. Wherever we may be, we are under his eye, within the reach of his arm and power ; cast down, therefore, but not destroyed. Thirdly, *cast down in Christ.* What do you mean by that ? In union to him, never cast out of him, but cast down as members of Christ, as a part of himself. Oh this union is indissoluble, and this relationship is unchangeably permanent. That young man or woman in Australia is your son or daughter, and notwithstanding that sixteen thousand miles come between you and him or her, the distance has not caused him to cease to be a son, or her to be a daughter, nor you to cease to be the parent ; and the castings down of a child of God are all of them in union to Christ, not cast out of, but dejected, depressed, suffering, weeping, and trembling *in him.* Always on or in the Rock which never moves ; although frequently in that high, honourable, and saving position, you fear and quake. Cast down, therefore ; but not destroyed. I will give you one more scripture, and then close. My sheep are in my hands. But an objection might have been raised : Your hands ? You are poor and despised ; you are Joseph the carpenter's son, and a Nazarite, and we do not believe in your greatness. Well, then, they are not only in my hands, they are in my Father's also ; and no one is able to pluck them out of his hands. It seems from this verse that the sheep are in the hands of both Christ and the Father. They are in my hands, and I give unto them eternal life ; and they are in my Father's hands. Underneath, therefore, are the everlasting arms, and everlasting arms go down with you, when you are cast down ; and therefore you are never cast out of the sustaining and eternal power of Jehovah, and hence the imperishableness of a child of God. “Cast down, but not destroyed.” The Lord add his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# THE ALL-SEEING GOD.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 12th, 1876.

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*"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."*—  
Prov. xv. 3.

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THERE are many portions of the word of divine truth which are necessarily limited in their application ; but while some statements can apply only to God himself, others only to the holy angels, others only to the devil, his angels, and his emissaries, others only to the ungodly, and others only to the people of God, my text this evening may be applied universally. There is no fact in the Word more solemn and important than that which is stated in the verse I have now read:—"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." This truth is infinitely important to Jehovah himself, unspeakably important to every angel in heaven, blessedly important to every saint and child of God, deeply and solemnly important to every wicked and ungodly man and woman, and it is wondrously and awfully important to the devil ; and hence our text at this time is wide and all-comprehending. It looks all ways, and is capable of being applied to *every thing and every person—good and bad* : "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

Let us look at the subject in three relations : firstly, *in relation to God himself* ; secondly, *in relation to his saints* ; and thirdly, *in relation to his enemies*.

I. Let us contemplate the subject in the first place, in relation to God himself. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. In carefully looking at our text, and prayerfully endeavouring to descend a little into it, we arrive at the conclusion that it represents our God as *all eye*,—"The eyes of the Lord are in every place." Our God, therefore, is all knowledge and wisdom, or all eye. It is not necessary that he should turn in order to see any being in the universe. In watching the position and operations of saints, angels, or devils, he changes not, for his eye or himself is everywhere. And then with regard to this fact, we are told that his eyes are as a flame of fire. He does not borrow light from his creatures in which to see the evil and the good, for the darkness and the light are both alike to him ; and seeing all things in his own light, the universe itself is transparent before him and beneath his eye. All hell, although it is a world of darkness, he sees through and through. All heaven is ever in his eye, and he is its eternal light ; and the world in which we dwell is perpetually comprehended by his all-perfect knowledge ; for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Sinner,—and it is said I say

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nothing to the sinner—this is a solemn fact for you ; and saint and child of God, this is a very blessed and exhilarating fact for you, because that great Being who is all eye, is your God and Father,—The eyes of the Lord are in every place. They are therefore in heaven ; in hell ; in this world, and if there be other worlds, they are there also. His eyes are here to-night ; they are in the closet when you are there ; and they are in the depths of darkness and distress into which the believer is sometimes cast. In *every* place,—mark the universality of the expression. And then it is said they are there, “ beholding the evil and the good ;” evil and good things, evil and good circumstances, evil and good events, evil and good beings. *Evil and good things*:—there is not a thought but what he sees, not an emotion but what he knows, not a desire but what he understands and comprehends. In the deepest and darkest heart there is not a thought, nor a feeling, nor a motive, but what is comprehended by the great and glorious Jehovah. My friends, we live in the midst of solemnities, being perpetually surrounded by the searching eyes of God. He sees us whether we turn towards him or not ; and, as I have already said, he sees us without turning himself. God is in every place, beholding temptation and trial ; in every place beholding prayer, and hope, and spirituality. and a multitude of other things, some of which I hope to call your attention to to-night. And they behold *evil and good beings* as well as things. Angels rejoice in the fact that they live and sing beneath their Maker’s eye. The devil would if he could get from beneath the eye of God. He lives, and tempts and torments creatures, and especially the saints of God, under Jehovah’s very eye. Oh what an enemy he is ! How deep and implacable must be the enmity which rages in his breast ! The eyes of God are ever fixed upon him, yet he goes on defying his Maker, defying the Saviour of the Church, and defying everything that is heavenly, sacred, and divine. The eyes of God behold not only *the* evil one, but *every* evil one. But that is not all. They are fixed on the tried believer, the trembling saint, the weak and feeble traveller towards another world, the man that grace divine has saved, and in whose heart there is a little love, and hope, and faith, and grace, in whose breast these is found the earnest of a better world,—the eyes of the Lord are constantly fixed upon him ; and therefore the eyes of God take in all beings, and all things, in all places.

However, let us come a little closer to our subject, and look at it first, in relation to *divine necessity*. Can we apply the word “necessity” to God ? Ought we not, you are ready to say, when speaking of God and of his eye, always to speak of his sovereignty ? There are some things which God must do, some things which he cannot but do ; and this is one of them. This fact cannot be altered, it must be so. It is absolutely necessary ; and let me say that God himself cannot alter it. for he cannot lessen himself ; he cannot contract himself, he cannot become blind, or partially so ; he cannot limit his own knowledge ; he cannot possibly withdraw himself from any place ; he must, since he is God and omnipresent, be everywhere ; and if he is everywhere and is all eye, his eye is everywhere ; his view of things, of men, of all creatures, can never be circumscribed or limited by any power, circumstance, or event. There are many things which limit our view of things ; as, for instance, distance. We cannot see beyond a certain point. His eyes are in the most distant corner of the universe, in the deepest dungeon the saint was ever in, and in the greatest depth of that pit which is called bottomless. His eyes being everywhere, distance cannot limit his view. And material objects cannot limit the view of God. We may conceal ourselves from one another ; and deluded, foolish, and wicked men are ever acting and proceeding as if they believed they could conceal themselves from him. They cast a black veil over themselves and over their deeds, vainly endeavouring to conceal their ungodly motives, and diabolical thoughts and schemes from the eye

of God ; but our God sees through hills, mountains, and distances, and therefore through the darkest and blackest cover. Beneath his eye hell is open, and destruction hath no covering. He comprehends all that is taking place in the depths of hell, in the heights of heaven, in the breast of the devil, in the heart of the sinner, and, blessed be God for a revelation of the fact, in the hearts of the objects of his everlasting love. He cannot limit himself, neither can the range of his eye be circumscribed. As he must be everywhere, so his eye must be in every place, beholding the evil and the good. But the eye of the Lord exercises different influences in different places according to the places themselves. His eye is in heaven, and it causes eternal day and joy there. His eye is in hell, and, oh, brethren, it is that fact that constitutes it a world of torment. I am confident the damned would be less miserable, and their sufferings less intense if they could get out of God's sight, or if Satan and the lost could get from under God's eye. But the terrible eye of his holiness, justice, purity, and truth, is incessantly fixed upon the tormented spirit. His eye is everywhere in this world for various purposes. He is good to all, his tender mercies are over all his works ; but his eye as lovingly looking at the saint creates, sometimes at least, a heaven of joy and delight in his breast. We think of the time, and often refer to it in our public and private prayers, when we said to God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. It is a mercy to be saved, a mercy to have been plucked as brands from the burning, and to have been brought to live with pleasure, and hope, and prayerfulness, beneath the eye of God. Are you sorry, —and I give it to you as a test—are you sorry that God's eye is so strong, and that he sees you everywhere ? Do you wish that he were at least sometimes partially blind ? Is it a source of satisfaction and pleasure to you that you are living incessantly beneath the eye of God ? If so, you are a changed character, you are a regenerated being ; for the devil hates the holy and divine eye that is always fixed upon him ; and the world are constantly saying, Depart from us. Oh, the world would, if it could, put out the eyes of God, and rejoice that he was blind. Men generally hate the thought and the fact that his eyes are everywhere ; while believers rejoice in the pleasing fact that they are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. But lest we preach too long a sermon, let us pass on to another point.

*God has a right to be in every place to inspect it, and to know everything that is therein.* He that is the proprietor of a house and dwells therein, has a right to go into every room thereof. God dwells on his own premises, and the universe is his residence, and he occupies every corner thereof. This is not only a matter of divine necessity, but one of divine right and authority. He has a right to occupy the whole world, and is never an intruder. Whenever he manifests himself in somewhat a special manner, he exercises his own rightful authority as the proprietor of the place, and the owner of the creature. He has a right to be where he is, to be what he is, and to do what he pleases. Now let us say two or three solemn words here. We have said he never comes as an intruder. He looks into a room, or a house, or a cave, or any other place where diabolical schemes are being formed and plans concocted, or some dark deeds of wickedness are being committed, and one of the party shudders, shakes, and fears ; for all at once it has occurred to him there is a God, and for a few minutes he most intensely wishes he were well out of the matter. What is that ? Why, the flashing light from God's eye, which is in every place, beholding the evil and the good. He can look frowningly upon one's conscience, and express his hatred of what a wretch is doing, without absolutely saving his soul ; and many a vile and wicked creature has been arrested in his diabolical proceedings for a time by the burning thought that God's eye was upon him, or at least, that there was a God. Our

God says concerning his people, "I will guide thee with mine eye;" and it seems to me that it might be said concerning his enemies, that they are in some degree restrained by his eye. If infidelity everywhere prevailed, and all men and women in their hearts deeply believed that there was no God, I believe that vice and immorality would overrun and destroy the world; but "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Again, let us contemplate a believer in the arms of the devil: he is regenerated, has been quickened by grace, and is a child of God; he is, however, in the power of the tempter. Satan's temptations are distracting and rending his mind, and he is ready to conclude, and perhaps has concluded, that he is a hypocrite, that his religion up to the present time has been nothing but a delusion, and he is on the verge of believing that there is no God. In such wretchedness, and under so hateful a temptation, where is his help? There is an eye looking, the eye of his Father, however, and he is pleased in a moment, as it were, to enter the scene, and look upon both the tempter and the tempted one. He casts his eye, so to speak, upon the devil, and that is enough; for there is omnipotence in his look. He looks mercifully upon the poor tempted one, and there is almighty help in his look, and the soul is delivered, and the devil takes flight. And he has rightful authority for thus entering the scene in which the devil is defiling, tormenting, and tempting the object of his love. I might go into trouble and various other scenes; but let me say he comes into his church. Is he an intruder there? Oh no; the church is his special property, and the eye of the Lord is there in a special way. It is in all places in a general way; but in his church his special presence is vouchsafed and felt, and his eye is open for saving purposes. He comes into a congregation, and takes a sinner for himself. He comes into the church on the Lord's-day, or perhaps at a church-meeting, and all the members, or nearly all of them, are solemnly and gratefully conscious of the pleasing fact that the Father's eye is upon them. What sweet Sundays we pass when we are conscious of the delightful fact that we are spending them beneath the eye of our God! Oh! how blessed it is to read the Bible under a consciousness that our Father's eye is upon us! The light we have upon the word, and the unction we have at the church-meeting or in our public assemblies, comes from our Father's eye. "The eye of the Lord is in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Is there a member of this church that can say, Depart from me, for I desire not a knowledge of thy ways? At our prayer-meetings and other gatherings, are not the voices and the petitions of the people unanimous:—

"Come nearer, nearer, nearer still;  
We're well when thou art near."

In every place, then; but I must leave different localities, and pass on to another point.

You may look at the subject in connection with *God's reign and rule*. He is the monarch of the universe, and, as the governor of all, he consults no one. His will is the unalterable rule of his own conduct; and having the management of the world and all its teeming millions of beings he must, as it seems to me, be an all-seeing being, his eye must be in every place, beholding the evil and the good. He sees the evil, and restrains it, and could with a frown annihilate it if he pleased; but there it is, whether it be sin or the devil; and he says, Let it remain and I will keep my eye upon it. God keeps his eye upon evil, overrules it, and turns its course without changing its nature. The wind that does so much damage to this individual and the other, drives the mill and grinds the flour, and is the means of supplying you with your daily bread; and the stream that sometimes overflows its banks, and inundates the country, drives

the wheel of the water-mill, which again fulfils a useful purpose. So of the wrath of man, God says, Let it be. I could annihilate it; but let it exist—the wrath of man against me and my people shall be turned into a certain course and utilised. Thus as the wind and the water are turned to profitable account, so our God utilises the evil that is in the world,—“The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain.” God is the Ruler of the Universe, and makes use of the evil as well as the good. I have thought thus of the evil and the good; looking at principles as well as persons. Is there more evil than good in London, or in England, or in your heart and mine? I believe in my very spirit that were it not for the checking, restraining, saving, and almighty eye of our heavenly Father, the evil that is in the world, and in the heart would predominate to-morrow, or even to-night. Talk about the scum rising to the surface, and the powerful vices and abominations that are in this city of London, this Babylon! If God were to shut his eyes or take no notice of us only for a day, the evil would indeed overpower the good, and ruin and destruction would follow. Do you want an evidence of the being of a God? Look, then, at the evil and the good—how small is the good! how vast is the evil!—and ask yourselves the question, What unseen hand or unseen eye is that which holds the bad in check and keeps the good alive? He is ever ruling on his throne. But let us proceed and look at this fact in connection with another. He is fulfilling his own purposes, and fulfilling them by various means, even by the evil and the good. God sometimes fulfils his purposes by his church. Let me tarry here a minute. The church of God is a wonderful instrument in the world. He is making use of it. But there is an evil church as well as a good one, a false as well as a true one, one that is nominal only as well as a church that is real. There is popery, and the various branches thereof, as well as the church of the living God. What is God doing with the evil? He permits it to exist. It fulfils a solemn and peculiar purpose. God says, I will have a church and fulfil my purposes thereby; and the devil says at once, And I will have one too, and it shall oppose the church of God. God says, I will watch all the movements and proceedings of hell; hence the text, The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, beholding the evil and the good. Our God fulfils his purposes by his ministers. There are some good ministers in the day in which we live. Say not I take a very gloomy view of things, for I cannot do this when I reflect upon the portion I have taken for my text to-night; yet the fact must be spoken. If God has good ministers preaching his word, the devil has his servants also; and there are evil and good men in pulpits. Oh that it may be my honour and privilege to be found in him! I have a great many fears, and doubts, and apprehensions concerning my own personal state and standing. I would not be a hypocrite for the world.

“How can I bear the piercing thought,  
What if my name should be left out,  
When thou for them shalt call!”

May the Lord be pleased to make and keep me right, and may I be found in him at last. It is, however, a fact that whilst there are good and godly ministers, there are evil ones; and our Lord is, as I believe, so ruling all things that his purposes are being fulfilled by them both. He sends his good and holy angels; the devil sends his. The evil and the good. There are contrary events of divine providence. Sometimes the road is straight, and then again it is crooked. Sometimes the path is comparatively smooth or even mossy, like Elim where the children of Israel encamped for time, having three-score and ten palm trees and twelve wells of water. They liked that spot, and would have preferred to have Elim all the way to Canaan. But the straight and crooked roads; the mossy and rough

paths, fulfil the purposes of our heavenly Father. And if we contemplate the hearts of his people, the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; and he whose you are, and whom you serve, fixes his eye upon you, and watches night and day, and keeps you, lest any hurt you. He that keepeth Israel never closes his eyes, he never slumbers nor sleeps.

Lastly, in relation to God, look at *it in connection with his judicial character*. Having ruled the world, and fulfilled all his purposes and the hopes of his people, he will come again and burn it, and judge all men and devils. It is necessary, then, since he is to judge all, that he should see all and know all. Ah ! he will be both judge and witness. He now sees, witnesses, and records, and by-and-bye, when assembled millions and worlds are before him, there will be no mistake, or difficulty, in dividing the sinner from the saint, or the sheep from the goats. His awful eye will place all beings in their proper positions, according to their character ; and then, Christian brethren, that eye which is now everywhere, will look smilingly on you, as he speaks : Come, ye blessed of my Father ! and he will look frowningly on his enemies as he pronounces their doom : Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire ! How important, then, is the subject which we have selected or have been directed to to-night !

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, let us contemplate the subject in *relation to the saint*. Having considered it in connection with God, the first thing in relation to the saints is *their calling* or their regeneration. All the objects of God's love are born into this world beneath his eye. The moment they come into existence their Father's eye is fixed upon them, and they are never lost sight of. Nay, they are born not only beneath his eye, but into his everlasting arms. "I was cast upon thee from the womb. Thou art my God from my mother's belly :"—so said good David in days of old. Oh, we did not know this. Fathers and mothers did not know this when, as little helpless infants, we came into this world of sickness and sorrow, and pain and woe. No one but God Almighty knew our destiny ; but he brought us into being, fixed his loving eye upon us at once, and placed his everlasting arms round about us, and held us fast even when we were enemies and dead in trespasses and sins. "Preserved in Christ Jesus, and then called." When, subsequently, we were called by Divine grace, some of us were constrained to look back upon the way in which Providence had led and saved us. We knew not, before calling, that we were being led in a special manner by God's eye ; but having been saved by his grace, we saw that we had been influenced by him, and, connecting things together, we thought of our parentage, and said : The Lord having resolved to call us by Divine grace accounted for such and such circumstances of our life. We did not know why there were those peculiarities in our homes, in our fathers and mothers ; but they were all accounted for then. We went back through our unregeneracy, our associations and connections therein, and thought of the various operations of Divine providence, and saw that there was an unseen and unfelt power, marvellously operating upon our friends, companions, and circumstances, leading all under the eye of God towards one great object, namely—God's intention to call us by his grace. Well, we were led to the place where eternal love was to break forth, and where the purposes of God concerning us were for the first time to be manifested. It poured with rain one Sunday night or morning, one says. I went out for a walk, and my temper was stirred, for I was disappointed of my pleasure by the weather. I turned into a chapel on the road, hating the people and the place ; and there the Lord met with me. Ah, yes, the eye of the Lord is in every place sending the shower of rain, or the tempest, or some other bitter disappointment. It was necessary that the man should go where God had a great blessing for him, the individual must be on the

appointed spot at the appointed time, the spot where the heart of God was to break forth towards him in streams of everlasting love, whether it be a chapel, or a church, or a dying bed, or any other place. There the Lord looked upon him, or at least made him conscious of the fact, for the first time, that his eye was upon him. God opened the sinner's eye, and it met that of God, and he said : Behold, I am vile ! I am vile ! God be merciful to me a sinner ! Then he led him into a large and wealthy place, and he now says : Blessed be his name ; ever since that wondrous hour he has kept me by his grace, and I rejoice in the fact that his eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. But let us pass on to another point.

*The local habitations of his people.* It is a very beautiful fact in connection with the journeys of the children of Israel, that the Lord went before them everywhere, to search out places for them to encamp in. And Israel was not better cared for, nor more highly favoured, than you are. The eye of the Lord is in every place, selecting habitations for the objects of his love. You are ready to say, You go so far, sir, in these matters. Yes ; all over the ground if I can. The eye of the Lord is everywhere ; and I love to talk about it. "The bounds of our habitation are fixed." Here, then, is the Scripture for it. Fixed ? By whom ? Your Father. How fixed ? By his providence. "May we not overstep them ?" We would do so if we could ; but, one says, I would not live where I do if it were not for this, that, or the other circumstance. Just so ; but you see there is that circumstance. I would not remain in that situation another week, if——" Yes, God has put that "if" there ; for "the bounds of our habitation are fixed." We would alter things if we could ; do better for ourselves if we could ; break over the bounds which our God has fixed if we could ; but the eye of the Lord is in every place ; and very firmly do I believe the fact which is beautifully stated by the poet :—

"Thy sheep, thy own peculiar care,  
Though now they seem to roam uneyed,  
Are led, or driven, only where  
They best and safest may abide."

The Lord goes before and selects the place in which we may best dwell ; where we shall be most useful ; where, so to speak, we shall be most safe. And what a mercy if our lot is cast where the Gospel is stately preached ! Some of God's dear people live in barren spots ; while we in London are favoured to live among the gardens ; and a short time since I thought of this portion—"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice ; cause me to hear it." I think some of my hearers may have imagined that the words are the words of the church ; but it is not so. They are addressed by Jesus Christ to his people. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice ; let me hear it. "Thou that dwellest in the gardens," we are told, is in the feminine gender, and not in the masculine ; and therefore a female, Christ's wife, or spouse, is the person addressed. Christ's people dwell in the gardens of his grace, and in this respect are highly favoured ; and the companions may be those that do not see their way clear into the church, having many doubts and scruples and fears ; these daughters of Jerusalem, hearken to the voice of God's people ; and the Great Owner of the gardens himself says, Let me hear it. Hear your prayers, hear your praises, hear your preaching, hear your expressions of gratitude, for pleasant is thy voice and thy countenance is comely. Well, the eyes of the Lord are in every place in relation to the local habitations of his people.

Then, persecution. "I know where thou dwellest," (see the chapter I read at the commencement) ; "even where Satan's seat is." Satan's seat ? Yes ; God has

a throne—so has the devil. God executes his purposes on his throne ; and Satan endeavours to execute his purposes upon his seat. God's throne is surrounded by his ministers and angels ; and so too is that of the devil ; and I have thought that whilst the blood of *Christ* is before the throne of God, the blood of *Christians* is before the seat of the devil. Rome has made herself drunk with the blood of saints. Well, some of the people of God dwell where Satan's seat is ; and what is their comfort ? We hear in the day in which we live a great deal about Popery, Ritualism, and High Churchism. What is our comfort ? The eye of God is on Rome. It is in the Vatican. In every cardinal's dwelling. In every mass-house, whether called chapel or cathedral. God's eye inspects every convent, monastery, and nunnery ; he beholds all the evil and the good. Why, then, does he not destroy Anti-Christ ? Perhaps thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this matter. There is a time to be born, and a time to die ; a time to destroy, and a time to build up ; and at the appointed time my God will frown ten thousand terrors and torments upon Rome, upon Anti-Christ. The monster shall cease to exist. This is our comfort ; our God is there. And you may apply it to your trials and troubles : and hence an explanation of the words, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The eye of the Lord beholds the evil and the good. Then look, lastly, at your struggle, your inward struggle. Beholding the evil and the good. You do not know whether there be any good within—God does. You do not know where to draw the line between the good and the evil—God does. All your conclusions are sometimes drawn against yourself. Our God is a God of truth, and the slightest measure of grace is too valuable to perish. A grain of heaven's saving gold shall not be lost, as the Lord liveth. His eye beholds the good, however small. However weak, however feeble, the grace of God in your heart may be, if only a grain, a small grain, it is good as far as it goes, and the Lord's eye will preserve it until you die ; and that little grace that makes you what you are as a Christian must be glorified.

Then, lastly, look at it in connection with death. In every place. In your dying room, on your dying bed, when your immortal spirits shall be where they never were before, in the precincts of eternity, on the dim and unexplored borders of another world. It seems to me that Toplady had some such conceptions as this when he penned that beautiful hymn, "Rock of Ages, shelter me." Wonderful words—

"When I soar to worlds unknown."

Did not Toplady know heaven and God, and something of glory ? Yes ; but he knew that his conceptions and views of the unexplored future were very limited and dim, and therefore he sang—

"While I draw this fleeting breath,  
When my eyestrings break in death,  
When I soar to worlds unknown,  
See thee on thy judgment throne,  
Rock of Ages, shelter me,  
Let me hide myself in thee."

The subject *in relation to the enemies of God* I must leave. May God command his blessing on what I have said, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# SUBMISSION TO THE BEREAVING HAND OF GOD.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 23rd, 1876.

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*"And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."—1 Samuel iii. 18.*

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THE all-sufficiency of our covenant God is an important theme for ministers of the Gospel to exhibit, and for true believers to rest upon. It is affirmed of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The Father is all-sufficient in his love; in his rich, free, and sovereign mercy; in the blessings of the covenant of grace; and in his saving purposes and designs. And Jesus Christ, the Son, is also all-sufficient: in the worth of his person; in his official character; in his precious and powerful blood; in his glorious and perfect obedience, or that righteousness which he wrought out and brought in for sinners, and which is cast over all the objects of eternal love. Christ's all-sufficiency as the Saviour of sinners may be contemplated in connection with his prevailing intercession, and his gracious and glorious reign. It breaks out and shines gloriously in both these branches of his mediatorial work, and will be acknowledged by assembled millions when he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. "I know," said Job, "that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth;" or, as it has been rendered by some learned men, "he shall stand last upon the earth;" when, having subdued and survived all his enemies, and destroyed death and the grave, he shall appear as the all-sufficient conqueror and the rightful proprietor of the world. Then all graves being open, and all the saints brought forth, and their ransomed eyes fixed upon their Lord, Christ's all-sufficiency will express itself in a marvellous manner in the change which shall take place through looking at their great transforming Saviour. All-sufficiency appears also in the person of the Holy Ghost. He dwells in the saints; and they are therefore said to be his temples, and he occupies his residence as the all-sufficient God. When he enters the heart of a sinner, and takes up his abode therein, he does so as Jehovah, and brings his all-sufficient grace and power with him also; and, consequently, the work of experimental and spiritual transformation in regeneration is effectuated at once. And since the Spirit never forsakes the heart of which he once takes possession, it is under the government and grace of an all-sufficient Saviour; and this accounts for the fact that the child of God is sustained in trouble, his head being kept above the waters, his soul from destruction in the fires through which he passes, and he is not crushed by the weight of the burdens and crosses he carries. Hence having this all-sufficient Spirit, Eli said in prospect of severe trials, "It is the Lord," and I acquiesce.

In relation to the text to-night, we may observe that the Lord was pleased to communicate his mind to old Eli through the youth Samuel, who, having been called in a miraculous manner, at length, standing before God, said: Speak, Lord,

No. 25.—MAY 15, 1876.

for thy servant heareth. And the Lord said to Samuel : "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin I will also make an end, for I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth ; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." And further, heavy tidings were delivered to Samuel for Eli—"And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." Very solemn words ! Most important decision on the part of God. And truly heavy tidings were these for old Eli, the saint, and the high priest of the children of Israel. Samuel having received this message from God, lay down till the morning, when Eli said to him—"What has the Lord said to thee ? I pray thee hide it not from me. God do so to thee, and more, also if thou hide anything from me of all the things he said unto thee. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." This manifested his character at the very outset of his official life. He told Eli all, and concealed nothing from him. And then the all-sufficiency of the Spirit at once appeared in Eli, helping him to say—"It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good."

Looking at the words of our text, and endeavouring to apply them to the purpose for which we are gathered together to-night, I must try to lose sight of Eli and Samuel, and Eli's ungodly sons, and contemplate the subject in connection with the people of God generally. And I will *first consider the subject in relation to the Lord ; and, secondly, in relation to the believer.*

*In the first place, let us consider the subject indicated in the text in relation to Jehovah himself.* "It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good." *Our God is independent.* He has always been so, and so he will remain for ever and ever. He has made worlds, perhaps thousands ; but he does not lean upon one of them. He has made millions and millions of creatures ; but he does not depend upon a single creature of his power. There are thrones and principalities and powers innumerable ; but they are all beneath the throne of God, and under the supervision, superintendence, and government of the great and glorious Jehovah. Our God is the sole Monarch of Heaven, earth, and the universe ; and therefore it is said that he is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the supreme ruler of princes. And since he is immutable, it is a fact on which we reflect with holy pleasure, that what Jehovah is he was, and what he is and was he will be for ever and ever. He was Jehovah when he lived alone, and also when he spoke matter into being, and gave it form and shape. He was the same when he brought angels out of nothing, and gave them powers to serve him and sing his praise. And when the world shall have passed away, should it be annihilated, and the elements shall have departed, and the heavens shall have been wrapped together like a scroll, and another state of things altogether different from the present shall have been introduced, then God will be as to his nature, character, and perfections what he was before the world existed, and what he has been in the experience of creatures, and what he will be unto the end of time. Blessed, truly blessed is that person who possesses that living faith which enables him to put his hand into that of this great Being, and say, "This God is my God for ever and ever, and he will be my guide even unto death." I have never known nor thought of preaching a changing God. At no time and in no place have I ever preached mutability in connection with the eternal Jehovah. If there is a truth in which we may deeply rejoice, it is this great fact that our Father is God, and changes not ; therefore the sons and daughters of Jacob are not consumed. And further in relation to the independence of God we may observe *he has an indisputable right to do so as he pleases everywhere.* He does as he pleases in heaven.

There is not an angel but what feels that God has a right to be supreme, and to govern all the minds of the celestial world. The fact that God is independent, and has a right to occupy the throne, are truly pleasant thoughts to the mind of every angel before the throne. And he has a right to do as he pleases, not only in the armies of heaven, but among the inhabitants of the earth. Surely the Author of our being has a right to do as he pleases with us. He measures the duration of our life. He only has a right to say how long we shall live here, where we shall dwell, and what circumstances shall surround our death. We may apply these facts to the departure\* of our beloved sister. She had her being from this great and independent God, whose universal authority is indisputable; and he had a right to say how long she should retain that being; where and how she should live; and how she should die; and

“Not Gabriel asks the reason why,  
Nor does God the reason give;  
Nor dares the favourite angel pry  
Between the folded leaves”

of the book of God's immutable purposes and decrees. And let it not be forgotten that our God is not accountable to either equals or superiors, for he has none. Our God is supreme; his throne is infinitely higher than that of the highest creature. It is so high that the lowest step thereof is beyond the seat of the highest angel. Jehovah has no equals nor superiors. And it is most obvious to every one that God is not accountable to inferiors. He is not accountable to angels for any part of his conduct, nor for any step he takes; nor to ministers of the Gospel, for what he is pleased to do by them; nor for withholding or seeming to withhold his blessing in some measure from them; nor to any church or churches; nor to any private Christian or individual saint—man or woman, for his mysterious operations. Angels look on and adore; but they never ask a question. They look on and sing, whilst God goes on with his work; but the question is never heard in heaven—show us wherefore thou contendest with them. Give us some reason for this, or that, or the other fact. My brethren and sisters, may that petition which occurs in the Lord's Prayer ascend from your hearts and mine, and an answer of peace come down from the throne: “Let thy will be done, on earth as it is done in heaven.” The will of God is done in heaven without a question, without a thought that God should disclose his mind, unfold his purposes, or give reasons for what he does. I invite you to reflect upon the independence of God, for I am sure that if your hearts are right in this affliction, you will rest in the fact that it has been done by God, who is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. All lean on God, and he leans on himself. “His own power his courts sustains.” God is a self-sustaining and self-existent Being. And now to apply all this. What has happened to the bereaved family of our beloved brother has been done by God. Our departed sister was the creature of Heaven, and, as we comfortably and confidently hope, one of the *new creatures* of God. She was God's child before she was my brother's wife, and God's creature and daughter before she was your mother, my beloved young hearers; and his right to her being supreme he came and took her when and as he pleased. She has ceased to be a human daughter, for her mother is still living; she has ceased to be the sister of her brothers, the wife our beloved brother, and the parent of the children that called her mother a week or so ago; but she has not ceased to be the Lord's. “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.”

But let us pass away from this point, and offer a few observations on another, which it may be necessary to notice on this occasion, viz.—*that the character of*

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\* Preached on the occasion of the sudden death of the wife of one of the deacons of Chadwell-street.

*our God always guarantees the excellency of all his proceedings.* Should you say I am doctrinal to-night, I reply, I cannot preach the gospel without setting forth the doctrines of divine grace, and it seems to me that if our bereaved friends require divine comfort and consolation, they cannot have any better, richer, or stronger than those which flow from the doctrines of eternal love, and a reception of them into their bereaved and pierced spirits. The character of your God, my friends, guarantees the superlative excellency of every part of his conduct. What is God? And what is his character? He is righteous, and all he does is therefore righteous. He is good, and all he does is therefore good. Our God can be deep in his conduct; but he cannot be wrong. He can be dark in his deeds, or work in the dark; but he cannot be unrighteous. He may do what is bewildering and overwhelming, and may also drown the mind or carry it away; but he cannot do anything inconsistent with his righteousness. His character appears everywhere in the operations of his hand, and it also breaks out and shines in the permissions of his will. Whenever he strikes a blow, he strikes it as a righteous and holy God. Whenever he gives, withholds, or takes, he does so in harmony with immutable righteousness, and truth, and goodness. I am going a step further if possible, and I do so because I prayerfully desire that my friends may be sustained and comforted. Our God is a God of order, and all he does is perfectly harmonious with himself and with everything that is right, and true, and heavenly and just. Disorder is human and devilish; it is not divine. Confusion is not heavenly, nor of God. Yet what has bereavement introduced into this family? It has broken up that condition of things which existed for between 20 and 30 years. It has brought grief into the mind and left a vacancy in the house; and it would be difficult indeed for my beloved friends just now to say what is their experience under this dispensation of divine providence. I take my stand here notwithstanding all this, as a minister of the Gospel and an expounder of the Word of God, and declare as God's servant that what has taken place is according to the will and appointment of the God of order, and that it is divinely and universally right. Could it have been prevented or altered—could God's hand have been turned back, or could God have been disappointed in connection with this mysterious dispensation, disorder and confusion would have been introduced into the rule and kingdom of God. If this is "taking high ground," will you say you do not believe it, or that I am not speaking the truth. The theme, though a solemn one, is altogether divine, for "God is a God of order, and not of confusion." We read of the law of divine adaptation which everywhere prevails. The mind of our God grasps the great whole; whilst you and I look at isolated and individual scenes, circumstances, and events. God's eye ranges over all time; his mind goes round all one's life, and sees its bearings and connections on the world and with time; and all the circumstances and events of our respective lives are so many parts of one great whole. There is a place for everything, and a thing appointed and fitted by God for every place; and in preparing persons and things for places God sometimes cuts deeply into the feelings of his creatures, and the affections and hearts of the objects of his love; but he is working out and executing one vast plan, and you and I occupy certain positions in connection with the fulfilment of his great purposes. God is connecting things together, and one creature is shaped for one place and another for another; and this Divine fitting of one event into another will proceed and progress, until, by-and-bye, the mystery of God and of Providence shall be completed, and angels and a redeemed and united church shall unanimously say: It was the Lord; and, behold, he has done all things well. Therefore say, brethren, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

*Let us pass on to observe in the next place that the operations of our God, however mysterious they may be, are the progressive fulfilment of his own eternal*

pleasure. He does as he pleases. Those words are applicable to God only. We thank God the devil cannot do as he pleases. It is nowhere said that angels do as they please, though it is a fact that what they do they feel a holy pleasure in doing; but they are not rulers nor governors; and it is our mercy, my brethren, that we cannot do as we please. It is a mercy for churches and ministers that the Lord rules, and a mercy for wives and husbands that neither can do as they please. Our Lord, however, does all he pleases, and the operations of his hand are the progressive fulfilment of the good pleasure of his will. He pleases his justice by what he does. He satisfies his truth, and meets its claims, by what he has done and is doing. He is pleasing mercy and fulfilling the requirements of his grace by all the works of his hand. Would you like to say with certain professors of religion that our God would have done differently in the past if creatures had not restrained his hand. Say not this is a very peculiar position. I am bringing before you that great and broad fact that our God is fulfilling all the good pleasure of his will. But if creatures would have given themselves to him, he would have taken a far different course. Well, you can take that ground if you like; only know it is the Lord that presides over the world—that presides over the church—that presides over the Bible—that presides over grace—that presides over life, and that presides over death. “It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good ;” and I am assured that God, in reviewing what he has done, even the whole of the past, is perfectly satisfied with all the operations of his hand. Speaking as creatures, we may regret the death of our sister, and the loss sustained thereby; but there is no regret on account thereof in heaven. God does not regret it; angels do not regret it; the spirits of just men made perfect do not regret it; and she herself does not regret the stroke by which she was laid low in death, or the solemn circumstances under which she was called away. She left all her regrets in this poor dark and dying world; and on entering heaven, methinks she said—It was the Lord; and he did all things well. Our God is fulfilling the good pleasure of his will.

