

THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

On LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 31st AUGUST, 1884.

“And to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant.”—Heb. xii. 24.

It is necessary, in order to complete the sense, to bring down the first four words of the 22nd verse, and connect them with our text. It will then read thus, “But ye are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant;” and it is added, “and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” In the following chapter, the apostle was led to write, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Therefore, the Lord was known and loved by the saints under the old dispensation; and since the religion of heaven, and the faith of God's people, are the same in all ages of the world,—the name and the person, the office, and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, were very dear and precious to Abel. “He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.”

Now let us limit our attention to the text itself, and in doing so we may notice a few things, in the first place, in relation to *the person indicated*—*Jesus*. We are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant. Let us first of all, therefore, contemplate His name, as announced to His mother. “Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.” He did not come into this world to conduct an experiment, neither did He assume our nature for the purpose of rendering men and women salvable, or of making it possible for them to be saved. The eternal God said, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.” Ministers of the gospel describe sin as to its source, its nature, its operations upon the hearts of the sinner and of the saint; but there is no being in the universe but Jesus that can save sinners from their sins: and this salvation of the dear Son of God is a very wonderful work. It includes deliverance from sin, from all its guilt; and if from all its guilt, condemnation is impossible: deliverance from the love of sin; and if we are delivered from that, we are saints; and if we are saints, or holy ones, we are going to heaven, and possess a meetness for that world, and a preparedness to see the face of God; for “without holiness no man shall see the Lord:” salvation from the love of sin; and salvation from its dominion and destructive power. Oh to be saved from the reign of sin! We look at our neighbours, and upon the thousands we see in the streets, and we at once behold the consequences of the dominion of sin. Are not the children of Adam slaves? Is not their bondage deep and dark? and do we not sometimes feel humbled under a consideration of the fact that once we were with them, and like them; and had it not been

for sovereign and undeserved mercy, we should have been united with them now. That which saved us from sin was the omnipotent hand of our Lord ; that which destroyed the dominion of sin within, was the undeserved favour and grace of Jehovah. Brethren, we are debtors. However bad our fellow-creatures may be, I often feel that I have not a stone to throw at one of them, even at the worst; for by the grace of God I am what I am. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus;" for He shall fulfil the meaning of that name. He will assume human nature, and enter into that body which I have prepared for Him ; the fulness of the Godhead will for ever dwell in Him, and in that body He will come into the world to save sinners; and He will come determined to perform this work, and possessed of all necessary qualifications, bringing salvation itself with Him. As the water that flowed from the rock which was smitten in the wilderness was originally in the great depths, so the salvation that flowed from the Son of God was from all eternity in Him ; and He will come in human nature, and take the sinner's place, and be smitten, as the rock was smitten in the wilderness, and as the sinner would have been smitten had it not been for this glorious Substitute. He will suffer all that punishment which sinners must have suffered had not He interposed Himself and His precious blood ; and he will stand beneath the hand of Justice and receive every stroke until eternal truth declares that she is satisfied. And when all that is done, then He will return to His glory, and take His seat on His throne, and manage all the affairs of the world, until His kingdom is completed, when He will deliver it up unto Me, His Father. Thus, "He shall save His people from their sins." This atonement is brought by God Himself between the sinner and his sins. I can distinguish between the person of the sinner and the sins of his person, and attempt to show the difference between the two, that they are not identical, and that the one is not essential to the other ; but whilst I can thus distinguish, I cannot separate the sin from the person, nor the person from the sin. The blood of Jesus comes between sin and sinners, between my breaches of the law and my person. Thus we are saved, sin is condemned ; we take another position, and our guilt is cast behind God's back. We assume, through favour Divine, a new character. Sin remains unchanged in its nature, but God separates it from us, and forgives it, and forgets it for ever.

Jesus is the great fulfiller of the conditions, promises, and hopes of the New Covenant mentioned in the text. He is the fulfiller of the conditions of the covenant. You are ready to say that the Covenant of Grace was unconditional. So far as you and I are concerned, it is so ; for God will save us, and we shall be saved. There is no conditionality in connection with that matter ; but then our salvation was conditional, and contingent upon a perfect atonement, and upon the flowing of powerful, precious blood ; it was contingent upon a righteousness sufficiently great to justify millions, and upon the harmonization of all the attributes and perfections of God. A perfect atonement has been made, a glorious righteousness wrought out and brought in, and all the perfections of God united together in heavenly harmony ; and God can see no fault, for all faults have been put away. There is nothing defective in either the person or the work of the Saviour, comparing what Christ has done, and is doing

with the great plan of salvation which was proposed to Him before the foundation of the world ; all has been fulfilled : and therefore, the conditions of the covenant have been fulfilled, but by Christ Himself. You say, Salvation is contingent upon sanctification, and the Holy Ghost is in covenant bound to sanctify ; or it is contingent upon faith. I would rather reverse it, and say that faith is based upon salvation and not salvation upon faith. But have it so, if you like. " Without faith it is impossible to please God," and faith is the gift of God ; it is one of the fruits of the Spirit. View it, therefore, from whatever point you please, salvation is absolute and unconditional, as far as the creature is concerned. But what is a covenant of grace to me, was a covenant of works to the Lord Jesus Christ. His good works are the foundation of my salvation ; for without them, it would have been impossible. And then He fulfils all the promises of the covenant, and that is a wonderful work. Try to think of the innumerable promises God has given you. Meditate upon their greatness, endeavour to contemplate what their perfect fulfilment requires. If all worlds united to make one of them good, they would fail. The promises of God can be fulfilled only by God Himself, and Christ has said, " Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but My word shall not pass away." Not one jot or tittle of the law was to fail, and not one jot or tittle of the gospel shall fail. By a jot we may understand the smallest letter, and by tittle that which might be compared to the dot of the i. God is so exact, and His faithfulness is so unyielding, that He will have every promise fulfilled to the dot of the i. How are these promises to be made good, so many of them, and so great ? Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, and He is responsible for their fulfilment to the letter. And then you contemplate the hopes which you are the subjects of, and which, although they may not be strong, or rise high, or go far into the future, are more precious to you than life : you could not give up your hope for all the world. To lose your hope, or to be absolutely destitute of it, or to be on the very brink of despair, what would the world be to you under such conditions ? No, you are not happy, but you are hopeful ; and " the desires of the righteous shall be fulfilled." The Lord knows every one, for He is the Author of them, and it is not like our God to create a desire and disappoint it, or to give a hope through grace, and then fail to realize it to us. The Lord Jesus is the great Author and Object of hope, and as He is bound to make every promise good, and to fulfil all His own personal and official engagements, so also is He bound to fulfil every holy desire, and to carry your hopes into the fullest possible fruition in a better world. I am preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God, mindful of my Master's words, " Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." But where is this saving Jesus ? " Ye are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. This saving Jesus, this covenant-fulfilling Lamb of God, is on Mount Zion. The Lord deliver His people from a legal spirit. Do not expect to find Jesus Christ on Sinai, or to hear the still small voice where thunders roll. Do not expect to be comforted or saved there. Under the law there is no salvation or consolation. " Ye are come, not to the mount that might be touched ;" but to Mount Zion, where the

throne of Jesus is, even to that Jesus who is the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Let us now proceed to consider *the office that the Lord Jesus fills. Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.* The system of mediation has been admitted into the government of God. That was a matter of absolute sovereignty. God resolved to save sinners, and I think I will take it upon myself to say, that He could not do so without the intervention of His dear Son, and the sufferings and atonement of Immanuel. I know this has been questioned by some who have said that God resolved to save sinners that way, because He deemed it the best. If that is admitted, all is admitted; for God would not save sinners otherwise than in the best way and manner possible to Himself, to His omnipotence, and His will. Here then, we have a system of mediation, and not many mediators, but one only, Jesus—the Mediator of the New Covenant. Now, our Lord, is first of all a Mediator of revelation. God's people sometimes do not go far enough, as I understand the matter, when contemplating the mediation of the Saviour. They limit their thoughts to the reconciling work of the great Son of God. It is a fact that our dear Lord has reconciled sinners to Himself, or sinners to His Father, and He has brought them nigh by the blood of His cross; but it is important that we should, first of all, consider Christ as the Mediator of revelation. He is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person. Deity is in humanity, the Father is in the Son, the infinite majesty of Jehovah is to be seen for ever by the saints in the person of our Lord. Unmediated Deity cannot save. Absolute Deity cannot convert sinners; for,

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

The natural sun shining fully and brightly dazzles our eyes, if we look upon it for a moment; and that is only a creature of this great and glorious God. And if the glory of the sun of nature be so dazzling to the mortal eye, how should we feel if unmediated Deity were poured down upon us, or we called to stand before it? No: all the majesty of God is connected with His mercy; and mercy and majesty are in the person of His Son, so that I see God in Christ. God shines upon our souls through Him, and thus we can bear the beams of His glory, and the rays of His majesty; for in the person of His dear Son He is not terrible to us, or to any seeking sinner. If I view justice out of Christ, I am alarmed; if I contemplate mercy out of Jesus Christ, I feel there is no certainty about it; if I view eternal truth out of the Mediator, I am terrified: but when mercy, truth and justice are viewed in the glorious person of God's dear Son, I see them in all their greatness and glory, and connected with the saving purposes of God, so that Jesus is the Mediator of revelation, for He is the medium through which God looks at me, and through which I behold God. He is a fire, but not destructive or consuming to those that put their trust in Him, — otherwise than He is a consuming fire, as to their sins, and transgression, and guilt. We want the fire of God's love, the flames of Jehovah's majesty, but we want them condensed or brought to-

gether into one place, as we require fire in our houses when the weather is cold ; we want it in the grate, then we shall be warm ; but we do not want a conflagration, or the whole house on fire. God, out of Christ, is consuming and terrible ; but in Christ He is clothed with our own nature, and the God we love, the God we believe in, and the God who is ours in covenant. He is the Mediator of revelation. And then He is the mediator of reconciliation, having made us nigh " by the blood of His cross." In Jesus, God and guilty sinners sweetly meet together. I cannot meet Jehovah out of Him, or pray out of Him. By His precious blood he has, however, removed the obstructions that lay between me and my God, and brought God and guilty sinners together. God and man are thus made friends ; and the friendship will never be disturbed on God's part. It may be disturbed in yourself, that is, in your apprehension ; but the renewal of friendship, if I may so speak, is final ; a disturbance on the part of God can never happen. There is no reason why God should ever frown upon the people for whom His dear Son died ; you make a mistake when you think that God frowns upon you angrily. Your sin is put away, your guilt is gone ; you have been made nigh, and friendship eternal has been brought into manifestation between your God and yourself by the Mediator of reconciliation.

And then our Lord is a Mediator of communication. He stands between the great God, and the worm that receives blessings and favours through the Mediator ; and these mercies fill his heart sometimes with gratitude, and he presents expressions thereof through the Mediator to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's method of saving sinners. God communicates His thoughts to you through Christ, and you communicate your thoughts to the Father through Him. The thoughts of God, coming to you through the Mediator, have a fragrance which is wonderful, and produces a mysterious experience in the heart. No thought of God can ever, out of or apart from Christ, convert the heart of a sinner. God's thoughts are made known to us through blood, His plans and arrangements through the wounds of the Saviour, His decrees and purposes come into our hearts through the precious fragrance of Immanuel's name and sufferings. It is this that causes us to say, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto us, O God ! how great is the sum of them !" He is a Mediator of intercourse, as well as of revelation and communication. Having a High Priest over the house of God, and a way into the holiest of all through the veil, that is to say His flesh, let us draw near with true hearts, in the full assurance of faith. I never feel happy in connection with prayer or praise, unless I have some comfortable apprehensions of the mediation of my Lord. When I am upon my knees, there is no real, heartfelt, acceptable prayer before God, unless there is some experimental apprehension of the fact that Jesus stands between, in garments dyed in blood. I dare not open my lips before God out of the presence of Christ, if I have a proper conception of my own guilt. I dare not mention the word mercy before the just and holy God, in the absence of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know that God is just, and I am guilty, and I have no authority to ask God for mercy apart from the Mediator of the New Covenant. It would be, if I may so speak, a kind of insult offered to a

just and holy God by a guilty criminal, to ask for pardon irrespective of satisfaction. There must be satisfaction on the part of God, and some knowledge of this fact by the sinner, before there can be any confident pleading before the throne of Divine grace and holiness. It is for the sake of Thy dear Son : His name I plead, His work I mention. On His atonement, great God, I lean ; His name is the only plea I can possibly urge before Thee. If Thou wilt, Thou canst, through Him and by Him, make me clean. Had he not interposed Himself as a Mediator, and shed His blood, I had never been found before Thee praying for cleansing and for pardon. Jesus is the Mediator of intercourse. And when the sinner is thus brought to Him, Christ is also felt to be a Mediator of union between God and man, between the Father and the children. You do not ask that God would love you as guilty sinners. You go and pray for mercy, and mercy hears and sets you free, and the love of God is shed abroad in your souls.

“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.”

Oh to be brought by the Spirit to this Mediator, and by this Mediator to be brought to the Father ! and oh the blessedness of feeling that Father Son, and Holy Spirit, and oneself are all united together !

In the third place a word or two on *the covenant itself*—a new covenant, in opposition to the old covenant of works, and to the ceremonial law : a new covenant, a new Mediator, and new creatures, and all in a new place. A new covenant, because it is a covenant of grace, in which salvation is absolutely certain, and a new Mediator. The old covenant had a mediator namely Moses, and though he was a good and great man, he was not great enough. He was unable to stand firmly and untremblingly before God : for so “terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.” The trumpet waxed louder and louder, the thunder pealed, the lightnings flashed, the smoke was dense ; a multitude of angels were round about, and altogether the scene was so terrible, that Moses said—not in consequence of the fact that he felt any particular personal guilt, but contrasting himself with the awful manifestation of Divine majesty,—“I exceedingly fear and quake.” We are not come to that old covenant, or to such a Mediator as he was, for our Divine Mediator does not tremble or fear. We are coming as new creatures. Old Israel, as the national Israel, of God came to the mount that might be touched ; but the spiritual Israel are new creatures. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, and all things are become new :” and we are come to a new place, not to Sinai, but Zion : so when we come across the word Zion in the Scriptures, as descriptive of God's church and people, it may be understood to indicate a new state of things. Ye are come from the old state, to Mount Zion, which is the new state ; where we have a new covenant, a new Mediator, and God's people as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

I should now like to say a word on *the act itself*. “But ye are come.” No person is there naturally, or by nature. Ye are come to Jesus. But

cannot a babe be brought to Him by its parents, accompanied by sponsors? I do not imagine I have any in the house of God this morning who attribute anything like spiritual importance to such an act as that. We do not come in that way unto Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. Baptism does not bring us. Some people make a sad mistake in relation to baptism: we do not come through baptism to Jesus, but we go through Jesus to baptism. We do not go through the sacraments to Jesus; but through Jesus to the sacraments. Christ is before the sacrament, the sacrament follows a saving reception of the Lord Jesus Christ. The act of coming was ours, the power by which we came was His. The Mediator sits on the throne, and calls the sinner, and the sinner comes. He continues upon the throne, and gives the coming sinner promises, and the sinner thus led by the Spirit comes into contact with the Mediator, and says, with happy Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." How do they come? "With weeping, and with supplication will I lead them." Some of you remember the time when you first in connection with the things of God, when you first trembled at God's Word; when you sought retirement in some secret, silent place, in which you might, without being observed, pour out your troubled, broken heart before God. It was coming to Christ with weeping and with supplication. Ye are come unto Him. What for? For everything. I do not think I can do better than refer you to that beautiful hymn of Toplady's which we so frequently quote,

"Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I the Fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

We came to Him for all; we came burdened, lost, ruined, helpless and polluted creatures; and we have remained with the Mediator until now. Some talk about coming to Christ, and giving their hearts to Him; and then they go away, and take their hearts again. That is not how God saves sinners. We came because He called us. The Spirit led us, and necessity pressed us; we came because condemnation was behind us, the wrath of God was apprehended, and we wanted a refuge, and we found one in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He became precious to our hearts; and now we desire to live under the shadow of His person, and by His grace and power we mean to die where we live, and have been trying to live, for some few years past.

In the next place, just a word as to *the persons themselves*—*guilty sinners*. Ye are come to Him, as angels never came, as Adam never came, and as thousands do not come. What is said about those out of Christ? "They that are far from Thee shall perish." They are not coming to the Mediator. Hear what they say: "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." They see no beauty in Him, that they should desire Him. But ye, poor, penitent, weeping, praying, broken-hearted sinners, that want a refuge and salvation, and have no help in yourselves, and can show no reason fetched from your own bosom why God should be merciful,—you are coming to the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling.

The blessedness involved in all this. Christ sits upon the throne and calls, then He sends an influence from Himself by the Spirit, which attracts the called one, and by which he sees he needs a Mediator, and must have one or be for ever lost ; and under the gracious influence of God the Holy Spirit, the called sinner is gradually drawn.

“Gently he draws my soul along,
Both with His beauties and His tongue.”

By and bye, He receives the sinner. “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” It would be unjust to Himself to cast you out, because He has called you and bought you, and it would be unjust to the Spirit to cast you out, because the Spirit has quickened and regenerated you, and made you want the Lord. It would be unjust to the Father to reject you, because you are the Father’s child. It would be unjust to yourself, the coming sinner, because your hopes and your religion come from heaven. Here then, we have a beautiful and blessed sight, and know somewhat of the meaning of the Saviour’s words in the 17th of John, “I in them, and Thou in Me ; that they made perfect in one ;” for the Holy Ghost leads and unites the sinner to the Mediator, and the Mediator carries and unites the sinner to the Father, so that we have a triune God and a saved church sweetly united together. I in them, and Thou in Me, and the whole church in Us, saved with an everlasting salvation. Here, then, we have the best place and the best company.

Lastly, look for a moment at the contrast. Two mountains, Sinai and Zion. How different ! Both connected with Divinity : the law on Sinai ; but Jesus Christ, the Mediator, on Mount Zion. The wilderness and the city ! Sinai was in a wilderness. But ye are come to Jerusalem ; not into the wilderness, but into the city of the living God. A mixed multitude before Sinai, but here we have the perfect general assembly and church of the First-born, which are written in heaven. On Sinai we have a trembling Moses,—on Mount Zion a saving Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. On Sinai, we have a broken law with curses annexed ; on Zion we have the everlasting gospel of the blessed God.

“In such society as this,
My weary soul would rest ;”

With the spirits of just men made perfect, and with an innumerable company of angels ; with Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant, and with God the Judge of all. Listen to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. The Lord command His blessing, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE PRODIGAL RETURNED, ACCEPTED & HONOURED.

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PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

On LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 9th NOVEMBER, 1884.

“And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.”—Luke xv. 27.

No doubt the leading point in this parable is the greatness of the love of God, and the freeness and sovereignty of His mercy as it is displayed in the salvation of lost, ruined, and guilty men. We have three parables in this chapter,—that of the lost sheep, that of the lost piece of money, and that of the lost or prodigal son. I would not be fanciful, yet I think that the glorious Trinity is indicated in these three parables. In the first place, a sheep is lost, and Jesus Christ the great Shepherd goes after it and finds it, lays it upon His shoulders, and brings it with rejoicing to the fold. In the second place, a piece of money is lost by a woman; she lights a candle, and sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she finds it; and when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found it.” This represents the work of the Holy Spirit. And then in the parable of the prodigal son we have God the Father: Jesus Christ, the Shepherd, seeking the lost sheep and finding them; the Holy Ghost lighting up the soul, sweeping the house, convincing of sin, and leading the mind to repent in the presence of God; and then we have the poor sinner coming by the Spirit, through Christ, into the presence of the Father. Having made these remarks on the chapter itself, let us come to our text. The elder brother was in the field, and heard music and dancing, and called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, “Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.” I shall look at the text as indicating the nature of that salvation in which, I trust, we have good reason to believe we are interested.

In the first place, let me make a few observations upon *the returning sinner*. “Thy brother is come.” Taking the returning prodigal as indicating the experience of a returning sinner, several important points occur at once to the mind. How did the prodigal return? First, he returned to His father’s house *very poor*. This is one of the mysteries of our religion, which I used to think lay upon its very surface; but in the day in which we live it has somehow or other very nearly disappeared. Poverty in connection with religion or the things of God is sneered at,

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the Gospel is flippantly offered to everybody; and if the offering be attended with noise and show, so much the better. People have nothing to do but to open their ears and receive the testimony of God and believe in it, and then they leap out of the world into the church, out of alienation into a state of friendship, and out of a state of distance from God, into one of nearness to Him. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? Then I will profess unto them, saying, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." What is the meaning of this? Is not the Lord omniscient, the all-knowing One? We are to take that with a limitation: I never knew you on the knee of prayer, I never knew you confessing sin; I never knew you hoping in sovereign and undeserved mercy; I never knew you creeping, or trying to creep, under the shadow of My atonement. This is how the words, "I never knew you," are to be understood. Well, the prodigal returned home very poor, for he had not, and permit me to be plain, he had not a penny left in the world; for "he had spent all," "and no man gave unto him." Then "there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want." He had no money, and no power whatever over the famine which prevailed, and he was in want of many things, none of which he could purchase or command. May I advert to myself and just say, that when my soul was turned towards God, and I first applied or appealed to infinite mercy, I was helplessly poor; spiritually I was without a character except a very bad one, which I feared would be the cause of my condemnation and ruin for ever and ever. Yes, I was without a character, without a home, without a friend, without a penny, spiritually considered; I was poor, and wretched, and miserable, and naked; in fact I was lost and ruined, and I knew it. I do not set up a standard of Christian experience in relation to these matters, yet I do think that sinners may be far too well off for the Lord Jesus Christ, and far too rich to be saved; but they cannot be too empty or too poor. I do not know that, critically speaking, the words of Hart are correct:

"The poorer the wretch,
The *welcomer* here;"

And yet I know what the good man meant: he deemed it necessary to express himself in that manner, owing to the fears of poor guilty sinners. One coming sinner, however, is not more welcome than another; but it is a fact that no sinner can ever be too poor to receive a divine welcome from the hand, the eye, the mouth, and the heart of the everlasting God. The Pharisee went down to his house not justified, but condemned, and did not know it. He went into the Temple with the publican, and prayed or seemed to pray; but he drew so near that he left no room between himself and God for a Mediator, and felt there was no reason in his experience, why there should be precious blood between himself and the throne. He was well off, and seemed to come to God; but he was in good circumstances and did not want much, or in fact anything, that mercy had to bestow. His works were numerous and good, and for aught I know he thought and felt he had performed more than were absolutely required. But the publican was poor, very poor; he stood afar off, as a

sinner. Unworthiness would not allow him to go near; for every such sinner, though poor, is honest in his poverty; and poverty is always connected with honesty in a living soul. The publican would not take a step without a Divine order. He went as near as he could, and as near as the Holy Spirit helped him to go; and when his doubts and fears rose high as to his being accepted or rejected, he stopped and left an opening between himself and the throne, for Jesus Christ, the Mediator, and His blood and atonement. "He smote upon his breast, and would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven," but confessed his poverty: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "Thy brother is come." Does he look like thy brother? and is that coming? Yes, thy brother is come; and thy father hath received him and killed for him the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. A sense of poverty is not always pleasant, but it is essential to salvation. Too rich we may be, and too well off for mercy; but we cannot be too poor.

In the second place, the prodigal *was penitent*, as well as poor. We hear sometimes of persons who are poor and proud, and whose pride is in proportion to their poverty; but the coming child of God, deeply sensible of his spiritual poverty, is not proud, but on the contrary penitent. In one respect he regards his poverty as a crime; and, my friends, it is so. If you look carefully into the matter, and distinguish between things that differ, you will see that our moral poverty is our crime. We are transgressors of the law, and that constitutes us poor. Transgression of the law is a crime, and we are criminals. But whilst all are poor all do not know it. We were always poor; but there was a time when we did not think, know, or feel it. A new life was communicated to our hearts, which operated within; and then we realized in some measure the depth of our poverty, and went with weeping and supplication into the presence of our God. A poor sinner weeping: and doubtless the prodigal shed tears; for if he was poor, he was penitent too. There was no boldness, no presumption, no fleshly courage, or confidence in him. However big he might have been, and however inflated and full he previously was, now he was little enough, and small enough; for he was poor, wretched, miserable and broken-hearted. "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee."

