

THE LORD A FRIEND IN NEED.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 29th SEPTEMBER, 1878.

"The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down."—Psa. cxlvi. 8.

DAVID was blessed with a large measure of the Spirit of God when he penned this important and comprehensive portion of the Word. He was the king of Israel ; but his heart was filled with grace, and his circumstances, when this psalm was penned, were comparatively easy and smooth ; and, having believing views of the greatness and glory of his saving God, he said, "Praise ye the Lord ! Praise the Lord, O my soul ! While I live will I praise the Lord. I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." The psalmist did not always speak in this way, nor always write in this sweet and lofty strain. Sometimes his heart was filled with sorrow, and his spirit almost crushed. Occasionally the enemy smote his life down to the ground, and he "found trouble and sorrow." The light of God's countenance, however, was now shining upon him, and being near to heaven, some of the glory of that world fell upon his saved spirit, and he resolved to bless and praise the Lord his God as long as he had any being. He was quite confident that the Lord would always be worthy of his trust and his praises, and therefore he says, "Whilst I live on the earth I will praise Him ; and when I am in heaven, living in another state, then I will praise His name for ever. Although he was king of Israel, yet he said—"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. Had it been proper for creatures to put their trust in princes, it certainly might have been right for Israel to put confidence in their great king David ; for he had done much for the nation. God had very abundantly and visibly blessed him, and he was one of the best men then on the earth ; nevertheless, David said, "Put not your trust in princes, and therefore put not your trust in me." The kings of the nations which surrounded Israel were considered as heroes ; and having been victorious in battle, and conquered many people, and annexed their countries to their own, they were frequently deified, and their subjects put their trust in them. David, however, says—"Put not your trust in princes ; for, however high their thrones may be ; however bright their crowns may be ; whatever battles they may have fought, and whatever victories they may have won ; whatever their character, moral or spiritual, may be, they are but men. The circumstance of royalty attaches to them—nevertheless they are only men, and there is no help in them. "Man's breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth ; and in that very day his thoughts perish:" and, therefore, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." The great God of heaven and earth has constituted himself the God of Jacob, and he is therefore resolved and engaged to help him ; and happy is the man who has an interest in him, for he

VOL. II., No. 19.—NOVEMBER 15, 1878.

shall be favoured with that Divine help which he needs from day to day. And having spoken of the Lord as the God of Jacob, and as the object of the believer's hope, he proceeds to give us a comprehensive description of his character. First: the God of Jacob is the Maker of all—"which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is;" secondly: he is eternally faithful, for "he keepeth truth for ever;" thirdly: he pleads the cause of the oppressed, "for he executeth judgment for the oppressed;" fourthly: he is a bountiful benefactor, "for he giveth food to the hungry;" fifthly: he is a great deliverer, for "the Lord looseth the prisoners;" sixthly: he is the illuminator of the immortal mind, for "the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind;" and, lastly, to mention no more, as our text informs us, "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down," and "loveth the righteous."

I will now endeavour to make a few remarks on this divine and merciful operation of the God of Jacob. Let us, first, look at *what the text implies*, and, secondly, at *the great fact it expresses*.

I. In the first place, let us contemplate *some things implied* in the text. Read it again: "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down." Now this implies much, which we will consider, if the Lord will give us help and power to dwell upon it for a few minutes. In the first place, I observe that *sorrow fulfils a very great purpose in the government of the Lord our God*. This is a fact which, if one may speak for others, we are prone to lose sight of. We are willing to believe that grace and mercy, and other attributes and perfections of God, by their agreeable operations fulfil mighty purposes in the reign and rule of God; but we are now to speak on sorrow, and, as I understand the matter, it is important that we should start with the fact that sorrow and distress fulfil great purposes in the government of our heavenly Father. "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down." Have you, my friends, thought of the fact that God has now as much to do with sorrow as he has with joy? as much to do with pain as he has with pleasure? as much to do with darkness as he has with light? as much to do with death as he has with life? and as much to do with enemies (at least for the present time) as he has with his friends? God keeps his eye on both extremes, and on both conditions. He watches the sorrow and the joy—the deep pit and the high mountain. He keeps his eye upon those that are bowed down with grief on earth, as he does upon those happy minds which are now before his throne, singing his worthy and lofty praises without a tear. I repeat what I have said—perhaps for your information, certainly for your comfort—that our God has *now* as much to do with misery as he has with happiness; as much to do with trials, wants and dangers as he has with salvation. Imagine a most important point—a child of God going from regeneration to eternal glory without sorrow, disappointment, depression, or fainting and sinking of heart. Imagine such a state of things, and what would be the result? Consider it, first of all, in relation to the Word of God. The promises would be useless, or many of them absolutely superfluous without the state of things indicated in our text—the Lord's people are sometimes bowed down. Half the promises of God relate to affliction, sorrow, and tears, and without them much of the Bible would be unnecessary or a dead letter. Sorrow fits us for the Gospel; it endears the Word; it gives us a deep insight into its mysteries, for the deeper the sorrow, if the mind is favoured with heavenly light, the deeper the believer's soul penetrates into the revealed truth of the eternal God. I think I shall not be going out of my way if I make an observation concerning a beloved brother, who recently died, and went to heaven. He was a minister of a Baptist church in the country. During his last days he said, as I am informed, "The Lord is silent to me. I have been entreating him to apply some portion of his Word, to show me whether I shall die or live; and I can get nothing from him. No Scripture occurs to me, and no word

falls upon my heart. I said, 'Be not silent unto me, lest I become like them that go down into the pit.' My friends, I confess very frankly that I never saw so much meaning in those words before, and it does seem to me that a child of God must come into circumstances of sorrow in order to understand experimentally hundreds of portions of the Word of God, and therefore, having God's great promises that he will bless us in trial, we may conclude that it is his intention to lead his people through sorrow to their eternal rest on high; for otherwise his kind and comforting declarations could not be fulfilled to those that love his name.

But let us now pass on, and look at this subject in relation to *the person, offices, names, and fulness of God's beloved Son*. Beloved friends, if you were never bowed down, you would never want a whole Christ. If you were never bowed down, you would never want the fulness that is in him. If you were never bowed down in sorrow, you would never know the meaning of half the dear names by which he is known. He has assumed many precious and important names, which imply sorrow, grief and pain in his redeemed people. Those names would be mere ornaments to his person if there were no bowed-down ones to raise up, and no tears to wipe away. But there are tears to wipe away, and crooked, bowed-down minds to straighten; and faint and feeble saints to strengthen; and in order to assure them that he will supply, support, and save, Christ has taken significant names, and received a most important fulness. Those names shall come in contact with dejected souls, and that fulness shall meet the distressed and burdened minds of the children of God. Day by day, the saints shall have occasion for that which is in the names, titles, and offices of Christ; for in this way their acquaintance with him deepens and widens as years multiply and increase upon them. Hence the Word of God could not be fulfilled without the sorrows of God's people, and the fulness of Jesus Christ would have no receiving vessels without the pains and trials of those that are bowed down. Moreover, we read of the sympathy of our great Lord. I know that Christ's sympathy is twofold, for he sympathises with the joys of heaven as well as with the sorrows of earth, and with his people's pleasures here as well as with their pains. But why did he go into poverty, and acquaint himself with even all our sorrows? Why did he enter into temptation? Why was he himself bowed down? It appears to me that much of his affliction was really unnecessary and superfluous if it was not his intention to make himself experimentally acquainted with our sorrows, in order that he might be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He wept, and therefore he can sympathise with those that weep. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and therefore he can sympathise with those that are in sorrow, even with his people when they are bowed down. Perhaps, my brethren and sisters, God sometimes fulfils greater purposes by your disappointments and afflictions than by your pleasures and your joys. We would always rejoice in him. We would never be bowed down. It is not agreeable, but painful. We are ever endeavouring to avoid trouble, and to secure an easy and mossy path to walk in. But let us take a just and comprehensive view of the matter. God has purposes to accomplish, promises to fulfil, and his eternal Word to verify. This cannot be done without the sorrows and pains of his saved people; therefore, hell is permitted to bend the backs and to break the hearts of saints, in order that there may be occasions for God to heal wounds and raise those that are bowed down. My beloved friends, your sorrows are channels made by God, or permitted by him, in which he has prepared great grace to flow. You lose a wife—and the wound or channel made thereby is deep and long, and human sympathy flowing therein cannot fill it. We thank God for human and Christian sympathy, but it does not go far enough. You lose a child, and you are overtaken by other disappointments and afflictions, which form channels in

the house, and in and through the heart, which the sympathy of a father, a mother, a deacon, a minister—the whole church—cannot fill ; but when the sympathy of Christ, and the grace that is treasured up in him are set flowing into these channels of sorrow, the text is fulfilled : “The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down ;” and, therefore, sorrow is an important condition of things in the gracious, and even the providential, government of our God. I might tarry longer here, but perhaps this sorrowful subject is not particularly agreeable. I am not often dwelling on this theme, and had I never been in sorrow myself, I should not have dwelt upon it this morning.

Let us notice, in the next place, that the *great act here ascribed to the Lord is most important*. This is implied in the text ; for if the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down, be sure the act and its results are very important. Whatever the Lord does is great, and his operations in connection with grace are momentous ; and when he raises a bowed-down mind, the result is of the greatest consequence to himself ; to the devil, who hates his work ; to his angels, who glorify him for what he does ; and to the afflicted soul that is raised up. Look at him that is bowed down ; for though he is bowed down, yet he is a dear, an adopted, a regenerated child of God, and a member of the mystical body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven cannot be full without him. Christ, mystically considered, cannot be perfect without him. His name is in heaven ; his sins were upon the Saviour ; there is a mansion there for him—a crown and a throne awaiting his arrival there. It is not, perhaps, therefore, wonderful that the Lord should keep his eye upon him, and raise him when he is bowed down. And then, as to the act itself ; this also is important. To rectify a crooked mind—as the Lord straightened a crooked woman in the days of his flesh—to rectify a mind that is wrong ; to raise a bowed-down and an oppressed spirit ; to fill it with grace, and to exalt it into a new position, are acts most momentous in themselves. Go and perform such acts if you can. When a mind is bowed down, go with goodly words ; write a long, sympathetic letter ; spend a few hours with a bowed-down believer, that is almost crushed. He remains crooked. Speak tenderly to him, and let there be as much warmth and brotherly affection as possible in your utterances. You cannot straighten him. No ! this is God's work ; it is peculiar to Jehovah. He made the mind—he understands it—and he only can rectify, straighten, and exalt it ; and, therefore, the raising of a bowed-down mind by the hand of God is a most important act. And is not the result important ? One's darkness is turned to light, and one's night is turned into day ; one loses all his grief and sorrow, and his tears are wiped away—not by a cold or careless hand—but by the hand of his Father and his God ; and he who was bowed down, and whose heart was full of sorrow, now leaps for joy in the presence of his saving and delivering God. Therefore, the act itself is important.

It implies, thirdly, *the Saviour's dominion over the mind*. He is Lord of all, and therefore Lord of the mind that is burdened—Lord of the burden itself—and Lord of all those forces and powers that chain the soul and hold it fast ; and consequently he, and he only, can raise up him that is bowed down. A great deal has been flippantly said about the sorrows of God's people, and about giving our hearts to the Lord. Now Christ, and Christ only, is Lord of all human minds, and therefore not one can spiritually rectify itself. The Lord comes, and puts the hand of divine grace upon the heart, and brings it into connection with himself ; and when it is bowed down, whether it be by sin, by temptation, or by trouble, he only can place his everlasting hand and arm underneath it to sustain it. This I need not dwell upon, for I know I have affectionate friends present who have feelings of the warmest possible affection towards one another. I have heard some of you attempt, when beloved ones have been distressed, to place your words of comfort underneath their burdened spirits, and to insinuate consolation

between the soul and its load. But he who is Lord of all speaks, and it is done. His Word goes between the burden and the soul, and raises the former from the latter; and his everlasting arms underneath the sufferer raise him out of darkness, sorrow, and trouble. One says—"Surely, this was the Lord's doing. The grief was so deep that human powers could not have reached me, and the burden was so heavy that it required a God to sustain me beneath it, and then to remove it. It is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." It implies the universal and perfect dominion of Christ over minds, over burdens, and over hell. Jesus can give a buoyancy to the soul, and wings to soar; for "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and mount up with wings as eagles." What a contrast there is between our God and the world, and between the things of God and the things of the world! We have heard, with peculiar feelings, worldly persons give advice to their friends in trouble; and doctors to their patients in their sufferings. Sometimes, worldly persons may be heard to say—"You should visit some place of amusement a few times. Do not sit moping here in this melancholy state. The mind requires diversion. Spend a few evenings at the theatre—that will raise you up." Another says—"You are too much alone. Get into company—that will divert you; and you will lose your melancholy." Another says—"Try a little music;" and another suggests light reading, for light literature diverts the mind. Such is the advice of the world; but "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down," without the instrumentality of the theatre, of company, of music, or of light reading. A portion of the Old Bible which is sneered at by the ungodly, drops upon the oppressed spirit, and enters into it, and all is set right at once. "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down." We are not surprised that the world should be ignorant of the things of God, and yet there is some sort of impression in human nature that what my text states is a fact. I remember, when I was in the country, I visited, until she died, a good woman; and the last time I saw her, I met the doctor on the stairs, and he said, "It is you, Mr. Hazelton! I am glad you are come. She is dying, and will soon be gone; I can do no more for her. What she wants now, is to be somehow *soothed with a little religion*." I shall never forget it, but he did not understand these matters. He was considered an irreligious, though a very skillful, man. I saw her, and she had been "*soothed*" by the Lord, not with a "little"—but with a great deal—of religion. She died that night in holy and heavenly peace. "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down." On the bed of death, and within view of the deep wonders and solemnities thereof, the patient is not afraid to be told that he or she is dying. "Hush! hush!" one says, "pray do not tell him that he is in a precarious state. Keep that from him." Well, that is the policy of the world; and under certain circumstances, perhaps, it may be well to be exceedingly cautious in relation to those matters; but if the patient is a child of God, and the Lord has raised up his mind, he says—"I know what you are whispering about. You are saying that mine is a hopeless condition—that I have not much longer to live. The Lord be praised for it! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! 'The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down.'" The world comes and looks at the believer occasionally, when he is bowed down, and it passes on. Some come and look, and remain with us, but are perfectly helpless in relation to our trouble and trial, for, as we have already said, they cannot raise us up. But the Lord comes. He follows the minister, or the deacon, or some other visitor. The Lord comes, and—

"In darkest shades if he appear,
My dawning is begun:
He is my soul's sweet Morning Star,
And he my rising Sun."

We read sometimes about the law of compensation in nature and in providence. So rich, so unctions, so heavenly, so precious, are the blessings of our God, that it is worth our while to be sent into sorrow and trouble in order occasionally to receive them. I would, if I could, always bless the Lord for causing me to weep for the pleasure of having his own hand wipe away my tears. I would, if I could, bless him for wounding my heart, for the pleasure of subsequently feeling his own mercy heal the wound. Talk about compensations! We have them in grace, if we cannot always discover them in nature.

In the next place, the text expresses a great fact—"The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down." Now, here is a condition—a soul bowed down. This condition must have some special relation to heaven, and holiness, and Christ himself, because there are many persons that are bowed down, and in deep distress, whom he does not raise. There are many natural burdens, and sinful burdens, and slavish burdens, and legal burdens, which the Lord Jesus Christ has not pledged himself to help creatures under, and, therefore, the bowed-down here must have some relation to heaven and spiritual life, and to himself. The sinner that is living in sin, and dies therein, may be bowed down beneath the weight of the fears and terrors of a natural conscience. Christ is not pledged to help or to raise minds that are under the dominion of sin, and filled with slavish, natural, selfish, and sinful apprehensions; and therefore the text supposes that there is a measure—a spark of holy and heavenly life—in the hearts of the persons indicated. "He raiseth those that are bowed down." There are three things that tend to bow down the mind. There are many others, but I mention only three. First, sin; secondly, temptation; thirdly, trouble. In the first place: sin. When this is charged home upon the conscience by God himself, the person so dealt with says, "My sins are a burden too heavy for me to bear." How is that? Grace does not make him more sinful than he was. The light that comes from heaven does not increase his guilt. How is it that he now feels it so deeply? The sins that now lay upon him, and beneath which he groans, are the sins he had committed, and in which he had lived before light came into his mind. Now, however, he is unable to stand beneath their weight. Why, prior to his reception of grace, he lived in sin as in his element, and being surrounded thereby, he did not feel the weight that was upon him. Like as a diver, who goes down a considerable depth into the water—a great weight of which is then upon him—is unconscious of the fact, because he has water beneath and roundabout him; but take him out of the water, and place a large vessel full of it upon his head, and it will bow him down. Grace takes the sinner out of the dominion, and out of the love of sin. It ceases to be his element, and then, having it charged upon him, it bows him down, because he is in another element; and thus oppressed and distressed, he groans out his feelings, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Here the Saviour's words are appropriate and sweet—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then there are the temptations of the devil, and they bear down the mind. Sometimes we are tempted concerning our state; and when one loses his evidences, and cannot find his writings and title-deed, if I may so speak, and ceases to see his signs, he is bowed down and troubled. Sometimes we are tempted concerning the Bible. The diabolical thought enters and passes through the mind—and it must come from hell and be the offspring of Satan,—“Is it true?” and, perhaps, one has been forced a little further than that, and said, “Is there a God?” Can there be such thoughts in the mind of a true child of God? Yes, there are sometimes, and they bow him down. The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down. Then there is affliction and trouble—personal trouble, social trouble, a houseful of woe, and secular trouble. When you left your shops and business last night, you left a scene of confusion and trouble, and hoped it might not occur to your minds

to-day; but perhaps you are now bowed down by heavy secular burdens and trials. Then church troubles, and trouble coming from other sources oppress the mind and bow down the spirit. It seems to me, my friends, that the necessity of the act described in the text is impressed on nature itself. I will tell you what I mean. It seems to remain as an impression upon our very nature, that no being can raise a bowed down spirit but God himself. The impression is faint, and the thoughts of the mind, especially in sudden calamity, are very confused; nevertheless there is an impression of that kind upon the human soul. I have had thoughts very solemn, in relation to the *Princess Alice*—that unspeakably terrible catastrophe. I have wondered what were the thoughts of the hundreds of sinking souls when they saw nothing but death before them. Did they think about God? I should think they did, and perhaps their souls left their bodies filled with confused thoughts concerning the fact that there was only One Being in the universe that could then help and favour them: but I cannot go further here. There is an impression of this kind on the human conscience, and in sudden calamities it appears, and has a strong influence upon the mind. Hence, when persons are dying, anxiously they say, "Send for the minister. Let him come and read to me, and speak to me, and pray for me; for he knows the God I do not know; and the God I do not know is the only Being that can now help me. Send for him, perhaps I may gain some knowledge of that great Being through him; for the Lord only can raise them that are bowed down."

Now, lastly, how is this raising done? He does it by an application of himself. Is the mind bowed down by sin? He raiseth that burdened and oppressed mind by an application of his blood and atonement—"Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." I frequently quote those words because, as you are aware, they were the words that the Lord spoke to me when I was bowed down, and going as I feared to hell, and I shall never forget them; and, therefore, if it should occur to some of you that the preacher frequently uses them, bear in mind the fact that by them the Lord raised him out of darkness, guilt, and condemnation. By revelation. To see Jesus under our sin—not only as under sin, and bearing it; but under our own guilt, bearing the punishment that was due to us, and dying for us and in our room and stead; and then to see him rise, and to feel that we rose in and with him. Oh, this raises the mind, makes the crooked straight, and rectifies all that was wrong within. Thus Jesus raises the mind by his blood, and by giving one a faith's view of himself. He bids us look at himself, and the look makes us straight and causes us to walk uprightly. He raises us by the Word. The minister preaches the Word, and he gives his blessing with it; the burden then rolls off, and the mind of the favoured child of God is raised up. By the touch of his blessed Spirit, and in various other ways, he raises minds; and therefore, lastly, he favours us occasionally with a foreview of heaven.

"There is my home and portion fair,
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding place."

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, yet not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

You cannot see heaven as your home and be downcast. You cannot see Christ as your Lord and your Saviour and be bowed down. "He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off; and thou shalt meditate terror."

What terror? Terror behind you; terror which you are saved from, the terror of the wicked and into which you shall never sink, the terrors that surrounded the great Son of God, and which he swallowed up for your salvation. Thine eyes shall meditate terror, and then comes "the city of our solemnities," which is a quiet and enduring habitation. How beautifully all is put together by the Spirit of God! Well, into what state does he raise the people? Into a righteous one, into a holy one, into a state that is indisputably good. Whence came your joys? What is it that causes you so much pleasure? Are you not fanatical? No. Is it not dangerous to express in those forms so much pleasure and so much joy? There are good people that want to keep us down in the pit, in the dark, or in the valley. No; if he raises me, I will sing in spite of all opposers. If the Lord shines upon my mind, I will not doubt, I will not fear. Some good people seem to think that religion consists wholly and entirely in darkness and melancholy, and misery and woe. We are bowed down,—Heaven has resolved that we shall be bowed down, in order that Christ may glorify himself by raising us up. When he sets our feet upon the Rock, and establishes our going, we will sing a new song to his name. The Lord command his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

ERRATA.—In Sermon No. 18, p. 139, 17 lines from top, omit "not," and read, "and had Christ assumed," &c.; also on p. 142, 8 lines from bottom, for "inappropriately" read *appropriately*.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON DECEMBER 14TH.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

*. 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGE AND CHALLENGE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 20th OCTOBER, 1878.

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"—Rom. viii. 33.

THE covenant of grace is important to God and his church, and it is essential to heavenly consolation, if not to salvation, that every child of God should have clear and correct views of the different positions which are occupied by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost therein. There is a particular department in the economy of mercy which is occupied by the Father, another which is occupied by the Son, and another which is occupied by the Spirit of God; for the Father never steps out of his position into that of the Son, the Son never steps out of his office into that of the Father or the Spirit, and the Spirit never leaves his department for that of either the Father or the Son. There is beautiful order and harmony in the arrangements of grace; and a right knowledge of these facts seems to me to be essential to our growth in grace, and to our daily intercourse and fellowship with the Triune God of salvation. The work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is abundantly set forth by the Apostle Paul in this chapter. The Father is represented as choosing his people, as giving them his dear Son, as laying their sins upon him, as inflicting punishment upon him as their Substitute and Surety, as accepting the righteousness which he wrought out and brought in, and as for ever justifying all his people on the ground of that righteousness. The Son—the Lord Jesus—is represented as bearing imputed sin, as falling beneath the hand of God's punitive justice, and as going to the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. The Holy Spirit, and his quickening and sanctifying operations in the soul, are abundantly and sufficiently set forth in this most comprehensive portion of divine truth, which is, therefore, an epitome of the plan of salvation, or a divine and glorious abstract of the covenant of God's grace; or a full view of the grand operations of the Trinity in the past eternity, through all the ages of time, and as they shall be consummated in the eternity which is to come. The Apostle says, concerning the work of the Father, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things." When Paul was called by divine grace, very much was involved in that high and glorious act of God. The pharisee was thrown upon the earth, and he lay upon the ground, outside the walls of Damascus, weeping and saying—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was conducted into the city, laid upon a bed, and Ananias was sent to him; since he was a chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear his name among the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. The Apostle was very rapidly taught of God, having a very blessed view of the whole scheme of mercy, which probably took place in a few minutes; hence we find that, very

VOL. II., No. 20.—DECEMBER 14, 1878.

shortly after his conversion, he stood up among the people, preaching Christ and him crucified. In our subject this morning he seems to contemplate Jehovah on his throne, and the ransomed and justified church as gathered around him, while outside the church, he contemplates a world of enemies; and, standing up in the midst of justified millions, and before God's throne, he shouts as it were, so as to be heard by all—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all; therefore Christ's sacrifice is ours, all that his blood procured is ours; we are all covered with his righteousness; God has justified, acquitted, and accepted us, and avowed the fact that he eternally approves of us. And, therefore, addressing himself to every hostile power, in whatever form it may appear, he says—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It is God that justifieth.

Let us consider the text as it naturally divides itself: *The people indicated, and Their eternal perfection.* The people are God's elect, and their perfection is thus expressed: They are faultless, without blame, honourable, and for ever complete. "*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?*"

I. In the first place, a few observations on the *people indicated* in our text: and let me say at once that I shall make no critical observations this morning. I shall not attempt to go controversially into this high, sublime, and wondrous subject—"God's elect." You have frequently read the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, and the first chapter of the first Epistle of Peter, and also other portions of God's Word; and you have concluded, in common with thousands and millions of other persons, that God has a people whom he has loved with an everlasting love—that they are still in his heart, and will remain there for ever—and that this is owing to the fact that he is essentially unchangeable and eternal. I want, rather, to speak of the experience of this people, and come down as low as I possibly can, and try to trace election from their present state up to God's eternal love. Many of God's beloved ones stagger at this doctrine, or they stand so fast against it that one cannot move them, though they are filled with doubt and confusion. They would appropriate this, or take hold of that, or hope in a certain direction, if they knew they were the chosen of God. Well, beloved friends, let us attend to the word of truth for a few minutes, and attempt to trace to its source a little of the experience of those persons who are denominated the "elect of God."

I notice, in the first place, that *they are living ones.* God's elect on earth, who have been called by grace, are all of them spiritually living persons. Now, observe the connection between God's choice of his people and the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. What were they chosen to before the foundation of the world? Was it not to eternal life? It follows, therefore, that, sooner or later, they must possess eternal life; so that if you have the principle of divine and spiritual life in your hearts, you may rest quite satisfied with regard to election. The question, however, arises within. Is there life in our bosoms? Is that state of things which exists within a spiritual, a gracious state? If we could feel quite satisfied that ours was the spot of God's children, and that our experience was vital religion,

"Then might the great Archangel shout,
And the last trumpet sound."

But we have many doubts, fears, and apprehensions with regard to the genuineness of our godliness, and the spirituality of that which we hope is the life of God within. Well, let us observe, and perhaps we can get at the truth in this way, there are two or three signs of death, which you may try to apply to yourselves, and if, as they are mentioned, you find they are really descriptive of your state, then the inference will be that you are dead in sin, and have at present no ground whatever on which to conclude that you belong to the elect of God. It is a sure

sign of death when one is living in sin. But let us notice two or three points here. There are some who are living in sin, and have a deep and bitter hatred against everything that is holy and divine. You say, "That does not indicate our character." I thought it did not. You are not living in sin, and I know there are some who, though they have many doubts and fears, repel with indignation, and hatred deep and strong, the idea of hating holiness and everything that is heavenly and divine. Hate holiness! That is impossible to us; and as for living in sin, that surely is not our state. If to live in sin is to love it—to be under its rule and dominion, and to walk therein with pleasure—then we are not living therein; neither are we hating holiness and God. So far, then, it appears that you are not dead; and, as there is no neutral ground between death and life, let us confidently hope, and venture to say, that you are living persons. Then there is a second class of persons which we mention in connection with these signs of death, and they may be thus described: they are perfectly indifferent as to both sin and holiness; they do not care about either the one or the other. There are some who are avowed haters of God, and professed enemies to everything that is holy. Everyone knows that their mouths are full of evil, and that they roll it as sweetness under their tongues. Everyone may see that they are deep and bitter enemies to all that is holy and divine. But here is another class (I had almost said "less offensive," but, at all events, they are, so to speak, a quieter class of persons.) They are perfectly indifferent as to sin, and equally indifferent as to holiness. "Do not, say they, trouble us about either." Generally, they will request you not to trouble them with any of your thoughts about sin and holiness. "Leave us to ourselves. Sin does not concern us, and holiness has no charms for us—in fact, these matters never trouble us at all." Now, are you in this class, and one with those persons? Is sin nothing to you, and is holiness nothing to you? Again, you say—"Sin is something,—very much to us, and holiness is a matter that we can never regard with indifference, or with absence of feeling. If we have any sympathies, they are with holiness divine; and if we have any deep antipathies, they are against sin and unrighteousness, and moral evil." So far I think, my beloved hearer or hearers, you have been made alive from the dead. Well, now there is a third class, which I will just mention for the purpose of illustrating this subject. They have no sympathy whatever with the name of Jesus, with his person, nor with his work. They are not troubled about sin, nor are they deeply concerned about holiness; but, as for the name of Jesus, it is a dead name to them. There is no sympathy whatever in their spirits with him. Is there such a Person? They do not know and do not care. Well, there is such a person, and he may cease to exist; they do not care for that. He may change, and become something else; well, that is nothing whatever to them. But Christ is Christ to poor ruined sinners. They are perfectly unconcerned about, and indifferent to that also. Now, is this your state? Are these your feelings? Is there nothing in the dear name of Jesus that moves a feeling in your heart? Is there nothing in his blessed person that stirs a sympathy or sympathies in your bosom? Is it nothing to you that he was on the cross, and that he is now on the throne? "Unto you which believe, he is precious." My Christian friends, for you are Christians, you are not dead, but alive; you are alive to the nature of sin, and shrink from it; and alive to the nature of holiness, and sympathise with it. You are alive to the dear name of Jesus Christ, and can say before God that that name is to you as ointment poured forth.

And now another objection is urged, which I will just look at, and then pass on. You say, "We do not know when this life, if it be within, entered our hearts, and, unlike many of the people of God, we can give no time, and set forth no particular circumstances, which were instrumental in conveying the life of God to our souls." Now, beloved friends, there are two points here which are per-

fectly immaterial ; one thing only is material and essential, and that is eternal life in the heart. Never mind *how*, and never mind *when*, it came there—the date, the circumstances, or the manner, are perfectly immaterial ; because, if you have the life of God in your soul, God put it there, and therefore the time and the circumstances cannot be wrong. If God is the author of your life, and you really have his grace in your soul, the other matters are correct and proper. There is no condemnation to you. You really are, so far as I can trace your character, one of God's chosen people. I do not know why my mind has been directed in this course this morning. It is, as you know, somewhat unusual for me to go in this direction. When I take a doctrinal text, I usually treat it in a doctrinal manner ; but it was laid upon my mind to treat this part of our subject this morning in this experimental form. When God blesses us, he always descends ; but when we trace our interest in him, we always have to ascend. We have to look, first of all, within, and ascertain, if we can, what is there ; and if we can discover a spark of eternal life, in tracing that spark from our hearts to its Author, we go from regeneration to redemption on the cross, and from the cross to eternal covenant love ; and there taking our stand, we enter somewhat sweetly into the beautiful and comprehensive facts described by Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians :—"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Say, then, if life is a sign of election, and a love of holiness is a sign and symptom of life, all with us is right. We are interested in this high act of Jehovah—that of choosing his people to eternal life—for we have life in our hearts and a little holiness in our spirits. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Let us now notice another mark ; and that is—*conformity to Jesus Christ*. A little higher in the chapter we read thus : "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Now, nothing can be plainer, easier, or simpler than this. Some people are much frightened by the word "predestination," and as for the thing indicated by that word, they cannot bear it. I do not think, really, that many of them would hate or loathe it, and turn away from the great truth, if they scripturally considered it, or stood in a proper position for viewing this act of God. Can there be anything repulsive or bad in this high and glorious decree of God : "*Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son.*" Is it not beautiful ? Is it not heavenly ? Is there anything ungodlike here ? There is predestination on the throne, and before the throne there is an amiable pattern, which is the image of God and the eternal wonder of heaven—Jesus Christ ; and the loving Father says—The people yonder in the distant ages of time shall all be like my Son. I decree that they shall all bear his image, be filled with his Spirit, and be perfectly conformed to him. There is nothing, to my mind, dangerous or even disagreeable in this. On the contrary, there is in this purpose much—yea, everything—that is attractive and lovely. Now, my friends, look within again, though only for a minute. Has Christ been formed within, the hope of glory ? Have you experienced the important change called "regeneration" ? Has the finger of the Holy Spirit begun to trace upon the fleshy tables of your heart the lovely image of God's dear Son ? Is the outline of Immanuel already drawn ? I do not ask whether it be faint or full. Is the outline of Immanuel's image drawn upon your spirits—drawn by the finger of this heavenly Artist, God the Holy Ghost ? for God the Holy Spirit is the Conformer of all the people to Christ. Is it so ? If it is indeed so, your names are in heaven ; you are secretly in the bosom of the Father, and in the arms of God's everlasting love : for

"Ne'er had ye felt the guilt of sin,
Nor sweets of pardoning love,
Unless your worthless names had been
Enrolled to life above."

Any measure of conformity to Jesus Christ is the outcome of election. It is the grand result of God's eternal choice of your persons; and therefore look within. Compare your experience with the Word of God. If Christ is in your hearts, the Spirit put him there, and he is there as the fruit of this high and glorious decree of predestination. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Such persons are Christians. And what is a Christian? He is one with Christ; his character comes out of Christ; Christ produces him. This is what I understand by Christianity, or how I understand the character of a Christian. If I am a true Christian, I am united to Christ. He has produced my character, and brought me into a state of spiritual existence. A Christian is one that is anointed, having received the unction which Christ himself received. If you are anointed with the Spirit, that anointing constitutes you a Christian—it conforms you to Jesus Christ. A Christian is one that follows Christ, and is like him, so that when angels and Satan see a Christian, they see a being who faintly resembles the Lord himself; and the more Christianity we have, the more vividly is Christ seen in our walk, our character, and our conversation. Conformed to the image of his Son. Three seeds are mentioned in the Word of God, and each seed resembles its head, or original. The seed of Adam; and we all are his seed, and naturally we are like our father. There is the seed of the serpent, or the wicked one; and they are full of moral evil, and resemble the devil. There is the seed of the Lord Jesus Christ: "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." And as the seed of Adam are like Adam, and the seed of the devil are like the devil, so the seed of the Lord Jesus are like Christ. "Who shall say anything to the charge of God's elect?"

One thought more, and I shall have done with this part of the subject. These persons *possess a meetness for heaven*. The life that is in them, Christ formed in the heart the hope of glory, constitutes a meetness for the holy inheritance. An inheritance is prepared in heaven for all God's dear people, and this was done by the Father; and the Holy Spirit is at work on the earth preparing the heirs for their inheritance, the children for their home, and the ransomed of the Lord for the sweet and full realization of all the dignities, honours, and glories to which they were redeemed by the dear and blest Redeemer. A meetness for heaven, as I understand the matter, consists in what is commonly called "sanctification;" so that in holiness, in the presence of God, and in heavenly and gracious purity, the saint of God is in his element. He is at home therein, as the fish is in its own element in the sea, or the bird in the air, or the mole in the earth. God has fitted the mole for its dark home, the bird for the air in which it flies, and the fish for the sea in which it lives; and so he has fitted the Christian for Christ, for heaven, and for the beatific vision of himself in another world; so that the Christian possesses a nature that is suited to a better world than this. He is born from above, his citizenship is in heaven, and he is simply a sojourner here, making his way like a pilgrim to his everlasting rest; and he will not sit down, finally and permanently, until he reaches home. He is made for heaven, fitted for God's presence, qualified for glory, taught to live for a better world; perfect bliss is his destination, and he will be ever on the wing as long as he is absent from the Lord—ever on the wing until he reaches his eternal rest on high. That is all I will now say on this point, although I might have added other thoughts to these.

II. Now I shall perhaps say a little about doctrine. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect." Take it first as *indicating a doctrine*, as *expressing a challenge*, and as *affording comfort*. First, let us take a doctrinal view of the subject, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? This involves two points. First, *the character and work of Jesus*, and *the eternal decision of God*. In the first place, *the work of the Lord Jesus*; for the Lord's dear people are

perfect and complete, and without blame in him. Oh, I wish my beloved friends here and everywhere else were able in this respect to live up to what is commonly called their privileges. We hear a good deal about this in the present day from a certain quarter. You should live up to your privileges, and you might do so if you pleased. Well, my friends, here is one of our privileges. You are faultless and complete in Christ. God says you are so. The Word of God affirms the fact everywhere. Angels believe it, and so do devils, that you are, as God's children, perfect and complete in the dear Redeemer. Believe it! Live up to it! Dance for joy! Never doubt, never fear! This is your privilege. "God has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel." "Thou art all fair, there is no spot in thee." "Therefore are they without blame [or fault] before the throne of God." Here is a privilege! Embrace it; hang upon it! Sing for joy before the throne of God all the days of your life. My dear friends, facts are one thing and faith is another. If my faith could keep its hold, I then would always dance and sing for heavenly joy; but whilst facts abide, clouds come down between them and my mind. It is sometimes night with me, and I feel so strangely different within, that I sometimes wonder how it can be that such a sinful and polluted creature can be without fault in the presence of the everlasting God. I am not half a believer: I wish I were. If I could only believe with all my heart in the Lord Jesus Christ—his worth, his work, and his excellency—the world would roll on beneath my feet, and my affections, and thoughts, and feelings would be everlastingly fixed on things in a better world. It is, however, a fact, whatever our experience may be. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Now this faultlessness is necessary; for the perfect God will have a perfect people. It would not be consistent with the character of Jehovah to be surrounded by a number of imperfect and blameable characters—by a number of beings less perfect than his own glory and their personal felicity required. God means to glorify himself by saving and glorifying his people; therefore he intends to have a church as transparent as his Son, without a fault, without a wrinkle, without a stain; having nothing to dim its character, or its name, or its glory: and all this shall come to pass by the fact that he has connected sinners with the purifying and perfecting person of his dear Son. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Let me observe here that this is real and true. This state of things is not nominal; it is not a religious fiction. Some persons speak as if this state of things were a religious fiction. My dear friends, God does not speak fictions, nor require us to accept them and to believe in them. If I am told that as I stand in Christ no one can lay anything to my charge, that is a fact, that is absolutely true. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Well, now look at this in connection with the *eternal decision of God*. "It is God that justifieth." God, as a Judge, finds the sinner where he placed him, even in Jesus Christ, his dear Son. He finds the sinner redeemed with a price, washed in blood, covered with righteousness, and adorned with all the excellency and perfection that Christ can adorn him with. I had almost said, God goes round the sinner, examines him, and applies his law to him; divine justice and eternal holiness look with a scrutinising eye at him, and all the perfections of God surround him, and unanimously declare that, interested in the doing and dying of Jesus, his character is established, his name is clear, and that in Christ, and for his sake, he is worthy of eternal glory; and God says, "Loose him, and let him go." There is now no reason why condemnation should hang over him, no reason why he should be detained in bondage or in confusion; therefore, loose him, and let him go. Now then, as we are thus in Christ, and God has expressed his satisfaction with us, and that he wholly approves of us in this high and new position, let us turn, if we can, to hell and to the world, and say, We are God's beloved people, and 'who shall lay anything to our charge?'

Now, secondly, look at the words as a challenge. The apostle was very bold ; but he stood forth as God's servant, and spoke in his name. The challenge, be it observed, is founded on the great work I have tried to bring before you, and then notice its perfection and universality. I trust you will be able to attend to these facts. First, *it is universal with respect to accusers*. None are excepted ; it includes all. "*Who shall lay anything to their charge ?*" And, secondly, *it is universal with respect to crime*. "*Who shall lay anything.*" And, thirdly, *it is universal with respect to the people themselves*. "*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ?*" any one of them. Thus you observe the challenge is most comprehensive. It includes *all persons*. The world, and hell, and all beings are addressed ; while God himself comes forward and says, I have nothing to charge them with. Yes ; all their guilt is gone ; all their blemishes have disappeared, and there is every true reason why they should possess heaven and be happy, and not the slightest possibility of their sinking into hell and being lost. The groans, and sweat, and blood of God's dear Son, are reasons why their God should cover them with his feathers, and protect them from all the powers of evil ; therefore they shall never be in confusion and darkness. Then notice, in the next place, that this challenge takes in all crimes. Who shall lay *anything*. The sin of Adam is gone. Original guilt is lost in the atonement of Jesus. All our actual sins are gone—for it is Christ that died—sins committed before conversion, and we now sometimes think of them, and feel they were shameful and black, and we blush ; but they have all been pardoned, and covered by the righteousness of God's dear Son. Oh, but the sins committed since conversion, against light and knowledge have, some of them, been great and very terrible. "*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ?*" The blood of the Lamb rolled back to Eden, and washed the Adamic stain away. The blood of the Lamb rolled down to the bottom of guilt, and removed it all. The blood of the Lamb rolled onward into eternity, and prepared an honourable way for God's beloved people ; and, therefore, there is nothing to charge them with. Look at it, thirdly, in connection with the people themselves. "*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ?*" "Yes, sir, in heaven saints are perfect." But they are not safer than you ; and in Christ they are not more truly and thoroughly justified than you. You are not yet glorified ; but you are already justified, and in this respect you are as righteous as they are. Take the broken-hearted penitent, kneeling in his closet, deeply miserable, having never been brought into the enjoyment of liberty. And a penitent may be in yonder corner of the chapel, afraid that anyone should speak to him. The life of God is in his soul, and what shall we say about him, but that he is going to heaven ? There are weeping ones down here, and singing ones up there. They are equally justified and approved by God the Father in his beloved Son, and God is as pleased with the prayers of the broken heart down here, as he is with the songs of his people in heaven. Who shall lay anything to the charge of *any* of his elect ?

What shall we say, then, in the last place, on the subject *as a comfort* ? Take the reverse of this, and so contemplate it for a minute or two. The people of God chargeable with guilt ; though in Jesus Christ, yet still stained and faulty, and not complete even in their Lord ! Then the consequence would be, no one will be able, with any confidence or safety, to cast himself upon the work of Christ, for that would be a failure. If the people of God are any of them stained, polluted, and faulty, as in Jesus Christ, then it follows that it is useless to cast ourselves upon him for purification and perfection. But, blessed be God, that is not so. Were I to preach anything like that, you would say I was a kind of blasphemer. His work can never be nullified ; and, therefore, "*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ?*" Were it so, my friends, the contrivance of God would prove a nullity, and he might be repre-

sented as saying, It was my intention, by uniting the people to my Son, and by interesting them in his blood and righteousness, to free them from blame, and to separate them from sin; but I have failed: for though Christ has done his work, and they are still in him and one with him, yet they are polluted and guilty. But, blessed be God, that can never be. The gospel can never be falsified, your hope can never be frustrated, and the joy of heaven can never be imperfect: therefore, if you are touching the hem of his garment, take courage and comfort; you are in him; and as he is, so are you in the sight of God. His character is the foundation and the pattern of yours, and his covenant engagements are the great and solemn bonds by which he is pledged to establish your perfection, and to make you all-glorious within and without in the presence of God for ever and ever. Now will you permit me to say here, that since things are so, there is no ground whatever in fact for doubt and fear. Will you whip doubters and fearers? No, I will not; but I would preach their doubts and fears out of existence if I could. If divine things are indeed as I have represented them this morning, then there is no ground in fact for your apprehensions. But we do doubt. Yes; and if you go to the cause or causes of the doubt, you will surely find that they are not Christ nor his atonement. Your torturing fears arise from the suggestions of Satan, and the weakness of your faith in your saving Lord. Satan's suggestions are lies; for God says, Who shall lay anything to the charge of my people? The great accuser lays charges here and there, but they are unfounded and false, having no basis whatever in the Father's love, the Son's purchase, nor the Spirit's power. The Lord strengthen your faith, encourage your hope, and help you to cast yourselves as sinners upon Christ that died, who is the all-perfecting Saviour of guilty men, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON JANUARY 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

*. 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. 1s. 2d., post free.)

"NEARER HOME."

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 8th DECEMBER, 1878,
(THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THE CHAPEL.)

"For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."—Rom. xiii. 11.

THE subjects of this epistle are numerous, and they are treated with great spiritual and argumentative power; in fact, it is one of the most comprehensive portions of the Word of God. Its author possessed mighty powers of mind which were deeply sanctified and illuminated. There was in Paul great depth and force of spirituality, and in addition to this he was favoured with a double portion of the Holy Spirit, so that he stood out prominently, not only as a minister of the gospel, but as an apostle of Jesus Christ. In the first part of the epistle, Paul proves that all men are sinners, having broken the law of God, and that there is not a single child of Adam "that doeth good—no, not one." In the fourth chapter he speaks on the nature of faith, and the operations of that grace in the hearts of true believers. In the fifth chapter he discourses most instructively on the doctrine, grace, and results of justification. In the sixth and seventh chapters we have a full representation of the experience of the justified children of God. In the eighth chapter the apostle returns to doctrine, and speaks of the various forms of grace and expressions of divine love to which the sinner owes his salvation. In the ninth chapter he dives into mysteries which are profoundly deep, and exhibits them in a manner peculiar to himself. He speaks copiously and encouragingly in the tenth and eleventh chapters to Jews and Gentiles, and then, in the twelfth and following chapters, he introduces a considerable number of precepts and exhortations to the people of God. In the twelfth chapter his exhortations relate more especially to spiritual matters; whilst in the chapter out of which I have taken my text, some of them relate to temporal and civil affairs. Proceeding, he says—"That, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

There are two things to be noticed in these words. First, *the glorious object*, "Our salvation;" and, secondly, *the all-important fact*, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

In the first place, let us make a few observations on *the glorious object* indicated in our text. Salvation is a glorious theme. It engaged the thoughts and the heart of the Most High God in eternity, and it engages his thoughts and affection now; and this wondrous object will attract and hold the minds of millions of beings in heaven for ever. The term salvation, however, refers to different forms of God's love, and to various expressions of his grace. Sometimes by salvation

VOL. II., No. 21.—JANUARY 15, 1879.

we understand the great work of the dear Redeemer on the cross. At other times we understand by it the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and his sanctifying operations in the heart. At other times by salvation we understand those operations of divine providence, and those events of time by which our God preserves and saves his people from day to day. Again by salvation we understand those forms of love and power by which believers are kept until they die and reach the heavenly world, and occasionally salvation means that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which God has prepared for all his dear people. This is what we understand by this term in our text to-night. We are not now to speak so much on the blood of Christ, or on the righteousness of Immanuel, as on the glory of the heavenly world—on "the rest that is reserved for the people of God," or that state of eternal tranquillity and happiness to which we are going, and for which, by grace divine, we are fitted and prepared. The Apostle means heaven, and heavenly glory. He is here speaking of that eternal and sinless perfection in which we shall be for ever with and for ever like the Lord. Now is that part of our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Having never been in heaven, and having never seen the glory of that invisible world, nor heard the songs of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, I cannot, of course, describe the glory and excellencies of that eternal state; therefore I will try to speak upon the subject in another direction. I notice, first, that the Apostle here refers to that part of our salvation which will *for ever complete the work of the Holy Ghost in the sinner's soul*. I can tarry for a few minutes on this point, if I cannot follow the saved sinner into heaven, nor describe the throne he sits upon, nor the crown he wears, nor how he sings the praises of his God. Heaven completes and consummates the work of the Holy Spirit in the breast of every true believer; it is his work to quicken the soul, and many or most of you have been born again. The new birth takes place only once, and having been regenerated, you are now God's children in the family of grace; your faces are turned towards Zion, and your aspirations, hopes, and desires, are already more or less spiritual and divine. In quickening and regenerating the soul, the Holy Spirit forms the immortal mind for heaven, for eternity, and for God's presence in another world. "This people have I formed for myself, and they shall show forth my praise." The Spirit sanctifies and purifies the mind; for having quickened and formed it for another state, he infuses holiness into it, and hence, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Any measure of purity flows from God's heart, and is given by his Spirit, who is still at work in the bosoms of all true believers on the earth. Jesus Christ is the Christian's life, and the Spirit brings him into the hearts of sinners. Jesus shed his blood, and the Spirit applies it to the souls of guilty men. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; and the Spirit brings souls into the way, connects them with the truth, and communicates the life to them. Jesus Christ is the great goal and end of all Christianity, and the prize which believers have in view; and they will, therefore, continue on the wing, rise higher and higher, and be more or less restless until they see their Lord at home, and rest in the glorious bosom of God. When this all-important internal work is completed, and the soul is quite fitted and prepared for glory, then death will open the door, and the regenerated spirit will take its flight from its house of clay and ascend to that rest and perfection which God has prepared; and so shall we be for ever with the Lord. But let us tarry here a minute or two longer, and observe that this work of the Holy Ghost is limited to this present life. He does not make Christians in the other world. He does not change hearts on the other side of death. Some persons say I do not preach to sinners. It is a fact that I do not say such things to sinners as are said by many speakers; but let every one of my hearers now listen to me when I state the solemn and important truth, that souls possessing a preparedness for

heaven are regenerated here, and not on the other side of death, nor in eternity. We have no idea that a saving change takes place in the immortal soul after it has left the body; a change does take place after it has departed; for, absent from the body, it is for ever present with the Lord; but that is a change, not from death to life, not from nature to grace, but from grace to eternal glory; and, therefore, the Spirit works in this world, and his preparation of men for heaven is limited to the present life.