Before I look at the subject in connection with the believer, I should like just to observe that *our God rules the operations of all instruments he employs*. “It is the Lord.” You will read at your leisure in the following chapter that the children of Israel entered into a war with the Philistines, and that they were so blinded by the various influences of sin that they took the ark from Shiloh into the camp. The battle raged furiously between the two armies, and the result was the defeat of Israel and the capture of the ark of the Lord. A messenger, one of the Israelite soldiers, left the camp and ran to Shiloh, where the old man Eli was, and the young man said : Israel is beaten; Hophni and Phinehas, thy two sons, are slain, and the ark of God is taken. When he said Israel is defeated, the old man listened calmly; and when he added, Hophni and Phinehas are dead, Eli, it seems, did not manifest any violence of feeling; but when the man concluded with the intelligence, “the ark of God is taken,” he fell backwards and brake his neck, for the ark of God was more than Israel and Hophni and Phinehas were to him; and that painful intelligence sent him to his long home. God rules the operations of all the instruments he employs. It was the Philistines that defeated Israel; but the Lord presided over the battle. The Philistines slew Hophni and Phinehas; but the Lord thereby fulfilled his word. Death may reach us through a burning fever, or an ague that shakes the whole frame, or an accident on the rail, or on the water, or when crossing the crowded thoroughfares of this mighty city, or in many other ways. The Lord help us with the faith of Eli to say : “It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good.”

Before dismissing this part of my subject, let me make one observation on

an all-important fact, viz.—*That it is the Lord that produces such a state of mind as this.* The Lord is the author and giver of this holy subjection. We can find fault with God, rebel against him, murmur, complain, and even fight against his uplifted and outstretched arm; and the world can both contradict and blaspheme the word, works, and name of the Lord our God; but who can bring his mind into this position? Who can give his spirits this believing pliancy, flexibility, and holy softness? “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.” Why see a being bereaved of all his comforts, looking at the hand that stript him, and saying, thou hast a right to do it and the deed is good? What do you make of such a being as that? Why this—that he is a subject of Divine grace; his heart, mind, and powers are in practical and experimental subjection to the God of all grace, and a man in such a position and attitude reflects the glory of the character of his covenant God. I see God in the man that can say, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Let one’s wife, one’s child, or children, one’s husband, one’s property and estate, be taken; and in the absence of Divine assistance, I hear complaints, murmurs, and expressions of bitter feeling; but when I see an immortal being fall flat upon the sovereign, righteous, and mysterious will of God, I see such a triumph of faith as proves to me the existence of a God, and a proof of the reign of his rich grace in the heart of that being. Nothing is easier than for the believer to say—Let the Lord do what he will, when his arms are known to be underneath him, and the light of his countenance falls upon the heart; but this acquiescence is impossible in the absence of the Lord, and when the mind is enveloped in darkness. Come and tell me it is my duty to submit, my duty to resign my all to God, my duty to hold my tongue and be mute. I respond, My friend, I know it; “but I could also speak as you speak if my soul were in your soul’s place.” That is how patient Job expressed himself. If you were where I am, and what I am, I think, said he, you would say what I say, and feel as I feel. Duty-submission, and duty-subjection, and duty-resignation are good to a certain extent, but they leave the heart cold and hard; but when the soul is melted, and flows forth into the channels of Divine appointment, then I see much more than duty-submission and resignation can present.

Now a word in the second place on the subject in relation to the believer. “It is the Lord.” We will look at Eli for a minute, as representing the true believer under certain circumstances; and the first thought that occurs to our minds is this:—*The believer recognises the hand of his God.* “It is the Lord.” Who is there? The Lord. Whose word is that? It is the Lord’s. Who did that? Whose work is it? It is the Lord’s work. It is important to recognise the presence of God, the word of God, and the work of God. And this involves another fact, viz.—the rejection by the saint of every power but that of God. It is said “that change came from chance.” No; it was the Lord that produced it. Chance had nothing to do therewith. “But there are second causes in existence, and you admit they are in constant operation.” Yes; we admit this fact, but if all one’s attention be fixed upon them exclusively, and his thoughts and faith do not go beyond them to the Lord, the absence of faith in an intelligent Mind and Hand influencing all will leave one in despair, or nearly so. There is enough in second causes, if separated from God’s providence, to drive one mad, or sink one into a state of insanity. Oh, if the doctor had done so and so, my wife had not died! If I had called in a certain physician, my wife might have lived; and if this had not occurred, and the other had not transpired, or one had not done something, then things had not been as they are. Yes; we reason in this way, and, humanly speaking, such reasoning may be admissible; but then is there the smallest vein of comfort therein? My friends, you cannot afford to exclude the Lord. You must have Him in second causes

somewhere. Let them and their operations too be acknowledged ; but the Lord is also at hand, guiding all for your good and his own glory. May he give us faith to look and speak as Eli looked and spoke when Samuel told him all. "It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good." Job said, when all his property was gone, and nothing but his wife, who became a tempter and a torment to him, was left—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord." "Curse God," said the only one that was left to him. Curse God, Job, and die. Do you still hold fast your integrity ? Curse, and die. "Thou talkest as one of the foolish women talketh. Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil ?" It was good for my brother to receive his wife from the Lord, and good for him to have her between 20 and 30 years by the will and the mercy of the Lord ; and may he be enabled to believe it was equally good in God's account to take her away by death. Let him do what seemeth him good, for he is the Lord.

*Does not this tend to silence all murmuring voices and words ?* "It is the Lord." Who arrested that mind and made that man believe ? Was it his father or his mother ? Then I challenge his religion. I stop him and ask him many serious questions, and venture to intimate to him that I do not believe he is saved. If he got his religion from his father and mother, I do not believe in it. But did his religion come from the Lord ? If so, let him go—it is good. The Lord's work is divinely good. Is there a solemn affliction in the family ? Who is the author of it ? Whence came it there ? To what is it traceable ? Job had been the richest man in the East, and in a day he became a beggar and sat on the dunghill. Hear how he traced his sudden poverty and privation to the Lord. "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me ; and many such things are with him." "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord." If the devil tempts, we may oppose him ; if our fellow men strip us, we may denounce their conduct ; if even Gabriel took our all away, we should not perhaps commit a sin against him, or God, if we said—Stop and tell me what you have done that for. But when we are stripped by God, we are dumb ; our mouth is closed ; we are silent, for it is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good." You have read or heard of an anecdote which will illustrate this point :—The gardener of a gentleman took great pleasure and delight in the garden under his care, and having taken extraordinary pains in cultivating and perfecting a certain valuable plant, he watched and guarded it with jealous care. The plant had grown and was in flower ; and one morning he found the flower had been plucked—the flower of that plant that was so precious to him. Prepared to express bitter feelings and perhaps to smite the person that had plucked it, he said to one and another, Who did that ? No one appeared to know. At last one said, I saw the master pluck it this morning. That was enough ; that was all ; the servant was silenced, though he reared the plant ; for the master took it, and he had a right so to do. And who took our brother's beloved wife ? Who takes our dear friends ? Who enters our homes, and the church, to gather lilies ? And who gathered the lily that used to stand yonder ? Was it the devil ? If so, we might rebel. Was it an accident unaccompanied by God ? Then we may cherish our feelings. But who gathers the lilies and removes the plants from the gardens of grace in this world ? The Lord does it. "I was dumb ; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." "It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good."

*Here we have the unbounded faith of the believer.* Let him do whatever he pleases. I will stand still and accept all the operations of his hand with grateful adoration. Let the Lord provide for me. Let him place me where he pleases at the table. Let him carve for me, and I will bless his name. Let the Lord

hold the reins of the church and of the family, and guide both. I commit the management of all into his hands, and would not be my own master if I might. I refer my all to the Lord, and say, "Choose thou my inheritance for me: for thou art the Lord my God." O for more of the faith that puts one's all for time and eternity into the hands of God, and enables its subject, like good David of old, to lie down and sleep quietly and calmly in the tempest and the storm. There was an army against him, yet the good man said—"I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for the Lord causeth me to dwell in safety." There is a storm—the Christian may say—and he thinks a terrible one is coming. Well, he is not disturbed; for the Lord is on board, the vessel is insured in heaven, and God holds the helm, the winds being in his fist and the waters in the hollow of his hand. He is prepared to accept all the appointments of his will. "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." *Personal religion, beloved friends, is a divine reality.* Trouble makes way for its operations in the soul in a marvellous manner. Affliction makes way for grace and for God. It tests our religion, demonstrates the heavenly character of its principles, and proves the genuineness of our faith; and when we come safely and calmly out of the water on the salvation side thereof, we are wont to say, reviewing the storm and the desolation it made—"The Lord hath done all things well." May the Lord be pleased to sanctify the affliction occasioned by this bereavement to all that are concerned. I need not say to my brother that he knows it was the Lord. He came mercifully, though very mysteriously, as I said in the chapel at the cemetery; for he gave our friends notice of the fact that he was coming for her. Months, if not years before he came, the rumbling of his chariot wheels was, as it were heard. Though there were signs and tokens of the approach of the Lord, yet when he did come—it was solemnly and suddenly—the blow fell all at once. But our dear friend fell down and died, or nearly so—not in the tram car, not in the omnibus, not in the street among strangers, though what her sufferings or her feelings were when in the street, and before home was reached, we shall never know. The Lord was so merciful as to enable her to reach home, there to speak her last words. Well, it was the Lord that smote her, that separated her soul from the body, that bereaved our beloved friends of a mother and a wife, and the Lord that received her spirit when the union between it and her body was dissolved by death. "May we die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his:" for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# LOOKING ON A PIERCED CHRIST.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL.

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*"And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."—*  
John xix. 37.

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It will be remembered that the Lord, immediately after predicting the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, said to his disciples, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." The word of Jesus Christ, therefore, is important to himself, and also to all his loved and redeemed people. He has been sovereignly and mercifully pleased to give us a revelation of his will, of his heart and the thoughts of his mind; and, if we are hearty believers in the plenary inspiration of God's word, we know, in some respects, what the future will be, and what operations he will carry on in the kingdoms of nature, of providence, and of grace. Our Lord said also, while preaching a sermon on himself as the good Shepherd, "The scriptures cannot be broken;" and in consequence of this the expression is so frequently used, "The mouth of the Lord—the mouth of the Lord hath spoken this." The word of God lies beneath his eye as he sits upon his throne; and his hand is fulfilling his promises, his threatenings, and also the hopes and expectations of his beloved people. The Old Testament was before the eye of Jesus, as the suffering Saviour of his people, he was careful to confine himself, as to his words, his conduct, his steps, and his sufferings, to what was therein predicted concerning himself and his people; consequently, in the chapter out of which I have taken my text, the fulfilment of the scripture is referred to four or five times. In the 24th verse we read, "They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it (that is the coat of the Saviour,) but cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things, therefore (and the word "therefore" here is very significant and expressive): "These things, therefore, the soldiers did." It might have occurred to our minds, had it not been for this word, that the soldiers were guided by no special influence, at least, by none that was supernatural, when they said, Let us not rend it; but their minds, their mouths, and their hands were directed or overruled by a Divine power. The word of prophecy was present to the Saviour, and therefore his coat was not rent; hence, "Let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be."—"These things, therefore, the soldiers did." Then again, in the 28th verse, we read, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. It appears that the Saviour's eye was upon the writings of David; and whilst it was a fact that he thirsted, and that his thirst was penal and unspeakably

No. 26.—JUNE 15, 1876.

intense, it was also a fact that he had regard to the immutability of Divine revelation; and said, in order to fulfil the scripture, "I thirst!" Again, in the following verses, we read, that "Jesus having received the vinegar, said, It is finished! and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. The Jews, because it was the preparation that the body should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." Otherwise it was usual for criminals to hang upon the crosses upon which they were executed. But since the Lord Jesus was crucified at the time of the Jewish passover, and the Sabbath following was to the Jews a very important day, they were anxious that no criminal should then be seen on Golgotha or Calvary; and believing that Christ and the thieves had not had time to die, they went to Pilate and besought him that their legs might be broken, in order to accelerate their death; and he gave them permission to do this. "The soldiers therefore went and brake the legs of the first thief and of the other that was crucified with Jesus; but when they came to Jesus to accelerate his death, they saw that he was dead already, and brake not his legs. And this again constituted a perfect fulfilment of Scripture, for "these things were done that the scriptures should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken." We are then told that since the Lord Jesus was dead, they resolved not to break his legs, but one of the soldiers in an unaccountable and wanton manner "with his spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water;" and my text says, "Another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."

Now just one or two words more before I try to open the text. You observe in the fact that the soldiers omitted a portion of their duty, the word of God was fulfilled. They would not have exceeded their duty had they broken the legs of the three sufferers; they had orders so to do, and it was therefore their military duty to break the legs of the two thieves, and those of Jesus also; but finding him dead already, a thought occurred to their minds—for a supernatural influence was upon them—that they would not break his legs; and that took place, the Holy Ghost tells us, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled: "A bone of him shall not be broken." And then, in the second place, one of the soldiers exceeded his duty. He did what he had no authority to do. He had authority from Pilate and from his captain to break the legs of Christ, and that he did not do; but he had no authority whatever for piercing him in the side; and therefore an omission of duty on the one hand, and an excess thereof on the other, fulfilled the word of God; and hence it is said, "A bone of him shall not be broken" according to the scripture; and "another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."

I have made these introductory remarks for the purpose of trying to exalt your thoughts concerning the boundless importance of the word of God. And now leaving the fulfilment of the Scriptures, let us limit our attention for a few minutes to the words we have read, which express a solemn fact, "They shall look on him whom they pierced."

In the first place, this might refer to the Jewish nation; for although Christ was not pierced by a Jew, but by one of the Roman soldiers, a person is said to do that which is done in his name or by his authority, and it was the Jews that cried out, "Crucify him! crucify him!" They clamoured for his death, and therefore they pierced him. The time may come, for aught I know, when a very considerable number of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will be called by Divine grace, and look upon him whom they pierced and mourn for him. At all events, the period is coming, and may not be far distant, when the Lord of life and glory shall appear in the clouds, and every eye shall see him and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. I shall not confine my attention to the Jewish people as a nation, nor make any further remarks upon the supposition or the belief that large numbers

of them may probably be called by Divine grace, but look at my text as applicable to sinners saved, or to such persons as have a humble hope that their guilt and sin were imputed to the Lord of life and glory, and that he was pierced and wounded for their transgressions and crimes ; for "they shall look on him whom they pierced." This being the course which we intend taking, the subject may be divided into two branches :—First, *the blessed and important object*, a pierced Christ ; and secondly, *the solemn act*,—looking on Him. They shall look on him whom they pierced. Thus we have a marvellous object to contemplate, and a saving act to describe.

I. A few observations, in the first place, on the *object*—a *pierced Christ*, who is looked upon by every saved sinner. And the first thought here is this, the object of a saved sinner's faith is a *suffering* one—a pierced Christ. Some persons are continually saying, Preach Christ ; and there is, I think, much meaningless talk in relation to this point. Let Christ be preached : but have we a definite and scriptural idea of what it is to preach the Lord Jesus to our fellow men ? If I preach an uncrucified, unsuffering, unpierced, an unbleeding Christ, I do not preach the *Christ* of the Bible, nor that Saviour which lost and ruined sinners require. And therefore the apostle Paul has very beautifully and comprehensively put the fact before us : "I am determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified." We may, if we can, look into the bosom of eternal love, and exhibit Jesus Christ as lying therein, and then we may consider the throne of eternal glory wherein he is now seated, and preach the fact that he is crowned with many crowns, and that his kingdom is an everlasting one ; but if we omit his cross, his sufferings, his sweat and blood, we omit, I had almost said, the greatest and most wondrous view the sinner can have of the dear Redeemer. The cross of Jesus, his bleeding wounds, his crown of thorns, his unparalleled sufferings, and the fact that death with its ten thousand stings met him and thrust them all into his dear and precious person, constitute the cream of the gospel. And therefore the crucifixion, sufferings, and death of Jesus are all-important matters to every inquiring sinner, or to every man and woman that is going to heaven.

*All suffering appears superlative at the cross of Jesus.* I beg attention, beloved friends, to this point for a minute. For instance, the *sufferer* himself is the greatest Being that ever suffered, or that ever will or can suffer. He was incarnate God, and you are not, when contemplating Christ on the cross, to separate his divinity from his humanity ; his Godhead should not be modified or lessened on account of the fact that it was obscured in some measure whilst he hung on the accursed tree. The *whole* of the divine nature, his whole Deity was there. All the boundless greatness and majesty of God were in the person of him whom the cruel and cursing soldier chose to pierce. It was Jehovah-Jesus that hung on the tree ; and therefore in him we have the greatest Being that ever suffered. Then, pursuing this train of thought, we have, in the next place, the greatest *sufferings* that were ever experienced, as well as the greatest sufferer. There is not a being in hell that suffers as the Saviour did ; for all the pangs endured by the lost cannot be compared with those of the great Son of God. He suffered the hells of thousands, and on the tree he quenched that wrath which to the sinner himself would have been endless, and therefore this great Sufferer endured what had never been experienced before.

And then, in the third and last place, the *greatest possible results* are flowing, and will for ever flow, from these greatest sufferings of this greatest of sufferers. What are they ? What is the outcome of the depths of Christ's sorrow ? Why, all your life and mine. All your good hopes and mine. All those comforts which tend to make existence pleasant flow from the sufferings of the dear Redeemer ; and the facts that you are prepared for heaven, that your end shall be peace, that your spirit in its departing moments shall be tranquil and serene, are all owing

to the superlative sorrows and sufferings of incarnate God. And then, beloved brethren, the heaven that lies beyond all time and sin, the crowns of glory you shall for ever wear, the throne of dignity you shall for ever occupy, the robes of immortality you shall for ever wear, and those overflowing joys you shall for ever feel, may all be traced to the fact that Jesus was pierced for sinners,—for their guilt, transgression, and crime. And, therefore, we have in the pierced Christ the grand central object of the church of God, the grand central object of the *universe* of divine and holy minds, the very centre of that eternity of heaven and bliss which are prepared for the family of grace. The pierced Christ of God is the most glorious expression of the Father's thoughts of love concerning wretched, ruined man. "They shall look on him whom they pierced."

And, now, what were the sufferings of Jesus? They were *penal*. Yours and mine are not so; but those of Jesus were: that is, they were such sufferings as are experienced by the criminal in prison, or when his life is ignominiously taken for crime to satisfy justice. Go into a prison, and you see penal suffering there. Go into a hospital, you see suffering; but not that which is penal. Now Jesus suffered *penally*. He was punished. His sufferings were a punishment inflicted upon him to satisfy Divine justice. They were inflicted, not with a rod of correction as yours and mine are, but with a sword, and a spear, and with instruments of torture which indicated breaches of the law and transgressions of the will of God. They shall look on him who was suffered for sin. And, then, his sufferings were *meritorious*. You and I might suffer all the days of our life, and people might say when they were over here, and our spirits had departed for eternity—Poor creatures! they are better off now; as if the sufferings of a sinful creature could possibly merit so great a boon as love divine, or eternal happiness and glory. No, my friends—

"Could my tears for ever flow,  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
All for sin could not atone—  
Christ must save, and Christ alone."

His precious blood was a sufficient price. All his groans and agonies only were and are current coin in the moral government of God. Christ bought us with a price, and he merits and deserves for his weeping observers, all the perfection and bliss they shall ever possess. When Jesus died, the stipulated price was fully paid, the bill was receipted, the book was cancelled and closed, and Christ said, "It is finished;" and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. And, then, in the next place, the sufferings of Jesus Christ were *final*. I do beg attention to this, and hope to dwell upon it myself as a poor ruined sinner. I should not be comforted, and I hope I am speaking with reverence, by looking on him that was pierced, if I did not believe that his sufferings for sin and his people were final. My Christian brethren, the work of penal suffering for sin, as far as the people of God are concerned, is ended. It is all finished. Justice will never draw her sword over your soul, and never pour a curse upon your mind; and Jehovah will never judicially frown upon your troubled spirit; for he can frown, curse, smite no more. The punishment is all for ever ended, and the sufferings of the redeemed are chastisements and corrections, but not penal visitations for guilt, transgression, and crime. O that we had a stronger faith to cast ourselves on this great fact, and to look with a steadier eye on him that was pierced for sin! Well, the sufferings of Christ were meritorious and final; and since they were so, they sent a fragrance to heaven which entered that glorious world, surrounds the throne of God, envelopes Deity himself; and impregnates for ever the very atmosphere of glory. Faith lives in it here, hope is now sustained thereby, and herein the believer dies, and ascends from the body to heaven, to live and sing for ever and ever there. A suffering

object is the object of the saved sinner's faith. "They shall look on him whom they pierced." But it is time to pass away from this point, otherwise I intended to remind you of the fact that here we have the sinner's *Refuge*. If there is anything in the life and death of the Lord Jesus that ought to be regarded as the antitype of that cleft of the rock into which God put Moses, we have it here. Christ was pierced and wounded : and his wounds are the clefts of that rock into which God puts all his beloved people. "I will put thee," said God, to Moses, "into a place which is by me here;" and there is now a place by God, blessed be his name, in the smitten rock, into which he puts trembling sinners, and having lodged them therein, he covers them with his hand whilst he passes by and shows them his hinder parts. They look on him whom they pierced ; and, wishing they were in his wounds, God the Spirit in due time puts them therein. They look on the pierced One, and regard his wounds as *the great outlets* of eternal love. And as Moses smote the rock, and the waters gushed out, so, when Christ the Rock of Ages was pierced, blood and water flowed out—blood to atone for accursed crimes, and water to wash, cleanse, sanctify, and make us for ever whiter than snow. Brethren, it is sweet to look at the wounded Christ, and see the heart of Deity flowing ; good to look on a smitten Saviour, and wish we were in him ; sweet to be consciously placed in his bosom by the Holy Ghost ; and sweet to look and regard his wounds as the accepted *depository of prayer*, and all our offerings. Dear Jesus, we come to thee as helped by thy Spirit, and connect our prayers, tears, services, and sermons too, with thy wounds. They, whether they be ministers or private Christians,—“they shall look on him whom they pierced,” and, as it is elsewhere said, “they shall mourn for him.” And here, my brother, in the fact that our Lord was pierced, we have *our way to God*, our way out of time into eternity, our way through death, and our way into a better world. We go through the pierced heart of incarnate God to heaven, and through the wounds of the dear Redeemer into eternal rest. This is a living, tender, bleeding, and purifying way. We go this way to see our God. But lest we leave not ourselves time to glance at the second part of the subject, we will now leave the sufferings of Christ.

A *risen Saviour* is the object of the sinner's faith. They shall look on him whom they *pierced*—i.e., awhile ago, eighteen hundred and forty years, or thereabouts. Christ on the cross is not the termination of the believer's hope and faith. Christ is not in the grave, but risen from the dead ; and living again, he says, "Amen. I have the keys of hell and of death." Had not Jesus been raised from the dead, all would have been for ever lost. You cannot attribute too much importance to the resurrection of him that was pierced for you, or whom you pierced. This is the grand declaration of the fact that you are a saved man or woman, and that all in heaven is peace in relation to your soul and body. Had Christ remained in the grave under the power of death, all heaven, I had almost said, had been clothed in mourning, and God himself would have been disappointed, for full salvation would have been impossible without the resurrection of the Saviour. But on the morning of the third day, he that was pierced came out of prison or the tomb, and that fact proclaimed many delightful truths—viz., that the law was magnified, justice was satisfied, guilt was expiated, the debt was paid, and the way of salvation from the threshold of hell to the heights of glory was perfectly finished, and there was nothing more for a suffering Christ to do but go to heaven and take his crown and sceptre and reign there, for the purpose of bringing the purchase of his blood to himself in a better world. They shall look on him whom they pierced on the tree, and rejoice that he is risen from the dead, and ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by him. Our dear Lord may be regarded as first standing on the condemnation side of death, and then, secondly, as standing on the justification side thereof. He entered death

from the sinner's place, passed through it as a sufferer, and rose from the grave on the opposite side, which I have called the justification shore. He rose, and Paul triumphantly says, "He is able now to save all that come unto God by him." We look at our pierced Christ as suffering, and mourn, and then we look at him as risen, and commit our cause into his hands, fall at his once-pierced feet, pray for an interest in his intercession, and say, as did the dying thief—

"Now thou in thy kingdom art,  
Dear Lord, remember me."

Thirdly, he is a *revealed* Christ. They shall look on him; he must therefore show himself. This object, like the sun of nature, is a self-revealing one. He reveals himself declaratively in the Word; ministerially by the preaching of his sent servants; spiritually and experimentally to the hearts of his purchased people; and he ever liveth to reveal himself as the sinner's Saviour. And, beloved friends, I beg your attention to this important fact:—every one that goes to heaven looks on the pierced Jesus, and sees him somewhere before he enters that holy place; for it seems to me that there is no other method of practically and experimentally cleansing the mind from sin, and preparing it for the presence of eternal purity. "They shall look on him whom they pierced." Some of you are looking for him, or feeling after him, for you want him. By-and-bye, and before you enter the world of light, whither you are going, it may be in the deep solemnities of death, he will reveal himself, and you shall look on him; and, looking on Jesus, your adoring soul shall leave your body, and glide out of time into eternity, and pass in a marvellous manner into all the bliss of being and the grandeur of your God. They shall look on him, for he is a revealed Christ. And is he not *attractive*? This shall be our last idea—a pierced Christ is attractive. Among millions of beings he is the most prominent. Bible history gives us an account of the solemn business which was transacted on Calvary. We see the soldiers; we see Mary and the women sitting and watching him there; we see the rabble wagging their heads and putting out their tongues, as the Psalmist has it; and we hear them sneeringly and persecutingly say—"He saved others: let him save himself." We see all those characters; but the most prominent, the most attractive object on Calvary is the Being that was pierced; for they shall look on him. And, my brother, when he comes the second time without sin unto salvation, he will come attended by perhaps millions and millions, but the Lord will be the most prominent of all. Some little idle talk I sometimes hear about the experience of the glorified in heaven. One says, I shall look for you, and you will look for me among the glorified; and when I arrive I shall look for my father, and my mother, and my husband, and for others. All this appears to me to be carnalising that spiritual place and state, and things which are supernatural and divine. Christ is all in all; and our heaven will not result from a sight of creatures, but from the presence of him that was pierced for us, who will then be in the midst of the throne, whose beauties and excellencies we shall gaze on for ever and ever, as the good old believer in a country town said, just before she died—"I am now going to close my eyes for ever on earthly things, and open and fix them upon Immanuel, to take them off no more for ever." Oh, heaven will consist in being with and looking on him that we pierced, the Lamb as he had been slain. Well, they shall look on him *only*. Mary will be there; but should the Pope of Rome, and his predecessors and their followers go to heaven, and carry their religion with them, I suppose they would look on the Virgin Mary, the apostles, and the hundreds and thousands of saints that they have canonized. Miserable trash! Abomination, mystery of iniquity, and vile idolatry! Mary, indeed! Why, she is one of the observers or spectators. Her ransomed eyes are fixed upon her

once-pierced Lord. And Peter with the keys of heaven—another abomination ! he is there ; but not as an apostle, not in official robes, but in the robe of his Saviour's righteousness, looking at him whom he pierced. Hence Christ in the midst of the throne will attract the attention and absorb the thoughts of ransomed minds for ever and ever.

II. *The act itself.* They shall look on him ; first, in *condemnation*. Sensible of the fact that they are condemned, lost, and ruined, they shall look on him that was pierced ; and hence you observe the look is that of a guilty sinner, that of a criminal, that of one that is under sentence of death. Where do our criminals look, and on whom can they fix their eyes after conviction has taken place, and sentence has been passed upon them ? All before them is death, darkness, and black despair, except there may be a thought, a passing thought that probably petitions may be sent to Her Majesty, and the sentence may not be carried out ; but if there is such a hope it has no just foundation, and should it be fulfilled, justice would be wronged, according to existing facts, and mercy would triumph over her. But here is a guilty sinner in a state of condemnation, and under sentence of death : he is not in absolute despair, though perhaps not far from it, for there is ground whereon he may stand and hope. He is looking upon this pierced object ; and the language of his spirit is—God be merciful ; for thou canst if thou wilt be merciful to me a sinner. Say unto me, I am thy salvation. And this look is a *loathing* one. What is meant by that ? Why, not that Christ is loathed, but that he that looks loathes himself and his sins. It is a look of self-loathing, of godly sorrow and repentance. It is faith, with her eyes filled with tears, looking on the Lord Jesus. The sinner loathes his sin, and hopes for mercy, and hence he does not sink into despair ; he hangs between heaven and hell, looking on Jesus ; he does not sink into hell, for he is looking on the pierced One : he does not rise to heaven, for he knows not yet whether the Saviour died for him or not ; and, finally, he says—

“ If I die with mercy sought,  
When I the King have tried,  
This were to die,—delightful thought !—  
As sinner never died.”

He looks in condemnation thus on Jesus Christ, the pierced One. I should like to dwell on these points, but time forbids.

Secondly, there is a looking on him in *suffering*—mental, physical, spiritual circumstantial, and dying. In affliction, look at the grandest Sufferer that ever tasted sorrow.

“ His way was much rougher and darker than mine :  
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine ?”

Your pierced Lord had no dying bed ; he gave up the ghost on the accursed tree. Look at his dying circumstances. Who nursed him ? No one. Who moistened his burning tongue when he said—I thirst ! No mother was permitted to dip a feather into wine and water to mitigate the sufferings of the dying God-man. A wretch filled a sponge with vinegar, and raised it to his parched lips. When fever burns us up, my friends, we have nurses, and are succoured ; and when otherwise afflicted, we have alleviating circumstances and services ; but your Lord had none,—nothing to mitigate his woes. When tempted to repine and murmur in suffering, think of and look on the pierced One. They shall look on him whom they pierced when in suffering. And then again in *learning*—whilst inquiring into the mysteries of the kingdom, they shall look on him. When they would know the whole about sin, they shall look upon him, for the whole appears there. When they want to know what is love divine, they shall look on him. When they would know as much as possible of justice and its inflexibility

and sternness, they shall look on him ; and when they would know what is hell, they shall look on him that was pierced, and around whom the flames of divine wrath raged ; and when they would know what is death, and the sting thereof, they shall look on him ; for a pierced Christ is the fullest and grandest exposition of the vital mysteries which constitute our grand and holy religion. Then, fourthly, they shall look at him in their *conflict* with the world, the flesh, and the devil. I know of no influence that can enable one to stand against the powers of darkness, but that which comes from the crucified One. The Papists,—deluded mortals,—have many methods of mortifying the flesh and sin. Let me say—Do you want to mortify sin ? It must be done by a look—a daily look at him. Is the world to be crucified to you, and you to the world ? It must be done in this way. They may kneel on pebbles, count beads, and pray for whole days together, put peas between the soles of their feet and their shoes, wear horsehair or sackcloth next to their skin, immure themselves in nunneries and convents, assume a voluntary poverty, and much more, yet the “old man” will remain strong, and sin will prevail. When all these things are placed in competition with the pierced Christ of God, we say, with Paul: “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whom I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me.” I would sit before this pierced One as a sinner, and loathe sin, mortify it, be crucified to the world myself, and become pure ; for purity emanates from the pierced One, and flows from him through faith into the spectator’s heart. They shall look on him *in worship* ; in prayer ; in the ordinances of God’s house, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. I could not baptize any person that said he saw nothing of Jesus Christ in the ordinance, nor could I baptize one that rested therein. Be baptized for his sake ; but whilst doing this look on him whom you have pierced. Let us take our seats at the Lord’s table, see the elements, and look through them on him whom we pierced. In worship look ; but *on him only*. “This, sir, is the identical cross that Christ hung upon.” I do not care for that. “Here is the identical spear with which he was pierced. Here are the three nails with which he was nailed to the tree—one for each hand and one for his feet—the identical nails !” I do not care for them. Could I have them, and were I convinced that they were the same, I would pass them by, and come to the fact that as a guilty sinner, I want, not the spear, not the nails, but him that was pierced. And then, lastly, death will come, and we will die looking on him. Then, by-and-bye, the graves shall be opened and the dead shall be raised, and he that was pierced shall come again, and every eye shall see him, and we shall put our blood-bought, pardoned heads out of our dusty beds, and our ransomed eyes will be fixed upon him whom we pierced, and we shall say—“Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him, and he will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Then shall our eyes be set upon him for ever ; and “so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Amen. May the Lord add his blessing, for Christ’s sake.