In the third place, he went praying, and returned to his father as a *petitioner*. First, a pauper. (Do not be offended at the word.) "Thy brother is come," and he is penniless. He had nothing, and felt that he deserved nothing, and in that condition he came. And when he arrived, he stood, and trembled, and wept, and loathed himself on account of what he had been, and what he had done, and where he had been; and then he opened his mouth and confessed all. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He had resolved to add a petition to that, but his father would not allow him to do so. "He said, I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned;" this was true; "against heaven and before thee," that was so; "and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" that was a fact. Well, choked with his feelings before his tender and loving father, he confessed all that; and he had resolved to say, "make me as one of thy hired servants:" but when he had reached the

end of the confession, and was about to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," the father stopped him. Hired servants indeed! no, he was not to be a servant, nor as a hired servant, nor to occupy the position of a servant in his house. A hired servant! "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:" "for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Here is the child of God, poor, penitent, and weeping as he comes; and when he appears before God, he pours out the feelings of his heart in confession and petition. And what then?

He *is alone*: and "no man gave unto him." He was in the world, but he came out by himself, or alone; he is led by the Spirit, but he comes unaccompanied by fellow-creatures. Some of us know what it is to be lonely and in solitude, and what it was to be alone, when the Lord first met with us. You were one of a large family, but then none of them knew you. You had feelings at the family table to which you could not give expression; and if you had done so, the family would not have understood you, nor been interested. Grace Divine had brought you into a kind of moral or spiritual solitude, and you were never more solitary than when you were surrounded by company. In the family, in the shop, in the world, you were alone; the company did not interest you, and they knew nothing about your experience, nor of the loneliness you felt. The prodigal, it may be supposed in returning to his father's house, went through crowds. But if he did so, sin and guilt were on his conscience, and his heart was broken; his father's house was before him, he longed for reconciliation to him. Onward, therefore, he went alone and in solitude, into the presence of his father, who met him, not at home merely, but when he was a great way off. The secrets of Divine love between God and the soul are mutually communicated, and in a secret place and at particular times. The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation. The reconciliation between the father and the son took place at a distance. The father came running and fell on his neck and kissed him with the kiss of reconciliation, and then he took him by the hand and led him into the house. And the reason of the merriment and joy is, "Thy brother in come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound." The son returns poor, penitent, praying, and alone.

But where does he come to? Two or three points may be mentioned here. He comes to God, and to His house; and the God he comes to is his father, and in His house he finds himself at home. In my father's house "is bread enough and to spare." Is there a poor trembling sinner present, one who pants for God's salvation? "I opened my mouth," said David, "and panted" for thy salvation. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Allow me to describe as well as I can, some of your feelings. You have an idea that God, before whom you stand, is an angry Judge, and a frowning Law-giver, and that there can be no mercy in so holy and just a Being, for such a sinner as you. My dear friends, (for having the grace of God in your hearts although you are in the dark, and far from pleasure and joy, you are my friends and my brethren,) you are under the influence of the tempter and tormentor of penitent sinners; 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.”

He that has drawn you to your Father has drawn you because you are a well-beloved child, and bye and bye you will be surprised to learn how truthful the preacher was this morning, when the Father embraces you, and gives you the kiss of Divine reconciliation, and says, “Fear not, I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name: thou art Mine.” When a brother thus returns to his Father, he finds himself at home in the house of God. I mean not the house of God as it is generally considered; but His church and people. Thy brother has come, the fatted calf has been killed, and

“Here I can find a settled rest,
 While others go and come;
 No more a stranger or a guest,
 But like a child at home.”

The man did not come there as a visitor, to spend a few weeks or months, but to live there; to hold life-long communion with his Father and with his own brethren, and to die there; and that he might finally leave his Father’s house in this world, for that which is above. Thy brother is come home, and thy father hath received him. You must not forget that Jesus is speaking a parable; and mark one point here, that the prodigal did not enter the house before he had met his father; for He first met him, and received an assurance of reconciliation, and then he went into the house. So the poor sinner often says, “When God shall be pleased to bring me to such a point, I will enter into the church and become a member, I will then make a public profession of religion, and avow my faith in the Saviour’s precious name.” I do not care for conditional obedience myself, and therefore I do not preach it. The house of God is the place for every son and daughter of God. If you are not living in union with the world, you are not of it, but have been called out of it and separated from it; you have been brought into loving and spiritual connection with God and with His dear people, and His house should be your home. You should have a name and a place among the living in Jerusalem here, as you have a name and a place in Jerusalem above; for God has met with you, and this constitutes your qualification for a seat at the Father’s table. Thy brother has come, and thy father has satisfied him as to reconciliation, and brought him into the house, and he is seated and feasting at the table.

In the second place, *the reception he met with*. “Thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.” I can imagine him full of doubts and fears on the road. He came a long way to his father; and notwithstanding his resolution, and a knowledge of the fact that the owner of the house was his father; yet, owing to what he had been and had done, and looking at his poverty and rags, I can well believe that he had many misgivings as to whether his father would receive him or not. There was, however, nothing but death in other directions, and therefore he plodded on; and against hope he believed in hope, for hope and fear rose alternately. Now his hopes were high, and

then his fears were higher than they. At length the father's house appears, and the good man runs to meet him. He does not spurn him, nor speak sternly to him, but falls on his neck and kisses him. Oh! how quickly your fears were dissipated when the words fell from the throne of God, "Thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee." My sins, Father, they are the only burden I have, the only things that have troubled me for months; and I verily feared that they would evermore appear as a barrier between me and heaven. Is it so? Am I pardoned? Yes. "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." He hath received His son safe and sound. But how did He receive him? I can only mention two or three things here, as time is going. He received him *absolutely and unreservedly*. He did not say to him, What a wretch you have been! What a fortune you have squandered! How deeply you have degraded and disgraced the family name! What reason can you assign for returning, or for expecting anything like favour from me. Nothing of the kind: he absolutely received him, and not a single condition troubled the poor prodigal's mind. The father was as delighted to embrace the wretched son as the son was to receive the embrace; and probably there was more in the father's love than there was in the affection of the young prodigal himself. And this will apply to our God. When He received us He did so with all His heart, and all His heart is infinite; and therefore, it is said a little lower down that he received him joyfully. Yes, He received him absolutely. He received him *affectionately and forgivingly*. I heard a brother, who is now in heaven, once say, he had a friend whose son became a prodigal, and almost broke his father's heart. One day as the father was walking in the street, somebody tapped him on the shoulder; and turning round, he saw his wretched, miserable, tattered son, who said, "Father, I am very sorry." "Oh," said the father, "my boy, that will do." He did not want to hear more. "Father," he repeated "I am very sorry," but he would hear no more. Oh! if such affection be found in the heart of a creature, moved so deeply by a penitent confession of guilt, what is that affection which reigns in the heart and the bosom of our heavenly Father! "Thy brother is come," and thy father hath received him, and rejoices because he is safe and sound. Received him, not as a visitor, not as an enquirer, not as a person going about the country making observations, gathering information; but as his own son.

In the third place, observe *the provision made for him*. "Thy father hath killed the fatted calf." Now Jesus Christ had not suffered for sin when He delivered this parable; yet Old Testament saints fed upon the sacrifice of Christ, as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. I take the fatted calf, therefore, to typify Christ crucified; the Father's house to be His church; the table to be the gospel table, which God has spread for His house, and concerning which He has said, "I will abundantly bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread;" the fatted calf, therefore, placed before this prodigal and all the family, is Christ crucified, as set forth in the preaching of the word; for this constitutes the meat and drink and spiritual refreshment of the church of the living God. We are a church and congregation of returned prodigals, knit to one another and to the Lord, in church-fellowship and communion.

We meet together from time to time, to worship God, the Master of the house, and the Father of the family. I serve in an official capacity; and He says to me, Bring forth the fatted calf, and put it on the table; bring forth the best robe, and the ring, and put them on him, ministerially, descriptively: not efficiently, that is the Holy Spirit's work. Bring out Christ crucified; place Him upon the table, that this returned and welcome prodigal may find enough, and we may be merry. Rich provision; for all here is the best! The robe is the best, the best that ever existed, or that ever will exist. It is a better robe than that of angels. Theirs are wondrously good, but they are not like that which you and I shall wear in glory for ever. John Berridge says, (I think it occurs in his writings somewhere,) "I would not change my dress or robe for that which an angel wears." It is far superior to theirs. Their robe is that of creatures; but the robe which prodigals wear is the righteousness of God wrought out for guilty worms. "Bring forth the best robe." Why, that is justification through the righteousness of Christ. Yes, bring it forth; for nothing is too good for them to wear. Bring it forth, and do not lay it upon the table as if it might not be touched, or handled only in a very cautious manner, as if it were a dangerous doctrine. Bring it forth, and put it on him; put shoes on his feet, for he is a son, and not a slave who wore no shoes. Put a ring on his finger, for he is Mine; and spread the table, and let us eat and be merry: "for this my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

Fourthly, *the joy which the salvation of sinners occasions*. "Let us be merry." If you and I are not glad when sinners are born again, there is something seriously wrong in our hearts; and when good people come before the church, whether they say little or much, if it is to the point, if we are not glad to hear them relate their experience, we are out of health spiritually. But what was the joy? First, it was *parental*, for the father was joyful at the reception of the son. Secondly, it was *fraternal*, for his brothers and sisters were pleased to see him, those at least whose hearts were right, and whose affections were spiritual and gracious. We are pleased to see our brethren whom we had no idea we were related to, brought into the church of God. "Your brother is come." He has been to amazing lengths in sin; but he is your brother, and he is come home. He is poor, but let the brother of high degree rejoice in that he is made low, and the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; for in the church of God there is variety, though grace equalizes all. *Angelic* joy, "joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth:

"Angels in their songs rejoice,
And say, Behold he prays,"

What do they rejoice for? Why, in the sinner's reconciliation to God they see their reconciliation to them; for what reconciles man to God reconciles him to heaven, and to all in that world: therefore, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God." But suppose the welcomed one should fall away, and God should cease to love him, would not it be better that angels should withhold expressions of their joy till returning sinners get safe to heaven? The Father having received him, and brought

him into His house, he shall never die. "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." Angels rejoice, because they know penitent ones will be their companions in heaven for ever.

Fifthly, *the condition indicated*,—safe and sound. These two words indicate two great blessings; safe, because *justified*,—sound, because *sanctified*. Safe, because the best robe is on them, and they are, in the righteousness of Christ, all that God requires. Sound or healthy: the Holy Ghost dwells within; He is the Author of all holiness, and of that heavenly-mindedness, which we trust we are in some measure the subjects of. Such are safe and sound. He is not a prisoner, a servant, a slave, a stranger, nor an unhealed leper; but a son made white and clean. God has received him, and that has constituted him eternally safe and sound.

Lastly, *a contrast*. He was trying to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; but now he sits at the family table upon which is placed the fatted calf. He was a swineherd, keeping pigs, and in rags; now he sits wearing the best robe in his father's house. He was far away, a penniless wretch; now he is made nigh by the blood of the Lamb, and the everlasting love of his Father. What inference may be drawn from the subject? Why, that salvation is altogether of grace,—that the sinner contributes nothing whatever of himself unto it. This poor prodigal impoverished, lost, and ruined himself; he damaged and destroyed his own character, and constituted himself as wretched, miserable, low and hateful as he possibly could; and then he found himself in an absolutely helpless condition, and thus he came to his father, without a penny, clothed with rags, and defiled, without a home, and without a character: and the father received him.

"Pause, my soul, adore and wonder!
Ask, Oh why such love to me?"

The Pharisee goes with his bright robes, and is rejected. The penitent sinner comes with his rags, or rather, naked and filthy, and the Saviour receives him. God the Father accepts him, for He will in no wise cast out him that cometh. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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JUSTIFICATION AND PEACE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

On LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 18th JANUARY, 1885.

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—Rom. v. 1.

THE truths of the Gospel and the doctrines of Divine grace are so important to both God and man, that they are variously illustrated in the Word of Divine truth. It is said, "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." The rock smitten by Moses in the wilderness was a type of Christ, and the streams which flowed from it were typical of those truths and doctrines which spiritually sustain and satisfy the people of God. As the stream which flowed from that rock followed the children of Israel forty years in the wilderness, supplying them every day and every hour, so the grace of the Gospel continue to emanate from the glorious Person of the Saviour, and the spiritual necessities and requirements of the people of God are constantly met. Again : Jesus Christ is the Tree of Life, and the church as His spouse, says, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Jesus Christ is the Tree of Life, and the believer so views Him as to the complexity of His Person. He is the everlasting God; but He is God manifest in the flesh : and in connection with the Person of our Lord several important offices appear, which are essential to our salvation ; for His official work is inseparable from our justification and sanctification. Christ is represented as bearing twelve manner of fruits, and as yielding His fruit every month, and the leaves of the Tree are for the healing of the nations. The fruit which Christ produces, indicates the glorious doctrines of the Gospel, the precious promises of God's everlasting love, and those important truths upon which the true believer lives. And then, again, "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 is the eternal love of God, having its source and spring in His heart. It will never cease to flow ; for God's love, like Himself, is everlasting, and will continue to flow among the nations of the earth, and all the trials and troubles of the wilderness, and in the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. The streams which emanate therefrom make glad the city of God; and what are they but the truths of the gospel, or the promises and doctrines of Divine and sovereign grace by which the people of God are cheered and refreshed on their way to heaven ? Eternal redemption is a deep and precious stream, and blessed

is the man that drinks thereof and sits upon its bank, so to speak, and sings, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." The stream of pardon, emanating from Divine love is also a cooling and refreshing stream, and will flow until the end of time; for pardon as to its application is limited to time. Sinners will be pardoned as long as the world stands; but when time ends, and the world is destroyed, then the act of Divine pardon will cease: but it will continue until the end, and very blessed and happy is the person who can say, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back," or "Cast them into the depths of the sea." I am assured that they shall be remembered no more. How sweet to sit near this stream, and drink and drink again, and that from day to day. It slakes the thirst of the sensibly guilty sinner, and he becomes satisfied with the mercy of God. Then there is another stream, namely the justification of sinners in the sight of God. This is broad, and deep, and divinely clear; and this too is essential to salvation. Divine justification always includes pardon, but all pardon does not necessarily include justification, at least when we speak of it in connection with human matters. One creature pardons or forgives another, but he cannot justify him. Her Majesty, on the throne, exercises her royal prerogative, and pardons a criminal, and he escapes with his life, and no human power has a right to take it from him; but she can neither justify him, nor establish his character. She cannot remove his guilt, but he will carry the mark, the stain, the odour of his crime with him through the world to the grave; and therefore, although justification includes pardon, yet pardon does not necessarily include justification. But Divine justification includes forgiveness, and if God pardons a sinner He is sure to justify him also. Upon this theme the Apostle dwells in the former chapter, namely the fourth, and also in that out of which I have taken my text this morning. In the last verse of the preceding chapter he says, "Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The text divides itself naturally into two branches. *Justification and its important effect.* It is not my present intention to dwell for any length of time upon the first particular, namely, the justification of sinners in the sight of God: not because I feel I should not have room enough in that great and glorious subject; but because I am always dwelling upon it, and my mind is limited, and my powers small, and because my mind has been directed to the effect of justification, namely, "We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." I may, however, tarry a few minutes on the first particular, namely, the justification of sinners. It is most important to be all right in God's sight, or to be without fault, or blemish or "spot or wrinkle or any such thing;" but if we are in Christ, we are perfect and complete in the sight of God. Of course you will make no mistake here, and go away and misrepresent me: I am not speaking of what the believer is in himself, but of what he is in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Ye are complete in Him, or perfect and accepted in the Beloved," without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, as seen in the glorious Person of the precious and perfect Son of God. In Christ we are already perfect: in ourselves we are not so yet. The work of Jesus Christ *for* His people, is a finished and completed work, but the work of the Holy

Spirit in them is not yet finished and completed. When, however, the Spirit's work is completed, then we shall be in ourselves, and in our own experience all that we are now as seen in the Person of our Lord. Then we shall be without spot, experimentally and personally so; without a blot, a wrinkle, or a stain. All traces of sin will be utterly and eternally removed, and we shall be perfect, and pure, and complete, and for ever like our Lord. Let us, however, look for a minute or two at that which justifies a sinner before God. Not to tarry on the fact that works cannot justify, and that no person can be justified by the law. The Apostle Paul carries all those notions off the premises, and disposes of them in a manner which is almost peculiar to himself. Such is the nature of justification that it must be altogether of grace. Works can have no place and no influence whatever here. If we are justified, we are righteous; if we are all right before God, we are so owing to His undeserved grace and rich favour. Now a believer is justified mediatorially, or in other words by the mediation of the Saviour. I love the words, I think they are Newton's :

"What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine."

It pleased God to lay upon Christ the iniquities of us all. God imputed our sin to His Son, and all the obedience of the Redeemer is imputed to those persons whose iniquities were imputed to Him. So that there is, so to speak, a mutual transfer between Christ and men. All that was ours and would have crushed us for ever, was transferred from us to the Saviour, and He bore it and removed it all; and all that was Christ's even all His obedience, active and passive, is imputed to the sinner; and if Christ's obedient life and sacrificial death are sufficient, and are pleasing to God, and we are interested therein, we are perfect and complete, and God accepts us in Him. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace." My dear friends, this theme is infinitely high and important, and a Gospel fact in connection with which, if one may speak for others, our experience is very limited. I observe, that for the most part the people of God are constantly complaining of their sin, and I do not mean to say that they do so in a hollow manner, the evils which dwell within; their corruption and depravity they feel, and they express their experience, and I unite with them in all they say upon this fact, and am ready at times to cut myself off, being almost overwhelmed in darkness and wretchedness owing to my deep sense of imperfection and vileness, and therefore, I say that our experience of justification is very limited. But "If we believe not, yet God abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." It is said, Live up to your privileges. Well, it is your privilege to be complete in Christ. Go and live up to it if you can. My friends, you are in the field of conflict; and this fact is so high, this doctrine is so great and glorious, this wine is so rich, and this law of grace so wonderful, that although we have a little faith, it is not sufficiently strong to live, day by day, and hour by hour, upon this great and glorious privilege, that we are evermore justified and righteous in the obedience of the Saviour,

“The Spirit, wrought by faith and love,
And hope, and every grace;
But Jesus spent His life to work
The robe of righteousness.”

The obedience of Christ is put upon the soul; faith receives it from God, and the soul wears it in God's sight. Now you know that a person's garments come between him and all eyes that behold him; and the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness come between the sinner and the eye of God, and He sees him, if I may so speak, not as a guilty one, but as a justified and righteous person. He sees you in the obedience of the Saviour, in the character of His dear Son, and in the perfections of the Mediator; for this robe covers you before the eye of your beholding God. Oh the blessedness of being in Christ, and wearing this robe of justifying righteousness. Well, Christ wrought out this righteousness, and brought it in, and the Holy Ghost reveals it to the soul; and then the person appears in the court, before the Judge, or God in His judicial character, who examines, weighs, and tries him by His law, His holiness, and all His moral perfections; and in this righteousness of the dear Redeemer God pronounces him just and righteous, and acquits him, saying “Loose him, and let him go.” He is all that I require him to be; in harmony with my law, he is approved and accepted in the Beloved; I see no fault in him; the righteousness in which he appears before Me is his own, having been wrought out for him according to the intention of the Mediator who wrought it out, that he should have and wear it for ever. Christ's, righteousness, therefore is your own, and in it you now appear before God. God cannot condemn you, but must justify you. “Loose him, and let him go.” So the sinner is liberated and walks at liberty; not all the days of his life, as to his personal experience, but as to God's acceptance of him, and there is therefore now no condemnation to him.

Now this righteousness is perfect, or justification is a completed act of God. I do not think I can lay too much stress upon that fact, because many of the works of God are progressive, and He will continue His operations in certain directions until the end of time, and many branches of His work will not be finished before the end of all things. But justification is a completed act of God, and all believers in His great name are now completely justified. Justification is not progressive. If you ask whether I think sanctification is so? I reply, I am not going into any critical matters. I do dislike controversy in the pulpit. I do not believe in progressive sanctification as to the experience of the believer, for where is the saint who feels that he becomes holier every day? Anyhow, I do not believe in progressive justification. If God has justified you, the act was complete and final, and you will not be more complete in that respect in heaven than you are now. Your sanctification will then be complete, and your growth and development will then be perfect; but with regard to your justification, if you are in that state, you are perfect and complete now, for it is not a progressive work. Neither is it a terminable work of God. Some of His works will be destroyed, and some operations in connection with religion itself will end. But the justification of sinners in His sight is an eternal blessing, favour, and privilege. We shall

lose a great deal before we die, and when we are on the other side of death; but we shall retain this when there, and appear as justified persons. We lose our friends and relations, and we lose our happy frames and feelings, and much of our pleasurable experience; but justification is a blessing that will last as long as life endures, and abide as long as the soul itself shall live. May it be yours and mine when we come to die, and even before that time, to realize our interest in the justifying righteousness of the dear Redeemer, even all the days of our life, that we may be enabled to ask with the apostle Paul "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It would be unjust in "the powers that be" to strike or punish a righteous character, and wrong in any judge or jury to condemn him,—though such a fault has sometimes been committed. Nothing of this kind can ever take place in the Court of Heaven, or in the judicial proceedings of God; His decisions are always according to truth. If He says, Thou art righteous, then He can never smite you, and His curse can never fall upon you. He may hide His face and put some bitters into your cup, but He must save you from hell; for it would not be consistent with His righteousness, holiness, and equity to permit you to sink into that prison, which was made for the unrighteous only. Now friends, lastly this is realized by faith. "Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God." Not by works and not by faith and works united; for, "for if it be of grace, it is no more of works; and if it be of works, it is no more of grace." The two cannot be mixed together,—God's infinitely rich grace, and man's poor, imperfect works!