Let us further observe that the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart is progressive. Some, having been regenerated, are glorified very early; but usually the Christian remains on the earth a few years, and not a few bear the burden and heat of the day and become aged. Being regenerated, they enter the field of battle, are engaged in many severe and sore conflicts, bear many heavy burdens, shed many tears, and are frequently cast down—sorrows and trials awaiting them every day; but the Spirit remains within, and proceeds with his good work of grace; and Paul, who was well informed concerning this matter, has said: I am “confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun the good work in you will perform it, until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.” And then observe, that the Holy Spirit completes his work when a good man dies; he never completes it before we meet death, which dissolves the tie that unites the soul and body; then eternal salvation being completed, the immortal mind is perfectly fitted for heaven. If God completed his work before death, methinks we should be unfitted to live in this world. Were we perfectly free from sin, and absolutely and thoroughly holy, this world would be no home for us; and, with regard to both body and soul, we should be unsuited to the present life; and, therefore, as our days multiply, and our years increase, the internal operations of the Spirit are carried on. There is a work for every day, and a day for every work; and when the believer comes into the deep solemnities of death, the Holy Spirit is in his breast, proceeding with the all-important work until he completes sanctification, the spirituality of the mind, and the conformity of the heart to the everlasting God. When he has put the final mark, and added his finishing touch to the soul, the saint is ready to leave the body, heaven is ready to receive his immortal mind; and angels are waiting to shout “Hallelujah!” when his ransomed spirit arrives; for all is beautifully and divinely arranged. Brethren, when it is time for us to die, we shall, all buoyant with heavenly qualities, leave this poor dying world, to be for ever with the Lord.

Finally, on this point, bear in mind that when the soul is thus sanctified and saved, it enters into the glory-world, into that rest that is prepared for it; it is at once at home, at once and for ever in its element; the light of eternity is not too bright for it, and the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” does not oppress it. The soul can then bear that weight, the eye can bear that light, and although our God is a consuming fire, and his excellencies are all infinite, the immortal mind, thus prepared, is qualified to enter his excellencies, and to stand before the divine glory for ever. Now is that joyful state, and that blessed place, nearer to us than when we first believed. Oh, brethren, it will be a happy moment for us when the work of the Spirit is finished, and all his operations in our hearts are completed, and we are perfectly ready to leave the body and all that is now naturally near and dear to us for the realms of light and glory. You feel that you are not yet ready for heaven, but you will be at the appointed time; for your readiness does not depend upon your own powers or performances, but, like your hope and faith, upon the indwelling and sanctifying power of God the Holy Ghost. God’s foundation of salvation is divine, rock from first to last, stable and immovable.

But, secondly, this blessed state will *complete the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Now, our dear Lord ever liveth to make intercession for all that come

unto God by him, and he will not cease to pray for you until you are in the better world, and for ever with your Lord. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." We are saved, meritoriously and powerfully, by the two branches of the priesthood of Jesus, and both are absolutely necessary to our ultimate and eternal happiness. We are saved first by his sacrifice and atonement from guilt and sin, from the curse of a broken law, and from the righteous anger of a just and holy God; and having saved us by his death from condemnation, our High Priest is gone to heaven to perpetuate and apply that salvation. We need his official life in heaven as much as we needed it on the earth. We require his intercession before his Father's throne, therefore he ever lives above, bearing the names of his people on his breastplate before God. There he appears in the presence of God for us, and observe that his intercession perpetuates the flowing of divine and saving grace. I believe that if Jesus ceased interceding for sinners, grace would cease to flow from the throne of God. By dying he opened the door of heaven, and by interceding he keeps it open; by dying, as Goodwin somewhere says, he broached the riches of divine grace, and by interceding he perpetuates their communication from heaven to earth, and from the heart of God into the hearts of sinners; therefore, brethren, so long as you are here conflicting with the world, the flesh, and the devil, Jesus appears for you yonder, and his intercession renders your reception of needed mercy certain, and daily supplies divinely sure. You were put upon your feet because Christ died for you, and you are kept upon them because he prays for you; and hence he said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." You were put into a saved state by the sacrifice of the Redeemer, and in that state you are preserved by his intercession. And then do not forget another fact, namely, that the intercession of Jesus gives a special character to Divine providence, in relation to all who love his dear name. Providence is universal and perpetual, but it has special as well as general forms, and they owe their special character to the intercessory life and the glorious reign of your great Lord in heaven. Christ says to his Father, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." Some persons object to a special providence; but surely God's conduct towards Jacob differed much from his conduct towards Esau; and surely the providence which attended Isaac assumed forms which it did not assume in connection with Ishmael; and surely the goodness of God, which supplies a blasphemer with temporal mercies, must be more general and common than that providence which appears in connection with the good man who prays, so to speak, his way along day by day, to the glory and peace that remain for the beloved people of God. My brethren, Christ pleads for you on high; he is there your Advocate; therefore grace continues to flow, and providence assumes forms expressive of paternal love. And are not the angels of God "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?" Our Lord will pray his servants through the world, he will pray them through all their troubles, out of all their sins, out of all afflictions and disappointments, through death itself, into heaven and up to his throne, when he will embrace them, and then his intercession for them will for ever cease. Hence we learn that this branch of the Saviour's work is terminable, and will end in the personal perfection and salvation of all his dear people. Now is that state of things nearer than when we believed.

Let us notice, in the third place, that this *will fulfil all the holy hopes and desires of God's people*. This consummation is now nearer than when we believed. The hope of the believer is a good hope, for God is its Author, its Object, its Preserver, and Jesus is its life. All the spiritual desires of a believer are like his

character, holy and heavenly, and therefore they are acceptable to the eternal God. We have said that God is the Author of holy hopes and heavenly desire; and will he create hopes and disappoint them? or produce desires and not fulfil them? Is it like his majesty and his mercy to cause an immortal mind to be all alive with heavenly desires and mysterious aspirations, and then finally leave that soul disappointed and unsatisfied? No, my friends; if your hopes are God's creatures, and your desires are the fruits of his grace, and your aspirations are the outcome of the operations of his Spirit, they shall certainly be fulfilled. Hope shall soon be for ever lost in its Great Object, for the Lord will honour his own work. You are now an expecting pilgrim, looking for what is promised, but not yet possessed; and let me remind you of the fact that if you lived here a hundred or hundreds of years, you would not, with your present experience, feel at home. God has formed you for himself, and qualified you for another state, and your desires therefore will at times be strong, rising higher and higher until that heaven is reached which now is nearer than it was when you first believed. Your sails are now spread, or you are now on the wing, and you will remain in a state of spiritual restlessness until the expected Object is seen and reached, and you are perfect in a better world. Although you do not understand the mystery, yet having been formed for perfection, and possessing principles by which you are in sympathy with heaven, deep rest and permanent repose cannot be found here. The very best of nature cannot possibly satisfy you, therefore you must rise higher until you reach the future glory, and bathe therein for ever. Then, but not till then, will you be at rest; not till then will you find eternal repose. Oh, what a state is that in which there are no desires! no hopes! no expectations, and no room for them! In heaven, the presence of God leaves nothing to desire, and nothing to hope for. There the beatific vision of the face of the Redeemer swallows up all hope, and fulfils the highest expectations of the soul. Brethren, that will be our full and perfect salvation.

This salvation might be considered as negative and positive. Some persons dwell much on the negative side of this great favour, while others dwell upon its positive glory. It has two sides, and both are divinely perfect and complete. The eternal absence of all that is evil, and the everlasting possession of all that is good and sweet.

"Sin, my worst enemy before,
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more;
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again."

The vessel of mercy shall be perfectly clean and divinely transparent; it shall have no flaw, no crack, no streak of darkness dimming its lustre and glory. Thus, negative salvation will be perfect and complete. But when the vessel is thus prepared and fitted for the Master's use, what then? Then it shall be filled with all the fulness of God. All that can possibly come under the name of evil for ever gone, and then filled with all that can come under the name of divine and heavenly good. Now is that state of things nearer than when we believed.

Let us now observe, that this *will quite fulfil the Gospel*, for what we know of heaven we learn from it. What shall we say of its doctrines in relation to the glory of heaven? They will all be verified there. And what shall we say of its promises? They will all be fulfilled there. We shall not see behind us, or remember in heaven, in connection with our pilgrimage, an unfulfilled promise, or one broken engagement of our covenant God. We shall all be prepared to say, "Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord our God promised us." Lo, all is come to pass. The mysteries of the Gospel—what shall we say about them? The Bible we cannot fathom, though we sit and ponder its mysteries until we quite lose ourselves in divine things. I am glad there are mysteries in

the gospel which we cannot fathom, and glories which we cannot measure; for if this volume, like other books, were comprehensible, we might and should become tired of it, and cease perhaps to read it; but all will be made plain in glory, for then shall we know even as we are known. Though the depths of God will be unfathomable in heaven, yet our knowledge will be satisfactory, leaving no room whatever for inquiries in his presence. How shall we enter heaven? Well, we know that only by consulting the Word. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought. They shall enter into the King's palace." Who will be glad to see us arrive? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be glad to see us reach that glory. All the holy angels will rejoice, and again they will say "Hallelujah!" And without being fanciful, may we not say that all our brethren there will be glad to see us arrive, for brotherly love reigns in heaven; therefore, all there love us, and will be glad to see us in our disembodied state, perfected and saved with an everlasting salvation. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Now secondly, and briefly, since the time is almost gone, let us contemplate *the important fact*—Salvation is *now nearer* than when we *first* believed. The morning of grace and spiritual life is an interesting period in the experience of a Christian. I love to think of it, and to return to my experience and feelings at that happy time. There is something most winning and attractive in an infant, and there is something most engaging and attractive, at least to my mind, in a babe in grace—in one just born again, lisping out some of his wishes and wants on the knee of prayer before God's throne, and trying to say, Abba, Father. The morning of spiritual life, however, is exceedingly diversified. Some of the Lord's people remember that when they were called by grace, they very shortly entered into liberty. Their morning was a bright one, almost without a cloud, or if a few hung over them they were not very dark and dense, and they soon passed away. Others remember that the morning of their new life was a dreary one, with clouds and storms; but even so it was the morning of a day that has no end, and the beginning of a life that never dies. It was your introduction into a state of things which has no end, for it is the way everlasting. In the morning of our spiritual life we believed. But how did we believe? The power of our faith was then very limited; for on looking back to the time when we were brought into liberty, we see and feel that, notwithstanding our joys and pleasures, our faith and hope were not then very deep or solid. They were good as to their nature, but their range and power were certainly not great. Nevertheless, this morning was an interesting period; and angels rejoiced when eternal day dawned upon us, and they saw us repent and heard us cry for mercy. But let us come closer to this point. Is heaven now nearer than when we started for that world? for that is the simple meaning of the text. How so? *In point of time* it is now nearer than when we believed. Some of my beloved friends are young in years, and in grace; others are old in years, and in their experience of eternal things. How long have you been pilgrims? Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, and some of you can say sixty years we have been followers of the Lord. Think, then, how near to heaven you must be. My dear young friends may be near to that bright home, but it is an indisputable fact that my aged brethren and sisters are almost there. Time is a most mysterious arrangement of the mighty Jehovah. It cannot be arrested in its progress. Onward it goes, and is carrying all with it. It cannot be prolonged. Do what we will, the day cannot be made longer than God has made it, and life cannot be prolonged beyond his purpose. Time is of that nature that, when it is once past, ten thousand worlds cannot recall it—it is for ever gone from us. We have, therefore, fewer steps to take than when we believed, fewer conflicts to enter than when we believed, fewer burdens to bear than when we believed, fewer tears to shed than when we believed, and fewer

days to live than when we believed. Our hair has turned gray since we first believed, and that fact reminds us that our salvation is now nearer than it was then. We know not the distance between ourselves and heaven, but we do know that it is growing less every day and hour. Think, my brethren, if you can stir up your minds and get alive to the fact, that you are to-night a day's march nearer home. This being the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of this chapel, we who have been connected with the cause during that period are a quarter of a century nearer heaven than we were. Nearer, then, in point of time.

Secondly, nearer *in point of preparation*. Is it so? I think it is. The work of the Spirit in the heart being, as we have already seen, a progressive work. Let me put a question or two to my beloved friends. Have you not less to live for than you had twenty years ago? That is an important question, and one which we cannot answer without due and solemn consideration. Your hold upon the world is not so tight as it was many years ago. You have discovered, in a measure, its hollowness. You have been sorely tried, and your afflictions have been sanctified; and some of you I have heard express yourselves in this way—

“Weary of self, the world, and sin,
Dear Jesus, set me free.”

Brethren, if afflictions are sanctified, and our losses and crosses are made profitable to us by the Spirit and presence of God, we are, if I may so speak, better prepared for our full salvation than we were when we first believed. Well, death or some sharp trials will probably come again, and it may be I shall hear some of you say, when a beloved one or beloved ones are dying or dead beside you, I have now less to live for, sir, than I had; for another tie that bound me to the earth is broken. Last year one gave way, and the year before another, and soon I think I shall feel as if I had nothing on the earth to live for but God, and fellowship and communion with Jesus. Oh that we may be ripe! Oh that we may be ready! Oh that we may be wholly, wholly prepared to lay down our life, to breathe our souls into the Master's hand at the appointed time! May God prepare us by his grace, his Spirit, and his precious blood, to meet himself in death and in glory.

Then, *in point of expectation*, “our salvation is nearer than when we believed.” When we believed many years ago, we had many expectations, and they were exceedingly warm, lively, and high; but much of the good which we then expected we have never obtained, and it is as far off apparently as ever; but here is heaven and perfection which were then expected, and, unlike almost all other good, they are nearer now than when we believed, and our expectation shall not perish, our hope shall not be cut off. Heaven and the Christian must meet, and his hope must be lost for ever in the full fruition of his God. I might go on to say, it is nearer *in point of reception*. When you started on your pilgrimage, blessings were laid up in Christ for you during your journey. You have received many, having been called, and justified, and preserved. “Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.” And there are other blessings in Christ to be received in this life, the last of which is victory through the blood of the Lamb; and, that having been received, then will come the grand secret—For ever with the Lord. All this is absolutely necessary, and I close by observing—salvation is nearer *in point of necessity*. As this world recedes from us, another approaches; as this world vanishes, another rises to view; and, in your case, the other world must be heaven, because you have believed, and do believe. “Now is salvation nearer than when we believed.” You are in Christ, therefore heaven must come. God is your God, and his grace cannot be separated from his glory; for the Lord will give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from them that

walk uprightly. A few years ago, then, we began to be saved, or God began to save us; now we are nearly saved; and by-and-bye we shall be completely saved. Two important points or periods mark our life: the period when we were born again, and the period when we shall be perfect. Those two points lend a glory to the present. The present, you say, is one of conflict, doubt, fear, darkness. A glory, my friends, comes from the past, when you were born again, and other glories come from the period when you shall be made perfect; and the united glory of these two periods is sufficient to cover the anxiety, doubt, fear, uncertainty, and darkness of the present. The Lord add his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON FEBRUARY 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

* * 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE BELIEVER'S ROCK.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 27th OCTOBER, 1878.

"Neither is there any rock like our God."—1 Sam. ii. 2.

ELKANAH, the Levite was a gracious man, and Hannah, one of his two wives, was a godly woman. He experienced a large measure of strife and trouble at home; nevertheless, once a year, at least, he went to the tabernacle of the Lord to worship; for the temple was not built. The old tabernacle which Moses made in the wilderness was then in existence, and it had been pitched by divine order at Shiloh; and inasmuch as the males of the children of Israel were obliged by the ceremonial law to go to the place where the Lord's presence was vouchsafed to the people, Elkanah, accompanied by his two wives, went thither to worship. They were therefore public worshippers, and Elkanah and Hannah at least were spiritual worshippers of the God of Israel. The aged man Eli, was the high priest and judge of the people at this time, and sitting near to or in the tabernacle as Hannah entered it with her lips moving, he suspected the woman had been drinking and was drunk, and he said, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee." "Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." The ark of the covenant was in the tabernacle at Shiloh, and Hannah appeared without the veil, and poured forth the sorrow of her heart in the presence of her God upon the mercy-seat. She was not, however, heard by Eli. Her prayer was very earnest, her heart was very warm, and her services were divinely acceptable, although her lips only moved. Eli, however supposed that her unusual conduct indicated drunkenness. Having poured out her heart before God, she returned with her husband to their home, and in course of time her prayer was answered, and Samuel was born, who in due time was weaned, and brought by his mother to Shiloh, and presented to the Lord. As Hannah appeared again at the tabernacle to worship, she said to Eli, "O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord." Then you thought me a most abandoned creature in a drunken state in the house of the God of Israel. My spirit was then full of sorrow and overwhelmed with grief. I then poured forth my heart, and prayed for this child, and God has answered me. "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him; therefore also I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there." And Hannah, it is said, proceeded to express herself

VOL. II., No. 22.—FEBRUARY 15, 1879.

thus—"My heart rejoiceth in the Lord. My horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over my enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. Her sorrow was gone, her wounds were healed, her tears were wiped away, and she was favoured with comforting views of her covenant God and Father, and being delightedly conscious of the fact that her prayers had reached the ears of Jehovah, and had been answered by him, she said, "There is none holy as the Lord." Holiness is the glory of God and of heaven. God could not be blessed without holiness, and neither angels nor human spirits in heaven could be happy without purity; for happiness and holiness are inseparable, the latter being absolutely essential to the former. God, who is infinitely, unalterably, and essentially holy, is clothed with this light as with a garment, and all his other attributes and perfections express themselves through it. His omnipotence is holy, so is his love, so is his wisdom, and so is his grace. If these perfections, and the whole of God's nature, were not holy, we should be unable to honour and revere him. God is also the eternal source and spring of holiness. All creatures in heaven are holy by the will and power of God; but his holiness is underived and necessary, and he cannot be otherwise than holy. If a creature, once holy, loses that excellency, he cannot possibly recover it by his own power; therefore the holy character and principles of saints are due to the sovereign will and transforming power of the Holy One of Israel. "There is none holy as the Lord, neither is there any Rock like our God."

I shall offer a few observations on this clause of the verse. The great fact stated is a very blessed one important one, and I pray that we may be helped in our meditations for a few minutes this evening. I shall, in the first place, consider *a few things implied*; and, in the second place, I will contemplate *the great fact expressed*. In the first place, there are *some important facts implied*. "Neither is there any Rock like our God." Coming at once to the subject, we notice, first, *that every true believer has a personal experience of this fact*. Does not the text evidently imply this truth? Hannah's heart was full of feeling, and her mind was full of light when she said—"Neither is there any Rock like our God." She did not go by hearsay, nor did she thus express herself merely because she had found it even in the Word of God. It is a fact that she had read it in the writings of Moses, and it is also a fact that she, and her husband, and others, had had conversations on this all-important theme; but the good woman on this occasion spoke most experimentally. She said, I know the God of Israel, and that he is my God; I have a knowledge of some other beings also, and I am prepared to say, O Eli, that there is no Rock like our God. Experience is a very important element or feature of personal spiritual character. The great facts of salvation are to be brought down to the heart; for God intends that they shall rest upon the spirit, and it is his purpose that the grace of those facts shall enter deeply into the minds of his beloved people who, therefore, sometimes express themselves very confidently concerning them. They do not go by hearsay, their religion is not learned as a lesson; it is not something which they have committed to memory but they have a holy and unctious experience of the great truths of the Gospel, and of this one among the rest. Hannah was now happy, for her feet were standing on the Rock of Ages, she was surrounded by the bulwarks of salvation, her prayer-hearing and answering God, was immeasurably precious to her heart, and therefore she said, Come, all ye that fear God, and listen while I declare that there is no Rock whatever like our God. What God is declared to be in the Word, that his people have some rich and heavenly experience of in their own souls. The Word declares that God is a Rock, and that declaration has to be impressed upon the regenerated heart. We see it here with our eyes, and we hear about it with our ears, but what is seen and heard is to be brought into the heart or deeply impressed thereon, and God is to be our Rock, not theoretically, and not merely as an article of our creed. A knowledge of this great truth is to

constitute a vital branch of our personal and heavenly experience, and therefore the Holy Spirit applies the Word of divine truth to the hearts of God's family. God is a Rock, says revelation, and the heart that is influenced by the Spirit responds, "There is no Rock like our God." God's declaration on his throne concerning himself, "that in Him is everlasting strength," is followed by the echo of his voice in the hearts of his believing people, "There is no Rock like our God," who is the Rock of Ages. The great Redeemer is original Truth, the Gospel of God is written truth, and the reception of what is written in the Gospel becomes experimental truth: thus there is a vital connection and heavenly harmony between God and his people. There is eternal truth on the throne of glory, and eternal truth in the Book of God; but Christ on the throne, and Christ in the Bible, though most important realities, are not enough; God and man require something more. What is written here must be imprinted upon our hearts, and Christ must be formed, within the hope of glory, that he may live and dwell within by faith. Now, my hearers, this experience gives confidence, and it enables believers to speak boldly in relation to the things of God. If they are asked what they think of Christ, they do not reply, We imagine he is this, or that, or the other. Christ is in their hearts, having been formed therein by the Spirit, who glorifies him. They have a holy experience of the meaning of the word; for he that inspires the Gospel has entered their minds and impressed its holy truths upon the fleshy tables of their hearts; and they come forth under his hands and say with Paul, "We know whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him against that day." I may here, without bitterness, for I do not like that element, ask the question—How is it that many persons are constantly departing from the truth of God, and are perpetually changing their creed? They believe one order of things one year, and the next year it is wholly abandoned, and another is adopted. They are ever shifting, ever changing. You can never tell where to find them, or what they will be when you next meet them. To what is this due? Well, without taking the judgment-seat, it seems to me that if persons are taught as Hannah was, they will always live upon the same doctrines, and always express themselves with humble confidence in relation to the truth of God. What the Holy Ghost taught us, or what we trust he taught us, some years ago, that we now hold fast as vital to our salvation, and essential to the honour and glory of our God. There is salvation in no other. That is not a matter of opinion with us, neither is it a mere theory with the children of God. The child of God says, it must be so; for there is no other name given among men under the whole heavens whereby we must be saved; and, therefore, if I reach heaven at last, I am satisfied that I must sail thither on the tide of a Saviour's blood; and if I stand with comfort before the face of my Maker, I am quite sure that I must be stripped of my own rags, and be clothed with his beauteous robe. I cannot as a minister propose two or three theories to my hearers; so far as I have been taught, I speak confidently the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, feeling that so far as my present knowledge and experience go, I can stand by the side of Hannah and say, Brethren, "There is no Rock like our God." Hannah avowed her personal experience. She was not ashamed of it. And what is there to be ashamed of in those feelings which are generated in the heart by God's good Spirit? The world have their pleasures, and talk loudly and long about them, and boldly too. The atheist avows his atheism, and tells you with much brazen boldness, There is no God. The deist boldly declares that God does not interfere with the affairs of men, or the world. The Papist avows his experience, or rather his delusive peculiarities, and, holding forth his errors, contends earnestly and persecutingly for them. We who are believers have the God of heaven for our God, the Rock of eternal ages beneath our spirits, and are interested in a love that can never be increased, and in Divine favour that can never change. Let

us stand forth, therefore, before the world, and if needs be before hell, and avow our personal experience of the character of God. "Neither is there any Rock like our God." Personal experience, then, is one great fact implied in the text.

It seems to me, in the second place, *immortal minds require a divine Rock to sustain them*. Have you thought of this? I never know all my hearers, neither here nor elsewhere; but it may be there are some listening to me to-night who are not altogether in sympathy with me—who know little or nothing of God as the Rock of Ages. Have you thought, my friends, of this fact—that the mind of man requires a Rock, and that it must have something to rest upon? A great many persons do not go as far as this in contemplating the peculiarities of their own minds, and the solemn facts which are connected with the government of God. The human mind is not self-sustaining, nor self-supporting. It is always feeling for or grasping after something solid, substantial, and fixed, to lean upon. It is always attempting either to descend into lower depths, or to ascend into greater heights than it has at present attained, and it never finds a settled point, and never becomes fixed and satisfied until it finds Jehovah, the Rock of everlasting ages. I am not surprised that minds should require a Rock, for God originally made them for himself; and, therefore, in their fallen state and condition, far from God and in ignorance of him, they must always wander, unsettled and unsatisfied. The mind is the greatest creature under heaven. It is fearfully and marvellously made, and its powers are vast. This appears in the fact that it is capable of committing sin which incurs the wrath of God; capable of committing crimes sufficiently great to merit eternal condemnation and ruin. The mind of man is capable of receiving its Maker, and capable of becoming like him again, and capable of becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Now let this fallen, but wonderful creature, the mind, come to the world: it finds no settled rest there. Present to it a multitude of nicely constructed theories about religion—it finds no permanent rest in them. Let it possess many gifts, talents, and moral and natural excellencies—more, much more is wanted. Take it to Sinai, to the covenant of works—it finds no peace there. It therefore leaves Sinai, and flies round the world in a state of unhappiness and unsettledness; and being dark, and ignorant, and lost, it gropes for rock where rock was never found, and looks for settledness and peace where they were never obtained. At length the Holy Ghost comes, and putting his hand upon the sinner in the error of his ways, he drops the principle of divine life into his soul, and brings the wanderer to the blest Redeemer; and now he sings—

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

The renewed mind must have rock, something firm and settled, and it finds it in the Lord in whom it finds rest and safety. "Neither," said Hannah, "is there any Rock like our God." She spake believingly, and experimentally; for the God of Israel was the Rock of Ages to her.

Thirdly, *Peace and joy arise in a great measure from comparison, or rather from contrast*. "Neither is there any Rock like our God." She had, it seems, tried other rocks, or perhaps she could not with propriety have expressed herself in this manner. Yes; she had tried other ground, been in contact with other beings, and had visited other wells which seemed to be full of water, and she had been, more or less, deeply and bitterly disappointed by all.

"The more I strove against its power,
I sinned and stumbled but the more;
Till late I heard my Saviour say,
Come hither, soul, I am the Way."

"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."

Oh friends, the anchor drags if it does not strike into this Rock of Ages. The raging storms of a broken law, in the moral government of God, meeting guilt and sin, will heave and toss the vessel, and the ship will drag its anchor if it has not entered into this divine and eternal Rock. But—

"Now I have found the ground wherein,
 Sure my soul's anchor may remain;
 The wounds of Jesus for my sin,
 Before the world's foundation slain.
 Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
 When heaven and earth are fled away."

Therefore the sinner turns away from himself, away from all creatures, and away from all his own works and excellencies to God; and, having some experience of his greatness, immutability, and preciousness, he says, "There is no Rock like our God."

Then observe, in the fourth place, *he is the same to all*. What God is to one of his people, that he is to all; for "neither is there any Rock like *our* God." Hannah and her husband were both upon it, and both stood where Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had stood before them. The Rock of Ages never moves. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. If God's character were not a rock, if he were not immutable and immovable, we should have no sympathy with Old Testament writings, and should find ourselves out of harmony with Old Testament believers; but we stand where they stood, and sit where they sat, and enter into the Rock into which they entered, and see, if I may so speak, their very names inscribed in the friendship and love of that God on whom we ourselves are leaning and depending, and this greatly assists us in this waste, howling wilderness.

Lastly, I notice *that God's people are witnesses for him*. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Hannah said, as it were, to Eli, once I was very sorrowful in my spirit; but the Lord has heard and answered me, and I am come to bless his name. I now bear witness for my God, and let all Israel know that the poor sorrowing Hannah must and will now attest the fact that there is no Rock like the God of Israel. We hope that we are witnesses for God. Do you think there is one? Yes; for we have had to do with him. And do you think that his love is what the Gospel represents it to be? We know it, for it has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. And do you think his providence and care are what the Word represents them to be? He cares for us, and his providence has ever surrounded and supplied us. If all the infidels in the world came forward to assert there is no God, we would set our faith and experience against their testimony, and venture to call it vanity and lies, and bind the gospel to our hearts before the Rock of eternal ages. We have had intercourse with God, his love has been shed abroad in our hearts, and we know he cares for us. Then, what about hearing and answering prayer. Are you troubled with doubts concerning this, or do you reason thus—"If one prays for a particular thing, and he happens to receive it, may it not come in the ordinary course of things, and be received in the common course of providence or the operations of nature? That is a species of infidelity or unbelief, depend upon it. That is how Satan would have us reason, for the purpose of drying up our comfort, and robbing us of our enjoyment. Hear what this witness said in court, and she was a witness for God: "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath

given me my petition which I asked of him." Hannah said, in effect, let the world talk about fanaticism as they will in relation to prayer and divine answers thereto, here is my Samuel, who is to be lent to the Lord all the days of his life, and I hold him in my arms as an answer to the petition of my heart ; therefore there is no Rock like our God.

Now secondly, and briefly, *the fact expressed is the incomparableness of the God of Israel.* There is no Rock like him. Look at him first *in relation to his position.* I mean by that, that he is just where we need him, and just what we require a God to be. There may be, when there is a terrible downpour of rain, an excellent shelter a mile off, but one may get wet through and be dangerously and fatally drenched before he reaches that shelter ; but God, who is our refuge, is a *very present* help in trouble. There is a deep meaning in those words. God is a *help*, a *present* help, a *very present* help in trouble. If he is a Rock, a Refuge, a Shelter, it is a blessing that he is in our wilderness world. The rock that supplied Israel was in the wilderness, and not in Egypt ; in the desert, and not in Canaan ; so there is no Rock like our God in this respect ; for he says, "I am with thee, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Therefore, he is incomparable as to his position. We are in the wilderness, and so is God. We are in danger, and God stands therein. We are surrounded by serpents, scorpions, and perils, and the Rock of Ages protects us. We are sometimes in solitude, and our God is near at hand, and always accessible ; and we have never far to go for succour. I have sometimes thought we should die if we had a mile to run before we could pray ; we could scarcely contain ourselves if we might not drop down upon the knee of prayer in the very midst of our sorrow and troubles. God, who is our Rock, is not merely in another land, or in another world, he is with us here, and now ; therefore, Hannah said, "I called upon him here, and here he met me ; here he has blessed me, and here he has answered my prayer ; therefore, in this respect, there is no Rock like our God. The rock which stood in the wilderness, and whose streams followed the children of Israel forty years, was there before they entered the desert, and perhaps it is there now. The sand of the desert was occasionally drifted against it in all directions by the terrible winds which blew across the wilderness, and probably there would be hills, mountains, and valleys of sand ; but though the sand was ever shifting, there stood the rock, and the water flowed from it for forty years. "There is no rock like our God."

Then, secondly, consider the fact *that God is a refuge and a shadow to his people.* "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." You know the shadow of a material object is long or short according to the position of the sun and the height of that object. If the sun is in a certain position, and the object is exceedingly high, the shadow east upon the ground is very long. Now, here is our God, the Rock of Ages, standing at the very commencement of the desert, the Rock that is higher than we. He casts the shadow of his presence and mediation across the whole desert of our life here. It reaches from Egypt to Canaan, covering the whole of our path. The highest mountains in the world—the Himalayas and others, cast long shadows at particular times ; but here is the Rock of Ages seated on his throne, or, smitten by the rod of God, casting his saving shadow across the desert, upon Sinai, over our daily life, our every trouble, and across all time. There is no refuge or shelter from storms and tempests like our God. The law is fiery ; but we are safe in him. The waters of trouble rise higher and higher, but they will never cover this Rock ; and he has placed our feet thereon, having raised us from the horrible pit and miry clay, and set our feet upon the rock, and established our goings. Here in the desert are the powers of darkness aiming their arrows at us ; but the devil has not an arm nor a bow strong enough to send an arrow through the salvation which

surrounds the saint of God, for the eternal God is his refuge. There is no Rock like our God, considered as a refuge from the storm and a shadow from the heat.

Passing on, we notice *the idea of support*. He sustains and supports his people, or in other words, he is the foundation of their salvation. "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I do not know whether it be a fact or not, but it is said that the elephant manifests a measure of fear and excitement when it passes over a bridge—it seems to prefer the solid earth, and to walk on solid roads; vibration beneath its feet seems to startle it. The immortal soul deprecates vibrations beneath it. The Christian wants underneath his mind nothing less firm than God, nothing less immutable than the Rock of Ages. The child of God is represented as a builder. A wise builder will use the best materials, will build in the best manner, will give all possible attention to his foundation, and will build for the future; and the believer will build with the best materials, in the best manner, on eternal rock, for eternity. He is an immortal being, possessing an undying soul, and he builds therefore for eternity. Shall I build on works, or something short of God? No;—

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

Again, the text indicates the fact that there is no God *that supplies his worshippers and followers as the God of Israel supplies his*. There is no God like our God as to divine supplies. Other rocks are barren, hard, and empty; and may be dangerous, too, for snakes and serpents may be in them. It is far from being so with our Rock. He is not barren nor empty, and there is no evil in the Lord. He is fixed and firm, and everlasting abundance is in him. He is represented as yielding water, honey, and oil. You never heard of such a Rock as this. No; there is not another like our God. All saving supplies flow from this Rock. They pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. "He opened the Rock, and the waters gushed out, and flowed among the dry places like a river." A person secreting himself in a rock might be starved to death, or die of thirst; but in our God we have safety, plenty, and eternal life. What will the oil be? "Thou hast anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." The oil is the Spirit who proceedeth forth from the Father and the Son. And the honey? Well, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Do you not call this honey? "In whom we have redemption,"—how sweet!—"even the forgiveness of sins,"—what honey!—"in whom we have obtained an inheritance." Bless his name! all that we can wish or want we find in the Lord our God. There is no rock like him. I might proceed to speak of the various comforts experienced by the child of God; but we leave that to—

Notice, lastly, there is none like him *for unchangeableness*. He is the same from year to year, from age to age, and from the beginning to the end of time. And what he ever has been, that he ever will be—a divine Rock. The Rock of Ages never moves. Everything else is changing. I am ever changing, and it is well I am; for life here would be amazingly monotonous and insipid if it had no changes. I should not like to have my mind stationary all the days of my life. Change is essential to the creature, it contributes to his happiness and profit. But God cannot change without ceasing to be God, he cannot alter his decisions without ceasing to be a divine object of trust and confidence. Do angels change? I think so. How so? Do you not think that they are ever learning; to be ever learning is to be ever changing. The spirits of just men made perfect also

change. They are for ever learning, and increasing in knowledge. Is it so with your God? No; in the midst of heaven stands Jehovah's lofty throne, upon it he for ever sits, and to his knowledge there can be no addition. His information can never increase, he can never go further, never rise higher, never sink deeper; he is for ever the same infinite, perfect, merciful, and glorious being. "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our God even unto death." "There is," therefore, "no rock like our God." Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON MARCH 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & CO., 28, BANNER-STREET, BUNHILL-ROW, LONDON, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price,
(viz. 6d., post free.)

**** 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. 1s. 2d., post free.)**

THE LORD GREAT IN ZION.

A Sermon-

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 23rd FEBRUARY, 1879.

"The Lord is great in Zion ; and he is high above all the people."—Psa. xcix. 2.

IN this and the two preceding Psalms, we have the important subject of the reign and the government of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the first place, the great fact itself is asserted. "The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice : let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." And again in this Psalm: "The Lord reigneth ; let the people tremble. He sitteth between the cherubims ; let the earth be moved." This great fact is not only asserted—the Holy Ghost gives proofs of it, which are comprehensive and divinely great. Clouds and darkness are round about him ; nevertheless his throne is established in eternal righteousness, judgment, and truth. God himself cannot be seen ; his purposes are not revealed, and many of his intentions are concealed from his creatures ; and, therefore, although he sits upon the throne and reigns over all, yet clouds and darkness are round about him. God is here represented as sitting between the cherubims, or as having taken his seat on the throne of mercy. The Holy Spirit here alludes to the Divine shekinah, which was a mysterious and bright cloud that shone in the most holy place upon the golden lid of that portable chest which was called the ark of the covenant. This ark was made by Moses, and its contents were important and sacred. A lid which was all of gold was made to fit the ark ; and upon this golden covering, which was called the mercy-seat, two cherubims were formed, and between them God was seated ; and hence it is said, "The Lord reigneth ; let the people tremble : he sitteth between the cherubims ; let the earth be moved." The Holy Ghost illustrates this great and important fact. There are times in the life and experience of gracious men and women, when they are compelled to repair to the throne of God, and, as it were, to lean against it, and watch with adoring feelings the mysterious operations of his hand ; for God giveth no account of any of his matters. When his hand is stretched out, no creature can cause him to withdraw it, and no being has a right to say unto him—What doest thou ? He does as he pleases in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and in executing his deep intentions and purposes, his conduct is sometimes exceedingly mysterious ; and while the feelings and the faith of the saints are bewildered and tossed, they take refuge in the character of their King, and attempt to conceal themselves beneath the shadow of his throne, and try to tranquilize themselves with the pleasing fact that infinite love and power are working, and that eternal wisdom guides the operations of God's hand.

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

VOL. II., No. 23.—MARCH 15, 1879.

The Holy Ghost having asserted and illustrated the fact that the Lord reigns, proceeds to give several important exhortations upon this great reality, and among them we have this one: "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy." Our text, however, informs us that our God is in Zion, that he is high above all the people, and that all his greatness is connected with the Zion of his heart and love. I shall endeavour to illustrate our subject by advancing a few facts which I will mention as I proceed.

It is my intention to limit my observations to the first clause of the verse, "The Lord is great in Zion;" and I first notice *the great fact itself*, that our God is great in his church. What shall I say about the greatness, the superlative greatness of our Lord and Saviour?

"'Tis a deep that knows no sounding,
Without bottom, brim, or shore."

What can poor feeble worms with minds so limited as ours say concerning the infinite majesty of the Lord of grace and glory? My dear friends, if we are the Lord's people, we are savingly interested in all his greatness, and all the greatness of this almighty Being is interested in our persons and our salvation. Our views of this matter are most circumscribed; and

"Slowly, alas! our minds receive
The comforts which our Maker gives."

The greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ might be considered, first, in relation to his *divine essence*; for we are all, I hope, firm believers in the essential Deity of the Son of God. Since I am always lost in the Divine majesty of our Lord, I sometimes try to get away from this deep mystery as quickly as possible. I cannot comprehend it, and therefore in considering it I always feel the necessity and importance of connecting it with humanity; for then I am in the presence of a Being whose glory, though great, does not bewilder my mind, and whom I can love and trust. All things are in him; all worlds are in him; all beings are in him; he surrounds, contains, and holds all. Nothing is beyond him; but he is beyond all. He is high above all the people. Paul uttered a great truth when he said, "In him we live and move, and have our being." The mighty ocean surrounds the tiniest fish as well as the whale, and both have their home therein. Creatures small and feeble, and creatures large and strong, are in the great and glorious God. There is no place unoccupied by God; no world that lies beyond the reach of his eye, of his knowledge, or of his hand. All beings, however low in hell, or however high in heaven, are thoroughly and perfectly comprehended by that God who is great in Zion. I do not often dwell long on this wondrous subject, because it is so high that I cannot attain unto it. I believingly rejoice, however, in the fact that our God is essentially or necessarily great. All other greatness is defined, having had a birth, a beginning, and a cause; but God's greatness was never born, never originated; it never began, and nothing in existence ever caused it. He would have been great had he lived alone in his own proper eternity, and never come forth into time. Had he never made a world, or an angel to see his face and sing his praises, he would have been infinitely and essentially great. He owes his greatness, his grandeur, and his glory to nothing out of himself. In all respects he is the independent Jehovah, whilst all worlds and beings depend upon his sovereign will and almighty arm. This glorious Being is in the church, and this glorious Lord is, in a manner so mysterious that I cannot describe it, in the humble contrite heart; for "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." How this Being, whose essence lies outside the universe and contains all worlds, can dwell in the breast of a human sinner, is one of those mysteries which the angels may well desire to look into. It is one of the articles of our faith, and one of

the articles of our feeling, and of our experience, that this great God dwells savingly in the heart of every true believer.

God, or Christ, is *great personally*. We now leave the undefinable and incomprehensible essence of God to look at the persons of the glorious Godhead. Here we have something a little more definite; but still we contemplate a mystery, and are surrounded by ineffable glory. Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh. If we drop the humanity of Immanuel, we have nothing left but abstract Deity. We may talk about the Divine persons in the Godhead; but even then there is nothing in unmediated Deity that we can believingly see or touch, and no ground upon which we can place our trembling feet as sinners exposed to God's righteous wrath. Let us see this great and infinite God in human form, and our thoughts rise and rally round him. Here we have a centre that attracts and comforts our spirits, and kindles a hope in our hearts, and which could not exist in the simple essence of Jehovah. Our dear Lord Jesus in the complexity of his person is infinitely great. He did not cease to be essentially great when he became lowly, when he became a babe, when he asked for a drink of water, when he was nailed to the accursed tree, when he was crucified in weakness, nor when he bowed his head in death. One of our poets somewhere sings respecting the wondering angels and our dying God at the sad scenes of Calvary—

“Why from these sad scenes retreat?
Why with your wings your faces hide?
He ne'er appeared so good, so great,
As when he bowed his head and died.”

He appeared in greatness when he made the world, and his glory broke forth wondrously when he spoke it into being by a word; but all Christ's greatness took another form, even a heart melting and purifying form when he bowed his head in blood, in suffering, and in death for our salvation.

Our Lord is *great officially*. Now if we cannot understand his essence, and are lost in mystery when we contemplate his person, we have something more definite when we turn towards and consider his official glory. He is a Prophet, and we sit at his feet as his disciples, and there as learners we would be found in life and death. Like Mary and others we would imbibe his spirit, drink in his word, and act or serve as his spiritual followers. He is a Priest, and we are sinners. This Priest suits our case, and we are the very beings that suit Christ, the great High Priest of heaven. There is that in his office that we want and must have, and that in our hearts that Christ must remove, and which he will remove; for he hates our sins, and loves our persons. He bled for us, and removed our guilt; and, hating the accursed thing that still dwells within us, he has sworn that he will finally pluck it up, and annihilate it, and save our souls with an everlasting salvation. He is a King, and he is great on his throne as he was on his cross; and there is a greatness in the power of his sceptre as there is in the power of his blood. Here, then, we have something more definite than in God out of Christ. That is wonderful; but we know not where we are; but God in Christ we can understand a little, and our thoughts find peace. Great God, we come to thee in Christ; for thou art a great and divine Prophet to teach our souls, remove our ignorance, and fill our minds with unctuous light. A great Priest to atone, and save, and wash, and make us whiter than snow. A great King to sway our souls, defend our persons, give us laws, command our affections, defeat our enemies, and carry us to heaven. “The Lord is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

Now our Lord's greatness is superlative. I do not speak now so much of his Divine greatness, as of his greatness as a complex person. His greatness in his complexity is superlative. There is nothing like it in this world; for the mightiest person or thing on the earth that is good and great, is but a faint, a very faint resemblance of the infinite greatness of our dear Lord; for

"Not earth, nor sun, nor seas, nor stars,
Nor heaven, his full resemblance bears;
His beauties we can never trace,
Till we behold him face to face."

An old heathen philosopher said that the bright light of a natural day was the shadow of Deity. A wonderful expression of a great thought, but a great fact. The light of nature is the shadow of nature's Lord. Then what must Deity, what must Christ be, if light is his shadow! His greatness is superlative; for there is none great as the Lord. I have sometimes thought that this great Being must look down upon his wormlike creatures men, with abhorrence and indignation when they strut and lift up their little hands and heads; and when he sees the pride that inflates their hearts, and gushes from their mouths, how offensive they must be in the eye and in the estimation of this great and glorious God! There is none great as the Lord, and compared with him there is no one great at all. To him, and to him only, can the word greatness be applied. "The Lord is great." And then his greatness is unchanging and unchangeable. He can never be greater. I speak with reverence, feeling somewhat of the marvellousness of the character of our God—do what he will, he can never be greater than he is. If he can possibly be greater, he is not now perfect. Should he make ~~make~~ more worlds and save them, he would not thereby increase his greatness; and, bless his name, his greatness can never be less than it is; for he will never forfeit it; it can never be dimmed; nothing can ever diminish it; his greatness is as immutable as his throne is firm and everlasting.

Now all this is in Zion. "The Lord is great in Zion." What does "Zion" here mean? Does it mean that Jerusalem which was the metropolis of the Holy Land, or does it mean the temple which stood in that city? God was there; but the Psalm or Psalms refer to Gentile times, and to the Gospel dispensation, and to the living church of the living God, and all this greatness—and I wish I could give you a greater idea of it—is in the church of the everlasting God.

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

And how does this greatness appear in Zion, or in God's church? It breaks forth gloriously in the very existence of Zion. It appears in the fact that there is a church, and such a church; that there is such a body, and that its character is what it is. Where is it? On this Rock will I build my church. Who spoke that word?—Jesus of Nazareth; he who had not where to lay his head. "Foxes have holes," said he, "and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Yet he said, "My church." And what did he say about his church? On this Rock, Peter, which you have confessed—Thou art the Christ of God—will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Where, says Popery, was your church before Luther? Why, it was then where it always had been. I know we have in the Word a description of Zion, and a portrait of her King; but where, literally speaking, is the church of God? It is in God's heart, and in his hands; for though it is said to be founded on a Rock, it is in the everlasting love and everlasting arms of Jehovah. Christ is in God, and the church is in Christ; all, therefore, are in God. He is great in Zion—not merely as to her existence, but as to what Zion is. She is all fair—without spot, and faultless—before the throne of God, her guilt being for ever drowned in the blood of her great Lord. Littleness, disgrace, degradation, and insignificance, have all vanished and disappeared in the greatness of her Lord. Zion gives nothing to her King, but he gives everything to her, and places and persons impart nothing whatever to Emmanuel, for all true sacredness is evermore from him. Were this chapel ten times larger, and ten

times more costly as to its architectural arrangements than it is, and filled with people, and Christ were not here, the place, the people, and the minister would possess no heavenly sacredness, for places borrow all from, but lend nothing to the Saviour. Perish the thought—that ministers, deacons, people, or places, can ever lend anything to our great Lord! All that is spiritually great in a place or in a people comes from the great Lord of life and glory. Thus Christ is superlatively and unchangeably great, and this greatness appears in the existence and character of Zion.