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# ZION'S FOUNDER AND FOUNDATION.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 11th, 1876.

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*"What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it."*—Isa. xiv. 32.

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"GLORIOUS things are spoken of thee, O city of God." Immediately after the fall, in the days of Abraham and Jacob, and by Moses, the servant of God, very glorious things were spoken concerning Zion; God's holy prophets, and the apostles of Jesus Christ also, have spoken of and recorded the church's glories; and encouraging and instructive facts in relation thereto are expressed in the chapter from which we have selected our text to-night. But, in order to understand this portion of the Word of God, it may be necessary to glance at the literal meaning thereof.

The children of Israel, as God's nation, were deeply hated and persecuted by the nations by whom they were surrounded, and eventually they were carried into captivity by people that were stronger and mightier than they. In the first part of this chapter the Lord gives some very gracious promises to them in relation to Babylon, their great enemy, saying in the 4th and following verses, "Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased, and the golden city ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruleth the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth." The whole of the connection in which these words stand you will read at your leisure, and observe that the Holy Ghost describes in a very striking manner the utter destruction of Nebuchadnezzar, of his army, and ultimately of Babylon and of the empire itself; and all this is closed with the solemn words, "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass, and as I have purposed so shall it stand." God had purposed that Israel should not cease to be His people, and they remained, therefore, in covenant connection with Him, even when they were in the land of Babylon. He purposed also that, at the expiration of seventy years, they should return to Canaan, and, accordingly, when the predicted period arrived, Cyrus was on the spot; a proclamation of liberty was issued by that great conqueror and monarch, and Israel, as God's national church, returned from their captivity to their native land. In the verses which follow, there are promises from God concerning another mighty enemy by whom Israel was hated, punished, and carried away. "I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him underfoot; then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose which is purposed upon the

No. 27.—JULY 15, 1876.

whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations." In the first part of the chapter Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are referred to ; but in the portion I have just read Sennacherib and the Assyrian power are threatened with defeat and destruction. In the 28th verse it is said, "In the year that King Ahaz died was this burden." There, and in the verses which immediately precede my text, God speaks to the children of Israel concerning the Philistines, under the name of Palestina : "Rejoice not thou whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken ; for out of the serpent's root shall come the cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." Time forbids our going into the whole of the literal meaning of this. You are aware that Hezekiah was the son of Ahaz, who was an exceedingly wicked man, and whom, on account of his wickedness and crimes, the Philistines conquered again and again. The Lord, therefore, says, Rejoice not, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken—in allusion to the fact that the Philistines rejoiced when Uzziah, who defeated them, ceased to reign—for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. Rather extraordinary epithets to apply to so good a man as Hezekiah. Nevertheless, we must apply them to him ; for it was Hezekiah by whom the Philistines were defeated and conquered. "And the first-born of the poor whom you, O Palestina, oppressed, shall feed ; and the needy shall lie down in safety under the reign of the son of Ahaz, and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay the remnant." The land of the Philistines was divided into five districts or lordships, and hence we read of the lords of the Philistines, in allusion to which God says, "Howl, O gate ; cry, O city ; thou whole Palestina, art dissolved ; for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times. What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation ?" Messengers were sent to Hezekiah to enquire into the cause of his victories and triumphs, and the most excellent condition of the kingdom under his reign, and the question is asked, "What shall one answer the messengers of the nation ?" What shall be said to them ? Why, tell the messengers "that the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it."

In making a few observations on our text, we may divide it into four heads. I want to say a few words, and but a few words, in the first place, on *Zion itself* ; and, secondly, I will direct your attention to *its divine and glorious Founder* ; and, thirdly, I shall have a word or two say on *the precious promise given here* ; and, fourthly, we will glance at *the enquirers* or messengers.

In the first place, let me make a few observations on *Zion* itself, which the Lord hath founded. The word "*Zion*" frequently occurs in the Word of God ; and sometimes it refers to that particular hill, or those hills, which were named Zion. Sometimes it means the city of David ; sometimes the temple which Solomon built upon mount Zion ; and very frequently it means the Church of the living God. This I think is most generally its meaning—for the hill of Zion in Jerusalem, the temple built thereon, and the city of David, were typical of God's church, which is called the city of the living God. I shall, therefore, look for a few minutes at the church of God, that heavenly Jerusalem which is free and is the mother of us all. And when we speak of the Church as Zion, have we any definite idea of that city, of that heavenly body of people ? What is Zion ? In the first place Zion is *altogether a new state of things, both in the world, and also in the government of our God*. Is Zion a natural state of things ? No ; for "My kingdom," said the dear Redeemer, "is not of this world." Zion is not based upon anything natural ; it is not composed of natural materials, neither does it exist for natural purposes. What, then, are its nature and properties ? It is spiritual—spiritual in its foundations, its materials, its structure, its Builder and all His operations from the foundation to the top stone thereof.

Again, Zion is not a legal state of things. The law of God is connected with her, and the church is in harmony with the legislative and judicial glories of Jehovah ; for it is not an establishment of slaves, neither is it an establishment of servants merely. Zion is gracious, spiritual, and filial. God dwells there as a parent, and the objects of His love dwell with Him as his dearly beloved children. And, then, further, Zion is not ceremonial, or a figurative state of things. The ceremonial dispensation has been absorbed into that of the Gospel, and types, and shadows, and figures, have ceased to exist, and Zion is a substantial state of things. The types and shadows of the ceremonial law, and the whole of the former dispensation, having been swallowed up by Jesus Christ, the church of the living God is the substantial and ever-abiding residence of God himself. Zion differs in many important respects from that state of things which existed in Eden before the fall, and which is sometimes called Adamic. Adam conversed with his Maker, and was perfectly holy and happy ; but Christ's mediation, and atonement, and salvation were unknown to him. 'The earthly paradise is closed, and that conditional state has for ever passed away ; but Zion shall ever dwell upon the heart of everlasting love. Jesus Christ is the great head and foundation of that super-creation state wherein are found all that follow Him and are conformed to His image. Zion is heavenly and not earthly ; it is eternal, and not temporal ; and hence, it is said, "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it."

Then, secondly, Zion is presented to us in the Word as the *earthly residence of our God*. God has said concerning his church or Zion, "This is my rest for ever ; here will I dwell, for I have desired it ;" and one thing which makes all saints love Zion and induces them to become members of Christian churches, is the fact that the Church is the abode of Jehovah ; for the Lord is there and they like to live where God lives, and to have their sympathies with the people who are in sympathy with God.

" His arms embrace this happy ground,  
Like brazen bulwarks built around ;  
Then let my soul in Zion dwell,  
Nor fear the wrath of Rome and hell."

There is everything in connection with Zion that our God requires, and, therefore, he rests eternally. In the first place, there is an all-sufficient atonement in Zion. The cross, the fountain, the blood, the sacrifice of Christ, and the sweet fragrance and perfume of the mediation of the Son of God, are there in Zion ; and therefore God dwells in that city. And then in Zion there is a magnified law. At Sinai, the law appears as broken ; but in Zion as magnified and made for ever honourable ; and where God finds his law magnified there He sits down and rests. The law having been magnified by Christ, has been brought by its great fulfiller into the city, and the Father, seeing the obedience of his dear Son, sits down and rests in Zion. Yes ; the altar, the victim, the priest, and the glorious robe are there—everything is there that the attributes and perfections of our God require, therefore they all meet in the church, in everlasting sympathy and harmony, and God and Zion are for ever one. It is His residence as a king, it is the seat of His government ; for He sits upon His holy hill of Zion. And it is his residence as the God of grace, and our covenant and gracious Father. Moreover, Zion is the depository of divine truth. I trust, my friends, and my young friends especially, will not lose sight of this fact, that the church of God is the depository of the gospel, or of the revelation of the mind and will of God. The children of Israel, as a nation, were the depository of the living oracles of Almighty God. They had the word, the statutes, and the judgments of God. They were favoured with a special revelation of the character, greatness, and

goodness of God. And the church, or the Zion of God, is now the depository of eternal truth; and I do not hesitate to say—but speak very confidently and boldly—that the world owes its light and information to the church and people of our God. The Word proceeds from Zion. Light emanates and shines therefrom. The Word of God proceeds from God's dear people; therefore, Zion being the depository of eternal truth, is the most important creature of the Lord. And, lastly, Zion is the residence of God's dear people, and hence our souls in Zion dwell. It is said concerning the saints, that they shall return and come to Zion with singing and everlasting joy upon their heads. Yonder is the wilderness of immorality and death, and hundreds of immortal souls are coming therefrom to the city of the living God; and having the wilderness behind them, and Zion before them, they are asking the way to the place, with their faces thitherward. They want Zion, just as doves want their windows, or sheep their folds and their pastures. When the grace of God enters the heart of a sinner, he enquires for Zion, for God's residence, for God's people, for God's service, and for God's worship. And then they come to Zion from Sinai. I do not set up a standard of Christian experience, and have never done so; yet I do think the child of God knows where and what Sinai is, for he has some knowledge of God's holy law, and of the fact that he is a sinner, and by the law is the knowledge of sin. The people of God are taken to Sinai to be tried and condemned, and I had almost said to be cursed,—well, to be cursed as far as their apprehensions go; and when this proceeding has taken place under the government and management of the good Spirit of God, the weeping penitent turns his face towards God and the cross of Immanuel, with—

“Lo! glad I come; and thou, blest Lamb,  
Shalt take me to Thee as I am.  
Nothing but sin I Thee can give:  
Nothing but grace shall I receive.”

And, then, the people of God are found wending their way to Zion through the storms, and difficulties, and trials of life; but, by-and-bye, Christian brethren, we shall emerge from the body, from the flesh, from time, from sin, and from sorrow, and enter into the upper apartments; for I do not like to separate Zion on earth from Zion in heaven, the state that we have here on earth from that which exists above. Here we are on the ground floor, and dwell in a lower condition. In death we are called up higher; and, therefore, when the spirit has left the body it goes up-stairs, if you will allow me thus to illustrate the subject. It enters into the chambers of eternal blessedness and glory, which our God has prepared for His dear people in His house on high. Zion here, and Zion there, are, strictly speaking, one. Here we are at school; there we shall be at home. Here we are trained, instructed, chastened, and corrected; but there we shall enter into rest, and be for ever with the Lord. Now, I shall add no more to these observations on the first part of our subject. I am aware that my thoughts on God's Zion are desultory, and my observations very imperfect; and I am not surprised at it, and, perhaps, you are not; for our minds are shallow, and our powers small, while the Word of God, like its great Author, is profoundly deep and immeasurably large.

Let us look, secondly, *at the great Founder of this city*. “What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation?” Why, “that the Lord hath founded Zion!” He has founded it—where? This is very important. He has founded it in His everlasting love. Everlasting love is our first thought; and it was, if I may speak of first thoughts in God—God's first thought also. He has based His people's life, and grace, and glory, upon His own great heart, or His unalterable and immutable affections. There is nothing human, nothing angelic, nothing

conditional or changeable in the foundation of Zion. All that sustains that vast system which is called the church, is eternal and divine. How low this foundation lies, and how strong and fixed it is ! And your life, and hopes, and godly fears, and worship, and interest, and heaven, are all based upon Jehovah's heart, and on nothing that is earthly, or that sin can change, or that the last fire can affect, or that the devil can reach. He reaches the superstructure, the materials, and the city, but he can never reach the everlasting love of God. Love gives existence to its objects. It brings them into being, and places itself beneath them for ever. The objects of love being also its creatures, are evermore sustained by that which gave them being ; and love passes up and through the whole superstructure. Love brings the materials of Zion to herself ; connects them with herself and with one another, and when the topstone thereof is brought home, and the church is completed, it shall be a glorious building of love, and this fact shall be acknowledged by saints and angels for ever. This is one view of the fact that the Lord hath founded Zion. What a mercy it is not founded on the obedience, or the works, or the love, or the religion, or the character of the creature ! True religion comes out of love, it is the fruit of the fact that God loves us. If we possess a heavenly religion, it originated in and flows from God's heart ; and, "we love Him because He first loved us." Our faith comes out of Jehovah's love, and our salvation, therefore, is not based upon faith : for that grace rests upon that which gave it existence—I mean the everlasting love of God. What is the reason faith lasts so long ? that hope is not crushed ? that the people of God continue to love their dear Saviour's name in trials, and troubles, and afflictions, and through all the storms of life ? What is the reason of all this, but the fact that the Lord hath founded Zion ? He is the author of faith, the God of hope, the sustainer of love, and the preserver of all real religion ; and, therefore, grace bears all the wear and tear of life, all the strain of temptation, and all the sneers and persecutions of a thousand Philistines, a thousand Sennacheribs, and a thousand Nebuchadnezzars also. When, therefore, the messengers of the nation come to ask us for a reason of the hope that is within us, the answer lies upon the surface : "The Lord hath founded Zion," and we are built thereon. Then, secondly, in another respect Zion must be said to have been founded by God on the mediation and blood of Jesus Christ. In the first view of this foundation the people of God are considered as creatures, and in this they are considered as sinners. Had not man fallen,—had not the church of God become sinful, lost and ruined,—blood had not been shed, atonement had not been required, and Christ, in all probability, had never left His Father's bosom. I believe God would have had a church, and Zion would have been His abode for ever, had not man fallen. But since man fell, something more than love was required. God did not alter the foundation, nor change the love, because the fall had taken place. Love remained what and where it was, and provided a Restorer, a Redeemer, a Ransomer, a Saviour for her fallen objects ; for Zion could not be raised honourably, legally, and equitably, without the intervention of blood. A bleeding Restorer appeared upon the scene, and poured out His soul and life before divine justice. God's moral government was honoured and satisfied ; and the sinner's salvation is based and founded on the mediation, atonement, and precious blood of Jesus Christ. Here is love, and blood thereon. The Father's love, and the Son's mediation based thereon. Do you think this foundation sufficiently firm ? Will it sink ? Will it give way ? Eternal love at the bottom of all, and precious blood upon that—can you venture your all upon it as poor guilty sinners ? Well, here you are building your hopes, raising your expectations, resting for peace in death, and for the presence of God in a better world. Thirdly, we take another view of this fact. God hath founded Zion on the covenant engagements of the Holy Ghost. Why, this is a Trinitarian

divinity! Yes; you have God in His Trinity of persons at the very bottom of religion. We have love, blood, and power, as the great facts which constitute the foundation of Zion, the city of our God. Now, since in the blood of Christ the people of God are contemplated sinners, the covenant engagements of the Holy Spirit imply that they are dead, and deformed, and far off; and the Holy Ghost, in covenant with the Father and the Son, pledged His word to bring the distant near, to wash the filthy in the blood of the Son, and to form and polish them for their respective places in this glorious structure, Zion. And this Zion is based on all the Father's love, on the person, work, and merits of the great redeeming Son, and on the covenant engagements and operations of God the Holy Spirit. "This God is our God for ever, and He will be our guide even unto death." What inference may we deduce from all this? Why, that Zion is a holy place; and that the people of God are most honourable.

"Saviour, if of Zion's city,  
I through a grace a member am,  
Let the world deride or pity,  
I will glory in Thy name."

Honour, solid and lasting, where can it be found? Not in the world. Nowhere apart from God's church, God's interest, and God's cause. Let the world condemn and trample us underfoot on account of our religion, and let it sneer at us all, because we are few and feeble, and sometimes faint. If we are resting upon this foundation, and are vitally united to this honoured and honourable people, we shall triumph when the world is in a blaze, and all sneerers shall be fearers for ever and ever. Moreover, friends, there is safety here. Not only is Zion an honourable place, it is a safe one. Based upon the heart of God and the rock of ages, the rock of salvation, and the power of the Spirit, we shall triumph, or, at least, we shall have peace and safety and security in the deep solemnities of death. What it is to die I do not yet know. I sometimes sit down and endeavour to investigate or contemplate the mystery of the separation of the soul from the body, what it is to vacate the house in which I have lived for upwards of fifty years; but I must die to know this. One thing, however, I know, that if I am living upon love, and blood, and power, I shall be safe when passing through the profoundly deep mysteries of dissolution into eternity. What further shall we deduce from these facts? Why, that Zion's glory is not material. There is a great misconception or misapprehension of things in the day in which we live concerning the glory of Zion. It is believed that magnificent cathedrals, gorgeous and expensive architecture, expensive and beautiful organs, faultless music, and other similar things contribute to the glory of Zion! But, beloved brethren and sisters, the most glorious of God's works never borrowed anything from human power or invention. Have entrancing music and gorgeously constructed buildings if you will, but know that Zion's glory consists in her God. God is the glory of His own residence; and what, therefore, may be brought by human hands can never contribute anything to the divine splendour and lustre of the city of Jehovah. O friends, we shall never have better times in connection with the church of God, nor see the destruction of Ritualism and Popery, until we have deeper and stronger spirituality in our assemblies. As long as the eye will have the gorgeous, and the ear will have the sonorous and pleasing, and as long as fleshly considerations prevail, and the sensuous is all in worship, so long will the professing church of God be weak and barren. O for more spirituality from the great God and author of Zion!

Thirdly, *the important promise given.* And the poor of His people shall trust in it. Those of you who have marginal readings in your Bibles will observe, if you turn to them, that they read, "The poor of His people shall betake them-

selves unto it." In my text it says they shall trust in it. Which is right? Let us accept both these renderings, and make what holy use we can of them. First—and the poor of His people shall trust in it. In what? In Zion, or in its *foundation*? The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of *His* people shall trust in it—shall trust in the Founder, in the foundation, and in the fact that God Himself has founded Zion. That is it. They shall trust in it—not in Zion, but in that that sustains, maintains, or bears it up. Now, I can understand this. Yonder is a poor sinner, with all his guilt upon his conscience—at least, such is his apprehension—and he is fleeing from the wrath to come. He wants to know experimentally the meaning of that word: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." Well, he is coming to the foundation laid in Zion, and laid for Zion—love and blood. He inquires, Did He die for me? Am I interested in eternal love? At all events, nothing less than that foundation can sustain my sinking spirit.

" Myself into Thine arms I cast,  
And hope I shall be saved at last."

"The poor of His people trust in it." We might also observe that they come to this foundation, and enter into the name of the great Founder of Zion, in the trials, troubles, sorrows, vexations, and disappointments of life. What should I have done—and my troubles, perhaps, are not for a moment to be compared with those through which some of my friends have passed—what should we have done in times and seasons that are past and gone, without a God, without such a foundation as this?

" In trouble, what a hiding-place  
Have they that know the God of grace."

The poor tried and tempted soul shall trust in it. And, then, again, as to the dangers which threaten Zion, for "the church is said to be in danger." I do not think the church of God is in danger. But Popery, it is said, is spreading, at least in this land, and that it aims at the throne, and intends so to permeate the ruling powers of the country as to bring the nation itself under its dominion again. And what answer shall we return to persons who talk in this way? "Why, the Lord hath founded Zion." Troublous times may be coming, and the trouble may be deep and great; perhaps, however, it may not be so terrible as we apprehend; but, however that may be, it must be short, if sharp, and it must leave Zion where it is. All that can happen must leave the church of God standing, and the interests of Emmanuel entire; for the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall safely trust in it. Then, secondly, they betake themselves unto it. To what? To the foundation, again; or, if you please, to Zion—betake themselves to Zion, for Christ is there, the sacrifice for sin is there, the heavenly provision is there, and God will abundantly bless the provision of His house; and society is there—and such society, too, as the poor of God's people love—God, and godly men and godly women.

" My soul shall pray for Zion still,  
While life or breath remains:  
There my best friends, my kindred, dwell;  
There God, my Saviour, reigns."

Fourthly and lastly, *the enquirers*. "What shall then one answer the messengers of the nation?" I have already alluded to this question. The messengers were sent, (as I said at the commencement of my observations to-night,) to Hezekiah, to enquire into the secret of his success, and victories, and prosperous reign. Why I bring this part of the subject before you at this time is this:

reports spread concerning the condition of Zion—reports spread far and wide concerning the honour that was put upon Hezekiah ; different nations heard of it, and sent to enquire concerning the cause thereof. Well, now, you may apply this to the church and people of the living God. God's Zion is not in a corner ; and His dealings with His people are widely reported. "Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." And when God converts a sinner from the error of his ways, and constitutes him a Christian, and a believer, the thing becomes notorious. All that are about him know it. A person needs not to tell it, for the fact will show itself. All the family know it ; all the village, or all the parish, it may be, will sooner or later know it. Yes ; the grace of God is a thing that cannot be hid. And I bring this before you for the purpose of illustrating the language of Peter : "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asked you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." "What shall we answer the messengers of the nation?" Why, our text supplies the answer. We can assign a reason for our success, our peace, our prosperity, and our peculiarities:—"The Lord hath founded Zion."

"The world beheld the glorious change,  
And did thy hand confess ;  
My tongue broke out in unknown strains,  
And sung surprising grace."

May the Lord be pleased to command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# CHRIST'S INCARNATION AND RESURRECTION.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 23rd, 1876.

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*"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my Gospel."*—2 Tim., ii. 8.

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THE Christian ministry is a divine institution, and therefore its importance in the economy of grace is great. It is founded on the great facts that Jesus Christ having redeemed sinners, it is the intention of the everlasting God, to call and comfort the ransomed by the preaching of the Word, and, therefore, the Great Redeemer said to His disciples shortly after His resurrection, and before His ascension into heaven : "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." All the world is His, for He is by acquirement Lord of all, and He has a right to send His servants where He pleases. Having thus received their commission, His disciples went forth preaching the life and salvation of their risen Master. The gospel ministry being therefore a divine appointment, and the Saviour having promised to be with His people, and His sent servants, until the end of the world, we are right, I think, in believing that there will be gospel ministers through all time, and that the Christian ministry will exist until the last day. Preaching the gospel of grace in this dark and sinful world, is an important, and generally, a hard and difficult work ; and not a few of God's servants feel that His Word is a burden upon their hearts. This work was very difficult and burdensome in the days of Paul ; for then religion did not walk, as we sometimes express ourselves, "in silver slippers." The way in which the Apostles of Jesus walked was very rough, since they served their Lord amid the bitterest persecution, and in privation and sufferings almost unparalleled. Ministers needed then, as now they need the fulfilment of the Great Master's promise, and communications of Divine grace from the great Head of the church. A man may be able to speak before a few hundreds of people for three-quarters of an hour or an hour ; but all public speaking is not preaching, and talking to our fellow-creatures is not always a fulfilment of the great commission. For just as there is a divine secret in experimental religion, so there is a divine secret in connexion with the proper ministry of the Word, and it consists in the presence and blessing of the adorable Author of all saving truth. Ministers need the glorious person and power of Him by whom the Word of God is inspired ; and, when the Great Inspirer of Divine Truth fills the heart of a preacher, I can assure you it is very pleasant and refreshing work to explain and expound the glorious mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But if a man preaches the truth ; he will be opposed ; if he declares the whole counsel of God, he will be more or less hated. He will be loved by God's people, for his testimony will be received by them ; but all men do not believe, and all men are not saints. There is still such a thing as enmity in the human heart, and it manifests itself against everything that is godlike ; and, therefore, it breaks out against Divine truth. And if it is so, ministers of the gospel will be opposed—not only by the devil, but by men also ; and they require all the grace their Master has promised and is pleased to impart. This was felt by the Apostle Paul, and hence, he said, "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He did not exhort Timothy to be strong in himself. No doubt Timothy was a gifted young man, and since the Apostle advised him to give himself to reading and study, it is, I think, very probable, that he was a student and perhaps, a deep one

No. 28.—AUGUST 15, 1876.

—he was a man of mind, of talent, and of spiritual power. Paul, however, as his father, and as one whose experience was weighty and deep, said, “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ; and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.” The Apostle was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, and he exhorted Timothy to fearlessly proclaim the glorious doctrines of God’s grace. For, although persecutions abounded, and bitter afflictions surrounded him, yet he had no desire to fly from his work, nor desert his Master’s cause. The more he was persecuted, the harder, if possible, he worked ; for the love of Christ constrained him, and his faith in the person and mediation of Jesus was deep and spiritually powerful, and, he therefore said, “Endure hardness, Timothy, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” for it is not for soldiers, especially during war, to sit on easy chairs, and walk on carpets : they have to live abroad in camps—to live in dust and dirt, blood and sweat, want and suffering. “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Proceeding, he says, “If a man strive for masteries, he is not crowned except he strive lawfully.” Timothy was not to be ashamed of the Gospel—he was not to conceal any of its principles. There was no reason whatever why he should bring a cloud over the name, the person, or the character of the Lord. A minister must strive in some respects, but he should strive lawfully. Striving against the devil must be lawfully carried on, and if we strive against mere professors, the strife must be lawful ; and if we strive earnestly, in contending for the truth, we must speak the truth in love, or strive lawfully. “The husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits.” This, perhaps, is peculiar to a Christian minister. It is a proposition which will hardly apply universally ; for the husbandman that laboureth in nature, is not always the first partaker of the fruit. However, some transpose the words, and read them, “the husbandman must first labour before he partakes of the fruit.” However, a good minister of Jesus Christ must himself live upon the bread which he brings before the people. He must drink of the water of salvation before he places it upon the gospel table. He must eat of the grapes of Eshcol himself at home, in his study, before he brings them into the house of God. A man that preaches, or professes to preach, the gospel, having no experience of its preciousness and power, is very solemnly out of his place ; for the husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider, therefore, what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things ; and in all your preaching, “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my Gospel.”

There are two things in these words which should have our attention for a few minutes this morning. First, two great leading doctrines of the Gospel—the *incarnation and the resurrection of our Lord* : Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel.” Then, secondly (and, perhaps, I shall not say much on that point), *the Apostle’s advice or exhortation* : Remember this.

In the first place we have to look at *the two cardinal doctrines of the Gospel*, the *incarnation* of Christ and His *resurrection*. I have called these the two principal doctrines of the Gospel, because I think if you put them together, you will see that they include or involve all that is vital to our salvation. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, includes the whole of His life here on the earth, and His resurrection, of course, includes the facts that He suffered and died ; for had He not suffered and died, and been buried, we should have heard nothing about His resurrection from the dead. And, therefore, we have here in the text before us this morning, the great fundamentals of our religion, or the foundation on which the church of the living God is built. I do not intend to tarry long on the first point, and for this reason, I am frequently bringing before you the incarnation of our Lord, and I do so because it is a theme I dearly and deeply love.

“Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find ;  
The holy, just, and sacred Three,  
Are terrors to my mind.”

I cannot bear the thought of approaching abstract Deity, and I never sit down to puzzle and perplex myself by trying to think about a God out Christ. It is our mercy that Jehovah is in Jesus, and that Jesus is Jehovah; that the infinite and everlasting God is in the man Christ Jesus, and that we shall see Him in that glorious Man in heaven, for ever and ever. I will, however, say one or two words on this point. "The Lord Jesus, of the seed of David." We will not trouble ourselves with any thoughts on the point, that the Apostles did not say of the seed of Adam, nor on the fact that Christ is called elsewhere, the seed of Abraham, or of Isaac, and Jacob—he here speaks of Jesus Christ as the seed of David. Now, of course, this means his humanity. It means that Jesus Christ was, as pertaining to His human body, the Son of David. This indicates the humanity of our Lord, and this is that blessed doctrine which we call the incarnation of Jehovah. The incarnation of Jehovah! Those words are very weighty and comprehensive. Jehovah incarnated, or in the flesh! "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." Taking two or three simple thoughts which appear to lie upon the surface of this subject, we will then pass on to His resurrection. Our great Lord is represented as of the seed of David, to indicate the fact that *He is one of the people*, or that He is one of us. Oh, is it not a blessed fact, that He that sits upon the throne, at the right hand of His Father, is one of ourselves; that we are his flesh, connected with him by ties which, though close and tender, are divinely and omnipotently strong! I have said, God anointed one chosen out of the people. In what respects is Jesus Christ one of the people? He is our brother, and we do not speak metaphorically, for the Word of God uses not figurative language when it represents Jesus Christ as the elder brother of the family of Divine grace. He is our brother, and is not ashamed to call us brethren; and the period is coming when He will say, "Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given Me." Our glorious Christ is the keeper of God's children. Cain said to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Jesus Christ is the keeper of all that family of which He is firstborn. He saved them, bled for them, and died for them. He is responsible for all the seed of David: for their life, their safe arrival in heaven, their coronation, and their glory in that better world. He is one with us as to relationship, then; for I do not know how Jehovah could be related to us as a Father, without the complexity of His Son, Jesus Christ, or how the great God could be in covenant with us without the humanity of our Lord. The distance between the human and angelic natures is very great, but that between the Divine and human, or between Deity and man, is greater still. But this distance is all filled up satisfactorily and eternally, by the complex person of the great and blessed Son of God. And, therefore, He is one of us, because He is our brother. But we go, if possible, a little farther than this. He is one of us as to curse and condemnation. I fancy some one saying, Are you not going too far when you represent Christ as one with us in sin, in curse, and in condemnation? He knew no sin, and was utterly incapable of committing it, and his spotless and pure humanity was all that the strictest justice and the purest holiness could possibly require. But the Lord "made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;" and, therefore, this Son of David, this glorious Brother of the family of grace was one with us in relation to sin. He took our place and our sin, and received the punishment that was due to us; and being identified with us as our brother, he made himself responsible for the presentation of a spotless, and pure, and perfectly justified family. One with us in condemnation too; for the condemnation that follows sin, that is the result thereof, reached, surrounded, and overwhelmed Him. He was baptized therein, and swallowed it all up for ever, and thus He was one with us as to condemnation. And blessed be His name, He is one with us as to justification and salvation. This doctrine of union to the Christ of God, is one of the greatest and most glorious facts contained in the Word of God. All our comfort, our hopes, and the certainty of our salvation flow therefrom. Christ Jesus, the seed of David, is one of the people and will be identified with them for ever. He is one with us in eternal salvation through suffering.

Dear Christian brethren and sisters, what was there in the life of Christ here on the earth that was not connected with your salvation and mine. He was born to suffer and to save. Helived to suffer and save. He was a man of sorrows to save. He went about doing good to save.

“Cold mountains and the midnight air,  
Witnessed the fervour of His prayer;  
The desert His temptation knew,  
His conflict and His victory too.”

As soon as he breathed in this world, He breathed as a Saviour. “Unto you is born, the city of David,” the seed of David—“a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And therefore our salvation, actively considered, commenced in the manger, and the Babe that lay therein proceeded to save until He reached Calvary, when He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost, and said, “It is finished.” Hence, Remember Timothy, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel. We are saved by his birth, saved by His life, saved by His sufferings—saved by His obedience—saved by His death—saved by his burial—saved by His resurrection—and saved by His enthronement in Heaven. Jesus Christ is one of the people, and he appeared in human nature for the purpose of *revealing His Father to the family of heaven*. He is the great teaching Prophet of the church,—the great Zaphnath-paaneah, or the revealer of God, the revealer of heaven, the revealer of eternity, and the revealer of heaven’s great and gracious secrets. Drop the humanity of Christ out of your faith, and have nothing but man here on the earth, and an abstract Deity everywhere, and you will not be able to form one satisfactory idea of God—one satisfactory conception of Jehovah. God, the high, the mighty, the lofty, the majestic, the infinitely great and glorious must be brought down to us, and one Being only can bring Him down. Angels could not come low enough, and if they could, they could not have brought God down to man, for saving and sanctifying purposes. We must have the mediatorial Revealer of God, who is Himself God, and in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Jehovah, therefore, is brought down to the limited and shallow powers and capacities of human creatures like ourselves, and when we embrace the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, the Christ of God, we embrace all in all. I cannot explain it, but we do embrace the everlasting ALL. We cannot enter into this mystery, for His name involves all, and his person includes all,—all that I must know, all that God requires me to know, and all that He requires me to possess for ever. We do not know much, our knowledge is very limited and shallow; but if it is the result of Divine teaching, it is good as far as it goes, and is sufficient to accomplish the intentions and designs of Jehovah. Christ is the seed of David for the purpose of revealing the great God to man. On this point—just one thought more—our Christ has assumed our nature, which He loves so well, and taken it into everlasting union to Himself, because it is His intention *to elevate, to purify, to perfect, and to glorify it in another state and world*. What are we to be? We are to be like Him. And what is He?

“All over glorious is my Lord,  
Must be beloved and yet adored.”

He is the wonder of heaven, the everlasting astonishment of angels, and the masterpiece of all the works of God. All the wisdom and knowledge and power and love, and inexhaustible resources of God, were employed in the constitution of the complex person of the great and blessed Redeemer. And we are to be like him—not as to His Deity, not as to His complexity—but like Him as to His spiritualized and glorified humanity; as to the fact that he is a man. Our souls like His—not as to capacity, greatness, and power; but we shall know as He knows, have the grace that he possesses, and roll in the love (if I may so speak) in which he lives. “That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” And our bodies shall be like his by-and-bye. We may, however, have a word to offer on that point presently, or perhaps again in the evening of this day. Well, friends, that is our prospect; and

"I would not change my blest estate,  
For all that earth calls good or great;  
And while my faith can keep her hold,  
I envy not the sinner's gold."

This is our prospect—and what a prospect it is, in such a world as this, where sickness abounds, and death is cutting down its thousands every day and almost every hour, and everything is humanly uncertain! There is a better world; we are going thither. The great Christ of God is there—the glory of the place, and the sun that lights up all eternity itself he is ours, and we are going to be like Him and with Him for ever, to see His dear face without a veil between; that face that wept—that face that was smitten—that face down which meritorious tears trickled in the garden and on the cross—that face down which blood flowed from the wounds made by the thorny crown; that face we shall see shining brighter than ten thousand suns, and lighting up the hearts and minds of countless millions for ever and ever. Remember, Timothy, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel. That is all I will say on the incarnation. When the text occurred to my mind whilst reading these Epistles to Timothy, the resurrection of Christ then appeared the most prominent part thereof. I have, therefore, trespassed a little on my own time this morning by dwelling so long on the first part of the subject.