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

No, not the very best. The holiest thoughts you ever had constitute no part whatever of this glorious robe. The holiest feelings that ever warmed your heart, and did you good, form no part of your justification; and the best steps you ever took, in the holiest hour of your life, must all disappear in connection with the question of What is that which justifies a sinner? Nothing human, nothing of the mere creature; it is all of grace, and all from the great God-man. All the threads of all the parts of this glorious robe came from the Mediator, the Son of God; and all this, if realized at all, is realized by faith, and not by works, nor by reason. It was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, that sinners should be justified by the character and doings of another. Self-justification they considered was essential to God's acceptance of men, and that there could be no safety apart from the individual's own character and doings. Therefore, when the Bible came forth and threw a new and mysterious light upon the whole business, and declared that man in His best estate was altogether vanity, and that without a righteousness better than the best of them possessed, no one could see the face of God,—the world was astonished, the Greeks sneered, and the Jews stumbled. All this was new and nonsensical to them; but though it was the reputed foolishness of God, it was wiser than men; and though it was deemed the weakness of God, it was stronger than men. The righteousness of another Person is produced, which He does not re-

slavery. But here the child of God is alive and free, no bonds, but that quire for Himself, for He was personally perfect. Who is it for? And what shall be done with it? He has brought it in, and it is put upon the ungodly; and they receive it by faith, and stand before God, believing in Christ, and in His obedience; they pray for eternal life and salvation for the sake of what He has done, and has been pleased to become to them. And if this is not the way sinners are saved, I do not know anything about it; and if this is not how sinners are justified, I am out of the secret. Justified by faith. Is faith, then, the matter of our justification? That is another important question which we have not time to go into. Of course the matter of our justification is the righteousness of Christ, and faith is the power, the principle that realises this, takes hold of it, and appropriates the fact. I have sometimes illustrated the subject in this homely way: You go out into the street, and in the passage hangs your overcoat, which you take down and put on. What is it that warms you and excludes the weather, the act of putting the coat on, or the coat itself? Faith is the hand that takes the robe and uses it, and therefore faith is not the matter of justification, but the instrument, the means, the hand which receives the garment in which the sinner appears before God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

Now a word or two in the second place, on the *effects of justification*: "We have peace with God." I thought when I came, that I would take up all the time this morning on this branch of the subject, but I am not my own master. In the first place, let us glance at the *nature of this peace*. It is *righteous* in relation to God. It is a blessing to possess a peace which is honourable and *in harmony with* God's equity, justice, and truth; no divine concessions were made, and nothing was ignored on the part of God. No part of the Divine character was eclipsed or dimmed, God brought out all the perfections, and all His great demands were expressed when the Saviour was about to satisfy justice, and work out a righteousness for sinners. And the Lord honoured all the attributes of the Father, met all the requirements of the great Lawgiver, covered the whole ground, satisfied justice, so that her sword was sheathed, and has never been unsheathed again, and elicited from God the Divine commendation or expression of satisfaction, "I am well pleased with thee for thy righteousness' sake; for thou hast magnified the law, and made it honourable." Here we have peace. If this righteousness is ours, we have a holy, an equitable peace with God which the world can neither give nor take away. But it is a *living* peace. A corpse is still and motionless; and there is quietness in the graveyard, but it is the peace of death. But "being justified by faith, we have peace with God," and peace that is consistent with activity and energy, and with the loving operations of the quickened mind. A multitude of thoughts spring up and hallowed feelings prevail in the heart, all of which are perfectly consistent with that holy peace which is one of the results of justification. It is an honourable and a living peace, and it is the peace of *freedom* and liberty. A slave might be said to be in peace. Being bound, he dares not say that his life, his feet, his hands are his own. There is an air of peace, but it is the peace of bondage, the quietness, the fixedness of

of love; for the glorious liberty of the children of God is his, all the range of heaven and of eternal life is his, and his peace, therefore, is that of life and liberty. It is also the peace of holy intelligence, or *gracious knowledge*. You say such a person is grossly ignorant. He talks about justification, and righteousness, and kindred subjects, and does not know what he means or says. But he that is truly justified by faith does know what he means and what he affirms. Among the most unlearned of the dear people of God, there has sometimes been found a vast amount of light upon those mysterious acts of God, the imputation of sin to Christ, and the imputation of righteousness to the sinner. I laboured in the country, as you know, some years before I came to London, and I can say, that though some of the people of God in country places talk about Divine things in their own way, yet their views are clear, and their words indicate a depth of spiritual knowledge such as many do not possess. Their views of their own personal justification are wondrously correct and heartfelt. Yes, the imputation of sin and righteousness are well understood by them, and there are thousands now in heaven enjoying the riches of justifying grace and glory, who were not well understood when they were on the earth, when they talked about these facts. The knowledge of God comes immediately from Him, and it is always right and true, and the heart that possesses it is right in His sight, and if you can say no more than the once blind man said, "One thing I know, that whereas, I was blind now I see," God has taught you and you know a great deal more than many; you are a good scholar at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. One thing you know,—you may not know anything about politics, nor about science, as for controversies on points of religion, you do not trouble yourself about them; but one thing you know, and you cannot be reasoned out of it, for it is an experimental and personal knowledge,—“I was blind, but now I see.” So justified sinners who many years ago scarcely knew the alphabet, were enabled by Divine teaching to take hold of the Saviour’s righteousness intelligently and believingly for themselves, and experienced the peace the text speaks of. The nature of this peace.

Secondly, *the limits of it*: “Being justified by faith.” It is a peace that belongs exclusively to justified sinners; and therefore, my friends, see that you do not take up a peace, and run away with it, while none belongs to you. This is children’s food, and the wine of the kingdom; and subjects only are permitted to drink it. If you are justified, take it, and make as much of it as you can. The question is great and important, Am I justified in the sight of God? Then justification itself is limited to faith, and faith is limited to the indwelling of the Spirit, for it is the gift of God. And then further, this justification, or rather this peace, limits God as to His dealings with His people. If He has acquitted you for the sake of the righteousness of Christ,—if He has set you free, and marked and sealed you with the Holy Ghost, and passed you on for heaven,—then His providence over you must be special, and He can never do anything but bless you; He will take the rod and mix bitter cups, and make your way rough, but He can never curse you and never permit or do anything in the course of His providence towards you, that will in any way contradict or falsify His great act of setting you free and directing you to eternal glory.

Thirdly, *the value of this peace with God.* That is just where we want it. *Peace with God.* There is peace in heaven. Peace in eternity, and peace with God. Yes, we have peace with Him, and He will never turn against us ; for He cannot change, and no beings can ever turn Him against us. Who is he that can harm us, if we be followers of that which is good ? We follow Christ and His righteousness, and therefore can never come into condemnation. It is in heaven, and it is peace with God. You may set creatures against creatures, and creatures against yourself, or against me ; but, pleasing thought ! there is no power in the world that can ever set God against us, if we are justified by faith ; and nothing can ever induce Him to turn His back upon us. We have peace. I intended saying a word or two on the realization of the fact, but our time is gone, and therefore let me close by making one remark on *the procuring cause of all this.* "Through our Lord Jesus Christ." This explains the whole, and makes it all beautiful and simple. "Our Lord Jesus Christ." Is He ours ? Our Jesus, our Christ, our Lord ? Yes. Well, where is He ? With God in heaven. Now this explains it. We have peace with God, for our Peace Himself is there. Who is our peace ? Why our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is in heaven and with the Father. People say we must take the road of righteousness to get to the Saviour, and the road of holiness to come to Christ, and the road of good works to come to God. Now, my dear friends, do not believe a word of it. The road of righteousness to come to Christ !! Then I should wonder who would ever come to Him. Why Christ is the way of righteousness, and there is no getting into that way otherwise than by Him. It is not that holiness leads to Christ, but that Christ leads to holiness. It is not that good works lead to Christ, but that Christ leads to good works. The fact is, He is our all with God in heaven, and therefore He is our door, our gate, and our way in, and our way out. Our way out of condemnation into justification, our way out of death into eternal life, our way out of disgrace into glory, and our way out of a lost and ruined state into a state of eternal salvation. So long as Christ our Peace is with God we shall have peace, unless we should happen to pass through some change as to our justification ; which can never happen : for justification is eternal, and Christ, who is our peace, will always be with God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

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THE LORD'S MARVELLOUS DEEDS THE GROUND OF PRAISE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,—

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL.

“O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory.”—Psalm xcvi. 1.

LET us direct attention in the first place, to the fact that *the deeds of our Lord are marvellous*. “He hath done marvellous things.” I might call your thoughts to creation, which is a marvellous work. Some ministers dwelling on this verse would no doubt carry their hearers up to the visible heavens, and contemplate the works of God there. I admit with adoring gratitude that God has done marvellous things in creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.” The atmosphere which surrounds our globe and in which we live, and move, and have our being is a marvellous creature of God; and even those works which are comparatively small and even minute, we cannot speak of as otherwise than marvellous. The operations of God’s hands are all wonderful, whether He makes a common daisy in field, or a glorious sun in the heavens, whether He produces an insect or an elephant, whether He brings forth a babe or an angel, all His works as a Creator are marvellous, and worthy of Himself. I will not, however, dwell upon the works of God in creation and providence, since I would look at the wondrous deeds of the great and glorious Mediator, or at our everlasting salvation, in which “He hath done marvellous things.” *Where* has He done them? I must in the first place ask you to send your thoughts into heaven, the world of eternal glory, and realize as much as you possibly can in connection with the wondrous past. Although we use beautiful language in our songs of praise, we do not know very much about heaven:

“Yet now and then, dear Lord, bestow
A drop of heaven on worms below.”

Sometime since we heard something about “the gates ajar;” and much of that kind of writing and talk has been used in connection with the kingdom of glory, but the fact is, we must die and go there, before we can possibly know what it is. We may infer, however, from the greatness of the Builder of that world or from the majesty and glory of the eternal God, that heaven is a wonderful home, a wonderful place, and a wonderful land of rest, for millions, for ever and ever. The glory of heaven is not material, neither is it merely intellectual glory. We wish we received more frequently earnestings of that glory, and were more often sealed experimentally so by the Spirit unto the day of redemption. Sometimes we are afraid we shall never see or enter heaven, and that it will not be our portion to live there with happy millions for ever. We are sure that if we should be sent to hell it would be hell to us to be associated for ever with

damned spirits that hate God, and with the devil and his angels. We should not be at home there, not as to our nature, and the frame and principles of our minds. We sometimes try to obtain a little comfort from negative sources, and this is one of them. Well, we hope to see His face,

“ And never, never sin,
And from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

The Lord hath done marvellous things above ; for in the first place he resolved from all eternity to have a people or a family ; and it is not for you or me to say that the family is small or the number few. It will be an innumerable company ; for so the Word of God declares, “ a number that no man can number,” which is known to God, and will be known to Him for ever ; and there will be mistake, and no one missing. Well, with this innumerable company God resolved to surround Himself for ever ! He resolved to pour eternal glories into every heart, and eternal light into every mind, and to fit them for the highest station and for the best position in the universe. Having registered their names in the Book of Life, we are informed that He prepared for them a city, a rest, a home ; and I apprehend that as the people were and ever will be so truly and deeply loved by the eternal God Himself, that the heavens he has prepared for them are wonderful. The world we are now living in and are passing through, which God made for creatures merely, is a marvellous world. When we speak of it as barren, and empty, and sinful, we do not mean that it is so physically and geographically ; for so it is the workmanship of God, and a beautiful world. The mountains and valleys, the oceans and seas, the rivers and streams, the flowers and trees, and all the beauties and wonders thereof are the marvellous works of Jehovah. But what is this world compared with that ? The marvellousness of this world disappears and vanishes before that world of rest and glory which God has prepared for His people above. That world is filled with God’s own glory, which is the element of His saints ; heaven is eternally tranquil, and cannot be disturbed by any of those influences by which this world is agitated and tossed.

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

Having passed out of our dying bodies, our immortal spirits will enter into eternal glory, and we shall find ourselves more at home in that new scene and state than we have ever felt ourselves in this world. There will be no consciousness of unpreparedness or unfitness ; for we shall be at home at once. I cannot explain it, I wish I could more fully do so. We shall be and feel at home at once, in the presence of the Infinite Majesty of God. “ Sing unto the Lord, for He hath done marvellous things in the world of eternal glory. He has prepared thrones and crowns for all : the crowns will fit their wearers, for our God has resolved so to influence and sanctify His saints that a perfect crown shall fit every one. He did not make them to fit our heads as sinners ; but mark their name, they are crowns of righteousness. They are to be put upon righteous heads, for

their wearers shall be righteous by and through Him that made them. "He hath indeed done marvellous things." Thrones of righteousness, for the righteous to sit upon, and crowns of righteousness for the righteous to wear, and palms of righteous victory for the righteous to bear, in a righteous world, and before a righteous God, whilst they shall possess righteous principles for ever and ever. Marvellous things God has done for His people in heaven.

Then if we descend from heaven into this world, we shall see that "He hath done marvellous things on the earth. How marvellous was the incarnation of our Lord, and let me just say here, that the great Person mentioned in my text is that Lord who stood before, and was judged by the sinful and hypocritical Pilate, who said to Him, "I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee, and Jesus answered "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above; therefore He that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin." The Lord that hath done marvellous things stood before Pilate, and they spat in His face, and buffeted Him, and blindfolded Him. I wish I could realize more of the solemnity of these facts about which I speak, think, and read. Surely we are marvellous beings, or we could not meditate upon the sufferings of our great Lord, with so little feeling. That lovely face they spat upon, those dear eyes they blindfolded, and that majestic countenance they smote, and upon His blessed person they made long their furrows. He went into Gethsemane, and from Gethsemane to Pilate, and from Pilate to Calvary, and did marvellous things in each place. It was a marvellous posture, when He fell upon the earth and sweat great drops of blood. Then the Father smote him with the withering curse of the broken law by His own potent justice. My friends, the curses of men are sometimes fearful; and have caused us to shudder and tremble; and in former times the Pope of Rome issued curses which were strong enough to wither nations. We know that they were nothing in themselves, but in consequence of the constitution of things at that time, they were sufficient to ruin families and overturn governments. And if the empty curse of proud creatures has been found to be so destructive, what must the righteous curse of God's Almighty Justice have been upon His incarnate Son! Our sins and God's wrath formed a junction upon Him, and united on His person; and He that was mighty to save fell to the ground and sweat as it were great drops of blood. He bled beneath our sin and guilt, and then went to Calvary to lay down His life for us. Marvellous words He spoke on the cross; but He entered into no argument with anyone. On the cross, He went where no being ever went before; there He received what no being had ever before received; and, bless His name! He there did what no other being could do. There hung the incarnate Son of God, our only hope, and the glorious Fulfiller of all the purposes and intentions of heaven. There He hung, bleeding, groaning, and suffering, while sin and guilt gradually faded away, and the last trace disappeared, and the last crime was expiated, when He said "Father it is finished." Saints, it is finished. Hope in Me: it is finished; and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath done marvellous things; His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory."

What was He buried for? Having died on the cross, why did He not at once return to life again? No, He would pursue death into its own territory, and go to the utmost extent of the curse; for had He not entered the grave, that house appointed for all living would have been left outside His mediatorial work. He went there, because the grave was one of the results of sin and fruits of the curse, and He came to cover the whole of that awful ground. He went into the grave and consecrated it, and defeated death in its own domain, and His right hand got Him the victory; for, having accomplished the great purposes of Heaven, in that respect He came victoriously from the tomb, and triumphantly ascended to His God and our God. But our Lord has not only done marvellous things, He is still doing wondrously even in the hearts of His people. Marvellous things are done in heaven, marvellous things were done in Gethsemane and on Calvary, and marvellous things are done in our hearts. Let us not say very much about what we were before we knew the Saviour's precious name; that was a marvellous and Divine act, by which your hearts were quickened. Your souls were then arrested, your eyes were opened, your ears were unstopped, and you were constituted new creatures. Then Satan felt, so to speak, that you had been taken out of his hands. I put it in this form, because God has said, that He will take "the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive." Satan held you, and was carrying you as fast as possible through sinful pleasures, and in a sinful course down to hell, and had promised himself the fiendish satisfaction of landing you there. But "sing unto the Lord, for He hath done marvellous things!" He met the tyrant and said, Deliver to Me that captive, and let him go free, for he is Mine; and He took us out of his hand, and delivered us from slavery and death. Then we became enveloped in darkness and a fearful state of things took place, such as some of us could not at the time describe. At all events, we were new creatures, having been regenerated; and we did not know what had taken place, only that we could not take another step hell-ward, nor go any further in that direction. We were alarmed and terrified, yet we felt that if our souls were sent to hell, God's righteous law would approve it well; and we prayed, "God be merciful to us, for we are sinners." If you have got no further than this, my brethren and sisters, sing! If you have not been brought into the liberty yet, wait awhile, for that is before you. If He has put you in the beginning of the way everlasting, He will sooner or later bring you to heaven, therefore, sing! If God has divorced you from sin, as to its love and reign, sing His praises! It is a high mercy to leave sin, to know we are sinners, and to breathe the prayer of the publican for mercy. There are some in the house of God, who though they have been led into liberty are ready to say,—

"Sweet was the time when first I felt,
The Saviour's pardoning blood
Applied to cleanse my soul from guilt,
And bring me near to God."

Ah! it was a sweet time. Theatres, casinos, dancing-rooms and entertainments of the highest character belonging to the world,

“I tread them all beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good and great.”

Dear Christian friends, have you been led into liberty through the wounds of the Saviour? Are you under the shadow of the cross, and the sweet covert of the atonement? “Sing unto the Lord for He hath done marvellous things for you, His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory.” That is when marvellous things are done. Only there is another point I thought I would mention, but one cannot say everything in an hour: our God has done marvellous things for us in Himself. Not merely in heaven, and on the cross, and in our own hearts and families, and so on, He has done marvellous things for us in Himself. What I mean is this. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” He has done marvellous things for us in the person of His Son. What has He done? Why, written our names in Him. What does that mean? That He has inseparably connected us with Him, and and connected His dear Son with His own dear people. And what else has He done? Blessed us. Blessed us with what? With blessings. How many? All. What sort of blessings? All spiritual blessings. Why, they are the best. How marvellous! He has blessed us with *blessings*, with *all* blessings, and with *all spiritual* blessings. That is all well as far as it goes; but we lost all once in Adam, and may we not lose all these blessings? He hath blessed us with all blessings *in Christ*. They are all in Him, so that they are safe, and we shall have them as we need them, and they can never be lost or forfeited, He holds them for us and He holds them fast. “Sing unto Him, for He hath done marvellous things. All spiritual blessings. When was this done? Before the foundation of the world. And what was it done for? That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, and therefore if the question is asked, Where has God done marvellous things for His people? The answer is ready. In Himself, and in heaven, and in His humiliation and in our hearts. And what He has done He will never reverse. Having begun the good work, he will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ.

But *when* did the Lord perform marvellous things? Well, when is He not doing them? I have already referred to some things that were done before the foundation of the world. Some people do not like to go back so far, and I dare say there are many going to heaven who seldom or never go back into the past eternity for comfort and consolation. If so, let me tell you, my dear friends, the comfort and consolation which you have, if it is spiritual, comes from the past eternity, whether you ever go back into it or not. That is where it comes from even from the great depths. “Ah well,” one says, “I do not trouble myself about that. Very likely not. Persons that are very thirsty are quite ready to go down and drink of the river on the spot without enquiring where the source of it is. It is, however, a matter of importance sometimes to know where the source of a stream, or of a river is; at all events it is certainly important in connection with this matter, because it tends not only to make the water so cooling, so sweet and so precious, but to endear its Author. When I know that it comes from God’s eternal love, and

that its source is in eternity, it makes it wonderful ; and much of its marvellousness would be lost if I could trace its source to some period of time, or to some act of my own, and therefore, first,

“ My faith looks back to see,
The burdens Thou didst bear.”

and then it flies from Calvary to eternity, where the whole arrangement was made, and then it goes forward into the future eternity where all is to be consummated. Faith is, if I may so put it, between the two eternities ; and since it “ is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” it brings comfort into our hearts from the past eternity, and hope into our minds from the future eternity. Now hope deals not with the past, for we hope not for that which is past and gone. Faith is that peculiar grace which has to do with past and future. It goes back into eternal decrees, and fetches comfort from them, and forward into their fulfilment in eternity, and brings comfort thence also. Through the operations of faith, our hearts are sometimes filled with adoration, and we can say in the language of the text, “ Sing a new song, for the Lord hath done marvellous things.”

And *how many* marvellous things has He done for many of us now sitting at His feet. You were brought low, and He helped you. How low you cannot tell, but one says He helped me. You were brought low, in order that there might be occasion for Divine help, and room for your wonder-working God. Another step, and I should have been ruined : that step was not taken. Another day of such circumstances, and I should not have been here this morning : but that day never came or those, circumstances never arose. Had I continued in that frame of mind I should have lost my reason, but you did not continue in it you see. In providence, in grace, and in glory, and in nature, the Lord has done wonderful things. He has done marvellous things for us, whatever others may say ; notwithstanding our foolishness, peevishness and ingratitude, in our best moments we feel that we owe Him our all, and shall do so for ever. Had He left us and passed us by, taking no gracious notice of us, what wretched rebels or pests some of us might have become ! We cannot say what we should have become, or where we should have been, and it was only for God, who might have sent us to hell, to have taken no saving notice of us. But I passed by thee, not accidentally, but intentionally, and it is wonderful that the mighty God should have condescended to come where we were, “ I passed by thee, and thy time was the time of love.” “ Where the word of a King is, there is power.” “ Sing unto the Lord,” for He did wonderful things when He saved us. And how does He work ? In a variety of ways. When He created the world, He did it by a word ; but when He saved His people a word was not sufficient. When He made the world, he did it on His throne : but in saving His people He had to leave His throne. No suffering was necessary in the creation of the world, but blood and power and suffering, and what we shall never fully comprehend were absolutely required to save and redeem us from all evil. But one of the most marvellous things in connection with this is the people that are benefited by what He has done. For whom has He done these marvellous things ?

For me, and you—the guiltiest, the vilest, the most distant and unworthy. Do not misrepresent human nature, for you do not always feel so yourself. I wish I did. There are times when I have a deep sense of my own unworthiness, and I am never quite right unless I have a sense of my own sinfulness; for if I do not properly remember my poverty and wretchedness, I cannot say much feelingly, about the marvellousness of what God has done. But when I feel that I am a bankrupt, wretched, and without a single penny, and then reflect upon the fact that all things are now mine, I am ready to say, “Sing, for He hath done marvellous things.” When I think that I had nothing to wear but rags, and that when I first appeared before God with anything like Divine acceptance, I had to cast them away, and appear naked; when I think of that and reflect upon the fact that I am now wearing the fine linen which is clean and white, the righteousness of saints; when I think I am now clothed with gold of Ophir, and with raiment of needlework, beautifully adorned and enriched, I say, “Sing, for He hath done marvellous things!” When I think I had not a friend hardly worth having, or that my friends were in fact, my deepest and worst enemies; and that now God, and angels, and God’s beloved people are my friends, and that I am to have a heaven full of friends for ever and ever, it is all truly wonderful, is it not? Then I say, “Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvellous things.”

The second point is, *the victory* He has won. “His right hand and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory.” “For our Lord is a man of war, the Lord of Hosts is His name.” He is the Captain of our salvation, and He carries a sword. He uses a sword, as well as a censer, He uses a golden censer, for He is our Priest, and He uses a two-edged sword, for He is our King, the Lord of Hosts, strong and mighty in battle. “His right hand has gotten Him the victory” everywhere. He went to Egypt, where His national people Israel were slaves, and His right hand, and His holy arm got Him the victory there. “I will bring you out,” said He by Moses, “with an high hand and an outstretched arm,” and the poor little tyrant Pharaoh became proud and big, and said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him? I do not know the Lord, and neither will I let Israel go.” But His arm got Him the victory; Then they went to Babylon, and were captives there seventy years; and His right hand and His holy arm got Him the victory there. Then came our dear Lord and encountered principalities, powers, spiritual darkness, and wickednesses in high places, and all hell, united with the world, came against Him, for worlds were represented at the cross. There was a representation of heaven in the justice of God, a representation of hell, “Now is your hour and the power of darkness, and the world was represented by Jews and Gentiles; therefore, all the worlds with which we are connected were at Calvary, and all except heaven in *one* respect were against the darling Son of God. Christ expiated guilt, and atoned high heaven, and then He had to conquer hell, and the powers of darkness, and Paul triumphs in the fact, that by the cross He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. He put His crushing feet upon the head of the crooked serpent, according to the Divine promise, and destroyed the works of the devil, so

far as destruction was then required. It was His right hand and His holy arm that got Him the victory. His battles are never doubtful as to their nature, their necessity, or their issue. The battles of the Lord are all of them necessary, and they are all holy, and they are all certain as to victory. Jesus did not enter the field as ordinary soldiers and generals go into the battle hoping for victory and trying to win it, as a matter of uncertainty. He entered the field to win, and not to try to do so. He conquered His enemies, and overcame every foe; and having done so He chained every conquered foe, and sits upon His throne, and restrains and checks him, according to the good pleasure of His will. The saints in the days of Luther, especially towards the latter part of his life, would take up this song, and "sing His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory . for what a crushing load lay upon the world before the times of that Reformer ! What a momentous conflict it was ! but the Lord was in the field, and the issue, therefore was not doubtful nor uncertain. And when the Word was translated, and the gospel was preached and Divine truth shed its heavenly light upon the nations of the earth, and the church was in some measure emancipated and free, then the text expressed their feelings, "Sing a new song, His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory." And what He has done in this respect, He can, and perhaps He will do again. I do not know that we or perhaps our children may not have the battle of the Reformation to fight over again. I think it is most probable. England, as a nation is foolish in this respect. Popery, now it is coaxed, and comforted, and petted ! and how the nation tries to please it ! but as for Calvinism let it be trampled underfoot, while Popery is to have free course and be glorified. The nation may have to introduce another Reformation, and fight for liberty again. What the Lord has done in this respect, however, He will do again. His truth is essentially eternal and can never die or change. He that conquered hell on the cross lives for ever on the throne, and He will by and bye take His great power and reign according to His Word.