We proceed to notice God's mysterious connection with Zion, for in this also his greatness appears. What is the nature of this connection? It is human and it is divine. It is also spiritual, gracious, legal, and heavenly. It is altogether wonderful, being all that is good and great. The Lord is connected with Zion naturally. She is bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and he is connected divinely with her; for if he were only a man, she would soon be demolished and destroyed, and would disappear. Zion's great King is a man, and he is God; and the two natures are mysteriously united. He has placed his arms around his church, and put her into his bosom, and she is permitted to embrace her Lord, and claim a living and saving connection with him. He holds her, and his church holds him. Her salvation, however, depends upon his grasp of her, and not upon her grasp of him. Look at her perpetuity, and you will see another proof of the greatness of Zion's Lord. What is the church with regard to the world? A little garden! but the world cannot destroy it; a little flock, surrounded by wolves and lions, yet they cannot destroy the sheep. "My soul is among lions." Never fear, believer, for their teeth have been extracted, and their jawbones have been broken, as David expresses it elsewhere: "Thou hast smitten all mine enemies on the cheek-bone," and you know a lion cannot bite when his jaw is broken. And our God, who is great in Zion, has broken the power of all our enemies, or he will do so; and will extract the teeth of all our foes. Zion dwells upon the heart of everlasting love, and is destined to live till the end of time, and hereafter in a better state for ever and ever. To what is the perpetuity of Zion due? The great Lord is in the midst of her, and shall help her, and that right early.

Christ's greatness appears in Zion's connection with heaven. Zion is heaven upon earth. It is not a perfect heaven; still it is heaven below, for without the church of God, the means of grace and divine worship, there would be no heaven here at all; therefore Zion is that new state of things here of which it may be said that it is heaven in this world. Zion, my friends, is the lower street of heaven, and

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground,
From faith and hope may grow.

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

But if Zion here is the lower street of heaven, the upper street of hell is also in this world. Both heaven and hell are connected with the earth, hence here there is a measure of penal sorrow and of gracious joy, and Jacob was therefore sweetly led to say, after his wonderful dream, "God is in this place, and I knew it not. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Surely, friends, if the gate of heaven is in any way on the earth, a part of heaven is here; for the gate of a place is a part of the place itself, as the door of a house is a part of the house. If the gate of heaven opens here in this world, then we have a part of heaven below. Yes, and

"In thy temple let us see
A glimpse of love, a glimpse of thee."

I might proceed on this point, but must be brief. In Zion he manifests himself in a special manner. The world have manifestations of this great Being, but they are generally providential, natural, and common; but we desire the Lord to manifest himself unto us as he does not unto the world. There is unspeakably much that is good, and beautiful, and glorious, out of doors in the world; but the best is in Zion—in the church of God. Out of doors, we see our Father's hand; indoors, we see his heart. Out of doors, we see his general works; indoors, we see his lovely face. Out of doors, we hear his voice in the thunder, and see his glory in the lightning; but in Zion we sit at his feet, and hear the words of his mouth, and sometimes lose ourselves in happy, holy meditation. God is great in the world, but he is greater in the Zion of his heart.

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

Now, my friends, if the Lord's greatness is thus connected with Zion, and Zion is thus aggrandized and exalted, then it appears to me that the world must fare all the better for the church. God saves his church, and his church subordinately saves the world. How so? Not efficiently, and not as governing and ruling it. "Ye are the salt of the earth;" and as salt saves from putrefaction, so the church saves the world from present destruction. The church is a bulwark, and as bulwarks save cities, towns, or places from the enemy, so the church saves the world. When the church is removed, and the salt of the earth is taken to heaven, and the pillars of the earth, which are the saints of God, are removed from underneath the world; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he sets the earth upon them: when those pillars are taken away, then the world will fall and cease to exist: therefore the world fares all the better for Zion, while Zion's importance and influence are derived from the presence of her Lord, who is great in Zion. I did not think that I should have occupied so much time on the first particular; but if a heavenly wind blows, it is perhaps well not to apply the break, but permit the mind to revolve.

Let us notice in the second place that the Lord is *avowedly great*. I have looked at his greatness as a fact; now observe that this fact is avowed and declared publicly, and that by God himself. Why should he conceal his greatness? We have a special revelation lying in the midst of Zion, the leading fact of which is that which we are discussing to-night. The Lord has a church, and in that church he is great. Now his love to his people was and is so deep and mighty, that it impelled him to reveal his greatness to them. You know there is a peculiar force in love, which will open the mouth and cause its own expressions to flow. God loves Zion, and coming into this city he avows the fact that he has brought all his greatness with him. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." God said to Moses; "Tell Pharaoh that I AM hath sent you unto him." Now that denotes infinity, and the sentence is unfinished. "I am that I am." What is God? He says, I am that I am. But what is he? In the passage I have just quoted, "Fear not, for I am with thee"—that is *where* he is. "Be not dismayed, for I am thy God"—that is *what* he is. And, therefore, he is all in Zion that her circumstances can possibly require a God to be. I am with thee; therefore be not dismayed. God, by avowing his greatness in Zion, has engaged himself to bless her for ever. For what other purpose has he avowed his greatness? It is a sort of implicit engagement on his part to perform the part of a God, and since he has revealed his greatness, hopes have been kindled in our hearts, and—

"Here raise your expectations high,
'Tis sure and solid ground."

A good friend in the country died a few days ago. I had known her for upwards of thirty years. Her body is now in the grave, and her soul is in heaven; and some of her last words were, addressing a friend whose voice she recognized, "Come in, friend, . . .

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

A soul standing on this rock, when eternity is near, is a sight for the devil, a voice for the world, and an encouragement for the halting children of Zion. Raise your expectations high, for you have an infinitely great God to draw supplies from, and your hope is based on his greatness, his graciousness, and his mercy. The Lord is great in Zion, and he has avowed the fact. What has he avowed it for? For the information of all his enemies. Hell knows it, and Popes and Cardinals may know it. If they read the Bible, and they occasionally do so for their own purposes, they may become theoretically acquainted with the fact that the Lord is great in Zion. Well, God will let all hell and all Rome know it, and gnash their teeth and mix bitter cups for protestants or for the Zion of God. Let them whet their swords, and forge a thousand more; let them let them plot and plan as they will, the gates of hell, (and Antichrist is one of them,) shall not prevail against Zion, for great is the Lord who dwells there.

Then, thirdly, he is great in *the estimation of Zion*. He is first great in their estimation, and then great in their realization. No believer has low or limited thoughts of the dear Redeemer's glory. As soon as one's eyes are opened, and one's heart is broken, and repentance unto life is given, the mind has the most exalted conceptions of the blessed Christ of God. "Give me children," one said in days of old, "or else I die:" a wish that savoured, perhaps, of rebellion. The poet, however, has taken advantage of that utterance, and substituting "Christ" for "children," he puts into the believer's mouth the words, "Give me Christ, or else I die." Say, my friend, here is a sackful of gold, and if that is not enough, a sackful of bank notes which will make you rich all the days of your life. Give up your notions of Christ and religion. A thousand sacks full of bank notes would not satisfy a mind that has been convinced of sin, and that wants the dear Redeemer. All the gold, and all the bank paper in the world with the highest figures upon it, fall infinitely short of the work, the preciousness, and the glory of the blessed Christ of God. Ten thousand worlds cannot fill a heart that wants the blest Immanuel; and therefore, in the estimation of Zion, Christ is great. His claims, his authority, his atonement, and his name are great; and, feeling this, a trembling sinner prays him to say unto his soul, "I am thy salvation."

Fourthly, he is great in *the realization of Zion*. It is sooner or later realized. Look at his new creation work. That drunkard is now a sober, consistent, good and godly man; in fact, he is a new creature. Who did it? The great God of heaven and earth. There is the black and depraved Magdalene, whose nature and heart were as vile as seven devils could make them; now she is whiter than snow, being purified and meetened for heaven. Who did that? The great Lord in Zion. Then there are those adornments which are mentioned by the prophet, "He is clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness." Who made those robes, and who gave them? The Lord that is great in Zion. Oh, my friends, in Zion's realization there is none great as the Lord; and so great is he in her estimation and realization, that the world becomes little and empty before her eyes. A knowledge of Christ's greatness makes a creature great. I become great in preaching if I have high and rich conceptions of the greatness of Christ. What do you mean?—I then preach in deep humility, in childlike simplicity; aiming never at myself, but aiming to carry the minds of my hearers up higher and higher towards this great and glorious Redeemer. When I have proper conceptions of his greatness, the parts of a text appear at once to my mind, and they glitter like pieces of heavenly gold. When you have proper conceptions of his greatness, you can pray confi-

dently and comprehensively, and use such language as you cannot command at other times. The Lord is great in Zion's realization.

He is *deservedly great*. The high position he holds he has acquired a right to occupy; and as he has the highest seat in heaven, so he has a right to the highest place in the minds of his people. I wish he were always on the throne in my heart, or if he is always there, I wish he always swayed all my feelings, directed all my thoughts, and made my whole mind spiritual and heavenly. His greatness he deserves, whatever my feelings may be.

"Crown him! Crown him!
Crowns become the Victor's brow."

The angels of God, and saints in heaven, have crowned him. Oh that he might be crowned in your hearts and mine, for he deserves it well. The Lord is great in the estimation of Zion, and deservedly so. Great in *Zion's profession*. He is mine, and I am not ashamed of it. "Put him on, and wear him;" so I will. I care not for a sneering world, I will put on Christ and walk in him. There is a persecuting world drawing the sword, and getting the faggot, the stake, and the fire ready, and you will have to suffer for his sake. Be it so. He is all in all to me. I am not afraid, said Paul, to go to Rome, nor to appear before Nero—not afraid to die for his sake. That man's soul is knit to the Lord, and possesses a deep knowledge of his greatness, who can thus truthfully and experimentally express himself. Before we leave the subject, we may say that *all this has been demonstrated again and again*. You have, with mighty sorrows in your hearts, entered Zion. I do not mean this place merely, but the house of God, where this great Being lives and reigns; and by a word hell has been defeated, and the wilderness of your mind has been converted into a garden. You have entered Zion with the arrows of the tempter in your souls, and having taken your seats before this great God, everyone of those arrows has been withdrawn, the poison they conveyed has been extracted, and the wounds they made have been healed; and you have left the place in peace. You came burdened into the house of God; bowed down in body, and in spirit. Family burdens, social burdens, business burdens, and burdens of various kinds were on your mind. Still you came and took your seat. The service proceeded; a mysterious power raised the load, lifted the burden; the mind became disentangled, a holy buoyancy was felt, and for a whole hour you forgot your sorrows and lost yourself in the contemplation of your Lord. Is he not great? I choose to preach on his greatness in this direction, because I think it profitable. He is great in power, in preciousness, and in all respects. Look at aged Simeon in the Temple, with this great One, an infant, in his arms; the fear of death was in a moment annihilated, and more than that, for that was only half the blessing, his desire to die was at once increased. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Pharaoh, the great, is gone; Nebuchadnezzar, the terrible, is gone; Cæsar, the august, is gone; and popes and kings are going; but Zion lives, and her Monarch shall be great for ever and ever. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON APRIL 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

. 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. 1s. 2d., post free.)

THE ELDERS AROUND THE THRONE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 23rd MARCH, 1879.

"And round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats : and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment ; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."—Rev. iv. 4.

In the Scriptures we have God's testimony concerning the formation of the earth and the church, the old creation and the new. The first chapters of Genesis describe God's work as a Creator, and the remainder of that book represents his church during the patriarchal age. In the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, we have a full view of the Jewish church in connection with the ceremonial dispensation, while in the first portion of the New Testament we have a glorious manifestation of Christ, the great Head of all. In the book of the Revelation we behold the church of God under the Gospel dispensation ; the Holy Spirit, in the first chapter, introducing Christ and his saved people in highly figurative forms. John informs us that he was in the isle that was called Patmos for the Word of God, and that, being in the Spirit on the Lord's day, he heard behind him a peculiar voice. Turning himself to see the speaker, Jesus Christ appeared to him in the glory, greatness, and dignity of his character and person, in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, which doubtless held lights more or less bright. This was a representation of Christ as the Head of the church, and probably as the great High Priest of our profession, and also of the church itself as a seven-branched lamp under his supervision and management, it being the priest's business to attend to the lamp in the temple. In the second and third chapters we have the seven Asiatic churches portrayed in the letters which were dictated to John by the Lord Jesus, and addressed to them respectively, the last being to the church at Laodicea. Promises also were given to those that overcame the various enemies and perils mentioned and denounced, and a very precious one was made to those members of the last-mentioned body that should be victorious : "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne."

In the chapter from which we have taken our text to-night, we have a vision of the throne of Jehovah, and a symbolical representation of the Father seated thereon. John says, "After this I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was as of a trumpet talking with me which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit, and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne ; and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine

VOL. II., No. 24.—APRIL 15, 1879.

stone." It becomes us to be modest and humble while inquiring for and venturing to express the meaning of this. The great Being, however, that sat on the throne was, I conclude, God the Father; for in the next chapter we are informed that he had a book in his hand, and that the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, approached this throne, and received the volume of Divine purposes and decrees from the hand of this heavenly Monarch. Very much in this book is mysterious and deep, and its predictions and unfulfilled prophecies and promises can be explained only by time and by Divine operations. There are, however, Gospel facts lying here and there upon the surface which are comparatively plain, and the meaning of which is obvious; and, notwithstanding that my text is a highly figurative one, I take it that the great facts stated therein are clearly Gospel truths; and, having that view of my subject, I shall endeavour to preach the Gospel from these words.

"He that sat upon the throne was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." No doubt these stones were intended to indicate the infinite greatness and majesty of God, and the glory of the Divine attributes. "And there was a rainbow round about the throne." The rainbow is a token of God's covenant with the earth, and when it is mentioned in connection with salvation, it always indicates the covenant of eternal grace. There is, therefore, something exceedingly beautiful, and divinely precious and sweet, in the fact that the throne of our heavenly Father is surrounded by the rainbow of the covenant, and that all the blessings coming to us from him come through the covenant of grace, and that all our offerings to him reach his throne, and are accepted by him in a covenant way. The rainbow was in sight like unto an emerald. The colour was green, it suited the human eye; and the covenant of grace is pleasant to the believing eye of the enlightened mind, for there is an everlasting vitality, loveliness, and freshness in it. The rainbow, however, is composed of a variety of colours, green prevailing; so all the attributes of God, and all the forms of his love, are inseparately connected in his covenant, and as it is perhaps impossible to say where one colour begins and another ends, so it is impossible for us to say where the operations of justice close and those of mercy commence. We are however certain that mercy meets justice, and that grace meets righteousness, and that all the Divine attributes are beautifully and blessedly blended in that covenant which is ordered in all things, and sure, and which is round about the great throne of Jehovah. I am not this evening going into the mystery of the book of God's concealed purposes and decrees, but will look at what is stated in our text. Round about that throne, which stood at the head of a semicircle, were four-and-twenty seats, and upon the seats were four-and-twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold. Now, if there is something mysterious, there is certainly much that is most significant in the number twenty-four. Without pretending to understand all in the Revelation, we may have a few correct thoughts at times on certain portions of this book. May not the number twenty-four be intended to indicate the whole church of the living God? There were twelve tribes under the Old Testament dispensation, and there are twelve apostles of the Lord under the New. If you take the twenty-four elders as the representatives of the Old and the New Testament churches, you will have the people of God, in all ages of the world, down to the end of time. Or perhaps this number may have reference to the twenty-four courses of priests and Levites employed from time to time in the Temple. I shall not, however, insist upon these matters. I take it that these twenty-four elders are divinely intended to represent the whole church of Jesus Christ engaged in worship, and therefore they are said to be seated before God, or round his everlasting throne.

Having made these introductory remarks, and thus reached the subject, let me offer some thoughts upon the three privileges of God's people which are

indicated in our text. In the first place, *their position*—they are seated “round about the throne.” Secondly, *their character and profession*—they are “clothed with white raiment;” and thirdly, *their royal dignity*—“and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”

In the first place, a few observations on the high position occupied by the ransomed church of God—they are near to the throne of Jehovah. I wish I had ability to preach on this subject in a manner becoming its magnitude and glory. Oh that we all had greater mental and spiritual powers, to go deeper into these mysteries than we are able to go! We are, however, what we are, by the power and grace of God; and if we cannot go very far or deep into these mysteries, I hope we shall find the Gospel of God's grace if we remain upon the surface of the subject. The ransomed and regenerated church are near to the throne of Jehovah. I notice, first, that it indicates *their spiritual and experimental nearness to God*, “round about the throne.” Christian brethren, it is a great mercy and a high privilege to be near to that throne which is surrounded by the rainbow of the covenant, and to be in a state of reconciliation and harmony with the great Author of our being, that great and glorious God into whose presence we must soon enter. I would tell you, if I could, what is the distance between an unregenerated sinner and one that has been born again. I would tell you how far the one character is from the other. The world lies in wickedness, and it is in the arms of the wicked one. The unregenerate are under the law, in a state of darkness, death, and terrible condemnation; but these elders are in a position the very opposite to this. They are not in darkness, but light; they are not in a state of enmity against God, but of friendship; they are not far off, but near; hence it is said they are seated before the throne of their Maker, who is their God and Father. There was a time when they were enemies by wicked works; and there was a time when we were far off, and having no right conceptions of either God or his throne we said, “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” There was a time when we should have deeply loathed the idea of being seated in the presence of our Maker. We hated his name and his character, and our mental powers at that time would have rebelled most violently against any power that might have attempted to carry us near to the throne of Jehovah. But, blessed be God for the riches and power of his grace, we are not now in the pit, nor in a state of distance, darkness, and alienation from God. It may be that some of my hearers are unable to say that they are seated before God's throne, yet I believe that every disciple in his house to-night is able and sweetly constrained to say—

“Come nearer, nearer, nearer still;
I'm well when thou art near.”

Christian brother, you are near to the throne as to conviction, as to the apprehensions of your mind, as to your personal consciousness of God's presence; and there may have been times when you were so near to the Divine glory, that the world behind you was forgotten, sin within you was subdued, and eternity before you wore a thousand glories and attractions.

Let us show how a sinner is brought into a state of nearness to the Father's throne. Two powers are employed in this great branch of salvation, viz., the work of bringing the distant near, and of quickening the dead into spiritual life. First, there is the power of Jesus' blood, and secondly there is the power of Divine grace. There is first the power of Christ's blood. Ye who were far off have been made nigh by the blood of Christ; and this nearness is a legal nearness to God, for the blood of the Lamb has brought us from under a broken law. We have ceased to be considered as guilty in the sight of God. We are justified by Christ's blood and righteousness, which have carried us into nearness to our Maker, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. This nearness is a moral, a practical, and an abiding

nearness. But we are made nigh by the power of the Spirit, as well as by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. I set up no standard of Christian experience, nor say a soul must be held as it were over the mouth of hell, and that his apprehensions must be just so deep and protracted; but I do say that since all men are born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and are corrupt and depraved, the important change called the new birth or regeneration must take place; for except ye be born again, ye cannot enter, nor even see, the kingdom of heaven. You remember the time when the Spirit's hand was laid upon your minds, and you were arrested in your downward course, and you felt absolutely unable to take another step towards hell. This power turned your face towards God and your back upon the world and hell, and then you realized the solemn fact that there was a fearful distance between your guilty soul and God. Then you felt you were far off; and upon the knee of confession and prayer, although far off, you said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He that arrested you—

"Led you on with gentle pace,
To Jesus as your hiding-place."

He led you to the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," and washed your guilty and unclean spirit therein. He threw over you the obedience of the great Redeemer, and presented you as washed and clothed before the God whom you had hated, and you took your seat as a pardoned sinner in his presence. In this part of the text, then, we see one of the believer's high privileges, viz, his nearness to the everlasting God.

How near to God's throne is the believer found, or does he sit? He is nearer than Adam was before he fell. Man in a state of innocence was not so near to the throne of God as the ransomed sinner is; for the blood of incarnate God carries the immortal mind into a nearness to Jehovah which is ineffable and inconceivable. Not only is there perfect harmony and sympathy between the Deity and the blood-washed mind, the redeemed is bound to God by ties the most sacred and strong. He is nearer than angels ever were; and hence, whilst four-and-twenty elders are seated round about the throne, which is encircled with the rainbow of the covenant, the outer circle is composed of the angels of God. Here, then, are ransomed millions, and there are God's angelic hosts of servants, desiring to look into the mystery of redemption, and rejoicing in the salvation of men before them. And how is it that the saints are nearer than they? Jesus' blood never carried angels into their position; the righteousness of Jesus never carried Gabriel into his seat. But the atonement of Jesus carries the sinner into the position he occupies; and there is more in redemption by the blood of the Lamb than there was in those acts of creative power by which the character and being of angels were formed. Nearer than Adam, and nearer too than angels. I want to impress another fact upon your minds—viz., that these persons are made near to God. The Father is represented as seated on his throne, and yonder, far off, was the fallen world, in a state of ruin and condemnation. God did not lower his throne from its proper position to the lapsed condition of men, but opened his bosom, and giving his Son, he sent him to bring the distant near—to bring them back to him. God could not, and would not change, relax his claims, nor alter his law; and therefore he said, Son, go and bleed and die, and make an atonement for them, and bring them into harmony with my law and my moral government, and bring them back to me. Hence John informs us that he saw a door opened in heaven, and that he saw a throne there, and One sitting thereon; and that upon four-and-twenty seats were four-and-twenty elders, representing the whole ransomed church of God. They are near to God in pardon. How near does pardoning love take a sinner to God's throne. It seems to me that it lodges him in the Father's bosom. And near to God in harmony, in sympathy, in friendship, and in holy intercourse and communion. Dear Christian

friends, this appears to me to be a most important point ; the longer I live the more deeply I feel the importance of intercourse and communion with God. We live in a very peculiar day. I am not going to find fault with anyone ; for, being exceedingly faulty myself, it is not for me, perhaps, to censure others. I may, however, be permitted to say that we live in a very peculiar day. Profession is almost universal. It is exceedingly gaudy, showy, and fascinating in thousands of places ; but how much real religion, how much godliness for death and for heaven, is there in the day in which we live. Religion—heart religion—consists in holy communion, heavenly intercourse, with the God of heaven. How much closet work is there in this day ? There are, however, times when we are favoured to get near to the throne, when the world is not between us and heaven, and sin does not interrupt our peace, and doubts and fears sink and pass away, and the immortal mind comes into holy contact with the loving mind of God. Then we open our hearts, and pour them out before God, and he sheds abroad his love therein by the Holy Ghost. Oh ! for more and more of this holy and heavenly communion with God.

Let me notice, in the second place, that this is a *position of rest*. The four and twenty elders were *sitting*. They were not approaching their seats, nor were they standing against them. Seats had been formed for them, and they were resting on them. There is rest here and here only. We have some experience—(it may be shallow and limited)—nevertheless, we know both rest and toil, bondage and freedom, darkness and light ; and we are quite prepared to say that there is solid, heavenly, purifying rest nowhere else. Learning : there is no solid rest in that. Wealth : wealthy persons are among the most restless and unsatisfied of all beings. Health : thank God for it, it is a great mercy ; but we cannot find permanent rest in that. Intellect, well-trained and filled : there is no permanent rest in that. Where is rest to be found ? I saw heaven opened, and seats before God's throne, and I saw persons seated thereon. There is rest in God's presence. Rest from what ? Rest from the slavery of sin, rest from legal bondage, rest from one's own works and toil, rest from doubt and fear and unbelief, and rest from the fear of death. Favoured with nearness to God, we can sit down and rest from our works, as Christ is seated at God's right hand, and rests from his suffering and toil. What is it that rests before God ? The whole heart. "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." The understanding is at home here, here the judgment is quiet and satisfied, and here the will is sweetly blended with the will of God. The affections find a sufficient and satisfactory object before or upon the throne, and the conscience rests before Jehovah's face. The sting of guilt is gone, the burden of sin is gone, and the soul's toil and journey are, as it were, at an end, when the soul finds itself in a state of nearness to Jehovah. This is the haven of rest ; here the soul anchors for time, for death, and for eternity. Oh, precious blood ! that brings me into nearness to God ; and oh, blessed Spirit ! that whispers to my heart that I am God's child, and enables me to sit down, amid all the splendour of Deity, before the great Majesty of heaven and earth. "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our Guide even unto death." It is a position of nearness and a position of rest.

Thirdly, we have *order divine and beautiful here*. God is a God of order. Round about the throne are seats, and God's people are seated before him as his disciples, for he is their Great Teacher. "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." The Great Teacher at the head of the class, and all the pupils sitting round about him in beautiful order ; or as so many guests, God is the Great Master of the feast, and the guests are assembled and seated in his presence. A family gathering, and their Royal Father on his seat, at the head of his children, who are seated before him. There is divine order in the church, and in heavenly worship. If there is not divine order, our worship is not acceptable to God. God will not be worshipped anyhow, or in

confusion. Everything in the house of God should be in harmony with the glorious character of the great object of worship. Congregations and churches cannot be too decorous, nor feel too deeply in the services of the sanctuary. Round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats, occupied by so many worshippers, and they sat and worshipped him that sat before them—a position of order.

Notice, lastly—and then I will dismiss this part of the subject—we have the *idea of perfection*. Four-and-twenty seats, and four-and-twenty elders. A seat for every elder, and an elder upon every seat. All these were seated, and every seat was occupied by the proper person, and all were before God. Where are you, my hearers? Well, we are not seated yet before God. Let me inform you that if God has broken your heart and bruised your spirit, and caused you to feel the guilt and burden of sin—if you are coming to him with weeping and supplication, there is room for you before God, and a seat provided for you there. God himself will soon welcome you, and, in common with other ransomed sinners, you shall enter into his presence to take your seat as a grateful worshipper, with all the confidence of the blood-redeemed and blood-washed sinner. Four-and-twenty seats round about the throne.

Now, secondly, *their character*. They were clothed with white raiment. Now let me say at once that this indicates not so much heavenly glory as is represented by some writers, as the obedience and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the white raiment that is worn by all the church of God before his holy throne. The righteousness of Christ is his obedience, and is called righteousness because it is all that God's moral law requires, and his moral government demands. Every precept of the law has been perfectly fulfilled by the Great Law-fulfiller, and all its penalty has been borne by the suffering Son of God. Our great Lord was under the law three-and-thirty years. "He was made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive that which was laid up for them, the adoption of sons." The Redeemer walked, and worked, and suffered during the whole of his life, in which he gave day by day, and hour by hour, obedience and satisfaction to the holy law of God. Having reached the end of the precept, and exhausted the penalty, he took *his* well-spent life, his obedience or righteousness, and presented it to his Father on the throne, and He, having examined it, weighed it, and measured it in the balances and light of heaven, said, "I am well pleased with thee for thy righteousness' sake; for thou hast magnified the law, and made it honourable;" and then—

"Lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around."

And thus covered, clothed, and adorned, the sinner sits in confidence before God himself. If this is not how sinners are justified and saved, your minister is altogether out of the great mystery and secret. Here, however, I am trusting, for if I am a preacher—a minister of the Gospel—I am also a guilty sinner, and am not to be saved by my preaching, nor by any gift or gifts I may possess. I am going to heaven as every other sinner must go, Christ's blood and righteousness being the only foundation of my hope. Clothed with white raiment. This white raiment is proper for all positions and all purposes. This is the dress we work in; for if we work in our own, our works will never be accepted; and, therefore, let us work, and, if you will, work hard in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This dress we also walk in, and in it we likewise rest. In the scorching heat, this is the robe to wear, for it excludes the heat, as it excludes the pinching, freezing cold of winter. It keeps the soul warm in winter, and cool in summer. In this

dress one enters the field of battle, and engages in a life-long conflict ; and thus clothed, we hope to appear before God, having gathered this ready-made robe close round our departing spirits in the hour of dissolution.

Then, secondly, we have *the idea of imputation*. This is a most important doctrine, and never more so in the pulpit than in the present day. It is sneered at, but the time is coming when people will cease to contemn this great branch of grace. Now, as our raiment is *upon* our persons, so the righteousness of Christ imputed is upon the sinner. There is a righteousness that is imparted, and there is another that is imputed. Our imparted righteousness is not yet fully and perfectly developed—not universal and complete. We have sin within. The work of the Spirit within is a progressive, a growing operation, but the white raiment upon those elders was at once full, perfect, and complete. It is imputed to us by the Father, whose act is realised to us by the Holy Spirit. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ;” and we have also “access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Now, our garments come between our persons and the weather ; they cover us, coming between our persons and all eyes. The imputed righteousness of Christ comes between the sinner and the eye of God’s majesty, so that the Father on the throne, looking at the elders, sees the righteousness of his dear Son, and approves of their persons and their offerings for his sake. Hence clothed with white raiment.

Then, thirdly, this *raiment is their own*. They are not borrowed garments. God does not lend them, nor does he give them to be worn for a time or for particular occasions. The rags we formerly wore were our own, really and truly so, but they were not more truly our own than is that white raiment which we now wear in the sight of God. The Saviour made it for sinners. It is the dress the bridegroom made for his bride. He gives it to her, puts it upon her, and she says triumphantly, “He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.” Will he not recall it ? No ! He has made his righteousness for ever yours. The righteousness, the garment, the white raiment with which we are clothed, is our own. It covers the whole person, and therefore it is sufficient. See the attributes of God. Truth divine says, If those sinners are saved, and covered with a righteousness, I insist upon the dress fitting them. Nothing so beautifully and gloriously fits a sinner as does the obedience of Jesus Christ. Justice says, It shall cover them, even their whole persons ; and this robe does cover them. Holiness says, It shall be white ; and they are clothed with white raiment, “which is the righteousness of saints.” Love says, It shall be of the best material ; and she is brought to the King in raiment of needlework, and placed at his right hand in gold of Ophir. It must be strong and everlasting to fulfil the desires of the human mind. Let me only feel that Jesus died for me, and that his righteousness is mine, and I am satisfied—being covered from head to foot by his glorious robe of righteousness.

And, thirdly and lastly, *their royal dignity*. “And they had on their heads crowns of gold.” It is not, perhaps, very material whether you take these crowns to indicate their kingly or their priestly character. I see no objection whatever to use the word “mitre,” or to consider them in connection with their priestly position and work. The priest’s mitre is occasionally in the Word of God called a crown. “Well, he hath made us kings,” hence a royal crown ; “and priests,” hence a priestly crown. Thus the white raiment will be a royal robe and the robe of a priest ; “He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign on the earth.” However, here is royal dignity. The beggar is raised from the dust, the poor lifted from the dunghill ; placed among princes—even among the princes of God’s people.

Then, secondly, this dignity is *imperishable*. Dignity—for they are crowned ; imperishable dignity—for they are crowns of gold ; not a wreath of laurels, not a

crown of fading flowers, not a turban or a diadem of silk, but a golden crown—for the inheritance of the saints is incorruptible, undefiled, and can never, never fade away. It indicates *dominion*. We shall reign. Where?—On the earth. How? with him?—Yes; if he absents himself, we cannot reign. If he is with us, we reign with him; for we reign because he reigns, and because he lives we live also. Where is the saints' kingdom? They have three: an internal one, an external one, and an eternal one. "The kingdom of God is within you." The Gospel dispensation is the kingdom of heaven, and that is theirs; there is the kingdom of eternal glory provided for them on high, and therefore the elders were crowned with imperishable honour and dignity. I should like to be able to go a little further into this subject, but I must close with this thought: the subject indicates the *equality* of the saints. All seated near the throne, all clothed with white, and all crowned with gold. There may be some crowns brighter and heavier than others for aught I know. I do not, however, think so; that is not my belief. All the saints of God are equal in love divine and in the precious blood of Christ. Their dignity, therefore, their glory, their peace, and their pleasures, are perfectly equal. Their number is countless; but though there are millions of immortal minds before God's throne, their seats, their raiment, and their crowns are equal in height, purity and worth, while they for ever dwell in the sunshine of God's presence. May God command his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON MAY 14TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOM & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

* * 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE BELIEVER'S REST.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, 24th APRIL, 1879.

"For we which have believed do enter into rest."—Heb. iv. 3.

THE apostle's object in writing this comprehensive epistle was to prove and illustrate the greatness and the glory of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ, and also the superiority and perpetuity of the gospel dispensation. In the 4th chapter four distinct rests are referred to ; and we do not read it aright unless we bear this fact in our minds. In the first place, there is the Creator's seventh-day rest. God completed the work of creation in six days, and rested on the seventh from all the works he had made. In the second place, God promised Canaan to the children of Israel ; and that country is constantly spoken of as the land of promised rest. In the third place, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our atoning and saving Priest, has finished his work and entered into his rest, which is, in the fourth place, the better rest that remaineth, therefore, for the people of God. They do not by faith enter into the seventh-day rest, nor into the land of Canaan, where Israel rested ; but they follow the Lord Jesus Christ, who is gone to heaven and is seated on the right hand of infinite Majesty, and find rest, peace, and satisfaction in what he has done for them. A fifth rest I will not insist upon ; four certainly are mentioned in this chapter. There is, however, that rest which God has prepared in a better world for all his people. Now, we which have believed do enter—not into the old rest, not into the land of Canaan,—but into the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and his atoning worth and work, and find rest and peace to our souls here ; and soon we shall, having been kept by the mighty power of God, enter into eternal rest in the presence of God hereafter. The Apostle Paul argues like himself in this chapter. He says—"Seeing, therefore, it remaineth that some must enter in, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief." "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David" (that is in the Psalms of David)—"To-day, after so long a time, as it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The children of Israel had been in the rest of Canaan hundreds of years before David's time ; and yet God then spoke of entering into another rest. The apostle, therefore, says, we are not to understand David to mean the land of Canaan, because he says, "after so long a time—To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ;" and, therefore, there is still a rest remaining, and the word "remaineth" is here used logically, rather than to indicate futurity ; there remaineth, therefore, another rest—not the seventh-day rest, nor the land of Canaan, which Joshua

VOL. II., No. 25.—MAY 15, 1879.

gave the children of Israel possession of—but there remaineth another rest for the people of God, and “we which have believed do enter into it.”

I shall now illustrate the terms of the text, and not otherwise divide the subject. In the first place, we have *the “rest,”* into which the believer is said to enter. I like to ascertain, if it be possible, the literal meaning of the Word of God, or the meaning of New Testament facts in relation to the former dispensation, for we cannot understand New Testament declarations and promises, if they bear any relation to the Old Testament, unless we know the nature of that relation. “We which have believed do enter into rest.” First of all, this rest will be a *dispensational* or an *evangelical rest*, as opposed to that ceremonial state of things which was in operation for hundreds of years. This may serve to illustrate the language of Peter, who speaks in the Acts of the ceremonial dispensation as a yoke which neither their fathers nor themselves were able to bear. Yet that yoke was divinely constructed, and the burden borne under the ceremonial dispensation was altogether of God. Nevertheless, it is called a yoke and a burden; and to this I think, the apostle first of all refers when he says, “we which have believed do enter into rest.” It is not now necessary to offer a lamb every morning and another every evening; and when we fall into any sin, or are chargeable with sins of omission, we are not required by the gospel to purchase expensive victims to atone for contracted guilt. If we were now required to do this, the gospel dispensation would hardly be one of rest and of liberty. No; we are not now required to offer sacrifices, for Christ, by his one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Under the gospel we are not required to devote many weeks to a number of annual feasts; for then many persons would complain of the expensiveness and difficulties of religious services. Christian worship, under the gospel dispensation, does not perhaps cost a fiftieth part of what it cost the children of Israel to serve God. Many persons talk about the expensiveness of attending church or chapel, forgetting that if they frequented theatres and similar places, as formerly they did, ten or twenty shillings a night would not go far. Well, blessed be God, “we that have believed have entered into rest.” The ceremonial dispensation is behind us, having been for ever abrogated; for Christ is the end of both laws for righteousness to every one that believeth. Christian brethren, saints are not now required to travel a hundred miles or more to one particular place three times a year to worship God. You know the Temple in Jerusalem was the only place in which God could be publicly worshipped; for though, subsequently, synagogues were built in the land, yet sacrifices were not permitted to be offered in them. Three times a year the male population of Israel had to leave their homes and repair to Jerusalem to worship God. We have now no such lengths to go, and are not limited to twice or thrice a year. “Wherever two or three are gathered together,” there may be found the throne of grace, and also the God of heaven. Yes; the gospel dispensation is one of rest and ease, compared with those burdensome ceremonies which the Redeemer abrogated, and which were swallowed up and fulfilled in his blood and atonement. Now, I will not tarry longer on that point. I thought it necessary to make these observations, because I believed they were included in the meaning of the text, as well as in the meaning of the Saviour’s words (Matthew xi. 28—30)—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you [not the yoke of Moses] and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke, [under the present dispensation,] is easy, and my burden is light.” Perhaps my young friends—whatever my older friends and hearers may think—will not find fault with me for having introduced this topic.

Then, in the next place, the rest indicated in our text to-night is *experimental rest*. Do you say that is better? Well, if the other point tends to cast a light.

upon the subject, that is good. This experimental rest is found in Christ only, in his blood, under his obedience, and upon his atonement ; and we who have faith in him, having been enabled to believe, do enter into rest. We are helped to embrace his person, plunge into his blood, creep beneath his name, and rest upon his finished work. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth ;" and as there is nothing beyond the law but Christ, its perfect fulfiller, we, who do believe in him, enter into his atonement and are at once at the end of our legal journey, and, as weary travellers, sit down and rest in the Lord. In Jesus we are at the end of our legal toils and labour, and find rest for our souls. In him we lose our burdens, our doubts, our darkness, and our fears, and have peace with God and confidence in him. There is no rest out of him ; and there is nothing, strictly speaking, but rest in him. Whatever a person may possess, rest cannot be found in anything short of Jesus. When his dear name is dropped upon the heart, and the soul is immersed in his grace and fulness, doubts and fears and darkness are dissipated, and the believer sits down where God himself is seated, and finds rest and peace with Heaven ; "For we which have believed do enter into rest."

Now, I should say that this rest is a *new one*, and should be so regarded by all that enter it. Not to repeat what I have already said, that God rested as a Creator, and that Israel rested in the land of Canaan ; this is not the rest which Adam had in Eden, nor the rest which Israel had in Canaan, nor the rest which angels have before the throne ; for

"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace and dying love."

This rest is peculiar to pardoned, and washed, and justified sinners ; and angels, therefore, desire to look into it, wondering what it is, and what may be the experience of pardoned men. This rest is Christian rest. Christ himself is in it ; and every Christian shall, sooner or later, be with him therein. Already believers are in him, for he hath raised us up together with him, and made us sit together in heavenly places even in Christ Jesus. He bears our names upon the breast-plate of his love, and appears before God as the grand Representative of all that he died for ; and, therefore, we have entered into rest in that respect ; but this is not by faith. This rest is entered by faith ; "for we which have believe do enter into rest." Every Christian shall really follow the Lord, and draw near to that dear Friend who is the true rest of every saved conscience, and sit down at his feet, and find peace such as the world cannot give. And this rest is a *Divine one* ; I mean by that, that God himself rests here. The Father rests in the work of his Son, and Christ also rests therein ; the only Being, surely, that can, with propriety, rest in his own works ; and the Holy Spirit also rests here ; and we that believe are honoured, beloved friends, to sit where God is honoured, and to find rest for our minds, where all God's perfections are in harmony. If we are not in this position in some degree, we are not yet going to heaven. Whatever men may say, and however loudly they may talk about charity, we must be faithful. If we are not in this rest, or if we are not coming towards it, we are not going to heaven ; for that sinner can never be accepted who stops short of Jesus Christ, and finds enough out of the dear Son of God. We that believe find enough, where God finds all ; and where God erects his mercy throne and takes his seat thereon, there we sometimes find rest to our souls. This rest is, in the third place, a *conscience rest*. It is a rest for the whole mind. We read of a bed too short to stretch upon, and of a covering too narrow to wrap ourselves in, which must be a very inconvenient and uncomfortable state of things—a bed too short, and a covering too narrow. Well, this rest is not so ; the bed is long enough for the tallest sinner, and the covering broad enough for the greatest transgressor. Here conscience finds room enough ; and

all the faculties and powers of the soul are at home in sweet tranquillity and peace in the atonement of the blest Redeemer. The conscience has all it wants ; and the will, the affections, and the judgment find all they need. There is enough in Christ's salvation to satisfy the soul in relation to past, present, and future. Thank God for that rest which he has prepared for the minds of guilty sinners ; for it appears to me it is connected with both paradises—with the old one, and also with the new. This rest, or that which occasions it, goes back to the old Garden of Eden, where the fall took place and the ruin of man was accomplished ; and it goes forward to that new paradise of God which is in heaven ; so that the atonement of Jesus is retrospective, aspective, and prospective. It throws a glory upon the present, it casts perfection upon the past, and it reveals everything calculated to generate certainty upon the future ; and we which have believed do enter into all this. Oh how sweet to find this rest in Christ ! I know some persons would speak of me as an enthusiast, and laugh and sneer if they heard me dwell upon this point of Christian experience ; "but we who have believed do enter into rest," do we not ? Let me ask the question. Do we not enter into rest ? Is there not a wonderful difference between rest and weariness, peace and war, order and confusion ; a tempest and a calm ? and such a difference is realized in the mind, for religion is something more than notion—something is really known and felt. The children of God may be compared to the conies, which "are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." These creatures are generally thought to mean rabbits, which are timid and feeble animals, and have many enemies, hunting them from place to place ; but they have their refuge and home in rocks, where they are safe and secure. God's dear people are a feeble folk, who are pursued by hell and surrounded by dangers. Spiritual wickednesses in high places threaten them with destruction, and their own poor spirits are timid. They shake and tremble ; but the Holy Ghost comes down upon them and produces and actuates a supernatural principle, and draws their faith into exercise, and they run into the Rock of ages, and find themselves safe, and calm, and tranquil there ; for "we which have believed do enter into rest." And here we have all the *essential elements of rest*. I mean spiritual rest. We are washed : that is an element of rest. We are clothed for God and for eternity, and that gives rest. We are enriched—filled with all the fulness of God ; and surely it gives rest to have enough—enough for time and enough for eternity. And we are on intimate terms with God, and owe nothing except a debt of eternal gratitude, for the fact that Jesus has paid our legal debts ; and it is an unspeakable blessing to be free therefrom. I have not been tried by being in debt ; but I believe if I were, I should be a most unhappy man. I was, however, most unhappy when I felt, as a sinner, that I was lost in debt and had nothing to pay ; but I found a Surety and payment of all my debts under the cross by God's dear Son ; and out of debt, one is out of danger. Clothed for God, washed for heaven, enriched for eternity—possessing a meetness for the skies.

" Yes ! I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given ;
More happy—yet not more secure—
The glorified spirits in heaven."

" We who have believed do enter into rest ;" and that is one term.

The second is *the realisation* of this rest ; we *enter into it*. This word may be taken as indicating a point of time and a point of experience. We who have believed, said Paul—that is myself and my brethren, and the young Christian church just formed—which was very young in his days. They were believers in the new High Priest that God had sent from heaven, and in the great work which he had accomplished when he died, saying, it is finished ; and, through grace Divine, they believed what he said ; and therefore, in point of time, "they that

then believed entered into rest." They were no longer under the law of Moses, but under the gospel; not under a dispensation of types and ceremonies, but under one of substance; and that was true, heavenly, and abiding. And then again, this may be taken as indicating a point of experience. We enter into rest. I do not know that I have much to add to what I have already said; only when a person enters a house or any place, he leaves one spot for another, and sometimes one state of things for another. We have entered into rest; and I have tried to show you what we find herein; but what have we left behind us? Why, we left guilt—thank God! that is gone—that is not here. We left guilt, and condemnation, and curse, and a broken law; and all the expressions of God's anger and wrath are all outside, and we are in rest. No guilt in Christ, but pardon! No condemnation in Christ, but justification! No curse in Christ, but blessing! No death in Christ, but eternal life! No strife with God in Christ; but peace; for God and man are one, sweetly reconciled in the dear Redeemer. We enter, and you see the meaning of the word. We enter into rest and leave the world outside; and our doubts and fears, and darkness and terrors, and all those feelings that wear and embitter the spirit, producing a kind of hell within—all are left outside, and we enter into rest. We enter it. How so? I know my text says by believing; but we will come to that presently. We enter into this rest *by the Spirit*; for just as it was the work of Christ to prepare and provide this rest, so it is the work of the Holy Spirit to carry the sinner into it. A great deal is said in the present day about the facility with which men may enter into rest and make their peace with God. I believe I could as soon have made my peace with God, as I could enter into rest without the Holy Spirit's presence and power. If man can enter into rest by his own power, then the gift of the Spirit was a superfluous gift, and his presence and operations here on earth are quite unnecessary. I do not think that God steps in to do anything that the sinner himself is capable of performing. Therefore Christ said, when he was at the grave of Lazarus, "Roll ye away the stone." You can do that; but you cannot raise the dead. What man can do, God will not work a miracle to perform. Let us, however, brethren in the ministry, preach the Holy Ghost as well as the Lord Jesus Christ. "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you. He shall glorify me, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The Holy Ghost takes the believing heart and carries it over the threshold that divides rest from weariness and strife, and lodges it in the bosom of eternal love; and now, sings the soul—

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

We enter this rest *by the cross*. We do not come by the throne to the cross, although the Spirit works under the cross and under the throne. When the sinner comes to the cross, he is where the peace was made and the rest was established, and the cross of Christ is the door that opens into a large and wealthy place. He brought me, said David, through fire and through water, and led me into a large and wealthy place. And when our souls passed through the cross into the sweet enjoyment of Gospel rest, we felt we were in a wealthy and fertile place, that stretched away between our feet and heaven, and then we felt as if we should have liked to die, being satisfied that we should have gone thither; and yet we cannot always now exercise faith in God. I have sometimes wished I had died then, but then I should not have preached the gospel. Well, we pass through the cross, or the wounds and sufferings of the dear Redeemer, into this wide and fertile plain where Christ's flock feeds. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd;" for, having exalted valleys, and levelled hills, and made crooked things straight, and rough places plain, and revealed the glory of God, he shall feed his

flock like a shepherd and gather the lambs in his arms. We enter through the cross, and live a life of faith whilst we are here, between two great points—the throne of Jesus in heaven, and his cross here. On one side of the cross are curse, condemnation, and hell; and on the other are eternal rest, and peace to every true believer. We who have believed do enter into rest, and this is the second *erm.*

In the third place we have a period indicated. We which have believed *do* enter into rest. It seems then, my beloved hearers, that this rest is to be enjoyed in a measure here. Yes; and I will preach enjoyment too, whenever I can, for I love it, and believe the people of God should have it set before them in the ministry. I do not like to dwell on trouble and darkness of mind, and if I am obliged to preach on those themes, I will go all round them, and find some brightness if I can; for, after all, the sorrows of a child of God have bright sides, and it is the duty and privilege of every minister of the gospel to try and find and present them. Well, this is a present blessing. We which have believed *do* enter rest. Some say, wait till you get to heaven before you sing. No; we sing now. Stay till heaven is reached before you are happy. Yes, before we are perfectly so; but we are sometimes joyful now. Stop till you get to heaven before you speak confidently. Why so? "Hold fast your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." Why stop till we get to heaven before we talk confidently, when we which have believed *do* now enter into rest? Beloved friends, if we have entered into Christ experimentally, we have rest, and are already in the vestibule, in the antechamber of heaven. We are not in heaven yet; but we are on heaven's premises, waiting in the porch for the Lord. This is a better porch than Solomon's, and this temple of rest infinitely surpasses his, in the vestibule of which we sit, and sometimes by faith hear the songs of the glorified in the Holiest of all, and we sing—

"There is our home and portion fair,
Our treasure and our heart are there."