Now a word or two, in the second place, on *His resurrection*. "He was raised from the dead." Sin was the procuring cause of the Saviour's death, and therefore his way to the grave. He went through all our demerit, and having completed salvation he merited his release from the tomb. He went through all that was between himself and death, and having saved His people by dying, he was raised from the dead according to the gospel. My dear friends, let us tarry here just a minute, to say that the death of the Lord Jesus would have been a terrible, an awful, an infinite loss, without His resurrection. The fall of Adam was an awful loss. He fell, and carried a world down with him. All was wrecked and ruined in an hour, and that for all the ages of time, and in relation to millions for all eternity; but that calamity was not so great as the death of Christ would have been without His resurrection. Oh, if Christ had not risen from the dead all in all worlds would have been lost. Adam lost all in this world, but there were boundless resources in heaven untouched, unshaken, and uninjured. Those boundless resources, even all of them, were in the seed of David when He was here on the earth; and if He had not risen from the dead, if He were in the grave now, if that Holy One, like His brethren, had seen corruption, then the resources of heaven would have been exhausted, and God himself—I hope I am speaking reverently—could not have saved sinners equitably and honourably; but by dying Jesus did what He intended to do, and what God required Him to do, and all that our state required to be done, all was perfectly done. Remember, Timothy, that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and remember what all that implies—that His work was done, done well, done in a God-like manner, and that sinners, therefore, are absolutely and eternally saved. But let us look at the resurrection of Christ in three or four relations. I hardly know where or how to begin on so boundless and all-important a theme.

Look at the resurrection of the seed of David, Jesus Christ, in relation, first of all, to his *humiliation*. He made the world, and lived in it thirty-three years, and it hated Him. He came to His own, and His own received Him not; and whilst He lived therein He upheld and sustained it. It was by the will of Jesus of Nazareth, the seed of David, who was here on earth, that the sun rose every morning, that the moon shone every night, and the stars gave their light. The world in which He lived and walked and suffered was in His hand.

"His shoulders held up heaven and earth  
Whilst Mary held up him."

Did He look like the Maker, the Sustainer, the Governor, and the Proprietor of the world? "All things were made by Him and for Him, and without Him was nothing made that was made." Did He look like the Proprietor and the Ruler of the Universe? No; but how did He appear when He was raised from the dead;

and stood as a conqueror on the other side of the grave? The obscuration of His majesty had ceased. The cloud that enveloped Him had disappeared. His poverty and privation were past and gone. The veil under which He had lived had been wholly removed, and He appeared then as Jehovah-Jesus, the Mighty God, and the everlasting Father. The humiliation of Christ. First look at its depth. You can never measure the distance between the bosom of the Father and the grave where the Son of God lay. Oh, you do not know how far it was from the glory that He left to the degradation and humiliation into which He went. He humbled himself unto death, even the death of the cross. Will you look at this for a minute, while I try to direct your thoughts to the fact that He was the only being that could go so far or sink so low. No other being ever stood so high; therefore no other being could sink so low. You and I sink low, do we not? but where was our Lord? What depths did He go into? How low did He sink? Oh, the distance was infinite, or at least immeasurable, between the glory that He left and the humiliation into which he sank. Well, it is all over. Remember His resurrection, Timothy. His humiliation was lifelong, also. Poor in birth, poor in youth, poor in manhood, poor in suffering, poor in death, not having a pillow for His head, nor a bed for His heavenly person; and poorer than you will be, I suppose, in His burial; for He had not a grave of His own to lie in. Joseph of Arimathea had made one for himself, and there they laid the Lord of life and glory. It is all over. Remember the resurrection of the seed of David. And then, again, His humiliation was meritorious. As He proceeded lower, and lower, and lower, he produced and procured salvation and brought new forms of love into existence, or if not into existence, into visibility. He left behind himself a shining path of obedience and every step He took and act He performed was meritorious, and contributed to the great redemption which he came to achieve. Well, as we have said two or three times, all that ceased when He was raised from the dead. He came up out of it all; emerged from the grave and from under all the clouds and darkness that had covered Him, not a poor man, not a man of sorrows shedding tears and blood, not to be buffeted and spat upon again, not to meet Herod nor Pontius Pilate, but as the Monarch of the Universe; and as the Sun of Righteousness, which, having set in blood three days before, rose, not in suffering, but in righteousness. "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings, and ye shall grow up as calves of the stall." The humiliation of Christ is for ever ended.

But passing away from that, look secondly at His resurrection in relation to His *suretyship*. If you say I am in the old road this morning, I reply, There is only one way to heaven, and I do not want a second: this is enough for me. It has been sufficient to lead millions to the throne of God, and I hope I am walking therein. I do not want another Gospel. If you can find me something better than the suretyship engagements of Jesus Christ, I was going to say I will preach it. I am sure I will preach the best I know; but let us return to the subject, the suretyship engagements of our Lord. Charged with the debts of all God's people, never before did a being so indebted to Divine justice stand before the throne of God. You say—indebted to justice? Yes, he was. He did not contract the debts; but you and I did. He did not commit the sin or contract the guilt; but we did: and he said to His Father, charge it all on me; make it mine; put it all beneath my name; hold me responsible for it all, for I will pay; for they may not and shall not be lost. I can pay, and I will do so, and, therefore, put all beneath my name and account me the debtor and the sinner. Well, the place of payment was appointed—Calvary. The time was appointed, too—"Father, the hour is come"—and the hour having arrived the Surety was on the spot—at Calvary. Justice and Truth met Him with the debt book; the bond, His own bond, His own word, bearing His own signature, was presented and He paid the whole, as he was bound to do. I speak softly and reverently, for the theme is a mighty one, and the fact is truly deep and solemn. Yes, He was bound to pay the whole, for having sovereignly engaged to discharge the debt, and signed the bond, he was bound to fulfil His engagements, and

having done so, in due time, He rose from the dead and was discharged, and we sing—

“ In His release our own we see,  
And shout to view Jehovah pleased.”

Brother (and I speak to the doubter and trembler), if you are trusting in the dear name of Jesus, and I am going to say what may seem to be a very hard thing—you do not owe any measure of justifying obedience to God's law now. *Justifying* obedience. Ah! that qualifies it. Yes, I know what I said. In the court of equity and law you are clear, and there is nothing to pay; but there is another court in which you now appear. You owe a debt of grateful and loving obedience and praise to Him that died for you and rose again; but justifying obedience is all brought in by your great Surety, Christ, else He had not been raised from the dead. Remember that He *was* raised from the dead according to my gospel.

Thirdly, look at His resurrection in connection with His *federal Headship*. When Adam fell, he carried all his seed with him; and when Jesus, the second Adam, and Lord of all, rose from the dead he brought all his seed with him out of the grave. We see a fallen church in the garden of Eden; but in the garden where the sepulchre was we see in the person that said, “Mary! Mary!” to the woman, a saved, a risen and justified church, and as the risen Head of His people He says,—“Because I live, ye shall live also;” the life therefore which He possesses His people possess also, and they must retain it as long as their reigning Lord lives. Christian brethren, there are three important places in the government of God—Eden, Calvary, and Zion. In Eden, the curse was kindled; on Calvary the kindled curse was quenched; on Zion the happy saved sinner sits and sings the well-earned praises of his great delivering Lord. The resurrection of Christ in connection with His Headship.

Then, in the next place, in connection with His *sufferings*. Have they not been included before? If so, just one word more in connection therewith. Where there is sin there must be suffering. God cannot pardon sin without an atonement; and atonement for sin involves penal suffering. It is all over. There is no more to be endured; no more suffering *for sin*. There is much suffering on account of it; and in the very depths of my spirit I believe that if God's children walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to them. There is a very heavy rod sometimes in God's hand. I have been found fault with for preaching this; but I have a right to expect to be found fault with for preaching the gospel. Yes, a heavy rod is sometimes in our Father's hand, and there are such facts as tokens of displeasure on the part of God at the conduct of His children. Nevertheless, all the penal fires have been put out. All the punishment which was due to sin in the court of justice and equity has been inflicted upon the Lord. If the sword of justice were not wholly in its sheath, if there were a fiery curse—only one—remaining, Jesus Christ would not be preached as having risen from the dead. But he is out of the grave, and the language of that fact is—the fires are quenched, the gates of hell are closed, God is satisfied, and penal suffering is for ever over. Remember that you preach the resurrection of Jesus.

Then, in the next place, the resurrection of Christ in relation to himself as *conqueror*. There was a conflict between Christ and death, and remember, my brethren, that Christ met death with its ten thousand times ten thousand stings, for he by the grace of God has tasted death for every man—that is for every one of the men mentioned in that chapter, “the many sons that are to be brought to glory,” “he by the grace of God has tasted death for *every one* of them.” And what was the result? Did he go successfully through His work and conquer the enemy? Yes; He pursued death into his own territories or the grave, and, therefore, he was buried; otherwise we might well wonder that Jesus, having died on the cross, did not come to life again in a few moments. Was anything more than His sufferings and death required? When he bowed His head and died and gave up the ghost, why did He not return to life without

burial? The grave was a part of the evil consequences of sin. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return;" and our dear Lord having determined to go to the end of the curse, it was necessary that he should pursue death into his deep dominions, grapple with and overcome him therein, and then come forth leaving behind him death conquered and the grave overcome. Why did not He annihilate death? Ah! that will have to be done by and bye. He has not yet annihilated death, but conquered him. He has not annihilated the grave, but He has taken it for a time into His own dominions, and there stands a solemn promise of His in the Word—"O death, I will be thy plague, O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from my eyes." Death is not God's creature, and He will destroy him utterly by and bye. The grave is not God's creature, and that, too, shall be destroyed. Bear in mind that they are both conquered; and will you fear a conquered foe? Why shrink from death? his eternal conqueror is your Brother and your Saviour. Do you fear it as an enemy? Do not forget that death and the grave are overcome. Remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

In the next place, look at His resurrection in relation to his *forerunnership*. "Whither the forerunner has for us entered." He ran unto death, he ran into it, for the dear Mediator's life was a race. He ran up to heaven, he ran through it, he ran into the grave and through it, and then ran up to heaven; and the gates were opened and fastened back, if I may so speak, and left

"A way so broad and unconfined,  
That all His church shall march behind."

Having thus entered the heavenly world, He went up to His throne, took possession of it, and was crowned Lord of all. He then took possession of all the mansions in that better land, and thus prepared His people's places for them. Jesus says, I have done my work, and, Father, they are coming. "I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory"—They are coming—some young, some old, some through deep trial and trouble; but they are all coming, and they shall all arrive; and he has taken heaven for them; remember that he was raised from the dead and went to glory as the Forerunner of His people.

Lastly, as to his *Lordship*. He died, and was raised again that he might be the Lord of the dead and also of the living. There are some travelling towards the grave. He is their Lord. There are, perhaps hundreds, of bodies in heaven, I do not know how many but Enoch's body is there, so is Elijah's, and the bodies of those saints also who were raised from the dead when our Lord left the tomb—they are there. He is their Lord. He is the Lord of all that are morally dead and that are spiritually alive. He is the Lord of living and dead. He has inaugurated a new life, a new state of things; for if any man be in Christ Jesus he is in a new creature. We are not in Eden nor in heaven yet; but we are in a heavenly place, and are going to a heavenly world. Old things are passed away and all things are become new. Amen.

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# THE LOVING AND INFALLIBLE GUIDE.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 20th, 1876.

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*"And the Lord shall guide thee continually."*—Isa. lviii. 11.

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THE grace of God is an unspeakably sweet and precious theme to dwell upon. Every glorified spirit in heaven, every sanctified soul on the earth, and every minister of the gospel meditate thereon with holy joy. The Apostle Paul discoursed with more feeling than tongue could tell upon that high and heavenly subject, and he evermore rejoiced in assuring his friends and hearers that, "by the grace of God, he was what he was." We read, however, of the riches of divine grace; for there is not only grace in God,—his grace is infinitely rich and eternally enriching to all its favoured possessors, and hence we are said to be accepted in the beloved, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." And again, the Apostle speaks of preaching among the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Our God is rich in grace for ever and ever, and he has expressed this fact in a very beautiful and comprehensive manner in the gospel of salvation. The holy doctrines of the Bible, the promises of God's love, and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, considered in its various branches, express the riches of God's eternal grace and love, while his covenant characters and names are the outlets of rich and saving mercy. God has constituted himself our covenant God and Father, and sovereignly taken upon himself vast and momentous responsibilities. The word responsibility in relation to God is, I know, a very strong one; but the promise of God is strong, and the solemn oath with which he interposed himself can never be violated. I will be a God to thee for ever, and will do all that thy circumstances require me to do. He is first their covenant God, and then their gracious and everlasting Father; and hence the Redeemer says to His brethren, by way of teaching them how to pray, "When ye pray, say, Our Father who art in heaven." Again, our God has been pleased to assume the title of a Saviour, calling himself by that important and blessed name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us. He was God with us in our flesh and in our world, to redeem us from guilt, and deserved curse and wrath, and He is God with us now for the purpose of blessing and guiding us continually. I might go further into the riches of grace as they are expressed in the names and titles of our Lord; but what I have said may perhaps be sufficient to introduce my subject this morning. How very blessed and important to the saints of God, who are strangers, and sojourners, and pilgrims here below, is this declaration,—*"The Lord—i.e., Jehovah—shall guide thee continually."*

In offering a few observations on our text this morning, I will first try to show *what it implies*, and then explain, if I can, *the great fact which it expresses*.

I. In the first place, let us look at some important facts which I think the text implies: "The Lord shall guide thee continually." I will try to fix your attention for a few minutes upon a few points which I think will

No. 29,—SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1876.

be profitable to all our minds. The text implies, in the first place, that the *safety and salvation of God's people are important*. I hope we shall be able to bring our thoughts to this subject, for we need the consolation and comfort it is calculated to afford. It is a blessed truth that our salvation and security are important to all parties concerned? Why, it is so in some respects to the devil himself; but I will not go out of the way this morning to preach him. Your safety is important to God, and to all his angels in heaven. It is important to all the glorified above; for, listen, my friends, they without you cannot be made perfect. The spirits of the just ones before the throne require your presence in heaven, and also the presence there of all the chosen of God; for without the feeble sheep and lambs who are now on earth, the flock of Jesus Christ above cannot be complete. And hence the importance of their salvation and the necessity that God should guide them continually. Whatever love produces is important to love, is an observation which will hold here on earth, and even apply to creatures; but let us attend to divine things. Whatever the love of God produces is important to the God of love. He produces vital religion, true Christianity, a good hope, those tears of repentance which fill your eyes, that spiritual state of things in which you exist, and all that experience which savingly distinguishes you from the rest of mankind. Hence we read of a divine bottle for the tears which love produces, and that God will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, and hear and accept their sighs and groans. Now, my dear friends, if your groans are acceptable to God, and your tears are, so to speak, bottled in heaven; if your thoughts are of so much importance that they are registered on high, (for there is a book of remembrance written for them that fear the Lord and that think upon his name) and if the Bible is God's word, and therefore divinely true, then, is it not a fact that your person and the whole of your salvation are important matters—so important indeed that God looks upon you in this desert place and waste-howling wilderness, and says, for your comfort, “I will guide you continually.” My friends, if it were not so, God would not have charged himself with the guidance of your souls through this world; but He has taken that business into his own hands, and constituted himself responsible for your safety, and hence his eye is continually upon you, and influence from himself is ever in some way affecting you.

“His honour is engaged to save  
The meanest of His sheep :  
All that His heavenly Father gave  
His hands securely keep.”

Things, places, and persons, are important in proportion as they are interested in God, or God is interested in them. Places are important in proportion as God is interested in them, and I will mention three or four. There is, first, Mount Sinai. There God's holy law was given, and God appeared as Israel's King and God. Calvary is another important spot. And its importance is derived from the fact that the God-man sweat, and bled, and suffered, and died there; and did that work there by which we are for ever saved, and which will fill heaven and eternity with adoration. And then, again, Zion is important, and its importance comes from the fact that God is interested therein. What is it that makes a chapel divinely important? The spire, if there happens to be one? The organ? The choir? Or is it important because it contains a crowded, a fashionable, an intellectual and a wealthy congregation? Oh, no; that which makes places of worship spiritually important is the fact that God is there. And, then, heaven is what it is from the fact that God is there. Now, you may apply these observations, not only to things and places, but to persons. The nearer a person is to God, the more important he is. If God is lovingly interested in an individual, the life and preservation of that individual are sacred facts. God is interested in all human creatures. Yes; but he is not *alike* interested in all, and therefore turn your attention to the regenerated, or the newborn man and woman, to the children of the living God. You are more or less deeply

interested in the dear little children that belong to your friends and neighbours. They are interesting creatures, and you love them. You take an interest in them ; but that interest is shallow and weak compared with your interest in your own beloved ones. Now, though God is interested in all the creatures of his hand and power, there are the creatures of his *heart* ; new creatures ; beings who are God's dear children, and concerning whom he says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." The God of heaven calls you precious, and you call him so, which we are not surprised at ; but that he should so speak of you is marvellous indeed. So precious are you to God, and so deeply interested is he in you, that he cannot afford to lose you, nor to allow you to wander alone through this mazy world, it being so full of difficulties, and dangers, and death. God says, Dear child, you shall live for ever, and never perish, nor be destroyed ; and as you cannot find your way alone, and heaven is to receive you, and your name is written in the book of life, I will take upon myself the responsibility of saving and guiding you day by day. I will guide thee continually by my counsel, and afterwards, I will receive thee to glory. Oh, Christian brethren, hold fast your privileges, if you can. Let them not slip out of the hands of your faith, and be not tortured and tormented by the observations which are made on the right hand and on the left, about the high doctrines of divine grace. It is the will of our heavenly Father that we should have strong consolation, and when I see that the great Jehovah is guiding a number of men and women in a saving way through this mazy world, I come to the conclusion at once that the life of those people is dear and important to him ; otherwise he would not come down to guide them, nor would he spread his wings over them to cover them all the day long. I know you feel your own personal insignificance, vileness, and sinfulness. I feel them, we all feel them ; and that feeling increases in strength, as days, and weeks, and years increase ; for twenty years ago we did not so deeply realize those facts as we do to-day ; but whilst these are facts, and painful ones, there is much more connected with our salvation. Our God accounts us precious, and the great Jehovah looks upon us with complacency and delight, and if he is pleased to give us names better than of sons and of daughters, let us bless his name. If he is pleased to call us great, or to speak of our life and career through the world as important matters, let us adore his grace if we can. It is ours, perhaps, to hang down our heads in shame sometimes, and confess our own insignificance and vileness ; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and mount up as well as sink down—they shall mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting. Well, then, Christian brethren, you see, if these positions be true, that your life is precious, and your safety important, and therefore God says, "I will guide thee continually." Now, observe that you are redeemed men and women. I speak of course to the people of God ; redeemed by the precious blood of Christ ; and, further, you have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Imagine that, having been redeemed and regenerated, you were left alone in this wide world of ours, that God left you to shift for yourselves in the midst of these perplexing and bewildering scenes ! Why, then, redemption's work would all be, as far as your glorification was concerned, in vain, and your regeneration would terminate in nothing ; but having redeemed you by his blood, and quickened you by his grace and Spirit, Christ comes and says to you in his word, It is my intention to have you in heaven, to crown you with glory and honour there, and that you shall enter into everlasting rest ; and since that is my intention, "I will guide thee continually." Thus, friends, we arrive at the conclusion that salvation is certain. I do not know what there is in this proposition, or in the fact which it expresses, so terrible and dreadful ; and yet the truth that salvation is divinely and absolutely certain is represented as a very dreadful affair—something that everybody ought to shudder at. We are told that such a doctrine, or a belief therein, will lead persons to live licentiously

and loosely. Persons who talk in that way are, I fear, strangers to the grace of God, and to the God of all grace. If God works, he works in a manner that is worthy of himself; and I ask the question here, in connection with this subject, Is not our Guide infallible? I ask the question, and leave it on the minds of all my hearers whether they accept these positions or not—Is not our Guide infallible? Is He a Saviour? Is He a Shepherd? He is infallible. Is He a Leader, a Guide? He is competent to lead souls through this world to the better country; for his power and wisdom are divine and perfect. As a Guide he knows the way, and obtains the will, and the affections, and the faith of his followers. He attracts all his followers and brings their souls and minds into sweet subjection to himself, and will never lose either himself or the people he is leading. He speaks authoritatively and powerfully when he says, follow me here and follow me there. "This is the way; walk ye in it." Soon, and perhaps by some sudden stroke, your journey will end, and the tie that holds soul and body together having been snapped by the hand of God, you will, ere you are aware, find yourself with him in heaven, in a better world, in everlasting rest and joy; for there can be no disappointment here, since God is our guide—there can be no failure here, since he that guides you bought you with his blood, and represents you now before the throne of eternal glory. I believe every pilgrim's journey is arranged, and his arrival in heaven is timed. We are expected there. There is not an angel of God in heaven but what expects us; for did they not sing when we repented of sin under the grace of God the Holy Spirit. "Verily I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." They sang when you repented and shed tears of godly sorrow, and ever since that wondrous moment they have believed that you would reach heaven, and are expecting you in that world of eternal glory (for they are believers in the final perseverance of the saints.) By-and-bye the clock will strike the hour appointed and registered by God—the clock will strike, and the blow of death will fall, the last blow and the best that we shall ever feel, and that will set our ransomed spirits eternally free; and then shall we be for ever with the Lord, to bless and adore the riches of his wisdom in guiding us continually through this waste howling, wilderness.

I might add a few more thoughts to these on this part of our subject, but time is going, and therefore we will notice, secondly, that the text implies *the importance of the character of God's people*. Now, if, in the estimation of my hearers I have been soaring a little, I am about to come down, not into matters of uncertainty, for I shall always keep out of them in connection with religion, but to matters of experience, or rather, of practice. "The Lord shall guide thee continually." Wherefore? Because the public or outward walk and conversation of His people are divinely important. You observe, beloved hearers, that if God had simply decreed that we should have heaven without regard to our character, or our walk through, and our public reputation, in this world, we might have lived and walked anywhere and anyhow, but that decree is not all in connection with our salvation. It is a fact that salvation is of divine decree, and that God's decree shall stand for ever, and be eternally and honourably fulfilled, and that heaven shall therefore receive all the objects of His love; but it is also a fact that He has redeemed us from all iniquity, and that He purifies unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and, therefore, having respect to the character, and reputation, and general walk and conversation of his people, he says, "I will guide thee continually." Is this necessary, O God? We shall be sure to be saved, and must reach heaven. Our reputation here is of no particular importance or consequence. Yes, says God, it is; it is of great importance and consequence to me, and, therefore, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. I will guard thee all the day long, and guide thee continually. Hence David says, speaking of Christ as a shepherd and a guide, "He leadeth me in paths of righteousness, for His name's sake." We have not only a righteous heaven, and a righteous

birth, and a righteous life: there are righteous paths for righteous people to walk in; so that you see it is righteousness all the way through. He leads them in paths of righteousness. I believe our God leads his people in paths of doctrinal righteousness, and that so far as a saint is in error, he is walking in unrighteousness, and is not led by God; for Christ leads his people by his Spirit in paths of doctrinal truth. He leads also in paths of experimental, and practical, and circumstantial righteousness. The world know nothing of God or His grace beyond what they see in the walk and conversation of His followers. My friends, the world invert God's order of things. They judge the Bible by professors of religion, and God by his followers. This is inverting God's order of things. Looking at the conversation of the people of God, if a professor of religion lives loosely and intemperately, and in a worldly and sinful manner, they immediately conclude the Bible is not a book of facts, but a cunningly-devised fable, and that God is not what he is represented to be. Now our God says, I will guide them continually, for their walk through this world is of importance to Me. I will only add here, that if a saint can live in sin, and worldliness, and intimacy with the enemies of Jesus Christ, he is to me a most inexplicable character. That is all I will now say about it. If you want such a character explained, you must go to another than myself, for I do not know how a believer can live in sin. I know that He can fall into it, become defiled by it, groan and weep under it, and how he can be carried away and held fast thereby; but I do not know how he can live in sympathy therewith. I say I do not believe it. And, then, again, with regard to the world, how can a child of God live serenely and happily in a state of worldliness? "Are you never worldly, sir?" Yes. And what then? I trust I realize the fact, thank God! When a spirit of worldliness creeps over the regenerated mind like a withering wind, and burns up every green thing, leaving one's poor spirit barren, and desolate, and sterile,—thank God, if there is, generally speaking, life enough in the soul to realize the existence of such a terrible state of things. If that is the case, you are not wholly left by God. He is still with you, if you realize your condition at such a time. Thus, the character and conversation of God's people are important, and this fact is implied in our text—"And the Lord shall guide thee continually."

Now let us pass on and notice, the text implies that *God himself will choose our way*. The Lord shall guide thee continually; then He shall chose the path, else He would not be our guide. If we were permitted to tell Him what paths we should like to walk in, and if He suffered Himself to be governed and controlled by our wishes and desires, then I could see no meaning in my text: "And the Lord shall guide thee continually." My beloved friends, He that has loved you with an everlasting love has a right to choose your way. He that died to put away your sin, and that did by death redeem you, has a right to lead you home to heaven; and He that arrested you by His grace, and regenerated you by His Spirit, has a right to do as He pleases with you during your pilgrimage here. This is an experimental point. Most of us should have been elsewhere this morning had we had our own way. I do not know whether I should have been in the pulpit at Chadwell-street had I had my own way, and I do not know whether a single person in the house of God this morning would have been in Mount Zion Chapel, Chadwell-street, had he had his own way. You wanted to be in such a position, and in another place. The fact is, we are here,—here by the will and leadings of God, and ought we not to say with adoring gratitude, that God having guided us, we are where we are. I do not mean to say that the place is so excellent, or that the preaching is anything particular; but, looking at the fact that our frequent and bitter disappointments have forced us into courses and paths which have resulted in our sitting at His feet this morning, let us adoringly say: "The Lord has guided us until the present moment." Yes; "the Lord shall guide thee continually." He chooses the way and walks before His people, and leads them on—and very blessed indeed it is when they can say,

“ Though dark be my way, since Thou art my Guide,  
 ’Tis mine to obey, ’tis Thine to provide !”

for He makes the way and goes before. May God give every one an obedient will, and bring his mind, affections, and feelings into sweet subjection to himself. Let us never forget that the journey is short, that life is brief, that eternity is near, that the rest above is unbroken and eternal, and that infinite wisdom and love are our guide. Whilst God guides his people he is influenced by his own love, and knowledge, and infinite wisdom. We look upon the surface of the path in which we walk, and are discontented and dissatisfied. Believe, my brother, that there are depths of Divine wisdom as there are of Divine mercy. If you could take as wide a view of things as your God takes of them, and comprehend the whole of your life and all the circumstances thereof, then you would thoroughly acquiesce in the arrangements of your Father, and fall in adoring gratitude before Him, and bless Him, that you are where you are, and what you are. “The Lord shall guide thee continually,” and, therefore, He chooses the way for His people.

There is another word in the text which ought not to be passed over, and that is the word “*continually*.” His influence is incessant and uninterrupted. “The Lord shall guide thee continually.” Suppose our God suspended His gracious and saving influences for an hour. What then? We should all sink into destruction. Suppose our God absented Himself from His travelling children for an hour, and left His church alone for that short period in this dangerous and dying world, He would then lose every one. Why, you take a hard view of the world, of sin, and of enemies. It is solemnly true, however. I believe, in the very depths of my heart, that if God suspended his blessing and absented Himself from this world for only an hour, or from the church on earth, the world would swallow up the saints, and God would lose his own; and, therefore, “The Lord shall guide thee continually.” And the operations of our God as a guide are felt everywhere. All in heaven, all in hell, and all in this world are influenced by the fact that God is guiding his people. The church of God is so dear to him, that in guiding and making a way for them through time, He influences kings, and noblemen, and merchants, and tradesmen; aye, that all the world are directly or indirectly influenced by God’s guidance of a beloved people through it. Kings—why, our guide is King of kings, and they cannot do as they would. God says, “There shall be a way for my saints,” and, therefore, He restrains or constrains them. Noblemen—they to fulfil their wills and tastes may resolve to purchase estates in such places, and build mansions, and bring large establishments into existence therein, and in doing this it is necessary that a number of hands should be employed, and some of them may be the saints of the Most High. Our God takes advantage of the will and the purposes of the rich, even in relation to particular lands or portions of the country. There are saints of God there, and all things work together for their good. All, directly or indirectly, are overruled by the influence of this fact. Well, He has guided us thus far. Thus far we’ve proved the promise good—“I will guide thee continually.” I do not think I ought to dismiss this part of my subject without just observing that *implicit faith and trust in God are glorifying to him*. You say, that is a fact; but faith is the gift of God. I have never ignored this. I cannot do so. I know it is the gift of God, and that without His blessing it cannot be vigorous, nor exercise itself confidently upon His Word, His fulness, and His faithfulness. Nevertheless, implicit faith and trust are glorifying to Him. “I will guide thee continually.” Amen, O Lord, here I am; take my heart, my hand, my head, my home, my family, and all my concerns, and arrange for me, O Thou great Jehovah. Can we thus surrender ourselves and all we have to our Covenant God and Father, and gracious Guide? Recklessness and carelessness are black sins and crimes; but implicit trust and confidence in God are heavenly virtues or graces; and if God means what he says, “I will guide thee continually,” then our immoderate carking care is needless, useless, and pernicious. It is needless, for He cares

for us, and there is no room for immoderate care in God's government, and I wish there were not in our bosoms. It is useless; for it fulfils no profitable purpose, and accomplishes no good design. The mind is vexed and chafed, day by day, and month by month; and what for? Without any result, but pain and dissatisfaction on our part. Not only is it needless and useless, it is insulting and offensive to God; and it must be so in the highest degree. Our God has said, "I care for you; I will guide you, and that continually;" yet we want to take the reins or the rudder into our own hands. Such a state of mind is insulting to God, and offensive to His infinite Majesty. O for a stronger, steadier faith, to cast ourselves intelligently and believingly into His Almighty arms, or throw ourselves flat, as it were, upon His will and operation, rejoicing in the fact that He will guide us continually.

II. The truth expressed. It is a Divine fact and well attested; for everyone in heaven is prepared to prove, and, indeed, his glorification does prove, that the promise-making is a promise-fulfilling God. He guides His people *by His Spirit*. I should like, if time permitted, to dwell upon this point. He guides His people by His Spirit into all truth, into nothing but the truth, and gives that measure of knowledge which is essential to their salvation. He shall guide you into all truth; and surely, during the first stage of our Christian experience, He guided us through labyrinths of errors and works of our own. Sometimes we were ready to give up truth altogether, then we grasped it again, but thought we should never see daylight, nor God, and never have salvation; and we resolved, and tried, and schemed; but God's eye was upon us all the time, and at length we were sweetly conducted into the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and helped to cast our guilty, wretched, and filthy souls, upon His blood and righteousness for all. "The Lord shall guide thee continually." Since that time we have lived in the midst of errors, and our minds have sometimes been entangled, and I may just say here that I believe we are living in very serious and solemn times. There never were so many dangerous, poisonous, and plausible errors in existence, I think, as in the day in which we live. Everybody has something to say about God, and religion, and doctrine, and many of God's dear people are more than a little perplexed; many who are honest stumble, and the unwary and somewhat unstable are very seriously and solemnly bewildered. To-day I deeply feel the importance of that prayer—

"Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;"

which I refer to doctrinal, as well as to circumstantial matters.

"I am weak, but Thou art mighty;  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand."

Oh there are rocks and quicksands about us, my friends; and without a heavenly and Divine Pilot, we shall run upon them and be damaged, hence—"I will guide thee continually." He guides His people *by His Word*. Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. "Oh, bless His name, it is by the light of His Word that we see the way, and walk therein. By His Word we see in a measure what we are, and whose we are, and in what relation God stands to our souls. O for greater faith in the Word of Truth, that we may follow the dictates of heavenly wisdom in our way to our heavenly home! He guides us *by His Providence*. He makes, perpetuates, or changes the way by making it crooked. We were going on comfortably, and travelling smoothly, but suddenly there was a turning in the road, and we went off the moss, and walked among thorns and upon flints, and He said; "This is the way, walk ye in it." "The Lord shall guide thee continually." Would it not have been better had we walked in ease? Would it not have been better had we lived under circumstances that were smooth and pleasant? Let infinite wisdom decide. Let the God that made us, and loves us, and bought us, lead.

"This is the way, walk ye in it." If two, or three, or more ways seem to meet and unite, and you stand still and hesitate, and wonder what the will of God is, and which way you should take, do not consult your own hearts first. I will not if I can help it; for "he that trusteth to his own heart is a fool." Depend upon it, if we become our own guides, we shall take the road that is wrong. No; let the Lord be your guide. What are we to do? Drop down on your knees, when difficulties and perplexities are before you, and say:—

"Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land."

I might proceed with the subject, but time is gone. *Jesus Christ is the example of his people*, and we are also followers of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. As to the evidence that we have been guided by God, take only two or three thoughts. Has the Lord been our guide? One thing is certain if you are in the vital way to heaven, and are walking and living in Jesus Christ; if God had not guided and blessed you, you had never been there. That is something. Then, again, you are not walking in the way that you planned for yourselves, but in that which God has planned for you. This we have already dwelt upon; and then in the next place, you are still followers of God as dear children—are you not? "I do not know," you say; "I do not know whether I am a follower of God or not." I cannot tell. One thing I can say, either God or the devil is your guide, for there are but two leaders, as there are only two ways through life. There is a broad way and a narrow one, a straight way and a crooked one. The devil leads millions in the broad and crooked way; and Christ leads his people in the straight and narrow one. You are not in the broad way—you know you are not. You know that you are not a follower of the devil, and that He is not your lord, and ruler, and master. However, I will put it before you in this strong way—If you are going down to hell and eternal darkness, the love of Christ constrains you. That is putting it in a strong form, is it not? It is the name of Christ that draws you, and the love of Christ that constrains you. There is, in your estimation, more in Christ's name than there is in anything else you know; and, following that name, are you going down to hell! Is it not absurd? Is it not worse than absurd? Is it not wicked and blasphemous?—No; if his name is precious, and His love constrains you,—the way may be steep, and rough, and thorny, it leads to eternal day; for "the Lord shall guide thee continually," and the attractions of Immanuel's name have never drawn a sinner into darkness and despair. Amen.