Thirdly, the text indicates the fact that *nothing whatever is due to the creature*. He did it all, "His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory." We had no hand in the matter. Not by our arm or our sword, or our power, but His hand has done it all. His arm is long, and strong, and very swift, and holy, and skilful in its operations. It is an Almighty arm. It is long enough to reach the most distant evil, strong enough to extinguish it, and to hold back the mightiest power, and quick enough to be with you in a moment before the devil can reach, or death overtake you. There is nothing to ascribe to yourselves, therefore sing to Him a new song, for the Lord has done it all.

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SINNERS REDEEMED AND SATISFIED.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL.

On LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 1st, 1885.

“Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.”—Psa. ciii. 4.

THE living church of God is “the city of our solemnities,” and we are invited to look upon it. Its foundations, and materials, and the way in which they are brought together and vitally united to one another and the Lord, are all deep solemnities. The King of Zion sits upon a throne of grace, and the mercy-seat and the holiest of all, are truly solemn realities. God said He would dwell in thick darkness; nevertheless the veil has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom and the light of mediation now fills the holiest of all. The mercy-seat has been uncovered by the Mediator, and His precious blood having been sprinkled in that audience chamber, everything there is in the experience of the saints, and in fact, most sacred and solemn. When we contemplate the child of God as a petitioner before the throne of grace, we are, so to speak, reminded of many solemnities connected with his character, position, and exercises. Solemnities in his character; for he had not been what he is had not Jesus died for Him: solemnities in his position on the knee of prayer before God; for he had never been there had not the blood of the Lamb been sprinkled before the throne; and in his exercises as a petitioner; for the Holy Ghost had never been in his heart teaching him how to pray and what to pray for, and he had never opened his guilty lips in the presence of a holy and heart-searching God, had it not been for the agony, sweat, blood, and death of God's incarnate Son. Then, if we meditate upon the ordinances of God's house, we are constrained to say that they are our solemnities, all of them being most sacred and holy. Levity and everything frivolous and empty ought to be prayerfully avoided by all who come into this city of our God. Baptism is a solemn ordinance, and so is the Lord's-supper: preaching the word of truth is one of our solemnities, and the singing of God's praises is another: and when we meditate upon the operations of Divine grace in the hearts of thousands, perhaps millions in Zion, we find ourselves surrounded as it were by Divine and heavenly solemnities. It is most solemn when the heart of a sinner is broken, and he applies to God for healing; and solemn indeed, when God applies the blood of His dear Son to the bruised spirit, making it whole and clean. Then sinners, having been thus healed, sanctified, and sealed, solemnly abide beneath the wings of God,

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and the feathers of the Almighty, and His truth is felt to be their shield and buckler. Having been thus saved, they are then conducted by the providence, counsel, word and Spirit of God from one scene to another, and from one circumstance to another, through all the ins and outs and ups and downs of life, and round all the various corners which are before or between them and heaven, until they reach their dying beds ; when God changes their countenances, and calls them away. Then we sometimes have solemn feelings whilst meditating upon the fact that the disembodied spirit, having left the world and time, has entered into eternity, and into another region and state which we cannot fully know until we die and enter into it ourselves. Therefore, Zion is "the city of our solemnities."

Some of these solemnities are set forth in the Psalm out of which I have taken my text this morning. If we rejoice, we do so with trembling. If we shed tears, there is sometimes a strange pleasure mixed with our sorrow ; for we both weep and sing before the cross of Jesus. We enter Gethsemane, where we have feelings of bitterness and of sweetness too. The sweetness tends to intensify the bitterness, whilst the bitterness intensifies the sweetness. Wonders of grace to God belong ; let us repeat His mercies in our song, and say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy Name." Let us bless the Lord with our souls, and not merely praise, or thank, or remember Him. Our blessing of the Lord is the result of His grace ; for had He not blessed us, we never should have blessed Him. We might have talked about praising, and thanking Him, but it is one thing to thank and praise Him, and another thing, with all one's heart, and powers, and soul to bless and adore His holy name. Bless the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ; the Father for His love, the Son for His blood, and the Spirit for His power. Bless the Lord, not merely with our lips, but with our souls ; for He anoints not only the lips, to unseal and open them, He also sanctifies, heals, helps, and fills the soul. God deals with souls, and souls deal with Him ; and since He has helped, and healed, and sanctified, and saved us, and said we shall dwell in His glory for ever, let us say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name !" The heart as a sanctified one, is as a well-tuned harp in the hand of the Holy Spirit, and all its faculties and powers are as its strings, and hence, "all that is within me." Let my will evermore yield to the will of God ; let my affections be warm and pure, and spiritual, and rise to heaven, even to Christ, who sitteth at the right hand of God ; let my understanding be clear and correct, and guided by the Word ; let my judgment be holy as to all its decisions and conclusions, "let my conscience be purged from dead works that I may serve the living and true God ;" let all my feelings and thoughts be Divinely pervaded by the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, that I may sing the well-deserved praises of that God, who hath saved me in Himself with an everlasting salvation. Brethren, we shall so sing in heaven ; but I can not explain this mystery now, only I use words which, generally speaking, indicate those thoughts which have been generated in our minds by the word of Divine truth. We shall sing in heaven with all our powers,

but we do not so sing here. Sometimes we sing critically with the understanding, looking at the words upon the page before us, we feel that they express the truths of God, and we sing, not with the heart, but with the understanding; at other times, we sing with the heart, and not altogether with the understanding; but then shall

“Every power find sweet employ,
In that eternal world of joy.”

No streak of darkness will ever cross the understanding, no chill will ever fall upon the heart, and there will be no mistakes whatever before the throne of God.

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

“Bless the Lord!” David proceeded to say, “and forget not all His benefits.” All His benefits are more in number than the hairs of our heads, or like the sand on the sea-shore, and they come continually and uninterruptedly like the air we breathe, which surrounds us, which we inhale, and without which we could not live. But He works sometimes in a very mysterious manner, and we know not what He is doing. He leads us in rough paths, and lays heavy burdens and crosses upon our shoulders. Friends, they are benefits and blessings in disguise. This is rather hard for faith to believe at all times. Nevertheless, when that grace is strong, and our understanding is clear, we receive everything that comes from the hand of our God as a benefit. The patient receives the medicine from the medical man, though it is bitter and nauseous, as a benefit, and believes it is intended to do him good; and our God has medicines as well as cordials, and useful bitters as well as pleasant sweets. Forget not *all* His benefits. We cannot *remember* them all, but that is no reason why we should forget them *all*. May it be our mercy to stand forth prominently and exhibit ourselves as everlasting debtors to undeserved mercy. We would not be as graves to receive the mercies of God, and hold them in concealment, but rather stand as pillars in the temple of our God, bearing inscriptions of eternal love. “All His benefits,” and what are they? Well, David mentions some of them. “He forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases.” He does not say he forgave all thine iniquities, or He will do so; but he puts it in the present tense, “He *forgiveth* all thine iniquities.” Some critic may say the act of pardon is but one, God has done this in Himself finally and for ever; therefore, we need not pray for the pardon of sins. My dear friends, you cannot get the ocean into a cup, and you cannot get the Infinite into the finite. Our God has once and for ever in Himself pardoned His people, but a sense and realization of that fact must be continuous and progressive with you and me. What else? My text follows: “Who redeemed thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.”

Let us first consider *the object indicated*. “Who redeemeth *thy life*

from destruction." I will say only one word about myself this morning, namely, that my illness during the past fortnight has perhaps suggested this text to my mind. "He redeemeth thy life from destruction. Now it may not be amiss to refer to the fact that David's life might be viewed in several aspects. His natural life as a creature might be considered, then his life as a shepherd, then his life as a military man, then his life as a king, and finally, his spiritual life. I do not care for a multitude of divisions; but it may be helpful to our memory, and perhaps our hearts also, to look at his life under these aspects. First, take his natural life; David was naturally healthy and strong in his youth, for he was ruddy and of a beautiful countenance; but he became weak and feeble as years multiplied upon him, but though

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

We are sometimes brought low, physically and naturally by disease, and suddenly we find ourselves in what is called, humanly speaking a precarious condition. How blessed it is under these circumstances to realize the fact that all our times are in His hand, and that the little spark of life can never be quenched by any disease, until the God of love sees fit. Yes, David's natural life was redeemed from destruction; but we leave that, as we want to consider spiritual matters. Then there was David's life as a shepherd; and how beautifully, humbly, and gratefully he spoke before Saul of the manner in which God then saved him from destruction. War was raging at the time between Israel and the Philistines, and he went to see his brethren, and take them some provision. His brethren found fault with him, and attributed his visit to the pride of his heart. "With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" "Well," said David, "is there not a cause for my being here? Goliath was then defying the armies of the living God. "Who is he?" said the stripling. And having received information as to his name, character and condition, he said, "Let not Israel be afraid." He was brought before Saul, and he spoke courageously and boldly as a true believer in the Lord. "Why," said Saul, "you cannot go out against him; you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." "Thy servant," said David, "kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth, and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him and slew him :.....the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." And what follows it is not necessary that I should enter into. He appeared in the field against Goliath, and put a stone into his sling, and smote the giant; and thus the Lord redeemed David's life from destruction, and crowned him with tokens of His loving kindness and tender mercy. Then, again, there was his life as a soldier, from that time he became a man of war, a captain and general of armies, and spent many years of his life in the field of battle,

in the midst of swords, and spears, and chariots; but neither Saul nor the enemies of Israel killed him. His life here, was remarkable. "He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight;" "so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms." He had no military training such as is generally necessary. Nations do not think of sending raw, undisciplined and untrained men into the field; but David never had a soldier's training; God taught him to fight, and gave him victories; and therefore, he says, "He redeemeth my life from destruction," my natural life, as a man, my life as a shepherd, my life as a soldier, and my life also as a king, especially when Absalom rose in rebellion against him and aimed at the life of that father who loved him so tenderly, and almost idolised him. But David said, I am still alive; for thou hast redeemed my life from destruction, thou crownest me with loving kindness. Lastly, and some of you think I ought not to have tarried so long on those points; lastly, his spiritual life. Aye, that is it. Thou hast redeemed me, spiritually, from destruction. Our dear Lord has redeemed from penal destruction. Our life was forfeited by sin, we were immersed in guilt, and pervaded by that which is essentially offensive to Jehovah. We were not merely spotted, but polluted, depraved, and offensive, and from head to foot, unclean, abominable, hateful. God's holiness could not look upon us approvingly, and His justice was bound to smite us. What has God done with us and for us? "Thou hast redeemed my life from destruction." I deserved to be smitten, cursed, sent to hell, and to suffer Thy wrath, and to feel its bitter, withering power for ever. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" for He has redeemed my soul from destruction. And not only were our souls forfeited by sin, they were at enmity with God.

"My dark, benighted mind,
Was enmity with Thee."

Forfeited, and yet in a state of enmity against God. I will not say that all people are alike before they are called as to the outward expressions and manifestations of sin. I can only speak for myself and some others; we hated eternal things with all our hearts. I did. I do not think it was possible for a youth to hate more deeply anything on earth than I hated the things of God. The last book some of us would have opened was the Bible, and the last things we would have talked about were holy and eternal things; and the language of our spirits was, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." And what has God done with us? Thou hast redeemed my life from destruction, and crowned me with loving-kindness and tender mercies." We were willing slaves in the hands of the tyrant, loaded with chains, and so ignorant, that we put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, and went on loathing holiness, hating God and cursing all that was Divine; but He has redeemed our life from destruction. Our life was in the hands, and under the power of God's punitive justice, which held us fast, and had there been no interposition of redeeming blood or an atonement for sin, Justice would have held us fast under the curse, whose withering, bitter, and tormenting power we must have felt for ever. But

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
 Wandering from the fold of God;
 He to save my soul from danger,
 Interposed His precious blood."

I do not know how to understand it, but the God of heaven whom we hated, loved us; and the Lord on high, whom we would have dethroned if we could, had prepared thrones for us. The God of glory, whose authority we would have destroyed, and whose being we would have annihilated had it been possible, hath redeemed our life from destruction. He has redeemed our life and all its powers from destruction; and having done so, our redeeming Lord says, I have ransomed you from death, and I am alive from the dead for evermore, and "Because I live, ye shall live also." And what a life it is! Is it not? It is not life to live without Christ. Not life to be in trespasses and sins. But it is life to live in and upon the Saviour, near to Him, and in holy fellowship and communion with the Lord. That is all I can say on the first point, for I cannot preach long this morning.

In the second place, let us look at *the act indicated*. "Thou hast redeemed my life from destruction. Redemption is by price, by power, and by providence. Redemption is by price. "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." I shall not trouble you with any thoughts upon the commercial view, as it is called, of the atonement of our Lord. I am tired of controversy. I come to you with the old Bible, loving the old-fashioned statements of the eternal Spirit therein. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price," looks very much like a purchase, in connection with the work of Christ. The price paid was the Redeemer's blood, justice demanded the uttermost farthing, and abated nothing; for "God spared not His only begotten Son." He went, not nearly, but quite unto the end of the law for righteousness; and paid not a part, but the whole. Nothing was abated, and His precious blood was the satisfaction given. He poured out His soul before Divine Justice, who received it and was satisfied; and thus our souls were redeemed from death by the price of blood. And redemption is by power also; for if power should not follow blood, Jesus would have died in vain. The power of the Spirit follows the death of Jesus, for as there is no salvation or remission of sins without the shedding of blood, so there is no knowledge of this fact without the work of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the Spirit takes possession of redeemed men, who until then, do not know, or want to know this fact. They are lost and undone, and are pleased in the ruin. Divine power comes and takes possession of them, and turns their faces towards God and Zion, and then they become concerned about redemption, and want to know whether the Saviour died for them. God snatches redeemed souls as brands from the burning, and applies the blood that was shed for them; and hence David says, He forgiveth all my iniquities, and healeth all my diseases. The soul that is redeemed cannot be lost, but must be made experimentally acquainted with his interest in Christ. That

having been done, the redeemed hide beneath the shadow of the Redeemer, and under the feathers of the Almighty, and God's truth is their shield and buckler; and from under this shadow, David says, He redeemeth my soul from destruction, He crowneth me with loving-kindness and tender mercies. I was a criminal, but He expiated my guilt. I was in debt, and He paid the whole. I was diseased, and He healed all my diseases. I was exposed to ten thousand dangers, and unable to protect myself, and He covers me all the day long. Therefore, He redeems my life from destruction, and crowns me with loving-kindness and tender mercies.

Thirdly, *the state from which he was delivered.* He redeemeth my life from *destruction*. Not from affliction, nor trial, nor temptation, nor conflict, nor pain, nor persecution, nor from natural death, but from destruction. Why did he not redeem us from affliction and trial? No, He deemed it better and best to lead us through trials to heaven, rather than in a perfectly smooth path to our eternal home. Better to go into the water and have God with us there, than to live and walk in ease. God says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee;" and hence, He redeemeth my life from *destruction*, but not from affliction, pain or sorrow. You have often been brought low, but He has often helped you. You have sometimes been almost crushed, but never quite so. We have said, We are cast out from thy presence, but we spoke according to our feelings; for He will perfect that which concerneth us, and redeem us from destruction. What is destruction? Literally here, the grave; but spiritually the curse of a broken law, hell and banishment from God. We fear not, however, our banishment from God since Jesus died for us. Redeemeth me from destruction. How? By substitution. We were in a position where destruction was sure to fall, and He took our place; and the destruction, the curse fell upon Him, and we were free. Redeemeth me from destruction! How? We were lepers, and He healed us, and so delivered us from destruction.

Then notice the *contrast*. He "crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." He crowneth thee, not with authority and power. No, He wears that crown Himself, and never gives us power to manage or govern for ourselves. If one may speak for others, that is what we should have preferred, for the flesh would like to have authority and power to manage our own affairs. No, He crowns His people, but not with authority. We are not to legislate, or make laws; for He wears the Legislator's crown, and marks out our course. We are not to govern, for He reigns, and He rules, and will do all His pleasure. It is ours as crowned sinners to follow our Lord, and not to go before Him. He crowns us, and what does that mean? Generally speaking the word crown in the word of God indicates the completion or perfection of a business or an affair. "Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." With mercy! that is a royal favour. With love! that is a parental favour, so that it takes in the kingly and fatherly character of God. A child that you have no knowledge of, is in danger, and near to destruction; you rush towards it, and snatch it from death. But if

you were its father or its mother you would rush to and seize the child with deeper feelings and more intense determination than if it were not yours. Our God as the Monarch of the universe exercises mercy, and as the Father of His people He is full of love, as David says, "He crowneth me with loving kindness and tender mercies. He makes the crown, and the materials are love and mercy. He puts it on the sinner whom He might have cursed. First, He redeemed my soul from death, He then brought me to His feet and filled me with spiritual desires, and in His own good time "He crowned me with loving-kindness and tender mercies." How so? He fulfilled my desires. I wanted to know whether He loved me, and died for me, and desired most intensely to know that privilege for myself and he has revealed the fact to my soul and crowned me. Then I have offered prayer to Him again and again, and He has heard and answered me, and so "crowned me with loving kindness and tender mercies." And then the crown He gives His people here is an earnest of the fact that He will crown him personally hereafter. He *crowneth* thee. Yes, now, in this world, in this present life, "crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies," so that we have enough.

"Enough, my gracious Lord,
Let faith triumphant cry;
My heart can on this promise live,
Can on this promise die."

Who does all this? He. The Lord. The work is His, He does it all. And then the confidence with which all this is expressed. "Who crowneth thee." It appears that a knowledge of redemption is possible in this life. The question has been asked whether persons can really know that they are going to heaven. Is it possible for them to be *scripturally* confident that they are saved sinners? David was confident of it, and he was taught of the Lord; and if we have a Divine and Almighty Being for our Teacher, nothing is too hard for Him to teach us. Therefore, friends, if when the question arises, Did Jesus love me and give Himself for me, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our hearts that it is so, we shall be able to say with Paul, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me;" or as in my text, "He redeemeth my life from destruction, He crowneth me with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Amen.

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THE REVELATION OF THE FATHER BY THE SON.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

On LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 29th, 1885.

"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father : and no man knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."—Matt. xi. 27.

THIS chapter contains much spiritual and Divine information concerning the Messiahship of our Lord, the character and mission of John the Baptist, and the fact that although, perhaps, there are not degrees of glory in heaven, there are degrees of punishment in hell. First, we have information concerning the Messiahship of Christ. John the Baptist was in prison, and he sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Christ at once proceeded to give them certain proofs of the fact that He was the promised Messiah : "Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." Let him compare the miracles you see with what is predicted of Me in the prophecies of Isaiah and elsewhere; tell him that the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Go, and tell your master that you have seen me work these miracles, and let him compare these operations of My hand with the prophecies recorded in the word concerning Me, for this will furnish abundant proof that I am the promised Messiah. Then we have a considerable measure of information concerning the character and mission of John himself. Having put several questions to the people as to what they went out into the wilderness to see. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater he." John occupied a kind of middle position between the old dispensation which was waning and that new one which was coming into existence. John the Baptist was not an Old Testament prophet, and he was not sent to predict the coming of the Lord, but to prepare the way before Him, to make His paths straight, and point Him out to the people. Old Testament prophets predicted the advent and incarnation of the Lord; but Malachi, the last of the

prophets was not able to point at any visible person in the world and say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Malachi, could only say, He is coming, and will soon be here, and when He is come, He will be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap : and who may abide the day of His coming ? John the Baptist, however, was not sent to predict the first coming of our Lord, as a future event ; but to go immediately before Him. He was greater than the prophets of the Old Testament, but not so great as he that is least in the kingdom of heaven. There was a long line of prophets behind John, and before him were the gospel church and ministers, preceded by the Lamb of God Himself ; and John said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." I knew Him not ; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, "John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him." I knew Him not till then, although I was sent before Him. John baptized Him, and when he saw the Spirit upon Him, and hearing the voice from heaven he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world !" The prophets that preceded him could only say, He is coming ; but when John saw all this he said, He is come to take away the sin of world. He could only say, He is come to take away sin ; but he could not say as the apostle Paul, and others said,—It is done, the work is finished, and the gospel dispensation has been completely established.

"My faith looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
While hanging on th' accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

Thus, then, we have information concerning the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, and concerning John the Baptist. In the third place, we have some light upon degrees of punishment in another world. "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell : for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Salvation is all of grace, and we shall have in eternity all that the Saviour deserves for us, and the wicked shall have what their sins deserve.

God is a God of justice, and will never punish sinners for sins they have not committed ; and therefore, we have the word tolerable here : "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Well, having given us information concerning these facts it follows : "Jesus answered and said, (and the word "answered" in the Scriptures is not always to be taken as indicating a reply to a question, for it frequently occurs when no question has been put to Him :) "Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of my Father," and so on.

I shall not take up any of your time this morning upon the first clause of the verse, since I have already preached from it. "All things are delivered of My Father," my remarks will be limited to what follows: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Our subject this morning is Divine and saving revelation. We are therefore to meditate for a short time upon this sacred theme. I trust the Holy Spirit may be present to assist the preacher, and to enable his hearers to profit by the text at least, if not by the sermon.

In the first place, let us look at *the nature of the revelation*. I may say at the outset that I am not going to make any critical remarks, or to dive into the wondrous mysteries which are indicated in the text, I think I have done with that sort of preaching. When I was a young man I thought I knew something about the nature of the adorable Trinity, and used to talk much about the mode and mystery of the Divine existence. As to the fact that our God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I believe it as firmly at ever, and adore God in that deep mystery as deeply as ever; but I have lived to feel that I am very limited as to knowledge, that my mind is very shallow, and that an experience of this great truth is a great deal better than theorizing upon the Divine Trinity. These three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are one God, and our covenant God; and happy are they who, with a living faith, embrace Emmanuel, the dear Redeemer, who reveals the whole mystery; and who can say for themselves,—“This God is our God for ever, and He will be our Guide, even unto death. We need a little more of the simplicity of the gospel; for having more of that, our experience of Divine things would be deeper and more spiritual; and the churches need a deeper realization of the preciousness and power of the doctrines they profess to believe. I shall not, therefore, attempt to dive into these deep mysteries in the inquiry, What is the nature of this revelation? It is to be inferred from the Revealer Himself, and also from the revealed One. This is a wonderful theme, a glorious fact: “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” We have, therefore, a revelation of the Father, by and in Christ. I do not know that I can refer you to a stronger or more helpful portion of the Word than that we have in the 1st chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews; when speaking of Christ he says: “Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person.” Thus the brightness of God’s glory is in Christ, and in this way He reveals the Father to guilty men. Surely that, or He, that is the express image of another person, must reveal that other person. Well, now, Jesus is the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of His Person. “Who has, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son.” Do not, my dear friends, trouble or perplex yourselves about this deep mystery; for “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” Our Lord put this very pertinent and important question to Philip, in answer to his request, Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Philip had some carnal ideas concerning the

Father and the Son, and he said, We can see you, and we want to see your Father and our Father also : show Him to us, and it will suffice us. The Master said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not not known Me, Philip ? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," for I reveal Him to men. I am the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person. "He that hath seen Me, therefore, hath seen Him also : how sayest thou then, Show us the Father ?" Christ is the great Revealer and Simplifier of all Divine mysteries which are saving ; and we have nothing whatever sufficiently clear for our salvation and our faith, if we avoid or lose sight of the glorious person of God's dear Son. I repeat what I have so frequently said, I do not expect that in heaven I shall see three thrones for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That is carnalizing Jehovah, for all such thoughts are of the flesh. How difficult it is to get beyond the flesh and its influence, when we think about our God. God is a mystery—a Spirit ; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth. In our Lord dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and

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

"I am in the Father ;" and the Father is in Me and hence the name which Pharaoh gave to Joseph might be applied to Him. After Joseph had interpreted the dream of Pharaoh, that king was so astonished that he gave him a new name, and called him Zaphnath-paaneah, that is, a revealer of secrets, or one to whom secrets are revealed. The Father is in Christ : His will, His decrees and purposes, His promises, His salvation, and He Himself, are in Him. He who is the great Revealer of the Father, to all in heaven, and to all God's people here, came into this world as the brightness of Divine glory, and the visible image of the invisible God ; and said, "He that hath seen Me [by the eye of faith,] hath seen the Father." "How sayest thou, then, Show us the Father ?" He is in Me, and I am in Him, and we are essentially united, and essentially one : "I and My Father are one." "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Christian brethren, it comes to this,—we have a revelation of the Father as a Law-giver, and also of Jesus, the Mediator between Him and the people by whom the law was broken ; between those people and God we have a Mediator, who represents transgressors on the one hand, and the Law-giver on the other, even the Great Revealer of God, and of Divine secrets—the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, we have the Father and His children, and between His numerous family and Himself we have our elder Brother, the Son of God, and the Son of man. The family come to the Mediator, and through Him they go to the Father. How simple, beautiful, and comprehensive are the words of Paul ! "Through Him we both have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father." Christ is all. The power that leads us is the Spirit, and the medium or way through which we appear before the Father is the Mediator and His work. When we feel, or are led to real-

ize our interest in Jesus, we address the God of heaven as our Father, our God, and our portion for ever and ever. This is the nature of the revelation.