All that remains to be done now, is for God to open the door of heaven and call us up higher to himself; but even here, and now, we have entered into rest. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord." I do not want to die to know Christ, for I know him now; but I must die to see him. I do not require to die to know the nature of the bliss of heaven, for I know that now; having had foretastes thereof, I know how the grapes taste, and what the bliss is. I have sometimes been enabled to examine my meetness, my title, my evidences, and my preparedness for bliss and glory, and have arrived at the conclusion—Christ is mine, and I am his. "Now, we that have believed *do* enter into rest."

Fourthly, another term is to be illustrated, viz., the *means by which this rest is entered—faith*. "We which have believed *do* enter into rest." It is not entered by works, nor by Sinai, nor by the law. My friend, if there is a legalist here to-night, toiling for rest, and peace, and salvation, on the old premises, do try to believe me when I say, you cannot so get into this rest, for it is not the way into it. You remember how Bunyan represents the matter. Mr. Worldly-Wiseman meets Pilgrim, and sends him out of the way to a certain place, where poor Christian was frightened by the thunder, the lightning, and the tempest, and was almost, as it were, at the mouth of hell. There is no true rest, my friend, by works, for we only which believe—not we that work, and toil, and labour—do enter into rest. And this rest is not entered by any intellectual effort, nor by any natural operation of the mind. Logic is necessary and important in its place, but we do not enter into this rest through arguments, which, unaccompanied by living faith, have always failed to carry the soul into it. It is only by a simple, full, and heart-felt belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ for myself. I

wish I could put it before you in clearer and better forms, but I cannot. It is not by works, nor by the law, nor by intellect, nor by any effort human nature may put forth; but by faith, which is the gift of God. The existence of this faith, and the fact that God should give it, is a new covenant, and heavenly mystery, and mercy. God gives the faith, which in due time carries the believing heart up to himself, for life, peace, rest, and eternal salvation.

Fifthly, there is another point to be noticed before I sit down, and that is the *unity of all believers*. "*We* which have believed do enter into rest." The apostle Paul included Abel, and contemplated the long cloud of believers that stretched away from his day to the days of Abel, who offered sacrifice to God, and obtained witness that he was righteous. Abel did not rest upon the lamb he offered on the altar, but on the substantial Lamb of which his victim was a type and figure. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Look at the prophet Isaiah. "Surely," he says, "he hath borne our sins and carried our sorrows." He was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him. We, from Abel to the very last saint that shall fall upon the knee of prayer and cry for mercy, all meet in this one place. All the flock of the Shepherd, all the household of faith, and all convinced sinners meet on the atonement of Jesus Christ, and here they become one. All that have believed do enter into rest. There is something to my mind exceedingly sweet in the thought that our peace and happiness here are in some measure social, and that our bliss and happiness in heaven will be so too. Heaven will not be half filled—a being here, and another yonder. It is a city, and will be well filled with the saints or the family of God, and it will for ever be "*we*" there, for *we* all shall enter into that rest. So the apostle elsewhere says, "We shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air," and so shall *we* be for ever with the Lord. I was saying the other day, in the pulpit, that heaven is the consummation and perfection of Christianity. If it is so, and we have right views of the Bible, a monastic life on earth cannot be scriptural; for if such a religion be perfected and consummated in heaven, social joy and bliss will be unknown, and seclusion and isolation for meditation will be universal, for heaven consummates the religion we have down here. No; we have Christian churches here, for it is not good to be alone. All are drawn to one point—the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and we which have believed surround that throne and the Lamb as the great centre of unity for ever and ever. Here we may notice two or three things. We have the great central object, the Lamb in the midst of the throne. This throne of the Lamb is in the centre of the universe, and round it are glorified spirits. Round the glorified spirits are glorious angels, and down here are we who have believed, while the outer circle is composed of systems and beings of which we need not speak, while the Lamb in the midst of the throne is God over all, blessed for ever. Another point will be, if the rest we enter here by faith is so sweet, what must it be *to see the Lamb*? If we who have *believed* enter into rest, what shall we feel and experience when we *see* what we now believe in! We shall see him as he is. Now we believe in him; but then we shall see him, and all those eternal things also in which we now believe.

"If such the sweetness of the stream,
What must the fountain be!"

And lastly, this speaks a word to every minister of the gospel. "*We* which have believed do enter into rest." There are four or five classes of characters. There is the world that lies in wickedness—wearied; they need rest, but do not want it, and do not know where to find what they need. Hence theatres are built, and dancing-rooms and abominations for all kinds of characters are brought into existence, because the world wants rest and pleasure and do not know where they are. Then there are convinced sinners; they want rest, and do not

know where it is to be found. Brethren, tell them "we which have believed do enter into rest." And then there are some, many thousands, who are in Christ, but do not rest; go after them, and comfort and console them, for they too have a right to the gospel of God and heaven. There is another class of Christians, and I am often among them, who wander as a bird from their nest, who forget their resting place. David was sometimes among them, and said, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." If I envy my brother, I leave my resting place when I do so. If I complain before God, and murmur at his proceedings, I leave my resting place. If I rebel, or cherish some sin, I leave my resting place. But there must be a returning to it, for though the child of God sometimes wanders as a bird from his nest, when sin, and envy, and guilt prevail, yet he shall return with wounds as deep as his first were, and with as many hot and bitter tears as those he first shed. Let us preach, then, to the wanderer, and to the backslider, who are hewing out to themselves cisterns which can hold no water. It is our duty and our privilege, beloved brethren, to preach the sinner's rest, and God's method of conveying him into it. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON JUNE 14TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers,
at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

* * 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

"APPLES OF GOLD IN PICTURES OF SILVER."

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, 22nd MAY, 1879.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."—Prov. xxv. 11.

THE Word of God is most comprehensive; and, in one or two respects, it might be said to be exhaustively so. Its comprehensiveness results from the fact that it is God's word, divinely inspired, and that it came from his throne and from his mind. It has something to say to every class of human creatures. In it we have information concerning angelic beings, good and bad; concerning the old serpent, the devil; and also those angels that fell not, but kept their first estate: but God's chief object therein is to address all classes of human sinners respecting himself and his claims. It is a singular fact, and one which should not be lost sight of, that the Word does not say much about Adam's intercourse with his Maker before he fell. That he then held intercourse with God is a fact; and that he had confidence, humility, holiness, and happiness in his Maker's presence is doubtless true: but what his prayers were, if he prayed, we do not know; for none of them are recorded. Probably he did not pray; for it seems he was not a needy creature, and, being full and complete, was it necessary that he should pray? Of this, however, we know nothing, for the Word of God is silent on that point. Again, we know not what songs he sang to his Maker. We are sure, however, that he was a grateful and an adoring creature as long as he was pure and upright, and that he blessed and praised his great Creator's name. The Word, however, is exceedingly concise and brief, as to anything like a description of Adam's life in the Garden of Eden; but the whole, or nearly the whole, of it relates to man as fallen—sinful, lost, and ruined; and therefore it speaks to all classes of sinners. It describes the unregenerate and ungodly—their life, their course, their experience, their friends, their enemies, their death, and what their eternity will be. It speaks to regenerated persons in a state of legal bondage; also to saints walking in light and liberty with their God. It says much to heavenly soldiers in the conflict, fighting the battles of the Lord; and much to all that are tried and tempted by the devil. It speaks to all those minds that are filled with fear and tried by unbelief. It addresses babes in grace who want and must have the sincere milk of the word; and also young men in the family; and we and our aged friends thank God sincerely, that it has precious promises for long-tried believers, to God's saints that are not, in one respect, far from the grave, and, in another respect, not far from heaven. The Word of God, therefore, is truly comprehensive; and, I say again, almost exhaustively so; for every character appears to be described. The various features characterising every individual, or every class of sinners, and all the marks of saintship, are

VOL. II., No. 26.—JUNE 15, 1879.

indicated in Divine truth ; so that it is next to impossible to misunderstand the literal meaning of the surface of the Word of God.

The text which I have read this evening is illustrated elsewhere in this chapter. In the 13th verse we have these words : "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him ; for he refresheth the soul of his masters." Our text may be connected with this. Again, in the 20th verse, we read : "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart." So that it is not always seasonable to sing songs ; indeed, it is never seasonable to sing songs to a heavy heart. There is a time to speak, and a time to be silent ; a time to sing, and a time to pray ; a time to reprove, and a time to comfort ; and, "As apples of gold in pictures of silver, so is a word fitly spoken." And then again, in the 25th verse, we read : "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." But we have to do this evening with the 11th verse, on which I will endeavour to make a few observations ; and I shall call your attention to the *subject indicated*—"A word fitly spoken ;" and, *secondly, to the illustration thereof* : "It is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

In the first place, I shall make a few observations on the *subject indicated* in our text—"A word fitly spoken." Now, if some persons occupied the pulpit, you would have a sermon, or part of a sermon, in all probability, upon rhetoric, and be entertained perhaps for half-an-hour on the importance of speaking with propriety, both in conversation and in public speeches and preaching. It is not my intention this evening, I assure you, to say anything about the rules of rhetoric, nor the rules of grammar ; neither shall I say anything about speaking logically. When we hear a person speaking in public, it is no doubt very agreeable and proper that his words should be well chosen, that they should run, as we have it in the margin, "upon his wheels"—that they should fit into each other with propriety, and, if possible, with beauty ; but I shall not preach on rhetoric to-night, nor deliver a lecture on logic ; neither shall I discourse on eloquence. These are good and proper in their places ; but I want, if possible, to call your attention to something which I think is here and now still better. I am a preacher of the gospel, and, I hope, a minister of the Lord Jesus ; and if I were to deliver a lecture on rhetoric, on eloquence, or oratory, my words would not be fitly spoken, inasmuch as I am standing before my fellow men as a minister of Christ, determined to know nothing but Jesus the crucified One. That is all I will say on that point.

Let us take notice of three things in connection with the subject. The first is the *Word itself* ; and the second is the *speaker* ; and the third is the *circumstance mentioned in connection with it*. There is not only a word and a speaker ; the word is represented as fitly spoken. In the first place, let us look at the word indicated ; for I believe Solomon had his eye upon eternal things, and that the gospel, which is God revealed, and the experience of his people, were in his thoughts ; and therefore I shall try to preach the gospel from our text to-night ; and here I will observe that our God is not a concealed but a revealed Being. He might have concealed himself for ever ; for aught I know, he might have made angels and concealed himself from them, and he might have made man and concealed himself from him ; but having created angels, he resolved to make them happy with his presence and the light of his countenance for ever. And, having made man, and resolved to people the world for ages with human beings, and to impart a measure of happiness to them, notwithstanding their transgression and fall, our God has revealed himself in his works and word ; and he reveals himself also to his people, in a manner which gladdens their spirits and rejoices their immortal minds. And as God is not concealed, but revealed, so neither is he an inactive Being. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "I will work," says he, "and who shall let it ;" Whoever may be idle, God is employed. Whoever may be inactive, God is always working. Whoever may be indolent, the eternal God is always executing his purposes, fulfilling his

promises, and saving sinners. And then God might have revealed himself, for aught I know, without speaking to us : but he has been pleased to declare his will, and words of gracious truth have fallen from his lips, which have been recorded in that blessed book called the Bible ; and as cool waters to a thirsty soul, so are the words of God to sinners who are sensibly guilty, and aware of the fact that a Substitute is needed, and that, without an interest in him, they must for ever perish.

Looking at the gospel for a few minutes, we notice first—that our God has given us *many glorious doctrines*. These doctrines of grace are like apples of gold in pictures of silver, and all of them are fitly spoken. They are expressions of his thoughts, declarations of Divine facts, and manifestations of his heart of love and of the love of his heart ; therefore they are heavenly and golden fruit, that refresh the heart and enrich the mind ; and, being recorded in his word, they are like golden apples in silver baskets, or baskets made of silver wire. These golden apples shine in the gospel, and hungry souls contemplate them prayerfully ; and when the rich doctrines of grace are unfolded and applied by the Spirit, the heart is nourished, the mind is elevated, the soul is purified, and the sinner is Divinely enriched and profited. Some persons despise doctrines, and tell us we should not preach them. Beloved friends, it appears to me that these are some of the richest fruit that grow upon the tree of life ; some of the best and the most precious expressions of Divine love in the Word of God. What do you think of the everlasting love of God ? That is golden fruit. What do you think of the fact that he has obtained eternal redemption for us ? There is fruit from the tree of life, placed upon the gospel table by God's own hand. What do you think of the free, and full, and eternal forgiveness of sin ? And what do you think of the perfect justification of the persons of God's people ? What do you think of that doctrine which is so hated in the present day—the final perseverance of the saints ? Let me put it before you in the form in which Christ has expressed it : “ My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” “ He keepeth the feet of his saints.” “ The Lord preserveth the souls of all them that fear him.” Having begun the good work, he will carry it on and perform it until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, these are Divine thoughts and truths, and Divinely expressed ; and they are like golden apples to everyone that knows the plague of his heart, that mourns under the temptations of the devil, that longs to know whether he or she be a son or a daughter of the Lord God Almighty.

Let us pass away from that, and take notice of the *promises of the word*. The doctrines are as golden apples ; and I am certain that God's promises are also rich, enriching, and sweet. The promise is a divine encouragement ; it tells me what God has bound himself to do, where he has bound himself to be, and what he has bound himself to become. The promise looks into the future and casts a light upon to-morrow ; for although it is said, “ Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth ; ” yet one thing is certain, and that is—should we see another day, we shall have the help, the presence, and the blessing of the Lord, our Heavenly Father. We are told that we cannot see the way before us, and that we know not “ what gloomy lines are written for us, or what bright scenes may rise.” The promise tells us, however, that if there should be deeper floods than any we have ever been in, God will be with us there ; and that if there should be hotter fires than any that have ever scorched us, they shall not burn us ; and that if we should meet fiercer hostility than any we have ever encountered, the Lord will not leave us, nor forsake us. The promise tells us that if we should die lingeringly, we shall be safe ; and that if we should die suddenly, we shall die in Jesus and be for ever blest. These are apples which earth does not produce, but which grow on the tree of life. All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us. Well, look at these golden apples in silver frames or baskets, if you please. Without being fanciful, what do you think of the names and titles of Jesus, the

Lamb of God ? What do you think of the various characters he has assumed for saving purposes ? Is he a Shepherd, a Brother, a Prophet, a Priest, a King ? How rich and costly is all this ; how divinely constructed are these receptacles, so to speak, of this heavenly fruit. All the promises of God. Look at them through this workmanship of eternal love ; they are all golden and precious in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Passing away from that, however, notice the *invitations of the Word*. Our Lord says—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There is an invitation and a promise. Do you know which is the richer of the two, or the better of the two—"Come unto me," or "I will give you rest ?" We cannot have the latter before we have received the former ; and, having received the invitation, we shall also surely receive the yea and amen promise of our Lord. When that invitation comes from the lips of Jesus, it is a word fitly spoken ; it just suits our case ; it fills the heart and draws the mind to the Lord Jesus. "Come unto me," and the weary one responds--

"Lo! glad I come; and thou, blest Lamb,
Shalt take me to thee as I am."

And, having reached the Saviour and fallen at his feet, there comes the fulfilment of the promise—"and I will give you rest." As apples of gold in pictures of silver, so are words fitly spoken by the Lord our God. Then there are the precepts of the word, and its exhortations also ; for God forbid that I should ever avoid them. If we love the doctrines of grace, and the promises of love, and the invitations of sovereign mercy, we love also the preceptive will of God, and shall every day consult those golden rules of heaven. They are good fruit, and grow upon the Lord Jesus ; and I pity the taste of that professor of religion who tells me and others that to preach the preceptive will of God is indicative of a legal spirit. Well, if the invitation says, "Come," the precept tells us where we must walk and how we should live, and guides and directs us in paths that are difficult, intricate, and dangerous. Now, my friends—putting a few other facts together—the Word of God is exceedingly comprehensive. First, we have Divine cautions: "Watch and be sober." Be careful—there is danger there ; and a cautionary word, fitly spoken, how good is it. Every word of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for correction in righteousness. We have Divine rebukes and reproofs: "What is that to thee ?" So spake the Saviour to Peter on a very solemn and interesting occasion. Mind your own business, which is that of following me. The Saviour can reprove as well as comfort ; and God has words of rebuke for his children, as well as words of consolation. Parents find it necessary to rebuke and reprove, as well as to comfort and console, their children. Then we have words of Divine comfort—"Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God." Thus, in the oracles of truth, we have combined doctrines, promises, invitations, precepts, exhortations, cautions, reproofs, rebukes, corrections, and the comforts and consolations of the Holy Ghost. These words, having come from the lips of God, are fitly spoken ; and being sometimes sweetly applied to the heart, we feel their divinity, and rejoice in the fact that the words of Christ are spirit and truth.

Now, in the second place, *the Speaker*. A word fitly spoken implies, of course, a speaker or speakers. I shall mention two or three. In the first place, the Speaker is *God himself*. Applying the text to God, we must say that his words are fitly spoken in relation to himself and in relation to the persons he addresses. Sometimes persons speak in a spirit that does not become them, or that is unworthy of their name, or their manner is inconsistent with their reputation ; but God is always like himself in his words, and always speaks in a manner that is worthy of himself. Our word towards you, says Paul, was not yea and nay, for the promises of God are not yea and nay—they are all yea and all amen to the glory of God by us. God works, and walks, and thinks, and saves, and he speaks like a God. The sheep hear Christ's voice, and they know it ; and the

children hear their heavenly Father's voice, and they know it. The voice of the Father and the voice of the Shepherd is never mistaken. The soul is not left in doubt, for God's word is experimentally heard. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Has God given you a promise? He means to fulfil it. It is like him to do so. It would be unlike the great God to disappoint your hope. Has God revealed a doctrine to you, and given you a measure of its grace? He intends to give you all that doctrine indicates; for it would be unworthy of Jehovah to reveal his saving will, and then leave his child so blessed in eternal darkness and sorrow. No; the word is fitly spoken in relation to himself. And then the word God speaks is spoken in a fitting or God-like manner to the sinner and to the saint. If I may so express myself, he speaks fittingly to sinners in a manner that is proper to himself, to sinners, and to saints. But we pass over that, and notice, secondly, the work of the Holy Spirit in this matter, for we cannot omit that, and I think my text includes it. Have you ever tried to apply the word to your own hearts? to extract milk from the promise? and by your own power to squeeze the gospel honeycomb and force sweetness out of it? If you have, I may remind you that you have always been disappointed. There is milk in the promise, but the power of the Holy Spirit is necessary. There is honey in the honeycomb, but the Spirit's presence is absolutely required. I take a text, or my mind alights upon one at home; I go round it, over it, and under it, but cannot get into it so as to discover its glories. I believe there is much in it, because it is the Word of God. I believe it is fraught with Divine riches and excellencies, but I cannot get at them, I have no power. I am dependent on the Holy Spirit for light and power, and for holy experience. Well, sometimes the Holy Spirit takes the promise and lays it on the mind, then one is satisfied it will be fulfilled. Sometimes the Spirit takes a text, an apple of gold, and puts it into the power of faith, and we eat and bless the name of the Lord our God. At times our hearts have wants so large that the world cannot supply them. The Spirit takes the everlasting truth of God at the proper hour, at the proper moment, and in the proper place, and applies it to the needy soul; and the heart is at once filled, and sings—

"Enough, my gracious God,
My soul triumphant cries!"

When the tabernacle was built, God gave Moses very particular instructions concerning all its parts. The tenons were to fit the mortices, so that nothing should be loose, or imperfect, in that Divine residence. We may apply this, I think, to the promises of God, and the truths of the gospel. God will have our wants sufficiently broad and deep for his word, and then the Holy Ghost brings the promise and fits it into the requirements of the soul, and the immortal mind then sweetly feels that God speaks fittingly, and in a manner that is worthy of himself. All this, I know, is sneered at as enthusiasm; nevertheless it is Divine truth. We are feebleness, and "power belongeth unto God."

Lest we should not get through the subject, let us pass on—not higher, but lower; and from the greater to the less—speaking, in the next place, of *ministers of the gospel*. A word fitly spoken by them, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. This is one of the greatest trials of my life, because I think I feel the importance of preaching the word in the spirit of the gospel, or in that manner in which God requires his servants to preach it. I know I have to speak to the tempted, the poor, the needy, the sick, the sorrowing, and the faint. I know I have some of all grades of experience, whether the place is filled or otherwise; and it may be so to-night. What one requires, another may not require, for there are no two saints who walk in precisely the same path—I mean as to circumstances, and therefore a very important responsibility rests upon a minister of the gospel, and most important is his work. You may have taken your seat in the house of God with a burden on your mind, and with deep wounds in your

heart. You may have left a home filled with affliction, or a counting-house or a shop in a state of confusion which almost overwhelmed you. As you went to the house of God, you hoped you might in some measure rise above it all for an hour, or obtain a blessing that would enable you to bear the pain and the affliction until deliverance should come. You hoped you might mount up with wings as an eagle, run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. The minister took his text, and proceeded with his sermon: the Lord was with him; the text caught your ear and touched your heart, and made you feel a little, and as the subject was unfolded; you almost or quite forgot the house, the bills, and the confusion, and you rose above the power of unbelief and the influence of worldly things, and sitting at the threshold of heaven, as it were, you spent an hour in hallowed and refreshing communion with God. "Apples of gold in pictures of silver." God is an apt speaker. The Holy Ghost is an apt applier, and ministers of the gospel are sometimes helped to speak a word in season to those who are weak, and faint, and weary. Let me just mention one thing more in passing, which relates to another class of speakers, even to all of you—I mean to all who have believed through grace—"Wherefore," says Paul, "*comfort one another with these words.*" A minister's words are interesting and important: but you walk home from the sanctuary with a brother whose mind is burdened and whose spirit is depressed; and it may be that a little Christian conversation may prove a word fitly spoken to him. We cannot talk too much about eternal things. I love Bunyan's spirit and method as expressed in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. He represents Pilgrim saying to his companion, The way is dangerous or uninteresting; let us divert ourselves by spiritual converse. So he addressed Hopeful, and generally the themes were, how the Pilgrim's path was entered, and what were their feelings and personal experience. My friends, we cannot do better than run in what may be called the twofold road: first, the road the Saviour made for us to heaven, the way of eternal salvation; and, secondly, the way of holiness in the King's highway, which is regeneration—how the Saviour made a way for us to heaven, and how the Holy Spirit saved our soul in Christ, the sinner's Substitute, the atoning Lamb of God. A word fitly spoken by the Father, "I have loved thee;" and by the Son, "It is finished!" and by the Spirit, and by ministers of the gospel, and by Christian brethren among themselves.

Now, thirdly, the *circumstance mentioned*. I have said a few things about the gospel; secondly, about the speaker; and now the circumstance connected with it: "A word *fitly spoken*." This relates to *its matter*; for, whatever we may say, to whomsoever we may speak, if what we say is not what is required, it is not a fitly spoken word. What should, and what must it be, but the eternal truth of God? This is never out of place in connection with our eternal state and standing before God here: the everlasting truth of Jehovah must always be the matter of the word. Secondly, this embraces the *manner in which one speaks*. If this is improper, the word will not be fitly spoken, neither will it resemble an apple of gold in a silver picture or basket. God's matter is Divine, and his manner is divinely loving, and lovingly Divine. "Speak the truth," for that is proper, but speak it "*in love*." You meet a poor fellow creature in the street, and give him sixpence or a shilling, but not with a very good grace, which he detects in your countenance and in your manner. He thanks you for your gift, for he sorely needs it. The matter of the gift is fitting, but it would have had a marvellously different effect upon him if your manner had been cordial and sweet. Some persons have gone into the pulpit and preached good gospel, but what has been said of their manner and spirit? God's truth is sometimes thrown about like flint-stones, and if the truth is to be compared to a stone rather than to an apple, let it resemble the smooth stones that David chose out of the brook when he went and fought Goliath. Let us not break Divine truths into sharp and angular pieces, and throw them about angrily, and call it "*faithfulness*." My dear friends, assuredly if we have so grand a theme to dwell upon as the gospel of God, we cannot imbibe too much of its heavenly spirit in preaching to our fellow

men. A word fitly spoken, then, is proper as to its matter, and proper as to its manner. Then, thirdly, this *includes persons*. Shall we preach the law and its curse to the saint? It is not fitting so to do. Condemnation to the saint is not fitting nor proper; and comfort and consolation to the unregenerate are equally inappropriate! Let the broken-hearted sinner, the weary traveller, the burdened holy mind, have the consolations of the gospel, for it is fitting and becoming. *Time*, also, is an important element in fitting words. There is a time to speak, and a time to refrain from speaking. I do not know whether Job's three friends were right or wrong, but I am inclined to think they were right. They went to comfort their friend, and finding him in the dust, covered with sores, and scraping himself with a potsherd, they sat down against him seven days and seven nights, and did not speak a word, for they saw that his grief was great. They had something to say; but seven days and nights elapsed before they spoke, after which a conversation ensued between them. There is a time to speak, and to speak words of comfort too. I have known you many years, and have seen some of you down in the depths of sorrow and bereavement, affliction and trouble of various kinds, and I have learned how impotent and utterly helpless I am when the heart is brimful of sorrow. There is just then no room for words of comfort. Letters expressive of condolence and sympathy are written to bereaved friends, and they are received and opened, and their author's signatures are learned; they are closed and laid by for a time with, "It is very kind, but we cannot read them now." Yes; time enters into this circumstance; for when the heart is overflowing with bitter grief, silence perhaps is best. It is important that we should know what we should say, how we should say it, and when we should speak. "A word *fitly* spoken." Then, lastly, the idea of *place* enters into this. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you:"—that is, lest the dogs turn and rend you, and the swine trample the pearls under their feet. I confess, (but in this I may be wrong, I do not speak positively, and I may differ from many of my friends,) I confess I think that loud talking about religion in promiscuous or miscellaneous groups of people is not speaking fittingly. If I am in an omnibus or a railway carriage with a friend, and spiritual and heavenly things become the theme of conversation, I like to keep those matters wholly with my friend and myself. I think there is such a thing as casting, in this respect, our pearls before swine, and that which is holy unto the dogs. There is a time and place for everything. In the pulpit there should be nothing but Christ. Among Christian people, Christ should be the subject of conversation; but when you are among enemies, Pharisees, the world, and sneerers at good things, let religion be seen in you, do not conceal it, but forget not that there is a time and a place for every purpose under heaven, and that "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." So much for the subject.

Perhaps, though time is gone, I may give you a mere outline of the *beautiful manner in which this subject is illustrated*—"like apples of gold in pictures of silver." I may not quite know the meaning of this. By "apples of gold," perhaps golden balls are meant, or gold formed into the shape of apples and put into silver baskets. That I do not think, however, is the meaning. Some suppose that apples painted in gold, and placed in white pictures, was the writer's idea; but neither do I think that is the meaning. It should, I believe, be taken literally—like apples of gold, such as Canaan produced an abundance of, as we have our golden pippins and golden rennets. We cannot eat gold, and I think the text indicates something that may be eaten as well as seen; something that will do us good as well as please us; something that rejoices the heart as well as pleases the eye. Gold is for the eye, the hand, and the pocket, and not for the sustenance of nature; but the apples here spoken of are such as may be eaten, while they are rich, and precious, and valuable as gold. But what is the great truth taught by the simile? That is what we should desire to

know. Just this, my friends, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," because it is *very rare*. It is not common, as golden apples in silver baskets are seen only occasionally. It is easy to return a blow for a blow, and easy for one hard word to follow another; but "a soft answer turneth away wrath." There is a spirit in man that is not always flexible and amiable, and we must confess that occasionally there is a little warmth in our feelings from which proceed words which are not perhaps altogether such as should be used under certain trying circumstances. Well, words fitly spoken are not common, like apples of gold in pictures of silver. If preachers always spoke fittingly as to both matter and manner, we might have different congregations; and if at church meetings we always used proper words in a loving spirit, we should have no falling out, and no unholy divisions; and if in families there were nothing but words of truth, love, and tenderness, they would be happy little groups. The text indicates something uncommon, occasional, and rare.

Then, again, it indicates *premeditation and arrangement*. Golden apples in silver baskets—not a multitude of them brought in a sack and shot down anyhow. My friends, we cannot always treat subjects in an off-hand manner. No; God thought before he spoke; therefore we have Divine beauty, system, and order from him; and whatever may be said against a studious preacher, I do not think a man will be useful if he does not study to shew himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. He gathers these heavenly apples by the help of God the Holy Spirit, and then places them in a basket in due order, and so brings them to God's house and places them on his table. It indicates arrangement.

Thirdly, it is *suggestive of beauty*. And is not the covenant of grace beautiful and lovely? So beautiful are these apples of gold in pictures of silver, that the angels desire to inspect them. And, fourthly, it indicates *worth and preciousness*—not ordinary apples, but golden ones. Something for the taste, and to nourish and refresh the heart, and something also to enrich the mind. Apples for food and enrichment, even durable riches and righteousness. Some of these apples of gold I have placed on the table; eat, for you are welcome. I must now leave the subject, having trespassed some minutes on the time. May the Lord command his blessing, causing his word to dwell in you richly, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON JULY 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

* * 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE PROMISE OF LIFE IN CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 22nd JUNE, 1879.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Tim. i. 1.

SALVATION is the greatest work of the Triune Jehovah. A great work was performed when myriads of angels were brought into existence, and qualified to live in the presence of their Maker, and to sing his worthy praises. The creation of the world and its fulness, was a marvellous work; and so, also, was that of making man, and placing him in the Garden of Eden in a state of natural, legal, and moral perfection and happiness. God is continually at work; for "My Father," said the Lord Jesus, "worketh hitherto, and I work." God's operations in connection with nature will continue as long as nature endures, and the mysteries of providence will proceed as long as there are creatures here. Divine providence is ever worthy of God; but it is only a part, and not the whole of his fulness, his glory, and his majesty. When, however, we contemplate salvation, we see his greatest, his most glorious work; that production of his hand and of his heart which will never be destroyed, and which will for ever reflect his highest praise and glory. It was indeed great to make a world, and to make man; but it was greater far to redeem sinners, and to save them honourably and eternally. Everything that is really spiritual, whether it relates to gifts or to graces, is intimately connected with the great scheme of mercy, and its glorious execution by our Triune God. The apostle Paul sometimes contrasted himself with what he had been previous to the grace of God taking possession of his heart. He never forgot that he was by nature a guilty and lost sinner, a proud Pharisee, and a bitter persecutor; and he wished that others with whom he spiritually came into contact might never forget their former condition, but contrast it with their state as sinners saved by grace. Therefore he says to the Corinthians, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?" If we differ from our fellow creatures, we owe the favour to God, and should ascribe it to sovereign mercy; for we are debtors to Him. If there are beneficial distinctions between ourselves and others, let sovereign favour have the glory. If our bodies or our minds are healthier and more vigorous than those of other persons, it is of sovereign mercy; and if we have new hearts of flesh and not the old hearts of stone, our salvation is due to the undeserved friendship and love of God; and, therefore, Paul well says, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?"

VOL. II., No. 27.—JULY 15, 1879.

In the verse which we have now read for our text, the apostle connects his person, his religion, and his office altogether with the scheme of God's mercy and with the gospel of his grace. He describes himself by his name, by his office, and speaks of both in connection with the gracious and saving will of God. He describes himself by his name. Originally his name was Saul—Saul the sinner, the pharisee, the persecutor, the enemy; but now it is Paul the saint, the preacher, the follower of Christ, and Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ. Saul the pharisee and enemy was dead and buried, and if I may so speak, risen again. Those words had been fulfilled in his experience—"I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Therefore, when the enquiry is made, Where is Saul the pharisee and persecutor? There is no such being, he is a new creature. Where is Magdalene the harlot? There is no such character now in existence. Where is cruel Manasseh, who, hating both God and his people, caused the streets of Jerusalem to flow with blood? He is not to be found, for he is dead and risen again. These all are forgiven sinners, having received that white stone and new name written which no person but its receiver knows. Saul the persecutor is dead with Christ, and risen with him, and is now walking in newness of life; he is no longer a pharisee, but sensibly the chiefest of sinners, and Paul the saint and the apostle of Jesus Christ. He was not an ordinary minister, but the great apostle of the Gentiles, and all this, he tells us, he was by the will of God, which was according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, or as it might read, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, *with respect to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.*" The apostle connected his salvation, his apostleship, and his preaching, with the promise of life; for had it not been for that, the gospel and gospel ministers had never been necessary.

It is my intention to endeavour to offer a few observations this morning on God's promise of life in Christ Jesus; and I want, in the first place, to direct your attention to *the favour indicated, viz., life*; secondly, to *God's method of securing and communicating it to sinners* by promise—"the promise of life in Christ Jesus; and, thirdly, to *offer a few reflections upon the subject.*

In the first place, let us look at *the Divine favour indicated—life.* "The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." Life is a very mysterious, perhaps the most mysterious of the creatures of God. There are many inanimate creatures, whose form, office, and importance in nature, proclaim the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of God; but there are also millions of animated or living creatures, and life in all its subjects, connections, and aspects, is a Divine and wonderful mystery. It appears to me, that notwithstanding the progress of philosophy, and the discoveries science is making, that life remains a mystery, and that it will so remain till the end of time, and it may be in eternity itself. We live, and others live, and we see the fact or evidences of the fact; but what life is creatures cannot tell. We have to speak this morning, not of any ordinary order of life, but of one which is extraordinary and momentous—"the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now, Christian brethren, this life, whatever it may be,—and we will enter upon no speculation here,—whatever it may consist in, *has its source in the heart of Deity.* I beg attention to this fact, and I pray for grace to attend to it myself; for it is most important, and when properly and deeply realised, the heart is sweetly warmed, and the affections are lifted and wondrously captivated. It is truly wonderful that the poor creature occupying the pulpit this morning should possess anything in his soul that came from the heart of Deity, and wonderful that the beloved friends sitting before him in God's house should have a secret something in their bosoms which came up from the depths of eternity, and flowed into their minds from the heart of the eternal Jehovah. All other life, my friends, is the production of God's hand. Vegetable life, animal life, and intellectual life, and life in all natural forms, is produced and perpetuated by the hand or the power of God; but the life of the believer,

and of the church of God, comes not merely from his hand, but from his heart; and it flows from the bosom of Deity, being represented as the river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. I do wish that in the present day we had more light and more life, for how miserably many Christians live! which is owing, no doubt, to their spiritual weakness and darkness. There are some persons, however, who talk very loftily in connection with the life of God, and they live, if we are to believe them, up to their privileges—their feeling corresponding to their faith, and their experience soaring as high as their belief; and, therefore, in every respect, we are informed they live upon the Rock, and the place of their defence is the munitions of rocks. They are never hungry, for they are always eating heavenly manna; and they are never thirsty, for they are always drinking heavenly water. They are strangers to night, for they are children of the day, and always live in the sunlight. This is tall talk in connection with the experience of the people of God. I do not think that the apostle Paul ever expressed himself in a way that led his hearers to conclude that he was always free from darkness, and never depressed. He proclaimed the great privileges of the church of God; but complained of his own inability, and of the general inability of God's people to live up to those privileges. I am not, however, to preach my experience or my feelings as the gospel of the grace of God. "I tell you the truth in Christ, and I lie not." Your religion, your life, that principle which is in your hearts, came out of the dateless love of God himself. Your body was formed by his hands, and the life that animates it came from the same source, and your soul was formed by God, for he is the Father of spirits; but that secret, heavenly, mysterious religion which is seated therein, came from God as your covenant God and gracious Father, and is declared to be in Christ. Its source is the heart of God, and Jesus Christ is its great repository, for "It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell." Thus we have life coming from the Father's heart into the person of his dearly beloved Son, and in order that sinners might receive it, they were united to Christ and constituted his body; therefore, it is said, we are members of his flesh, of his body, and of his bones; and as the members of the body are influenced by the head, and are supplied with blood from the heart, so every member of the mystical body of Jesus Christ is influenced by him, and receives life from the depths of Deity, through Christ the Great Head of the church. The church of God is the great, the everlasting receiver of this glorious life. You say, however, That is too general and vague—why do you not descend to particulars? Let me do so, and observe that every penitent sinner is a living person, and every spiritual praying one has eternal life in the sight of God. Everyone who is a subject of holy and heavenly desires, having a humble hope in the mercy of God and in the merits of the dear Redeemer, is a living soul, and if the preacher understands the matter, was very early blessed with life *in* Christ, and having received life *from* Christ here, he shall have life *with* Christ in the world to come, and may sing—

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

Let me just notice two or three things here. In the first place, *the nature of this life is spiritual*. Now, I have made use of a word the full meaning of which I cannot give. This life, however, is spiritual, and its possessor is a spiritual person. Perhaps the unregenerate, and those who have not studied divinity, as some express themselves, imagine that the life promised in the Gospel is a prolongation of natural life in the world to come. Perhaps the idea generally entertained is that this life resembles, and is indeed, the present one, being that which we now live in the flesh, and that the glorification of the soul simply means

its removal from this world into a higher, a nobler, and a better one, and that souls will live there, possessing the life which they now have. Well, that would be a prolongation of the present life; but that is not the life intended here, for saints are new creatures panting for a higher state than nature ever knew, and when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part only or imperfect shall be done away. Whilst we are here, we shall have to do with that which is natural; but when we are in heaven, we shall have done with natural things for ever. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. We shall be perfectly spiritual in heaven, as we are partially spiritual here. We shall not carry our natural affections, our natural prejudices, our natural failings with us into the heavenly world; and the carnal, and the sinful will be done away. No, Christian brethren; "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new." It is not a prolongation of the present life, but a new one; it is another, a higher life that was promised to millions by the Father in the Lord Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world. Neither is this life that which Adam possessed in the Garden of Eden, for salvation does not restore sinners to Eden, but takes them to heaven; it does not consist in the return of man to that which he lost, but to what is far higher, and richer, and better. The life of Adam in Eden was great, pure, and wonderful; but the life we have in Jesus Christ is higher and more wonderful than that. It is Christian life, the life of Christ himself in the world of glory; and, therefore, it is spiritual. That which is natural is too low for God's gracious purposes—too low in its source, in its nature, in its operations, and too low as to its end and goal. The child of God is taken into a new state, he is raised into a higher sphere than nature ever occupied, or Adam ever thought of before he became a fallen sinner. We stood high in our Eden state; but we stand higher in the Lord Jesus, the great Head of the church and the great Prince of life. Brethren, have we this new, this heavenly, this Christian life? If so, we stand high in God's universe; for, and I hardly know how to illustrate it, it is as far above natural life as intellectual life is above that of the animal. The distance between the lower animals and man is great, but perhaps there is a greater distance still between a natural mind and one that is spiritual. God assumed our nature that he might save it; and now, wearing it, he can communicate a higher life than Adam had before he fell and became a transgressor—"the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus."

Let us notice, secondly, *the perfection of this life*. Having dwelt upon its sources and nature, now let me observe that it is perfect. I hope you may be able to attend to this point, for it is really important; this life is perfect, not as to its development, or its exercise, but as to its nature and qualities it is now and here perfect. The new-born child possesses a perfectly natural life, though undeveloped; and the life of a newly regenerated soul is perfectly spiritual, and will never be more so in its nature. Its powers will grow, its heavenly qualities will more vividly appear, and its holy excellencies will become stronger and mightier, but its nature will never be purer or holier than it is now. God imparts it to the hearts of sinners, where it is surrounded by that which is impure and unclean; it retains, however, its own essential purity whatever unholiness it may be surrounded by. "That which is born of God cannot sin." The new life in a child of God is in its nature as good, and I speak reverently, as is the life of Christ in heaven. "The promise of life in Christ Jesus." He therefore is the head, the fountain, the spring of it; and the stream is ever like the spring, the branch is ever like the root, and the effect is always like the cause. If, therefore, you have living Christianity in your hearts, you may say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The *growth* of this life cannot be finally prevented. Hence we have the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. We have first the babe, then the young man, and then the father in grace and in Israel. The little hand of the child is perfect at first. Its five

fingers, its palm, and all its component parts are perfect; but it grows larger and larger, and stronger and stronger, until it reaches its natural proportions; and the life which is in Christ, and which comes from him, constitutes, when first communicated, its receiver a babe, who afterwards becomes a young man, and then a perfect man in heaven, if not a father in the church of God on the earth. Growth is inseparable from life, and perhaps there is nothing in existence much stronger than life. I do not know, or profess to understand these mysteries; but I think and believe that life is one of the mightiest forces in the universe. I have seen a tree, some of whose boughs had been sawn off, bound with iron hoops, thick and strong, send out tender twigs protruding from under the iron bands. Tender though they were, they were strong; and mysterious indeed is the strength and force of life. Your shoe wears out, and if its sole were steel instead of leather, in time that too would wear out; but the living foot unshod, and well used from year to year, wears not out: it lasts as long as life. There is strength in life. Vitality is a mysterious power, which we may apply to the life of God in the Christian's heart. Brethren, the heavy world comes down upon this life sometimes, yet it is not crushed; the powers of hell come against it sometimes, yet it is not destroyed. There is a vitality, an elasticity in it which are peculiar to grace. It is life promised in Christ Jesus. This life circulates through all the mind, it enters all its faculties and powers, and it flows into all its graces; so that the faith, the hope, the love, the joy, and the patience of a believer are living graces. Aye; there is life even in his tears and his bitterest sorrows, if they are the result of his union to Jesus. Life promised in Christ Jesus.

Let me notice thirdly, *that this life is eternal*. It is not liable to death. You know that this is one of the dogmas as they are called—one of the doctrines which distinguish us from many other professors, the generality of whom believe that spiritual life is mortal, and that its immortality is contingent on ourselves, and that if we do on one hand, and refrain from doing on the other, we shall on that ground live for ever. Now, my brethren, what we believe—and we thank God for it, is the fact that this life cannot die, else it would not be better in that respect—let me speak with reverence—than that which we lost in Adam. We had a great and blessed life in Eden, but it was losable. And now God has given us a better one, and one that is eternal. “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish.” “Always harping on that!” I thank God we have such a string, or such a fact to dwell upon. Why should not we harp upon it if it is a fact? Did Christ mean what he said, or is the language figurative? “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Therefore, friends, however unhappy we may be at times, we shall, by Christ, live spiritually on the earth, and soon in a better world for ever and ever. Eternity is the appointed and necessary duration of the life that was promised to us in Christ Jesus, the Lord. Let us now dismiss this part of the subject and proceed to notice.

Secondly, *God's method of securing and communicating this life to us*, “According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.” Now this constitutes God's people the children of promise; and hence they are called the children of the promise and not of the flesh. The son of Hagar, Ishmael, was born after the flesh; but Isaac, the son of Sarah, was not born after the flesh, but was the child of the promise. And a son of God is a child of Divine promise, and not of human power. As human power did not produce Isaac, so it has nothing to do efficiently with the spiritual birth of a sinner. A child of God is born again according to the promise; God is sure to fulfil his word, and when he does so there comes into Christ's kingdom a new creature, that new creature is a babe in grace, that babe is a child of God, and that child is an heir of the promise of life, an heir of the God that made the promise, and also of heaven itself, the inheritance reserved in heaven for him. Now this is represented as being in

Christ. "According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." Does the apostle mean that the life or that the promise is in him? Does he not mean that both are in him—the life and the promise also? All the promises in him are yea, and in him Amen. And then again it is said—"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;" so that Christ is the Great Head of Grace, and holds all the promises of our God, and possesses all the life of his church. Now in the 21st Psalm there is a very interesting word—"He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." I like to contemplate our Lord; and you know I am quite a Puritan, although I live in these modern days and times—I like to contemplate our Lord as viewing the chosen ones in the glass of God's love, and loving them himself, he asked that they might be his bride and possess eternal life for his sake. "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him." Well, Christ having received the church and requested the Father to give him eternal life for them; the promise thereof was given, thus Christ holds all, and is all for ever. This is, in my belief, God's method of mercy; and though David's language is somewhat unusual, it is a correct and beautiful representation of the saving transactions that occurred between the Father and the Son,

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

I will, Father, that they live for ever;—and he gave us life in Christ, his Son, before he spread the starry skies. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God in respect to God's promise of life in his dear Son, Jesus Christ. The promise might be considered as to its *earliness*—before the foundation of the world. Its *nature*:—oh, it is Divinely free, irrespective of everything in the creature. Its *absoluteness*. Its fulfilment is contingent upon nothing but the faithfulness and power of God. Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Its *revelation*:—God revealed it first in Eden by word of mouth, and then gradually by prophets in the Old Testament, and by Christ and the apostles in the New. Its *proclamation*:—I am one of the inferior heralds of the cross, and hope I have been sent to open my mouth in the great Master's name, and it is my duty, privilege, and business to preach, not to offer, the promise of life. I offer nothing, but preach the promise of life in him. Christ does not offer life, for he is bound to fulfil the Father's will, and communicate the life that he promised. Thus

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

Let us not fear because we are called Calvinists. I do not care for the name itself, but let us not be afraid of being so called. I pray that the Lord would raise up and qualify good and godly men to go forth into the world and into the vineyard to defend the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and take fast hold of those things which seem ready to die—I mean as to a *believing profession* of them. These things are either truth or error. If they are error, I am in a solemn position; but I have, however, ventured all I am as an immortal being upon this method of salvation; and so far as this promised life in Christ is concerned, I am as satisfied as if I were already in heaven. I am not always satisfied as to my interest in it; but as to this truth I believe it is rock, and if my soul be found in him I never can be lost. The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.

When and how was this promise fulfilled? It was fulfilled by the incarnation of Christ. "I am come," said Christ. What for? to make it possible for us to live? No. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And when he died, there was a fulfilment of the promise of life. "It is finished!" the life giver said, and went to heaven to demand our persons, for we shall live through his death. A few years ago an arrow from the throne of God entered your heart—it was dipped in the blood of Christ, and carried

eternal life with it, and left that holy principle there. "I live; and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." That is God's method of communicating it. Thus, first, I have endeavoured, briefly, to say a few things on the favour—life; and secondly on God's method of securing it to his people and communicating it to them.