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# CHRIST, THE SANCTIFIER OF HIS BRETHREN.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 24th, 1876.

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*"For both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."*—Heb. ii. 11.

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THE scene that was witnessed outside the city of Damascus when Saul of Tarsus was regenerated and called by conquering grace, was fraught with consequences of unspeakable importance to thousands of his fellow-men. Multitudes of immortal souls in the cities of Corinth, Colosse, Philippi, and Thessalonica, were to be savingly affected through what then and there took place. Paul, when he was Saul the Pharisee, had been a great curse in the world, and the influence of his life had been withering and destructive; but the Lord called him, and that fact constituted him a great blessing to his fellow-men. This is a fact in relation to ordinary men and believers; but it is eminently true of such a man as Saul of Tarsus was. Not only was his name in the Book of Life, and his guilt imputed to the Saviour, and he himself personally and eternally saved; it was the determination of his saving Lord to call him to the work of the ministry, to constitute him one of his apostles, to inspire him with a large portion of his Holy Spirit, and to qualify him to write several most elaborate, comprehensive, and important epistles to his church and people on the earth. Very early in his Christian life was the Lord Jesus Christ revealed to him in the excellencies of his person, the glories of his character, the fulness of his grace, and the greatness of his salvation; and consequently when Paul came forth into the work of the ministry, he announced his resolution, and declared the great determination of his mind, to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. This converted and transformed sinner proceeded to preach the grace and the glory of his Saviour, and multitudes were called by God and formed into Christian churches in various parts of the world. Perhaps the Apostle Paul did not know when he planted the churches of Christ in Colosse, Corinth, and elsewhere, that he would be called by the Holy Spirit to write the epistles to them. However, having planted those churches, circumstances arose in connection with them which rendered it necessary that their spiritual father and planter should write these important letters. The Holy Spirit filled his mind and guided his hand, and divinely inspired him to communicate the will of the great King of Zion to the church and to the world. These writings constitute a part of the holy Word of God, and it is, under God, to the conversion of the Apostle Paul that we are indebted for this elaborate and comprehensive Epistle to the Hebrews. It is a commentary, so to speak, upon the Book of Leviticus, or in other words, it is a commentary upon the writings of Moses. There are several prominent figures in this Epistle, but the most prominent of all is the great High Priest of our profession; and therefore the Apostle introduces him early, saying, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." Having spoken of the Sonship of Jesus, he proceeds to describe his character and glory: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his

No. 30.—OCTOBER 14, 1876.

power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Christ was, therefore, the most prominent and exalted object or character that engaged the attention of the author of this letter. Paul, however, introduces the angels of God, and in a few most comprehensive words proves the fact that Jesus is infinitely higher than the highest angel. He then appears to me to introduce Adam, the first man, who was holy, innocent, and upright, having been created in the image of God. Adam is introduced, and the writer shows that the Lord Jesus is infinitely greater than he, and therefore he says, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man;" or, We see Jesus, who for the purpose of suffering death, and by the grace of God, tasting death for every man, was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour. Read it so—transposing the clauses of the verse; for that dying Christ and redeeming God is crowned with glory and honour. "For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; "for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

There are three things in this portion of the Word. First, we have a *very important operation*—mediatorial sanctification. Secondly, we have a *most interesting and important fact stated in relation thereto*—the Sanctifier and the sanctified "are all of one." And thirdly, *the Apostle draws an important conclusion from these facts*—wherefore "He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

I. In the first place we have to notice a *very important operation*, which is performed in connection with the bringing of many sons unto glory. The great work of sanctification was commenced thousands of years ago, when the mediatorial Sanctifier came upon the scene, and appeared as the Purifier of the church and people of God; but He appeared in a more conspicuous and manifest manner eighteen hundred and seventy-six years ago. The Old Testament church of God was, however, composed of sanctified men and women; for since Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, he sanctified them also. And Christ is still the Sanctifier of his people, and under the gospel dispensation he is making Gentile sinners holy, and fitting and preparing them for heaven; and I will presently try to show you how the great affair of sanctification is in this respect a progressive work, or a gradual operation. Christ will never leave the stage, nor cease to act as the sanctifier of sinners, until all the purchase of his blood are sanctified, and the objects of eternal love are glorified. We have, therefore, in the first few words of our text indicated a very important branch of our salvation, a branch which is not, I fear—and I say that advisedly—which is not, I fear, very frequently dwelt upon. It is important that ministers should dwell upon justification; for it is an indispensable truth, and a glorious fact connected with salvation, and we must hold it fast; but it seems to me that sanctification is of equal importance, for glorification is based upon them both. I am therefore to say a few words to-night on this important theme—sanctification by the Mediator. Now you all know, that the word "sanctify" has different meanings in different connections and portions of the word; for instance, the Saviour says, "For their sakes, I sanctify myself; that they also may be sanctified through the truth." Again, it is said, that God blessed the seventh day and hallowed or sanctified it; therefore the word sanctify sometimes means to set apart; sometimes it means the purging of the sinner from guilt and sin; and at other times it means the infusion of spiritual and holy life and principles into the hearts of the dead, the distant, and the lost. We might, had we time, look at each of these meanings of the word "sanctify;" for we do not hesitate to declare, with all possible boldness and affection, that the Lord set apart him that is godly, and is sanctified, for himself,

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

Sanctification, therefore, takes us back into eternity, and leads us to contemplate that ancient act of Jehovah by which a church and covenant people were set apart for God, and Christ was made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. These persons were set apart for God's use, God's service, and God's glory in Jesus Christ his dear Son; and the Father viewing them in him saw them as he saw him, having constituted Christ their everlasting all. My dear hearers, do not turn a deaf ear to these facts, if they happen to be somewhat new to some of you. They *are* divine truths; and I urge them upon your calm attention, and entreat you to prayerfully ponder them in your minds. Our God having set his people apart for his own use in Jesus Christ, constituted him their sanctification and their all. But we come down lower, and notice that there is a sanctification which is legal, whereby Jesus Christ purged his people from guilt and sin, and whereby he set them for ever right with God, bringing them into harmony with his moral government, character, and perfections. This is through his blood, and sufferings, and tears, and sweat, and wounds, and death. It all flows from the Mediator, or from incarnate God, in a mystery of blood and suffering, from the dear Son of God who was enveloped in the flames of wrath, and who, when he had borne all that was due for sin, and all that justice could inflict upon him, looked up to heaven, and meeting the smiling eye of his Father, he bowed his head in death, and said, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost; and by his one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. In the next place (and this is the sanctification intended by the Apostle here,) sanctification is spiritual and filial. The great Mediator sends his Spirit into the hearts of his loved and redeemed ones, who works in them, conforming them to Jesus by bringing the powers and faculties of their minds into sweet subjection to him, and producing vital godliness and true Christianity in their souls; and without this holiness no man can see the Lord. Having made these remarks, which may be considered preliminary, let us proceed to explain—and of course we can only dwell upon the surface—a little of the mystery of sanctification.

In the first place, a word concerning *its nature*. If justification leads our thoughts to the fact of imputation, sanctification leads them to the fact of impartation; it gives us the idea of communication to the sinner's mind, and I have always thought, since the Lord called me by his grace, that when the Lord communicates life to a mind, experience is sure to result therefrom; and when he pours eternal things into a sinner's soul, something is known, and realised, and felt; and therefore I shall make a few observations on the experimental aspect of holiness.

Sanctification is the diffusion of Christ through the mind of the sinner. It would scarcely be right to say that it is a divine application. We cannot use that word in relation to sanctification. We use it in relation to blood; but when we speak of that which constitutes a person holy, we use the word "diffuse," or some other word whose meaning is similar. Well, the Holy Spirit comes and diffuses Christ through the mind of the sinner. According to what occurs elsewhere in this epistle: "Ye are made partakers of Jesus Christ." The light of grace, which is diffused through the mind that was dark, is not that light which Adam had, nor is it altogether that light which fills angelic minds: it is far superior to that which is commonly called intellectual and mental: it is that light which comes from the Sun of eternal righteousness, from Christ the Mediator, who is the dear Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. Not only is light diffused, but life (and therefore love) also is imparted to the heart. I shall not enter into the question as to which is first, light or life, from God; for I do not like such niceties in connection with personal godliness and living experience. It seems to me that if a ray of light from the Lord Jesus enters the mind of a sinner, it is a ray of *vital* light, for you cannot, in my judgment, separate life from light in the things of Christ and eternity. If the Son of God gives light to the mind by his Spirit, it is imparted to all the powers thereof. The understanding becomes enlightened, and sees things in some measure as Christ him-

self sees them, and the affections are Christianised and vitalised; and, moving towards Immanuel, they sympathise with his dear name, and the soul hungers and thirsts after God in Jesus Christ; the will too is enlightened, rectified, and elevated; so that what God chooses, the sanctified choose; what God rejects they reject, and what God embraces they embrace also; and thus he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all one in these respects; and seeing his own blessed image in his saved brethren and sisters, Christ says, "They are mine, and I am not ashamed to own them." When Divine life, light, and love are infused into a sinner, a conflict commences immediately; for Christ is a holy, a pure, and a sanctifying Christ. Grace and influence from him, entering the heart, purge, and purify, and sanctify. Sin loses its dominion, is at once dethroned and hurled from its seat; but God has resolved that it shall not at present cease to exist in his children. Its reign is terminated for ever, and the fact asserted becomes true of every sanctified one,—“Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Sin receives a fatal wound from the grace that reigns in the heart; and therefore it must die; but being crucified, its death is gradual. But it lives as long as the sanctified child lives here, and plunges, and struggles, and rages within. It has lost its sovereignty and dominion over the mind, but sometimes its ragings and defiling influences and power, are so great, that the sanctified one, looking within, asks despondingly, “Can either God or good dwell there?” However, the child of God takes his denomination, not from the evil that is in him, but from the sanctity that is there; his character is estimated, not from the fact that he is a sinner, but from the fact that he is one of Christ’s sanctified ones; and should he die to-night, even in the street, having been redeemed by blood and sanctified through the Mediator, and by his Spirit, his sanctified spirit, possessing those precious and invaluable properties and principles of holiness, would wing its way to the realms of eternal bliss and day. Thus the conflict commences when holiness is first infused, and it will continue until death snaps the tie that holds the mind and the body together. Oh how blessed it will be to see the death of sin when we die, and to know that it is for ever gone when we have left the body! I cannot tell what it is to enter as a sinless being into the presence of my Maker and my Saviour, but I can tell you a little of the holy joy experienced in connection with a holy looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Yes, I “shall see His face,  
And never, never sin,  
And from the rivers of His grace  
Drink endless pleasure in.”

A word or two in the second place on the means by which Christ sanctifies his people. I will pass over what may seem to some of my hearers to be a very prominent thought, that the Holy Ghost is the great efficient here. “If I depart, I will send him unto you.” You here see and hear that the Mediator speaks authoritatively. “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you, and he shall guide you unto all truth. He shall not speak of himself. He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,” and so on. This is a leading fact in connection with our sanctification. But by what means does the Holy Spirit sanctify the mind? I should say—and I would dwell as strongly as possible upon the fact—that divine and spiritual meditation is one. Do you love meditation? putting your forehead into the palm of your hand, and placing the Bible beneath your eye, and sitting for half-an-hour or an hour mediating upon the things of God and eternity. You may not have time for that, but you know what it is to do this for a few minutes occasionally. David did, and therefore he says in the close of one of his Psalms, “My meditation of him shall be sweet.” I think again of those beautiful and blessed words of God by the Prophet Malachi. They are to my mind very important and blessed—“And a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the

Lord, and that thought upon his name." What strikes me at this very moment is the fact that God records or registers the thoughts of his sanctified ones. A book of remembrance was written before him for them that thought upon *his* name. Thought—ah! not in the ordinary manner, not with cold hearts and icy feelings, and shallow souls; but those that thought upon his name as David thought upon it, and those who sometimes while thinking lose themselves in the precious name of Jesus. What a blessing it is to bathe in Immanuel's name! to dive into the depths of his fulness, and to leave the shore of this world, and to swim in the ocean of his excellencies, glories, and salvation! You know the mind takes the odour of the element in which it revolves, the thoughts take the odour of that in which they rest or play. If the thoughts of man revolve in sin, they are vile and abominable. If they revolve in a moral element, they possess a sweetness which is excellent; but if they revolve in Immanuel's name, and rotate in the fulness of the Christ of God, they become sweetly perfumed, and emit a fragrance before God which he recognises, and which draws his blessing down upon his child. O for more power to think upon His name; for this exercise tends to sanctify, and no other name than Christ's can purify the mind. In holy meditation the mind is influenced by the Spirit, but he always conveys the thoughts to Jesus, and fixes them on him for sanctity and satisfaction. The Spirit is from Christ, and the name of the Father is in him. I am sure that ten minutes' fellowship and communion with Christ in his sufferings, in his death and burial, in his resurrection, in his enthronement, and in his intercession, purifies the mind, sanctifies the thoughts, and makes one strong and vigorous in divine things. Spiritual meditation, therefore, is one of the means used by the Spirit for sanctifying sinners for Christ and for eternity. Were there time, I would say a word on sanctified affliction. I believe that Christ makes use of affliction very frequently, and very freely too, for the purpose of conforming the sinner to himself, and sanctifying the mind. There is a vast difference in the appearance of the field when first ploughed, and the same field in the month of August or September, when it is filled or covered with ripe corn ready for the sickle. In the previous October or November that field, being full of stubble and weeds, was ploughed. It was then hard, and when ploughed it was comparatively unsightly; but having been ploughed and sown with wheat, when harvest day arrives what a glorious sight appears! Our God is sometimes pleased to send the plough of affliction into the hearts and homes of his children, and occasionally he makes the furrows very deep. God, having prepared the heart by adversity, then sows it with his sanctifying blessing, and by-and-bye the "afterwards" comes. "Now, no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, *afterwards* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them which are exercised thereby." Let Christ do what he pleases; for he that sanctifieth is wise, and they who are sanctified are ignorant. Look at the vine after the vine-dresser has pruned it. You have sometimes felt inclined to say to him—"Have you not cut too much away? would it not have been better had you spared that branch and that twig, and this part and the other? Perhaps, if he were an irritable man, he would tell you to mind your own business, or wait till next autumn and see the result of his operations. Christ knows his own business. He is pruning the vine, and he may use the knife freely, stripping his people almost or quite naked; but he sanctifieth them. Then, may it be yours and mine, through sovereign favour and rich grace, to live a life of nearness to Immanuel. I have heard certain professors say, if a man knows a great deal about sin he will assuredly be humble; for the more one knows of himself the more humble and holy he will be. How would this be if applied to the devil? He must know much of sin and of himself; but he is not humble, neither has he any holiness. No, my friends, it is not a view of self, nor a view of sin, not merely struggling with that unclean spirit, that monster of iniquity that produces holiness, but

"The more Thy glories strike my eyes  
The humbler I shall lie."

Let me live near to my Sanctifier ; let me have much to do with Christ on the throne ; let my communion with the Father and the Son be constant and deep, and the work of sanctification will progress, and I shall be pure in heart—not perfectly so—yet pure in heart, possessing that purity which Jesus Christ possesses. “He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified.”

I should like to say a word, in the next place, on the progress of this work. Do you believe in progressive sanctification ? If by progressive sanctification you understand that the child of God feels that he gets holier and holier, and that his purity and sanctity are increased day by day, then I tell you I do not believe in it ; still I believe in progressing, or in the fact that the child of God advances here. It must be so, for his sanctifier is Jesus Christ, and this great work can never be stationary ; and, therefore, there is progress. And how does it appear ? How does it manifest itself ? Why, a saint of God, if I understand the mystery of godliness, grows in a holy knowledge of the fact that sin is exceedingly sinful, and that he himself is vile. You may call this progressive sanctification, or progressive knowledge. I call it the progress of a sanctified person. If I am in the secret, the sanctified man sees and feels how vile he is ; and the deeper his holiness is, and the more fellowship he has with God, the more extended and strengthened his knowledge of this fact becomes. I have known the Lord myself about thirty-eight years ; and think when he called me by his grace he gave me a terrible view of myself as a guilty sinner and a terrible view of sin ; but, I say to-night, thirty-eight years having elapsed since then, that I did not then so deeply realize the fact that sin was exceedingly black, and vile and abominable, as I realize it to-night, and I would loathe it more. Would that I had less of it ; but since such is our present state, O that God would be pleased to keep us by his grace until our dying hours ; and then may we be found among the happy thousands and millions in whose souls sin shall be for ever dead. Do you hate it, or desire to hate it with a holy hatred, as the enemy of God and your souls ? If this is your feeling and experience, you are growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ the Lord. As you advance, therefore, and years increase upon you, your knowledge of sin and of the Saviour increase also. Thus, as we get grey, and the grave appears yonder, not far off, and eternity is known to be very nigh, we gradually drop our worldly matters, and this and the other pleasure, this and the other theory, until by and bye we surrender all theories and speculations, and empty views of things, and Christ is all in all to us. Is that progressive sanctification ? I think so, if you will have the word progressive. I think that sanctification perpetuated, is that state of things wherein a poor sinner is brought to entirely depend for all he needs upon the precious name and fullness of the dear Son of God. I know there are many in God's house to-night who are in this condition ; all such are interested in the the great Sanctifier's grace, and are now being sanctified. I thought I would say a word on the necessity that exists for this sanctification ; but our time is nearly gone. I will give you two or three thoughts which you may turn over in your minds.

This sanctity is necessary, first, on God's account ; secondly, on Christ's account ; and thirdly, on your own account. First, on God's account. A holy father will have holy children. A holy, covenant God will have a purified family about him for ever—children like himself. Moreover, it seems to me, my dear friends, that it is not in the power of God (and I speak reverently) to make an unholy man happy—I mean as such. It is in God's power to give such a character temporal good, as physical and mental health and strength, and to surround him with all common and ordinary mercies, but not to make an unsanctified one as such happy, as his angels are—as himself is—as the glorified are. Will you tell me that that man can be a happy man whose breast is full of enmity ; that he can be happy whose heart is full of vipers. No ; they must be pulled out, and the heart must be cleansed, and their place must be taken by something else ; and, therefore, God has resolved that sin shall be utterly destroyed, the sinner's heart thoroughly cleansed, and that the Holy Spirit shall

diffuse his breath through all the powers of the mind. And then, again, sanctity is necessary on Christ's account. Is he not the Head of the church ; and shall a holy Head have unholy members ? Shall the Husband of the church have an unpurified wife ? Shall the elder brother of the family have brethren with him that are vile, unclean, and repulsive ? If God, your Father, can arrange for your holiness, you shall be sanctified ; and if your Elder Brother can make you holy, you shall appear without spot before the throne. And then, again, it is necessary on your own account ; for the glory of the invisible world is not like varnish applied to paint, if I may thus illustrate the subject. Glory is not an external polish ; it is not something applied to, or laid on the soul. The holiness that is glorified is, as we have tried to show, a new life infused into the mind ; and when that quickened mind, full of holiness, enters the glory-world, the glory of that world will permeate it, and the mind will imbibe it and retain it, and shine with it for ever and ever. And therefore this sanctity is necessary on the Father's part, necessary on the part of the Son our Brother, and necessary on your own account. You could not be happy in heaven without holiness. If a stain were on the glorified, it would damp all their pleasure, check all their joy, and prevent them from singing : but every holy one shall be transparent and pure there. God will see through him, and he will see through himself and see through others, and others will see through him ; and all shall declare the fact that they are as pure and holy as the sanctifying Jesus could make them. "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified."

II. Just a word on the second point. Ye are all of one. Christ and his people are all of one. I should like to tarry here a few minutes. They are all of one Father, and therefore of one family (see Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians—it just occurs to my mind—the 4th chapter.) "There is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all"—the whole family in heaven and on earth ; and hence Jesus said to the women, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God." And in that portion, the 17th of John, wherein we have an outline of the Saviour's intercessory prayer, our Lord says, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me ;" and, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Brethren, we are not going to meet strangers up there—a strange God, nor a strange Christ. Were you personally going to meet her Majesty to-morrow, there would, in all probability be a great deal of timidity felt on account of the fact that you were not familiar with her ; but, my friend, you are not going to meet a strange God, an unknown Christ ; but a God that is your Father, and a Christ that is your Brother, and your Brother, too, in a sense deeper, and nobler, and richer, than the sense in which yonder man is your brother, or yonder woman is your sister. All of one family. And all of one nature. This is the leading idea, and those of my hearers that may be a little critical may be thinking that I ought to have limited my attention to that fact. Well, it is the leading idea.

"He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one nature—one family and one nature. He has taken our nature ; he put it on ; he died in it ; he abides in it ; he loves us in it ; he hears us in it ; he embraces us in it ; and he will appear unto us in it at the last day, and we shall see him in our nature for ever and ever. All of one nature. He is called "the son of Adam," in one place, and yet circumstances were so arranged by infinite wisdom that, although he was born into the world, as all his brethren are, a body was prepared for him, and not descended from Adam in the ordinary way. Had Adam been his father by natural generation, he would have had original sin, and come into the world impure and a sinner ; "but, a body hast thou prepared me." His human nature was perfectly pure ; still it was our nature, the nature that sinned ; the nature that was under the curse ; the nature that was exposed to death ; and the nature that was guilty. Here the devil was disappointed, and wisdom and grace appeared in all their triumphs. By man came death ; by

man came also life. By man came disgrace ; by man honour and eternal glory. By man came guilt ; by man came justification. By man came ruin ; by man came the restoration. The devil must have looked on with wonder and astonishment at seeing all his works destroyed in that very nature which he had ruined. He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one origin. As God, Jesus Christ is, of course, unoriginated ; but as man we may speak of his origin. We have our origin in the sovereign good will and pleasure of God, and Christ has his origin as man, as Mediator, officially, and as the Great Head of the Church in the same great source and spring. Well, we must leave that matter. All of one covenant also. He is the Head ; we are the people. This covenant, it is said, may be broken, and that nothing is absolutely certain without the fulfilment of certain conditions by the sinner. Well, if the covenant of grace be a breakable one, and may give way, and its blessings may not be communicated, I suppose that uncertainty will apply to Christ as well as to the Christian ; for we are all one. If the Christian may be cast out of the covenant, I should rather think, since we are all one, that Christ's headship may suffer, or be unstable also. But not so ; for, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

" All is settled ;  
And my soul approves it well."

And there is one heaven for us all, one inheritance, and one destiny, "He that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are all of one."

III. Just a word on the last point. The conclusion drawn from these premises—"for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." They are what he calls them—there are no fictions here. He called them brethren in the councils of eternity. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." Here are the children whom thou hast given me. He called them so in the days of his flesh ; he calls us so in his intercession ; and at last, when assembled worlds are before him, and the earth is, perhaps, in a blaze, he will say to his dear people, or concerning them on the right hand : "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren." Amid all the solemn grandeur of that day he will not be ashamed to call us brethren. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Take three or four thoughts which I will express, and then close. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. This relates to three or four facts. First, his own personal and infinite purity, and the present impurity of his brethren. We are unclean ; we are sinful ; but he is far removed from sin. Nevertheless, he says, they are mine ; I will thoroughly sanctify them. I cannot disown them, because they are sinful—they are my brethren. Take it, secondly, in relation to his exaltation. He has not lost his brotherly love. Do not forget that he that is on the throne, is a brother, and has a brother's love. We talk about brotherly love ; in the church we are all one. There is brotherly love in heaven, even in the heart of Jesus, but he bows from his throne to enter a cottage ; to enter an attic ; to enter a cellar, where one of his poor brethren lives ; and he is not ashamed to call him brother. Take it in relation to his angelic servants. He is surrounded by angels strong in power, and delighting to do his will. He stoops from the ranks of angels that surround him to look at his humble brethren, and is not ashamed before those servants to call them brethren. Take it, lastly, in relation to his Divinity. He is God, and does not need the services of either angels or men. Yet, marvellous condescension, he points to his sanctified and redeemed ones, and says, They are my brethren. The Lord command his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# JESUS CROWNED.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 22nd, 1876.

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*"And on his head were many crowns."* Rev. xix. 12.

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THE Apostle Peter says, "It is contained in Scripture, Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." The Father laid this foundation, which is Jesus Christ, in and for Zion; and God the Spirit produces faith in the hearts of sinners, and leads them to build thereon for eternal salvation. When the Holy Ghost enters the heart, that faith springs up therein which invariably leads the sinner to Jesus Christ. Therefore it is said, "Unto you which believe, he is precious." Jesus is precious to the believer in every respect, and in all ages, and he will be so to his redeemed people till time shall end, and when also it is swallowed up in eternity. In the complexity of his person as God and man, in his offices, in his blood, in his righteousness, and in his intercession, and in the hallowing and helping influence of his blessed name our saving Lord is precious. It would be impossible for me to describe all the feelings of the person in whose heart Jesus dwells, and who therefore knows his worth. It might be observed that Christ is precious to the Father, and to the Spirit, and to every angel of God's power, as well as to saved men; for all that know him love him: but his great name is loved in a special way by the sinner that is saved by his grace and blood. Bread is precious to the hungry, water is precious to the thirsty, nourishing wine is precious to the faint, garments are precious to the naked, gold is precious to the poor, life is precious to the dying, pardon is precious to the guilty, and justification is precious to the condemned; and for all these reasons Christ is precious to his people. As our Prophet, or that Teacher sent from heaven, to reveal the deep things of God; as our Priest, with his atoning sacrifice, which is the foundation of our hope, and the covering under which we live, and hope to die; and as our King, Immanuel is precious, and on his royal grace I want to offer a few observations to-night; for nothing can be more sublime and glorious than the fact asserted in our text, "And on his head were many crowns."

I shall not divide my subject as I sometimes do; but look at a few facts and truths which the words suggest to our minds, naming them as I proceed. I notice in the first place *the all-important fact asserted*, that on the head of the great Immanuel "were many crowns." This was in the days of John, but he has many now; for he will never lose a crown, and none of them can ever lose their brightness or splendour. He will never cease to be worthy, and therefore he will wear his crowns until he shall come the second time, without sin, unto salvation; and beyond that in all the ages of eternity. As the crowns on the head of our great Immanuel are many, I cannot describe them all, having neither time, nor ability to do so; and therefore I shall just glance at three or four of them, and pray that God the Spirit would be pleased to enable me to speak, and you to hear for a few minutes to-night.

The first that requires our notice, is his *royal* crown; for he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He rules over the universe of God, and there is nothing therein but what is subject to his will, and is under his controlling power. I

No. 31.—NOVEMBER 15, 1876.

might have mentioned that he wears the crown of eternal divinity ; for he is God as well as man : and the crown of humanity ; for his human nature was always pure, and holy, and transparent, and perfect. And therefore he is crowned with peculiar honours, as the complex Saviour and Redeemer of sinners. But let us look at his royal crown. The dominion of Jesus Christ is supreme. His is the most glorious of all crowns that are worn in heaven. His throne is the highest, and all the seats of angels are unspeakably lower than his. The highest seat in the universe is his, and the greatest power is possessed by him, while the brightest and most glorious crown is on his brow. That head which was once smitten, which was once enveloped in darkness, which once wore a thorny crown, which was once torn,—that head, the eyes of which shed sin-atoning tears,—that head which bowed in death,—that head which lay in the grave,—that head wears the brightest regal crown ; for he is King of kings and Lord of lords. There have been thousands of kings ruling and reigning in this world, some of whom have been good, and many of whom have been bad ; but our great and exalted Immanuel has always presided over them all. Whenever he sees a creature's throne, he looks downwards from the seat whereon he is exalted ; but whenever elevated creatures look at him and contemplate his crown, they look upwards, and there is not a saint nor an angel in heaven, but what rejoices in the important fact, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and is King of Kings, and the only ruler of princes. And then the dominion of our Lord is universal, for nothing lies beyond his authority, beyond his dominion, his kingdom, or his jurisdiction. Satan is within the authority and reach of our Lord. Every man, good or bad, is within the dominion of our exalted Redeemer, and every principle, power, influence, and operation are subject to our crowned Immanuel. I will not say, as is sometimes said, dear friends, get an interest in him, become united to him, savingly believe in this exalted King of kings and Lord of lords. I have no authority to thus address my congregation, and I do not believe that such exhortations are scriptural ; but I will say, blessed is the man who is one with Jesus, and is saved in him with an everlasting salvation, and happy, thrice happy, is the person who can gratefully rejoice in the pleasing and glorious fact that the Lord reigneth over all. Jesus will never vacate his throne, he will never lose his glorious crown, nor surrender the sceptre of his righteousness and mercy ; and the glory which surrounds him as a King is as immutable, and perpetual as is his great and glorious person. How sweet is the fact that our Christ controls every wave, and holds all the winds in his fist. How blessed is the fact that every fiend is chained, and that Jesus holds the chain. How exhilarating is the fact that every influence, pestilential, destructive, or otherwise, is managed and controlled by him on whose head are many crowns. The child of God is perpetually safe, and when he is favoured with the help of the Spirit, and the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, he rejoices as deeply in the fact that Jesus wears the crown of glory as he does in the fact that he was once crowned with thorns. The fact is, my dear friends, we require all the crowns, or all those facts which the many crowns worn by Jesus indicate. He would not be wearing many crowns had he not worn the thorny one ; and had he not worn the crown of thorns we had not been here to-night ; for there had been no churches or chapels erected to his name, and no such element, principle, or power, as Christianity had existed. Our holy religion arises the great fact that that celestial head which is now crowned in heaven, once wore a crown of thorns. Yes ; we need them all. We need too the great facts which they perpetually indicate, and—blessed be God—we have what we need ; for under his wings we are living and progressing ; under the shadow of his throne we are now safe, and here we shall die at last.

Then, further, his dominion is an everlasting dominion. Where is Nebuchadnezzar and his crown ? Cyrus and his crown ? Darius and his crown ? The Pharaohs and their crowns ? The Roman emperors and their crowns ? and the Pope and his crown ? Well, I suppose, he is still wearing a triple crown ; but the time is coming when our great redeeming King shall put down all rule, and all authority, and all power, and when all secular and political crowns shall be

removed from all heads, and Jesus Christ shall appear for ever as the only Potentate. Every human throne shall be overthrown. Every secular kingdom shall cease to exist, and the present imperfect state of things shall one day be done away; but Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth from generation to generation. When the world is in a blaze, and the elements are melting with fervent heat, and the heavens are passing away with a great noise, ten thousand times ten thousand saints and angels shall be seen accompanying our great crowned Lord. Then every saint shall appear with one crown, and every angel shall have one; but on his celestial head, many crowns shall appear. And what a shout of triumph shall assembled millions hear, when all the ransomed, looking at their exalted Lord, shall exclaim, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" Well, he wears the crown of royal glory. Let me just say, before I dismiss this part of my subject, that this fact guarantees the fulfilment of the Word of God, and all his purposes and decrees; and that it guarantees also the fulfilment of all your desires, hopes, and expectations. I beg your attention to this thought; for the people of God require strong consolation, and it has been provided for them. In the fact stated in our text we have what secures the fulfilment of all God's will. The book before us is sneered at by some men, and some women too; but we have received it as the Word of God: we bind it to our hearts as the glorious Gospel of God's grace, and we believe that every promise written here shall be fulfilled, that every declaration shall be verified, that every part from Genesis to Revelation, and that every detail in the Revelation shall be made good by God. Jesus Christ is on the throne of eternal glory; and he is verifying the word, fulfilling the Gospel, and bringing to pass the things that are written in the Book from which our text to-night is taken. The Revelation contains mysteries which I do not pretend to understand. I am neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, and if a man is wise he will not prophesy; and I will go further, and say, if a man is really wise he will not attempt to fathom many of the mysteries which are recorded in this book. But the book of God's decrees is open before him who is crowned with many crowns. He is breaking the seals, and gradually unfolding its contents, and executing the will of his Father; for—beautiful thought! and Watts had many such, and he expressed them in very beautiful forms—

"His own eternal thought moves on  
His undisturbed affairs."

Well, the roll is being unfolded, and Jesus is progressing with his work. He calls a sinner here, another there, and another elsewhere. He pardons the guilty here and yonder; he touches a monarch on his throne, and sends him into eternity, and he touches the throne or the kingdom itself, and destroys its being; and all this is the gradual and divine fulfilment of the will of his heavenly Father. And then again, we have hopes which the world cannot fulfil, and holy desires in our breasts which human power, and wisdom, and goodness as it is called, cannot satisfy. It belongs to the crowned Immanuel to fulfil our hopes, and to Jesus, who is Lord of all, to satisfy the desires of our souls. Desires created by the Spirit in your hearts, I will take it upon me to say, the crowned Immanuel is bound to fulfil. You are hoping that you are the Lord's, and that you may persevere unto the end; your best Friend, he that loves you most, is crowned on high; and he who has the deepest imaginable interest in you has passed his word and pledged his honour to see you safely through. And you are hoping that in the deep solemnities of death, the everlasting arms of God may be found underneath you. Well, Jesus reigns, and the glory of his crown cannot be tarnished; and therefore when you need him in death you shall be blessed with his presence, and with all that shall be necessary to carry you triumphantly through the wonders of dissolution. Your crown shall be given by Immanuel; for, having passed out of the body, and out of time, and beyond sin, and the reach of the devil,

— you "shall see his face  
And never, never sin;  
And from the rivers of his grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in."

And the sweet fact that Jesus reigns shall be acknowledged too by assembled worlds at last ; for God hath given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess. The devil and all his angels, and all bad men shall bow before him, and confess that he is Lord of all. Oh, our Christ can force necks that will not bend, and cause beings that despise and hate his great name, however reluctantly they may do it, to bow to his rightful authority and power. He is the crowned Monarch of all, and all shall see and confess, and many of them with enmity in their hearts, that he is their Ruler. He shall be universally acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords. But let us pass away from this point, and notice other crowns upon Immanuel's head.