In the second place, *the necessity of this revelation*. The revelation of God to guilty men by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are all born morally or spiritually blind. It is not true that we bring into this world with us the germs of Christianity, or spiritual life and heavenly knowledge. We do not. We are born blind, and by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins. We bring into the world with us, perhaps, the germ of natural knowledge; but the germ of spiritual life, and knowledge is not in the heart until the Holy Ghost, through Jesus Christ, deposits it there. We are all in darkness, and without a revelation of God, through the Mediator, by the Spirit, we shall never know the Father nor see God. Let Jesus Christ be wholly dropped out of the system of religion, and you have nothing but nature and its light, and a natural religion never qualified a sinner for that spiritual world, which God has prepared for them that love Him. Drop Christ out of the economy of religion, and a spiritual knowledge of God and His claims, and His provision is impossible. There is no other means or method of knowing God, except by the person and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not believe in Christ, and tell me, as I have been told, that you do not want the Mediator, but that you can get at God and worship Him without Him; then I must tell you with all faithfulness, you are in the dark, and can never possess the true knowledge of God that way. God's eternal power and Godhead are apparent in the heavens, and in His providential government of the world; and enough of these points are revealed in nature to man as a creature, for moral and general purposes: but the heavens nowhere declare that an atonement for sin has been made, or that one was appointed or provided, and they nowhere reveal how a guilty sinner may find peace with God. All this is inseparably connected with the Person and mediation of God's beloved Son. No man knoweth the Father, but He to whom the Son will reveal Him. May it be our privilege, therefore to to live in the light of His countenance, and to have much intercourse, fellowship and communion with Him. The more fully we know Jesus Christ, the closer will be our communion and intercourse with our Father and our God.

Now, dear friends, this revelation from Jesus Christ is essential to two or three things. It is essential to a right knowledge of God, essential to our salvation, and essential to our intercourse with our heavenly Father. To a right knowledge of God. Some, or perhaps all of you, are readers of the literature, and especially the religious literature of the day, and you are sometimes astonished at what you cannot but feel is the amazing ignorance of people concerning God's character and claims. Learned men, and we have an abundance of them, and many of them are, morally and socially considered, excellent; and we have not a word to say against them in that respect: but many of them have the strangest notions of God, and the most unaccountable ideas of His rights and character. If God's claims and glory are put before them according to the Scriptures,

they regard them as very doubtful; and some who possess a particular turn of mind, will sneer, and condemn the whole as foolishness. But when the Redeemer becomes known, and Christ as the Mediator between God and man, reveals Jehovah to the sinner's mind, a right knowledge of God is the result, and the person thus possessing it says—

“Guilty I plead before Thy throne,
And low in dust I lie.”

Bring a natural man there if you can; bring him to possess feelings, such as are expressed by those words, and explain to him, if you can, how it was you came to have such an experience. You cannot get the light into his mind, nor open the blind eye; for no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him. I refer again to the portion I read at the commencement of the service—the 17th of John. It is important to know what life eternal is. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” To know God as a Judge, and to be guilty before Him, and to know Jesus as an Advocate and Mediator, pleading our cause, and obtaining our acquittal; to know God as the Law-giver, and to appear as law-breakers before Him, and to know Christ as the Law-fulfiller, and God’s acceptance of His Mediatorial work; this is life, and the result of a knowledge of the Saviour through the eternal Spirit. “No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.”

Now thirdly, *the extent of this revelation*. Here again, I would just say, that while I pass over all that is deep and mysterious, it is a fact that God is to be known. You know there is a class of persons now-a-days who declare that God is not knowable, which is not a fact; for there are thousands that know Him, for Jesus Christ has revealed Him unto them. But whilst God is knowable, He is unsearchable and unfathomable: He is apprehensible, but not comprehensible. You can apprehend Him, but not comprehend Him; you can have some knowledge of Him, but, “Who by searching can find out God?” Can we find out the Almighty unto perfection? Remember here, my dear friends, that the extent of our knowledge, coming from the Lord Jesus Christ, is never too shallow, nor too limited for salvation. If the Saviour reveals the Father to you and me, the revelation will be quite sufficient for all saving purposes. You and I may have but very shallow minds, and only a few experimental thoughts and ideas concerning God and eternal things; but having received the little light we possess from the Lord Jesus Christ, it will be found sufficient to carry us to death, and through it, and suffice to constitute us perfectly at home when we enter the heavenly world. Our dear Lord is the Revealer of the Father, and His revelations have always proved sufficient. The Son reveals the Father’s claims, and the provision He has made; and He reveals Himself as the only Mediator between God and man. “Come unto Me.” “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” And again, “No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me, draw him.”

Fourthly, and lastly, *the Sovereignty of this revelation*—"And He to whomsoever the *Son will* reveal Him." The sovereignty of our Lord in revealing eternal things, relates to persons, places, periods, and measure. First, Sovereignty relates to persons. "What, will you dip into mysteries here!" I cannot help the existence of mysteries; the Bible is full of them, and they are not to be ignored nor concealed. There is the mystery of Divine sovereignty; for the Master said, though the world may cavil, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Did Christ concur with the Father in what He had done? "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." But has He any part in this matter? "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him." How is it that Nicodemus was not an apostle, rather than Peter the fisherman? Nicodemus was a master in Israel, a learned man, a teacher, and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrim; his reputation was one of wisdom and prudence. How was it Nicodemus was not called to serve Christ as an apostle? A wise man, a prudent man, and one willing to learn? I do not know. Christ chose Peter the fisherman to serve Him as an apostle, and Nicodemus afterwards to serve Him in a more private capacity. But how is it that any are called by grace to know the Saviour's sacred name? How is it that for the most part,—and it used to be so, if it is not so now,—these great realities are concealed from the wise and prudent. It is a fact, and a lamentable fact, that among the most learned in the day in which we live, we find the deepest and strongest atheism or scepticism. Natural parts, powers, acquirements, accomplishments, and natural learning, all leave the mind in darkness, as to the nature of God, and His moral claims upon lost and ruined men, and His absolute sovereignty: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Untrained, untaught and illiterate persons, who never sat at the feet of learned doctors,—persons whose knowledge of general things is shallow and limited,—upon such persons the Mediator shines, and reveals the Father. And I thank Thee, said Christ, that it is so. And again, *places* are matters of sovereignty. What a place the cross was, upon which the thief hung! and yet Christ revealed His Father to him there. And what a place was that, just outside the city of Damascus, where Saul of Tarsus received the first revelation of God, and of His moral claims upon Him. Sometimes, it happens at home in the closet, and at times in God's house; first, in one place, and then in another. The Lord Jesus Christ is an absolute sovereign in these matters. Periods, too, are matters of sovereignty. It has been said, and I have recently been reading on the subject,—the longer one lives in sin, the more difficult his conversion becomes; just as the tree that stands long, year after year, becomes very deeply rooted in the earth, and spreads its roots far and wide, so the sinner that lives in sin becomes very deeply rooted therein, and conversion, or the new birth becomes almost impossible. Oh, we have to do with an Almighty God, who can call a sinner by grace at the age of forty,—aye, and when he is seventy years old, just as easily as He called the young Timothy.

Our Christ is a Sovereign. I do not know how old the thief on the cross was ; but one thing is certain, he was very deeply rooted in sin, but he was uprooted by Christ ; and his darkness was not too dense to be chased away by the dear redeeming Saviour. There was the man : perhaps he was forty or fifty years of age,—black enough, for he was a thief ; hear him under the vivifying light of heaven,—“ Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.”

And then the measures of this revelation are matters of sovereignty. To some He gives more, to others less, but to all sufficient for saving purposes. Thus I have offered a few thoughts upon this revelation, the nature of it, and the necessity for it, the extent of it, and the sovereignty of it. I thought I would have added a word or two as to the effects of it, on the mind, and the final consequences thereof, but my time is gone. Permit me, however, to quote the words of the poet : they are very sweet and beautiful, and they may do you good :—

“ Did Jesus once upon me shine ?
Then Jesus is for ever mine.”

If He has ever revealed the Father to you, the impression made can never be removed, for this sight can never be finally forgotten. You will ever remember certain revelations of God and of Jesus Christ to your poor soul, when you were sinking according to your apprehensions into hell itself, or when you were on the very borders thereof ; then Christ was revealed to you as the hope of glory, and as your hope, your Lord and your Saviour. You will never forget it, the impression can never be removed. Has that experience ever been yours ? Has such an event ever happened ? Then heaven is yours, and the time will come when you will fix your eyes upon Him, and remove them no more for ever. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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FAITH; ITS OBJECT, GROUND, EXERCISE AND REWARD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

On LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 7th, 1885.

"Then the devil leaveth Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him."—
Matt. iv. 11.

SATAN is a spirit of mischief, and mischief is his object every day, and in every place. As there is nothing good in him, no good can ever come from him. He is a liar and the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning, a destroyer, a tempter, and an accuser of the brethren; and all these names and titles have been illustrated in the experience and history of men, but especially of the people of God. You and I have felt that there is such a being as Satan, and that his power is very mischievous, tormenting and destructive; and hence, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," is our prayer. Our Lord knew what was passing in the mind of the devil, and He told Peter of it. He has desired to have you; but he cannot take a step without My permission, and therefore, he has only the desire to have you. He will, however, be permitted to use a certain measure of power, and will shake, torment, and try you, but I have prayed for thee. Our Lord goes before Satan; and He always precedes us in our troubles, trials and temptations, hence he said, "I have prayed for thee." If there was something startling to Peter in the intelligence that Satan had desired to have him; there was something encouraging at the same time in the other fact, that the Lord Jesus had prayed for him.

He had taken Peter and his case to His Father, and had interceded for him, that his faith might not fail; not that it might not be shaken, or might not tremble, or might not lose its hold, but that it might not fail: and when thou art converted, or restored, strengthen thy brethren. Peter never forgot that trial. That sore temptation was never erased from his memory or his mind; and he said, "Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Yes, there is such a being as Satan, and though his power is not unlimited, yet it is very great; and woe to the best saint out of heaven, who falls unaided into the hand of this mighty enemy. We have heard of persons speaking lightly concerning themselves and Satan's power. They have thus represented their experience: "When we have been favoured with a sense of the love of God, and with nearness to Him, and have felt that His everlasting arms were underneath us, we have defied the devil, saying, Now Satan you may

come, we are sufficiently strong for you." Let us never invite Satan to approach; rather let us pray that there may be as great a distance as possible between the tempter and our poor souls: for the strongest saint on earth is too weak for this mighty foe. Satan met our Lord in the wilderness, where He was tempted forty days and forty nights; and having ended the temptation, the text says, "Behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

Let us look at the subject in the first place *in relation to Jesus Christ Himself*. "Then the devil leaveth Him." We are accustomed to speak of the temptations of Satan in relation to ourselves, which is not surprising: for they are very terrible, and our experience under them is sometimes dreadful. We hardly know at times how to distinguish between what comes from the devil and what arises from our own hearts and minds. It is important, however, that while speaking of the temptations of the devil as affecting ourselves, we should now and then look at the temptation of our Lord. The footsteps of the flock are important, the footsteps of the Shepherd are more so. If you will now look into this place, you will see the footsteps of the Shepherd rather than the footsteps of the flock. It is helpful to us to see the footprints of Abraham, and to know that we are walking in the same path; but it is far more helpful to see the footprints of our great Leader and Example, and to know that we are following Him:—

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

I want to tarry a minute upon the mysterious fact that our Lord suffered when tempted. The question has been asked, Did Jesus Christ suffer when He was tempted? Why not? Is that scripture entirely forgotten: "He suffered, being tempted." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Yes, our Lord suffered in a peculiar manner in temptation, as no other being suffered in that furnace; but let us observe, first, that His sufferings in temptation were *voluntary*. Now that is not the case with believers. If our hearts are right, we never willingly go into temptation. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," and not when ye run into them. Our Lord went to meet the tempter. I beg your attention to this. He was led even of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil: but He did not go against His will, He thoroughly concurred with the Spirit and with His Father in this terrible conflict with Satan. He who holds the devil by His almighty power could have prevented him from tempting Him had He pleased. He who has chained Satan, and who restrains his power, could have said to him when He saw him approaching, Get thee hence, Satan: but He went to meet him in the field, and voluntarily engaged in that solemn and mysterious combat. But though His sufferings were voluntary, they were not for the purpose of ascertaining whether He could conquer or not. He carried with Him omnipotent power, and a Divine determination to bruise the serpent's head. Nevertheless, there was suffering connected with the temptation, and our Lord voluntarily entered into it. I say every day in effect, if not in form, "Lead me not

into temptation." Our Lord did not present that prayer to His Father, at least not on this occasion ; for that would have been praying against God's will. " He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." There were the fires of temptation, and Christ said, I will enter into them. There were the deep, roaring floods of the devil's power, and Jesus said I will pass into and through them. There was the terrible wilderness, and Jesus said, I will go there. Presently we shall see His reasons for doing so. He was not forced into temptation by the devil, and although the word "driveth" is used elsewhere, yet He was not compelled by the Spirit, nor by His Father against His will. His heart looked that way, and He was favourable to the conflict. He resolved to enter into that engagement with the powers of darkness, for purposes which were worthy of Himself and intimately connected with your comfort and mine. Again, His sufferings were *intense*. This is an important point because it may be helpful to those of you who are tempted. The intensity of Christ's sufferings was owing in a great measure to the fact that He was so pure and so holy. He was absolutely immaculate, without a spot or a stain. His nature, and His whole person were so tender and heavenly that He was altogether averse in every respect to sin, and the temptation of the devil; that the least contact with that unclean and diabolical foe caused the deepest pain. Permit me in a homely manner to illustrate the subject. A serpent upon your person, if it did not sting you, would fill you with horror. What shall we say of the old serpent, the devil, in contact with the Holy Son of God? How opposite were their natures, their principles, and their objects! Satan, who is an association of filth and abomination, and of all that is hateful, in contact with that great Person in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily! His whole nature shrank with aversion and detestation from the devil and his temptation, and yet He remained therein forty days and forty nights. The conflict between Christ and Satan lasted a long time. Perhaps the Holy Ghost has cast a covering over the larger portion of the temptation, and recorded only three attacks. Satan said, "Command that these stones be made bread." Then he set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said, "Cast Thyself down." Then he took Him to a high mountain, whence he showed Him all the glory of the kingdoms of the world, requiring Christ to worship him. Three temptations are recorded, but what took place during the whole of those forty days and forty nights after which our Lord was an hungered? I will tell you what took place, and give you the Bible evidence of it, and then you may form your own conclusions. Mark, "*He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*" What! tempted as you and I are sometimes tempted. Did Satan attempt to draw aside and render crooked and perverse that pure, righteous, and holy will, as he draws us aside and makes our souls unclean, and our affections worldly? Yes, all this Satan aimed at when He tempted Jesus. Our Lord was tempted to enter upon all those courses, to plant His foot in all those paths, and to think in all those hateful and abominable directions. But there He stood, the Rock of Ages—unmoved, untarnished, unstained. His righteousness was never once injured or damaged. He went into the horrible pit pure, and retained His purity

while He was in it ; and came out of it clean, immaculate and victorious. "He suffered, being tempted." It is said that He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and well may He be said to be the man of sorrows. The sensitiveness of the nature, and the holiness of the spirit of that immaculate and perfect One, in such an atmosphere as this, did indeed occasion grief and pain. Yes, our Lord "suffered, being tempted, in all points like as we are, yet without sin." "But I am tempted," one says, "as to whether I am a child of God,"—so was Jesus ; "if Thou be the Son of God." "I am sometimes tempted to take a questionable course to obtain daily bread ;" so was He : "Command these stones to become bread." "I am tempted to worldly-mindedness, and sometimes yield, and suffer on account thereof ;" so was He : "He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and said, All these will I give thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." My dear friends, Jesus has drunk out of every cup, if I may so put it ; and He has been in every trying position. Satan having tried all his art, all his malice, and all his power upon the Lord of life and glory, it is said he left Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him.

Before I dismiss this point, let me ask a question, and try to answer it. What did Christ acquire by this temptation ? He acquired a *personal experience of temptation*. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. I desire to speak with reverence of my Lord. His knowledge of temptation would not have been experimental but theoretical, (I trust that is not an improper word,) had He Himself not been tempted. He went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil,—not to gain information or to increase His knowledge, but to acquire a *personal experience* of the power of the tempter, so that He now is able to succour them that are tempted.

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

His knowledge of us is not theoretical but sympathetic. His feeling towards us is a fellow-feeling. He knows how sharp the arrow is, because it was cast at Himself. He knows how hot the fire is, because He has been in it. He knows how hard the devil can strike, because he smote Him and therefore, He is able to succour, and His ability is not merely personal or official, but the ability of experience and sympathy ; hence "He is *able* to succour them that are tempted." In the next place He acquired a *new name*. "Thou hast made for Thyself an everlasting name." He has spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them. "The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is His name." He has made for Himself an everlasting name in heaven, and the conqueror of the devil has made for Himself a glorious name in the experience of His people. Is not Jesus, as the conqueror of the powers of darkness, very sweet, dear, and precious to your heart ? Is there any theme upon which you dwell with sweeter or more spiritual feelings than the fact that Christ has overcome the world, put away sin, and crushed the head of the old serpent ? Is there any fact sweeter to you than this, that Satan is chained, and that He that sits on the throne holds the chain. He cannot move

without our Redeemer's permission; he cannot cast a temptation or a dart at any of the saints of God without leave from on high. His tether is a long one, his liberty is very considerable, and we sometimes think it is almost boundless; but he is hemmed in and hedged in, and chained by Him who conquered Him; and when the Lord of glory overcame the tempter, He acquired a right to chain and to hold him for ever. Well, the battle has been fought, the victory has been won, and Christ, the conqueror of the powers of darkness has come forth with an unstained character, an undamaged name, and without any blot whatever upon His person. I had almost said, I wish it were so with myself, and with all God's dear people. Satan's temptations, however, have defiled our minds, polluted our hearts, and rendered our thoughts offensive; for we cannot say as our Lord said of Himself, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." Christ, however, came out of the field in which the devil left Him as a conqueror, pure, fragrant and perfectly immaculate—the great conqueror of hell, the Captain of salvation, and the example of His beloved followers.

In the second place, let us look at the subject *in relation to Satan*. "Then the devil leaveth Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him." Our Lord in the field of temptation suffered in our name, and in our nature. He did not enter into temptation, merely for His own sake, but for the sake of His beloved people, as I have already tried to show. He did not come from heaven for His own sake merely, but for ours also. He did not die for His own sake merely, but for ours also, therefore, He went and met the tempter, in the name and for the sake of all that should subsequently be tempted. The temptations of your Lord will have an influence upon all the temptations of His beloved people until the end of the world. And then, He suffered for us in temptation; but He conquered Satan in our nature. If Satan is a tormentor, he himself will be tormented for ever. It must have been a tormenting fact to him that the very nature that he ruined was the very nature that overcame him. "Since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection from the dead." He went into the garden of Eden to the first Adam and tempted him; he fell, and all fell in him. He came into the wilderness and met the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, and tempted Him; but he could not move, or bend, or stain Him. Satan was overcome in our name and nature. Not only so, he was driven away and ordered out of the field. Perhaps many readers of the Bible lose sight of this pleasing fact. It is said, "Then the devil leaveth Him." Did he willingly leave Him? Certainly not. He had orders to begone. "Get thee hence, Satan," and "Get thee behind Me, Satan!" Was that a request or a command? Did the Saviour merely express a desire that Satan would leave Him, or was the word an expression of Divine authority and omnipotence. "Get thee hence, Satan: then the devil leaveth Him." But how did he leave Him? The tempter was wounded and exhausted; his power was spent, but not his malice. He could forge at that time no other darts, and he had emptied his quiver. Every fiery dart that he could possibly make had been hurled at the Saviour, who blunted, quenched, and broke them all, and overcame in the name of His people, and for their sake, and hence

He says to tempted saints, "Fear not, I am thy shield." The devil was not reconciled, but overcome; his nature was not improved, but his power was at this time gone. He could not strike another blow, neither had he another dart to throw, or another temptation to assail the Saviour with; and hence the pleasing intelligence, "Then Satan leaveth Him." May it be yours and mine, in deep and dark temptation, to keep this fact in view, and to rest upon this glorious victory of the dear Redeemer. You say, your sin is put away, and it is so; that the world is overcome, which is a fact; but notwithstanding, Satan follows you everywhere, and you are the subjects of many hateful thoughts and vile and fierce temptations. Do not forget that your Lord was tempted to forsake His Father, and to ally Himself to the devil,—“Cast Thyself down;” and again, “Fall down and worship me.” And do not forget that he who thus tempts you is under the control and in the hands of Him who conquered him in the wilderness.

Now, thirdly, I should like to look at the subject *in relation to the saints*. Here observe that the Lord Jesus Christ appears as our Shield. David very frequently rejoiced that the Lord was his shield; and God assured Abraham that He was his; and Paul says, speaking of God's people in the field of battle, Take not only the breastplate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation; “but above all, taking the shield of faith.” I am not quite sure that we have the true meaning of those words. I have heard different views expressed by different men upon the shield of faith. Some say that this shield is the grace of faith, and others that it is the Object of faith. I incline towards the latter idea. It appears to some that the grace of faith is the arm that holds the shield, and that the shield itself is the Object of faith. Armed with the name of our tempted and conquering Lord, we shall overcome the foe. Above all, therefore, take the shield of faith. Well, this Shield, my dear friends, appears here in the wilderness, and no arrow pierces it, for it is impenetrable. No blow battered it, and none of the force employed by the devil moved the Saviour. The Shield at which the devil aimed, and which he would have been glad to spoil, as to its nature and its use, remained the same through the whole of the forty days' temptation. Battered, beat, and pierced no where! Get behind this tempted and conquering Christ; for all hell aimed at Him, and left Him unmoved. Your position and mine, as poor tempted souls, is behind the tempted Christ of God, Who is our “shield and exceeding great reward.” Our Lord limits the power of Satan as to the experience of His people; but He did not limit it as to Himself. I believe He gave Satan full liberty to bring out all his forces, and to employ all his power, which is not the case when the tempter meets you and me. Yes, when he met our Shield, the Lord Jesus Christ removed every restraint, and held him back in no respect. He permitted him to rush upon Him with all the power he possessed, that all that power might be defeated; and the devil, weary, exhausted and conquered, was ordered out of the field.