My third branch was some *reflections upon the subject*; but I have left myself only a few minutes for that. In the first place, this promise of life is God's *principal promise*. It is the prime, the first, the fundamental one. All other promises are based upon this. Having promised us life,—it was necessary that he should give us something more, else how was this one promise to be fulfilled? Having promised life, he engaged that we should have the Spirit, and that he would never leave nor forsake us, and that he would be a very present help in every time of trouble, and that all things should work together for our good. Without these and other blessings, this promise would be nullified or falsified. All the other promises rest upon this one, and their fulfilment is necessitated by it. All God's other promises surround this, which is the grand central point of our salvation. Then you perceive, we have life in all respects if we have it in this way. We have it in the Father's purpose, for the promise is an expression of it. We have it in the promise, and we have it in and through the death of Jesus Christ. Thus we have life in Christ, life in ourselves, life before time, life in time, and life after time, even for ever and ever. Now go and live up to your privileges if you can. You have now a flickering spark of life in your breast that is supernatural and divine, and that must exist as long as Deity lives, notwithstanding its present feebleness. Go and sing and never doubt again. Ah, we shall do so by and bye, when we have put off mortality and left our sins for ever behind us. That is the first reflection I have to offer.

Then, secondly, *the operations now going on by way of fulfilment of this promise*. What is now going on in heaven in relation to it? "He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by him." "I will, Father, that they be with me where I am." Life is promised to them, and they must have it. What else is being done there? We leave much for want of time, and observe that a river of water of life is always flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, making glad the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. The angels have been marshalled for service. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?" Some of you are seventy or eighty years of age; and although I *may* go before you into eternity, you *must* soon be there. How many have reached heaven whom we knew and loved when they were here, and what shall we say about them? Living souls are always arriving there, from the east, the west, the north, and south,—some from this place and some from that. The gates of glory are open, the mansions are ready, and the living people of God are entering—and so the promise of life is being fulfilled. What is being done down here? Churches have been formed, ordinances have been given, the Christian ministry has been instituted, our deacons are employed, aye, and our Sunday school teachers—let me include them—are at work, and all these operations are connected with God's fulfilment of this promise of life in his dear Son. Success depends not upon our operations, but upon the blessing of God; yet what an honour it is to have a hand, however small, an instrumental hand in the fulfilment of this great promise of eternal life. Some one said to me—I believe it was one of the speakers at our Sunday school meeting—"One of the addresses you delivered, some years ago, in the gallery, to the Sunday school children, was made a blessing to the soul of a young person." Thus, friends, there is something done in the church of God, in fulfilment of the promise of eternal life.

What is going on in providence, which is subordinate to grace? Providence is carrying the world along with it, and its operations fulfil the behests of grace. All things are so arranged that they work together for good to the living children

of God. What is going on in the world? "Princes decree justice." He is King of kings and Lord of lords." He raises the monarch and casts him to the ground again. He permits various systems to come into existence—even Anti-christ—and suffers them to remain for a time, and then destroys them. Then there are the temptations of the devil, which may be viewed, so to speak, as an indirect means in the accomplishment of God's will. Brethren, you see that persecution has had an important hand in this business. Consider the Philippian jailor. Paul was persecuted, sent to jail, and his imprisonment resulted in the salvation of the jailor and his household. And the disciples at Jerusalem were scattered abroad by the fires of persecution, and then they preached Christ everywhere. Here is the promise of life—the prime, principal promise—and many operations are going on by way of fulfilling it. Well, what further shall we say? Why even this my brother,—if there is a little life in your soul, the whole of this great promise and all the others are yours, and they must all be fulfilled. Sing, then, if you can :—

"Yes; I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given:
More happy, yet not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

Notice, once more, that God gives all he requires. If we must do this and that, and possess this and that—even truth in the inward parts, God has promised all :—"In the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom." What does God require in us? Holiness is required. He has promised conformity to Christ, and said we shall be like him; and the Holy Ghost is at work within in connection with this matter. Heavenly mindedness is necessary. He will make us heavenly minded. The old covenant requires perfection, but gives us nothing. The new covenant requires perfection, and gives it to us for ever. The order of the two covenants is reversed—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. In the old covenant the precept precedes the promise, *Do and live*. In that covenant the promise is conditional, and follows the precept. The promise of life in Christ Jesus is—*Live and do*; not, *Do and live*. "I passed by thee, and thy time was the time of love, and I said unto thee, *Live*, and thou becamest mine." Then I said, *Go and do*. The old covenant says, *Do*, and curses us for not performing what is required—it requires perfection in us, and finding us sinners, it condemns and leaves us; but while the new covenant says *Do*, it gives us life and power to do the will of God. According to God's Word, the new covenant requires not less than the old; but whilst it requires perfection, it provides it for us; for by it we are made alive and perfect in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord give his blessing on these remarks, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON AUGUST 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOM & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

** 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE DESERTION OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 20th JULY, 1879.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Psa. xxii. 1.

OUR God is infinite, and therefore unsearchable; and his ways in nature, providence, and grace are past finding out. The government of God is deep, sometimes dark, and always mysterious. All the great facts connected with it are important to himself, and to all the creatures of his power. It is certain that suffering is a most important element in his government of nature and grace, for it has existed in this and in another world ever since angels and man fell; and since the creature cannot expiate his own guilt, there must be, according to our views of the nature of sin and of the character of God, suffering for ever, unless sin be otherwise removed. In that world of darkness and punishment which we are taught to believe exists in the universe of God—there is nothing but suffering, and the suffering experienced therein is the natural and necessary outcome of that terrible thing, sin. In the world in which we are now living we suffer, and find ourselves surrounded by suffering, and God is accomplishing his purposes thereby. By the sufferings of the wicked he asserts the claims of his law, and the demands of justice, while he fulfils his merciful decrees by the sufferings of his dear people. "Every bullet," as one has said, "has its billet;" and there is a time and a season "for every purpose under heaven." "Afflictions," we are told, "do not spring from the dust," nor do they come from chance. Our life's minutest circumstance is guided by the eye of God. Afflictions, therefore, are very important in the government of God, since by their operations he executes his righteous and sovereign will. If the sufferings of creatures generally, and the afflictions of God's people specially, accomplish great purposes, what shall be said, and what ought to be said, concerning the woes and sufferings of God's beloved Son? It is a fact that the ransomed in heaven were sufferers here. I have, now, no desire to discuss the point that not a few that are before the throne were called away from the world very early. As a rule, all who are now in glory were sufferers and mourners here below; and even the Lamb himself in the midst of the throne was once a sufferer and a mourner in this world. Christ, the glorified Head in heaven, and the happy members of his body there were once sufferers here, and now we are filling up the afflictions of Jesus Christ. The ransomed church of God will be a suffering people till the end of time,

VOL. II., No. 28.—AUGUST 15, 1879.

that is it will be so if we have correctly read, and if we properly understand the word of Divine truth. We have not, however, this morning to say anything about the sufferings of fallen angels or of lost men; neither have we much to say about the sufferings of God's beloved people. We are to direct our attention for a short time to the greatest of all Sufferers, the incarnate Son of God, our great Immanuel; and to the greatest of all sufferings—those profound depths of sorrow and woe into which he descended for the purpose of saving his beloved bride. I take it that the words of my text are the words of Christ himself. He used them on the cross; and it is supposed by some writers that he then repeated the whole of this Psalm. Whether he did so or not I cannot say, it is nowhere recorded in the word. It is certain, however, that the Saviour quoted the words which form my text this morning: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Let me first call your attention to *the Saviour's desertion*; in the second place, let us look at *the confidence of Christ in his desertion*; and in the third place, let us try to learn a few lessons from both these facts. The Saviour's desertion—"Why hast thou forsaken me?" The Saviour's confidence in darkness—"My God, my God;" and from these two points we may learn a few precious and important lessons.

Now, first, a few observations on a theme which I do not well understand, and which I shall never be able to fathom or explain, viz., the marvellous desertion of the Lord Jesus Christ by his heavenly Father. The experience indicated in my text was altogether new to Jesus. He had been in his Father's bosom, and before the foundation of the world he had lived in the light of his heavenly Father's countenance. He said in the days of his flesh—"You will leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, "because the Father is with me." But when he had reached Calvary and had been nailed to the cursed tree, for three hours we are told darkness covered the earth; and during that solemn, important, and dreadful period, the Lord Jesus Christ experienced something which he had never experienced before. His Father hid his face from him, and left him in darkness, such as no being had ever been in before, and then he uttered these wondrous words—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Let us, however, in contemplating our subject first enquire into the *cause of this desertion*. It is a fact that God deserted Christ, that he left him for a time; and since God has a reason for everything he does, and for every step he takes, there must have been an important reason why he left his beloved Son when he was hanging on the tree. What was the cause of that darkness, or the reason for that solemn desertion? It was owing to the fact that Christ was intimately and solemnly connected with sin and sinners. Had he not been connected with sin in some very close and mysterious manner, it would have been unrighteous on his heavenly Father's part to forsake him. I hope I am speaking feelingly and reverently, for I feel that I am on a very solemn subject, and to ascribe unrighteousness to God, even conditionally, seems to be a very solemn sort of phraseology, and yet I am not afraid to repeat it. If Christ had not been very closely connected with sin, it would not have been right or just on God's part to desert him. If Jesus had not been in some mysterious manner connected with sinners, the vile and guilty, I cannot see how God could have consistently deserted him; but "the Lord had laid him the iniquities of us all"—"He was made sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He that was made sin appeared before God as the great Head of the church, and the responsible Husband of a fallen bride, a ruined wife, or as the great Substitute and Surety of countless millions. He then represented all that shall for ever appear in heaven and sing his praises there; and he represented, not only their persons but their character. My friends, do not suffer your thoughts to glide swiftly

over that fact. Let them tarry upon it. Jesus represented you and your character, your crimes, and your guilt, for the Lord laid it all upon him; it was transferred from the principal, that is from the sinner to the Surety,—from the guilty themselves to the Lord Jesus; and when sin had been thus imputed to him he was treated as a sinner, and as the real representative of countless millions of transgressors, in whose place he stood. He was regarded as the sinner, having voluntarily engaged to bear sin and to be punished for it, he was found in the sinner's position. And banishment from God being the penalty of sin, the holy God deserted him: for one charged with guilt cannot stand before God's face, neither can there be favourable connection between a holy God and a guilty being. The guilty must be banished from God, and—pray do not misunderstand me—as Christ had become guilty *by imputation*, (for he was not personally so, but had taken the sinner's place,) he stood, so to speak, at this time in a place that was altogether new; for he was banished as it were from his heavenly Father. The Lord turned his back upon him, or he turned away his face from his darling Son, loathing the abominable thing which was upon him. He loved the Sin-bearer, but he hated the sin that was upon him. He loved the Substitute and Surety; but the evil with which he was loaded, the guilt which had been imputed to him was infinitely loathsome to the eternal God, and, therefore, he turned away his face from the Sufferer. As there can be no spiritual light in the absence of God, when the Father hid his face from Christ he was left in darkness most deep and dense, and he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," even that which was upon Christ. The holiness of the eternal God necessitated this desertion. He contemplated his Son as loaded with sin, and his purity obliged Jehovah to leave him until he had put away the accursed thing by the sacrifice of himself. Holiness cannot bear the sight of that which is evil, and, therefore, it turned away from Jesus. Justice is too high and glorious to change; therefore it was bound to smite, and hence God turned his face away from Christ. The law of God can never be repealed, and it demanded perfect obedience, which had not been rendered, and it, therefore, cursed him for the disobedience which he had made himself answerable for. This, my brethren and sisters, is your way into peace, your way into salvation, your way into the presence of God in communion, your way through death, and your way into the world of eternal glory. Well, that is all over. God will hide his face no more. Penal evil is for ever at an end, and the flood-gates of eternal grace have been thrown up, so that when the Redeemer returned exonerated from blame, and freed from sin and guilt, and said, "It is finished," then justice set wide open the gate of heaven, and threw up, so to speak, the sluices of eternal salvation, and there came rolling down into this poor world and into sinners' hearts, through the wounds of the Crucified One, eternal life, eternal salvation, and the earnest of eternal glory. I said at the commencement that suffering constituted a very important element in the government of God, and surely the sufferings and pains of Immanuel viewed thus, are a most important fact in connection with our salvation. We have our joys from his sorrows, our pleasures from his pains, our honour from his degradation, our riches from his poverty, our life from his death, our heaven from the fact that he bore the torments of hell for his beloved church and people.

"Pause, my soul, adore and wonder—
Ask, oh why such love to me?"

It is said of certain persons that having reached Calvary they sat down and watched him there. May it be your privilege and mine to live on Calvary and rest there, watching our dear suffering, bleeding, dying Saviour. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But let us notice, secondly, *the nature of this desertion*, as we have tried to set before you the cause of it ; and here let me observe that no spiritual union whatever was dissolved when Jesus said, "Why hast thou forsaken me ? For instance, the two natures in our adorable Lord were then as closely united as ever. The God did not leave the man ; his humanity was not left alone when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" Had the God-head of Jesus deserted his humanity on this occasion and in these depths, there would have been only a mere man under the awful load ; and the sin, the curse would have crushed him. No ; he was a complex person : Immanuel—God in our nature when he hung on the tree, and when his heavenly Father deserted him. There was no dissolution of the union that existed between himself and his Father. When his Father hid his face from him, God did not cease to be his Father, the union between the two persons, the Father and the Son, was not then snapped asunder or broken. None of these important unions then gave away, and blessed be his name, his church was then in his hands, their names were then on his heart, he then appeared as their Head and Representative ; and, though he hung on the tree and was alone as far as his Father was concerned, he pressed his bride to his heart. Many waters did not quench the everlasting love of his soul. The Father and Christ were then one, the humanity and God-head of Christ were then one, Christ and his church were then one. But a certain union was then dissolved, and a very terrible bond did then break and give way. "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." When the Redeemer said, "It is finished," the union that had existed between the church and her guilt was dissolved, then that awful connection ceased for ever. Christ carried the guilt of his bride away into the land of oblivion and forgetfulness, and came back untarnished, bringing with him his beloved people, and saying, "Here am I and the children whom thou hast given me." Though this desertion did not involve the dissolution of the important union between the Father and the Son, yet it did involve the dissolution of that union that was ruinous, and which would have destroyed us to all eternity had not the great Redeemer been deserted. But, further, what was the nature of this desertion ? It was *penal*. Let us not forget that though God sometimes leaves us, or we feel as if he left us, that when he hides his face and we are in darkness he is absent for corrective and not penal purposes. God leaves, or seems to leave his children to chastise and set them right in relation to some great and important point or points, but there was nothing wrong, nothing to correct in the character of Christ. The person, character, and doings of the Redeemer were perfectly acceptable to his heavenly Father. He did not desert him for personal reasons, but, as we have said, because sin and iniquity were upon him, and penal darkness must follow sin and guilt. God, therefore, in hiding his face from Christ inflicted the curse upon him. This was the nature of the desertion. It was the infliction of the curse. At that hour *God* was dealing with his Son. *Men* had dealt with him ; they had scourged him, and he opened not his mouth ; they had buffeted and blind-folded him, and said, Prophecy who is it that smote thee ; and he was dumb : they had thrust a crown of thorns on his head, and cast an old purple robe upon him, and nailed him to the cross, and he opened not his mouth ; but when he was on the tree, and there was universal darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour, and he was an infinite distance from God, bearing the accursed burden of sin, then he was smitten with the curse and all the wrath that was due to the sin that was upon him, and he spoke, and said, "Why hast thou forsaken me ?" This desertion was penal, and not corrective. When man stabbed and wounded him he was as a lamb led to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth ; but when his Father performed this terrible part of his work, then the sufferings of his soul became intense and marvellously deep. It was something

which had never happened to him before, and then, not when man smote him, he uttered this humble and submissive complaint, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" My friends, the curse fell on him then, the flames of Divine wrath then enveloped him; and whilst he was in the very depths of his sufferings the whole was brought to a crisis by the fact that God turned away his face from him.

The *necessity* for it. It was necessary that sin should be carried away into a land of oblivion and eternal forgetfulness. This was beautifully typified by the scapegoat. The sins of Israel were ceremonially transferred to the goat, which was then led away by a proper person into the wilderness, into a land not inhabited—that is how it is expressed. And Christ engaged to receive by imputation the sins of all his Israel, and to carry them away into a land not inhabited. Yes, and he fulfilled his engagements, and returned from that uninhabited land exonerated, full of honour, having made for himself an everlasting name, and said, "It is finished," and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost; and, meeting Mary a day or two after, in his resurrection-body, he said, All hail! all health! Mary. The dreadful curse is ended, and the glorious work is done. Christian brethren, this is all our salvation, and, as far as I am concerned, I hope I can say, It is all my desire. Here I desire to live, and more and still more of this wondrous form of grace and expression of love I desire to experience. Here I hope to die, on this blest atonement, this glorious, this finished work of my now exalted, enthroned, crowned, and reigning Immanuel. The desertion of Christ was necessary. Then when Christ returned from this uninhabited land and cried with a loud voice, saying, "It is finished," the bitterness of death was past, and I want my friends to bear that fact in mind. He came back, having carried away our sins, and left them where God could not see them—that is to say, he had wholly removed guilt, he had exhausted the curse, and condemnation and ruin had ceased to exist; and when he emerged from the darkness and returned from this uninhabited and uninhabitable land, then the bitterness of death with him was past, and he gave up the ghost, for his suffering was over. The pain had been experienced, and all that was penally terrible in connection with death had been met and exhausted, and then his soul which had been left in that deep darkness he gave up, saying, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These appear to me to have been the last words he spoke on the cross. He cried with a loud voice. Oh he did not die as mortals die. Do you hear them cry during their last moments with a loud voice? Nature is exhausted. Speaking is, as a rule, almost, if not quite impossible, and if reason is on its throne, and the powers of the mind are healthy and comparatively strong in death, and one does then express his feelings, it is in a whisper, the faintest possible, and friends bow themselves to catch it. But Christ had conquered death before he died; unstung the monster and divested it of its power before he gave his soul up into the hands of his heavenly Father, and hence, a minute before he died, he said, with a loud voice, "It is finished." Now, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The extent of it. I think, perhaps, as time is going we must pass over that, and notice the *duration* of this desertion. How long did it last? We read of three hours' darkness. What Christ passed through during those three hours men and angels will never wholly know. No being ever stood where he was when he said, Father, "why hast thou forsaken me?" and no being, or worlds of beings could ever stand beneath what he then bore.

"My soul, one portion of that ire
Had scorched thee with eternal fire,
Which spent its terrors there."

How was it that it lasted only three hours, when we are taught to believe that the

darkness experienced by the wicked is everlasting? In Christ's experience it was not everlasting. He went quite through it all in a few hours, which was owing to the infinity of his person. Had he being only a creature he would have lost himself, and all that he represented; but the Sufferer, the deserted one, was the God-man, an infinite Being; therefore that which was bottomless to mere creatures was not so to him, and that which required an eternity of suffering in them, was passed through in a brief period by the great Immanuel. It is said, that just before morning the darkness is the most dense; and so just before the morning of eternal day with the blest Redeemer the darkness was most dense. It seems that Christ descended gradually into those terrible depths. How far he came when he left his Father's bosom and appeared in the manger; he condescended to work with his hands, and so sanctified labour, for it was part of the curse, "Thou shalt eat bread in the sweat of thy face," and Christ turned the curse into a blessing. His poverty was great, and the temptations he experienced were deep. At length he appeared in the hands of the traitor, Judas, and of the soldiers; then he was condemned to be crucified by Pontius Pilate, when coming to Golgotha he said, "Now is your hour and the power of darkness," and taking down all the barriers he laid himself bare to all. There he was exposed to all that could destroy sinners, and God could inflict for sin. "Now is your hour and the power of darkness." It was their hour, and they made the most of it. As the hour was closing, however, God hid his face from him, and then Christ was at the very bottom of his sufferings. Lower he could not go; and having reached that terrible point he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This terminated this desertion, and now it is all over. The Sun of Righteousness is risen from the dead. "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." The awful night is ended, and eternal day has dawned. It is called the day of his power, and the day of salvation; and we having been saved are the children of the day and the light. In darkness we may be, and sometimes shall be; but our darkness and desertion can never be penal, for Christ hath borne all the curse away.

Secondly, a word on *the Sufferer's confidence*: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." I scarcely know how to speak on this point; but let us look at it first, briefly, *in relation to himself*. "My God, my God." His faith, and trust, and confidence did not give away when his Father left him. Do you not see that if Christ's confidence in his God had then given away, his character would thereby have become imperfect, and our salvation would have been imperilled, or impossible. The faith and confidence of Christ in full and vigorous exercise were always essential to his character. It would have been a failing, a fault in him to doubt. Unbelief in any measure in the heart of Jesus would have unfitted him for his work, and have been offensive to God; for unbelief, and doubts, and fears are evils. A weak confidence giving way is an evil; and had Christ's trust been shaken, negative evils, at least, would have appeared in him, and God would have ceased to accept his sufferings. No; when he was in the deepest distress, and in the densest darkness he held on his God, and cried from amid the torments that filled and surrounded him, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" David was the man after God's own heart, but when God hid his face from him, and plunged him into sorrow and trouble, he said, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?" All that was tolerated, so to speak, in David, though he was a great man; but such words would have been unworthy of Jesus; and had he thus expressed himself, there had been no gospel for us to-day. No; he held fast when God forsook him. My God, my God, I am forsaken,—but why?

Secondly, look at the confidence *in relation to the believer*. Our dear Lord is to be regarded not only as our Saviour, but also as our pattern and example. Suppose his confidence had left him in the depths of his sufferings, what kind of a pattern or of an example should we have before us now but an imperfect one? But it is not so, for in him we have a perfect Sufferer, and a perfect example of patience, trust, and prayer in suffering. Our standard is perfect. Friends, though we are imperfect and unable to reach that high standard, yet I am glad it is so high and perfect. I would not have it lowered, because of my infirmities and inability to reach it. I see on the cross an all-sufficient Saviour, and a perfect pattern, and example of patience, prayer, and trust in suffering. I now fall before my Lord, praying that I may have fellowship with him in his sufferings, and that I may be helped as a sinner to lean on his merit, and as a child of God to imitate him all the days of my life.

We might look at it, thirdly and lastly, *in relation to the powers of darkness*. The confidence of Christ in relation to death and the devil. I limit myself to those two powers, for they were both there. The serpent's head was to be bruised—but where and when? Darkness is the serpent's abode, and Christ was now there. He and the serpent met, and it was then that Christ put his victorious mediatorial foot upon the serpent's head and crushed him. There also, as I said a few minutes ago, he took the sting from death, and divested it of all its terrors, and stripped it of its power. Then, leaving the devil and death defeated behind him, and emerging from the darkness, he cried, and it was the shout of victory, Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now I come to thee—into thy hands I commend my spirit.

Now, thirdly, *the lessons to be learned from these two facts*. They are worth mentioning. What did God leave his dear Son for? That he might never forsake his people; and hence the promise, I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee. I left my Son and forsook him for a time, as he engaged to endure the curse, and to bear the penalty of sin. He has done it, and now I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. And brethren, do you talk about its being night with your soul? Modify your expressions a little if you can. Perhaps it is, now, hardly right to talk about nights. It is day-time with us. The night, the darkness are past and gone. It is day-time. What do you think, then, of the afflictions and pains of God's people now? I should rather say that the sun is clouded, and rather speak of dark days than of nights; for, indeed, the night is past and gone. Clouds between you and the sun may be very dark, and hang very low; and sometimes our day may be almost as dark as night, and this may last for months, or even years; but you cannot go where Christ went, for that great mystery was for ever terminated by him, and, therefore, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." Again, you are sometimes deserted, and mourn an absent God. Well, take secondly, the fact that your desertions are not only not penal, *they are sanctified by the sufferings of Christ*. If your darkness were not sanctified, you would be without hope when God leaves, or seems to leave you. You could not pray, you would then be unable to revert to past experience. "When wilt thou come unto me"?

"Come nearer, nearer, nearer still,—
I'm well when thou art near."

The hidings of your heavenly Father's face will do you good, and not harm, because Christ went afar off, and said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." That is not all; let us look at a third lesson. *Jesus can sympathise with you in desertion*. Your sorrows shall be sanctified, for Jesus died; and he is able to sympathise with you, because "he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" and he "suffered being tempted." He suffered. Some

persons might think that the Saviour did not suffer when he was tempted, owing to his greatness. The Holy Ghost tells us that he suffered, being tempted, that he might succour those that are tempted. Your dear Lord in heaven gives you all possible attention, and when you mourn an absent God you have the sympathy of his heart and hand. He knows exactly what measures of grace to give and what forms of mercy to bestow ; for he once mourned an absent God. Then you shall never go were Christ went, for he "is the first and the last." I take those names of our Lord to be most comprehensive in their meaning. "I am the first and the last." Of course they refer to his person, his office, and his work ; but he is the first that ever went where he stood when he used the words of our text, and he is the last ; for even the lost can never sink so deep as the Son of God sunk. Therefore, he is the first and the last, that went into that uninhabited land where all the curse fell, where sin was wholly punished, and where guilt was left and lost for ever. The Lord be pleased to command his blessing, for Christ's sake, Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOM & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

. 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE LORD SITTING UPON THE FLOOD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 27th JULY, 1879.

"The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever."—Psa. xxix. 10.

THERE are times when the faith of a child of God is vigorous and active, and he can confidently trust in the Lord. It was so in the experience of David, that great servant of God, who, when the storms of affliction raged, was occasionally enabled to cast himself into the arms of his covenant and gracious God and Father, where he possessed a peace that was holy and undisturbed. The storms of a believer's life are sometimes great, and the circumstances by which he is surrounded threatening and terrible; nevertheless, feeling himself in the arms of his covenant God, he says, "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not I fear." And contemplating the danger and death by which he is surrounded, he proceeds, "though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea," I will not fear; "though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," my soul is calm. The believer's faith remains strong, and his comfort does not abate; for the Lord is his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Amid circumstances which shook the earth and made the mighty tremble, the Psalmist said—I am calm, my mind is serene, and my faith still keeps its hold; for "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." That river flows from the heart of Deity, and is always smooth and clear, and the streams that emanate therefrom, which are the waters of the sanctuary, are always sweet and refreshing; for by their effectual operation God fulfils his promise—"I will make my people joyful in my house of prayer." The river indicated there may mean the eternal love of God, and the streams that flow therefrom may mean eternal salvation, redemption, justification, pardon, peace, sanctification, yea and amen promises, and all those soul-enriching consolations which are peculiar to the people of God. Well, the Psalmist said, there is such a river, and as I dwell in the tabernacles of the Most High where its streams so sweetly flow, let the earth be removed, let the mountains be torn up, and let the sea heave and roar—I will not fear; for the Lord is my God, and "He sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever."

In looking, for a few minutes, at this portion of the Word, we shall direct our attention to three things. First, *we will attempt to illustrate the fact*; secondly, *we will endeavour to prove it*; and, thirdly, *we will try to improve it*.

In the first place *let us illustrate the fact* stated in the text—"The Lord sitteth
VOL. II., No. 29.—SEPTEMBER 15, 1879.

upon the flood ; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." "I will," says David, "take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." I suppose that by "the cup of salvation" we are to understand the Word ; for that is God's cup filled with heavenly water, or, better still, with heavenly wine, or literally the Word of God is filled with his great salvation. David says—I will take the Word, and press it, as it were, to the lips of my faith, and drink thereof, and call upon the name of the Lord. He rejoiced in the great, the precious, the glorious fact that Jehovah "sitteth upon the flood ; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." But let us come at once to the subject and notice, in the first place, *that the Lord sits upon every flood*. He sits upon miraculous floods, natural floods, and circumstantial floods. In the first place there have been *miraculous floods*, and probably the Holy Ghost here refers to the deluge ; for we are told by the learned that the word rendered "flood" in the text, is the word which is always used to indicate that deluge of waters by which God destroyed or drowned the world. God, so to speak, sat upon that most tremendous and destructive deluge in a very solemn, saving, and interesting manner. I would not be fanciful, for I do not like fanciful interpretations of the Word ; but you know an ark was built, and that the whole church of God then on the earth was saved therein. You remember that the Lord said to Noah, after the beasts and the fowls had entered the structure—"Come thou and all thy house into the ark ;" so that the Lord was already therein. The Lord commanded Noah to enter, and he went in and was with God upon the flood. The whole church of God then upon the earth having entered the ark, the Lord shut them in, and blessed them with his presence there ; and then, although the storm raged, and the mountains were gradually covered, and probably millions of human beings perished, Noah sat serenely and calmly in that house, and, his God being with him, sang with solemn feelings, the grace that steered him through. My Christian friends, we have no fear if the Lord is present with us. External circumstances, however terrible and fearful they may be, cannot ruffle the placidity of the spiritual mind when it is resting upon the hands, the bosom, and the heart of God. In all probability some of the holiest hours of Noah's life were passed in the ark. I should think he was divinely happy and tranquil, although the storm beat against the sides of his house, and the torrents fell upon the roof and its motion was perpetual ; for Noah was conscious of the presence of his God, and his fellowship and communion with heaven were not, I think, disturbed. God steered the ark from place to place, and literally sat upon that miraculous flood as King and Ruler. We will leave this part of the subject by just observing that God was upon that flood as the proprietor and the insulted Lawgiver of the world, and that by it he fulfilled both the merciful and the righteous purposes of his mind.

Now let us observe, for it may serve to help and encourage us, that the Lord sitteth *upon every natural flood*. Contemplate the clouds over our heads, and the rivers and seas of water that float in the air, for they are vast. The Lord sitteth upon all the floods that surround the world and its inhabitants, and not a drop can fall without his permission ; for he rules and reigns over it all. And then as to the world—contemplate not merely the rain that falls in torrents, and that has now fallen for so long a time,—God sits upon every river, every sea, and every ocean. Every wave is controlled by him who holds the winds in his fists, and the waters in the hollow of his hand, and not a single wave rolls without his permission ; therefore we sing in relation to God's rule—

"Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

The sea is his. He is its great Creator and Ruler, and all that it contains is also his ; and it seems to me that this great fact is most encouraging to the child

of God. Recently we have read much concerning shipwrecks and the loss of life, and there is much that is mysterious, deep, and dark in this department of the Divine government ; but we are with the few persons now living who firmly and heartily believe that nothing should be attributed to chance, but that the Lord rules everywhere. The great Jehovah himself sitteth upon the flood, and what we know not now we shall know hereafter ; and I verily believe that if we had his knowledge and wisdom, and were on his throne, and in his position, we should do just as he is doing. "The Lord sitteth upon the flood."

Then, in the third place, *there are circumstantial floods*, or the word may be taken metaphorically to indicate a multitude of persons. Peoples are called floods ; the ungodly are called a flood ; and armies are called floods. Now, is not the text a glorious fact, and does it not exhilarate and comfort your hearts to believe that your heavenly Father sitteth upon all those floods ? He knows the mind of every enemy, and is perfectly acquainted with the heart of every foe, and hostile multitudes cannot move without his permission ; for he presides over all the floods of the ungodly. Then, again, the temptations of the devil are spoken of as floods ; for "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Sometimes when a void is created near to the child of God, the devil rushes into it with his temptations, which are deep, stormy, and destructive. There is not a saint upon the earth that can by himself cope with the powers of darkness, nor a child of God that would not certainly be carried away by the floods of temptation if the Lord did not control. Whether temptation relates to your personal interest in salvation, or the truth and divinity of the Word, or the being of a God, the Lord ruleth over all. Perhaps there may have been times in your experience when you have said with very peculiar feelings—Where is now my God ? Is there anything in religion, or anything substantial in the Word ? Is there after all such a Being as that great Jehovah, whose name I have been taught to revere, and in whom, I think, I have put my trust ? Brethren, these influences would carry us quite away ; these deep, impetuous, mighty waters would overwhelm and destroy us, were it not for the truth stated in my text—"The Lord sitteth upon the flood." Then, again, there are floods of error ; for we read in the Book of the Revelation of the church of God under the notion of a woman who fled into the wilderness, where a place was prepared for her by God, that the serpent cast a flood of waters out of his mouth after her, intending thereby to drown and destroy her. By the woman there understand the church of God. I will offer no observation upon the wilderness, nor upon the spiritual or mystical meaning of the word. By the serpent understand the devil, and by the flood of waters cast out of his mouth after her, understand not only temptation, but great floods of error. But the earth helped the woman, for the Lord is upon the floods ; and as the earth is the Lord's and all that is therein, it helped the woman in a manner which we need not now explain. "The Lord sitteth upon the flood ; yea, he sitteth King for ever." Then by floods understand afflictions, sorrows, and disappointments. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Some of the children of God live, if I may so speak, almost all their days in a flood of affliction. Many families know very much about affliction. Wave after wave comes into the house, the waters rise higher and higher, and their sufferings become greater and greater. Death, perhaps, entered last year, it came the year before, it has been once this year, and it threatens to come again before the year closes. Thus some of the dear children of God live in the water ; their way home is through great tribulation, and they sometimes feel they are sinking in deep waters where there is no standing. And how is it they do not sink ? How is it they do not use unlawful

means to get out of the depths, as perhaps they are sometimes tempted to do? The reason is clear. He that sits King upon the flood puts underneath them his everlasting arms, and sustains them in the tempest, whilst he sits on his throne upon the storm. Well, then, whether it be floods of men, or floods of temptation, or floods of error, or floods of affliction, or floods of indwelling sin and human depravity, the Lord controls them all. That is all I will say on the flood.

Let us now pass on and make a few observations on the *doctrine of the text*. Look at the words, and ponder them. They are most beautiful, comprehensive, and weighty. "The Lord *sitteth* upon the flood." Jehovah *sitteth* King for ever. Look at the majesty of God. Did you ever hear anything like this for grandeur and glory? Is anything like this to be found in any other book? A great Being, the Infinite One, sitting on the sea in storms! Jehovah seated on his throne which rises above the highest wave or billow that ever rolled! On the highest flood there is a higher throne, on which the Most High himself sits, governing all; and the tempest-tossed child of God may look up, and, catching a glimpse of him, say, "That God is my God for ever and ever; and he will be my Guide, even unto death." I say, see here the majesty of Jehovah. He sits. It is a posture of rest. He is undisturbed and unmoved, and his throne does not shake, while

"His eternal thought moves on
His undisturbed affairs."

The raging, roaring floods have shaken the faith of the greatest saints, and angels have looked on with wonder and astonishment; but the Maker of the sea, and the Ruler of worlds, sits in all his essential majesty upon them, whilst storms and tempests are furious round about. There is no fear in his mind, no shaking of his throne, nothing in connection with his purposes or government becomes loose or gives way. He sits as serenely on the flood as he does up yonder in the realms of eternal day and glory. This is the God you love, adore, and worship! And this Being is your covenant God and your gracious heavenly Father. It is a posture of rest.

It is a posture of *observation*. The Lord *sitteth* upon the flood, watching its rising, its waves, and its billows. Job, who was in the depths, came to the surface, and the Lord's eye was upon him, his heart was towards him, and his arms underneath him—hence, taking breath a few minutes, he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. My witness is in heaven, and may record is on high." The Lord's eye was upon his servant Job in the flood, and therefore he was not in despair. His God supported his mind, and ruled his troubles, and the fact in our text was verified by his triumphant profession of faith. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and that in my flesh I shall see God for myself." Thus Job sunk in the flood, and rose to its surface, until eventually he that sat upon it, managing all the affairs of that saint, conducted him to the shore of salvation and rest, and blessed his latter end more than his beginning. A posture of divine rest and divine observation.

The text indicates the sovereign *rule* of our God. He *sitteth* upon the flood to rule it. I do not like to hear the children of grace who are believers in the God of heaven talk about chance, and fortune and misfortune. It is a mercy to be brought to believe that—

"My life's minutest circumstance
Is governed by God's eye."

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Five sparrows are sold for two farthings, two for one farthing; but the odd one cannot fall to the ground without your heavenly Father's notice; and therefore he holds all the winds in his

fist, and all the floods in the hollow of his hand, and rules and overrules all for the good of his people, and the glory of his own great name. What if your afflictions arose from chance, which is blind? Could order so beautiful as that which results from our confusion, and combinations and connections so Godlike as those which take place, ever happen through the operations of a blind and ignorant agent. No; God is on the waters. The God of glory sits in the storm, and exercises an omnipotent influence upon it all. Afflictions spring not from the dust; they flow not from chance; but they come into existence in harmony with the will of our gracious covenant God, being managed and controlled by his almighty and loving hand. The Lord sitteth upon the flood to rule.

Observe here, before I dismiss this part of the subject, that he sits upon the flood as the fulfiller of his own purposes. There is a necessity for every affliction, and perhaps I might not go too far if I said, there is a necessity for every temptation. You do not know what marvellous purposes God has to accomplish by your life on the earth, nor can you yet discover what deep designs are fulfilled by the bitter disappointments you are experiencing. And who is to yield? who should, who must yield—you or your God? If God has resolved to fulfil merciful intentions by your sufferings, and to do you good through your crosses, try to fall—and I hope I may be able to take the advice myself—try to fall submissively at his feet, and say cordially, “Father, not my will, but thine be done.” The Lord sits and rules, causing every change to fulfil some deep design and useful purpose. Here is a bookful of Divine promises, and shall they be dead letters? God having given, cannot fulfil them without ruling the flood, and sitting King for ever. God’s control fulfils his word, and your desires, your hopes, and your prayers. Your unanswered prayers are not unnoticed; they lie before God, and perhaps other trials and afflictions will, in the hand of God, fulfil your petitions, and be the means of realizing the desires of your heart. The doctrine of the text includes the facts that the locality, the depth, the raging, the duration, and the disappearing of the flood are all arranged by your heavenly Father on his throne; for he sitteth upon the flood.

Now let us notice another point. This is *information*: not only a precious doctrine, it is precious information. Not from her majesty the Queen, not from a society formed to help us; it is information from heaven, from the God of grace and glory, and an answer to the question that is sneeringly put, “Where is now thy God?” When a believer in God has been in deep waters, and storms have been terrible, a voice has been heard, saying, “Where is now thy God?” Let the poor soul thus tried point to the surface, and say, “There he is, sitting upon this flood.” By giving us this information, he has pledged and solemnly bound himself to do us good all the days of our life. My Christian friends, the water may be deep and very tempestuous, and your doubts and fears may rise high—the eternal God is still where he always has been since the introduction of sin. He has always been above every trouble, so ruling that his grace in the heart has terminated in glory; and the fulfilment of his word to you shall see you in your mansions in another and a better world. This great fact engages the attention of all beings. God says, I will sit on the flood, and control and manage it; and the consequence is all eyes are turned towards him. The eyes of the devil are turned towards God; and, thank God, the devil is thwarted and disappointed, and his plans are abortive from day to day. Satan intends the death and destruction of the saints; but they are sustained and supported by their storm-directing God. Then the eyes of angels are drawn towards the flood and God who sits upon it. They are around his throne awaiting and receiving his orders, and fly to fulfil them; and, hence, good Paul said, “He whose I am, and whom I serve, hath sent his angel to assure me of my safety, and of the safety of all on board; and I believe it will be even as it was

told me." Angels watch their Maker. They keep their eyes upon his wonder-working hand, and his mysterious operations ; and perhaps I should not be wrong if I said they keep them also upon the Bible, and read God's promises and the declarations of his love, and watch to learn how their Maker will fulfil his word. They learn new mysteries here, and tell the marvellous love of the everlasting God. You and I may turn our attention that way ; for God is surely there. The Lord help us to look and trust during the remainder of our life.

"My God, I would not long to see
My fate with curious eyes ;
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes may rise."

Should storms gather, and clouds lower, and all around be threatening, I pray for faith to believe what is here stated—"The Lord sitteth upon the flood."

Lastly, we have an unchanging God presiding over all the changes of life. Sometimes the flood gathers suddenly, and great and solemn changes come unexpectedly. Have you not seen a family plunged from affluence into poverty, from health into sickness ? Have you not seen the circumstances of a child of God quite reversed ? How wonderful are many of the changes of this world ! Above them there is an unchanging God who rules, directs, and manages all ; and your changes take place because he cannot change towards you. If there were no changes, or if you did not suffer from them, something would be wrong ; for out of them great good arises, and the fulfilment of God's will takes place in connection with them.

Now, *let me prove the fact*, having tried to illustrate it. "The Lord sitteth upon the flood ;" he sitteth King for ever. I notice, in the first place, that *the preservation of the church of God demonstrates this fact*, that the Lord sits upon the flood. Sometimes the church is compared to a ship, and I suppose the idea came from Noah's ark. Whatever it came from, it is significant. The church is as a ship on the stormy sea of time and the world. She has encountered many storms and tempests, and been threatened with destruction again and again. Sometimes the whole cause of God has gone down into deep water, and the world has hoped, again and again, that it was dead and perished ; but the church, Immanuel's kingdom, the interest of God, is still afloat. Here is the ship on the flood ; it is alive yet, although it has experienced thousands of years of suffering and persecution. And why ? The Lord is on board ; he sits at the helm and guides the vessel ; he presides over the storm and the calm ; for he has said : "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Has she not been opposed ? Hell is against her ; but the Lord is for her. The world is against her ; but heaven is for her. Antichrist, the man of sin, has tried to drown and destroy her for hundreds of years ; but the Lord sitteth upon every antichristian system to govern it, as well as upon his own calm sea of Divine grace and eternal salvation. Idolatry is against her ; but no matter how deep, bitter, and fierce its opposition may be, "The Lord is our refuge and strength : a very present help in time of trouble." We are nearing heaven. When I was sixteen years of age, I was baptized, and my companions laughed and sneered, and said I should soon give up my religion and profession, and be among them again. Many strange and wonderful things were predicted, while I silently and secretly prayed that I might have grace to persevere and hold on, that I might not bring a reproach upon the holy name and heavenly interest of the dear Redeemer ; and "having obtained help from God I continue until now."

"I have been upheld till now :
Who could hold me up but thou ?"

Look at this ship, and at the despised persons on board ; consider the heavy

storms of the deep over which it is sailing, and remember it has been preserved nearly six thousand years, and that it is yet strong and full of life, and you will have proof of the fact that the Lord sitteth King upon the flood.

Take another view. Look at *morality and order in the world*. Let us thank God that although there is so much disorder and wickedness in this ruined world, yet there is a measure of order and morality. Morality is not wholly gone; some remains of it are left in this country, and in the world. How is it there is any order in a world over so large a part of which the devil seems to preside? How is it there is any morality, seeing three-fourths of the people, and, perhaps, more, are steeped in sin. Immorality is loved, and many would blot out the sacredness of the Sabbath and destroy Christianity, and leap into the deepest vices were it possible. How is it the country is not drowned in vice and confusion? We have good laws, and the country is filled with magistrates and powers. Be it so; but suppose the God of heaven should remove his restraining providence, and the other element should get the upper hand, what would then become of our laws and our magistrates? Anarchy, immorality, and death would rage and prevail everywhere. Oh, there is sin enough in England to ruin the country, vice enough to drown order, and enough of hell in sinful hearts to set the whole land morally on fire. How is it we and other nations are preserved? "The Lord sitteth upon the flood," and he is King for ever. Do you think I am drawing too hideous a picture, or that my colours are a little too dark? Think, then, of the passions of man, the sinful and depraved powers of those who are haters of God and of one another, which are restrained and bridled only by that imperceptible influence which comes from God himself.

Let us pass on and notice *the preservation of nations and the world* by this fact—"The Lord sitteth upon the floods." The Lord give peace in our days, so the church prays, and the prayer is good. The Lord give peace. Cannot the nations live without falling out? No; not without God. But, you say, what a wonderful day we live in! The enlightenment of the world is wonderful. Nations are being educated, and universal concord will ere long prevail. Yes; and see what instruments of death and destruction are accumulating in all the nations of the earth—at least, of the continent of Europe! Who can tell what is about to happen? Now it is a time of peace—at least, to some extent. Guns, however, and instruments of slaughter and death are being prepared, and whole nations are being cast into a military form, if I may so speak,—and what for? I do not know. And when two nations, the most intelligent and educated, fall out, they experience no remorse, no hesitation in endeavouring to wholly exhaust and destroy each other. The world, my friends, would destroy and consume itself, if the Lord did not sit King upon the floods. Oh what a hellish evil is sin, and what a mighty enemy is Satan! Over all, however, Jehovah sitteth King for ever. And, then, look at our privileges. We may sit under our own vines and fig-trees; for the Lord reigns, and has spread a table for us in the presence of our enemies; and we Protestants sit at the gospel feast, and eat and drink, and bless his name in spite of all our foes. All this demonstrates with sufficient clearness to my mind, the fact that the Lord sitteth King upon the flood.

Then, again, has affliction ever injured you? No, bless his name; you have been in deep waters and terrible storms; but Christ has therein endeared himself to you, embittered sin, and shown you the hollowness of the world, and your afflictions have been sanctified, so that you are still clinging, or trying to cleave, closer to him than ever. My friends, since you have been blessed in the flood, and storm and affliction have been sanctified to you, the fact we have been trying to discuss is proved. How many of God's people have left us! They were neither lost on the road, nor drowned in the flood. The Lord

loveth his saints, and preserveth them for ever. Thousands of enemies have been drowned, and many systems have been wrecked and have come to nothing; but the Lord's dear people have been carried safely through, and every saint to the present time that has left this world, has reached the heaven he started for. Therefore "the Lord sitteth upon the flood;" he is King for ever and ever.

Thirdly, let us *improve the subject*. I will trust and not be afraid; for "the Lord sitteth upon the flood." Safety is of the Lord; and, hence, during the storm at sea our Lord arose and rebuked the wind and the sea, and said, "Peace, be still," and immediately there was a great calm; and looking at his disciples he said, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith!" Had you not your Lord on board? "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him!" My brethren, there is safety at sea; for safety is of the Lord, and he is there. Peter was safe walking on the sea with his great Lord and Redeemer. The Lord that sits upon the flood can save upon it. Peter went to meet him, and as long as his eye was fixed upon the Manager and Controller of the flood, he stepped firmly; but when he saw the wind and the waves, he began to sink; and he that rules the flood put out his hand, and caught the sinking one, saying, "O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?" "I will trust and not be afraid." It is not too much to say that you have in this great Ruler a sympathising Friend. He that sits upon the flood was himself once in the depths, and said, "I sink in deep waters in which there is no standing." He then extracted the curse from all our sufferings and sinkings, and rising to the surface he took his seat thereon; and our risen Lord now reigns over all. Hence there is deep comfort, and rich and strong consolation, in the fact stated in my text this morning. The Lord command his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON OCTOBER 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

* * 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE NAIL FASTENED IN A SURE PLACE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 28th SEPTEMBER, 1879.

"And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons."—Isa. xxii. 23, 24.