In the second place, he wears a *priestly crown* ; not only a crown of royalty, but the crown of a priest, for he is the great high priest of our profession. You remember in the law of Moses it is said that Moses was to make a peculiar crown for Aaron his brother, which was to be worn by him on particular occasions. It was to be of gold, and on the front thereof were to be inscribed these words—"Holiness unto the Lord." Aaron and all the Jewish High Priests were types of Christ, and their white and glorious garments were typical of the humanity and character of our Lord ; and the mitre which they wore, or the sacerdotal crown was typical of the fact that our Jesus is crowned as a Priest. He shall sit as a Priest upon his throne. No Jewish high priest ever reached the throne of Israel, nor ever sat thereon. It was for the high priest to officiate at the altar, at the table of shewbread, and in the holiest of all. He had also to do with leprous men and leprous houses, and leprous garments ; but it was not his work to reign. However high or good a man he may have been, he never approached the throne of Israel ; but the Lord Jesus as our Priest has reached the throne of heaven and of glory, and he is seated thereon and crowned also. Eternal justice crowned him as a Priest as eternal righteousness crowned him as a King. And why is he enthroned and crowned as a Priest ? Why, because he has completed his priestly or atoning work. The Jewish high priest never reigned, because his work was never done ; he never removed sin, he never satisfied justice, he never magnified the law, he never even lessened the moral evil with which he had ceremonially to deal, but the Lord Jesus Christ came not to mitigate sin, but to expiate guilt, to atone for it and remove it ; and, blessed be his name, he did not leave this world before he had done so. When he bowed his head in death, and said "It is finished," a perfect atonement was made ; a God-honouring righteousness was wrought out, and brought in, death was conquered, and millions were meritoriously saved ; and then having risen from the dead, angels as they accompanied him shouted, "Open ye the gates ; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in ;" and our Priestly King entered into heaven itself. The veil which had never been rent before, was rent in twain, not from the bottom to the top, but from the top to the bottom. Heaven, not hell nor men, rent it. Heaven had been satisfied, and God himself tore it into two from the top to the bottom, and our great High Priest ascended in pomp and triumph into the holiest of all, and marched up to his seat of eternal glory, and they enthroned him there as the great High Priest of our profession, and hence he is crowned as a King and as a priest, and all this demonstrates the everlasting fulness and perfection of his atoning work and triumphs ; for He had never been enthroned if his work had not been perfect, and the priestly crown had never been placed upon his celestial brow had not his blood fully and perfectly atoned for sin. And there is another fact here which we cannot afford to lose sight of, which is this, that our priestly Intercessor within the veil wears a crown. A crowned Intercessor ; a crowned Advocate ; a crowned Pleader ; not a petitioner, weak and feeble, and not a petitioner strong without a crown, but an Intercessor crowned with glory, and demanding the blessings which he mentions in his intercessory prayer. The Son is crowned whilst he addresses his Father : "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Again, it was the work of the priest not only to atone for sin, and intercede

for the people, but having sprinkled the blood before the throne in the holiest of all, he came out of that secret and sacred chamber, and held up both his hands and blessed the whole congregation of Israel : "The Lord bless thee and keep thee ; the Lord cause his face to shine upon thee, and give thee peace ;" was the priestly blessing of Aaron and of his successors. Our crowned Priest lifts up his powerful hands, which are full of pardon, and peace, and salvation, and pronounces authoritatively and substantially a blessing upon all that bow before him. On his head were many crowns—that of a King and that of a Priest.

But let us just notice a third crown, viz., that of the *Bridegroom*. "Go forth and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." "My Beloved," said the church, "is the chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely." You are to take that description of Jesus Christ and apply it to all the characters he sustains. Sometimes the church spoke of her Lord as a standard bearer, and then she meant He was the chiefest among ten thousand standard bearers. Sometimes she spoke of him as a fruit tree, and then she would say, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons ;" but most generally in that beautiful but mysterious book she speaks of him as her heavenly Bridegroom, and then she says, He is the chiefest among ten thousand husbands, and he is the altogether lovely one. There have been husbands that have been dearly and deeply loved, and many thousands and millions of them too, but our Christ wears the brightest conjugal crown. "Thy Maker is thy Husband : the Lord of Hosts is his name.....The God of the whole earth shall he be called." Yes ; as the Bridegroom of his people, he is crowned ; for as a husband he stands alone, having no equal : and never was there such a wife as is the church of God, for her husband has made her unequalled in all respects. "Thy Maker is thy husband." Other husbands find their wives made for them : but Christ made his own wife. She fell ; and never did Husband travel so far for his wife and for her honour and glory as our heavenly husband travelled for us, all the way from heaven from the Father's bosom, and from his throne down into the depths of degradation into which she had fallen, and then he died for her. He came after her, and since he could not have her with himself without dying, he shed his blood, and from the infinite love he had to her he poured out his soul unto death and went into the grave, and so rescued her honourably from eternal death and condemnation ; and now turning towards his redeemed spouse, he says :—

"All this indeed I bore for thee,  
And then he smiles again."

"Return unto me, for I married to thee, saith the Lord." "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." Probably you will read at your leisure the chapter out of which our text is taken this evening. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready : and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white ; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." Oh what a wedding day the last great day will be, and it will be an everlasting one. Sometimes the wedding day, or a few days or weeks are the only happy ones of wedded life ; but we have a whole eternity before us, and that will be the long, long wedding day of Christ and his beloved people. Oh what joys and glories await us there ! Oh, the church, Christ's bride and spouse, will be a crown upon his head, and she will call upon angels to join her in crowning him Lord of all.

Fourthly, he wears the *conqueror's crown*. There have been conquerors who have been crowned, and conquerors will be crowned again ; but our Christ's crown as a conqueror is the brightest of them all. That which was unconquerable to all other beings was overcome and overthrown by him. Tell me, who save Christ, can conquer sin ? If all the angels of God had come from heaven they could not have removed that abominable evil ; but our Lord has overcome it. Tell me who, but Immanuel can triumphantly and completely overcome the world ? Look at this great Being, Jesus on the throne. The world is under his

feet, sin is behind his and his Father's back; the devil is in chains under his dominion; death has lost his sting, and been divested of his terrors, and the very character of the grave has been changed. Let him who has overcome all this hostility be crowned for his pains, and for his glorious work he is crowned as a conqueror in heaven.

Do you say I have mentioned only four crowns? Well, now, by way of closing let me mention a million or millions of crowns which are on his worthy head. He wears the crown of salvation, and he is crowned as the Saviour by every saved sinner. All that have arrived in heaven crown him, and will crown him for ever; and we who are going thither are, as well as we can, crowning him Lord of all. And how do redeemed sinners crown Immanuel? Lord, wear our praises and expressions of gratitude as thy crown. But you say they are not very bright, nor great, nor valuable. Well, they are really what he and his Spirit make them, and it cost him unparalleled sufferings and pains to obtain them, and he constitutes them valuable; and such is his love to us and to the great results of his work, that he takes our expressions of grateful love, and wears them as his crown. But our rapturous exclamations in another world he will receive with approbation and delight for ever. And let me say that our Lord is conscious of his own worth, and of the fact that he alone deserves all the praises of ransomed creatures. There are no worthy beings in heaven save himself, and Jesus is conscious of the fact that all around him owe all they have to his love, blood, and power. A virtuous wife is a crown to her husband; children are said to be the crown of their parents; and the church of Christ is Christ's crown; for all the glorified family of God must be the crown of the dear Immanuel. I have ten thousand times ten thousand other crowns to mention; for not only does every saved sinner, but every angel puts the crown of gratitude and thankfulness upon his worthy head. They praise him for their creation, for their confirmation and their union with himself and his redeemed church for ever. Yes, angels praise Christ for having redeemed men and saved them, and for having constituted them their everlasting associates and companions; and therefore angels praise him, redeemed sinners praise him, the Father praises him, the Spirit of Jehovah praises him, and all the millions of angels and men shall adoringly acknowledge the fact that there is nothing in his character but what is righteous, holy, just, true, and good; and all shall acknowledge the fact that he is worthy to be crowned Lord of all. That is the fact.

Let us in the second place make a remark or two upon the *ground of this fact*. "On his head were many crowns." Why is he crowned? First, on account of the *infinite worth of his person and character*. I have already said that there is only one worthy being in heaven, and that is Christ. The strongest angel, or the one that sits upon the highest throne, if there be degrees of angelic glory, is unworthy, and he would not suffer the word worthiness to be applied to himself. Creatures worthy! What creatures are so? Not men—not angels; but thou art worthy to receive

"Honour and power divine,  
And blessings more than we can give,  
Be, Lord, for ever thine."

Our Lord is, as to his person, unique. He sits alone, stands alone, and is praised alone, and is infinitely exalted above all other beings and characters. His throne is surrounded by splendour and majesty, but it all emanates from himself. He alone is worthy. The Father says he is worthy, the Spirit says he is worthy, all the prophets and the apostles say he is worthy, and we say so too. Oh let us unite our feeble voices with those of innumerable spirits that proclaim the fact that Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, is worthy of all the crowns that are upon his head. Not one is too bright, and excess in praising him is an everlasting impossibility. You may speak in laudatory terms of creatures and go much too far—go so far that your words may be positively untrue: but use the mightiest language, bring the most fervent feeling and the most perfect heart to proclaim the majesty and grandeur of Jesus Christ, and he will still remain above all blessing and all praise: he wears many crowns

on account of the infinite worth of his person. He never sinned and never connived at it, but has always so loathed and hated it, that he intends to destroy its very being, and every trace thereof in his beloved bride. And then again, he is worthy *on account of what he has done*. I read the 2nd chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians to you at the commencement of the service to-night: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him"—because he went so low God has raised him so high. because he went into such degradation, God has raised him to those heights of glorification; because he humbled himself he has been exalted. Well, what has he acquired? A name that is above every other name. Is it a Conqueror?—he is first; a Saviour?—he is first; a Friend?—he is first. He is supreme in all respects. Lift him up, my friends, at Chadwell-street and everywhere else—lift him up, and proclaim his greatness and his glory. Sermons filled with his great name the Holy Spirit will bless. The colours used in portraying Jesus cannot be too bright, and one cannot be too earnest in exalting him. Let us spend and be spent in the cause of that dear Friend that so deservedly wears many crowns. All important interests have been vindicated and sustained by him. The interests of his Father he held fast, and perfectly established them by his suffering and death. He has sustained the interests of his church and his own also. There is not a spot upon his name; neither himself nor others have dimmed it in any respect. No, he is transparent and pure, and worthy of all the trust and confidence that are reposed in him. Therefore, since he has saved and upheld the interests of his Father, and those of all his angels too, and the very heavens of eternal glory are based upon his mediation as upon a rock, let him wear many crowns. And then I might speak upon his varied fulness, for it seems that his many crowns indicate great variety in this respect. We have life from him, and we crown him for it. What is life without pardon? We have that also in him. What is pardon without perfect justification? This we have by him, and what are all these without heaven? We shall finally have that, for there are crowns of glory laid up for us. Therefore his fulness being so varied, on his head are many crowns.

Thirdly. *The time when all this appeared to "John, the writer of the Revelation,* in what order did this vision occur, and when were these many crowns seen? You have read the book of the Revelation and wondered what some portions meant. One thing I wish to impress upon your mind—viz., in the earlier part of the book we have a representation of the Church of God; then follows a description of wondrous sorrows, afflictions, and persecutions—blood and fire, and very much that I cannot understand. We have the beast and the false prophet, and the dragon and the old serpent, and floods of errors, and war and death. There is the church, a woman clothed with the sun, on her head a crown of twelve stars, the moon under her feet. She is driven into the wilderness, the serpent casts a flood of water out of his mouth to drown her; but the earth helps the woman, and it was given to her to be sustained in the wilderness for a certain time; and whilst she is there, she is hated, persecuted, loathed, and at times we almost lose sight of her. All hell, and Antichrist, and Mahometanism meet her, and terrible changes occur to her; but, after all these, it is said, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." She is not dead, although she has been through seas and fires, and encountered most hostile powers. Come, and I will show you the bride of the Lamb. It might have been thought that she was swallowed up and utterly destroyed. No: "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. . . . The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife [is here, and] hath made herself ready." How was it that she lived in so much danger? Her husband was crowned with many crowns; and therefore she still lives, and has lost nothing that was substantial. Her husband is Lord of Popery, and Mahometanism, and persecution, and he has guarded and saved

her; and his ability and rule are indicated by the fact that on his head are many crowns. Hence she emerges from the flood, and the cloud, and the tempest, and the hostility, and from all; and she is clothed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints; and blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Oh, her Husband had not during all these two thousand years, less or more, lost one of his crowns, because he had not lost one of the members of his church—not a single crown was dimmed, and none of his honours and glories were gone. And all these facts were revealed to John in the Isle of Patmos that he might record them in the Bible for your information and edification and mine, and, therefore,

“The weakest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way.”

for on our Saviour's head are many, many crowns.

*The use to be made of this fact.* Just one thought, and I will have done. “Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him.” Hell and the world are opposed to you, and you are opposed to yourselves; and self hostility and opposition appear to me to be the worst. If there were no antagonistic powers within, we should be happy persons. How, we ask, shall we get on? How shall we persevere? We sometimes wonder whether our religion will be lost, and all ooze out and flow away at last. “Trust in him at all times.” Do you love the fact that he wears the crown? and have you sometimes thought that if you should go to hell, there will be some pleasurable feeling in your breast even there when recollecting that Jesus is crowned in heaven. My dear friends, hell is no place for you. Eternal wrath is not your portion. Condemnation can never overtake you. Trust in him, confide in him, rest in him, and he will bring it to pass. Again: expect the fulfilment of all that is written here. The threatenings of God—Christ is crowned, and he will fulfil them. What do you think of Popery, and of Mahometanism, and of the present crisis—if European affairs have reached a crisis? And some of you do think about them. False systems, and organisations as such, are doomed to destruction; and when the time comes, our Lord will have no difficulty in sweeping them away. In the preceding chapter it is said an angel appeared with a millstone and cast it into the sea, and he said, Thus shall Babylon that great city be cast down, and be found no more at all. The time will come when he who is crowned Lord of all will cast that system into the sea of eternal oblivion, and he shall reign for ever Lord of all, and we shall reign with him. But expect the fulfilment of the promise as well as that of the threatening; his word must be made good. Expect an answer to every heart-felt prayer offered, and the fulfilment of every desire of which the Holy Ghost is the author. Live up to your privileges! Yes, they tell us we should do so. I do not tell my hearers anywhere that they ought to do this; for the word “ought” in this connection does not mean much practically. It might be used occasionally; but while these are our privileges, we have our weakness, and a divine gift is required to raise us above it. Our privileges are included in the fact that our dear Redeemer is crowned Lord of all, and that we therefore are as safe as angels before the throne. Nevertheless our weakness says, I would but cannot pray; I would but cannot believe; I would but cannot trust. What then, sir? Why, “Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” “If our heart condemn us, he is greater than our heart and knoweth all things;” and, therefore, all will come right at last: all is divinely right now; for Jesus shall reign for ever and ever. The Lord bless you and keep you, for his name's sake. Amen.

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# THE SINCERE PETITIONER HEARD.

## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 26th, 1876.

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*"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me : but verily God hath heard me ; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."* Psalm lxvi. 18—20.

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It will be remembered by most of my hearers, that when our blessed Redeemer had cured the maniac and saved his soul, it is said he was seen sitting at his Saviour's feet, clothed and in his right mind. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, and no case is too difficult or too far gone for the saving power of divine grace. That poor man had been living for a considerable time among the tombs, he had been frequently chained and bound. He was full of self-inflicted wounds, and a legion of devils possessed his body. God, however, was manifested in the flesh, for that poor person called Jesus of Nazareth, met him, and by a word commanded the legion to depart from him, and they left him at the bidding of the Almighty Speaker. The maniac became a saved character, and, as is usual with all saved sinners, he took his seat at his Saviour's feet. He was clothed ; but where did the raiment come from ? Who produced the garments ? Jesus did not carry clothes about with him, and it does not appear that his disciples, or Judas who carried the bag, supplied the dress ; nevertheless, he who had been mad was now in his right mind, he who had been a furious wanderer was now quietly sitting at the Saviour's feet, and he who had lived in a state of nakedness was now clothed also. It seems to me that a twofold miracle was wrought by Christ on that occasion ; for he that cast out the devils and saved the soul of the maniac, also produced the garments and clothed the man. All this is beautifully illustrative of Christ's dealings with his people, and of the experience of every saved sinner. The saved man said, and we are not surprised at it, Allow me, Lord, to live with thee, and follow from place to place, and to live and die with thee. But Jesus said—No. I have saved and blessed you, and there is now therefore important work for you to do : for God first works for his people, and then he works in them, and then he works by them. He works for them in Christ, he works in them by his Spirit when he regenerates and sanctifies them, and he works by them when he makes use of them in the church and in the world. Our Lord, therefore, proceeded to say to the man, "Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for thee, and has had compassion on thee." Most likely the man went home to his friends and related to them the gracious dealings of God with his body, and his saving dealings with his soul ; and what spiritual results flowed therefrom we cannot tell.

It seems that there is nothing new under the sun, even in the grace of God, for this state of things existed in the days of David, and therefore he says in the Psalm out of which I have taken my text, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." The work of salvation is

No. 32.—DECEMBER 15, 1876.

not to be concealed, and he that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ is to stand in a prominent position. It is not for the man that has been saved from the dunghill and seated upon a throne, not for the beggar who has been enriched by divine grace to conceal either himself or the riches and power of that mercy to which he is an everlasting debtor ; and therefore he says, " Come and hear, [not everybody, but] all ye that fear God." And why did David invite only such as feared God ? It seems to me that the world are incapable of appreciating anything like a consistent statement of the work of grace upon the sinner's soul. However, on this particular occasion the Psalmist invited such as feared God, and said, " I will tell you what he has done for my soul." He does not seem to allude to what the Lord had done for his body, or in connection with his temporal circumstances. The soul is of unspeakable importance to the child of God, as it is unutterably important to the Saviour. " I will tell you what he hath done for my soul ;" for I was far off, but now I am nigh ; I was dead, but now I am alive ; I was a rebel and an enemy, but now I am reconciled and a friend ; I was black, and vile, and undone, but though sin still dwells within me, yet in other respects I am washed and shall be made whiter than snow. I was without God and without hope in the world ; but now I have through divine favour both a God and a good hope ; for the God of heaven is my covenant God, and through grace, I am saved ; and if you will come before me, I will relate to you the whole of the gracious proceedings of the Lord with my soul." I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If, however, I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, but verily he hath heard me and attended to the voice of my prayer." I hope the Lord will give me strength to make a few observations upon three points :—First, *the great and important fact* asserted. " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me ;" secondly, *a personal exemplification of this fact*, or of one aspect of it, " but verily God hath heard me ; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer ;" and thirdly *an expression of gratitude* in consequence of this : " Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." These are the three branches into which I think the text very naturally divides itself, and I hope to be able to make some profitable use of each of them.

I. First, we have *a very important and solemn fact asserted* : " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." David did not stand alone here. He was not an isolated individual in relation to this fact. The Lord hates sin, though he loves sinners. He hates sin, and has never heard the man that regarded iniquity in his heart, and therefore this portion of the Word of God will be applicable to all petitioners as long as time endures. I want to be very particular to-night, because my text is a very solemn one, and there are two or three very important distinctions to be observed, and to which we should give as much attention as possible. The first I will mention is this :—David does not say, *If there is iniquity in my heart*, the Lord will not hear me ; but if I *regard* it. I want my hearers, and especially my trembling and feeble friends, to take notice of this distinction, for it indicates a most important and vital difference. Had David said, *If there is iniquity in my heart*, the Lord will not hear me, he would never have been heard as a petitioner ; and you and I, and all the sons and daughters of Adam, might pray in vain for ever ; " for there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." " If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." That is a most important fact, and especially to certain individuals who talk loudly and long about their personal holiness, or rather their perfection in the flesh. I have recently read books on that subject ; pamphlets have been sent by post to me, enforcing the duty and the necessity of becoming perfectly free from sin and evil in this world. My dear friends, the Bible knows nothing of such a state of things, and David was a stranger to it, and so also was the beloved Apostle John. I should think that John was as holy as most men, and that he had as

much to do with God as any of the Apostles had. I should imagine that his heart was as full of love to God generally as are the hearts of modern professors; yet that good, and holy, and loving man was a stranger to this state of perfection; for it was John that said, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Understand, therefore, my beloved friends, that there is a difference between sin being in the heart and sin being regarded by the heart. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." It is taken for granted that the evil is within; but it is an enemy, and not a friend. Sin is in the heart, but what is our feeling in relation to it? We hate and loathe it, and would tear it from our spirits if we could, and crush and utterly destroy it; but it will remain in the heart of every saint while he is on the earth, and rage in his breast as long as he is in the flesh, or until he crosses the threshold of eternity. Were it not so, but on the contrary a fact that the child of God were sinless and perfect, there would be nothing for him to call upon God for. He would not, as I understand the matter, want to visit the cross, he would not want daily washing in the fountain opened for uncleanness and sin, he would not want a daily sacrifice, or a daily application of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There would be nothing wrong for him to confess in the presence of God, and it would be altogether out of place for him to say—Have mercy upon me, for I am a sinner. Be of good cheer, my beloved friends, that are cast down on account of the sin, depravity, and evil within you, who are distressed because they interrupt your communion and fellowship with God, and mar and spoil your devotions and your prayers—cheer up, and be not overmuch discouraged, since the Lord has given you grace to loathe sin and hate it, to endeavour to avoid it, and to rejoice in the pleasing hope of a final and everlasting deliverance therefrom. Your prayer shall not be shut out; for the Psalmist says—"If I regard iniquity in my heart," that is, if I hug the evil and press it to my soul, loving it, and living in communion and fellowship with it, then, the Lord will not hear me; for it is evident that you do not so regard it in your hearts; for verily God hath heard you, and hath attended unto the voice of your prayer and supplication.

Then, again, *there is a twofold practice in relation to prayer*, or a twofold influence drawing or moving the spirit in the act of prayer. In the first place *self*, and lusts, and pride, sometimes influence us when we come to the throne of grace. We have certain wants, and not distinguishing between things that differ, we take them before God, give expression to them in his presence, and ask him to supply them; whereas if our mental powers and spiritual abilities were deeper and stronger, and we could analyse those wants, we should not unfrequently find that they were carnal and fleshly, and that we desired to have them supplied in order that we might fulfil our lusts. There are many such requests as these presented even by good men and women before the throne of God. "Ye ask and have not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." If you will not divulge a secret, I will give you one in relation to myself. I do think that I make the work of the ministry a subject of earnest prayer, and I am quite sure that every time I enter the pulpit I try to lift up my heart in hope and prayer to God, that he would help and bless me. Sometimes, however, the thought occurs to my mind, Why am I so anxious to receive a blessing, and to be favoured with the help of God? Is it in order that I may profit the people, honour my Master, and glorify his great name? Is there no measure of self or of pride connected with my wish? Am I not desirous of obtaining help, in order that it may appear that I can preach a good sermon? "Who can understand his errors?" A word to the wise is enough. O friends, our hearts are "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." We may make a very important mistake in connection with matters like these. It is exceedingly difficult to be absolutely and wholly detached from self—exceedingly difficult to

be wholly carried beyond the influence of pride and sin, and to desire to be anything or nothing that Jesus Christ may be all in all. Well, we have thus prayed sometimes. We have been very warm and earnest in our petitions as we have thought, and the Lord has not heard us, or if he has, he has not been pleased to answer us according to the desires and wishes of our hearts. "Ye ask and have not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." There is a thirsting pride within, that is insatiable, which we cannot starve to death. This dangerous principle draws many things towards itself; it loves to be sustained, and it will be nourished by sin, and Satanic and worldly influences, as long as we are in the flesh. Now, when we go to God under this influence with our unhallowed and unspiritual wants, and desire that he would give us certain favours to supply those wants, it is wisdom on the part of God, and a mercy to us, to withhold supplies, and to take no notice of our prayers.

We notice, again, that whilst we are sometimes moved by self in prayer, at other times we are *moved by the Spirit*, and those prayers which are dictated by him, and are indited according to the Word of God, always reach the ears of Jehovah. However ill expressed the petitions may be, if the inspirer of the Bible, the Spirit of God, is the Leader of the petitioner in prayer, the broken petition and the ill expressed desire and hope, always reach God's throne, and he attends to the voice of such petitioners. Who, you say, is to judge, then, if there is so thin and fine a line between flesh and spirit, and between sin and holiness; who is to judge as to what is carnal, and what is spiritual? God is judge alone, and he is so on the mercy-seat as well as on the judgment throne. He will sit not on the mercy seat at the last day to judge the world, but on the throne of judgment; but now he is on the throne of grace, and it is said God is our judge, God is our lawgiver, and God is our king, and he will save us, in his judicial character, as well as by his kingly power and glory. He is our judge. He weighs the spirits, and by him thoughts and actions also are pondered. You do not always know the nature of a thought, the weight of an action, nor the worth of your petitions; but God receives and weighs them, and separates the precious from the vile, and that which is the outcome of the operations of his Spirit he hears, whilst that which is the fruit of the flesh he rejects. It follows, then, from this that our petitions are at times exceedingly broken, unconnected, and incoherent for, you know, that though there are moments in prayer when the whole mind is swayed sweetly and very delightfully, there are other moments when one's thoughts are dissipated, and not only so, vain and evil thoughts creep into the mind even when one is upon his knees. Is the child of God the subject of this experience? Are these some of the things he feels upon the knee of prayer? Yes, as long as the evil is within, we shall realise its existence and feel its influence. Let us thank God for some hallowed feeling, for some holy thought, and for a little that is heavenly, whilst with all the spiritual powers we possess we deprecate that which is unhallowed, unheavenly, and carnal.

I shall not stop to say much *on hypocrisy*. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," is not the language of a hypocrite. I may just say that hypocrisy in relation to the things of God, and especially in relation to the throne of grace is a very terrible state to be in. To go down upon one's knees in a hypocritical spirit, and as a hypocrite, to ask the God of heaven to do that for him which, if done would kill the very thing that he loves, or destroy the very evil that he is pressing to his heart, and to ask for this with seeming earnestness is something almost incredible and inconceivable. Oh! I say, if there are such hypocrites in existence, they are awful characters. To appear as a wolf in sheep's clothing before our fellow men is bad enough, but so to appear before God must be a thousand times worse.

But you are not a hypocrite. I will give you one or two marks of such a character. One mark is this, and you will always find it upon him,—he

never goes abroad nor stays at home without it, he has no religion for private life, and he has no closet intercourse with heaven ; his religion is for the church or chapel, and for the public eye and ear, and when no human eyes are looking, and no human ears are hearing, he is not a religious or praying man. That fact always marks a hypocrite pure and simple. Ask him about the closet, and since he is a hypocrite he will tell you he goes there ; for a hypocrite will be a liar, but follow him, if you can do so, through the whole of his private life, and you will find he is destitute of private religion, and that he does not in fact want or desire to hold intercourse with the God of heaven and earth. Is this the case with you ? No. You have a closet, and you enter it and could not live without so doing. I mean, you cannot live without trying to appear before God in private. You have never been satisfied with your closet performances, but although you have never been pleased with yourself in connection with your private religion, yet you call upon your Father who seeth in secret. I do not say this is done seven times a day, but you are at times in privacy, in some concealed place, where you lift up the eye, the voice, and the heart, it may be for a few minutes only, in fervent prayer to the great God of salvation, and therefore you are not a hypocrite. No ; you do not regard iniquity in your hearts. The Lord has heard you. Give him time, and be patient, for it becomes you to be so, and to wait for such a God as you have to do with ; and just as angels apprehend the fact that he has not turned away your prayer nor his mercy from you, so shall it satisfactorily appear to you.

Now before I leave this part of my subject, I must try to show you how it is that God will not, or cannot, hear the prayer of the person who regards iniquity in his heart: First, *because it would be contrary to his very nature so to do.* If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me ; for it would be contrary to his very perfection and being to hear such a person. I mention only one of his attributes. God is holy ; and I take it that his holiness is that glorious attribute of the Divine character which pervades his whole being. It is not peculiar to one or two excellencies, it is diffused through the whole of the infinite character of God. It pervades all his glorious perfections. Mercy is holy, grace is holy, love is holy, wisdom is holy, power is holy,—our God is a holy God ; and therefore, if hearing and answering prayer—and I beg attention to this—imply a sympathetic union with the petitioner, God cannot hear the man who regards iniquity in his heart, because, being holy, he cannot sympathise with a lover of sin. The God that hears prayer touches the petitioner, so to speak, and is in union with him ; therefore, if iniquity is regarded in the heart, and sin is loved and followed, there can be no sympathy between God and the soul, and the Lord will not hear him. Then, secondly, to hear such prayers *would throw the whole of God's government into confusion and disorder.* My friends, I suppose when we get to heaven we shall thank God for having rejected many of our prayers, and I think that we have done so already. Some of us have had to thank our heavenly Father for not hearing and answering some of our prayers. How often have we had to say, Now we see, or think we see, the reason for that dispensation and the other. We remember how earnestly we prayed concerning a particular matter, and how disappointed we were that God did not give us the desires of our hearts at the time ; whereas now we see that, had he heard us and fulfilled our desires, such and such favourable circumstances could not have arisen. My beloved friends, our God surveys and his infinite mind comprehends the great whole. You and I look at isolated events and circumstances ; we separate and divide them ; whereas our God goes round one's life and all the ages, and he causes all things “to work together—not one, or two, or half-a-dozen, but *all* things to work together for good, to them that love him, and are so called according to his purpose.” If God regarded or answered the prayer of him that regards iniquity in his heart, he would defeat himself and falsify the Bible, and I had almost said undeify himself. But he is holy and true, and his government,

like himself, is pure and righteous. Are there not times, my friends, when we are, as it were, asking God to put the reins into our hands, and allow us to steer, and guide, and manage? If God heard those prayers, left us to direct events and govern ourselves, we should presently be in fatal danger, and spoil the perfect arrangements of our heavenly Father. Forgive me if I illustrate this in a very simple way. Yonder, in the city, we have that amazingly and constantly choked thoroughfare called Cheapside, and many other such places. You are driving a vehicle there with your little son by your side; your hand is a practised one, and you know how to drive your vehicle through all the thousands that are there. The child wants the reins, aye, and the whip also, for he can drive as well as you, and he asks you to give them to him, and you do so: and before a minute has elapsed there will be an accident, confusion, and a smash. Our God is steering us through multitudes of dangers, and He only can drive and guide us safely through all. Had I the reins of this church wholly in my hand for a week only, I might and I should overturn the whole. God is on his throne, and he reigns over all, and his government, his rights, and all his works are just, and beautiful, and true. If I regard iniquity, the Lord in mercy and wisdom will not hear me. Again, if he did so, it would appear that *the sufferings and work of Jesus Christ were superfluous*. He might as well have peopled the heavens without any regard to legal or moral purity and perfection; but a holy God will have a holy salvation; and sinners saved shall be made holy, their prayers and their joys shall be holy also; and therefore the Saviour died to obtain a place for the sinner before God, and a hearing for him in heaven; but he did not die to obtain any place or toleration for *sin*. He died to put away the evil, and to destroy its being—first to expiate it, and then to destroy it; and the time is coming, that time which, though we know and love him, we sometimes dread and fear so much,—that period from which we now shrink, is coming when the last remains of sin—if you will allow me to use the word “remains”—shall be removed from our hearts, and when, oh blest experience, we shall enter into the presence of our God absolutely saved and free from sin, and from every trace of transgression and iniquity. How often, after a person has been suffering from some terrible disease, and has been healed, and become strong and vigorous again, does it happen that traces of the disease remain upon him; the small-pox, for example, may leave the recovered patient pitted from head to foot; traces of disease often remain upon the person after an effectual cure has taken place. God heals his people, and in heaven there will not be the slightest trace of guilt, iniquity, or depravity. *It would cast a shade upon the Spirit's work* also, did God hear and answer prayer when iniquity was regarded in the heart of the petitioner. Our God judged it necessary, in order that prayer might be acceptable in his sight, to communicate his Spirit. We cannot pray acceptably without him. Our infirmities and sinfulness are so deep and great, that without the Spirit there can be no spiritual and acceptable prayer; whereas, if sin and holiness were both alike to God,—if a good and a sinful frame were both the same to him,—we should say that the indwelling of the Spirit was a superfluous arrangement. However, all is settled and arranged, and we bless God for the wisdom which drew the plan, and for the holiness which shines throughout the whole. *Our Father has made a very elaborate arrangement in relation to prayer*. First of all there is a suitable throne before which the sinner may appear as a petitioner, which is the mercy-seat, or the throne of grace, and was typified by the ark which Moses was commanded to make. And God said, having given directions for the formation of the ark, “I will come down and dwell between the cherubim; and here will I meet thee, and here will I commune with thee.” A way has been made to that throne, paved with love, and drawn with lines of precious blood. A great High Priest stands before that throne to receive the coming sinner; and the Spirit is in the breast of every living petitioner, so that by him, through Christ, we appear before the Father. Oh friends, we shall never

fully know what our salvation cost, nor the full pains our God took to place himself in a position to honourably and delightedly hear and answer the prayers of sinners.

II. Just a word in the second place, on *the exemplification of this fact or one aspect of it*. "Verily God hath heard me, and, he hath attended to the voice of my prayer." Real heartfelt prayer is an evidence of sanctification, and of heavenly and spiritual sonship. You know the difference between heartfelt and heartless prayer. There are prayers which are heartless, if they may be called prayers, and there are heartfull prayers. Say not now you are fanatical. My dear friends, we know the difference between being abroad and in the freezing weather, and being indoors in a well-warmed room; there is a great difference between the two states; but it is not greater than is the difference between heartless and heartfelt prayer. There are times when, so to speak, the heart is as heavy as lead, as hard as a stone, as cold as ice, and as barren as a wilderness; and again there are times when it is warm, enlarged, buoyant and elevated, and when being filled with love it soars above the world and everything that is terrestrial. Is there any such experience as this? If you do not know it, my dear brother, may the Lord hear my prayer, and that of his dear people for you and shed abroad his love in your heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given to you. Oh, the difference, the indescribable difference, between nearness to and distance from God, between bondage and liberty, between expansion and contraction of heart. When the heart is enlarged, and the mind is expanded, the difference is felt, and we are at the moment conscious of the fact that we are with God and I trust I am not going too far if I say what is religion for, but to sooner or later to lead us here, and produce hopes, and convictions, and joys like these? There are times when we feel we are with God, and we would not like to say, and no power could force us to say, that God is not hearing us at the moment. Such is the experience of the heart and the frame of the mind, that we cannot but believe that God's smiling eye is upon us, and that his attentive ear is open, and that he is receiving what we are addressing to him. Well, this is a part of the believer's experience, and one says, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." My dear friends, this position you are destined to reach. Do not misunderstand me; such a happy state of things is not absolutely essential to prayer. This is what I have termed nearness to God, and sacred and solemn moments of holy fellowship and communion with our Father, and at such a time I am sure iniquity is not *regarded* in the heart. Sin is there even then but, like the beasts of the forest, when the sun rises and the day dawns, it creeps into its den, and into darkness, for it cannot bear the light of heaven's countenance upon the heart while the soul has nearness to the blessed God.