The subject in the fourth place *in relation to angels*. “And angels came and ministered unto Him.” I will not say what they did, but it is, however, I think certain, that they brought Him provision, for He was

really and truly man, and was afterwards an hungered. He would not break the law, or go contrary to the claims of holiness to make bread for Himself. Man did eat angels' food in the wilderness, and Christ had a meal prepared for Him by the angels of God, who, when He had conquered in the battle, came and ministered unto Him. What I want to show you is this. They were the spectators of the battle, and they watched the whole proceedings. I have an idea, and I mention it as a matter of opinion which you may receive or reject,—that the devil, seeing the angels at a distance, looking on and watching, said, "It is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." Well, the angels of our tempted Lord were looking on. What for? To learn new mysteries, and to be able all the better to adore the love of our great conquering Lord. They shared in the triumph, but not in the battle. Christ was to fight, and fight alone, and no angel or other being was to share the honour of the victory with Him. When the battle was fought and Satan had left the Saviour, then the enquiring, grateful, adoring angels came and bowed to their Lord, and ministered unto Him. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Oh I think that as they stood by and looked on, they thought that to allow Himself to be so tempted, and to enter into suffering like this on their behalf, proved how deep, how high, and how great was His love to lost sinners.

One word more, and I have done, and that is the subject *in relation to the place*. It was in the wilderness. The first temptation was in the garden of Eden. This, however, took place in the wilderness and in solitude. We might learn several points from this,—the most important, perhaps, of which is,—that there was no human witness of the temptations of our Lord. Do you know why human beings were not permitted to enter, or look on, or hear? No, I do not; unless what I have suggested be the fact, that much of the temptation was too abominable to meet the human eye, or the human ear, and too devilish and hateful to be described; for "He was in all points tempted like as we are." What a scene was this,—how diabolical and vile! No human witness was there, but angels were yonder, looking on. There was our best Friend, and our worst enemy. All the love of God in Christ, and all the hatred of hell in the devil. Infinite goodness in combat with unbounded malice. Blessed for ever be His name, the battle was fought and the conquest was won; and now,

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

Have you not sometimes been glad that your fellow-creatures could not see into your heart, and that you have been alone with God. Thoughts and feelings have arisen which you were able to take to no one but your God. Christ was in the wilderness, my brother, where what took place was concealed from human eyes and from human ears. "He suffered, being tempted" in all points like as we are. And if Satan does these

things in the green tree, what will he not do in the dry? But if he did not damage Christ personally, he will, if permitted, damage Him relatively. Satan never after this so tempted Christ again, although it is elsewhere said that he left Him for a time; yet he never returned to such a conflict as this was. Subsequently he tempted Christ, and tried Him through His followers, and by various instruments. Here, none of His followers were present; and the temptation was not by instruments, but a combat between the two persons, Christ and Satan. Afterwards Christ was tempted through Peter. Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, because He had spoken of dying. "This shall not be unto Thee!" which was another temptation, another dart hurled by the devil, but it went to Him through Peter. Christ, therefore, said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." And He said again, "Now is your hour, and the power of darkness." This was, however, a personal conflict between the great Head of the church and the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

What do we learn from this? One thing is sometimes very precious to myself, and that is that it is no sin to be tempted. No evil was infused into Jesus Christ; it fell upon Him, and it rolled off; but though He was tempted yet He was without sin, for the sin lies in yielding. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." There is something in you and in me that is in sympathy with the devil, something for temptation to lodge upon. There is, if I may so speak, a vast measure of powder in us, and if a spark from the devil should fall upon it, an explosion would take place. Our name and reputation would be destroyed, and our usefulness would end, and we should fall into the very lowest possible condition. The Lord be pleased to watch over us every day, to guard us every moment, to surround us with favour as with a shield, and to preserve us by His mighty power to eternal salvation. He has taught us thus to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever." Amen.

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THE CROWN OF GLORY, AND THE DIADEM OF BEAUTY.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
On LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 28th, 1885.

"In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people." Isaiah xxviii. 5.

THE history of the children of Israel, as the national church and people of God, is most interesting and instructive to the spiritual mind. It should not be forgotten that the kingdom of Israel was split into two parts, at the commencement of the reign of Rehoboam. Ten tribes constituted what is generally styled in the Word of God, the kingdom of Israel; and Judah and Benjamin formed the kingdom of Judah. Our Lord was to descend from Judah, and therefore the great God of heaven and earth preserved in existence, year after year, and age after age, that very important tribe. When the people of Judah were taken into Babylon as captives, the Lord was pleased to say; "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so will I do for My servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all." The vine was carried out of Canaan into Babylon, but it was the purpose of God to spare it there; and hence the Babylonians could not destroy it. I will, said God, preserve the tribe of Judah, and defend and protect my ancient people; for they carry a blessing with them out of Canaan into Babylon. The great Son of David was to be born, and He was carried as it were in the loins of the people; and by and bye He appeared upon the scene, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and therefore God left not the Jews during their seventy years' captivity; but returned them again to their native land. This, however, was not the case with the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes, of which Jeroboam became the first king. In the days of Hezekiah, who was a good man, and a very lively and striking type of Jesus Christ, the ten tribes were scattered abroad, being carried away by the Assyrian monarch Shalmaneser, and they were never gathered together again. The blessing was not in them; for the great Messiah proceeded from Judah. They were therefore carried away and scattered abroad, in due time upon the face of the earth. It appears that the cup of their wickedness was full, and these facts are referred to in the first few verses of this chapter. "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim;" for sometimes the kingdom of Israel was called Ephraim,—"whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine." The land occupied by the ten tribes was very fertile, and it produced an abundance of grapes or wine, and the people were given to

the abominable vice of drunkenness : for I suppose we are to take the term drunkards, as indicating the fact that they were so literally. Perhaps you may, however, regard the term as having a figurative meaning; and if so, then they were drunken with idolatry. They set up two calves, one at Dan, and the other at Bethel, and departed from the living God. The Lord says, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim;" and then again in the fourth verse, "and the glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valleys, shall be a fading flower." The whole land was most productive, and presented at certain seasons of the year scenes of uncommon beauty and glory. The Lord, however, says, the glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer, which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up. "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of His people." Literally by the "residue of His people," we are here to understand the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, or the Jews who as a nation were preserved until the birth of Jesus Christ. Spiritually, you must understand our text to refer to the people of God. Having made these few observations upon the historical facts in connection with which the text stands, I shall endeavour to look at my subject as indicating the experience of the saints of God.

The first point we shall notice is this,—*What is the Lord to His beloved people?* I beg your attention to my text; for I wish I could preach from it as such a portion of the Word ought to be preached from. I can, however, only keep on the surface, and gather up a few facts which I may find lying thereon. The Lord is for His people "a crown of glory and for a diadem of beauty." You talk about your doubts and fears, and about your corruptions and defilement, and you complain before your fellow-men, and sometimes before God, that you are full of unbelief and unworthiness, and I find no fault with you for doing so; but I find in myself and in my brethren and sisters a proneness to forget the other side of the question, which is, what we are to the Lord, and what the Lord is unto us, if we are His people. My text which is the Word of God, says, "The Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people." What are we to understand by this? We frequently speak of the crown which we hope to wear in heaven, and we are also thankful that we are crowned with loving kindness and tender mercy here: but my text states a very marvellous fact: "The Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty." Does it not mean two things,—namely, Divine relationship; and that the Lord's people resemble their Father and their God? It means, first, Divine relationship; for if you and I are saints, and children of God, He is a crown of glory unto us: for it is our glory that the God of heaven is our God. The heathen thought and believed that their gods were their glory; hence Dagon was the glory of the Philistines, and Baal the glory of Israel after they had apostatized from God. But who and what is our God? "Our God is in heavens, and He hath done whatsoever it hath pleased Him." It hath pleased Him to become our God, and to constitute us His peculiar people; and having placed Himself in that

relation to us, He says, "Thy God shall be thy glory." The brightest crown is that worn by the saint of God. There is no crown on the earth like that which an heir of God wears. Do you feel it is yours? Perhaps you do not believe confidently as to your relationship to Jehovah. Many of you cannot do so; and yet the language of your spirits is—

"Give us Christ, or else we die."

We would that we might call Him our God, and were able to say on the knee of prayer; "My Father which is in heaven." Then He is your Father and covenant God; I would give you faith to believe this, if I could; but that is the gift of God. I would lead you into liberty, if I could; but I can only state facts, and leave my Master to bless them. If the desire of your soul is to His name, and to the remembrance of Him, and you are sincere when you say, "I would that I might call God my Father," I declare, with the Bible before me, and in the presence of God, that the Lord *is* your Father, or you would not possess a deep concern about these things. The God of heaven is yours, and therefore He has given you grace; and your greatest glory consists in the fact that He who made the world and governs it, is your Father; for, "The Lord of hosts shall be unto His people a crown of glory." "My ancestors," one says, "lived in such and such a place, and were very great and popular;" another says, "My ancestors were royal personages." You, my Christian brother and sister, are descended from the King of kings; being born of God and for Him, you possess principles within, which angels never possessed, and the operation of which they are strangers to; and your greatest dignity and glory are, that you are children of the God of heaven, who is your everlasting Father. This is the crown you wear; the world does not see it, and you do not always realize the fact. This crown of glory you wear, even whilst you are here; for the Lord is a "crown of glory" to the residue of His people.

But it is said in my text, that He shall be "a diadem of beauty," to all to whom He is a "crown of glory." Most writers say, this is but another form of expressing the fact in the first clause of the verse. It may be so; but as the Lord has been pleased to amplify the subject in this manner, let us consider for a minute the "diadem of beauty." He is a "crown of glory," inasmuch as He is our God, and He is a "diadem of beauty," inasmuch as He has made us somewhat like Himself. He who is our God, and has plucked us out of the fire, has in some measure conformed us to the image of His dear Son; and therefore Divine relationship is our "crown of glory," and Divine resemblance is our "diadem of beauty," and hence we have beauty so frequently noticed in connection with holiness. He that is most like Jesus is most beautiful. He who possesses the largest measure of the Holy Ghost working within and conforming him to the image of Christ, wears the "diadem of beauty." Just as the blasphemer and the drunkard in the streets are repulsive sights, so a holy child of God who possesses purity of heart is spiritually lovely and beautiful; and we shall in this respect be altogether beautiful and lovely when we are perfectly free from sin, and there is no spot whatever in us. The more generally and deeply we resemble the holy Jesus, the more conspicuous is this "diadem of beauty." God is a

"crown of glory" to me, if I am His child, and a "diadem of beauty" to me if I am like Him. If I cannot say much about my holiness, yet if I love it and would be pure, then He is to me a "diadem of beauty."

Let us take it in another form. He is a "crown of glory" as to our justification, and a "diadem of beauty" as to our sanctification. As to our justification? "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." If the whole of the obedience and righteousness of the Redeemer has been imputed to us, we are in the sight of God perfect and complete. It is truly glorious to be without fault,—to be in harmony with God, and to be all that His law and justice require. If we are measured by the law, and that by God Himself, and He declares we are perfect and complete in Christ, then we are as it were crowned with glory. We are not perfect in ourselves; but if Christ is ours, and we are His, if His righteousness has been imputed to us, and His Spirit imparted to us, then we wear a "crown of glory" as justified, and a "diadem of beauty" as sanctified. "Upon Thy right hand did stand the queen, in gold of Ophir;" and I should think she did not stand there without a crown; for she wore her royal robes, and she stood in a royal position at the right of her royal Husband. And a "diadem of beauty" we say indicates the believer's sanctification. Do I believe in progressive sanctification? Well, I will not introduce criticisms into my sermon at the present time; I am rather too old for that now, and I believe the people of God generally want something more solid than controversy or mere criticisms in the pulpit. I do believe in sanctification, and that it is the work of the Holy Ghost in the sinner's heart; and I believe that this work and privilege of sanctification, constitutes what my text calls, a "diadem of beauty." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." But I have not done yet: I want now to make the Word of God, as I always try to do, explain and expound itself; and therefore I will give you from the gospel a full view, so to speak, of this "crown of glory," and this "diadem of beauty." If you will at your leisure turn to the 1st Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, you will read this at the 30th verse: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." A better place, my brother, you could not be in; and a higher, holier, and heavenlier person you could not possibly be connected with. "Of Him:" that is, of God, "are ye in Christ Jesus." And are we in Christ Jesus? Yes; and how long shall we remain there? There is no separation between Christ and His dear people. And what will be the result of our union to Him? Paul says, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But let me place this crown before you,—this crown which you wear, and which is yours, and your right to which can never be disputed. The crown is thus described: "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." I, saith the Lord, will be a "crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty unto the residue of My people." First of all, the natural man is dark, and blind, and ignorant; he exists in the midst of solemn and awful mysteries, and does not know it. Hell is round about him, and he does not know it. But if Jesus Christ is made unto him wisdom—and the wisdom that cometh from above is the best,—then

the eyes of the sinner's understanding are opened, and he sees with dread and alarm what awful mysteries he has been living in the midst of; he turns his eyes within, and sees nothing but guilt, and sin; and he looks about for a refuge, and faintly discovers one yonder; having wisdom from Christ, he drops upon his knees, with "God be merciful to me a sinner." "He of God is made unto us wisdom," which is the first thing. And what does such a person need and want? Righteousness. He has been made wise unto salvation, and he feels that he must be righteous. He now knows he has no righteousness of his own, and that he appears naked and polluted, just as he is, in the presence of God; and then Christ is made righteousness unto him: wisdom to discover his want of righteousness, and wisdom to discover the fact that Christ's righteousness is the very blessing he wants; and then Christ is made all this unto him. What next? "And sanctification." Justification is eternal, and the robe of the Saviour's righteousness is upon the sinner and covers him, being between God's eye and its wearer. God sees the believer in His Son; he of God is made unto us this glorious righteousness. And then comes sanctification, which is an internal work. "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." What we shall be in heaven I cannot describe, for it doth not yet appear. Our God has said, however, that "the King's daughter is all glorious within." And it is said further—"Forget also thine own people and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him." Our character is right, spotless and faultless; our heart is right in the sight of God; for Jesus Christ is made unto us righteousness, and sanctification. Then there is heaven, or the completion of salvation and redemption. This constitutes the last excellency. If we feel and enjoy by faith the pleasing fact that Christ is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption, then we realize what it is to be crowned by God, and crowned with Him; "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be unto the residue of His people a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty." David in the 103rd Psalm says, after referring to complaints, and diseases, and sorrows, which he had experienced, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Why surely that is a bright and blessed crown to wear! Whose loving kindness, and whose tender mercies? His own. What are they? He crowns the earth and the year with His goodness; but He crowns His people with His *loving-kindness*. "All men in this world are partakers of His mercy; but He crowneth His people especially with His *tender mercies*." And what is the consequence of all this? "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." The Lord is to you a crown of righteousness, which will never be removed from your head. Separation between you and Christ is impossible. "I will give thee," He says, "a crown of life." Consider this point—"A crown of life," or, "a living crown." Not merely a crown made for a living one, but a living crown to indicate royal relationship; and this crown is the Lord, who is the living God. Only think, you are crowned with that Being who is the fountain and giver of all life, and who perpetuates the life He gives; hence referring to the wreaths and garlands which victors

were crowned with, the Apostle Peter says, "Our inheritance, or crown, is incorruptible, and fadeth not away." The world's best is constantly fading, and becoming less and less valuable; for the world passeth away. Your crown, however, is richer far and more lasting than gold itself. Christ is your's, your righteousness, your sanctification, your beauty, your glory, your everlasting all. All that is glorious is not beautiful, and all that is beautiful is not glorious. But the Lord is a "crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty to the residue of His people." In the 16th of Ezekiel we read, "I spread My skirt over thee, and thou becamest Mine;" and after enumerating certain other ornaments given, God says, "and I set a beautiful crown upon thine head." Yes, the Lord of hosts is a "crown of glory" to His people.

In the second place, let me try to show *what the people are to the Lord of hosts*. They are spoken of as the "residue of His people." They are His dear children. Some persons have sneeringly said, we are very free in our use of the words "*dear*" and "*precious*." I am not surprised that we should be free in quoting these terms; for our God uses them freely. How frequently do the words "dearly beloved" and "precious" occur! "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." And to whom are the children of God dear? They are more or less dear to each other; "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" and if the saints are dear to saints, I am sure they are unspeakably dear to their God. Your child by your side is your dear one; and sure I am that the God of heaven regards with infinite tenderness and affection every one of His dear children. God's children are so near and so dear to Him, that He says, "I will crown every one with His Father's name and His Father's glory." Well, they are not only His children, they bear and wear His name; and thus they are His representatives on earth. As I directed your attention to a portion of the Word which explains your crown, so now I have another portion which sets forth the whole of the character of God's people, and which shows what they are to Him. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." This shows what the people are to God. Here are the people that are crowned by God. First of all, "ye are a chosen generation;" or as we are told it might have been rendered "ye are a chosen *kindred*." The saint is akin to God, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father is his Father; and the Son at His right hand is his Brother; mark, and I am not speaking figuratively nor introducing matter in a thoughtless manner. The greatest Being in the universe is his Father, and calls the weeping sensible sinner His dear child; and Christ, on whose head are many crowns is His elder Brother. In a certain sense He is akin to all God's angels too, and also to all the glorified in heaven, and to all God's people on earth. Only think, my dear friends, that there is a particular and blessed relationship existing between you and Abraham, who went to heaven thousands of years ago, and who is now participating in its joys. He is your brother, and this fraternal relationship is everlasting: "Ye are a chosen generation." And what else? "A royal priesthood." Now here, my friends, you have a literal explanation of the crown and the diadem,—"*a royal priesthood*." The

crown indicates royalty, and the diadem the fact that you are a priest to God. The Jewish High Priest wore a crown and a diadem ; for some times his mitre is called a crown, and sometimes his diadem is so called. The mitre having been placed upon his head, the Lord commanded Moses to take a fillet or band of blue lace, and place a plate of gold upon it, and inscribe upon that golden plate, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." This band or fillet was tied round his mitre, and the ends of it fell behind upon his back, and thus he appeared before God in his priestly crown and diadem. And ye are a "royal priesthood." Are we kings? Yes. And are crowned, too, and shall be more publicly crowned another day. Are we priests? Yes, and have been washed and anointed, having descended from the great High Priest, we have a right to serve as priests — "not to offer atoning sacrifices, but spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God." We do not offer blood, nor do we atone for sin; but we offer broken and contrite hearts, which, O God, Thou wilt not despise, and also praise and gratitude. As the princes of heaven you are crowned, and as God's priests before the throne, you wear "diadems of beauty." Royal priests, and priestly princes, the two combined; and every saint is all this, and nothing less. I must leave you to go through the remainder of the verse at your leisure.

Notice in the third place *What the people are in themselves*. First, God is to them a crown and a diadem ; secondly, they are to Him as crowned, his dear, honoured, and precious people. But what are they in themselves? Do you say I am descending now, and that this ought not to follow what has been said. O yes, we will take as many-sided a view of the subject as we can. They are crowned; but they do not deserve the honour. They have never merited it. Had God dealt with them according to their sins, and rewarded them according to their iniquities, they would never have been crowned; and therefore when they come to God their feelings are expressed in such language as this:—

"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."

God is the crown of that man, and His Holy Spirit is in his heart, and as a crown envelopes the head, so God encompasses and fills him; else he would never thus appear before Him.

How does God crown him? I am thy salvation. "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." And what is the response? Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." And, crowned with salvation and eternal life, the saint goes on his heavenly way rejoicing. But what is he in himself? Utterly incapable of fully realising the greatness of his privileges. Is it your privilege to be crowned with glory, and to wear a diadem of beauty? Do you quite realise this? At times, you have some happy moments which you do not and cannot forget; but on the whole, even when you have been most happy, and had clear light, then the subject was so deep and mysterious that a full realisation of it was simply impossible. To receive an earthly

crown would astonish you ; but to have this crown, and this diadem upon you for ever, is a mystery you cannot grasp, and a fact you cannot fully realise.

This is the other side of the question. One side is your darkness,—and the other is God's light. One side is difficulty and imperfection, and the other is brightness and glory. You cannot realize your dignity ; for the glory is too vast—the Lord Himself being the crown and glory. I have recently read portions of works in which saints are found fault with and scourged because they are not happy ; it is said it is their duty to be so ; for happiness is within reach, and they have no occasion to hang down their heads. It may be, so and if it is, it tends to prove that our privileges surpass our powers, and we cannot realise our honour and dignity. Those who write at this rate cannot realise it for themselves. We shall not know the full measure of our dignity, till we see our Lord at home. It is our privilege to be in Jesus and to be crowned by God and with Him ; but a deep uninterrupted enjoyment of that privilege is something that we do not at present experimentally understand. All this is attended by a mystery, is it not ? God is your crown and you represent Him here. In ourselves we are weak as worms, and strong only in the Lord. The mystery connected with this is the fact that we are, as David says, “poor and needy.” Why, these crowned saints that you have been speaking about are poor and despised ! That may be. It is a mystery that “God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.” Why, these saints that are thus crowned are tried every day, and their trials are bitter ! That may be so, for “the Lord trieth the righteous.” These crowned saints are tempted by the powers of darkness almost every day, and almost everywhere ; and if they are honoured as you have represented, would the devil be permitted to hunt and torment them in this way ? Why, it is because they are crowned and God is theirs, and because they are His dear children, that they are tried and tempted, poor and obscure on the earth. “We are saved by hope.” Mark the tense—it is not said, we *shall* be ; but we *are* saved by hope. Saved to-day, and by hope. “But hope that is seen is not hope.” Where is our crown ? Why—we are saved. Where is our salvation ? Why—in the Lord, where we ourselves are : for we are in Him that is true, by vital union and a living faith ; and our crown, our life, our all are there ; so that Christ is the believer's all. It doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is. Now, brother and sister, if the Lord is your glory and your beauty, you possess the best ; and there is no crown, no diadem like those which you wear. Can you by faith lay hold on the Lord, and say as has been said by many others, “Thou art my Lord and my God ?” If so, you are crowned with glory, and there is no dignity and no beauty in the universe like yours. “He will beautify the meek with salvation.”

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CHRIST'S DEPARTURE TO HEAVEN.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
On LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 26th, 1885.

"But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?"—John xvi. 5.

"MANY are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." It is said that the Lord delivereth *him*. The number of righteous persons on the earth is very considerable, and all of them are at times in trouble and affliction, but it is a fact that they shall be delivered out of them all. But our God has been pleased to express Himself in a peculiar manner, saying, "The Lord delivereth *him* not *them*, out of them all," indicating that every individual saint lives beneath the ever-wakeful and watchful eye of God. Every true believer shall be guarded and protected by Jehovah, and sooner or later the weakest and feeblest one shall emerge from trouble and sorrow, and take his seat in eternal rest. But why are the righteous tried, and why are their trials and afflictions many? God giveth no account of any of His matters; but "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." We are in the hands of infinite wisdom, as well as of everlasting love; and God is dealing with His people in a manner which will surely do them good, and promote His own honour and glory. Whilst we see the hand of God at work in connection with mysteries dark and deep, it well becomes us as purblind creatures to be silent in His presence. Many of the people of God,—and I think I may number myself among them,—have resolved to have a smooth path through life; for it is not in human nature to choose trouble nor to love it, on the contrary, the flesh kicks and rebels against it; and, therefore the saints are sometimes looking on the right hand and on the left for a level road. They resolve again and again to make their circumstances, if possible, agreeable; although our great reigning Lord has said, "In *Me* ye shall have peace,"—not in the world, not in your plans, or the manner in which you execute them. "In *Me* ye shall have peace;" "in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world." It is said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" and I think I have rejoiced in the position in which the Saviour was pleased to place that fact. Observe, it stands between two bright and blessed stars: "First, in *Me* ye shall have peace;" and then, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;" and between those two lights we have the cloud of trouble,—“in the world ye shall have tribulation.” The world, however, is a conquered enemy; and therefore, the believer, is not, strictly, speaking, correct when he says he

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is going to heaven through an enemy's country. This world does not belong to the devil. Hell was made for him, and for his slaves and followers; but he is not Lord of all, for our Jesus is upon the throne. Satan is permitted to go up and down in the earth, to tempt and try the people of God; but if our faith is strong, we shall see that the monster is chained, and that the hand of his great Conqueror holds the chain; hence—

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

Nevertheless, in the world the righteous shall have tribulation. Not a few of them are tried and afflicted in relation to their families. I have known during the three-and-thirty years I have been with you, many mothers and fathers with aching heads and broken hearts, in consequence of family disappointments and trials. Not a few of God's servants are in tribulation with regard to their business: but it is not for me in the pulpit to go into these matters; therefore, I will only say, we are in the world, and must have to do with it. Some of you have more to do with it than I have, and I know that some believers are sorely tried and troubled in relation to business matters. Again, some of God's people have been tried with regard to church affairs; and I speak experimentally when I say that church trials are among the bitterest troubles the child of God passes through. Some of us have known what it is to have sleepless nights, and days of restlessness and sorrow, in consequence of the state of things in the church or churches with which we have been connected. We are, however, greatly favoured in this respect in this place; for there has never been any very serious misunderstanding here. The Lord be thanked for His goodness towards us. Let us unitedly put the crown of praise upon the great Head of Zion. But if there are no business trials, and no family trials, and no church trials, there is always enough in the heart of every child of God to try him night and day. “In me,” said Paul, a greater man than any of us now present, “that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Indwelling sin is an enemy that is very near to us,—nearer in fact than our business, and to use a strong expression, nearer to us than our families are. Families dwell within in a certain sense, but our children, our wives and our husbands do not dwell within as sin dwells there; and so long as we are the subjects of indwelling sin, we shall experience affliction and trouble.