WE are assured by the Holy Spirit in the Word, that when God had finished his great work of creation, "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." We are again assured, by the same authority, that the great salvation of the everlasting God is considered so marvellous, deep, and mysterious by all His angels, that they continually desire to look into it. They adored the great Creator, when they contemplated his first great work; but, if I may so speak, they left that great production of his power and goodness, to contemplate and inspect most earnestly his greater work of saving sinners in himself with an everlasting salvation. There are two great revelations of Jehovah. The first we have in nature, and the second we have in grace. In creation God partially displays himself: but in salvation he completely and eternally discovers his greatness, and reveals his resources and his glory. Nature is only a part of God's ways; but in grace which reigns in the eternal salvation of sinners, the whole of Deity appears, and all the riches of divine love, wisdom, and power; and therefore, angels are constantly enquiring into this great mystery. They perpetually contemplate the covenant of grace, the Mediator of the covenant, the blessings of the covenant, the manner in which those blessings are communicated to sinners, how those blessings operate upon sinners, and the great and glorious result and outcome of God's eternal love to guilty men in the glorious person of his beloved Son.

The Lamb of God is said to be slain from the foundation of the world. Christ was slain in the purposes and decrees of God, and He was slain, so to speak, in the first promise that God gave to guilty man. The Lamb was slain in all those types and ceremonies by which he was prefigured for hundreds of years before his advent. We are told that the Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed Adam and Eve. We are led from this fact to conclude that a death had taken place, that blood had been shed, and that a symbol or a type of the atonement of the promised Seed had been given; and that sin should be pardoned, and sinners covered with a righteousness other than their own, which was for ever lost. Christ was slain also in the numerous prophecies of the Old Testament as well as in those striking types which were given by Jehovah. Sometimes *things*, sometimes *seasons*, and frequently *persons*, were con-

VOL. II., No. 30.—OCTOBER 15, 1879.

sidered as lively types of the great Redeemer. In the connection in which my text stands mention is made of Shebna and Eliakim. Shebna it appears was treasurer of king Hezekiah, and perhaps secretary also. He controlled the affairs of the royal palace, and probably he was also keeper of the temple of God. It appears however, that he was a wicked and covetous man, and there is something to support the supposition that he was a foreigner; in fact an Egyptian. However, he was exceedingly over-reaching and proud, and the Lord says, "What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?" Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. He will surely violently turn, and toss thee like a ball, into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house," and in the 20th verse the Lord says, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah." This man was an Israelite. He may have belonged to the tribe of Judah, and even to the royal house of David. Others, however, suppose that he belonged to the tribe of Levi, and that he was therefore a priest. Well, the Lord said, "I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah." Eliakim was thus constituted secretary and treasurer, being called by God to preside over David's royal house, and probably also over the temple of the Lord. "And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house." Now if Aaron, Moses, and others were types of Christ, Eliakim was also a very striking type of the great Ruler in Israel, and as such we shall consider him this morning.

I shall look at my subject first in *relation to Christ himself*, and secondly in *relation to the house of God*, or "his Father's house."

In the first place let us look at the subject *in relation to Christ*. "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a glorious throne to his Father's house. We notice in the first place *God's act* as it is here indicated. I will fasten Eliakim as a nail in a sure place; and as he was a type of Jesus, we may apply this to God's beloved Son. God resolved to have a church, to surround himself with it and to bless it for ever; and he determined that his dearly beloved Son should reside therein and preside over it, through all the ages of time and in heaven for ever. The official character and glory of the Redeemer are exceedingly important to all God's people; for Christ in his offices is fastened as a nail in a sure place. He is the great Prophet, the great Priest, and the great and eternal king of Zion. As our Prophet he teaches, instructs, and informs our minds. All the knowledge we have of ourselves, of God, and of heaven is obtained from him who was sent from God to be the great Doctor, or teaching master of his people. In a word, Christ saves by teaching, atoning, reigning; and in all these respects he is as a nail fastened in a sure place. As our Prophet, he opens God's Word, and God's will, and mind. As our Priest, he opens eternal life, makes a way into it, and gives it to all the people of God, saying: "Because I live, ye shall live also." And as our King he opens prisons, and sets the prisoners free; he opens human hearts, and deposits grace and salvation therein; he opens the church, and admits, in an authoritative manner into the house of his Father, and he opens death and the grave, and heaven itself for all his blood-bought people; and therefore it is said, I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulders. He shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open. But let us look for a minute at the precious source of the official glory and proceedings of our Lord. How is it that Jesus Christ is fastened as a nail in a sure place, in his church, and in the affections of his dear people? It is

because God loves us with an everlasting love. The mediation of Jesus arises out of love. The offices of the Lamb spring out of the heart of Deity. Our salvation is the great outcome of Divine love. All the names and titles of God's beloved Son, are fruits of love eternal, while at the same time they are the outlets of all our grace and salvation. God, then, having resolved to have a church and loving that church in himself with an everlasting love, appointed Jesus Christ to be its Head, its Saviour, its Lord and its King. He did so for his own sake ; for there were mysteries in his mind which he determined guilty sinners should know, and there was love in his heart, which he determined guilty sinners should receive. The salvation of sinners was eternally planned, and he resolved that great plan should be fully revealed, and gloriously and completely executed ; and therefore he said, I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place. Moreover Jesus Christ is worthy of this position. All the affairs of this world, all the affairs of heaven, and all the affairs of the church of God are constantly passing through the head and the hands of the dear Redeemer. He is worthy to be trusted by the Father, by all his angels, and by every poor guilty sinner here ; and therefore he was appointed for the sake of his own worthiness, greatness, and glory.

But let us look at the act indicated. "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place," as a Priest, and as a King. The great Redeemer said, I am authorized to lay down my life for my sheep : for "this commandment have I received of my Father." Therefore the Father called him to fill the Priest's office, and to officiate therein, here on the earth, and in heaven until the end of time. He called him to offer himself a sacrifice for sin, and to put it away for ever, and to offer himself a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. See the great High Priest in the garden offering himself ; see Him on Calvary, bleeding, and dying, see him proceeding with his great atoning work until it was wholly done. The blood required was shed, and sin was quite put away ; the law was wholly magnified, and all the attributes of God were completely and eternally harmonized. Hear the great High Priest of our profession saying, "It is finished ;" and see him bow his head in death, and give up the ghost ! Then our Lord is raised from the dead, and taken to heaven, and placed on the right hand of infinite Majesty, and there he sits, as in a sure place. Worlds hang upon him, all the happiness of heaven hangs upon him, all the graces of the Spirit in the hearts of sinners hang upon him, all the unfulfilled purposes of God hang upon him, and all the holy hopes of guilty millions hang upon this glorious One who is as a nail which God has fastened in a sure place. The government is upon his shoulders.

Learn from this, my dear friend, the importance of the church, the safety of the people of God, and also the importance of trusting in the Lord. If there is one lesson I find more difficult to learn than another, it is the great fact that the government of all things is upon the shoulders of Jesus. The government of the world is on him, the government of the church is there, and the government of families is upon the shoulders of our risen Redeemer. How often have we had sleepless nights in consequence of something that had arisen in the church ! I do not mean particularly in connection with ourselves, but in connection with churches with which we have had to do. Night after night, we have been restless on account of trouble, or threatened trouble in the church of Christ. Certain individuals have caused us pain, certain future dreaded troubles or afflictions have distressed our spirits, because we have taken, or tried to take the government of the church into our own hands, or upon our own shoulders. Christian brethren in the ministry, if I have one or two here this morning, let us not forget the fact, that the government of the church hangs on this nail, that Jesus Christ is, and will be, responsible for ever. Let us not forget that it is yours and mine to preach the Gospel, to set forth the will of God, to explain to the best of our abilities the great mysteries of the kingdom, and to leave the government of the

body, and the affairs of the church where God has placed them, upon the shoulders of his dear Son. Those shoulders are broad enough to bear the whole church, and strong enough to bear the whole weight of its government. He never stoops beneath his burden, as I have stooped beneath mine. His shoulders are almighty, and his heart is one of omnipotent love. God has laid the key of the house of David upon his shoulders, and fastened him as a nail in a sure place. As time is going, let us dismiss that point and pass on to another.

The text indicates, in the second place, the *fixedness of the official glory of Jesus Christ*. I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place. What changes we have in this world—in families, and in the church of Christ. A letter came, probably yesterday, informing us that a brother was dead. Another came this morning, informing us that a good pastor of such a church is likely to die. And then we have godly ministers near at hand who are exceedingly ill, and some of whom may probably never preach again. Death is doing his work. In the house of God there are many changes, the vessels of small quantity, the vessels of cups, and vessels of flacons are changing places, as far as this life and world are concerned. But, whoever dies, the Lord liveth. Whoever changes, the Lord is the same. Whatever takes place, the key is on Christ's shoulders, and the nail that God fastened in a sure place is where it was six thousand years ago; so that if the better members (if there be any difference) in our churches depart, the best of all remains. The Lord himself abides. Whatever may transpire beneath the sun, and whatever may occur above the sun, no change can take place in the person, in the office, or in the salvation of the beloved Christ of God. He is unchangeable as to his person. This nail—and I hope I am not fancifully interpreting the Word—this nail can never fail, can never waste, can never be worn by the innumerable weights that are placed upon it. The Redeemer will always be the perfect Man, and the eternal God. He will always be a complex Person. He is unchangeable: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." We have been loved by individuals whose hearts have changed, and whose conduct, therefore, towards us has changed also. The conduct of our Redeemer towards us has changed, and varied; but his heart has never altered, his affections have always been the same. Change in him is an eternal impossibility, for he cannot cease to be God. "I am God." What of that? "I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." And then he never changes as to his office. Aaron, the priest, died, and was succeeded by Eleazar; Eleazar died, and was succeeded by his son. King David died, and was succeeded by Solomon, and Solomon by Rehoboam; but Christ appeared after them all, and he "abideth a Priest continually," and he also fills the kingly office for ever and ever. We have an eternal Priest in the church, an eternal Priest in the temple above, perpetually officiating for all that come unto God by him. He is always in the house, always ready to meet the petitioner, to shape his petitions, and to receive and present them to his Father. He is always ready with the much incense of his sacrifice and intercession to mix with the prayers of all saints, and to present them, thus perfumed and perfected, to his God and our God, to his Father and our Father. And he never changes as to his kingly character. If he abideth a Priest for ever, he is also a King for ever. The reins of government he never puts into the hand of another, and he never drops them. Events and circumstances as they arise always fulfil the deep purposes and the wise decrees of Jehovah. Error is simply impossible with him. He is eternally incapable of making a mistake, and therefore God will never remove him from office. As he never changes in office, so he will never forfeit his right to the confidence of his Father, the confidence of the sinner, nor to the confidence of the angels of God in heaven. My Christian brethren, the perpetuity of Christ's official glory perpetuates our religion, and secures our life and our hope. If we ceased to hang upon this nail, our godliness would lose its vitality. If this nail

were removed, the burden that is upon it, all "the offspring and the issue," would at once die and disappear. Our religion is what it is because we are hanging upon Jesus, and our life is spiritual and immortal in consequence of our connection with the blessed Christ of God. Our perseverance, therefore, is a proof of the fixedness of Jesus in office; for if he were not fixed, or if he changed officially, progress in divine things would be simply impossible. We persevere from one hour to another, because Christ is changeless, and he is ours. We proceed from day to day, and from one point to another, because Jesus reigns as a King, and officiates as a Priest in heaven; and because we are in a mysterious and loving manner united to his person, and connected with his office. "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place."

Then notice, thirdly, the text *indicates the strength of our Lord*. "They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house." His strength, therefore, must be great. Government is always a weight. Some of you who have large families are at times troubled and tried as to the government of your homes. The management of your affairs often leaves you at your wit's end, and prevents your sleep at night. Domestic matters press heavily upon your minds, and are felt to be a heavy burden; and if the affairs of one family oppress and bow down your mind, what must be the weight of the government of worlds, which God, so to speak, has hung upon the person and office of his dear Son? and yet—

"His eternal thought moves on
His undisturbed affairs."

He continues to speak, and it is done; to command, and it stands fast for ever.

"His shoulders held up heaven and earth,
When Mary held up him."

And the same great burden is still upon his shoulders, yet he is not oppressed, not distressed, and never nonplussed; for his wisdom is equal to his work, and his power is omnipotent. If a pastor's duties are sometimes a burden, what must be the weight that devolves upon the name of our great Lord? He presides over and directs all the branches of our salvation, and all the events of providence, while his ever wakeful eye watches all the powers of darkness. I wish I could impress this upon your minds. Your Lord numbers your hairs, and orders your steps: for "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." Let me place before you a few of the wondrous operations of this great Ruler and Priest. He numbers your hairs, orders your steps, guides your circumstances, hears your prayers, attends to your groans, watches the devil, restrains his temptations, gives your daily bread, issues your pardon, fulfils promises, and realizes all the hopes his Spirit forms in your hearts. What power and greatness are required for all this work! and as Jesus possesses both, and stands engaged to conduct you to heaven, there shall be no failure, for "he shall open, and none shall shut; and shut, and none shall open." This is your Christ, and this is a faint and imperfect view of the great burden that hangs upon this strong nail. "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, . . . and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house." Contemplate a troubled mind, or think of the time when your mind was so burdened that you felt as if you must be crushed. Millions of such minds hang on this dear Immanuel. Minds both happy and unhappy are upon him. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." How heavy and how important is the weight that hangs upon this strong Lord! Troubled saints, tempted saints, afflicted saints, fearing saints, persecuted saints, young saints, old saints, and dying saints, all are his care and charge; all these he bears, sustains, and saves. Although some of these are truly wretched in themselves, and calculated at times to make their

friends miserable, yet they are precious to him, being "vessels of small quantity," and in his Father's house. He has bound himself to preserve and sustain them, and to present them without spot or wrinkle before his Father's face. I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house.

Then, fourthly, look at *his responsibility*—"all the glory of his Father's house." All the glory of that house is derived from himself; all its legal glory, all its spiritual glory, and all its eternal glory. This glory involves the life of all the children, and that is from Christ. It involves the conformity of every child to himself, and he imparts the Spirit to every child, to produce a perfect resemblance to himself. It involves all the riches of divine grace here, and all the future riches of divine glory; and these depend upon him. Christian brother and sister, those concerns that hang upon the Saviour can never fail, whether they be devolved upon him by the Father, by faith, by prayer, by hope, or otherwise. Whatever has been placed in his hands, or committed to his management, is safe; therefore—

"Give him, my soul, thy cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father's grace."

Lastly, *the manner in which he fulfils his official obligations*. "And he shall be for a glorious throne to his Father's house"—or he shall make his Father's throne glorious. And has he not done so? There is a throne of grace, and he has made it glorious: having opened the holiest of all, and made a way to it for the sinner. His Father is seated upon his throne, and with infinite pleasure he waits to be gracious to all that come unto him by his dear Son. He has made the throne glorious, inasmuch as there is a rainbow round about it, in sight like unto an emerald; inasmuch as a river of water of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb; and inasmuch as thousands of petitioners are always there. The holiest of all is always occupied, and I had almost said always full; some are groaning, some are fainting, some are weeping, and some are singing. Some take men for God to manage, some take Satan for God to restrain, that they may overcome him; others take burdens into the holiest, and pray for grace to enable them to bear them, or to roll them upon him that sitteth upon the throne. "He shall be for a glorious throne to his Father's house." And then he has engaged to bring all his father's house to the throne of eternal glory; and therefore "Unto you which believe, he is precious." Time is advancing, and therefore I can say no more on that part of the subject.

Secondly, and briefly, look at the subject *in relation to the house of God*: and here we have three things to notice. The house is spoken of as *God's children*; the children are compared to *vessels*, and then a *great fact is asserted*. In the first place the house is spoken of as consisting of *God's children*—"the offspring and the issue," or, as it literally means, children and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. They shall hang upon him all the offspring and the issue; or, to use a Bible term, "from generation to generation" his name shall be known, and loved, and feared. All these children are princes. In his Father's house they are Christ's own brethren, as they are his Father's children. They are the royal family of heaven, depending for all things upon their elder Brother, who is as a nail fastened in a sure place. They are princes by birth, for they are born of God and for him. They are partakers of the Divine nature, and the life of God is in their souls. God calls them children, and they call him their Father; and therefore they are princes by birth. Then they are princes as to their character, for "Ye are complete in him." They are princes as to their wealth and riches, for "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." They are princes as to their position; for "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes, and to make him inherit

the throne of glory." Brethren, you are in that house where God's saints live ; you sit with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, and Noah, those great princes of this royal house of heaven that inherit thrones of glory. In one sense you are already seated with them, and are destined, like them, to occupy thrones of glory hereafter. And they are princes by practice also, for they "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world."

Just a word on the figurative expressions. "*All vessels* of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons." First, the child of God is a *divinely-formed character* ; for, as a vessel is not a self-made thing, so a Christian is not a self-formed character. Children of God are vessels of mercy. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And of what materials are these vessels made? Sinners, fallen and ruined men and women. They are unlike angels, and they differ from Adam as he stood in innocence in Eden. These vessels are converted, regenerated, ransomed, and saved human transgressors, and God will have respect to the work of his hands. He loves every new creature, for he has made and formed him for himself ; therefore the saints are the noblest work of God on earth. These vessels are precious to their Maker ; therefore, my dear hearers, if you are vessels of mercy you are dear to God in his Son.

Secondly, a vessel is not *self-filled*. As the saints are divinely formed, so they are divinely filled. God has provided for filling them ; for "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell : and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." These vessels are constantly receiving from Him on whose name they hang. The blessings of eternal love flow from the Father's heart, through the Mediator, into these cups and flagons : small and great, strong and weak, old and young. Eternal love shall fill them all.

Then, thirdly, these vessels are of *dissimilar sizes*—vessels of small quantity, from cups even to flagons. Here is the fact that there are babes, young men and fathers in the house of God. Believers whose minds are shallow, and others whose minds are deep. Shall I put it in this way ? Would you not say that Abraham was a large vessel ? He hung on Christ. "He desired to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Thus was Abraham, that larger vessel, hanging on Christ. But where in the Bible shall I find a character to indicate little faith ? I know the Saviour said to his disciples, "Oh thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?" Let us introduce into the subject Bunyan's Mr. Despondency and his daughter Much Afraid. They both hang with the greater Abraham on the same strong Mediator. Vessels, even cups and flagons. Then there are the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, ordinary ministers of the Word, and an exceedingly large multitude of weak believers, like myself, and some, it may be, of my hearers this morning. They all hang on him, for they shall hang all on Jesus, from Enoch, that walked with God, down to the smallest believer that can be found on the earth.

Lastly, the *equality of God's people in this respect*. They are all alike safe, all alike in Christ, all alike dependent on him. One brother is very tall ; his arms of faith are strong, and he can so use the sword of the Spirit that Satan is overcome by him ; and here comes a faint and feeble one saying—

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought ;
Do I love the Lord or no ?
Am I his, or am I not ?"

That brother who is a kind of believing giant is not more safe than that worm who never read his title clear to mansions in the skies. They shall hang all on him. Christ only knows what to do with them, so diversified are their experience

and their feelings. No minister of the gospel can bear the weight of half his congregation, or even of one of his people, his changes and fickleness are so great that he would soon get out of patience with him altogether; therefore, they shall all hang on the Lord. He will have patience with them; his power is sufficient to sustain them, and his fulness sufficient to fill them for ever. I have fastened him as a nail in a sure place, and all hang upon him.

Then we have *the fact*—they shall hang all the glory, and all the vessels on him. There is the young convert—a vessel of small quantity—just born again and does not know it, who would give a world, if he possessed one, for the privilege of calling God his Father. He cannot do without Christ, and although he has no satisfaction and no peace, he hangs his thoughts and his hopes on Christ, and tries to hang his troubled heart there also. Against him is an afflicted believer, whose sorrows are very deep, piercing, and bitter, and he is trying to rest his aching head and his almost crushed heart upon the Christ of God. He wants a refuge, he wants support, he wants that strength which God has promised: “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Then there is a hoary-headed saint. “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you,” even the aged father and mother in Israel. Then go into the dying chamber, where a saint is going home. Have a few words with him, if he is able to speak; perhaps he will quote the beautiful language of Toplady—

“Rock of ages, shelter me,
Let me hide myself in thee.”

Whatever hangs on Immanuel belongs to God. Never mind, my dear brother, how either yourself or your burden came there, if you are there, you are safe. Whoever hangs on Christ is God’s, and is going to heaven. Is it a broken heart, a troubled conscience, a pierced spirit, a burdened mind? Whatever it may be, a humble hope, a little faith hanging there will surely be found by God. The faith that hangs there is divine. The hope that hangs there is good, and the prayer that has been hung on this sacred nail will be answered in God’s good time, in heaven if not before.

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”

If this is your experience, you are as safe as Gabriel before the throne of God. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON NOVEMBER 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

* * 13 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

“AN OLD DISCIPLE.”

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 12th OCTOBER, 1879.

“An old disciple.”—Acts xxi. 16.

THE apostle Paul says we are saved by grace ; and confidently applying that great fact to himself as an example of sovereign mercy and transforming power, he declares, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” This great preacher of the gospel shone very brightly as a Christian, as a Christian minister, and as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like John the Baptist, he was a burning and shining light, and multitudes rejoiced in the heavenly truths he proclaimed. He was great as a believer in God and a follower of the great Redeemer. His faith was strong and steady, his hope was fixed and firm, his heart was inflamed with love to his beloved Master, and conformity to him was the prevailing desire of his mind. In the exercise of these excellencies he lived and died, and now his ransomed and blood washed spirit realizes before the throne all he desired and wished below. He was great also in his official capacity as a minister of Christ. Having been divinely inspired in an extraordinary manner, his views of God's truth were clear, deep, and comprehensive, and he never shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Every minister of the Gospel in those days, however, was not an apostle ; but Paul was called, not only to believe and preach, but to exercise apostolic functions in the service of Jesus Christ ; and in this exalted position he combined the tenderest holy feeling and the greatest boldness in the cause of God and truth. We learn from the context that Paul was at Cæsarea, staying at the house of Philip, whose daughters were prophetesses, and that one Agabus took the girdle of Paul, and bound his hands and feet, and said, “Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.” The friends of the apostle having heard these things, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem ; and Paul said, What mean ye to weep and break mine heart ? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

VOL. II., No. 31.—NOVEMBER 15, 1879.

This holy man could bear the threatening look of a persecutor, and the haughty and cruel words of those that hated him for his dear Redeemer's sake ; but when he saw *Christians* weep, and found them attempting to dissuade him from his spiritual purpose, he said, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? since I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." The carriages, therefore, were at once taken up, and they went on to Jerusalem, being accompanied by one Mnason, of Cyprus, *an old disciple*.

I wish to make a few observations on this subject to-night, applying it as well as may be possible to the departure of our dearly beloved brethren, one of whom was a very old disciple, the other not being so advanced in years. Yet as he was not young, and knowing he was also a disciple, I have no hesitation in applying my text to him likewise.*

The text before us naturally divides itself into two branches. In the first place, it indicates a *very important character*—"a disciple;" and in the next place, it expresses an *interesting circumstance in connection with this character*—"an old disciple."

In the first place, let us direct our attention for a few minutes to this *interesting character—a disciple*. A disciple is one who attends the lectures, and professes the tenets of another. A disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is one that believes his doctrines, imbibes his spirit, and follows his example. Now, if these are the characteristics of a Christian disciple, we have no hesitation in applying the text to our beloved friends. Both our brethren, we are persuaded, were Christ's disciples ; for we had in their life and death the clearest evidence of their interest in the everlasting love of God, of their registration in heaven, of their having been bought with a price, and redeemed from death and guilt, and also of their regeneration ; and therefore we speak of them as Christ's disciples. Christ formed their minds as vessels of mercy, and filled them on the earth occasionally with the fulness of God, and now with all the glory of God in another world. Jesus is divinely and solemnly engaged to preserve all whom he teaches, to lead them through all the years and changes of this life, and to present them without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the throne of God.

This great teaching master, Jesus Christ, is Lord of all, and therefore Lord of the human mind. He is the Maker and the Redeemer of minds ; therefore he knows their character and requirements, and what is necessary to constitute them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." If such a teacher as Christ was required to instruct the beloved church of God, and to fit and prepare them for heaven, a right and true knowledge of the Revelation of God is most important. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Jesus is the great Fountain of light, and knowledge, and the saving teacher of the family of God, all of whom are sooner or later brought to sit at his feet to hear his words, to imbibe his blessed spirit, and ultimately to become perfectly conformed to the holy and saving will of God. The Lord is fitting the minds of his people for their high destiny and employment, so that although we some-

* Preached on the occasion of the death, in one week, of two beloved brethren, viz., Mr. Mote, the most aged deacon of the church, and Mr. Hodges, a member of the congregation, and buried respectively, October 9th and 10th.

times speak of the saints as mean and insignificant, the fact is they are most important. Their minds are marvellous creatures, possessing marvellous faculties and powers, which are to be spiritualized, christianized, sanctified, and fitted for a better world, where they shall live for ever in the daylight of God's presence. David said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." If our bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made, are not our minds also wonderfully constituted. When they are regenerated and sanctified, a new nature and new powers are put, so to speak, into all their faculties, and they become students and learners of Christ. The disciples of Jesus are destined to associate for ever with angels. Take an unregenerated mind, and place it in the midst of the angels of God, and their presence would dazzle and confound it, and render it unhappy. We are, however, going where our beloved brethren are gone, to associate on thrones of glory with them and all the angels of God; and since Jesus is the great teaching master of the ignorant, and his great business is to train immortal minds for the company of the glorified host before God; when we enter that glory world we shall at once feel at home and in our element. The glory will not be too bright, and the height will not be too great for our capabilities and powers; for he will qualify us to enjoy all that a God of omnipotent grace and glory has provided for his people. Moreover ransomed sinners shall be fitted for the presence of God himself, prepared to enter into his glory, and to be filled with all the fulness of God. They shall receive and bear the image of God, and be thoroughly conformed to him. They shall see the Divine glory, and bathe their enlarged and perfected spirits therein for ever and ever. An important work must be done before persons can so appear before God; certain principles must be rooted in sinners' hearts before they can enter the world of glory; and it is the official business of our glorious Teacher to train souls for heaven, for eternity, and for the presence of God. Let us be thankful that we have a humble hope we are not altogether destitute of this preparedness. We love now the appearing of Christ, and to sit at his feet, and hear the heavenly words that fall from his lips. Now we love to have the Bible beneath our eyes, receiving portion after portion while the Spirit influences our hearts. Now the streams are sweet, the light that now comes from the Sun of Righteousness upon our spirits is precious—what, therefore, must be that Fountain and that Sun in the midst of the glory world! Jesus is fitting us for himself, and preparing us for the presence of his God and our God, and his Father and our Father.

Such a teacher must necessarily possess marvellous powers, and our dear Lord is admirably qualified for the work. He loves this work of saving and teaching. He presides over the communications of his own Spirit, over every minister and subordinate teacher in the church; and he is the great Master from whom every under-teacher receives his message, his influence, and his authority, and ministers should come before their people as from his presence. Our Lord loves his work and his pupils, and is divinely patient with them. He progressively informs and expands the mind, making room therein for his grace, his truth, and himself. The Redeemer experiences no difficulty in his work of teaching. Human teachers sometimes have considerable trouble with the minds of their pupils; but Christ is the great Fountain of all power, wisdom, and knowledge. He has the key of every mind, and opens and none can shut, and shuts and none can open; and having opened the dark mind of a sinner, he pours new and Divine light into it, by which solemn discoveries are made. Our departed brethren learned at the feet of their Master the nature of sin and death. It may seem an easy lesson to learn; but no one can understand this unless he is divinely taught. You tell me you can see the nature and effects of sin in the streets; but, beloved friends, there is only one being that can truly teach this solemn lesson, and that is the

Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our brother Mote was many years ago taken by the power of grace, and placed at the feet of the Lord. The Master poured new light upon his mind, and he saw sin as he had never seen it before ; and then he thus expressed his feelings, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This was the experience of both our brethren, who in due time realized their interest in the everlasting love of God. I will first say we hear in many places that it is only for the sinner to believe, and his peace with God is made at once, and that it is exceedingly possible, and even easy, to realize one's own interest in the doing and dying of the Saviour. My dear friends, the fact that one's name is written yonder in the Book of Life is so great that no one but God can reveal it to the mind. The fact that Jesus Christ died for us, involves so much that it requires a Divine person to assure us thereof. We heard ministers preach ; we read books upon this subject ; we studied the Word of God—guilt, however, remained on our consciences, and sorrow continued in our hearts ; and in common with all God's people we exclaimed, "Say unto our souls, I am thy salvation."

"The more I strove against sin's power,
I sinned and stumbled but the more,
Till late I heard my Saviour say,
Come hither, soul, I am the way.

"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 love shall I receive."

Oh that happy moment when the heavenly words fell upon our wounded and grief-filled hearts, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

Our dear brethren were taught of God that they were sinners, and that they were saved, that their sins were imputed to the Saviour, and that his righteousness was imputed to them, and both of them had a merciful measure of confidence in relation to these facts. For upwards of twenty years it was my privilege to know and walk with our aged brother Mote, and, as I said at his funeral, I seldom or never heard him complain of doubt and unbelief. He was a highly favoured disciple, and learned well the heavenly truth that Jesus loved him, and gave himself for him ; and judging from the prayers we have heard our brother Hodges offer, we believe that he also was a highly favoured disciple. They both learned at the feet of Jesus the unsatisfying character of everything out of Christ ; and when they came to die, Jesus, who had taught them how to live, led them through death to the gates of glory which were open just before them. Since he had become their saving Teacher, he conducted them through the deep solemnities of death into the presence of his God and their God, and his Father and their Father. There is now no error in their understanding, no sin in their will, no carnality in their affections, and no confusion in their thoughts—all are perfect and concentrated upon the blessed Christ of God. Now they are filled with all they desired and wished whilst they were here below.

But *how does Christ teach?* By his Spirit, by his word, and by the various scenes and circumstances of life : for "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Our Lord brings light out of darkness, and order out of confusion. God's children sit at his feet, and he causes their troubles to subserve their highest spiritual interest. The very fact that sin dwells within becomes instructive to the hearts of his

people. The conflict rages in their breasts every day of their life, and under Divine influence and teaching the warfare is useful to their souls.

A disciple of Christ is *one that follows him*. There is great sympathy between Christ and his people, between the Teacher and the taught. The mind of Christ, the Teacher, comes into contact with the minds of his people, his disciples. An infinite mind in contact with one that is finite. From that Almighty mind light proceeds, grace flows, and salvation emanates, and they enter the mind of the sinner. They will not advance without their Teacher, nor proceed without the presence of their Lord. Look at them first as sinners; they cannot take a step without the blood of the Lamb; as guilty sinners they must have the atonement before them, and the bleeding Saviour's arm to stay upon, or they are stationary. Bring the law to help them, or mention a hundred other things, they are fast, and cannot move; for, having spiritual desires, they must have Christ, or they must die. Take them as petitioners, they cannot enter the holiest without their Master, or breathe a petition without introducing his name. The pupil at his Lord's feet looks into his face when he presents his humble prayer at the throne of Divine grace. Take these disciples as students, for such they are; they do not thoughtlessly jump at conclusions, but follow the leading Lamb. Where he leads they go, what he teaches they believe, and what he gives them they receive. As pilgrims they must have their Guide.

"Guide me, oh thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land."

And when the cloud is unseen they stand still, at least it is best for them so to do. Often have I heard my dear aged brother speak of the importance of making this and that and all things a matter of prayer. Let us pray indicates a wonderful act and privilege. Brethren, let us always pray. Are we in difficulties? let us pray. Are we hemmed in and surrounded by the powers of darkness? let us pray. Are we full of darkness? let us pray. Yes, there is much in these words, *let us pray*. So, then, as pilgrims they cannot move with safety without their Guide. As sufferers they must have the presence of the dear Redeemer; for afflictions are never useful without the blessing of the Lord. It is not in affliction nor in this bereavement to do you good without the grace of your teaching Lord. If your great Master should come, and I think he is already there, and stand in the gaps which he has now made, your hearts will be helped, and most important lessons will be learned by the two dear widows, and by the beloved children of both families. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

We do not yet know what it is to die, but it must be terrible to die alone; and yet, perhaps, it is not possible to die alone; for if Christ is not there, the Devil is; if heaven is not in death, hell is there. A disciple of Jesus feels that he could not die without his Lord; for, when heart and flesh fail, and all that is social and natural about his soul gives way, then he says—

"Rock of ages, shelter me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

As time is going, I must leave this part of the subject, or I had thought of saying, *a true disciple proves the worth of his personal religion*. Much is said about the articles of our faith. They are not adopted by the disciples of Jesus as matters of convenience, nor are they held to be dangled before the eyes of the

world. Every true disciple knows and feels somewhat of the immense worth and value of the everlasting truth of God. Christ does not give us mere opinions of things, but a living faith which produces conviction in our minds. Our principles are not theories held to justify us in claiming a Christian's name and position, neither do we hold them with a loose hand; but they are the bread of our minds, and the water and wine that nourish and cheer our hearts. They are infinitely more to the disciple of Christ than they are to a mere professor. The disciple proves their divinity and adaptation to himself as a sinner, and their power to produce within that state of things which the world can neither give nor take away. Take a disciple in the trials of life and in the furnace of affliction, and the lessons taught by Christ as to the importance of vital godliness are deep and abiding. In the furnace he proves the preciousness of faith, the reality of grace, and the worth and power of eternal truth; and as he emerges from affliction he says, What would have become of me had it not been for the promise, power, and presence of my Lord. Let temptation come, and his daily conflict with indwelling sin be severe, he proves therein the worth of the religion of heaven, and the value of those principles which constitute him a believer in Christ, and a follower of the Lamb of God.

Secondly, let us look at *the circumstance indicated*—an old disciple. Some are called home in early life, but some live many years in the world. God does as he pleases in this respect. Many old persons are not believers, and one of the most pitiable sights on earth is that of an old person, eighty or ninety years of age, having no grace, no God, no hope, and no bright ray of true light in relation to the future. There are some aged persons who are not old as disciples; but our dear brethren were old disciples of the Lord, old in nature and old in grace.

Look at this *circumstances in four or five relations*. First, *in relation to the world*. What is a disciple to the world? "Ye are the salt of the earth," and for eighty-five years that preserving grain of salt was in this world of corruption and death. Disciples are the lights of the world, and the pillars of the earth. The saints are the subordinate saviours of the world, and therefore it was greatly favoured in having the presence of our brethren so long. These two grains of salt, these two pillars, and these two lights, tended for a long period to preserve, support, and enlighten the world. The world was unconsciously benefited by them. The very presence of God's saints on earth is a blessing to the ungodly. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Their presence, prayers, and influence are all useful here. That locality is greatly blessed wherein disciples dwell, or a Christian church is planted. These lights of the world shine in this dark desert. What a scene of moral desolation and darkness the world would be without these burning lights of God. These old disciples influence the morality, the politics, the laws, and the prosperity of nations. It is not merely our statesmen, our power, nor our government that preserve the nation; but the pillars of the earth, even the saints of the living God.

Look at it, secondly, *in relation to the church*. We had our brother Mote in membership and office with us a great many years. Some friends are taken away shortly after joining the church. It is no small mercy to have a good and useful member for many years. Our brother's dwelling seemed a fixed one, and here he found his home. We had the benefit of his experience until he was over eighty years of age. As a saint and as a man we loved him sincerely, and he was a blessing to this church. But that is not all; he was called by grace in early life. I have heard him speak of his very early years in connection with his

call, which I think took place in Dr. Fletcher's Chapel. He and his beloved brother, who wrote those spiritual hymns of praise, walked together most harmoniously in the things of God and eternity. Supposing he was twenty years old when called, and dying at the age of eighty five, how long was the church of God favoured with his influence and usefulness !

Look at it, thirdly, *in relation to the family*—"an old disciple" in relation to the family. What a blessing it is to be long favoured with the presence of one we love. An old husband ! Many years our two bereaved sisters were favoured with the presence, influence, prayers, and tender love and care of their beloved husbands. Natural love is a great boon, and it must be a blessing to possess it for many years. Our sisters leaned upon their husbands many years, and are thankful they had them so long. They have, however, been removed, and the gap, the breach, is wide ; but let us bless God that they were satisfied with long life, and that they are gone to heaven as shocks of corn fully ripe. My beloved friends, some of you, like myself, are getting into years ; you were long favoured with your respective fathers, who loved you and prayed for you, and what you now possess in answer to the years of their prayers you perhaps will never know.

Look at it *in relation to themselves*. Eighty-five in one case, and sixty-four or sixty-five in the other, and professors of religion for the greater part of their lives. Did they ever fall ? Not publicly. Did they ever backslide in their hearts ? Most probably they did ; but, thank God, their feet were kept year after year until the one was eighty-five, and the other sixty-five, and their names are not now offensive, but fragrant to the church of God. We can follow them all their days, and speak of them as old disciples who were kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. The great principles their Master taught them in their early life they retained, and loved with an increasing love. They lived upon them, and died upon them, being sustained and kept by grace and power divine.

Look at it *in relation to angels*. "Old disciples." Many years ago, angels rejoiced over their repentance, and ever since they have ministered to them. For a long period they were attended by guardian spirits who conducted them to the threshold of glory, and now they sing their united hallelujahs in heaven.

Look at this again *in relation to their God*. What long-suffering, what patience, and what continuance of divine love. Kept by God's eye, which was always upon them ; by his hand, which was always underneath them ; by his grace, which was always within them ; and by his mighty power which never failed. Their course, therefore, was honourable to themselves through grace, honourable to the church and the family, and honouring to that God who, having regenerated their souls, preserved them all their days. Young and old disciples. I trust we may have the spirit which they possessed, and the grace to live and die with which their minds were animated.

I saw our brother Mote a few days before he died, and he supplied some words of a verse which I could not quite remember.

" To this, by faith, he oft retreats,
Bondage and labour quite forgets,
And bids his cares adieu ;
Slides softly into promised rest,
Reclines his head on Jesu's breast,
And proves the Sabbath true."

These were almost the last words I heard him speak. His head was on the

breast of Jesus, and his departure was a sliding out of time into eternal rest, where he is keeping a Sabbath which shall never end.

Our brother Hodges, expressing his feelings shortly before he left us, said, I have done with the world, and want to be out of it. Oh, what a mercy to be able to say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." May the Lord be pleased to favour us with grace to sit as disciples at his feet while we live, and at last to die on his bosom; for so shall we be for ever with him. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON DECEMBER 15TH, 1879.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

* 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE WORD OF THIS SALVATION.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 26th OCTOBER, 1879.

"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of salvation sent."—Acts xiii. 26.

THERE are many great powers in operation in the universe before the throne of God. Sin is before God, and its power is both mighty and terrible. Grace reigns in the high realm of salvation, and its influence is irresistible and incessant,—dignifying degraded man, and glorifying its Author, God. Love, also, is a wondrous power, and has been so ever since God created the world; or ever since He created heaven and gave angels being there. The angels that keep their first estate are filled with love Divine, and every one might say, The love of God constraineth me. Natural affection is an excellency which sin has not quite destroyed; and this world, which is disordered and ruined, would be far worse without it. Natural love is a great power, and in continual operation, a power which will not be extinguished until the end of time. Spiritual affection in the church of God is a special excellency and power, which we wish were deeper and warmer in the hearts of the saints. If brotherly love more generally and powerfully prevailed, the churches would surely be more spiritual, peaceful, and prosperous. Let us, therefore, pray that the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts, and that all God's living worshippers may love one another with pure hearts fervently. Divine love is the greatest of all powers, and concerning this sweet and mighty influence, the great apostle said, "The love of Christ constraineth us." This great love constrained Paul in preaching the gospel to declare the whole counsel of God. There were at times many secular, and natural, and sinful reasons why he should conceal or attempt to conceal, certain portions of God's counsel; but the love of Christ constrained him to declare it all; and, therefore, trampling on temptations, and "treading on the lion and the adder," he avowed his determination to conceal nothing. When persons complained of his boldness and seeming severity in preaching, he said, That which impels me is the love of Christ. Again, in relation to the same subject, he wrote, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." From this, it has been thought that the apostle persuaded men to live, to believe, and to turn to the Lord. That is not, I apprehend, the meaning of these words, but we persuade men of our sincerity, and of the fact that what we preach is the gospel, or the very word of God, and that we cannot possibly keep back any portion thereof; and hence he immediately added, "We are made manifest

VOL. II., No. 32.—DECEMBER 15, 1879.

unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." The apostle journeyed from place to place, for the love of Christ constrained him. Sometimes inferior preachers complain on account of their numerous engagements, which carry them far from home, and that they are seldom there. It appears to me, that Paul scarcely had a home on the earth. He was always preaching the gospel, or ministering to the saints, or otherwise about his Master's business. Having the treasure of the gospel in his heart, he was called to carry it everywhere; and when asked for reasons for his zeal and labours, he said, "The love of Christ constraineth me."

In the connection in which the text stands we learn that the Apostle was in Antioch, and that on the Sabbath day he entered into a synagogue of that city. After the reading of the law, and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on; and Paul stood up and beckoned with his hand, and said, "Ye men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." Our text this morning forms a part of the sermon preached on that occasion. In the first place the attention of his audience was directed to the relation in which Israel stood to God. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers. Divine relationship is important, and Paul never preached long without adverting to the covenant of grace. Having hinted at this point, he proceeded to set forth God's longsuffering, and patience toward his people. "About the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness." He then reminded them that according to the promise Canaan was given to Israel, who for four hundred and fifty years were governed by judges, and then for forty years by Saul, who was followed by David, the son of Jesse, a man after God's own heart. David received many great and precious promises; and the preacher reminded his hearers that among them was this one,—that his seed should be a Saviour Jesus. Now, says the Apostle, "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." By "the word of this salvation" Christ may be meant; but I do not, however, think that is the sense of the text. It is a fact that Christ is the Word of God, and also the Word of salvation; for He is the great thought, or all the great thoughts of Jehovah embodied and expressed, so that he that knows the Lord Jesus knows and understands in a measure the mind of God. The mind of a person is known by the utterance, and expression of his thoughts, and God's thoughts concerning sinners are revealed by Christ, his Word. If we have a spiritual and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, we know the saving intentions of the Most High concerning guilty, ruined and sinful men. This, however, not being the sense of the text, let us apply it to the Gospel: "to you is the word of this salvation sent."

I shall gather up a few facts from the surface of the subject, mention them as I proceed, and make a few observations upon them. "The word of this salvation."

We notice in the first place some things respecting *its great Author*. What is the origin of the word of salvation? Surely that great Being who is the God of salvation is the Author of the Word which declares it. This word was necessitated by the fact that God, having resolved to save sinners, had carried that resolution into effect by the death and sufferings of his beloved Son. The Gospel is therefore intelligence from heaven, good news from the heart, and from the throne of God, and God's own report of his own proceedings before and since the foundation of the world. When great questions of national importance have been discussed and settled, a report of the proceedings is anticipated with strong feelings. The great Triune God sat in council upon our salvation,

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

And arranged the whole of it from first to last. The building of heaven the furnishing of that glory world, the Saviour, his person, and his name were purposed and arranged. How our sins should be put away, our character established, and our persons for ever saved, were then finally settled. Then God came forth from the council with a report of those loving decrees which had pleased and delighted him so well. God is infinitely satisfied with his own saving purpose and plan ; and therefore he has fully revealed them in the Gospel, which is the Word of this salvation. This divine report of divine proceedings, beloved friends, constitutes the Gospel what it is. The gospel bears the signature of God, and he that sees it not, is blind. In this holy Book of heaven we discover divine authority, greatness, and grandeur, unless we are strangers to sin and to salvation. That the Gospel is so blessed is due to the facts that the God of grace is its Author, and that salvation is its great subject matter.

What is the Gospel ? And here let me be experimental, as well as doctrinal. Look at its copiousness, and comprehensiveness, which constitute it a treasure. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us." It discloses in "wondrous forms the unsearchable riches of Christ." And this, my brethren, makes it precious. Its connection with Deity, with the Saviour, and with heaven makes it invaluable. It is the richest boon and the most enriching blessing, for it is the word of God. Take the best human book in the world, whatever that may be ; you will not be able to read it with half that pleasure and assurance with which you read the holy book of heaven. Unto you is the word of this salvation sent. Moreover that is the richest mind in which the Word of God dwells most plenteously. The richest Christian is the one in whom the word dwells most comprehensively, and works most powerfully. A hundred facts more or less important may be in one's mind : one, however, can never possess a knowledge of anything half so important as the Word of this salvation. Sometimes when your minds are wandering, and your thoughts are vain, a portion of the word strikes your souls which has the effect of gathering together all your wandering ideas, and immediately concentrating them on things divine. When the Word thus occurs to your souls, it demonstrates the fact that it is God's word, and that he is in it. Not only is the Gospel rich and enriching, because it is the Word of this salvation ; it is mighty, because it came from God. It arrests the sinner's mind, and breaks the hardest heart ; and then it heals it, however deep the wound may be. However low, and fainting the spirits may be, a draught from this cup of salvation never fails to revive one's fainting hope and drooping faith. There is a power in Bible truths that can never be found in any other book, a power adapted to the mind, and always invincible. This is due to the fact that the Word of this salvation is from the God that saves, and that salvation itself is connected with it. And does not this account for the miraculous manner in which the Word has been preserved ? For thousands of years this most ancient volume has been on the earth, where it has been hated, as well as loved and pressed to believing hearts. Hell has desired to destroy it. Rome, or Antichrist, has long concealed or withheld it, and burnt probably thousands of its volumes, and the ungodly world cares not for it ; yet the Word of this salvation is before us this morning in all its purity and entirety. Eternal truth marks it, eternal justice watches it with a jealous eye and holds her sword over it, while a special providence always guards these oracles of truth, this revelation of God and of his great salvation. "Men and brethren, unto you is the word of this salvation sent."