Secondly, *Providence proves that God has heard you*. Now I want to convince you, if I can, that he has heard and answered you in this respect. Divine providence proves this, for it is the daily and progressive fulfilment of the promises of God, and also of the prayers of his people. He is fulfilling his promises by the operations of his providence (I will not tarry on that), and he is answering the prayer of his people by the same means; for he who is the God of providence, is the Author of all prayer; he who is the Author of prayer, is the God of providence. He teaches his dear children to ask for the blessings he designs to give; and, sooner or later, he turns the wheel of his providence according to his own wisdom and knowledge, and the blessing sought for falls into the petitioner's lap. Divine interpositions on your behalf have been numerous and conspicuous—have they not? Why, yes; on such an occasion he interposed with such a friend, such a desired circumstance, or such an event, and the result of all was, I was delivered, and helped, and favoured, and blessed. Give him the glory. Verily, he hath heard you, and he hath attended to your supplication. And then, again—for I must close—*your position to-night in the house of God proves that he has heard your prayer*, and that, therefore, there have

been times when you prayed without regarding iniquity in your hearts. Where are you to-night? Well, if that is rather a wide question, let me make it narrow. Where is sin? In my heart. In what character and capacity is it there? "As a hated enemy, sir." God be thanked. He has heard you. It is an enemy and not a friend. You are not in a state of reconciliation with it through Divine mercy. Ah! just so; it is through Divine mercy that I am in a state of conflict with it. That is well. Sin is in the heart. And where is the heart? I have tried to commit it unto the Lord. I have said, and am saying to-night—

"Here's my heart; Lord, take and seal it—  
Seal it from my courts above."

Verily God has heard you; he has attended to the voice of your prayer. And, again, you *continue to pray*, and that very fact proves that God has heard your prayer. "I have never had a kid from my Father; one says, "I have never realised the pardon of my sins; I have never tasted the holy joy of conscious salvation." Why do you not give up praying, cast off your religion, and go back again into Egypt? No, that cannot be. Then what do you pray for? Why, he has heard others, and I think and believe (aye, it is so) he will hear me. However, I could not live without calling upon his name. I come into the house of God again and again, and trust—

"The time of love will come,  
When I shall clearly see,  
Not only that he shed his blood,  
But I shall say—for me."

And, therefore, sink or swim, since I cannot regard iniquity in my heart, I will go into his presence, fall upon the knee of prayer, and trust and believe that sooner or later he will hear my petitions, and fulfil the requests of my heart.

Thirdly, *the gratitude expressed*, "Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." I can only say there are here two streams. God's mercy ever flowing towards his children, and their prayers ascending to his ear, and that the former is never diverted from the humble petitioner, and the latter is ever accepted by God, and tokens of these facts prompt the expression, "Blessed be God."

"Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise."

Amen.

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# THE PURIFYING HOPE OF GLORY.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 10th, 1876.

(THE TWENTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THE CHAPEL.)

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

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OUR great and adorable Redeemer, in the days of his flesh, gave exceeding great and precious promises to his disciples, many of which may be regarded as having been spoken to all the objects of his love. Certain important words, however, were addressed in a special way to the eleven men who should afterwards become his apostles; and among the sweet expressions which flowed from his heart and dropped from his lips, was the assurance that there should take place an extraordinary effusion of his blessed Spirit. "It is expedient for you," he said, "that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you: and when he is come, he shall reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;" and "he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." We may remember this and similar promises in connection with the spirit manifested by James and John before the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and the spirit they manifested immediately after the day of Pentecost.

On one occasion, which had been preceded by very solemn circumstances, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, went to their Master, and said to him: "Grant us to sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom;" and Jesus Christ assured them they knew not what they were asking, and were strangers to their own spirits. "It is not mine," said he, "to give this; but it shall be given unto them for whom it was prepared of my Father." From that peculiar request, we learn the fact that both James and John, those two tender-hearted and beloved sons of Zebedee, were carnal, or that at least there was a large measure of carnality in their minds. They contemplated Jesus Christ as a temporal Prince, his kingdom as a temporal kingdom, the great redeeming work which he came to achieve as a temporal redemption, and the liberty and glory which he came to introduce, as a temporal liberty, and an earthly glory; and hence the carnal request. Now, we may contrast the spirit of those two men at that time with their spirit immediately after the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost. The Lord had said to them, When he the Spirit is come, "he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you;" and, consequently, when the Spirit had filled the hearts of James, and John, and Peter, and the rest of the apostles, they discovered very satisfactorily and blessedly the fact that their Master's person was spiritual, that his work was a spiritual work, that his kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, and that his followers and subjects were spiritual men and women, and that it should be the happy lot and the high and heavenly privilege of all his followers to sit for ever on his right hand.

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This new state of things, brought to pass by the Spirit of God, appears very clearly and strikingly in the first part of the chapter out of which I have taken my text to-night. John could not have thus written before the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He could not have thus expressed himself before the ascension of his Lord, and the great downpouring of the grace of God—"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." He had lost all ideas of being a minister of state, and had abandoned all thoughts of sitting at his right or his left hand in a temporal kingdom. He was now carried infinitely beyond all such subjects. And then notice and try to connect what follows with the observations I have already made. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." A few years before this, John might have said, My views and thoughts were limited to this world, and to a temporal kingdom; but, beloved, we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Two points shall engage our attention—first, *the glorious hope of the beloved children of God*—"Every man that hath this hope in him;" and, secondly, *the influence of this hope upon the heart and life of every son of God*—he "purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

I. A few thoughts in the first place on *the believer's hope*, or on the hope of the sons of God; for you observe that the believer's hope is a filial or childlike one, the hope of children or of the sons of God. I might tarry here for a moment to observe, and more especially to my younger hearers, that it is important that you should read the word of God consecutively. There are portions of Divine truth, which detached from the connection in which they stand, are very sweet and blessed; but it is of the highest importance that you should read the Word of God consecutively; and my text is one which should not be detached from the connection in which it stands. The theme of our Author, or of the apostle here, was spiritual or Divine sonship. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" "and every man that is a son, and who has therefore, this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." We sometimes speak of the fear of God's people as a filial fear. Let us never forget that their faith is a filial faith, that their hope is a filial hope also, just as their affections and their sympathies are likewise filial and childlike. My dear friends, this is a very important distinction, for it is a fact in connection with our godlike and heavenly religion that everything goes upon the high and important ground of relationship; and it matters not what spirit we may be of; if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his; and if we have his Spirit, we have a fraternal life, for Jesus is our elder brother; and coming from the Father, as well as from the Son, is also a filial spirit, producing filial feelings and aspirations, and therefore hope is filial, love is filial, faith is filial, as well as the fear of God. But I am to call your attention to the glorious hope of the sons of God. "Every man that hath this hope in him." Now it is for me to speak on both the object and the grace of hope; but, first, we shall contemplate the glorious object of hope. What is the hope but the hope that is mentioned in the preceding verse? "We know when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." what we, and what all God's children, are hoping for; and everyone that is for this perfect conformity to Christ, purifies himself, even as Christ. In a word, that which we are hoping for is eternal blessedness in this world, or eternal bliss, and glory, and perfection in the heavenly state. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. There are four or five things

which appear to constitute the everlasting bliss and blessedness of God's dear children, and I will name them at once. In the first place, we shall *be like him* ; in the second place, we shall *see him* ; in the third place, we shall *be near him and with him* ; in the fourth place, we shall fully and uninterruptedly *enjoy him* ; and in the fifth place, all this will be *uninterrupted and for ever*. These facts are now the objects of our hope, blended or united together, they constitute that glorious prize which every believer is said to have in view.

In the first place—and if this were all, it would be a marvellous mercy, an unspeakably great and precious gift—we shall be perfectly *conformed to Christ*. As it does not yet appear in the Word, and we have never with our mortal eyes seen the Son of God, I cannot describe the great honour, glory, and excellency of perfect conformity to him ; but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. In what respect shall we be like our Lord ? Some years ago, there was a certain sect of professing Christians—whether they were truly so or not I will not say—who believed that the Christian as in Christ, was much more than he was commonly taken to be, that he became a Christ, and hence they used to write about being Christed in him, and constituted something more than Christians by their union to the Lord. All that is exceedingly presumptuous, and something even worse than that, it is grossly wicked. Surely it will be enough for redeemed sinners to be like their Lord, without becoming equal to him. To perfectly Christianise the sinner is the grand purpose of the Trinity in salvation, and not to deify him. There is only one Christ, and every Christian shall in certain respects be like him for ever ; and I understand, my friends, that we shall be conformed to him as to his sinlessness, and like him be perfect in holiness and purity ; and should it be our happy privilege to be as free from sin as Christ is free from it, we shall desire no more. We shall not want to sway the sceptre, to wear Christ's crown, neither shall we aim at his seat. We shall rather rejoice in his personal and superlative excellencies and glories ; and if he will remove every trace of sin from us, and make us as holy as he is holy, and as pure as he is pure—

“ Dissolved by his goodness  
We'll fall to the ground,  
And sing to the praise  
Of the mercy we've found.”

The believer's hope does not go beyond this point, but at the same time it does not stop short of it ; he is expecting to be like him, and there are, I think, several hundreds of persons here to-night, who are looking for the day when they shall see the Saviour as he is, and be as sinless and pure as he is. Oh brethren, what pleasure will fill our hearts, and what glorious joy will everlastingly swell our minds, when we are free from sin, and when we are positively and verily holy ; when we shall be incapable of thinking an unholy thought, incapable of possessing an unhallowed feeling, and incapable of dropping our adoring attention from the dear person of the Son of God. There will be no wandering of desire, no vanity of thought, no hardness of heart, and no influences whatever in heaven to enervate our liveliness, and degrade our spirits. All will be elevating, ennobling, and dignifying to the ransomed and immortal mind, for we shall be as like Christ in holiness, as God the Holy Spirit can constitute our whole being. We shall be like him as to his person, or rather, we shall be like him as to the perfection of his humanity in his resurrection glory. His body is in heaven, and is spiritual, and it is as immortal as his mind ; and his whole human nature is as immortal as his Divine nature, and therefore Christ endureth for ever. But we shall not be perfectly like him until we are raised from the dead, until these vile bodies are formed and fashioned like unto his glorious body ; and all the promises indicate this great, and final, and glorious

day of grace. The work of redemption, or rather of salvation, is progressive. Christ is advancing with it, and the Spirit is carrying it forward towards its consummation; and when Mohamedanism and Popery are no more, and time has nearly reached its close, then the great King of heaven and earth shall appear, and as the only Archangel, shall say, "Awake! ye dead, and come to the judgment;" and all the millions of the ransomed by his blood shall lift up their heads in their dusty beds, and feel an influence that shall raise them from their graves, and they shall see their glorious Lord descending in the air. The sight will immediately transform them. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." In immortality, we shall then be like him, and also as to our acceptance with and before God. It will be blessed to sit by Emmanuel's side, or stand in his presence, or at his feet, (for I know not what our posture in heaven may be,) and feel that we are as acceptable to God as he is, and that we are interested in the very love with which Christ himself is loved; this will be heaven to us, and nothing short of this can finally satisfy the sons of God. All this has been provided by God, and is promised to us as our heaven, and we are hoping for the same—"Every man that hath this hope in him," shall be like him.

In the second place, the *full vision* of Christ, and his charms, for we shall see him as he is, and not as he was. He was a babe in the manger; but we shall not see him so; he was poor and needy, for foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but he had not where to lay his head. We shall not see him in poverty; he was prostrate in the garden, and sweat great drops of blood; he will sweat no blood then; he died in weakness on the tree, but he left his weakness there; and we shall see him, not as he was, but as he is. We may not now know what his glories are; but we then shall, for we shall see him surrounded by them for ever. Yes, then we shall see him, but now we live, and walk by faith, and not by sight; and I sometimes think of that beautiful verse—

"Though the shore we hope to land on  
Only by report is known;  
May we freely all abandon,  
Led by that report alone."

What have we to rest our faith upon as to the existence of such a person as Christ,—of such a place as heaven,—and of such joys as we are now speaking about? On what ground are we hoping to possess this bliss? On this—the glorious gospel of the blessed God. "And is that satisfactory to you?" Yes; perfectly so. "And do you think and believe it is the Word of God?" Thank his name, I do. "Are there never contrary winds blowing against your faith, and causing it to waver and shake?" Yes, at times there are; and were it not so, I should not be deep in conflict, or know much of the wiles of the devil. There are contrary winds and raging storms, and my faith is assailed and trembles; still I am helped to sing—

"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."

I have said in temptation, if I may thus express myself,—if you take the Bible, give me something that will supply its place and satisfy my soul as the Word of God does. Friends, we shall live in a state of conflict as long as we are here, —but the antagonism encountered intensifies the believer's hope; for the more severe the opposition, the more vigilant and vigorous at times is our hope of deliverance, and of the glory of God. We are now living in a fog, under clouds, in a state of imperfection; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And what about the sight of Christ?

We read in puerile writings, which teem from the press at the present time, a number of empty and inconsistent things about heaven. One says, When I arrive in heaven, I shall look for you, and for my wife, and for my husband, and for my son, and for my daughter. O my brethren, we shall see *him*, and our Lord's face and glory will engage our attention, and fix and absorb all our thoughts for ever. I see my brother so-and-so in the chapel this evening, and I am pleased to see him here ; but my joy is marred and my pleasure interrupted by the absence of that and the other individual ; but there will be nothing to interrupt my joy or mar my pleasure when I shall see my Lord at home. I shall be perfectly satisfied as to the company there, as to my brethren that will be following me, and as to the people that shall fill the heavens of eternal glory. I shall see him, and the sight of my satisfied and glorified Jesus, and the full vision of his face will be heaven to me. He is an infinite person, and I beg attention to this point, and therefore ten thousand times ten thousand beauties will eternally appear in his dear face. We shall never tire, and never be weary. Jehovah is there, the excellencies of the complex person of the Son of God are there ; and my eyes and my thoughts will be fixed contentedly and pleasurably for ever. I shall want to see no other beings, otherwise than as I shall see them in connection with my dear Lord.

And then *nearness* to him, for we shall be with him. Can you not understand the possibility of being like him without being near to him, or the possibility of seeing him at a distance ? But we shall then be near to him—"for ever with the Lord." Now we and our Lord are in two different worlds—he is in glory, and we are in grace—he is in heaven, and we are on the earth. How far it is to heaven I do not know ; but "absent from the body," we shall be immediately "present with the Lord." However, we are at present in two different states and worlds ; and are we therefore strangers to his presence ? No. Is he here ? Yes ; he is here by his Spirit, and we are favoured with his spiritual presence, for which we bless his name. It is a boon, an undeserved mercy ! His spiritual presence has sometimes swallowed up all our sorrow, dried up all our tears, warmed our hearts, and produced a heaven on earth. His spiritual presence has turned the wilderness into a garden, and changed thorns and briars into rose and fir trees, and our night to day ; for it has a wonderful influence upon the mind, and if his spiritual presence is so powerful and transforming, what must it be to be with him, and to be near him ? Brethren, we are now living in the beams of the Sun, then we shall be clothed with the Sun. Now he shines from heaven, and occasionally he pours his light down upon us in this dark world ; for now we have light and darkness too. Now the beams of our Christ are stronger or weaker according to his will ; but then we shall be immersed in his glory, and live for ever in a state of nearness to his blessed person, being filled with all the fulness of God.

This brings me to the fact of *fruition*. We shall be like him, and we shall be satisfied. Hope will be swallowed up in its object. Here the streams and rivers flow ; but yonder is the sea of rest. In death, or when we enter heaven, all the rivers of grace will empty themselves into the sea of glory. Hope then will lose itself in the full fruition and enjoyment of Jesus, and all our holy desires will be swallowed up in the infinite ocean of eternal bliss. Prayer will be superseded by perfect satisfaction ; therefore there is none in heaven except that of the great Intercessor before the throne. Angels never pray, for they never want. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob never pray, for they are filled with Christ. They on high have no desires, for heaven leaves nothing for the immortal mind to desire ; and, therefore, there will be the fullest fruition of our Christ.

And, lastly, this will be eternal ; "for ever with the Lord." We now get a text of Scripture, and apply the lips of our faith to it, and suck honey from it as from the heavenly honeycomb ; but we lose its sweetness again ; or our faith becoming weak, the word seems not to yield that precious power which it had

yielded, and, therefore, we do not long retain our joys. Our Sabbaths are sometimes very blessed days ; but they are short. Night comes, and Monday morning dawns, and we have to go into the cold and freezing world again. But everything in heaven is immortal, deathless, and eternal. The sight of Christ is eternal ; the presence of angels and glorified spirits is eternal ; and sitting under the tree of life and eating the fruit thereof is eternal ! Oh, the Sabbath, the congregation, the happiness, the heaven, and the praise are all uninterrupted and immortal. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." Do you think that any person not being a son or a daughter of God, hopes for perfection and purity ? That a sinner living in sin, and loving it, is longing for holiness and for heaven ? Such a person hoping for heaven for the sake of the holiness, the purity, and the employment of the place ? Oh, no ; you must come, notwithstanding the loose creed and the empty religion of the day, to gospel facts, and it is truly important that you should do so. The hope, the *good* hope of heaven, is limited to God's sons, and, therefore, it arises out of adoption, and is the outgrowth of regeneration. It is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit ; and that being so, that divine person is in the heart of the hoper ; and if he is in the heart, the hoper is a child of the living God. Relationship entitles every one, every son and daughter, to hope for all that I have tried to place before you ; for if we are sons, we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, and have Scriptural ground for expecting eternal glory. I have before illustrated it in this way. Yonder is a beautiful mansion, with beautiful grounds surrounding it ; the property is large, and the owner thereof is considered to be an exceedingly wealthy man. Two persons are walking in the road, and one of them says, "I hope to live there myself some day, and to be the owner of that estate." The other replies, "How is that ? Are you related to its present proprietor ?" "No ; I am not a son, nor a nephew, nor a relation at all ?" "Are you a friend of his ?" "No." "You have reason, then, to know that he has made a will in your favour, and that when he is dead, should you be the longer liver, you will possess the property ?" "No." Then how can you hope, man, that that property will ever be your's ? Your hope is baseless, your mind is wrong." One says, I hope for heaven, and for a heavenly crown. My dear friends, perhaps that may be well ; but let us examine the groundwork of your hope. What is it based upon ? Why, sir, Jesus died for me. Christ is my dear Redeemer. I know by Divine teaching that I am a son of God. Then hope on ; for heaven is your's, and you are entitled to hope for an eternal crown, and for everlasting honours ; for you are a child of God. But be careful, examine yourself, whether you be in the faith ; for this hope is the privilege of the children of God only. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." And what a blessed hope this is. What buoyancy it gives to the heart ! How it elevates the mind to think that—

"A few more rolling suns at most,  
Will land me on fair Canaan's coast;  
Where I shall sing the song of grace,  
And see my glorious hiding-place!"

We next notice *the connection between the grace of hope, and the glory hoped for*. Are the two connected ? Yes, inseparably. The glory hoped for I have endeavoured to describe ; and now a word in connection between hope in the heart and its object in heaven. The connection is a *decretive* one, formed by eternal purpose and decree—"predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Here is the little hope of the believer, and yonder is its great Object in heaven ; and eternal decrees unite the two together, and, therefore, it is said, "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly." Again, the connection is *natural*, or in other words, according to the nature of

things. The God that provided the glory for us, creates the hope of that glory in our hearts. Had not heaven been provided for us, a hope of that state had never been imparted to us ; and, therefore, we are led to hope for glory, because God settled it upon us in Christ before the foundation of the world : and this is the kind of connection that exists between our glorious hope and the glory that is hoped for. Again, this connection is *experimental*. You know the kind of connection that exists between human thirst and pure water, between human hunger and good bread and other food, between a soft bed and weary limbs at night ; and this is the kind of connection God has formed between hope and its object. No cold water was ever so grateful to a thirsty man, as heaven will be to those that hunger and thirst after righteousness ; and no bread was ever so agreeable to the hungry as the sight of Christ will be to the longing saint ; and no soft bed promising rest was ever so acceptable to the worn and weary, as eternal rest in heaven will be to all the weary pilgrims of grace, or the people of our God ; and, lastly, this connection is *indissoluble*. Having given you to hope for heaven, you will not be disappointed. He who is the Author of your hope will maintain it. There have been times when hope was almost drowned, when it sank beneath the flood ; but even then there was a buoyancy in it which prevented its destruction, or its remaining at the bottom of the waters. I had almost said that a good hope might be likened to cork, which by force you might hold for hours beneath the water ; but remove the pressure, and it will rise again. And there is a living and an imperishable buoyancy in that hope which the Lord imparts to the soul, and by-and-bye it will reach the threshold of heaven, and the glories of that world will fall upon the panting heart ; and when it has conducted us so far, and the soul is ready to enter the promised bliss, and to be immersed in the presence of God, then it will finally disappear, and we shall bless God for the privilege, and the blessing of a good hope through grace while we were in this dying and stormy world. Thus much for the hope. I meant to say a word or two on its basis or foundation—"this hope *in him*,"—but one cannot say everything in an hour.

II. Just a word on *its influence and effect on its possessor*. "Every man that hath this hope in him *purifieth* himself, even as he is pure." This purification in connection with the Lord Jesus must be regarded as referring to quality and not equality. We can never, do what we will, equal in ourselves the purity and holiness of our Lord ; but the nature and quality of this purity are the same as those of Christ. Holy as he is holy, not as to equality, but as to quality. We are sinners : he is sinless. We have a little purity of heart, and much impurity ; but the little purity we have, we have received from Jesus our head of holiness ; therefore it is like that which is in Christ, and it is an earnest of full perfection. That, however, I do not want to dwell upon. The verb here—"purifieth"—is a very important and significant one—"he *purifieth* himself even as he is pure." The difficulty here—if there be any—is this : How can a child of God, who is a sinner, and absolutely dependent upon the Spirit of God, be said to purify himself, and to do it so marvellously as is described in the text—"even as he is pure ?" Oh it is sufficiently easy. In the first place, he does this by dealing with his Lord. Hence we read of purifying the heart by faith ; not that there are self-purifying powers in the grace of faith itself, but as it has to do with the blood that purifies, with the power that cleanses the soul, "and every man having this hope in Jesus, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure," by dealing with the Saviour, and having to do with his blood and grace. He comes to the fountain to be washed, to the Holy One for the unction, to Jesus for the word ("For now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you,") and to the Lord for holy fellowship with God ; and many of my hearers know that the atmosphere of the holiest of all is very purifying, and that to have a little fellowship and communion with Jesus is the most purifying exercise

of the immortal mind. Oh if we could only live in his presence, and remain in uninterrupted intercourse with Jesus, sin would not lift its head, depravity and corruption would not rise, or not rise very high. The saint always feels a purifying influence in close and holy intercourse with the Saviour. But we will go a step further, and observe that this is done practically. We do not shirk the question, nor the importance of practical godliness. We may be called high doctrine people, and that in a contemptuous spirit; but that does not move us, for our Master and his doctrines were sneered at. We believe with all the powers we possess, that "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself," and is correspondingly high in his aim and practice; that is to say, he makes Christ his pattern and his example. That is, perhaps, the leading idea of the apostle in the passage we are now contemplating. Every man that follows the Lamb is as anxious to pick his road through this unclean world as he, who has regard for physical cleanliness and comfort, is through our muddy London streets.

But we must leave this part of the subject, and add only one word or two to what I have already said. This purity of heart is always in proportion to the intensity of the hope of the child of God. Hope makes the heart tender and sensitive, and the more intensely and earnestly one hopes for heaven, the more deeply and intensely he loathes sin. The hope of heaven is a holy one, and holiness itself is hoped for; and he that intensely hopes for perfect holiness purifies himself, even as Christ is pure. By way of illustrating and proving what I have said, let me just notice the dear child of God on his dying bed. I do not mean every one of them—they all die safe; for they all die in the arms of Jesus, and on the bosom of the Father's love; but some seem to be more favoured, or, if not so, the experience of some on their dying beds differs from the experience of others. Some have their mental powers in full natural and spiritual exercise until the last stage of their life, and are able to express their feelings down to the last minute or two of their existence here. The light of glory shines very sweetly upon the soul whilst all around it is giving way; their mental powers are strong, and their vocal powers do not fail, and then what marvellous utterances from them we have sometimes heard. When hope in death and in the swellings of Jordan is strong, it has almost lost itself in its object, God in Christ, before heaven has actually been reached. And when the departing one has been asked, "Where are you going to, my friend?" "To heaven," has been the reply. "Are you sure?" "Yes; for

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

"What is your view of Christ now?" "Oh he is precious? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Then is hope strong and certain, and now for the purity. Is there an unclean wish, an unholy word, an unhallowed utterance at that time? And if one should rush into the room, and give utterance to nonsense and vanity, how unutterably offensive it would be to the holy and happy departing one. The nearer heaven, the stronger the hope, and the deeper the purity; and when the soul has emerged from the body, and is face to face with its great object, Jesus, the light of his countenance will have withered the last sin and consumed the last trace of corruption: and then shall we be not only for ever with him, but for ever like him, pure as he is pure.

May the Lord grant his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# THE PRESERVATION OF ISRAEL.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 18th, 1877.

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*"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore."*—Psa. cxxi. 8.

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"God is not the author of confusion," but of peace and order; and, consequently, we find divine, beautiful, and uninterrupted harmony in nature, in providence, in the moral government of God, and in His great salvation. Heaven is a large world, and contains a number which no man can number of redeemed sinners; and although there must be added to that number all the glorious angels of God, yet there is nothing but order, harmony, and tranquility there. And when a church is scripturally constituted, and its worship and movements are in harmony with the Word of God, and its members are spiritual and holy persons, and God's presence is sweetly enjoyed by the whole body, heavenly order reigns therein; and since order is a divine law, we look for it in the ceremonial dispensation, and in that vast organization called the Jewish and National Church of God. I am now speaking of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the fact that they were a divine organization appears everywhere, and in every department of God's dealings with them. There were three principal officers in that nation or church—viz., prophet, priest, and king; and you have not forgotten that the children of Israel were frequently in a state of conflict, and that they were especially so in the reign of David; and it is a fact not to be overlooked that their prophet, priest, and king, were connected with every war they waged. It was the work of the prophet to declare the will of God to the people as to whether they should go out against an enemy or not; and when he had left the throne of God, with a message for the king or the nation, he appeared in the palace, or at once sought an interview with the king for the purpose of communicating to him the will of God. The army of course was prepared, and everything was got ready for the march and for the battle, and it was usual at least during one period of their existence for the king to head the army. There stood the prophet the Lord's messenger, who had communicated to the people the mind and will of God.—Go out against them and fight; there stood the army more or less numerous and strong, and at its head stood the king, and in this instance we will refer to David—there stood the warlike and victorious David, and very near to him stood the priest to give him and the army the blessing of their God.

These observations are not irrelevant to our text, nor to the Psalm out of which it is taken; for it is said by some writers that this Psalm was repeated or sung every time the God of Israel ordered them to go to battle. I have said that the army was prepared and headed by king David, in his military dress, and he is represented as saying, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and

No. 36 - APRIL 14, 1877.

earth"—or better still the rendering in the margin ; for the learned tell us that we have the literal and correct idea therein :—Since I am about to encounter a great enemy, "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?"—that is to the dunghill gods of the nations—to the idols that are round about me? No ; I will not lift up mine eyes to them. "From whence cometh my help?" My help cometh not from the hills, but from the Lord ; not from the idols of the nations, but from Jehovah, which made heaven and earth. And the king or general of the army, having repeated these words, the priest proceeded to say (and see what a beautiful view this gives us of the Psalm,) "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved ; he that keepeth thee will not slumber ; he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." You are where he has told you to stand, and you are about to obey his orders by going into the field that he himself has appointed you to enter ; and therefore, "the Lord is thy keeper, he is thy shade upon thy right hand." The sun shall not smite thee by day, whilst you are fighting, nor the moon by night while you are lying on the ground. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil ; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore." Thus you see that order and harmony were apparent everywhere in that vast national organization. The psalm was also repeated to the people when they left their homes to go in companies up to Jerusalem, to worship thrice a year.

Now I shall not divide my text to-night in the ordinary manner, yet of course I shall have some leading branches, which I will mention as I proceed with my subject.

The first fact that requires our notice is *the character of the Preserver of Israel*. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in." We have a proverb, "He is well kept whom the Lord keeps ;" and if the Lord keeps us, we are indeed well kept, and whatever we may think of our position, our character, or our standing, if the Lord does not form our character, and then preserve it, we are deceived, and shall sooner or later be bitterly disappointed, and therefore it is important, not only that we should be kept, but kept by the Lord. Some of you, like myself, may have had some apprehensions respecting your perseverance in a course of holiness, or in your profession of religion. The devil is still an enemy, and everywhere he works in a manner like himself. If he speaks good words, it is for a devilish purpose ; and if he seems to perform a worthy or a good action, his motive is diabolical and mischievous. I have sometimes had many uncomfortable apprehensions respecting my own perseverance as a minister, and a professor of religion. I have asked myself the question, "Is it not owing to something natural in myself, to the force of my own character, and the peculiar constitution of my mind, having no taste for this and for that, and that I continue to stand and remain in connection with the church of God? I am but beginning to learn that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and that being so, he is Lord of my tastes, and of the order, constitution, and character of my mind, and that if it is a fact that my continuance in this particular position is owing to certain mental peculiarities, then I should pass beyond that second cause of my perseverance to the first great cause of all, and say, "Not unto me ; not unto me, but unto Thy name be all the praise and glory." And this is how we should treat every question relating to our religion. Why, the times are very different now to what they formerly were ; for intelligence is clearer and education is advancing, and the human intellect is marvellously informed now, compared with its condition forty or fifty years ago. Admitting this, for argument's sake—who presides over all those secondary means and influences? Who presides over all those subordinate powers? Away with all that covert infidelity—for it is infidelity *itself* to attribute anything that is good to human power, wisdom, or arrangements. The Lord is the Preserver of thy going out and thy coming in, from this time

forth and for evermore. Oh ! sir, you are a member of a church, and when you are peculiarly and powerfully tempted to depart from your profession, the thought occurs to you, that since you are in fellowship with a Christian church you cannot and ought not therefore to do this and that. Well, who can tell me that this is not one of God's ways of keeping me ? What have you or I to find fault with, if God is pleased to employ that circumstance to hold us up in his ways ? Who and what is the creature that he should reply against the wise, and gracious ; and holy arrangements of our God ?

But, not to tarry on this point, let us notice the fact that if the Lord is your preserver, you are preserved by Divine *benevolence*, and that your preservation affords Jehovah delight and satisfaction. My dear friends we do not dwell on these themes with sufficient fervour and frequency. There is nothing forced in your God, for he is never constrained by any influence out of himself, let us believe that he is self-moved in the whole of our salvation. What is it that constrains or moves God to place his everlasting arms about a feeble worm ? What leads him to build the walls and bulwarks of salvation about such a poor and feeble soul as yours ? What is it, I say, that moves him to do this ? His own benevolence ; and if you think that too weak a word to use—and I confess that I am not particularly fond of it—take another, it is his own everlasting love and the good pleasure of his will. His heart is in the great business of preserving his people, for it is an encouraging fact, my hearers, that your daily and perpetual preservation forms a part of God's grand scheme of salvation, and he cannot accomplish the whole of it without preserving you. Put these thoughts together, and then remember that the scheme of salvation is God's darling scheme. Salvation is his dearest work ; the grandest and noblest production of his grace and power. His whole self, all his persons and attributes, are in the great work of saving you and taking you to heaven. Do not get to think that the exercise of his long-suffering gives him pain, that the exercise of Divine patience and forbearance occasions anything like regret in the infinite mind of God. How often has one said to another, "I am thankful, dear friend, that I am able to help you ; I am pleased and delighted that I have it in my power to do you good. And God is pleased, not only because he is able help you, but because he is able to do it in harmony with his greatness, his attributes, and perfections. If God himself were to speak to this congregation to-night, methinks he would say to all his saved and preserved people—Children, beloved ones, I am pleased and delighted to spread my wings over you, and to take you for your preservation and protection beneath my Almighty feathers, as a hen protects her brood. And how is that ? You see she lifts her wings, her young ones creep beneath them, and she covers them with herself ; and she does it with a maternal love, and some of you know a mother's love.

"Just as a hen protects her brood  
From birds of prey that seek their blood,  
Under her feathers ; so the Lord  
Makes his own arm his people's guard."

Since God does nothing that is contrary to his will, or opposite to his character and glory, all his heart, all his hand, all his powers are in your salvation ; and, therefore, adore its greatness and glory.