But many of the afflictions of the saints have arisen out of persecution. The Saviour in the chapter out of which I have taken my text, gives us several important predictions, and several precious promises, and much rich comfort and consolation. He gave the disciples certain important predictions: “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. “They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” This was part of the prospect the Saviour opened before His apostles, which was not very attractive or cheering. Nevertheless, He would not deceive them. “I have spoken these things unto you, that you should not be offended. First, they will draw the ecclesiastical sword, and turn

you out of the synagogue, or excommunicate you ; and secondly, they will draw the civil sword and kill you. And this took place in the experience of most of the apostles of Christ, and this has been the experience also of thousands of God's people since their days. Oh the sham religion of persecuting Antichrist ! and I could go a little closer too if I had time. Ecclesiastical judges sat upon certain cases, and condemned professors of religion for holding certain doctrines ; and then handed them over to the civil power. They tried cases religiously, and found thousands guilty of heresy, and then handed them over to the magistrate to be executed. And this was a literal fulfilment of the words, "They shall excommunicate you ; and the time cometh when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Thus we are reminded of the fact that there was a measure of conscientiousness connected with all this. Be very careful when you hear people talk about acting up to their consciences, and that their actions should follow its dictates. Conscience may be wrong, and if there is no grace therein, it is not good. If there has been no blood applied, and one is not directed by the Holy Spirit, he will err in following the requirements and demands of his conscience. The persecutors that killed the apostles thought that by doing so they were doing God service. Was their conduct, however, approved by the God of heaven ? "I speak these things unto you now, that when the time comes ye may not be offended." Sin and grace can never coalesce, and the church and the world cannot be united together. The two companies, the two societies, the two seeds are wondrously distinct from each other. The world will hate the people of God, and the saints will not be able to associate with the world. "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him ;" and "whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Let us, therefore, shine as believers, and make up our minds to be persecuted if we do so. Thank God they can not draw the civil sword against us now, nor cast us into prison for the sake of Christ and His truth. Nevertheless, the spirit of persecution is still in-existence ; and if the restraints were removed from it, it would break forth in forms as cruel, and as bitter, as in days past and gone. Well, the Saviour predicted persecution, and then He gave them great and precious promises to comfort their souls. And now He says, "I go my way to Him that sent me." He had been with them three years, and during that period they had walked up and down the land with Him, and the hand of persecution had scarcely ever fallen upon them, but upon their Leader and Captain. "Now, I am no more with you, I am going my way to Him that sent Me," and it is expedient for you that I should do so.

The subject before us is the departure of our Lord from this world to His Father. I shall make no remarks upon the latter clause of this verse. "Now, I go my way to Him that sent me." The first thought that occurs to my mind, as requiring a like notice is, *when did the Saviour depart to Him that sent Him ?* "But *now* I go my way." Let me here observe in somewhat general forms that our Lord is perfectly punctual, and that Divine punctuality constitutes a branch of our eternal salvation and life. Time is of the utmost importance to God and also

to His people. In my spirit I wish that God's saints felt more than they appear to feel in regard to this. A year or a month is a very important period, and so is a week or a day. How many minutes are lost ! and yet a minute is important in the government of God. And I go further, for I am warranted to do so, and say that moments which are the smallest points of time are important in the providence and grace of God. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee." "A vineyard of red wine : I the Lord do keep it, I will water it *every moment*." This vineyard must be an important one, and a very extraordinary place to require watering every moment. What is the meaning of the phraseology, "I will water it every moment ?" Why, it means this, my friends, that the blessing of God never ceases to fall, that the enriching grace of God never ceases to distil upon the heads and hearts of His people on the earth. Our thoughts are very quick, for they spring up and travel in a moment, like a flash of lightning to the ends of the earth, and in a moment they are in heaven or hell. And how much has arisen from a thought ! One may have given rise to an empire ; for "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth !" And if thoughts may be the seeds of such great results, they are matters of importance in the government of God, and He might well say, "I will water it every moment." But what has this to do with our text ? My subject just now is Divine punctuality, and the Saviour was Divinely punctual in every branch of His work, and in every step He took as the Saviour of lost and ruined sinners. When the time was come, and He was due in this world, He appeared upon the scene ; for He came in due time. Our gracious God never comes too early, or before He is needed, and, bless His name, He never comes to the help of His people too late. When Jesus Christ was due on earth, He appeared at the very hour, and an angel of God announced His advent, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." And then, further, our Lord died at the appointed time. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come." Our Lord referred to a particular hour that was agreed upon between Himself and His Father in the council of peace, before the foundation of the world. How much depended on that hour ! it was the grand central point of time, out of which flowed, and still continues to flow streams of eternal life and salvation. When Jesus was due in Gethsemane, He appeared in the garden ; and when He was due on Calvary, He appeared on the accursed tree. When He was due in heaven as the returning High Priest of our profession, He ascended to His God and our God, and to His Father and our Father. He went His way to Him that sent Him. Was it by chance that our Lord died during the time the Jews celebrated their passover ? No, it was a matter of pre-ordination, and Divine appointment. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us ;" and it was right and proper that the antitype should answer to the type, and the substance to the shadow, and therefore, our passover was sacrificed for us at a particular time. It was not a matter of chance that our Lord died at three o'clock in the afternoon. You are aware that in the former dispensation there were two daily sacrifices for sin, one called the morning sacrifice at nine o'clock, and the other

the evening sacrifice, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Christ is our morning and our evening Lamb; and at the ninth hour, which was three o'clock in the afternoon, "He cried with a loud voice, and said, It is finished and gave up the ghost." And how striking was the fact that at that hour the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, even at the very moment the priest was standing before it offering the evening incense to the God of Israel. How it must have startled him! Well, all that was divinely arranged, and I put these historical facts before you, for the purpose of encouraging you to hope in the infinite and boundless mercy of that God who times all the operations of His hand and keeps all His appointments with His beloved people. "Jesus said, And now I go my way to Him that sent Me." It appears then that He went to heaven, or returned to His Father, after He had finished His work on the earth; and that He would not, and did not die until He had finished it; for His life was in His own hands: "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He came to do a certain work in a certain time, and He went about it and through it like the great God-man and Mediator. He worked every day for three-and-thirty years, and when they were expired He was at the end of His sufferings and His labour, when He lifted up His eyes towards His Father in heaven, and said, "It is finished, and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." Our Lord's work was completed before He died and went to heaven. How unlike you and me in our performances, even those which give us most pleasure and satisfaction. A finishing stroke or two is wanted here and there, and something extra is required to render it satisfactory. But here we have, or had, the great God man, the grand embodiment of Divine wisdom, love, and omnipotence, saving sinners, who proceeded with His work, sweating blood, and weeping and dying the curse away; and when it was all gone, and the storm was all over, and millions were redeemed and saved, then He said, "Now, I go my way to Him that sent Me." Here, then in, the first place, we have the time when our dear Lord went to heaven.

In the second place, let us look at *the point or the place from which He departed*. "I go my way to Him that sent Me." He was in this world. I do not know whether He has ever been in other worlds as He was in this. He is in other worlds with regard to His omnipresence, for as God He is everywhere; but whether He has visited other worlds as He visited this, I am not required to know. He has been here, and tabernacled on earth; and having saved sinners, and fulfilled His Father's purpose, He said, Now I shall leave the place; and He went from the scene of His labour. Now, I want to remind you of two or three things; first, that the bodily presence of Christ on the earth is *not now needed*; secondly, that it is *not expedient*; and thirdly, that it is *not possible*. In the first place, the bodily presence of Christ in this world is *not now needed*. The saints do not need it. When I say His bodily presence, my hearers understand me. I mean the real visible presence of Jesus Christ, as God-man. He is really and truly God, but He is man as well as God, and therefore, God and man in one great Person. As man He cannot be in two places at the same time, although as God He is everywhere. As

man, however, He must be located somewhere, and the Scriptures represent Him as sitting at the Father's right hand. We need Him there, but we do not need Him here. His bodily presence, since He has saved His people from condemnation is in heaven. If we need it here, it must be to fulfil some purpose. Is it for revelation? Do we need Him here to reveal the things of God unto us? He has done that, and the revelation is written here, and it is sufficiently full and copious. Is it for the application of salvation to the heart? Does that require His presence here? The Holy Ghost does that: "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." And if we have the Holy Ghost to apply salvation in this world, we do not require the presence of Jesus to do it. If Immanuel had not been here and bled, the Spirit would not now be here to apply anything. The Lord Jesus, however, came and bled and died, and then went to Him that sent Him, and now the Holy Ghost takes the blood that was shed, and applies it to the consciences of those whom He saved. We do not require, you see, the bodily presence of Jesus for revelation, nor for application. Neither is it required for consolation. Some of God's people have fancied that it would be very agreeable and pleasant to have Jesus personally here, that they might see Him and talk with Him, and have to do with Him every day. Well, we should want Him in our congregation, and other congregations of saints would like to have Him also. It is best that His bodily presence should be in heaven, and His *spiritual* presence here. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "Now, I go My way to Him that sent Me." My bodily presence with you on earth is no longer needful, and I am going to My God and your God, to My Father and your Father.

Again, the bodily presence of Jesus Christ is not *expedient*. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." His bodily presence is not expedient; for first, we are to live by faith, and not by sight; and if He were on the earth, we should, like His immediate followers and disciples, live by sight and not by faith; and this state of things was gently reprov'd by Christ in Thomas. "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." It is blessed to see Christ, and to believe at sight; but it is more blessed to believe without seeing: so said our great and glorious Saviour. We walk by faith, we live by faith, and we stand by faith. The world derides us, because we pray to a God that they and we cannot see, and sing psalms and hymns, and make a joyful noise unto a Being Whom we believe and declare to be in heaven. We do believe He is there; and more than that we believe He is our God, our portion and our all. Therefore,

"Come, let us join our cheerful songs
With angels round the throne;"

For we live by faith of joys to come, and are as confident of the existence of our God as if we had seen Him face to face. Not expedient that Christ should be here, for I do not think we could bear His glory. He would have to veil the splendour of His majesty, if He lived among us.

John saw a measure of His glory in the Isle of Patmos, and what was the effect thereof upon him? "I fell at His feet as dead." Why, surely it is not pleasure, nor joyful communion with Jesus to fall as dead and powerless as in a swoon at His feet. We shall not so fall before Him in heaven. We could not bear the glory here. I am, said the Master, about to be glorified, and "now I go My way to Him that sent Me." Again, ordinances would be superfluous if Jesus were bodily present with us now. Should I require the bread and wine if Jesus were before my eyes; He that shed His blood and saved my soul. What should I want the ordinance of believers' baptism for, if I had before me that dear Saviour, in whom was opened the fountain for sin and for uncleanness?

We said also that His bodily presence here was not *possible*. First, we do not need it, then it is not expedient, and thirdly, it is not possible. That is a great word to use. It is impossible on this ground. Were Jesus bodily present with us in this world, He could not complete our salvation and deliverance. Having made the atonement He was bound to take it into the holiest of all, and present it to His Father there. "If He were on earth, He should not be a priest; seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law. Having magnified the law, and made it for ever honourable, He was bound as our law-fulfiller, to appear in the presence of the great Lawgiver there. We need Him there, and could not do without His presence where He is now, but we now need the Holy Ghost to reveal to us the things of Christ, and this we are favoured with. The Spirit abides with us for ever, but Jesus dwells in heaven, and we are going to Him. He will not now come to us, only in a way of spiritual power; but by and bye when His mediatorial kingdom is completed, "He will come again the second time, without sin unto salvation. He is gone from this world to His Father.

Thirdly, *how did He depart?* "Now, I go My way to Him that sent Me." Did He go alone? No, angels attended Him:—

"They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,
The glorious work is done!"

Was that all? I think not, for many bodies of the saints that slept arose, and came out of their graves after His resurrection, and appeared unto many in Jerusalem. Did they die again, and were they again buried? As angels accompanied the great Conqueror to His throne, I apprehend our great Redeemer took those saints to heaven with Him; so that there was a kind of representative gathering composed of angels and risen saints, whom He presented, if I may so express myself, as a pledge and example of what the whole should be at the last great day. Nor did He go empty-handed to His Father. What did He carry with Him? A stainless character, and a great and new name. He took with Him a magnified law, and put it into the ark of the covenant which is the mercy-seat, and covered the whole with His own propitiation. Thus He magnified the law and made it honourable. He carried with Him the price of our redemption, and presented it to His Father, and

Justice said, Loose them all and let them go : I am well pleased for His righteousness' sake. He carried with Him on His breast-plate, as our great High Priest all the names of His beloved people. He went to heaven bodily and officially. Our Surety was released and returned to Him that sent Him. He went as a Conqueror. He left behind Him all the powers of darkness conquered, the world overcome, death unstung, and the grave consecrated and subjected to Himself ; while before Him was the glory in which He now dwells. He is crowned with many crowns, His seat is at the Father's right hand, and He has an everlasting right to present the persons and the offerings of all His ransomed people. My dear friends, our Lord is now just where we require Him to be as a priest a prince, and a Saviour. He is on the other side of death. What should we do, if having passed through death, we met not there our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ ? Yes, He has passed through death, and waits on the other side to receive our souls when we arrive in that world. He is in heaven, and we on entering shall see Him face to face. People talk about entering heaven, and looking about for brothers and sisters, and deacons and pastors and so on ; but I apprehend that the saint of God on entering his home will look for the Saviour. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and others are there, and we are glad to know it ; but " Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee ! " We require the presence of Christ before God, between Him and our poor souls. When Jesus went to Him that sent Him, there was nothing between Him and His Father ; and we, having reached heaven, my brethren, shall find nothing between us and our Saviour. Sin is put away, guilt has been removed, and the devil is conquered and chained. No, we want no priest between Christ and our souls, and no creature to introduce us to Him. There is an open way for the sinner to the Saviour, as there was an open way for the Saviour to His Father. What is Jesus to you ? The pearl of great price, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. You say I could afford to lose this, and that, and the other friend, and this comfort and the other ; but I could not afford to lose my Lord. Jesus is my all in all, and He is in heaven. Therefore, my heart and my affections are there ; " for where the treasure is, there will the heart be also."

" Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon ;
His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till Him I view."

The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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DAY-BREAK.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20th, 1885.

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bethel."—Song of Solomon ii. 17.

THE Church says, in the prophecies of Jeremiah, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." These words are immensely great and truly wonderful. The Lover Himself is an infinite Being. It does not give us comfort or pleasure to know that we are interested in the good opinion or affections of certain individuals; but it fills our hearts with unspeakable delight to be divinely assured that the God of heaven loves us with a love which is infinite and everlasting. Whoever may hate us, we are loved by God in heaven; whoever may love us, and change in their affections towards us, the God of heaven cannot change; and whatever good we may derive from an interest in the affections of the creature, having been everlastingly loved by the God of heaven, all things are ours for ever and ever; for, "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." Therefore, brethren, we are children of the Most High; and if "children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." And what is Christ worth? Is He not the heir of all things? and if we are joint-heirs with Him, our riches can never be told, neither can they ever be fully or entirely possessed. I suppose there are thousands of wealthy people, who could not possibly carry in their hands or upon their persons all the riches they own. They know what they are worth, and they can express the sum, but they could not hold or carry it. The children of God are immensely and divinely rich, and they can never be otherwise, since "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

The Son of God, our great Brother, and heavenly Bridegroom, breaks out very blessedly in the book out of which I have taken my text this morning. Such is the love of Christ to His people that He says, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock." We are told that it might be as well in our reading of the Scriptures to omit this portion of the Word, and not read it at all. It is said in certain quarters, by certain professors of religion, that the language employed by Solomon here is too sensuous and familiar, and that the mind is rather apt to become, as it were, too free with God by reading this book; and ministers have therefore been advised seldom or never to take texts from it. Well, Jesus Christ, notwithstanding all that says, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs." If our Maker is our Husband, and the Church is the spouse, the bride of Jesus Christ, surely they may be mutually familiar. Surely the

communion carried on between Christ, the Bridegroom, and the Church as the heavenly bride, is very sweet, and precious, and superior to anything and everything that is natural. It is altogether heavenly, and divinely spiritual, and anyone who speaks contemptuously of this portion of the Word, may be regarded as a comparative stranger to the sweets of secret and sacred fellowship with the Lord. It is my belief that many thousands of God's dear people, whose spirits are now in heaven, were mercifully blessed when they were here, through meditating upon the glories of Christ, as set forth in this interesting portion of God's word. Well, Christ speaks of His church as a dove, and as being in the Rock. "O my dove that art in the rock." The Church, like the dove, is defenceless and weak, surrounded by birds of prey which would tear it to pieces if they were permitted; but she is precious to Jesus, and marvellous provision has been made for her safety and salvation. Her Lord is the Rock of Ages which was cleft for her. "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the Rock," in one respect, whilst in another "thou art in the secret places of the stairs." This indicates the experience of not a few of the people of God, who desire to go into the upper room. They will not, however, leave the premises, and it is not possible to drive them away from the house of God. They are on the stairs, and take a step upwards now and then as God enables them to do so. But persons in the secret places of the stairs are likely, if I may so speak to become foul and unfit to be seen by company; so Christ's dove conceals herself, not upon the stairs, but in secret places. They hide themselves, for their sense of unworthiness is so great, that they fear to be seen, and yet they love the gates of Zion, and the place where God's honour dwelleth. Well, the Saviour says, "Let me see thy countenance." Lord, I am black, defiled, and not fit to appear before thee." "Let Me see thy countenance, and let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." What a mercy it is that God does not think of us as we think of ourselves, and that He does not feel towards us as we frequently feel towards ourselves. It is right and proper that we should confess our sins, and it is also a fact that we feel every day more or less deeply that we are vile, but it is also a fact on the other hand that God says, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." The countenance of the bride is comely to the Bridegroom, and her voice is sweet to Him; therefore, He says, Come and show thyself, and let me see thy face, and open thy lips, and let me hear thy voice; and then she said, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

We will look at a few facts which appear in the text. The first question or thought relates to *the period indicated*,—the day expected. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved." I believe that these words are full of gospel, and that they refer to some great gospel facts connected with our eternal salvation and life. I will try to take as comprehensive a view of the subject as I can, and notice in the first place that this expected day indicates *the great gospel day in which we are living*; you and I are living under the gospel dispensation, which will end in eternity. Then I shall have a word or two in the second place to say about *that wondrous day when the night with us will*

have for ever passed away ; for we are expecting that day. And then thirdly, I shall have a word to say upon *the second coming of our Lord* ; for a wondrous day will break upon the world, and especially upon all the ransomed people of God, "when our Lord comes again, the second time, without sin, unto salvation." "Until the day break."

First, let us look at this day as indicating *the gospel dispensation*. Now this day is a glorious one, and its glory far surpasses that of the Jewish dispensation. This great gospel day comprehends the whole of the period between the incarnation of Jesus Christ and His second coming. I will not stop to argue with persons who are constantly saying, "Now, is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation ;" and therefore, if you do not come and give God your hearts to-day, you may not have a chance or an opportunity of doing so to-morrow. All that sort of talk has no gospel meaning whatever. Now, indeed, is the accepted time, but it will last until Christ comes again. The accepted time is to-day, and to-morrow, next week, and next year ; and it will be God's accepted time, until the heavens are drawn aside, and Jesus Christ comes the second time, without sin, unto salvation. And why is it God's accepted time ? Because it is the day of salvation. But was not the Jewish economy a day of salvation ? No, it was a dispensation of shadows, a time of ceremonies, and not substance. That dispensation was a divinely appointed time, but it was not God's *accepted* time. Therefore, when Jesus came and said, "Sacrifice and offering, and burnt offerings, and offerings for sin, Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein ; which are offered by the law ; then said He Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, [the ceremonies and shadows,] that He may establish the second." And He did not come in vain, for He swallowed up all those shadows which appeared on the ground floor, and which, as shadows, were so instructive to Old Testament saints. He put an end to them all, as their substance and truth. And let me here just say that a shadow always indicates the existence of a substance somewhere : if there were not substance there would never be a shadow, however appropriate the ground, or clear the light might be. The shadows of the ceremonial dispensation were caused by the existence of the great substance, a glorious person. The lambs of that dispensation were shadows, the substance of which was the Lamb of God in heaven. There was the shadow of a priest before the people, but the substantial Priest was in heaven, who occasioned the shadow on earth. I might go on to speak of that dispensation ; for there was a multitude of shadows all of which disappeared when our Lord came. He was and is the Way, not the shadow of the way, but *the way, the truth, and the life*. So that the Gospel dispensation is the day that was expected by Old Testament believers ; and hence we have them saying here of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah ; "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." This Gospel day was seen by Abraham. "Thou art not," said the Jews to Jesus, "yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham ? Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; I strengthened his eyes, and gave him Divine light, and told him to look forward into the future : and he saw it

and was glad. The day that Abraham saw was the day of Christ's incarnation, humiliation, and of atonement by the great High Priest of our profession, the day of salvation, and Christ's working day. And when Abraham looked into the future, and saw all that by Divine direction and power, his heart was glad. Yes, the Old Testament church is here represented as saying, Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, be with us, and turn not away from us. So that the saints under that dispensation wanted the presence of the Lord, and deprecated His absence. We are told by naturalists that a gentle breeze passes over the face of the earth when the sun rises, and therefore, the break of day is sometimes called the breath of day. Here the church says, Until the day breathe, until a gentle wind, a holy breeze comes from the heavenly world, across the mountains, and a new day commences, turn my Beloved, and dwell with me, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

In the second place, and I will not say positively that this is the meaning, or a part of the meaning of my text,—I introduce it, I confess by way of accommodation. There is a state before us, if we are the children of God, which is sometimes called *an everlasting day*. There is no night in heaven. And the Apostle Paul spoke of the present state as one of darkness and of night, saying, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." A few years ago we who are now advanced in life were very young, and if one may speak for others, we did not think much about night. Our heads, however, have become grey or bald, and we are in all respects far different from what we then were. Taking a natural view of the matter, the present state is one of night and of darkness, and some of us feel very solemnly in relation to this fact, that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Until, dear Lord, the day break, or breathe, the heavenly day in which we shall see the Sun of Righteousness Himself in the midst of God's glory, and rejoice that He will never set, but for ever for and ever shine in a world in which, therefore, there can be no night, turn unto us and never leave us. Cheer up, my brethren and sisters; a few more hours, if I may so express myself, and the night will be over, and the day will breathe. And what about ourselves? Until that glorious morning comes, until that day breathe, turn my Beloved, and be like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. Hold us up for a few months or years longer, according to Thy will and pleasure, and leave us not, we pray. Eternal day is coming; but the night is sometimes dark; we would constrain thee to abide with us, through the night of time and keep us till the day break, and the shadows flee away. And what shadows are there to flee away? If we are living under the gospel dispensation, we love baptism; but it is as a shadow, and we shall not want it in heaven. We love the Lord's-supper; but it is a figure which we shall not want there. We love the preaching of the Word, and the other ordinances of God's house; but they are means of grace, all of which will cease or flee away. When we see the Sun of Righteousness and the Lamb Himself, we shall not want symbolical representations of Him. Until I am there, permit me, Lord, to live with Thy people, to observe the ordinances of Thy house, and to watch the symbols of Thyself; but keep me until the breaking of the day when these shadows shall disappear, and all will be substantial for ever.