Look again at another fact. Events and circumstances are found to be continually fulfilling this Book, this Gospel of God. This proves the height of its origin and the Divinity of its Author. Do you think that by mere chance and accident events could so arise and occur as to fulfil what is written here ? No. Here we have the plans of God and of his grace, and by the operations of a wise

Providence we have the gradual, progressive, and certain fulfilment thereof. If a nation falls, the word is fulfilled; if a peculiar character ascends an earthly throne, some great design is fulfilled. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him." Have you never seen the word of this salvation fulfilled? He who has fulfilled a part is the great fulfiller of the whole; and God has in giving you his word pledged his name, his oath, and his honour to save your souls, and take you to eternal happiness and glory. The word of this salvation is progressively fulfilled. Look at the figures by which its peculiar character is illustrated. It is compared to a cup. "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." How large a cup it is, formed by God himself, and placed immediately beneath his throne; and it contains his salvation—salvation from the Father's purpose, from the purchase of the Son, and from the power of the Holy Spirit. These three are one, and this trinity of blessings is found in the cup of salvation. Have you not sometimes been privileged to place the lips of faith upon this cup, and drink the promise, the doctrine, and the declarations of the Lord, saying, "who loved me and gave himself for me?" "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" I will again take this sacred cup, and call upon the name of the Lord. The word of this salvation is compared to a river. "There is a river, the streams whereof shalt make glad the city of God; the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." The source of this river is the heart of Deity. It flows immediately from the throne of God and the Lamb, bringing with it love and blood divine, and bearing down to the world from the mind and heart of God, his saving thoughts concerning guilty men. How vehement at times is our thirst as spiritual persons! We thirst for knowledge such as the world cannot give. We come to this everflowing river, and drink, and bless the name of the Lord. We thirst for holiness, and here our thirst is slaked, for we are conformed to Christ. We thirst for a light upon the future, for a tranquilizing view of death, and for a knowledge of eternity; and "This river and its streams gladden and satisfy our inquisitive minds." The word of this salvation is a seed which is vital; for "it liveth for ever." Its life is not natural, but divine. When the Holy Spirit drops this heavenly seed upon the hearts of sinners, it takes root therein, and grows, as indeed it must, since it is divinely quick and powerful; and "God's word shall not return unto him void." It strikes its powers deeply into all the faculties of the mind, and thus becomes the engrafted word which converts the heart of its receivers, and saves their souls. The word of this salvation is armour, especially a sword. It is the sword of Christ's mouth, and the sword which he has girded on his thigh. Christ himself used it when he was tempted, and believers are using it now, even the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. We do not believe in a gospel which, like an ordinary fishing-net requires mending, or an ordinary weapon requires sharpening by ministers. Sometimes brethren say, Shall a brother read and pray for you, that is, whet your sword before you use it or preach? We reply, we use a sword that is never blunt, that requires no whetting; for the word of this salvation is always sharp, and powerful, and Godlike. What it was when it was first uttered by the mouth of Jehovah, that it will remain until the end of time. The gospel is all this on account of its divine Authorship and origin. God having resolved to save has fulfilled that great purpose, and now sends the word of this salvation to reveal the fact. We are informed how he has redeemed the guilty, pleased himself, and established eternal intercourse between fallen beings and his own mind; in fact, that sinners are saved with an everlasting salvation. Hence the gospel is the word of this salvation. Brethren is not this a satisfactory and sufficient revelation of God? There is a most comprehensive revelation of God in creation, and some morally good persons tell the world they can see as much of the Deity in creation as they require to know; for his visible works declare his

eternal power and Godhead. That might be true if man were not a sinner, fallen and ruined. This salvation would not be required, and this word of revealed religion would be unnecessary if man were an innocent creature. But he is a transgressor ; and in creation there is not a sufficiently copious and comprehensive revelation of God for him. We must know something more of God than either nature or the law reveals, if our minds are to be satisfied ; for we are lost yet immortal beings, destined to live in the future for ever, and having no comforting intelligence as to our relation to God but in the word of this salvation. We cast ourselves upon this word, and bless God for having sent it to our world and our souls. We believe in it unreservedly and confidently, feeling that it is the representative of God on earth, and that in venturing ourselves upon it we are safe in the great Speaker's arms. O for grace to plead the revealed engagements of the Lord, saying, "Thou hast said thou wouldest surely do me good ; and also they that call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"Myself into thine arms I cast,
And know I shall be saved at last."

So much for the source and spring of the word of this salvation.

Now, secondly, *its name*. God has been pleased to designate it thus—"The word of this salvation." Is there any other salvation ? No ; "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Only there are a great many human schemes abroad which are said to be saving. But it is *this* salvation—this and this only ; for there is only one, although we are told there are many ways to heaven. Jesus, however, assures us that he is "the way, the truth, and the life." Beloved friends, eternal truth declares there is only one way from ruin and wrath to eternal perfection and glory, and a second is not required ; and if we have been brought to love God's way of saving sinners, we are deeply indebted to undeserved mercy. It is a great blessing to have been reconciled to God's method of mercy, his plan of salvation, and his way of taking sinners to heaven. The great contention between God and men is how men shall be saved, and who shall save them. Man will have a hand in the business, and quarrels with God and with divine sovereignty if he may not. God says he will do the whole or nothing. It must be all of grace, and cannot be of any act of the creature. If we have been lovingly constrained to receive God's method of mercy, we may be in the minority, and not among the general superficial professors of the day ; but we are standing on the ground of heaven, and under the atonement of Jesus Christ. "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil." Its name is "the word of this salvation," because it displays salvation. It unfolds and reveals, first, its great Author. First and foremost this word exhibits a living, faithful portrait of the Author of salvation. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image." And, secondly, the plan of it. This is divinely unfolded in the gospel of salvation. Then, thirdly, the marvellous manner in which God's plan and decree were executed. God became incarnate, came down and dwelt among us three-and-thirty years ; and I will not say that the work might not have been done in a briefer period than that. Jesus spent three-and-thirty years in completing the meritorious branch of the plan of salvation, and during that time he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He rose victoriously from the grave, and went triumphantly to heaven, and the word discovers the fact that he is still at work, and that this great salvation cannot be completed until the last day, when all the ransomed shall appear in personal perfection, headed by the Saviour himself, who shall conduct them to the Father, saying, "Here am I and the children thou hast given me." But there is something else—the application of it. The word shows how it is received, and how it operates on

the heart. How it transforms and constitutes them Christians, and that angels wonder at the power of gospel truth, producing results and effects so wondrous ; "which things the angels desire to look into." It discloses also the consummation of this salvation,—when the dead shall be raised, and the ransomed family of heaven shall appear in full splendour and perfection, millions of blood-washed sinners shall enter confidently and victoriously into the heavens prepared for them. Men and brethren, this is its name.

Its introduction into the world indicated God's purpose to save, and it appears that its introduction into any locality might be considered as indicative of God's purpose to bless persons therein. I know many villages in which there is little or no gospel, and I have known others into which it was introduced in connection even with myself and brethren in the ministry, and I have always felt that God had merciful purposes and designs to fulfil in those places. One of the best societies—forgive a slight digression for a moment—in existence is, in my opinion, the Bible Society. All hail to missionary efforts, especially to those of that little Society to which we belong—may God bless it, and make it a blessing ; but one of the noblest and most useful works is that of circulating the word of eternal life.

"Fly abroad, thou mighty Gospel,
Win and conquer, never cease."

Tracts are good, but they are little lights from this great Lamp of truth. They are better than nothing, and some of them are excellent. Pamphlets and magazines are good, but they are as small candles which burn out and disappear, while this great Lamp continues to burn and shine. This is the Lamp of heaven made by God, and lighted on his throne, being supplied with all it contains from his heart of everlasting love. The name which God has given to the Gospel is "the word of this salvation." Its continuance in a place indicates the progressiveness of God's saving word which supplies the churches with heavenly light. A very terrible thing it appears to me is the removal of a candlestick out of its place—a calamity—and perhaps it might be considered as amounting to a Divine judgment. If the candlestick of heaven remains, if the word of this salvation abides in a place, be assured God's Spirit is there with manifestations of his presence more or less bright, and that it is his intention to save sinners and to build up Jerusalem.

Thirdly, observe *the donation of the gospel*. To you is the word of this salvation sent. Sent from heaven to earth, from God to man, even from the heart of Deity to the heart of the sinner. You occasionally hear of grace flowing from heart to heart as oil from vessel to vessel. I never comprehended the meaning of this as applied to creatures, but applied to God and sinners I can understand it. If a measure of grace is communicated to one here, he desires to keep it for himself ; in fact he cannot impart any portion thereof to the heart of another. There is the heart of God in heaven, and the heart of his child on earth to whom the word of this salvation is sent. It comes from love, and brings love into the minds of men. It begets love when it is applied by the Spirit, and the soul's response is, "We love him, because he first loved us." It comes from the Saviour to the sinner, even from the wounded Christ to those souls for whom he was bruised. I said unto them, Behold me, behold me. "And they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." The word of this salvation comes from Gethsemane, and with it we hear, as it were, the groans of our suffering Lord. It comes from Calvary and reveals the cross and blood of Jesus ; and in it we hear those wondrous words, "It is finished." The great work of saving sinners is accomplished. It is sent to those that were nigh—the Jews ; and to those that were far off—the Gentiles. But, looking at it spiritually, it was sent to you and me when we were far from God and near to hell,

"'Twas thus the eternal covenant ran,
Almighty grace, arrest that man."

and having been arrested and pierced,

"I felt the arrows of distress,
And found I had no hiding place."

Then having been apprehended as debtors and criminals, we were cast into prison, or into a state of bondage, where we remained till the word of this salvation was sent to us, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Then these delivered ones often pass through deep waters, and walk through great fires, and this word reaches them there; for "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Then these saved persons are in the field of battle. "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." The temptations of the devil are so fierce, and so foul and strong, that men reel and stagger beneath them, until "the word of this salvation is sent." Yonder lies a dying saint, in the deep wonders of dissolution, with only a step between his soul and eternity; and yet he is serene and tranquil; indeed, the only happy person in the room. What is that power that now sustains him in this most solemn position? The word of this salvation has been sent to him, and he is reposing on it. The blessed gospel of our God was sent unsought. Had it not reached us until we had asked for it, we had been eternal strangers to it.

Just a word on another fact. It was sent absolutely; it was not offered, but sent; and not as an experiment. The professing world seems to be in sad confusion in relation to this matter. The gospel is "the word of salvation," and by it God is conducting no experiment. If salvation were only offered to the world, and the efficacy of the word were contingent on the sinner's will, certainty would wholly disappear from the reign of grace, and divine results might never arise. We have no faith in a gospel which is not absolutely operative. Our God is not conducting a series of uncertain operations, but is positively verifying that Scripture: "My word shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The chariot of the gospel shall not return to heaven empty. That would be to return void to God. The word sent from heaven to earth is inseparable from the Holy Ghost, who is taking in immortal souls, and conveying them through all their sins, and troubles, and sorrows to heaven; thus the word returns full, and not void or empty.

What is *the proper position of the gospel*? It follows the breach of the law and the commission of sin against the everlasting God. We might have imagined that no word of salvation or mercy would have proceeded from that Being whom we had insulted. But it is not so; for, brethren, such a word is sent. The Old Testament preceded Christ and the atonement, and threw a light upon the coming Person and that glorious favour. The Redeemer came, and made the promised atonement, and the Old Testament was followed by the New. The Old threw a light upon the future, and said, "He is coming;" the New throws a light upon the past, saying, "It is Christ that died," "Israel is saved in him with an everlasting salvation;" and thus the two Testaments meet and centre in our Lord. Again, it follows the law in point of nature, in point of time, and in order of experience. It follows the law in order of nature, for, having created man, it was necessary that God should give him a law; but the gospel was not a Divine necessity. The law came from God's nature; the gospel from his sovereign will and grace. The gospel follows the law in order of time. The law was given to Adam in a state of innocency: the gospel was given by the

second Adam to guilty and fallen men. But, experimentally, the gospel follows the law. By the law is the knowledge of sin. "I was alive without the law once," says the great apostle; "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." There is much difference between the law coming to a person, and a person coming to the law. When the law comes to the heart, a solemn experience is the result. Can the law kill sin, or give mercy? No; for when it comes sin revives, and justice appears. Paul imagined he was faultless, because touching the law, he was blameless. He thought he had sufficient righteousness for heaven, but when the law came, his unperceived sin revived, and he who before thought he was perfect, was condemned, cursed, and died. Things were quite reversed in his mind, for that law in which he rested condemned him as a sinner, cursed him for his guilt, and left him to perish. This is all the law can do. To such persons is the word of this salvation sent; for now there is room for the gospel, and scope for a new revelation from heaven. As by the former is the knowledge of sin, so by the latter we come to have an experimental knowledge of salvation; and this is the proper place of the word. But how does the gospel operate? It enters the heart by the Holy Ghost, for it is the channel or medium through which the salvation flows. It connects God with the sinner, whose heart is thereby brought into contact with Christ, and his grace then enters the souls of guilty men. Peter, therefore, speaks of having been born again by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. When saving truth has thus entered the heart, a very serious internal revolution takes place. The original state of things is completely changed, for then the soul changes owners and rulers. He that had been under the dominion of sin; is now under the reign of grace: he that had been in the hands of the devil, is now sitting at the feet of Christ; and the Spirit having thus quickened the soul, enthrones the Saviour therein. Here we see a new creature in his spiritual beauty and glory. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." This gospel leads the sinner to the Saviour, and furnishes him with words when he is in his presence. It unites him to Jesus and gives him rules for his future guidance; in fact, it leads him, under the Spirit's ministry, home to heaven.

As to the duration of it. It is the everlasting gospel: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." As long as there are sinners to be saved, this word will be found on the earth. We are not expecting a new gospel, neither do we want another, for we are thankfully satisfied with this. The design of this great gift is to glorify our triune God, by giving us a full and powerful revelation of the Father's love, the Son's merit and blood, and the Holy Spirit's regenerating, quickening, and sanctifying power; and when all the saved ones are at the right hand of the Saviour, there will be in Christ and in Christians a complete fulfilment of the word of this salvation. Then may the world look at the gospel, and look at saved millions, and behold in God's work the highest glories of the great Author of the word of this salvation. I close with one word more. It is very remarkable that the word of this salvation is wonderfully comprehensive and copious. When God would tell us how he made our world and others, he took about one page, or two pages at most, while all the rest of the precious volume relates to that new creation which arises out of that glorious salvation wherein appears in wondrous forms all his fulness. Men and brethren, to you is this God-like message sent. The Lord command his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON JANUARY 15TH, 1880.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

*. 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. 1s. 2d., post free.)

DIVINE SUPREMACY.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 8th DECEMBER, 1879.

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."—Isa. xlv. 7.

THE sun of nature is a self-revealing body, and its great Maker is a self-revealing God; therefore it is said, "In thy light shall we see light." God's revelation of himself, and of his purposes, however, has been gradual and progressive. Adam's knowledge was sufficient and perfect before he fell; but when he became a sinner, his mind became full of darkness, and he lost the true knowledge of his Maker, the living God. Another revelation from heaven was, according to God's will, then necessary; and, immediately after the fall, God revealed in some measure the purposes of his sovereign love, promising four thousand years before the incarnation of his Son, that Jesus should come into the world. That promise was never forgotten, but formed a great centre around which a multitude of other promises clustered, all of which were in due time fulfilled; for God "is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." In the days of Abraham, divine revelation was remarkably bright and full. God told that good and great believer that his seed should be numerous, and it came to pass; that they should dwell in a land of strangers, and it came to pass; and that at the expiration of 400 years they should leave their bondage and possess the land into which he had led Abraham, and it all came to pass. I mention these facts to remind you that the Bible is the real Word of God, who has usually, if not invariably, given promises of blessings before they were received, and predictions and prophecies of events in the distant future. Thousands of years after a Saviour was promised, he came into the world; and hundreds of years after Israel's deliverance from Egypt was promised, the seed of Abraham left that land. Again in the days of Daniel it was said, "After three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself;" and it came to pass. Thus our God is executing his purposes and intentions, and "whoso is wise," and will observe the operations of his hand, and compare them with the word of his mouth, will see the great and important fact that the Bible is the word of God.

Now the words which I have read to-night are God's own words spoken in relation to Cyrus. I have not time to go far into history in connection with that most interesting and extraordinary man. Isaiah prophesied about 170 years before Cyrus took Babylon; and yet in this chapter we have foreshadowed the

VOL. II., No. 33.—JANUARY 15, 1880.

manner in which that city was captured, together with the certainty that it should fall. These facts are so stated that it strikes every unprejudiced reader that the prediction came from God. About 170 years before Israel departed from their captivity, the Lord promised the blessing, and mentioned their deliverer's name. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him, I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut." I am not going into ancient history, nor into secular history at all; but I may ask my young friends, who desire information and light upon these matters, to consult Rollin or some other historian, and compare history with the predictions, the promises, and the word of God. Fools say the Bible is not the word of God, and that he is not in this precious and important book; when nearly 200 years before an individual was born, his birth, and name, and special work are mentioned in the most minute and wonderful manner. I will open before him the two-leaved gates; and this took place when Babylon was taken at night. "And I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; and I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." Observe, God speaks in the first person, and limits the operations altogether to himself. *I—I will do it all.* These words were addressed prophetically to Cyrus: "I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord, which called thee by thy name, am the God of Israel"—not "thy God;" for Cyrus was a heathen, albeit a very interesting and amiable one. One more observation, and then I will come to the gospel of the text. Cyrus was a Persian, as Darius was a Mede; and the Persians (and therefore Cyrus himself) believed that there were two great antagonistic powers or deities in the universe which were evermore opposed to each other. These they called Light and Darkness. Light produced all that was good, and Darkness all that was evil. Now the Lord says to Cyrus his anointed, whose name he had mentioned, and whose services he intended to employ to bring his people out of Babylon, "You believe in a certain deity whom you call Light, and whom you speak of as the source of all good, and in another deity called Darkness, the author of evil. *"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."*

Having thus reached the text, and believing that much precious gospel may be drawn from it, I will call your attention to two points: first, *it embodies a great doctrine*; and, secondly, *it presents precious comfort to every true believer.*

In the first place, the text *embodies a great doctrine.* "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil." I am going to say nothing extraordinary, or critical, or metaphysical; but shall offer a few observations upon the clauses as they stand. "I form the light, and create darkness." God forms our *natural light*. If you say that is not a very high position to take, I reply, let us go a step at a time. God, as the great Creator of all, forms the light of nature; and as the Maker of worlds, he points at the sun and says, "That is my creature. And he forms the light and creates darkness by causing that great production of his power, the sun, to rise in the morning and to set at night. Now this is very easy and plain, and no argument is required to prove this position. The universe is an association of the multitudes of God's creatures. One part has a peculiar influence upon another, and the sun influences the whole of the system of which it is the centre. Always observe that, whatever you do, you must not exclude God from astronomy, nor from the laws of nature. Do not allow any book, nor any author, however great and popular his name may be, to lead your minds astray from the great, the all-important, and ever-essential fact that the throne of Deity, the great Author of all worlds, is in the centre of the universe, and that all nature and its laws emanated from him, and that he

guides the motions of every world according to the good pleasure of his own will. He forms the light and creates darkness every day and night. He is at work still. The infidel, if he heard me, (and it may be that some are here to-night,) would sneer at the minister in the pulpit for talking about the presence and the interposition of God every morning and every night. We cannot, however, afford to contemplate the rising and setting sun, the light of day, nor the darkness of night, apart from the presence of the great Creator. As creatures and as sinners we are very poor and guilty, and so entirely dependent upon some-one out of ourselves, that we must have God everywhere. The Lord forms the light of the morning, and creates the darkness of the evening, by bidding the sun to rise and set; and he perpetuates the revolutions of days and nights, weeks and months, and years, by regulating all by those laws of which he is the great Author. I might, if I were required or expected to-night to preach on this theme, tarry here a few minutes; but our subject is a large one, and therefore I will only say, my dear young friends, do not forget the word of exhortation which I dropped a few minutes since; for a word to the wise is enough. We never lived in so dangerous a day as the present, when the influence of much of our literature was so seductive and pernicious. You may easily get ideas into your minds that may defile and plague you sorely, but having received them there you cannot get them out again. Study the Bible. A fact is stated here, and by God himself, "I form the light, and create darkness." Let us, however, leave this point, and look at other aspects of the subject.

Contemplate *spiritual light*. You say, that is better. In some respects it is; so it is another step. God forms spiritual light and darkness. How is this done? By his presence, and by his absence. Nothing can be simpler than that. By his presence with a nation, with a people, and with individuals. By his presence with a nation or with a people. Look at Israel inhabiting the land of Canaan for hundreds of years, and living in floods of light poured down upon them from heaven. They had the oracles of God; the adoption pertained to them. The promises were theirs. They had the divine Shekinah, and the great God of Israel limited and confined his light and saving influence for ages to Canaan. He created their light; and by leaving Gentile nations in ignorance, gross darkness covered the people. Then, coming to individuals, his presence forms our light, and his absence occasions our darkness. Do not condemn the preacher because he believes that very ordinary and common fact that when the sun shines there is light, for there is nothing wonderful in this. When I come, however, to apply this to spiritual things, I may excite peculiar feelings in some breasts. I believe that when the Sun of righteousness shines there is light, and that when he does not shine there is darkness. There is a wonderful difference between light and darkness, between the presence of Christ and his absence; and if Dr. Watts were now living, he and I should walk in great harmony, singing—

"In darkest shades, if he appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's sweet Morning Star,
And he my rising Sun."

Job knew the difference between the light that was occasioned by God's presence, and the darkness that followed his absence: "Oh that I were as in months past. . . . when his candle shined upon my head." I go backwards and forwards and cannot see him, and turn to the right hand and to the left, and cannot behold him. There was a difference in Job's estimation and experience between light and darkness, and I have always preached the difference between these two important states. If the Lord is

with us, our minds are irradiated with heavenly light ; and thus illuminated, we can see ourselves, not merely as sinners, but as saints, and can "read our title clear to mansions in the skies." We can then see our evidences and our signs, and we know that the presence of God is the source and spring of spiritual light. But when he hides his face we are troubled, being ready to say with David, "I will say unto God my rock, why hast thou forgotten me?" "O when wilt thou come unto me?" It is then night and darkness with our souls. Let us pray, my friends, for more experience in connection with the things of God, that we be not as the hard and impenetrable rock beneath a falling shower of rain, which is not impressed nor softened thereby. Oh for hearts to imbibe and retain the blessing of heaven, and to respond to its influences by growing graces, and rising spiritual thoughts and holy feelings !

Let me say a word, in the next place, on what I will call *sovereign light and darkness*. Revelation is frequently said to be a light from heaven, and the absence of revelation involves a state of darkness. Sometimes God's purpose is apparent, and when it is so he gives the light ; but when his intention is concealed, and we are in the dark as to his deep designs, he forms this light and this darkness. Concerning the investigating mind, and the inquiring intellect, and the prying thoughts of man, it might be said, Hitherto mayest thou come, but no further, and here shall thy enquiries stop. Beyond divinely prescribed limits all is darkness, and if creatures be so intrepid and self-confident as to go beyond the divine line, they will find themselves without compass, chart, or helm. All beyond divine revelation is an unknown ocean, densely dark and profoundly deep. All beyond the two covers of this blessed and holy book is beyond our reach, and humanly uncertain. There is enough here for you and me in the Word. Keep within these bounds ; for all beyond is dark, and God has made it so by limiting revelation. Should you still say, There is much beyond the Bible. What is it? The answer is, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me!" "Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." "I form the light, and create darkness."

I might now give you, perhaps, what might be called the *literal meaning of the words*. I just mention it and pass on, as time is going. We have an account of *miraculous light and darkness*. See, for instance, the land of Egypt. One of the plagues of the Egyptians was a darkness over all the land that might be felt, and during the whole of that time the children of Israel in Goshen had light. There is a literal explanation of the text. God formed the light that shone in Goshen upon his people Israel, and he created the darkness in which the Egyptians were buried. "I the Lord do all these things." May we refer to the wonderful darkness that was over all the earth, during three hours, when our Lord was on the cross. [You should not go into that, sir; for you know it has been proved that an eclipse took place at that time.] Some persons are always trying to prove something that will invalidate or weaken the word of divine truth. The Holy Ghost has been pleased to put his mark upon that fact—"There was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." I do not care whether that darkness was the result of an eclipse or not. It does appear that our God has sent back the shadow on the sun-dial, and that he could command the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. "I form the light, and create darkness." Take heaven and hell. Oh, there is eternal day on high, and eternal night down there. Eternal night is that state of darkness which guilty, sinful man deserves, and which God as a righteous Governor must inflict, apart from the mediation of his Son.

Now, secondly, "*I make peace, and create evil.*" It is not at all difficult to show how he makes peace, nor what that peace is of which the Lord is the Author. He makes peace *mediatorially*, and hence there is eternal reconciliation

between God and saved sinners. Are there other peacemakers? Yes; occasionally we find them in the church, reconciling brethren and sisters: but there is a peace so great that it could not have been made by the creature, but by God himself exclusively. How did our Lord make peace? By fulfilling the law; and if you can fulfil God's law like the Lord Jesus, I assure you God will be at peace with you for ever. If you can set yourself for ever right with the moral character and government of God, you may go to heaven and occupy some independent or isolated position there, and sing your own praises for ever. *The sinner make his peace with God!* I wonder how and when it is made! I wonder what peace it is! I the Lord make peace. It is done by magnifying the law, by atoning for sin, by satisfying justice, and by bringing together around a bleeding sacrifice all the otherwise disunited attributes of God. When all the divine attributes are brought together around the great central suffering incarnate God, then the great Lawgiver comes down and places his throne amid the atoning blood, and receives all that were ransomed and redeemed by his dear Son. Heaven pacified, Deity appeased, and a holy cloud enveloping the throne of Jehovah, show all wrath and curse for ever swallowed up. I the Lord make peace.

Again, this peace is *experimental*. You see the second member of the text does not very much differ from the first. I make peace *experimentally*. When the Lord gives peace, who or what can disturb the heart? and if the Lord withholds peace from a guilty conscience, who can give that conscience ease? The Lord makes peace; but how? There is that peace-making blood which flowed from the great Peacemaker, and here is the bruised, pierced, and stung conscience of the sinner; and the Holy Spirit applies the blood to the guilty one, in whose mind a terrible tempest rages, and from which has been heard the petition many times, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," and all the storm ceases and a holy calm prevails. What manner of man is this, that even sin and the sting of guilt obey him, being removed by the sweet power of his name? God makes peace by applying blood, and by giving his Spirit to bear witness with human spirits that they are his children. Have you heard the still small voice? Yes; God has given us songs even in the night. Let me say that nights have been tedious and dreary times with us, when we have been in darkness, and pain, and alone; but if the still small voice has been heard, the night fled quickly, and we were calm and quiet. There is something sweet in this. Jesus gives us a song in the night, and we hear the voice of the Turtledove when the world hears nothing heavenly, or the voice of the Spirit of adoption assuring us that we are children and heirs of God. This peace I want, and with this peace I pray God to favour you. Well, then, there is a providential peace, and peace also in death; but we cannot longer tarry here.

I the Lord create evil. Do you now say I have reached the difficulty? I see no difficulty here. The branches or the clauses are antithetical. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil." Moral evil? No; God is not the author of sin. Sin is an evil—moral evil—an evil only—there is nothing good in it. God hates it; but he hates not the works of his hand as such, therefore he is not the author of sin. It would be wrong in God to punish and curse sin, if he were its author and gave it being, therefore that is not the "evil" here intended. "I create evil." How are we to understand it? *Circumstantial* evil. "And when Job's friends saw all the evil that had come upon him." This is the kind of evil. Again, the children of Israel said when they were in the land of Babylon, "All this evil is come upon us." And we are accustomed to speak of afflictions, trials, and bereavements, and death as evils; and God does not prohibit this, but speaks himself occasionally in the same language. "Is there evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it." "I make

peace, and create evil." Consider national calamities, who is their author? Does not the Lord send the famine and the epidemic, which sweep thousands away? It is possible, and even common, for persons to run wild in relation to sanitary matters, by attributing the preservation of health and the prolongation of life to man himself; whereas God is in the darkness and the evil, as well as in the light and the peace. "I the Lord do all these things." Look at all these matters in connection with the hand of God. When the cattle plague prevailed, how much that was wicked was spoken and written. People want to do without God. The devil wishes them to do without him, and they will be independent of him if they can. But God will ever be on the scene, to smile or to smite. "When thy hand is lifted up they will not see; but they shall see." His uplifted hand is to be seen; and let us thank God for giving us eyes to see, and hearts to desire to behold it in all these things. "I create evil"—in families, and for individuals. Was not the death of Lazarus considered an evil? All mourned and wept, even Christ himself. To Martha and Mary it was a very bitter ingredient in their cup. The loss of beloved ones leaves gaps which neither men nor angels can repair or fill. In this respect we see bereavement and affliction are called evils. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil."

What shall we say, in the second place, on the subject *as expressing holy and spiritual comfort*? "I the Lord do all these things." Cyrus, I, and not your supposed deities, do them all. The Persians believed that Darkness was a bad spirit, and produced evil; whereas God says, I, and not idols, not Satan, not man, not chance, do all these things. Passing over a few thoughts which I have in my mind in relation to the moral government of God, I will look at the subject in connection with our comfort. First of all, beloved, *see the hand of God in all things*. "I the Lord do all these things." You need not language more comprehensive than this, and nothing could be better calculated to cheer and comfort the saint. I the Lord cause night and day, light and darkness, peace and plenty, and penury and evil. Come and see "what desolations he hath made on the earth." And then again he "makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth. See the hand of God, my brother, in all these things. First, look at it as it may be seen by faith *behind all second causes*. That is an important matter. You and I are prone to look at second causes, and we cannot help looking at them, for they force themselves upon our attention. Go through them, however, for this may be done, since every one has a way through it. Pray for grace to carry your mind quite through or above them all to that great Being who is behind and above them. [Sir, the day is caused by the sun.] Get beyond the sun, and see your God there. The night is caused by the absence of the sun. Well, then, ascertain the author of its absence. Then one says, Here is a very unfortunate event, and had I foreseen things, it would not have occurred; but unfortunately it has happened, and all this trouble has arisen. Had this or that been done, or left undone, it might have been prevented. Just so, my brother; but that unfortunate circumstance was guided by God's eye, and managed by his hand.

"The fictitious powers of chance
And fortune I defy;
My life's minutest circumstance
Is governed by thine eye."

You cannot have a ray of light without your Father's hand, nor an hour's darkness without his knowledge and permission. You cannot have an hour's peace without the interposition of heaven, nor can the devil touch your heart and faith without the permission of your God. Around you general circum-

stances are continually revolving as it seems without any particular order, and some of them threaten you with destruction, as you were threatened years ago; but although you have always been on the brink of ruin, yet you have never been destroyed; for around you a special providence has been placed, and over you sits your heavenly Father, the Lord who does all these things. It is a comfort to see the hand of God in all circumstances and events.

Secondly, notice *the blessedness of an interest in God*. Who is this Lord but our God? We are his children, and he is our Father. And he is doing all these things. He sits at the helm and guides the ship, holding the winds in his fist, and the waters in the hollow of his hand, controlling every wave; while the calm is the result of his blessing. Thus the believer progresses, and his salvation now is "nearer than when he first believed." If a storm rises, we are tossed up as it were to heaven, and sink down again into the depths; yet at such times we may be comparatively serene and tranquil—there is peace in the storm. Such persons it may be thought have hard hearts, an unfeeling nature; they may be considered reckless and careless by strangers to God, who feel that under similar circumstances they should be miserable. Yet the trusting saint is graciously calm, and quietly leaning on God his Father, who holds the reins and does all these things. I wish we all had more of that religion which enables the afflicted saint to sing—

"My steady soul shall fear no more,
Than solid rocks when billows roar."

Thirdly, *God is an ever-present Agent*. "I the Lord *do all* these things." It does not say I did them, or I will do them. That would have been true, for he worked yesterday and will work to-morrow; but he is doing them now. If he dropped the reins, or vacated the throne for an hour, universal disorder and ruin would prevail. But he will never leave his seat, nor cease to hold all power. He is always at work, and always over all—God blessed for ever. If heaven went out, hell would rush in. If God went out, the devil would rush in; and if God ceased only for an hour to rule matters, there would be no light and peace to-morrow; we should have midnight when it should be midday. Beautiful order and harmony pervade the government of God, who is ever working all these things. Thus there is scope for faith. All these things—darkness and light, war and peace. What desolations are here, sir. Yonder is Jerusalem in ruins. The Lord did it. No; Babylon did it. They were the sword; the hand was God's. Then again, Babylon changed hands, Belshazzar was slain, and Cyrus took the city. I the Lord do it: thus there is scope for faith. But what is the conduct of faith? It believes adoringly. I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. What he does is right; for he cannot err in thought, word, or work. If an angel did something terrible or afflictive without God's knowledge or permission, I should rise up before him and question the propriety of his conduct, or require him to explain it. But since the Lord does all these things, when he crushes my hopes and thwarts my plans, I will sit down and try to be dumb; for all his ways are righteous, just, and true. Nothing is too hard for him. No rock is too hard for his power to break, and no difficulty too hard for his knowledge to penetrate, or for his wisdom to resolve; and no being is too far off for his hand to reach. Oh that we, having committed ourselves into his arms, might have grace to lie still therein, for the Lord does all.

Lastly, *he is not ashamed of his work*. He avows it. I the Lord am the great Agent, the great Workman doing all these things. See yonder Christian, the world persecutes him; for he is thought to be too severe, strict, and holy. To what are his peculiarities attributable? The Lord has made that man or that

woman what he or she is. Well, there is a person that was once comparable to a bramble, now flourishing like the rose—altogether another character. What has happened? The Lord has changed him? “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” And look at the observers of God’s work; angels gather round it and learn, devils observe and oppose it, the world occasionally looks at the works of God, and the fool says in his heart, There is no God; while the believer says, My God has said that he forms the light and creates darkness, that he makes peace and creates evil, that he does all these things, and his word shall stand for ever. On that word I cast myself, and find a peace and tranquillity of mind which the world can neither give nor take away. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON FEBRUARY 14TH, 1880.

Printed and published by BRISCON & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

*. 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE RESULT OF GODLY KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 4th JANUARY, 1880.

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him : I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."—Psa. xci. 14.

THE last words of dying persons are usually considered important ; those of dying saints are certainly so ; but the dying words of the Great Redeemer are most important of all. Our Lord having announced the great fact that his work was finished, addressed himself to his Father, and said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Those words were most important, and their great and mighty influence is felt even now by every being in heaven ; even by God himself upon his throne. The dying words of believers are important to Satan, to the world, and especially to beloved friends who may be standing by and looking on. There is a particular class of believers mentioned in the word of God, whose dying words were very weighty. How Abraham died, or what were his last words, we know not. We have, however, some account of the death-bed experience of Jacob : "I have waited," he said, "for thy salvation, O Lord." Coming forward to the days of Moses, we have a full and comprehensive description of the dying scenes and circumstances of that good man. "And this is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death," and he said, "Yea, he loved the people ; all his saints are in thy hand : and they sat down at thy feet ; every one shall receive of thy words." And the dying blessing which he predictively pronounced upon the twelve tribes of Israel closes with these words : "Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord !" These words were beautifully descriptive of the condition and privileges of the children of Israel as the national church of God, and they are also sweetly descriptive of the state and the privileges of all true believers now. Every saint is saved by God, and therefore his name is written in heaven. A mansion has been built for him there. A crown of glory awaits his arrival, and pleasures and bliss more than tongue can describe, or mind conceive, are treasured up in that bright world, for that happy and honoured person. The child of God has privileges here, many or all of which are set forth by the Holy Spirit in the word.

The Psalm from which our text is taken sets forth many of the privileges of
VOL. II., No. 34.—FEBRUARY 15, 1880.

God's people. The first verse is, if I may so speak, like a beautiful May morning. How large and how weighty are all the words in this divine sentence ! Our spirits are sometimes thrilled with sacred pleasure and pure delight, while contemplating what is stated here. Set forth, if you can, the full meaning of this verse : "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Here is a fountain of happiness, or an ocean of satisfaction, for every child of God. All here is superlative, so to speak. The Most High himself. Saints in heaven are high, Gabriel and other angels are high ; but the Lord is God over all, blessed for ever and ever. His throne is the highest seat in that world, and its lowest step is far too high for seraphs. This Great Being is now before us, as the Most High God. Then, secondly, there is not only a place, but a secret place for his people. Now I would, if I could, tell you what this means. The words, however, are the words of God, and infinite greatness appears in them, and, therefore, I cannot fully explain the mystery. It certainly is a blessing to occupy any place near to the Most High, to be safe before his throne, even if one is exposed ; but here it is said the person is in the secret place of the Most High. Then, thirdly, this favoured one is represented, not as occasionally entering this place, nor as walking to the door and looking into it—he *dwelleth* therein. Of him, it is said, "He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." What I have so frequently said, I repeat. Here are some of your privileges, and if you love to be told it is your duty to live up to them, then I say, look at them as God has here placed them before you. The Most High is your God, and will be so for ever. He has provided for you a secret place, in order that you may be saved without possible failure, and you are dwelling therein ; and lest there should be any ground for heartrending doubts and fears, God has bolted the door with a holy promise. He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty—here are your privileges if you can live up to them. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The spirit is willing, and the *spirit* also is weak. "The good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do." We have not time, however, to go over the whole of this Psalm. I read it at the commencement of the service, because I thought I might be led to make these observations upon it. The Psalm, we say, contains a very full description of the privileges of God's people, and he says, in our text concerning these honoured persons, individually : "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him ; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."

Not to burden you with many divisions, we look at the two branches into which the text seems naturally to divide itself. *The character described and the twofold promise given.* Beginning at the bottom of the text, we take knowledge before love, and then the character is one that knows God's name, and has set his love upon him. The twofold promise—I will deliver him, and I will set him on high. These are the natural divisions of the subject, and on each of them I will try to make a few observations to-night.

In the first place, there is an interesting character ; or the child of God characterised :—He has known my name, and set his love upon me. Beginning at the bottom of the text, what shall we say about the name of God ; or the *object of this knowledge*. Have we any definite ideas concerning this name ? The name of God is God himself ; and he that savingly knows God's name, knows God himself. There is a great difference between our natural knowledge, and that spiritual knowledge of which God here speaks. We may know a person's name without knowing the person himself, and hence one says : "Do you know such an individual ? And you answer, "Yes, by name ; but not personally. We have heard of him, but have never seen him or spoken to him." In natural and social life, therefore, we may say we know a person without being acquainted with him ; but one cannot truly know the name of God without knowing God

himself, because this saving knowledge comprehends much more than the letters which form the noun *God*. G-o-d spells God, and this name is printed in the Bible ; but heavenly knowledge goes far beyond this. If we know this name, we know God's persons, and let me say we know somewhat of his presence. Our knowledge is limited, and will probably grow for ever ; yet we know the Father, we know the Son, and we know the Spirit—so that being Christians we know Christ, being godly we know God, and being spiritual we know the Spirit—thus we are more or less acquainted with the Lord our God. We have to do with him, and he that has nothing to do with God has no knowledge of his name. This name printed is read by all, and many have a theoretical knowledge of it ; but the true believer goes through its letters into the presence of its Great Bearer. God's name, unlike every other, is a living name, a vitalizing power—it carries with it a divine influence to immortal minds. There is something in it, which coming into contact with the soul, affects and sweetly fills it with what is supernatural and inimitable. The name of Jesus is to the believer as ointment poured forth. Let me advert to some of the more pleasurable experiences of God's people. Have you not sometimes prayed for half-an-hour, and felt on rising from your knees as if you had been only a few minutes before the Lord ? May I go a little further than this ? Have you not, especially during the warmth of your first love, been in your closet even longer than that, and then wondered how the time had fled away ? I suppose some of my hearers may think I am going a little too far, and that feelings such as these seldom possess the breasts of worshippers. My dear friends, this is not the common, the ordinary experience of believers ; but surely when Christ's dear name comes into sweet contact with the poor and needy soul, and the salvation of that name flows into the heart, a little heaven upon earth is enjoyed, and some experience that is supernatural results therefrom. For myself, and for my beloved friends, I am praying that we may receive more and more from the ever-full and eternally saving name of the Redeemer. There is in hearts and churches too much of that which is icy and chilling in the day in which we live. We need to be nearer to the fire, to live beneath the warming sun, to have experimental connection with our creed, and more grace, that all our thoughts might be vital, and not merely theoretical. Our thoughts may be straight as a line and hollow as a pipe, our theological ideas may be faultless in this respect ; but what is a straight pipe without the oil or water to fill it ! Our thoughts cannot be too correct ; but we require their connection with the precious and eternal fulness of this name. Thus, friends, we have seen the object of knowledge. "My name ;" not the letters of it, not a theoretical knowledge of it ; but God himself. The name he has assumed for saving purposes, the name he has acquired by saving us, the name he has revealed for the purpose of elevating our hearts and purifying our minds—that name which he can lower into this world, and bring into contact with immortal minds. "Because he hath shown *my name*, therefore will I deliver him."

The name of God is *divinely and savingly definite*. If there are persons present who are not accustomed to think on this subject, let me crave their attention to a point or two upon it. The name of God is definite. "God is everywhere." Yes ; but what is His name ? And although He is everywhere, have you found Him, and been in contact with Him ? Have you knelt before Him, and have your thoughts been concentrated upon something definite ? For a great universal Spirit does not allay a sinner's fears, nor comfort his mind. What is the name of this omnipresent God ? Collect your feelings, and let them rest on him. Gather up your thoughts and concentrate them upon—what ? for there is no name. What is his name, if thou canst tell ? God must simplify himself, and bring all his majesty together into one particular name, and thus appear in a definite form and character, before our wandering wicked hearts can find anything to know, love, or trust in. God has given his Son a name, which

is above every other name, and on Jesus—who saves his people from their sins—ten thousand guilty sinners rest ; and because they know his name, therefore will he deliver them ; and because they have set their love upon him, he will set them on high. We talk about an omnipresent God, or of a Being that is everywhere, while we can find him nowhere to save and satisfy our hearts. We want mercy, and grace, and eternal love, and God's name written in characters of atoning blood ; and when these appear in God's dear Son, our thoughts are rallied, our minds become steady, and we fall as guilty sinners before him with the prayer, " Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." As a rule, I am much at home on this theme, and it is pleasant to forget oneself upon it. Well, I love the name of our Lord, and also to proclaim it, especially when I am helped by God the Holy Spirit.

Then again, *this is a sovereign name.* "The minister preached a great sermon upon the essential name and majesty of Jehovah." But did he not set them forth in connection with the mediation of Immanuel, who is God with us ? " No." Well then, my friends, what was there in the sermon for you ? Can you see anything in abstract Deity that you can stand upon, or on which you can build a hope ? No ; you feel you must have the sovereign, as well as the essential name of God. You must have that name, or those names, which God has been pleased to assume, because he resolved to save ; but which he might have never taken. He has, however, sovereignly assumed them to attract the guilty to himself, and to inspire them with comfort and with confidence. When Moses said, " I beseech thee, show me thy glory ;" God said, Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see my face and live ; but I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim my name. I will put thee in the cleft of the rock, and cover thee with my hand while I pass by. In the cleft of the rock God deposited Moses, and laid his saving hand upon the saint while he passed by with all his glory, proclaiming his great name. " I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious ; and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth—these are the glories that now compose God's name. He has assumed them—for the miserable are to be saved by mercy, the unworthy are to be taken to heaven by grace, and the sinful and wretched, whose frame he knows, and whom he remembers as dust, are to live under divine compassion. These names might never have been heard of, but God has assumed them to indicate the love of his heart and the purpose of his mind ; for the name of God is descriptive of what he is. One not knowing us might hear our names a thousand times, and never be able to form a correct idea of our characters or intentions, for our names are not descriptive. God's names, however, are designations, and assert what he is. He is a merciful and gracious God to lost sinners, which fact they plead in their prayers to him.

Now let us proceed to notice, secondly, *the act itself.* *They have known my name.* Having already observed that this knowledge is not a theoretical one, I notice, first, *it is essential to salvation.* Let me be affectionately faithful, and repeat that a knowledge of God's name is essential to salvation. It is essential to intercourse with heaven, and to peace with God. One says, I have great peace ; but what does it arise from ? You have made your peace with God ; but how did you do that ? You gave your heart to Jesus ; but a man must be his own before he can give himself away. Were you your own when you gave yourself to God ? We are God's creatures, and as fallen creatures we are slaves in the hands of the devil ; and he holds the sinner so fast, that it will be simply impossible for him to give himself away. No, my friends, God's name is not thus known, neither is this the way in which the soul comes into sweet fellowship and communion with him. A true knowledge of God's name is essential to salvation ; salvation certainly accompanies it, although one should know nothing else. The

Holy Ghost has been pleased to say : " The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." The illiterate may say they had no learning—when they were children educational privileges were by no means what they are now, and they can only just manage to read the Bible for themselves—but they do much more than that, for in reading the word they read the saving name of their God, and know it for themselves. This knowledge will abide with them for ever, and do them a thousand times more good than a knowledge of all the sciences in the world. Yet I do not depreciate knowledge by any means. Know, learn, read, and study all you can, only pray observe this one thing—the wayfaring man, though a fool, is safe in God's highway. Salvation does not require a general knowledge of many things ; but a knowledge of only one, or at least, two beings—oneself and God. It requires a knowledge of only one name—the saving name of the everlasting God. " He hath known my name ;" and this knowledge is divine and heavenly. " Blessed art thou, Simon-bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." When anything is said about sending one to college, it would be well if a young man felt there was not a man upon earth who could teach him how to preach, or teach him theology, as a minister ought to know it. The knowledge of God's name is not learned in the schools, not communicated by scholars. I do not depreciate scholars and learning, I honour them in their places, but they cannot give a true knowledge of God's name ; this is obtained not in schools, but at Christ's feet: for " who teacheth like him ?" and " All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." This knowledge is heavenly, and therefore saving ; and, consequently if you possess it you are safe, and shall sooner or later experience the fulfilment of this promise, " I will set him on high."

This knowledge is *transforming*. Other knowledge does not, I believe, transform the mind. One may study astronomy all his days and become wonderfully informed in that science, it will not sanctify his mind nor make him godly, but leave him in a natural state. Intellectually his mind is elevated and expanded, but morally it remains the same; but if he knows the name of Jesus, a new element is introduced, which pervading all his powers and faculties gives them a new character so that they cease to be what they were, and become holy and godlike. The mind was enmity against God ; this knowledge has reconciled it to him. It was a natural mind ; this knowledge has made it spiritual. It has brought light divine into it, which will burn therein for ever and ever. Let us pray, beloved friends, that our knowledge of this name may increase and grow, for this is true religion.

One word, in the second place, *on the love*. " Because he hath set his love upon me." The child of God soars high. Set his love upon *Me*. I am not surprised that the saint is of a soaring spirit, because knowledge precedes love ; and, being animated with that, the divine nature is in his heart. I am not surprised that he should soar, and set his love upon God. Where was he ? Down there in the depths and dirt of sin. What held him there ? A thousand hellish bonds and ties. Was he not unhappy ? No ; for he loved the filth, and rolled it as a sweet morsel under his tongue. What is the reason he is not now wallowing in the mire ? The ties that held him in that moral filth have been dissolved and cut. By whom ? By God himself. Well, is he not dead ? No ; he that cut the ties that held him fast in sin and death, breathed new life into his mind, and gave him a knowledge of himself. What then ? Grace having set him free, broken the bonds, and breathed new life into his mind, he began to move upward ; wings, or at least their rudiments appeared, and he tried to soar. " Have mercy upon me, for I am a sinner." " Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." He became a seeker of the Lord ; and what is a seeker of the Lord but a believer ; and what is it to seek the Lord but to soar ? What is true religion but

a daily soaring, a rising higher and higher till we are set as high as God himself can place us. "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." Yes; the guilty sinner rose from that depth, and appeared before the mercy-seat; he rose higher and higher, if I may so speak, and entered into the covenant of grace and into further realizations of God, until Christ was seen on the cross, and in the holiest of all, and he read his title clear to mansions in the skies. He met the dear Saviour by a living faith, and embraced and held him fast, and ceased not to soar until this high and heavenly point was reached; for he hath set his love so high. Delivered from the reign and love of sin by grace, he was saved from the world; and passing through it, and beyond all saints and angels, he soared above them all, and would not alight until he had found God; and finding him as his God, his heart became fixed; therefore will I deliver him, and set him up on high. In the morning I preached a doctrinal sermon on the sacrifice of Christ,—to-night I am preaching an experimental one on the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, enabling the child of God to soar on high. I would give this definition of soaring. Seeking the Lord is soaring, because the seeker rises above sin towards holiness and God. In seeking the Lord we look upwards; but are sometimes like a bird whose wings are weak, and which is tethered to the earth, we rise and descend again. But there are times when the wings of faith are strong, and when the weight of guilt is removed from our consciences, and then we mount on high according to God's promise: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and they shall mount up with wings as eagles." Think of a human heart set in the heart of God! "He hath set his love upon me." First, the mind flies to Jehovah, and all its thoughts become concentrated upon him; for the heart follows knowledge and love. God says, Thou art mine, and the soul of the sinner becomes sweetly united to the Saviour himself. And what will the Lord do with and for him. "I will deliver him, and I will set him on high." There is matter enough left for two or three more sermons, but our time is gone.