Again—not to tarry too long in a place—notice that since the Lord is the preserver of his people, *his eye incessantly watches over them* ; therefore it is said "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." It is an unspeakable favour to be interested in a preserver who never requires sleep, especially when we are surrounded by so many dangers. The tender mother, notwithstanding the depth of her love for her suffering child, and the intense pain which the

dear little thing is in, having sat up night after night, must fall asleep by-and-bye ; she grows weary and worn, and though her babe continues to suffer, she from exhaustion at last sleeps a little. What a mercy to be interested in the watchful care of that Being whose eyes are never heavy ! What a blessing to be under the protecting shadow of Him whose arm is never weak, and whose strength can never be exhausted. "He that keepeth Israel shall never slumber nor sleep." Now, "the Lord shall preserve thy going out." He knows all our goings out and comings in. He knows them not only as events, but because he has made appointments concerning them. "I will guide thee with mine eye." And as soon as a soul is born again, the eye of eternal Love is fixed upon it, and it is never removed therefrom. I will go further and say, when the babe, that God has loved with an everlasting love, and that he intends to call by his grace, comes into the world, the eye of Jehovah is fixed upon it, and a special providence attends it everywhere, until it reaches the spot where everlasting love is to break forth, and where it is first to cry for mercy, and become a new creature, and manifestly a child of the living God, we say the great Preserver of Israel follows that beloved one through all the intricate windings of life ; for "the Lord shall preserve thee." It is a mercy it is so ; for there are perhaps a thousand malevolent eyes continually fixed upon us. I suppose the devil does not slumber, but that his vigilance is incessant. The eyes of hell are upon us. I mean those of the devil and his angels ; "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers." There are also dear friends, the eyes of Popery, and no eyes upon earth, not even those of the Turks or heathens, are more malevolent towards the people of God than those of the Papacy. But let hell, and Rome, and the world look upon us malignantly, and plot, and scheme, and contrive—yonder is a throne, the highest in the universe, and there is the great Supreme upon it, whose eyes are ever more fixed for good upon the people that are so deeply hated, and he shall preserve them.

And again let me say, that this Keeper *certainly exercises an influence upon his people in keeping them.* I contend for the fact with all my heart, that that influence is one that is felt. My friends, we are not kept as within walls of granite, thick and high. The Lord does not put his people into a prison in order to keep them. He has other methods of keeping Israel. Prisoners are kept, preserved, and attended to ; but the Lord's dear people are not in prison. He keeps them in a peculiar manner, and the influence of his grace is sometimes such that those that are kept thereby cannot describe it. Why, look at nature—at our earth—it is surrounded by an atmosphere of between forty and fifty miles, and the world is continually immersed therein. That atmosphere is its secondary or subordinate preserver ; but it is God's creature and his contrivance, and all life is sustained thereby. And is not the new world, the new creation, the church of God, also surrounded by an atmosphere that is spiritual, and vital, and preserving, and that has a natural tendency to perpetuate its existence. Would God so care for the material world, and not equally care for the preservation of the spiritual ? In him all nature lives, and moves, and has its being, and in Christ the Lord in whom is all the fulness of God, Christians, live, and move and have their being. We are as believers immersed in God's care, in his grace, in his saving character, in his providence, in his protection : hence the Lord is thy keeper on thy right hand. How elaborate are God's arrangements for the keeping and preserving of his people ! Why, if we look with intelligent eyes and right feelings into the Word of God, we shall discover the fact that the most stupendous arrangements of our God relate to salvation. What has he done for the purpose of preserving Israel ? Look at the incarnation of our Lord Christ, at the whole of his mediation, at the

mysteries of divine providence, at the special care of divine grace, at the ministry of angels, at the indwelling of the Spirit and his perpetual operation in the heart, and at all things in connection with the general and special government of God, and you cannot fail to arrive at the conclusion that it is Heaven's settled purpose to save and preserve a people ; and "therefore the Lord shall preserve thy going out."

But let us notice the second point that offers itself to our minds in the text, "The Lord shall preserve *thy* going out," &c. Here we have *the subjects of divine preservation*, called in the earlier part of the Psalm, "Israel." "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." I will not take up your time by attempting a description of the character of Israel or God's people. What I wish to attend to is the fact, that if you are thus preserved and kept by God, your preservation is a matter of great importance, we infer this from what is stated here : "The LORD shall preserve thee." Why? Are we worth all this? Our notions of our worth or worthlessness do not come into the question at all : we are what the Lord has made us, and in reality what he accounts us to be, and he says : "Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable and I have loved thee ; therefore I have given men for thee and people for thy life : " for what are all the nations upon the face of the earth compared with my Israel? I will sacrifice Babylon, and Egypt, and Assyria, and Moab, and Edom for Israel. "For thy sake I have sent to Babylon and brought down the Chaldeans whose cry is in the ships." Brother, your life and character are important ; therefore God says : "I will preserve them unto my heavenly kingdom." Your progress is important to God, and he says, you shall persevere and hold on your way. Your arrival in the realms of glory is a matter of great importance to all that are above ; for all and everyone in heaven are expecting us. God is expecting us, and so are his holy angels ; "for are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?" And if they are ministering for us, of course they are expecting our arrival there ; and as for the spirits of just men made perfect, they too are expecting us ; for are not our mansions, our thrones, and our kingdom prepared for us, and are not our fellow-members expecting the perfection and completion of the mystical body of their Lord? They know that all God's designs are saving, and therefore they are all expecting us in that better world, and consequently the life, the character, the progress, and the glorification of God's dear people, are matters of the greatest importance. The life of your child is important to you, and you would, if you could, preserve it. I have not of course so much experience as to parental feeling as some of you have ; but I know, however, that the life of one's child is important to a parent, and that there is not a father or a mother on the face of the earth, having natural feelings, but what would preserve it as long as possible. That is just what God can do, is doing, and will do for all his dear children. Therefore, since you would if you could save your child from death and pain, think and believe that your heavenly Father will save his dear family from all evil, therefore hold up your heads, tread firmly, and hope confidently ; for if God can keep you, you shall be kept, and if he can fulfil his promise it shall not be violated, and if he can guide you safe through all to heaven,

"The weakest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way."

He keepeth Israel ; the keeping of them is a matter of importance. God cannot fulfil his promises without your life. Do I say strong things? I repeat it—he cannot fulfil his promises or verify his word without your glorification. Has he not made promises concerning your future perfection

and glory, then should you stop, or die short of heaven, or be destroyed before you reach that glory-world, what would be thought of the faithfulness, the wisdom, and power of God? A sheep dead outside the fold! A son dead outside the heavenly home! No. That has never happened. Every sheep shall reach the pasture and the fold, and every child shall reach its Father's house on high. You know if the chrysalis is not preserved there will be no future moth. Its daily preservation is absolutely necessary to the appearance of the moth or butterfly. If you do not preserve the babe, there will be no man or woman, and if you do not preserve the plant in the earlier stages of its growth, you will have no flowers in the summer: so if God should not preserve us while in our present chrysalis condition, but permit the foot or hand of an enemy to crush us, he would be disappointed; for the promised and expected full development could not take place. "Therefore, the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in."

Thirdly, *the nature of this preservation*. First, the Preserver; and secondly, the preserved; and thirdly, its nature. I have already said that God does not imprison his saints as it were for the purpose of keeping them in safety. His methods are evermore worthy of himself. The first, and perhaps, the only thing, I shall have time to mention is the fact that *God is everywhere supreme; therefore he is so in the affections and estimation of his people, and will maintain his supremacy therein*. Sometimes we see the observation in print, or hear it from the lips of men,—“The ruling passion is strong in death,” and there is a ruling power and feeling in the heart of a Christian, in the mind of the true believer. The state and condition of the mind of a person is determined by that which rules it. If the Master and Ruler of your mind is Christ, and the everlasting Jehovah reigns supreme within, your state and condition are thereby determined; and believing hope and love will be strong through life and in death: Christ will be all for ever and ever. He that holds the mind, keeps and preserves it for himself: if the devil holds it, he keeps it for himself; but if God holds the heart, he preserves it for himself, and its destination is glory. God enters the soul, and exalts himself therein, taking the highest seat in the mind; and if he can keep that seat, then he will preserve his own abode for ever; but if an enemy should ever present counter charms more powerful than those which God presents, or exercise a stronger influence than he exercises upon the mind, then Divine preservation would cease, and moral destruction would follow; but we have faith in our ruling and reigning God. His we are—and hope to be all the days of our life, and in him we pray to be found for ever. So long as we can say sincerely, “Thou art to us the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, so long shall we be preserved and kept. Oh! blessed be his name, we shall never see anything in his person but what will be lovely, amiable, attractive, and glorious. We shall never discover anything in him that is repulsive, or that has a tendency to check our fervency or cool our affections. I believe that Jesus will hold our hearts and secure our affections for ever, and if so we shall be preserved in our going out and coming in from this time forth even for evermore. You see it is all reducible again to one great fact, which is love. Love is the mighty power that reigns and prevails everywhere in the kingdom of the Lord of life and glory. Then further, with regard to keeping and preserving, *our Lord employs angels*. “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?” The King's children are on their way to the palace, to their royal Father's house, and they are passing through, not as is sometimes said—“an enemy's country”—there are enemies in it; but the country itself is not their property, but the Lord's: for “The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;” therefore the royal children of heaven are going

through Immanuel's land—the territories of their royal Father. But there are many enemies, dangers, traps, and snares therein ; consequently, being related to the Lord of glory, the travellers are conveyed from point to point, and from place to place by an invisible Hand. (I am not enthusiastic. I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not ; for surely the Bible is true.) Are they not *all* ? *All*—How many are there ? I do not know. But are they not *all* ministering spirits sent forth to minister ? Well, then, observe how you are attended, and surrounded by the angels of your heavenly Father, and your royal bridegroom, Christ. Christ takes your affections to himself, and holds them, and then sends the angels of his power to guard and protect you from place to place, and for aught I know—indeed I please myself with the thought, that some of them are here to-night. “A woman,” says the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian church, “ought to be covered, because of the angels ; which seems to mean that angels are in God's presence with the saints. I will not say they worship with us ; but since the manifold wisdom of God is known to principalities and powers by or through the church, I am not sure but that angels may learn something even from our services in the sanctuary : “which things the angels desire to look into.” And some of the mysteries of salvation they may learn in connection with the worship of the saints ? Friends, everything in the kingdom of Jesus Christ is mutually beneficial, and therefore the advantages are not all on one side—they are mutual, and the angels are profited with us ; for they learn more and still more of the grace and glory of their God, by attending the heirs of salvation from place to place.

Again, *observe the special arrangements of Divine Providence* to preserve our going out and our coming in. We cannot watch the operations of Providence without seeing the wonder-working hand of God. How marvellously strong is that influence that controls all contingencies, uncertainties, and casual matters, as we express ourselves ? Are they controlled by chance or fortune, and not by a powerful and purposing God ? Away with all that infidelity ; for all those strange circumstances, and events are controlled by an influence which is Divine, and seemingly contradictory events of Providence are connected together as the links of a chain. I have sometimes said that a circumstance that transpired ten or fifteen years ago seems to lie by itself, and we think of it, and wonder why it ever occurred, but after the lapse of those years another circumstance arises which is very peculiar, and somehow or other it connects itself with that which is fifteen years old, and we say, we now see that there was a need be for that peculiar dispensation. My dear friends, “whoso is wise and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.” All the operatives of Providence are intended by God to have an influence upon your preservation and perseverance. “O that we had a stronger faith !” Your preacher is a weak believer. His faith being very shallow and feeble. I mean it is so experimentally and vitally. In the doctrines of Divine grace I believe my faith is strong. You say, “You should live up to your privileges, sir. It is your duty to do so.” Would I not live up to them if I could ? It is my privilege to be saved by God's love, and kept by his mighty power ; but he knows how my heart palpitates, although I lie in his arms, and how I tremble, although I lean on his bosom. You have had your child leaning against your breast, and have felt its heart beat when it has been agitated by fear. So it is with the child of God. We thank our God that we have his bosom, and that whilst we shake on him he never shakes beneath us, “He that keepeth Israel.” This is the nature of the preservation.

Fourthly *the extent of it*. “He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in.” It means that the child of God shall be preserved in all his ways, at all times, and on all occasions. There is his way with the world, his way with the family, his

way with the church, and his way with God. We have a way of doing business with God, and with one another, and with the world, and with the church; and there are dangers, difficulties, and traps, in every one of them, sometimes even in the way in which we have to do with God himself. I mean the way of worship. God shall have respect to you in all your ways, and preserve your going out and coming in. But there are two leading ideas which I cannot refrain from presenting to you. The first is that of a *pilgrimage*, and the second is that of a *warfare*. A *pilgrim* starting on the road, and reaching his journey's end. He shall preserve thy going out. Twenty, thirty, or forty years ago, you set out for heaven—you left Egypt, and entered the wilderness, bound for Canaan. The Lord's eye was then upon you, and has been upon you ever since. He preserved thy going out, and he will preserve thy coming in also. Your Preserver is in heaven, and is waiting for your arrival; and as he was with you when you started, and has been with you until now, he will be with you when heart and flesh shall fail, and will conduct you in safety into your everlasting home. Secondly, the idea of a *warfare*. The Lord shall preserve thy going out to fight. He shall be with thee in the field of conflict, and help thee to fight, and give thee the victory; and when thou shalt return from scenes of battle, conflict, and death, he will return with thee, and thou shalt enter heaven as a victor and conqueror. Or we might say that we leave the shores of the world for heaven; go across the sea of trial, trouble, and conflict, where storms and tempests rage, and our fears are great. The opposite shore, however, shall be reached, and we shall enter into the harbour of eternal peace. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in—thy going out in the new birth, and thy coming in in glorification. Thy going out as a babe in early life and thy coming into perfection in a good old age, when the weeks, months, years, and trials of time are over.

*Fifthly, the perpetuity of it*—"from this time forth, and *even for evermore*." From the commencement to the end. This involves, of course, our *passage through death*, and all its solemn wonders. He will preserve us then. O that we all could now triumphantly believe it! Well, we hope to do so at last. And it includes our entrance, and an abundant one, into his everlasting kingdom and glory. Do not talk, my friends, as I have heard some persons, about creeping into heaven, as if you will then be ashamed, and blush as if entering a strange place, and going among strangers. Do not talk thus. You have a right to that world, being God's own child, and surely a child does not blush to see its father, nor does it creep before him when conscious of its righteousness. And we shall enter heaven as God's dear children, conscious of our purity and justification, and go up to our thrones with boldness, as persons that have been most honourably saved, preserved, and kept by God.

Had time permitted, I would have added another thought, or enlarged upon another point—viz., "the *certainty* of all this; "the Lord *shall* preserve." You see the text is very full. Not *offer* preserving grace, but he shall preserve thee. I wish offered grace and uncertain salvation were cast away from off the face of the earth. Well, he will not offer keeping grace but, give it. He *shall* preserve thy going out and thy coming in. Ah! but what if we lose the desire? Well, should we lose our spiritual desires, the text will not be fulfilled; for that which is lost is not preserved. No, he will preserve the desire; he will preserve the hope; he will preserve the prayer; he will preserve religion; he will preserve internal grace; he will preserve us wholly unto his heavenly kingdom. God grant that this may be our experience, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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# BACKSLIDING ISRAEL.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 21st FEBRUARY, 1875.

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*“My people are bent to backsliding from me.”—Hosea xi. 7.*

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ONE of the most remarkable facts in the history of the children of Israel was their proneness to idolatry. They were continually departing from their God, and forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which could hold no water. This fact, we say, was most remarkable, because they were delivered out of Egypt by the high hand and outstretched arm of God, who appeared in a visible form when he fulfilled his promise, and saved them from bondage. No man has seen God at any time; nevertheless, there was a visible symbol of the Divine presence when Israel left Egypt. A mysterious cloud appeared, which was the outstretched arm of their great delivering God; and it is said that when the Egyptians seemed to be gaining upon Israel in the Red Sea, the cloud went from before the children of Israel, and entered between them and the Egyptians; and that the Lord looked out of the cloud, and took off their chariot-wheels, and caused them to drive heavily. Thus, the children of Israel were miraculously protected by the high hand of their Divine deliverer. The sea was parted for them, and they were led in safety through the deep on dry ground. The pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, preceded them in and through the wilderness. Then God came down on Sinai to connect himself with them as their Lawgiver and King; and while they were under the shadow of that mount, and heard the thunder and saw the lightnings which proclaimed the presence of Jehovah, Aaron actually made a golden calf, and the people fell down and worshipped it. The Lord, however, remained with them. His love and kindness were constant and perpetual; and having, for forty years, led them in the wilderness, he conducted them by the same visible hand into the land of Canaan. The original inhabitants of that land were destroyed, and Israel took possession thereof, according to the promise of their God.

After the death of Joshua, Israel frequently fell into idolatry, and judges were raised up again and again to save them from their oppressors, and re-establish Divine worship; and as those good men died, the people invariably departed from the living and true God. In the reign of David the people did not fall down before idols, but in Solomon's time they fell again, and even Solomon himself departed from the God of his father David, and went after Ashtaroth and Milcom, the deities of Zidon and Ammon. The people were so bent to backsliding, that God eventually said—“Be astonished, O ye heavens, and be horribly afraid, for my people have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water:” and this ingratitude of Israel is enlarged upon in the chapter out of which I have taken my text.

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called him my son out of Egypt ; as they called them so they went from them. They sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms ; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." Notwithstanding all these marks and evidences of mercy and lovingkindness, the people went from their God, departed from their Deliverer, and became worshippers of Baal again and again ; and the result was the dispersion of ten tribes, and the seventy years' captivity of two in Babylon. Thus God cleansed his land, and cured the two tribes of idolatry, for, after their return from the Babylonish captivity, the worship of idols was finally abandoned.

Let us leave the fact that idolatry was the besetting sin of Israel according to the flesh, and look at the text in connection with our own experience. I do not know why I have been directed to this subject this morning, it is a little out of my usual course. However, the words have been laid upon my mind, and I have brought them to you as my text, and I will make a few observations upon them, taking a two-fold view of the subject.

*Let us first look at the fact itself, as announced by God—"My people are bent to backsliding from me ;" and, in the second place, let us point out God's conduct towards his people, in relation to this fact, that they are bent to backsliding from their God.*

First, we will make a few observations on the fact asserted—"My people are bent to backsliding from me." Every word in my text is very weighty and full, and, therefore, unspeakably important. "*My people*"—notwithstanding that they are my people, that I am their God, that I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, that I took off the yoke on their jaws, and laid meat unto them, notwithstanding all this—"they are bent to backsliding from me."

*Backsliding* is first of the *heart*, and then of the *feet*. How many are there in the house of God this morning that have not backslidden in heart from God ? Is there one saint present, who can say—"My heart has never backslidden from my God ?" Why, methinks, if one made such an assertion, and it were true, the text would scarcely be applicable to him—"My people *are bent* to backsliding from me." Heart-backsliding is followed, I am quite sure, by tokens of Divine disapprobation and displeasure ; but it is a mercy, if, when the heart departs from God, power divine keeps the feet. We are conscious of the fact that our hearts are prone to depart from God, and to fall from their own stedfastness ; but if our *feet* are kept, and our reputation and character are preserved, we are debtors to God's keeping grace. It is an unspeakable evil when the heart departs from God ; but when the feet, the tongue, and the eyes follow the heart, and one becomes an open backslider from his saving and covenant God, the evil is increased, for it blots the cause of God. "Why," you say, "the sin is not greater !" My beloved friends, if you and I have been taught by God, and our consciences have been made soft and tender, we have very strong feelings in relation to the honour of religion, God's cause, and eternal truth. Oh that God would always so keep our hearts, that they might never leave him ; but since we are conscious of the fact that we are bent to backslide from him, be it our prayer that he would hold us up, guard our reputation, and preserve

our character, that we may never take a course or step that would cause the enemies of truth to blaspheme.

One may do a great deal of harm to the cause of God by his outward walk and conversation ; and therefore, I do not like to hear people speak flippantly of them. I believe that if the heart is right, a child of God will be zealous of good works, and wish to walk so as to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things.

And then the word “bent” here is a very significant word. “My people are *bent* to backsliding from me.” There is an abiding propensity in them to backslide from me. It seems, therefore, and let my young friends particularly bear this in mind, that backsliding is easy work. One may easily slide back, and easily fall, and pursue a course of conduct that will do more damage than a long life can repair, while the soul will be so wounded that nothing but the balmy blood of the Lord Jesus Christ can heal it again. I can backslide, but I cannot restore myself. I can do mischief ; but, having done it, I cannot undo it. I can make work for repentance, but cannot give myself that grace ; and hence the word says they are *bent* to backslide from me.

Before we enter into the subject let us mention an important difference and distinction. It is always important, beloved friends, to distinguish between backsliding and final apostasy. Every backslider from God does not become a final apostate. David was a backslider, but not an apostate ; and Peter was a backslider from Jesus Christ for a time, but not an apostate. Therefore, let us distinguish between a backslider from God and a final apostate. My people are bent to *backsliding* from me.

What is a hypocrite ? An apostate in the bud. And what is a final apostate ? A hypocrite full blown and ripe. A hypocrite is an habitual worker of iniquity under a cloak. Living and dying in that state he will sink into perdition. He is not a backslider, having never been near to God. Now let us look at the subject somewhat experimentally, for it is an experimental subject. A backslider implies one who was previously in a state of nearness to God. That, I think, is a very clear and obvious fact. A backsliding state implies a prior state of nearness to God. If I have not been near to, or a follower of God, I cannot have backslidden from him. I think that cannot be denied. And how is a child of God brought near to God ?—I am now speaking of one that was formerly near to God. *In conviction* he said—“Oh, Lord, I am a sinner !” Grace took him into God’s presence, and caused him to bow the knee of prayer before God’s throne, and convinced him of sin in the light of God’s countenance ; and he who is now a backslider, was five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago solemnly convinced of sin, and trembled beneath the eye of a holy and heart-searching God. Not only was he solemnly convinced of sin, he was then seen upon the knee pouring out his feelings before God’s throne, saying—“God be merciful to me a sinner.” There was life then in his heart, and vitality in his convictions. Further, he was taken near to God in holy fellowship and communion with him. Then, perhaps, God blessed him with a sense of pardoning love, rolled the burden of guilt from his soul, led him into the sweet enjoyment of Gospel liberty, showed him he was his child, and that Jesus died for him. Let me dwell for a minute or two here.

The kind of backslider that I am referring to is an individual, who, some few months or years ago, was in that blessed state which we designate as one’s “first love.” Let us look back at the time when we first loved Jesus

for the sake of his own dear person and precious blood, and realised the fact that we were in him. Had any one spoken to us then of backsliding from God we might have been angry, for we could not have been induced to believe that backsliding from God would ever be possible to us. Our hearts were enlarged, and full of spiritual life and vigour. Our affections were warm and strong, and we were near to the dear Redeemer. The world had no charms for us, and no influence whatever upon us. We could see its vanities then, without being at all influenced by them. We could see worldly objects at that time which did not stir a single sympathetic thought in our minds, for our eyes and hearts were filled with the beauties of Jesus, and we sang—

“Let worldly minds the world pursue,  
Earth has no charms for us.”

Then, I say, we should have repudiated the idea of a possible backsliding from Christ. Yet, even then, the propensity to backsliding was within; and the deceitfulness of the heart, though unfelt, was great. Well, that happy state of things gradually passed away, and almost imperceptibly so—if one may speak for others—for one cannot tell how. But, almost imperceptibly, the affections became chilled, and the heart began to contract. That holy fervour of mind which characterised us for weeks or months, left us, and prayer to God was restrained; intercourse with God was interrupted and suspended; and our prayers were devoid of feeling. The heart then grew gradually hard, the conscience became gradually callous, and we were found by the devil and the world following Christ, if following at all, afar off, and exhibiting as little difference as possible from the world by which we were surrounded. Yes, Christian friends, the backslider is one who formerly was near to God, but is now under the influence of corruptions; and he would, if it were not for unchangeable grace, slide back farther and farther until he dropped into eternal perdition; but our God says (see 8th verse)—“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together.” Is Ephraim my dear child? Is he my son? Shall I dissolve the relationship that exists between him and me? No, he says—“I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man.” A child may depart from his father, the father will still love his boy, albeit he hates his conduct. The sinner saved may depart from his Saviour, his Saviour will never lose sight of him; and there may be a want of spiritual life or feeling in one’s soul, God will not finally leave the objects of his love. He will bring them back, as I will try to show you presently. Well, the first thing noticeable here is the fact that he who is a backslider was formerly in a state of nearness to God.

Then, in the second place, let us notice *that every child has two natures, or principles, or powers, in constant operation within*. I know that this is denied in certain quarters, but we cannot deny it here. If I were the only person that preached this doctrine, I believe I should be obliged to continue to preach it, notwithstanding that I was alone in the matter; for I am obliged to speak according to my own experience in connection with the Bible declaration, that “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would.”

The great Apostle Paul says—"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." There may be, for aught I know, and I will speak as tenderly as I can, good people who will go to heaven and live there for ever, who now fancy there is no sin in their flesh. I leave them where they are. If there are such persons they are a great deal better than others, and grace has done more for them than for many. I feel that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing; and that while I hope there is grace within, I feel that grace is not perfect in its measure, degree, and operation. I do not believe a child of God is thoroughly, universally, and completely holy here. If you tell me you have no unhallowed thoughts, no irregular passions, and no breathings of the old serpent upon a certain traitor that is within, then I think you ought to be in heaven with the spirits of just men made perfect; for I am sure I cannot preach to your profit. If there be such persons in the house of God this morning, let them know that God has said—"My people are bent to backsliding from me." O Lord, we must believe thy word! Well, the bias of their minds is that way—they are bent upon backsliding; and if such be the propensity of the child of God, then no child of God is completely sanctified here. No, my friends; we experience the prevalence of sin and corruption. The heart is dragged down, even while on the knee of prayer. You go into your closet and wish for five minutes with God, and, perhaps, you get near to the throne, and talk humbly and confidently with your Heavenly Father; but in a minute all holy thoughts drop down, all the heavenly feelings of the mind depart, and you are in Australia, or New Zealand, or your shop, or in some other place.

My dear friends, there are two antagonistic powers or principles within. The old man has lost none of his members. He is within. All his sinful and unclean parts are there, and he will, if grace prevent not, prevail and much spiritual mischief will follow. He is a traitor, in alliance with the powers of darkness; but, blessed be God, there is another power or principle, another life within. I mean, the principle of grace—the life of God in the soul, and that is in alliance with God and heaven. Whilst these two antagonistic powers are within, there will be a constant warfare. Sometimes the heart will backslide from God, and then, again, the spirit will be in a state of blessed nearness to God; and hence Watts sings—

"Water and fire maintain the fight,  
Until the weaker dies."

Brother, it appears to be the will of God that this conflict should be a life-long one. Without it, half the Bible would be an unmeaning mystery; we could not understand half the statements of our God; while, with respect to the ideas of victory, triumph, and conquest, they would have no meaning at all. But there is a field of battle, and the battle is between two antagonistic powers, both wrestling and struggling within; but grace shall finally get the victory; for grace shall reign unto eternal life.

Taking this view of the subject, we can understand the word of Divine truth. But let us pass on. There are two principles within; but there is a third idea—*past experience is not sufficient to prevent backsliding.*

What was the experience of that Israel that departed from God, who had appeared for them? God said they had departed from him, notwithstanding all they had received from him. I would say to my young

friends, Be careful here. Thank God for his former visits and mercies. Bless his name for them, but do not rest upon them, nor allow yourselves to confide in them.

“I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on his dear name.”

We carry with us into a backsliding state the memory of numerous mercies ; and a hundred marvellous impressions are upon our hearts when we backslide from the Lord. The impressions of grace upon the heart are not easily effaced. I do not think the memory of the past can be entirely lost in a backsliding state. It will pain the backslider, prick him, and render him truly miserable at times, for he cannot utterly lose it. Those impressions are as a fire within ; and in spite of his determination, if he has gone so far, to gratify his feelings, and live, if possible, in sin, there is the consciousness that he has been near to God. The impressions of former mercies are upon his spirit ; and, not having lost all his sensitiveness, he is an unhappy man. He laughs, but is not merry ; he jokes, but his spirit is pained and pierced ; he is in unholy company, but thinks of what he has been, and where he has been ; the impressions of his heart have not been effaced, and never shall be ; and, therefore, past experience, though holy, is not sufficient to prevent backsliding from God. All the sights we have seen, all the sweet sense of love we have had, and all the mercies we have received, are broken through, and the favoured one backslides from his God. Hence the prayer—“Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” “When I said, my feet slipped,”—for I was conscious of it—“thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.” Therefore, past experience, though we are thankful for it, and it fulfils a very important purpose, is not sufficient of itself to save from falling.

Lastly,—my text is so formed that it leads us to consider another fact, and that is, *there is no exception*. My people are, without exception, bent to backsliding from me. Not one ? No, not one may be excepted, if we are to take the words as they stand before us. My *people*. Whether it be King David on the throne, or the obscurest Israelite in the land ; whether it be the impulsive, earnest, and warm-hearted Peter, or some obscure, distant, and unknown saint of God, my people are bent to backsliding from me. We will cease to talk about the impossibility of backsliding, when we get into a better world. It will not be possible there, but it is solemnly possible here ; therefore, if he, whose we are, should suspend his blessing, and withhold that influence which is necessary to keep us from falling, there is no sin but what we might commit. Such is the vileness of our nature, that, unkept and unsustained by God, we shall fall and depart from God. “He that trusts to his own heart is a fool.”

There is only one being, one power, that can save, and that is the Speaker of the text—“My people are bent to backsliding from me.” I had some other thoughts upon this point, but the time is gone, and I want to say something—secondly—upon *God's conduct in relation to this fact*. I do not like to confine my attention to the dark side of the subject, therefore let us look at its bright side. *God's conduct in relation to this fact*. First—God's conduct in relation to the propensity itself. “They are bent to backsliding from me.” Then, Lord, what wilt thou do in that case ? “Well, I will do all my pleasure, in relation to the fact that they are prone to leave me.” What is to be done ? Canst thou accept the offerings of a being who is bent upon backsliding from

thee? Can he be approved by thee? Dost thou rest in thy love to an individual whose heart is so hard, that, without Divine influence, it will leave thee? Canst thou rest in thy love towards such an one? Yes. What is the arrangement of God?

“ Since, therefore, I can scarcely bear  
What, in myself, I see,  
How vile and black must I appear,  
Most holy God, to thee.

“ But since my Saviour stands between,  
In garments dyed in blood,  
’Tis he, instead of me, is seen,  
When I approach to God.”

Prone to wander, and that proneness strong, vile, and incessant—Lord, I feel it—can I be a child of God, and approved of Heaven? There is a Mediator standing between that person, and his God. Christ is the medium through whom the Father sees the man or woman who is prone to wander and backslide. I have said on other occasions, but I do not know whether you have accepted the illustration or not, an object seen through a medium appears to have the colour of the medium through which it is seen. Thus, if you look at an object through a medium that is green, the object seen appears to be green; and God has placed his dear Son between his eye and the poor sinner, and says—“I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither have I seen perverseness in Israel.”

I want you to bear in mind that I have only touched on this form of the subject—God’s conduct in relation to the propensity itself.

Now—secondly—*God’s conduct in relation to the act of backsliding.* All are prone to it; all may not actually backslide—at least, not outwardly, but all are prone to backslide, and all have a bias that way. All are not like David, but all would fall if placed in circumstances of strong temptation, and Divine influence were suspended, as was the case with him. All are not like Peter: but let us look at the act of backsliding from God. What is his conduct in relation to the act?

A loose professor—a loosely-living person—comes to me, and says—“Oh, I did enjoy that sermon! The doctrine of Divine grace was meat and drink to my soul.” If I know him to be living in sin, I answer—“I do not believe you, sir.” He says—“Oh, I had a blessed visit from my God at such and such a time!” I reply—“I do not believe it.” He adds—“My Heavenly Father looks upon me, and smiles, and grants me tokens of his love.” I rejoin—“I do not believe you; for I do not believe God smiles upon his children, and visits them with comforting tokens of his love, and fills their hearts with hallowed and heavenly peace when they are in a backsliding state from him. He changes his hand and his conduct, though he does not change his heart. He does not cut off a child he has loved, and send him into perdition, but he hides his face from him.

Let us read in this same book (second chapter and sixth verse)—“Therefore, behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.” This is God’s conduct towards a backslider. “I will make a wall that she shall not find her paths; and she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them. Then shall she say—I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now.” And what does the Lord proceed to say (see 14th verse)?—“I

will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her." Now here, my dear friends, we have God's conduct towards the backslider, when he is actually in a backsliding state. He visits him, sooner or later, with tokens of his displeasure, and most certainly he cuts off the light of his countenance from him, for I cannot believe that the backslider realizes the light of the Divine countenance as he does that lives near to God.

Then, sooner or later, he hedges up his way with thorns, makes the path rough, sends some terrible chastising stroke upon him, stops him, and builds a wall round about him, as in the portion I have read, and renders it absolutely impossible for him to find pleasure, peace, comfort, or gratification in his state. This brings me to notice the invitation, when he has brought him into that condition, and broken his heart, and his spirit is full of bitterness, woe, misery, and wretchedness, and the individual is loathing and abasing himself for his backsliding from God, then, sooner or later, the Lord says—"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings;" and sooner or later, the backslider is brought back again. At Calvary he sees a dying Christ, and his backslidings he sees also in the light of Christ's sufferings, and how repulsive they appear, while every backsliding step is seen to have drawn down curses upon the suffering Son of God! Why, here the words of the repenting one are at once bitter and sweet :—

"Was it for crimes that I had done,  
He groaned upon the tree?  
Amazing pity, grace unknown,  
And love beyond degree!"

The sinner is blessed, and sin is cursed on his dying Lord, and that twofold fact enters the soul most deeply, and produces humbleness of spirit before his forgiving God. And let us remark further upon this humility. The sinner whom God has called, but who has backslidden from him, and been restored to his presence and smiles, will be truly humble. He will go softly all his days, and not stride up to the top of the chapel to be seen by all, but take one of the first pews in the place. I am speaking advisedly, and from a knowledge that I have of facts. Such a person will go softly all the days of his life; and although this mode of expression has been objected to, he will carry the scar with him to the grave. You will find him among the children, but you will find him lowly and humble. He will never forget what he was, and what he was doing when the Lord met with him the second time, for the purpose of breaking his heart and restoring him to his smiles, and presence, and church.

Lastly, then, in relation to the riches of Divine grace. All are bent upon and prone to backslide; and one says—"I fell, but my God restored me. Wonders of grace belong to him!" Another says—"I was nearly gone, but the Lord prevented me;" and another says—"I did not fall, but I was bent upon it; and had it not been for restraining grace, I should have been as others;" and, consequently, friends, one has not a stone to throw at another, and all sing—"Oh to grace what debtors are all the children of God!" No one knows what he would do, if he were brought into certain circumstances, and left to himself; and, therefore "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We need an every-day salvation, and the Saviour always near, otherwise we cannot stand. May God give his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.