Secondly, *the twofold promise given*. What will God do? He will deliver him, and set him on high. I might just say this is Christian experience, or a part of it. Let us talk less about the form and more about the power, and less about working for God and more about God's work for us. I must confess that as I am getting older I do not like the phrase "working for God." Well, sir, but we do work for God. I dare say you do; and what are you doing for him? Let us work for one another and for our fellow men, and in God's name, and because he has done so much for us; but let us not incessantly talk about what we do for God. Let us do all the good we can, and then place all our works behind us. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit; that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Let us help one another, and do one another as much good as we can; but never say much about what you do for God.

"I will deliver him." The word deliver here has several meanings. First, it means *ransom* or *redeem*. "Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." Is it so—that they that know Christ's name are saved from the pit. God having found a ransom, has interposed it between the sinking soul and hell. Here is a soul loaded with guilt, and there is the pit of ruin into which it is, as to its apprehension, sinking. Yet he has some knowledge, or he would not be sensible of sinking. Deliver him, says that God that he desires to love, and to whom he prays for salvation; deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom, and the sinking sinner is saved from death. Now listen, he sings—

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

He proceeds—

“Had I ten thousand thousand tongues,
Not one should silent be!
Had I ten thousand thousand hearts,
I’d give them all to thee!”

He knows my name and I will deliver him. He has set his love upon me, and I will set him on high. O the glory of God’s method of mercy, and the blessedness of knowing it!

Secondly, it means *to extricate*. I will deliver him; see verse 3, for instance: “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.” Are there snares? Yes. Where? Everywhere nowadays. Snares at home, snares on the table, snares in the streets, snares in the shop-windows, snares in the chapel and in the church, and snares in the pulpit too. You can now hardly take up a book but what is full of snares. Young friends often become entangled and ensnared by the literature they read. Have a care; you may very easily admit a heap of abominations into your minds which you cannot so readily remove. There are snares everywhere. One fell into error, and it became a great snare to him; and where is he now? He delivered me. Another was held by some temptation which was very fierce and frightful; and what is his position and experience now? He is delivered from it, extricated, lifted out of the pit. “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.” God never leaves one that loves his name in the hands of hell. I will deliver him from error, and from temptation. Another was very much entangled some years ago by worldly friendships, which indeed sometimes become very ensnaring. It is easy, perhaps, to form friendships; but not so easy to dissolve them when they prove snares. What did he do? He cried to the Lord; and the result is, “the snare is broken, and I am escaped.” I will deliver him, for he hath set his love upon me. We might go into afflictions. You see what course my thoughts would have taken had time permitted. But there is a great deliverance coming, until which we shall be delivered and delivered again and again. When the film of death is over our eyes, and our blood ceases to flow in our veins, and eternity is near, and time is receding—what then?

“When ye hear my heart-strings break,
How kind my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul.”

Now Lord, come quickly, I am ready. With the last sigh, and the last breath, we shall sin, suffer, and groan for the last time.

“What then?” I will set him on high. “Let thy salvation set me up on high.” Because he hath known my name I will set him on high. What does that mean? Though I must leave the subject, I may just say the child of God is set *above all that the world is afraid of*. The world is afraid of the future, the Christian is not; the world is afraid of death, there are times when the believer is not; the world is afraid concerning outward good, of dying in the workhouse, and under some such impression some of our poor fellow creatures leap into the river or terminate their existence in some other way, they have no God, no faith, and no knowledge of this name. “I will set him on high because he hath known my name.” Above the world *as to dignity and honour*. Above the world. Thou shalt be above all the nations, said God to Israel, and Israel was so; and they that know God’s name are above all other persons in dignity, honour, and in experience. They stand upon the high Rock of ages, and look down upon the seething, boiling world at the bottom. Thousands run to the theatre: he looks upon them with mingled feelings of holy pity and contempt. There is beneath the believer a perpetual turmoil, the waters always rising and troubled, and very

muddy. No stillness, no serenity, no peace. Everybody running after pleasure, after satisfaction, after something that he cannot see, cannot find, and wants to possess. I will set my child on high. From whence he shall look down upon the strife and uncertainty of the dying world, and bless my name for serenity and peace such as the world can neither give nor take away. *Safety?* Yes. Above danger? God's high places are above danger. Set him where death never went, where destruction cannot reach him. There is a mark which death and its tides never pass. God has set his dear people higher than that line. above all danger and above all death. What then? There is a *glorious prospect*, "What heavenly prospects feast the eyes while gazing from these hills!" On Pisgah's top I see Canaan and heaven, and bless God for the sight. I must now leave the subject. May God command his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON MARCH 15TH, 1830.

Printed and published by BRISCOE & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

*• 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. (1s. 2d., post free.)

THE MORNING STAR.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 29th FEBRUARY, 1880.

"And I will give him the Morning Star."—Rev. ii. 28.

THE circumstances connected with the formation of Christian churches should not be forgotten ; for the providence and grace of God are always inseparably connected with them. We know the circumstances under which the church of Christ in the city of Ephesus was formed, and those under which the church at Thessalonica arose : and very copiously are the operations of Divine providence and grace described in connection with the origin of the church at Philippi ; but we do not, however, know much about the rise of the church in the city of Thyatira. It is, however, probable that Lydia, a seller of purple, who was called by grace under the ministrations of the apostle Paul, constituted, so to speak the nucleus of that church. If our conjecture be correct—and I think it most probable—we learn that two churches were originated by a gracious God in connection with discourses delivered in the city of Philippi by Paul. You remember the apostle was constrained in consequence of a vision which he saw, to go to Macedonia, and he went to Philippi, where he remained till the Sabbath, when himself and his friends went down to the river side "where prayer was wont to be made," and they "sat down and spoke unto the women which resorted thither," and Lydia's heart was opened by the Lord to attend to the things which were spoken of Paul. We are informed by the Holy Ghost and perhaps intentionally so, that Lydia, who was a seller of purple, was from Thyatira ; the claims of business doubtless having called her to Philippi. I apprehend, Christian friends, that these particulars, so minutely given, might be intended to shew, or to lead us to infer that this Lydia, the seller of purple from Thyatira, was present at this open-air service, in order that she might become the nucleus of the important church which was subsequently informed in that city. Well, the apostle preached the Gospel at Philippi, the jailer and his household were called, and a church of Jesus Christ was formed there also for his praise and glory. All the works of God, we are told, praise their Great Creator, and therefore the sun, moon and stars, proclaim his greatness, and praise his power and wisdom, as Addison has it—

"For ever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is Divine."

VOL. II., No. 35.—MARCH 15, 1880.

It appears, however, that all the creatures of God were made by Christ, and for his sake probably therefore, ONE of the great reasons why the sun is what it is, is that it might figuratively represent the greatness and the glory of Immanuel ; and therefore he is said to be the Sun of Righteousness and He is also as the bright and morning Star. He is the dayspring from on high, that has visited the world and the church and as he is now visiting individuals he here gives a very important and precious promise—though originally to members of the church at Thyatira, “And I will give him the Morning Star.”

In offering a few remarks on this verse I shall call your attention to the *character* and to the *promise* of Jesus Christ. In the first place *the character of Christ*. I take it that the text is descriptive of the character of Christ as the Morning Star, and that it expresses a promise that he will apply himself. “And I will give him the Morning Star.” In other words I will appear to him, reveal myself to him and apply my light, my lustre, and my glory to him. I shall not introduce anything farfetched or fanciful into my observations, but every character of our Lord is important, and every name he bears, sustains and reveals, is intended to convey to our minds some thoughts of the grace and love which are in his heart and may be seen in his work. He is now before us as the Morning Star, or the Great Light-bearer, which is, I believe, one of the meanings of the word. Does not this apply to the person, the work and the Gospel of our Great Lord ? Has he not brought light from another world, light from the bosom of Deity, light from the heart of his eternal Father, and information from the infinite mind of God, and does he not continue to shine as the bright and morning Star indicating the fact that night is gone, that eternal midnight is for ever past, and that a great and glorious day is approaching ? Yes, our Christ has brought light into the world, and into his church, and into the hearts and spirits of sinners ; and I trust that not a few of my hearers this morning can confidently say they know him as the Morning Star. The Morning Star is the precursor of day, indicating the end of darkness and the approach of morning ; that one state is passing away, and another is coming and will soon break upon the world. And the Lord Jesus is the Morning Star in all these respects ; for it may be said in relation to many persons that night is past and darkness is for ever gone, and that an endless day will soon dawn ; for in heaven there is no night. Here we have clouds, and mists, and darkness ; but blessed be the dear and exalted Redeemer, he appears as the Great Bringer and Bearer of Light, and the precursor of the expected day ; and therefore, though we are sometimes in darkness, it is not midnight darkness ; and though our hearts are sometimes enveloped in gloom, eternal death and the curse are for ever past and gone. A measure of light we have now, but not broad daylight yet ; that is reserved for another state and another world, where the church shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father for ever and ever.

But let me endeavour to give a few particulars. In the first place, Jesus is the Morning Star of *God's new creation*. We read in relation to the old creation^a that “The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.” Angels, it appears, were created before the world was made, and when God had spread out the firmament of heaven and called this world and others into existence, and given beauty, order and glory to the whole, those morning stars sang together, and those sons of God shouted for joy. If there was a good reason why angels should praise God for the first creation, we are sure there is abundant cause to praise the eternal God for the second, or for that new creation which owes its existence, glory and perpetuity to the person and work of our exalted Lord. The old creation is excellent : the new creation is infinitely more so. The old creation excited the songs of angels, its morning stars ; but the new state of things excites far deeper wonder, and renders them most

inquisitive ; for when the Morning Star of the new state shone in the firmament of God's grace, they desired to look into the profound mystery. "Which things the angels desire to look into." They sang, even "shouted for joy" when the world was made ; but in the greater glories of the Saviour's work, they are lost in reverent awe. The people of God are new creatures ; "for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new." We do not hesitate to say that God's new creation is as far above Eden, as Eden was above the present fallen state of things. The world is now a moral wreck, a ruin. It is fearfully unlike the state of things that existed before the fall. The old creation in its primitive perfection was all beauty, glory and tranquillity, and indicated the infinite goodness and resources of the Great Creator. Sin, however, is an awful and universal destroyer : all was ruined, and man became a lost creature ; having fallen into unspeakable distance and enmity when he sinned against his Maker. Therefore there is an unspeakable difference between the original paradise where Adam was, and the present state of ruin. But we have now another state of things, something far superior and more glorious, and that is God's new creation peopled by God's new creatures, and Jesus Christ is its Morning Star. The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and he shall bruise his heel. This new creation was concealed before man became a sinner ; but immediately after the fall God proceeded to reveal it, and Christ appeared in the first promise as the Morning Star thereof. The Seed of the woman was the new Light-bearer, indicating a new dispensation ; for as the morning star ushers in the day, so God's first promise to sinful man ushered in a new and an everlasting state of things. The first promise shone as a bright star in the darkness which prevailed and enveloped ruined man, assuring him that God had made arrangements for the removal of guilt, and elevating the guilty into a position higher and safer than that which was lost. Thus we have another creation, another rank of creatures, and another system of things portended in the first promise given by God to guilty men. If you will consider Christ as the Morning Star of this new creation, you will, as helped by the Spirit, and influenced by grace, be more or less edified and instructed in the mysteries of God's purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

But let us pass on and notice that Jesus is the Morning Star of *the present dispensation*. The Jewish dispensation was one of darkness and in some respects of night ; but the darkness is past and the true light now shineth. How was the Gospel dispensation ushered in ? By what person and by what power was the present state of things brought into existence ? Passing over the Star which Balaam predicted, I will say only a word or two about the star in the east which guided the wise men from Persia to Bethlehem. That star went and stood over the place where the Saviour was : it became stationary immediately over the manger where the dear Redeemer lay. That star directed them to Jesus Christ. It silently announced Immanuel's advent, and indicated the spot where the expected Messiah lay : it intimated that the dayspring from on high had visited us. Various stars appear along with that which denotes approaching day. The Morning Star of the present state of things was in the manger, in the stable. The Babe of Bethlehem was the bright and Morning Star, the bearer and the bringer of light and the precursor of a new day. He was that Dayspring from heaven with which God visited the world, and especially his beloved people. This bright harbinger of day shone until he said it is finished, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and poured the Holy Ghost down, on the day of Pentecost ; and then was literally fulfilled the promise in Malachi : "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." Thus Christ appeared as the Morning Star of the

glorious Gospel dispensation. He ushered it in, and I believe the present Gospel day—this day of salvation as it is called will last until the end of time. Many persons think that Christ will live and reign personally here a thousand years. I think, however, the children of God are destined to go to heaven, a better world than this : for “where I am there shall ye be also.” However, should he come, as a good old minister once said, we shall be glad to see him ; and should he live and reign here a thousand years, we shall be thankful to live and reign with him. This, however, is a matter of personal faith. Christ ushered in this Gospel day which will endure until the last vessel of mercy is saved, and the heavens of our God are filled with the objects of his love.

But a little more experimentally. You say, Yes if you please ; for that is what we want. Friends, we want the whole of the Gospel, the doctrines as well as the experience and the practice, the flesh on the bones, and the bones underneath the flesh. We require the skeleton and the body also. Jesus is the Morning Star of *that new life or day which is peculiar to the saints of God*. Look at the child of God in the morning of his new life and spiritual character when he is turned, when the grace of God arrests his heart and turns him from the devil to Christ, from sin to holiness, from death to life, from this world to heaven. He is converted or turned, for that is the meaning of the word “converted.” But he is more than converted, he is regenerated and then turned to the Lord. What is his experience ? Old things are passed away and all things are now becoming new ; for the day does not burst upon him all at once. The darkness he lived in is going, and the Morning Star is shining on his mind. Night is past and the midnight darkness of death is gone, and the true light now shineth—not powerfully perhaps, still it is the true light, and it shines upon a mind that was born into darkness, that lived in darkness, and that would have died and been lost in eternal darkness had it not been for rich, free and sovereign grace. What is the experience of this poor sinner ? It is neither day nor night with him. The night is, as I have said, receding—of this the morning star is a proof—darkness is vanishing and the morning is coming. He knows not what he is, he is a mystery to himself ; he knows not where he is, only he is conscious that a very solemn change has taken place, and that it did not originate with himself. There is guilt upon his conscience, a burden upon his heart, and darkness, doubt, and fear in his mind. Nevertheless there is something that sustains him, that imparts a measure of buoyancy to him, and that something is mysteriously connected with the name of Jesus ; for were it not for that name he would sink into despair. The darkness he is now in would be a thousand times denser were it not for the mysterious and wonderful attractiveness and power in the name of Jesus, which holds him up and saves him from despair. What shall I say to the poor sinner, if I have one in this position in the house of God this morning ? That dear name is a Morning Star to you. The little light you have comes from your saving Lord. The darkness will soon be wholly gone, and the day of liberty, and pardon, and peace, and light will soon break. How do you know ? “I will give him the Morning Star.” What for ? To show that night is behind him and day before him. Penal darkness is gone, and saving light is coming upon him ; for the morning star ushers in the day, and is the certain precursor of a bright and glorious future. If a ray from Jesus has fallen on your mind, if a grain of grace from heaven has been dropped into your hearts, if there is any savour and sweetness in the person of God’s dear Son to your experience—

“The time of love will come,
When you shall clearly see,
Not only that he shed his blood,
But you shall say ‘for me.’”

For "I will give him the Morning Star," and in this respect you already have Christ, although at present it may be with you neither day nor night. Into the night from which you have been brought you cannot return, and you cannot have full day until the Sun of Righteousness appears and shines upon you. My brother, if you will suffer a word of exhortation, keep your position, remain on your knees, hope in God's mercy; for as surely as Christ's name is precious to you, salvation in all its glory and greatness is yours. The Morning Star is a pledge of this.

Now let us depart from that point and look at Christ in another relation. You have heard much about the morning stars of the *Reformation*. Wicliffe, it is said, was the morning star of the Reformation here; Luther, perhaps, in Germany; and Zwinglius, perhaps, in Switzerland. Christ, however, was the Morning Star of that glorious change; and the professing church of God was wrapped in midnight darkness, and the gloom that enveloped the religion of heaven was impenetrable to the creature. Let us for a moment look at Luther in Germany reading the word of God. What did he see? Why, he had a view of Christ in the Bible, and such a view of him as he had never had before. He saw Christ and justification by faith and grace with new eyes. He saw this Morning Star in the holy word of God. The good man's mind became irradiated, and the day of the Reformation shortly afterwards dawned; and by and by—but I cannot speak positively—shortly this and that error, this and that abomination will sink and disappear from the professing church of God. Let me, however, say, that I am afraid we are now living in a state of great darkness. I do not think we have so much Bible and heavenly light as some persons wish us to believe. This is a dark day. Scientifically, intellectually, and politically we are supposed to have much light; but religiously and spiritually it is a cloudy and dark day. Errors are abundant and rampant, and gospel light is avoided if not hated. Well, the time perhaps may not be far off when errors will sink and there will be another reformation, and the church of God shall arise and shake herself, and put on her beautiful garments in which, though they have been called "rags" by certain persons, she shall appear as she ought to appear, the very opposite of this hateful world—the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, heavenly in her standing, heavenly in her character, heavenly in her practice, and heavenly in her creed. We do not believe in the death of truth. Like its Author, truth is immortal and eternal. It may be concealed in darkness, it may be trampled upon—immortality is in it, divinity is in it, and the everlasting gospel of the everlasting God shall emerge from the present night of darkness, and all this shall be brought about by the rising of the bright and morning star. Oh that our great Light-bearer, Christ, would arise and shine upon his dear people!

Lastly, what shall precede the morning of *eternal day in a better world*? Thank God, antichrist is doomed. I am told I ought to be charitable; and as far as possible I will be charitable to persons, but not to the vile principles of Rome. There can be no peace with her; as a system Christ has doomed it to destruction, and soon the threatening shall be fulfilled, and the word shall be verified: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" And then the false prophet, and heathenism, and everything that worketh abomination and loveth a lie, shall be destroyed, and the great white throne shall appear, and the heavens shall pass away, while the Redeemer shall descend, and the raising of the dead shall take place, and saints shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be for ever with the Lord. Brethren and sisters, has Christ ever shone on your minds? Has his name ever been dear and precious to you? Then heaven is yours. That world and state are yours where there is no night. *Eternal day is coming.* It will soon break. Behold the bright and morning star. Sometimes clouds con-

ceal him—still he is there, and since Christ is in the word and in the church day will soon break upon our wondering minds. The morning star of the new creation.

I thought I would, in the second place, call your attention to the fact that Christ is the *Star of Hope*. I have, however, included that in what I have already said. Does it not, in the next place, indicate *the promise and the fulfilment*? Christ in the promise, is the Morning Star; Christ in the fulfilment thereof, is daylight. This Morning Star appears in the promise, the prediction, and the prophecy; and as the morning star portends approaching day, so unfulfilled promises portend an approaching God. God is coming we know by the word. The promise will continue to shine more and more until the perfect day. Then something shall occur, some wonderful work in providence shall be done whereby the promise shall be fulfilled, and the prophecy shall be accomplished,—and then it will be day.

Does it not indicate *the supremacy of our Lord*? The morning star does not shine alone; others stars usually shine at the same time; so there are in the firmament of God's grace and church other stars shining now. Are not the angels of God there, and are not the seven stars the ministers of the gospel shining? The prophets, apostles, martyrs, and ministers of the gospel are all shining with a twinkling light during the night of time. Our existence and our light do not insure a coming day. It is our business to point to the Morning Star to proclaim his great office; and, therefore, Christ the Morning Star shines supremely among other stars, and his presence alone indicates a coming day, and that with absolute certainty. Lastly, here it seems to me to indicate *the sovereignty of God also*. The morning star is not always seen; and when it is not, a thousand other lights cannot reveal him, for he is a self-revealing being. The Morning Star reveals himself, and in his light we see light or Christ himself. The poor soul under guilt is pointed to Jesus, and he cannot see him. Guilt intervenes between his mind and Christ. In trouble when it is deep and temptation is strong, the Christian cannot see the Saviour; for he is not always seen. There are times, however, even in the sorrows of life, when we have a ray of light from heaven, a drop of grace from the heart of Divine love, and we can bear the trouble and carry the sorrow and hope for the day. Think of the morning that is coming. Yonder is the Morning Star!

“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, yet not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”

Now, secondly and very briefly, *the Saviour's promise and encouragement*. “I will give him the Morning Star.” Look at the *magnitude* of this promise. Earthly blessings are not mentioned here. They are elsewhere; but here they are not. The promise here says, “I will give him the morning star.” It means I will give him myself, or I will apply myself to him.

“Less than thyself will not suffice,
And more thou canst not give.”

Is anything else required? The Saviour uses a particular form of expression—the morning star; and much follows that, as we have already said. The day and the sun follow it; and all that follows the dawn of life the saints shall receive, and that is eternal day. Christ gives himself, his fulness, his salvation, his glory, and he will give him his presence on the throne, and we shall be like him in a better world. “Where I am, there shall also my servant be.” Again, this

gift is inalienable. Some of the gifts of our Lord may be lost, recalled, or become useless, or comparatively so, as some temporal favours when the purpose for which they were originally given has been fulfilled. But here is an inalienable gift. If yonder Christ is ours, and shines for us, and is what he is for us, who can rob us of him? Why, that Star, that Christ, that God is mine. Oh that your faith may be strengthened by God the Holy Ghost, enabling you this morning to look at Jesus with all your mental and spiritual powers, and to embrace him as your Saviour and your all. You may lose your wife, your husband, your father, your mother, your children, your property, your peace, your liberty, your temporal goods, and your life, but you cannot lose your Lord. This bright morning star, this gift is irrevocable—the saving benefits that flow from Christ are yours for ever and ever. Is not this light necessary? If one cannot see Christ, his mind is in trouble, and in view of death is distracted, and his thoughts are in confusion, rolling, and unfixed, without an object to rest upon. But when the bright and glorious Christ of God appears, the mind becomes steady, the thoughts are rallied, the feelings are tranquillized, the whole heart is attracted; for

“Here I’d sit for, ever viewing
Mercy’s streams in streams of blood.”

May we always see this bright Star when we come to this and other places of worship. Do you know what wandering of mind is in the house of God? what it is to see nothing sufficiently strong to engage the attention, or to collect the thoughts? Oh the blessedness of standing an hour in the pulpit viewing the glories of Immanuel! Oh Christ, give us all thyself!

Give Him. Give whom? To whom is Christ coming? Read the connection at your leisure. He that overcometh and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and so on. Overcomers receive him; through favour, you are an overcomer of sin. Why, it holds me fast; but not as it used to hold you. Now it is in you; formerly you were in that. Now it follows after you, and you are fleeing from it. Now you carry it; formerly it carried you where it would. Once it was your master, ruler, and your king; but in some measure you are now an overcomer. I have not time to go further into that matter. When therefore, lastly, *is this promise fulfilled?* First, in *conviction* when a soul is convinced of sin. I have already adverted to this. If my friends in their pews have at their right or left hand persons that occasionally weep in the house of God, speak to them, will you? Do not be officious, nor make yourself, nor the things of God, nor the place, nor the minister offensive, but speak kindly and affectionately to such persons; perhaps you will find they are under conviction and in darkness. It is neither day nor night with them, and they cannot see this Morning Star. These persons require encouragement; try to comfort them; and among other promises mention the text, “I will give him the Morning Star.”

This indicates coming liberty, freedom, peace, and joy. He gives it also *in trouble*; for unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. What is it that keeps the tried believer who is deep in trouble from sinking? what is it that keeps his head above water, but looking unto Jesus, the Morning Star? In its light he sees the opposite bank of the river, and feels satisfied that God will bless him with preserving grace, till deliverance comes, and then with deliverance itself; for under the influence of this Star he hopes for the day. *In death* what shall we do if we should die without seeing this precursor of heaven, this harbinger of eternal day? Oh, since we must die, how sweet it must be to depart, feeling as many of God’s dear people have felt in the solemnities of death—

"On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake my sure repose?"

All is well. The eye becomes feebler and feebler, natural light becomes weaker and weaker; but there is an eye in the mind, and a bright object before it, and the Christian leaves the world with faith and hope in the bright object before him, or gazing at that bright Morning Star which is ushering in an endless day. The mind thus fixed upon the dear Redeemer obtains the victory in the deep wonders of death.

"I know his glories from afar,
I know the bright and morning Star."

The Lord add his blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON APRIL 15TH, 1880.

Printed and published by BRISCON & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)

. 18 Sermons, stitched in a neat Wrapper, 1s. 1s. 2d., post free.)

RUTH'S CHOICE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 21st MARCH, 1880.

"And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me all that thou hath done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore."—Ruth ii. 11.

THE word of God may be contemplated as a sacred history, or as a treasury of Divine promises, or as a body of holy doctrines, or as a series of heavenly laws. We may contemplate it as the history of creation, of Divine providence, and of God's grace. It is a record of the work of Creation, and a representation of the character of the great Creator of the universe. The history of the creation, however, is exceedingly brief, while that of providence is more copious and comprehensive, extending from Genesis to Malachi, and from Matthew to Revelation. God's greatness and glory appear in creation; and his goodness appears in providence; but all his goodness, grace, greatness and glory shine wondrously and eternally in salvation. Considering the Word of God as the history of his grace, we might speak of two salvations which he has achieved. In the first place, the temporal salvation of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, and also their temporal deliverance from captivity in Babylon. And then, secondly, we contemplate that spiritual salvation which was in the great Son of God, which came gradually from Him and was triumphantly accomplished when He bowed his head and said, "It is finished." This spiritual salvation appears somewhat faintly indeed in the history of creation; it appears more gloriously in the history of providence, whilst it flows like a broad and deep river in the history of grace. Considering salvation in connection with the children of Israel, we observe that historical facts became narrower and narrower between the days of Noah and those of Moses, and still fewer between their departure from Egypt and the time they entered the land of Canaan. We have, in the early part of Scripture, allusions to Mesopotamia and various other countries; but when Israel had taken possession of the promised land, historical facts in the Word of God are for the most part limited to that somewhat small country—and no wonder, for that small tract of land contained the only people upon the face of the earth that God avowed for his own. Among this favoured nation certain great and extraordinary persons and characters occasionally appeared; hence we have recorded, not only the life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but the history of Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, and other prominent saints connected with that national church, such as the great and useful men who were raised up

to judge the people before Saul became their king. Occasionally certain interesting characters appear on the scene during the time of the Judges, and Ruth and Boaz are two of them.

We are informed that in the days of the Judges there was a famine in the land, and that a certain man, whose name was Elimelech, and whose wife's name was Naomi, left the land of Canaan in consequence of the scarcity, and went to the country of Moab and sojourned there. Whilst they were in Moab, their two sons married two daughters of the Moabites. Elimelech, the husband of Naomi died, and their two sons, the husbands of Orpah and Ruth died also, and three poor widows were left. One of them, Naomi, the mother, was an Israelite—a child of God and a severe sufferer in the kingdom of God. The two young widows also were poor; and Naomi having heard that the Lord had visited his people by giving them bread resolved to return from Moab to Canaan, and, at first, her two daughters-in-law resolved to go with her, and accompanied her on the road. At length she entreated them to return, and Orpah did so; but Ruth clave to her. Canaan was reached, and Naomi and Ruth went to Bethlehem, and it was, we are told, the time of barley harvest. Their poverty being now great, it was necessary that Ruth should go into the field to glean, and her hap was—and I beg your attention to this—her hap was to light upon a part of the field which belonged to Boaz. The Holy Spirit has been pleased to use the word “hap,” and elsewhere it is said “Time and chance happen to all men;” but still “to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven,” and therefore it was not a matter of chance that Ruth went to that part of the field which belonged to her kinsman Boaz. The reapers favoured her, and Boaz also, who had received intelligence of their arrival from Moab, encouraged the young widow, saying, among other things, “It hath been fully showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.”

I wish to call your attention this morning to a few points in connection with the grace, and providence, and salvation of God. The points to which I shall direct attention I shall name as I proceed, and in the first place let us contemplate *the riches of Divine grace*. Grace is divinely rich, and its riches are wondrously varied and diversified, so that they meet the requirements and necessities of all God's beloved people. Ruth was a Moabitess—nevertheless she was called by grace, brought to the land of Israel, constituted an Israelite, and subsequently occupied a very exalted and important position in the land of Canaan. There can be no doubt, I think, in the mind of any spiritual reader of the word that Ruth became a believer and a follower of the Lord, and a lover of the promised Messiah. There can be no doubt that she was made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Grace, let us observe, may be in the heart a considerable time before it is discovered—at least before those that are round about discover it. I do not know whether Naomi discovered grace in the heart of Ruth before the young widow so vehemently said, “Intreat me not to leave thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.” This resolve, expressed so fervently, was the outcome of a holy life within, and whether it was apparent before or not, Naomi then saw that her daughter-in-law was a saved woman. I think, however, that Ruth's new life was, up to that time, to some extent concealed, though Naomi must have observed something peculiar in her daughter's course, and something unusual in her conversation; for her conduct towards her mother had been strikingly tender, or Boaz would not have said, “It hath been fully showed me all that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband.”

Perhaps when her young husband died the Lord put his grace into her heart, or since three members of the family were called away the whole affliction was sanctified to her. It is, however, certain that saving grace was communicated to her, and that it eventually discovered itself in most excellent and lovely forms. Grace in the hearts of sinners is very deep therein; not the loudest, nor the longest, nor the most fluent talkers about divine things are always the best Christians, or the strongest or most spiritual believers. Still waters run deep, and grace being deep in the heart, often produces more thought and feeling than words. It opens the mouth before God; but many of His people are swift to hear, but slow to speak. I think that Ruth, probably being naturally quiet and modest, and having so much grace, felt more than she ever gave public utterance to before she expressed her feelings and determination on the road to Bethlehem.

Grace in the heart of God's child is always a tried principle and power, and sometimes friends try their fellow saints without intending to do so. How deeply Ruth's religion must have been tried by Naomi! I cannot think that Naomi was altogether justifiable in what she said. She certainly distressed her daughter-in-law, and put very considerable and improper pressure upon her when she said "thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou with her." She intimated to Ruth she would derive no benefit from accompanying her, and receive no advantage by going to Canaan. She suggested that as both were young they might obtain husbands again, and that it would be wise, therefore, to return to Moab and go no further with their sorrowing widowed mother. Ruth felt this deeply; her faith must have been, by her mother's counsel, severely strained, and her principles tried. They were however true and deep in her soul, and were not to be withered by a mother's natural feelings, nor destroyed by anything she might do or say; and, therefore, they broke forth, as I said a little before, somewhat fervently in that expression, "Entreat me not to leave thee." Ruth's grace was also tried, not only by her mother, but by poverty. They left Moab with little or nothing, and when they reached Canaan Ruth was compelled, through want, to glean. Death tried her, her mother tried her, and her sister tried her; for Orpah, having kissed them, took her mother's advice and returned to Moab, and was not seen again. It requires much to bear a parting, a separation like that. But there stood young Ruth with grace in her heart and the God of grace holding her fast, enabling her to struggle against her mother's counsel, and against the influence of the separation that had taken place between herself and Orpah. Moreover, it requires much special strength to enable one to tear oneself from one's native land and one's father's house, and Ruth had done all that. Was she justified in leaving her native country, and her father's house? Her father, mother, and family were doubtless idolators, and their home was a heathen home. Probably frequent conversations had taken place between them, and she was driven by necessity, and drawn by grace, to separate herself from her native land where sin had lulled all asleep; and from her father's house, where the darkness of Paganism prevailed, for the purpose of going to a people whom she had not known heretofore, and to a land where she might unite with kindred minds in the public worship of that God whose she was, and whom grace Divine had brought her to serve. Grace always severs from the world; it finds us there, but there it never leaves us. Grace from heaven fell into the land of Moab, and upon the heart of Ruth, separating her at once from the world without hesitation on her part. When God and her father were rivals, or in competition with each other, Ruth at once decided, for the love of God constrained her, and she said to Naomi, "Mother, thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God."

Grace brings us into new and most important associations and connections.

I am often almost lost in meditating on this point, what I might have been—and perhaps my observations will apply to most of my hearers—What we might have been had not God called us by His grace. My beloved hearers—and there is a fair number here this morning—you do not know what you owe to the religion of heaven, or how deeply you are indebted to the riches of Divine grace. You speak of your excellent parents, and of their grace and godliness, and of the favourable circles of friends among whom your early lot was cast—had it not been for mercy you would have been far enough from such friendship and from such associations. You may not be rich in temporals, yet have wherewithal to enable you to obey the injunction, “owe no man anything,” or have a comfortable competence from day to day, and so far as you can know the future you can see your way down to the grave;—this, although a temporal mercy—you owe to the grace of God, which, having saved your souls gave you new tastes, carried you into a new state, and blessed the labour of your heads or hands. But chiefly—

“Jesus, away from earth I fly,
And with thy church unite;
Thy saints shall be my company—
Thy presence my delight.”

Ruth had, perhaps, been happy in Moab; but she was happier in Canaan. She had had many friends and companions in her native land; but how rich a friend she found in Boaz, and what delightful friendship she met among the children of Israel! the people that she had not known heretofore. They received her, she remained with them, they and she became united, and one in heart and worship. It is one of our greatest mercies on the earth to belong to the people of God, and to stand identified with the excellent of the earth, be they few or many, rich or poor, popular or unpopular. I love the people of God, and my position among them, and would live and die in honourable connection with them. For, my dear friends, God is in the church; it is his family, and the only immortal interest he has on earth. “He loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Grace, therefore, comes underneath the heart and raises it from the world, and lifting it above the dominion of sin, it conveys it into God’s church, where living, vital, and useful unions are formed between kindred hearts and minds. I have been for many years connected with the people that I once knew not. Although I am not yet an old man, yet, having been called by grace when I was about sixteen years of age, it follows that I have lived in church fellowship a long period; but I am not yet tired of the saints. What should I do without my Sabbaths! without the means of grace! and without church fellowship and communion! How should I live isolated from the excellent of the earth, having none of the family of God to walk with in the wilderness!

“Here my best friends, my kindred dwell,
Here God my Saviour reigns.”

Let us bless God for the comprehensiveness of our privileges, and for the vastness of his grace; for salvation not only brings the soul into connection with eternal things, but into connection with kind friends and spiritual persons, even the sons and daughters of God. We walk with them here, and unite with them in prayer and praise whilst we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth. Bless God that you have left your father’s house and the land of your nativity, and that grace has brought you into loving association with a people that you knew not heretofore. “There are many inaccuracies and faults, and probably something that is sinful in the church,” and I have heard persons, in a most improper spirit, say, “We will never join a Christian church again, for we have seen so much therein that was wrong, and suffered so much in our minds and feelings that since we are out of membership now, so we will remain till we die.” Beloved

friends, is this right? Is this consistent? Is this thy kindness to thy dying Friend? That anger and unkindness should be found occasionally in sheep is, indeed, lamentable; but the emptiness, noise, deceit, and cruelty of the world are worse. Because you have seen inconsistencies in the fold, therefore you resolve to be inconsistent in another direction, and live neither in the church nor the world. Is this obedience, or an expression of gratitude to Jesus, who has said, "This is my rest; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." I think Cowper sings, "England, with all thy faults, I love thee still;" and let us say of the people of whom I am speaking—with all their faults we love them still. We love them for the Lord's sake, and trust we shall remain in connection with them until our Father shall call us home on high. "Thou art come to a people that thou knewest not heretofore."

But this is not all—if it were, we should not be very deeply or permanently benefited; and, therefore, the grace that brings us to the people of God brings us to the God of the people. The grace that brings us to Christian brethren brings us to Christ himself, and the grace that connects us with the church of God connects us with God in heaven, and there is not a holy angel but what we are one with. "That he might gather together in one all things that are in heaven, and that are on the earth, even in Him." We were strangers and foreigners, far from the church, from holiness, from heaven, and from God. Boaz said to Ruth, "It hath been shown me all that thou hast done: grace, I am sure, is in thy heart, and, therefore, thou art come to connect thyself with "a people that thou knewest not heretofore." Her sincerity was demonstrated by the fact that she had left the land of her nativity and the house of her father. Such persons are one with God's dear people on earth, one with the saints that are in heaven, one with millions of angels, one with Jesus Christ, and one with the eternal God. Oh how rich, free, and powerful is that grace that saves sinners with an everlasting salvation!

In the next place, I desire to call attention for a few minutes to *the mysteries of providence*, which always works in connection with grace. Grace superintends the operations of providence, which as her handmaid fulfils her requirements; as it always subserves its high and glorious interests. I cannot separate them, and I have no wish to do so. Look at the salvation of Ruth in connection with the operations of providence, and observe how beautifully providence worked with the influence of grace. Had not Elimelech and Naomi left Bethlehem for Moab, humanly speaking, Ruth had never been heard of or born again. Providence oftentimes works in conjunction with our inclinations, even when they are carnal. Do not misunderstand me. I will explain myself presently. Providence seems at times to fall in with our thoughts, when they are fleshly and unbelieving. How does that appear? Elimelech was a well-to-do man in Bethlehem, for his land was redeemed after the marriage had taken place between Boaz and Ruth. His circumstances in Bethlehem were good, but as there was a famine in the land, we can imagine Elimelech saying to Naomi and his two sons, "If we stay here we shall lose our all; let us emigrate. Through the famine our property is wasting, and if we remain we shall become poor; therefore we shall leave this country and go to Moab, where food is cheap, and we shall probably save what is left. This was carnal and unbelieving on the part of Elimelech, and perhaps Naomi shared her husband's feelings. That they were in easy circumstances is, I think, certain, from what Naomi afterwards said—"I went out full, but the Lord hath brought me back empty; call me not Naomi, which means 'pleasant,' but call me Mara, which means 'bitter,' for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me; my earthly all is gone; call me by a name that will indicate the Lord's bitter dealings with me." Elimelech's unbelief and carnal reason formed a link in the chain of events which resulted in Ruth's salvation.

Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons having reached Moab, their hap was (to use a Bible word again), to become connected with Ruth and Orpah, and that formed another link in the chain. Then Elimelech the father died, and had he not, humanly speaking, Ruth had not been called. Then the two husbands of the young women died, and Ruth and Orpah were left widows, and that constituted another link in the chain. Naomi was left a widow and in poverty, and she resolved to return to Bethlehem, which she might not have done had she been left in wealth; or had she increased her property and accumulated riches she would, humanly speaking, have remained in Moab. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." Do not find fault with that gap which providence has made in your hedge. There were three or four gaps in the hedge that surrounded Naomi, and through them the Lord passed to Ruth. Terrible wounds were made in this household, and through them salvation flowed into the heart of the young widow. We cannot know the purposes and intentions of our God. My beloved friends, if you could see the future as God sees it, and what arrangements he has made therein for you, you would cease to call your present circumstances hard. If good Ruth could have seen the future, and could have looked into the land of Canaan and seen her house, her husband, and her plenty as the wife of honourable Boaz, she would not have felt so bitterly the stripping providence, nor the painful necessity that forced her to leave her native land and home. She would have remained in Moab, and her heart would have remained untouched and unsaved, humanly speaking, but for the harmonious and beautifully-working providence of the Lord God. Certainly providence cut deep channels, but grace flowed into them and filled them. The way, my brethren, to honour is through humility; the way to pleasure lies through pain; the way to riches lies through poverty; and the way to salvation always lies through grief and deep repentance; and if God leads you into a valley, he does not intend to leave you there. There are hills or mountains before you if the Lord is leading you in valleys, and you shall surely ascend them and stand upon their summits and read, so far as God shall reveal it to you, the graciousness and the kindness of the purposes of your Heavenly Father towards you.

The mysteries of even the general providence of God subserve the interests of grace. The famine in the land of Canaan, and other operations of divine providence which appeared to be more general, and to have nothing peculiar or special in them, had a peculiar influence upon the salvation of this good woman. My friends, our God is saving a people, and providence works beneath his throne, and seed time and harvest, day and night, summer and winter, heat and cold, do not come and go merely for the sake of the world. There is a people in the midst of a people, and a world in the midst of a world; and God has his eye upon them, and his heart is towards them, and all the eternal and general operations of his hands, are carried on with a view to their salvation, welfare, and happiness. There was Ruth, a young girl in Moab, when the famine raged in Canaan, an idolatress in religion, yet her name was in the book of life; grace was to reach to her heart, and circumstances of a peculiar character arose and became so connected together, that Ruth left her native country and came to a people which she had not known before. What mysteries of providence!

Now you will not be offended if I direct your attention for a minute to another point—the *sovereignty of God and its solemnity*. I shall not stay here long, but I cannot get through the subject without taking a glance at it. Orpah kissed her mother and returned to Moab, but Ruth clave to her. Well, Orpah might have gone to Canaan as well as Ruth. But you observe she had no inclination to do so—she was not disposed to go. Naomi had said to her, "Return to thy country and to thy gods; and Orpah did so, for she loved her gods and her

country also, although she naturally loved her mother-in-law. She kissed her mother and returned to Moab; but Ruth clave to her. Say what you will against sovereignty, it is a great reality, and I cannot deny it, and have no wish to do so. It is an obvious, an abiding, an influential fact.

And if Ruth, who is singing the song of grace in heaven, were here among us this morning, she would unite with us in that hymn of praise :

“Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come!”

One thing is certain, her heart was different from the heart of Orpah, and if there was some good thing in her towards the God of Israel, he put it there.

In the next place learn from the subject *the power of divine grace*, the omnipotence of God in connection with the salvation of sinners. God will have all his own, whether they live in Moab, or Edom, or elsewhere. He is not at a loss for means, and His arm is not shortened that it cannot save. Do not think, my friends, that heaven will be half filled only, in consequence of the hardness of the human heart and man's unwillingness to be saved. Our God has a book of life, and his people are being called as they are registered therein. And “the Lord will count when he writeth up the people, that this and that man was born there.” Ruth was far off; but she came and was folded with the people of God, and numbered with the saints in time and eternity. Besides, do you not see—and I mention this in order to show that my observations on providence were not too strong—how much, besides her own salvation, depended on the calling of Ruth. In the first place the birth of David depended upon her salvation and her residence in Canaan; and in the second place, a long succession of kings, called the house of David, depended upon her—Solomon and others; and last, but not least, the incarnation of Jesus Christ depended upon her religion, her residence in the land of Canaan, and her union with Boaz, for she became one of the progenitors of David, of David's house, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the Book of Ruth closes with some interesting verses—which I need not now read—indicating Messiah's line as to the flesh: read them at your leisure. Having informed us how this good woman became the wife of Boaz, we are told that she bare Obed, Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse was one of the progenitors of the Lord Jesus Christ. See also in connection with this another important fact—do not lose sight of it—that Jesus Christ took the whole of our nature. He descended, not only from the Jews, but from Jew and Gentile; for both were united in him, for Boaz was an Israelite, and belonged to the tribe of Judah, while Ruth was a Gentile, and belonged to Moab. The Gentile was married to the Jew, and Christ took his body of them both. How much, therefore, depended upon the salvation of this extraordinary woman! “It hath been shown me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband, and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.” Hence the power of the Gospel or of divine grace. But sinners do resist, do they not? Yes; straying sheep always resist the shepherd when he follows them and puts forth his crook to catch them. But what of that? You walk through a field and a thousand little stinging ants crawl on your boot, and you take your handkerchief and brush them all off in a moment, unconscious of their resistance. And what is the resistance of a sinner in the almighty hands of God? O, Christ will have them, for He has redeemed them. They are written in heaven, and an almighty hand is gathering them; and therefore they shall come—come to Canaan, come to the church, come to God, and come to heaven.

Then, fifthly, learn from the subject *that the world is ignorant of the church*.

"Come to a people which thou *knewest not* heretofore." The world does not know the church. The church is a living body, and the world knows not its life, and you cannot make them comprehend it. They know not the language of the people. Ruth, literally speaking, perhaps learned Hebrew of her husband and of Naomi, her mother. But, spiritually, the world knows not the language of the heavenly Canaan; therefore God turns to his people a pure language. You find sometimes in newspaper reports the proceedings of religious bodies commented upon, and observe the folly and jargon of the worldly wise, for the wisdom of God is folly to them. The world is a stranger to the life, the language, the customs, the manners and the tastes of God's living people. Paul says—speaking to the Ephesians—"Now ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Well, as the world is a stranger to the church, it contemns, hates, and persecutes the saints. Let us, therefore, not expect that they will love us, or our religion, or our principles. That is one of the great faults of the day in which we live. The professing church is courting the world, and its members are doing a hundred questionable things, and some which are positively evil, for the purpose of rendering themselves, as professors, less offensive to the world. "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Our spirits rise within us when we read reports of the proceedings of meetings in our places of worship, and especially in our Protestant chapels, musical entertainments at which certain ladies and gentlemen sang this song, and that glee. My beloved friends, it is all carnal, and something worse; it is sinful and positively offensive to the God of heaven. I pity that man and that woman who has not heavenly religion enough to satisfy their minds and to please their feelings. Let us have fellowship and communion with God, and we want not such entertainments—at least not in the church; and congregations, having God in their midst, will not require them for the purpose of maintaining his sacred worship.

Lastly, "*godliness is profitable unto all things*, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Is it not good to live by faith in this world, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; to be a pilgrim journeying to the heavenly land, carrying this two-fold promise in your hand—a promise in one hand assuring us that we shall have all we need here, and in the other hand one assuring us that we shall have a kingdom of glory hereafter? The promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come. Brethren, I will not say I congratulate you, but I thank God that we have been separated from the world; that we have left our native country and our father's house, and are united to the people that once we knew not; and that we can say with Ruth—"This people shall be my people, and their God shall be my God."

God bless his truth, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE NEXT SERMON WILL BE READY ON MAY 15TH, 1880.

Printed and published by BRISCON & Co., 28, Banner-street, Bunhill-row, London, E.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Four copies post-free, by sending stamps to the above address.

Parcels of some of the back numbers, not fewer than 12, may be had from the Printers, at half-price, (viz. 6d., post free.)