In the last place, *the second coming of our Lord*. "Until that day break, turn my Beloved. Such an event will occur. "It is appointed

unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." "God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained, and whom He hath raised from the dead." Oh, it will be a wonderful day-break, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise which will be God's great noise. We know of no greater noise that is Divine than the terrific thunder; "and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Fervent heat! Yes, God's great heat shall melt the elements, and Christ will appear on His great white throne, and a solemn day will break upon the world. And what will then be done? Christ will complete His mediatorial work, and perfect His mediatorial kingdom, and present all the proceedings of His power, and the operations of His hand in their completed form, and will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; having put down all rule, and all authority and power. All rule? Yes! no kings, nor kingdoms, nor thrones, as such, will be there; for people will not appear at the last day as nations, nor as families, but as individuals. Hence, perhaps, God is pleased to punish nations as such here, because as nations they will not be judged or punished at the last day. All at last will appear before the Judge, not as kings, and queens, and nations, and families, but as individual creatures of the Most High God. Well, until that solemn day break, and the shadows of time flee away, turn my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart. I will close my observations on the expected day by just making this remark:—That ever since God first revealed His grace, the best has always been in the future, and has always been looked for and prayerfully expected by His people. Under the patriarchal dispensation, something brighter was promised and expected; under the ceremonial dispensation there was much that was good indeed, yet brighter days were expected. Under the gospel dispensation we have Christ the way, the truth, and the life. But something brighter than we already possess is yet to come. We have much in hand,—hold it fast, and cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward; but while we have much in hand, we have more in prospect. God has been pleased to commence a work of grace in our hearts, and we are children of the day, and of the light, and not of the night nor of darkness; but the best is to come. We have some gold, it is heavenly and Divine, and it is the earnest of the riches of heaven; but the whole inheritance is in the future, and I say to the Lord for you and for myself, Dear Lord, until that day break, and all these shadows flee away, come unto us, be with us, and dwell with us; notwithstanding that the mountains of Bether are between the heavenly world and our souls.

Now, secondly, look at the text, and you will see that *intervening mountains are referred to*. My Beloved, be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. I will make no critical remarks upon Bether. Dr. Gill says, perhaps Solomon referred to Bethel, or to Bithron. We will, however, take the word as it stands here. Bether: the meaning of the word as we have it in the margin is "mountains of division." That is enough for us, plain and simple-hearted people as we are. Be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division. There is something, therefore, that divides or intervenes between the breaking of the expected day, and the existing state of things. In the first place, what do you think of *time*? Solomon wrote this book about

1014 years before the advent of Jesus Christ, and a thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday ; but a thousand years in the creature's sight are a very long period. That lengthened period of time came in between the church of God in Solomon's days, and the incarnation of Immanuel, and during that thousand years, Jesus like a roe or a young hart was often seen skipping upon the mountains of division. A thousand years did not separate Him from the Old Testament saints, any more than a thousand years now can separate Him from New Testament believers. But that is not all : secondly, the mountains of Bether indicated *the ceremonial dispensation*, but especially *the ceremonial law*, which divided the Jew from the Gentile, and when our Lord came He broke down this partition, and made of twain, that is Jew and Gentile, one new man. Our Lord came and visited his people in connexion with the ceremonial dispensation. How He visited David when he was observing the ceremonies of the law in the tabernacle or the tent, which he had prepared for God ! While David observed these ceremonies, Jesus or the Messiah so frequently and blessedly came to him, that he said, " I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Well, these shadows have fled away, and that mountain, the ceremonial law, has been removed. But that is not all. What do you think of the *mountain of sin and guilt* ? Had the poet any such idea as this in his mind when he penned the words,—

" I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose ;
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose."

Can our God come over guilt ? He does come over it, He came over it before He removed it, and He comes over it before He gives us a sense of Divine forgiveness. Bless His name, the highest mountain of guilt, if it reach the very heavens, and be black as hell, and be covered with a thousand frightful appearances, cannot prevent the dear Redeemer from visiting and blessing His beloved ones. Guilt has, and it is proper that it should have, its influence upon you and me ; but it can have no deterring influence upon the roe or young heart, the dear and blessed Son of God. What do you think of *unbelief* as another mountain of division ? If it were not for the immutability of God and of His grace, this mountain of division would be one of separation. But who can separate us from the love of God ? Our Lord, then, is entreated to come over ceremonies, over periods of time, over mountains of guilt, over strong unbelief, over all doubts and fears. and over all our imperfections, as a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. I am sorry our time is nearly gone, and therefore notice,—

In the third place, *the prayer* :—" Turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart." Here the church prays for the presence of her Lord, her Bridegroom, and Husband : turn, my Beloved. The presence of Jesus is a reality, is it not ? We read about it in the Word, but His presence is very much more than a combination of letters which represent it. It is a Divine reality. The rays of the sun in this world are real, and his light and influences are realities ; and the presence of Jesus Christ is not ceremonial, or shadowy, or empty, but a Divine and spiri-

tual reality. Turn unto me. And He is always welcome, as His presence is real. Whenever He is pleased to come, we are glad to meet Him, glad to receive Him, and glad to sit at His feet and hear His word, and imbibe His spirit, and perform the part of disciples before Him. His presence is always needed, and always satisfying. When we are favoured with it we want no more ; if we have Christ and are blest with His presence, we have enough, and are full ; for He is all the fulness of God : and the soul that embraces the Saviour, and holds heartfelt fellowship and communion with Him is filled and satisfied. Hence, turn my Beloved. What was the matter ? Did He appear as if He were about to withdraw Himself from her ? Perhaps so, and she deprecated His absence, and wanted His presence. Do not leave me, but abide with me until the day break. Turn, my Beloved, and skip upon the mountains of division like a roe or a young hart.

Fourthly, *the fact implied*,—"like a roe, or a young hart." How is that ? Swiftly and gracefully. I might go into these matters if time permitted. These creatures are very graceful and beautiful in their movements ; but it appears to me that the leading and plain idea though not the only one, is that of swiftness. Come swiftly, and come now. Make haste, O God, make haste ! Do not delay. Thou canst, like these interesting creatures, leap upon the mountains, and skip upon the hills, and come instantaneously to my soul. Be pleased to come unto me. Our Lord leaped upon the mountains before He melted them. He leaped upon the mountains of guilt, under the Old Testament dispensation, before they disappeared. When the day broke, He went to work to remove them. This was predicted in the prophecies of Isaiah. "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low ; the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Here is the church on this side the mountains, in a valley, or on a plain, and yonder is heaven and eternity, and that state of things which was to dawn upon her. The church down in the valley says, Let me see Thee upon the mountains and hills until the day break and the shadows flee away. And by and bye He came and put away sin and levelled every mountain and every hill, and now we have a fertile plain. And as to circumstantial mountains and hills, they will soon all disappear, and sometimes now in your greatest affliction Christ appears on its very top, saying, "It is I be ; not afraid." "Like a roe or a young hart."

Fifthly, *the confidence expressed in the text*. "My beloved." Jesus captivates the soul, and ties it for ever to Himself. He is beloved in Himself and by the church on earth and all in heaven. But what about the little word "my ?" "Turn *my* Beloved." He is known from history ; so thousands and millions know Him, but they do not love Him. I mean they know Him with a historical knowledge, and believe in Him with a historical faith. Do you believe the Bible ? "To be sure I do, sir." And do you believe in Jesus Christ ? "To be sure I do." Why so ? "Because I believe the Bible is the word of God, and it contains a revelation of Jesus Christ ; and I therefore know Him." That is a natural, an historical knowledge. Do you love Him ? That is something more than mere knowledge. The fact is, there are both the *history* and the *mystery*

of Christ here. We go through the history, down into the mystery of Him, or rather the Holy Ghost takes us through the one into the other. I know persons whom it would not be perfectly correct in me to say I love. I know them; but to know a person is one thing, and to love him is something more. I know the Saviour from the information I get about Him here; and I know Him, I hope, inasmuch as it hath pleased God to reveal His Son in me. Not merely *unto* me, but *in* me; and, therefore, He hath won my affections, and bound my soul fast; and His absence I deprecate, and His presence I love: and, knowing there are mountains of division between Him and my soul, I say like the church, "Turn my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." He is your beloved and mine. And this desire for the presence of Jesus, bless His name! is mutual. You desire His presence, and He desires to be with you, or He would not come and appear upon the mountains of Bether, nor visit your poor spirits. His desire is to you, as your desire is to Him. You want Him, and He wants you, if I may use the word "want" in relation to Jesus. What a mercy it is to be in sympathy with God, and in harmony with Him, and for our desires to coincide, as far as they can, with the purposes of God. A little higher up in the chapter it is said, "My beloved," (8th verse,) "The voice of my Beloved! Behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains skipping upon the hills. My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart. Behold He standeth behind our wall, [divisions,] He looketh forth at the windows [thinking about day-break or the Gospel dispensation,] showing Himself through the lattice," [the ordinances of His house.] He is my beloved Lord.

Lastly, *what inferences might be drawn from the subject* thus considered. First, that everything in the gracious government of God is gradual. Salvation was gradual, and your possession of what God has promised is gradual. We have some, we shall have more, we shall have all by and bye. Until we possess all, come Thyself, and be with us, dear Lord, even "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." Sometimes Christ withdraws Himself, and we cannot see Him. Turn unto me, is another inference, that He seems to withdraw Himself. But thirdly, He is the same, and changes not, notwithstanding that He sometimes seems to hide His face. Then, in the next place, all nature seems to be taxed as it were by the Holy Spirit with the important work of setting forth and illustrating our blessed religion. First of all, we have the breathing of the day, then we have mountains, then we have a roe or a young hart, then we have shadows upon the earth, to set forth the marvellous character of Church's union to Jesus, and her fellowship with Him. But,

"The whole creation can afford
But some faint shadows of my Lord;
Nature to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colours not her own."

"When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE BEST KNOWLEDGE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 23th, 1885.

"The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."—Phil. iii. 8.

THE dying words of the great Redeemer are of vital importance to every true believer, to Christ Himself, and also to our triune God. Just before the Lord commended His spirit into the hands of His Father, He said, "It is finished, and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." His covenant engagements concerning the removal of sin, the expiation of guilt, and the penalty due to iniquity, together with the Father's purposes concerning sinners and their salvation, were fulfilled. But these words, "It is finished," referred not only to the completion of salvation, they included the ceremonial law also; for Christ is both the fulfilling end of the moral law, and the abrogating end of the ceremonial law; so that the law of Moses then for ever ceased to be binding upon the professing church and people of God. Some of the converted Jews, however, clung very tenaciously to that law, although they had some measure of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. They deemed it necessary that Christians should be circumcised, and that several other branches of that law should be introduced into the church, and observed by its members. It appears that some of these Judaizing teachers were in Philippi, and troubled the church of Christ in that city, and not believing that Jesus Christ had abrogated the ceremonial law, they taught the people that it was necessary to keep certain parts thereof. In connection with this fact, division and unhappiness sprang up in the church; and since the Philippians lay very near the heart of the Apostle, he, being divinely inspired, wrote this beautiful and comprehensive letter to them. He says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe;" and further on in the chapter he gives us a likeness of himself, as a Jew, as a Pharisee, and as a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "Beware of dogs." I apprehend he referred to those Judaizing teachers who both barked at and bit the people when they could. "Beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." Such were the Apostle's views of circumcision in relation to the church of Christ. He does not say. Beware of circumcision, but "Beware of the concision," which is a mere cutting off, and amounts to nothing, and is now of no importance. "Beware of the concision," for we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Outward circumcision was once important, but it has ceased to exist as a rite. The law of Moses has been wholly swept away, or rather swallowed up in the glorious person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. All that was gorgeous, and addressed to the senses under the previous dispensation, is no more, and that which is spiritual even

the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus the Lord, has taken its place. He then proceeds: "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more;" for I am of the stock of Israel; I was circumcised the eighth day; I am of the tribe of Benjamin, and my father and my mother were both Hebrews, and therefore I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Then he speaks of himself as a Pharisee: as touching the law I was a Pharisee; concerning zeal, I persecuted the church; and touching the righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless. If there were in these supposed privileges anything that could possibly influence one's acceptance with God, I might well put them in and plead them before the throne of God. But what was Paul's view concerning these supposed excellencies after his call by grace? "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. When the storm overtook him, he feared and felt that he should be drowned in everlasting darkness and perdition, he found that all those things must be thrown overboard, and he cast them all away, that he might embrace Christ only, and depend exclusively upon His person, blood, and righteousness. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Now let us confine ourselves for a few minutes to these words.

I will try to show—the Holy Spirit helping me,—what the excellency of this knowledge consists in, as the text says, "*The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*" In the first place, observe that it consists in *the object Himself, Christ Jesus my Lord.* Now, we know nothing about abstract Deity, and we care not to hear people talk about a God out of Christ. We do not know a God out of Christ, neither can we put our trust or rest our hope in Him. Abstract Deity we have no definite or satisfactory knowledge of.

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

God is not to be seen in angels, at least the Divine nature has not been united to the angelic; but He is in the man Christ Jesus; and we trust in Him, shall see Him, and live with Him for ever, as He dwells and will for ever dwell, in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. The excellency of this knowledge consists in *the glory* of its object. Now observe here, that Jesus Christ is the best object in the universe for both faith and sight. The happy millions in heaven never saw a more glorious object than the Christ of God; and all the believing thousands of God's people on the earth never saw by faith a more glorious object than the great and gracious Christ. There are things which are said to be great in this world, and persons whose honour, grandeur, and exaltation, draw the attention of many;

"But in His looks a glory stands,
The noblest labour of God's hands;
The pleasing lustre of His eyes,
Outshines the wonders of the skies."

You may have seen marvellously important objects, and given your attention to them; you may have tried to explore and to understand their mysteries, but you have never seen the best in the world, nor in the

universe, unless you have by faith seen the glorious Immanuel. The Lord Jesus wins the affections, melts the heart, and expands the soul. "Draw me," saith the Church: "we will run after Thee." My dear young friends, suffer a word of exhortation. Some of you know this great and glorious Christ. Pray that your knowledge of Him may increase and abound; pray that you may know—not more of yourselves, of your friends, or of the world; but that you may know more of the Saviour, for He is the loveliest object that eyes have seen, that hearts have loved, or that minds ever trusted in. Why, He is so powerful in His attractions, and so glorious in His perfections, that the Father's eye is always upon Him, the eye of the Spirit is always upon Him, and the eyes of all the angels in heaven are always upon this great Christ. I cannot explain to you this mystery; but when we are with Him in a better world, we shall find our heaven in His presence, and find all our deep and pure delight and joy in our nearness to, and fellowship and communion with Him for ever. How angels may appear to us when we get to heaven, I cannot say; neither can I tell how the spirits of just men there may appear to one another. They are there, and they live in eternal tranquillity and peace; but I can say this concerning the dear Redeemer, in the language of Dr. Watts:—

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

In our solar system the most glorious object is the sun; but in the system of mediation, of grace, of the covenant of mercy, which is the highest and grandest of all Divine systems, the noblest, the most exalted, and the most marvellous and mysterious object, is the great and glorious Saviour; therefore, Paul says, speaking of his knowledge of Him, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Now, we are here limited to one person, and I have often tried to thank the God of grace for having so sweetly and divinely simplified the great mystery of salvation; for it is a privilege and favour. What the whole of salvation is, and what all its bearings and connections are, I cannot tell, but nothing can be more simple than God's revealed plan of mercy, or His method of saving lost and ruined sinners. Yes, we are limited to one Being, even to our Lord Jesus Christ. Having entered into Him, and become vitally united to Him, we shall find a profundity that we shall never be able to fathom, and riches and pleasures that we shall never be able to fully understand; but for all purposes of personal salvation, God's method of mercy is delightfully plain and simple. I have read works on the angels, and have thought that the writers might or might not be correct; but I am not sure that I have been profited by what I have read concerning them. They have to do with us, and we may have to do with them; but we say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee." No doubt it will constitute a measure of our joy in heaven, to be with God's pure angels, and to unite with them for ever in singing His praises; but the great central Object of heaven, the one great attraction there, will be the glorious Redeemer. We know more of Him even now, than we know of any other being there, and we have more

confidence in Him, although we have never seen Him with our natural eye, than we have in any creature whatever. You have confidence in your wife, and she has confidence in you, and your children put their trust in you ; but for all purposes connected with eternity, your trust and confidence repose nowhere but upon the person and finished work, and perfect character of the glorious Immanuel. We are now limited to one object, the glorious Christ, though other lords have had dominion over us. Remember past times, when Jesus Christ was not vitally and experimentally your Lord, when other powers and other beings had dominion over you. When they ruled you, and exercised a tyrannical power over you, did you know them ? The devil ruled you, but you did not know him. Lust was a lord that ruled you, but you did not know it. If you had known the devil, and known the lusts and sins which governed your hearts, that knowledge would never have purified your souls, nor caused solid joy ; therefore the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord of all, and as our Lord is excellent. "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." My dear friends, a person might know the Bible by heart : I am going to say a very strong word,—a person might know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, though I hardly know whether it be possible or not ; but if it were possible, and persons could be found that knew the Bible by heart, I would then say that they might notwithstanding that, be ignorant of Jesus Christ. Yes, one may know the Book, and Christ's name as it stands therein, composed of so many letters ; he may have some knowledge of the historical Christ, who is talked of and written so much about ; but a true knowledge of Christ in the heart, as the hope of eternal life and glory, is limited to a few, I fear, in the day in which we live. The blessedness of all this consists in the fact that some of God's people can say, we know Him ; not only as Jesus who bled, and as Christ who bears the holy unction, but as the Lord over all, and as our Lord and our God. Perhaps we cannot fully enter into the feelings of Thomas when in answer to Christ's words, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands ; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing,"—he said in the Lord's presence, "My Lord and my God !" Oh, an influence from the once-suffering Saviour pervaded the mind of the man, and went through and through his heart, destroying all his unbelief, and carrying all his doubts and all his hardness away ; and dissolved by God's goodness, he gave way, and taking hold of the Saviour by faith he said, "My Lord and my God !" A great many extravagant things are said concerning this knowledge ; but I shall have a word to say as to its nature presently ; therefore I just remark here, that a state of things such as that I have referred to is produced by no other power than that of the Spirit of God. That is all I can say on the first point. The excellency of this knowledge consists in the glory of its object.

Now, in the second place let us look further into the subject, and we shall see that this excellency consists in a great measure *in the nature of the knowledge*. I wish I were stronger as to my mental powers in order that I might dive deeper into this great mystery. This knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ surpasses a sight of Christ in the flesh with the mortal eye. There were hundreds and thousands that saw Christ that did not know Him, and never believed in Him. He fed five thousand with a

few loaves and fishes, and they saw that He was an extraordinary Being, and must have been more than human, yet they did not know Him. Hundreds came into actual and personal contact with the person of the Saviour, and when they saw His face, they knew Him as Jesus of Nazareth; and yet they were ignorant of His worth and glory, because they had no faith. Some of them saw Him almost every day; His brethren for instance, "but neither did his brethren believe in Him." They saw, and knew, and conversed with Him naturally, and sat at table with Him occasionally, yet they had no saving knowledge of Him, as the glorious Christ of God. Were He here on the earth to day, and drew a veil over His glories, so as to make His presence bearable, then the world would remain in ignorance of Him, if faith were not given. Therefore, this excellent knowledge is the knowledge of faith, and not the knowledge which comes into the mind through the mortal eye, or that enters into the heart through the ear; but a knowledge connected with that mysterious power within called faith; and hence the importance of the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" My dear friends, if a sinner could be taken to heaven, and placed immediately before the face of Jesus Christ, without a saving knowledge of Him, it would not be heaven to him, and the presence of Jesus would not create a paradise of joy in his heart. There can be no heaven anywhere for a sinner that is ignorant, or in the dark concerning the glorious Immanuel. Do we know Him? Do not call me a fanatic, and go away and say that I introduce and insist upon matters which lie altogether beyond the reach of human experience. As a matter of fact, these things do lie beyond the reach of the natural powers of men; but when the Holy Ghost takes the things of Christ and shows them to the mind, then one's experience becomes spiritual, and a real knowledge of the truth and of the Lord Jesus Christ is the sweet and inevitable result. My friends, this knowledge is special and peculiar. A few individuals may enter your house, and sit down and converse with you, and you may be more or less familiar with them all. One friend and another among them you may have known a few years, but there is one among them who is your brother; you know all of them with a general knowledge, but you do not know them all as you know your own brother, or your own husband, or your own wife. This will in some measure apply to the glorious Redeemer. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh yes, you say, I have read about Him, and studied the Gospel, and I know Him as He is revealed in the Scriptures. Well, that is one way of knowing Him, and if He were now on the earth, you might know Him in the flesh, and view Him with the mortal eye, and yet your heart might remain unchanged, and your enmity against God untouched, and no sweet experience of the power and preciousness of the Saviour might result from the sight. This knowledge is special and peculiar, and when it is said, tell us how we may get it? I reply, I dislike that phraseology in connection with salvation, I can tell you how it is communicated; and therefore, as to its nature, I notice that it is *Divine in its origin*. It is a Divine gift; and if these remarks are sweeping, I cannot help it. This knowledge of the Saviour is not to be found in the natural mind, nor are the germs of it in the unregenerate. The Object seen, the eye that sees, and the knowledge received are altogether new. It is not in nature, nor is it acquired by mental labour. I often wonder on

reading the reports of men studying theology, and going through various works on divinity, how it is that people can be brought to think that a mere reading of theology and divinity can impart to the mind a true and sufficient knowledge of the Divine Being Himself. Oh this knowledge of Christ must come from God, and is not acquired by man. Do I despise study, or think it is undesirable? No, I should be very foolish if I depreciated general knowledge or reading, but on these vital matters I must speak the truth. This living light comes exclusively from heaven, and this knowledge comes from no being but God Himself. The Bible, as I said, might be known by heart, and yet the person himself might remain a stranger to God, and in darkness concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." And this knowledge as to its nature is Divine. It is a new light which enters the soul, and which reveals a new object. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." An open eye is not enough, we must have light; for a person cannot see in the dark. Therefore God gives that light which reveals His dear Son as our Lord. Paul says, I have so seen the Saviour, that "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It is excellent with regard to its nature.

In the third place, its excellency consists in its *extent or measure*. With regard to this point, the first measure of Divine knowledge which enters the heart embraces Christ as the Lord, and I beg your attention to this. Christ is first known as the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, but the person so addressing Him always used so to speak of Him. Yes, he used these names and terms, but he did not always know the Lord. Now, he knows that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and his knowledge carries certainty with it, and let us not forget this fact. In the second place, the person thus favoured with a knowledge of the Saviour is in due time brought to know that He is his Lord. *The Lord Jesus Christ becomes our Lord Jesus Christ.* Many a poor trembling sinner kneels before the throne, believing in the Saviour; but you cannot by any argument or form and force of reasoning induce him to believe that Jesus died for him; and, therefore, having only reached this point, he prays, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation;" he would give a world to know that Jesus loved him and gave Himself for him. Give a world!! For what? Why, to know this favour for himself, for this knowledge is so excellent. Have I exaggerated, or too deeply coloured your experience? If I have not, you are going to heaven, and you esteem this knowledge very highly, and it must be very precious and important to you. Yes, it is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. After a time, a further measure is imparted, and the poor soul rises, if I may so speak, and dances for joy, before the dear Redeemer, singing, Jesus *I know* has died for me. "I live, 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. Now, having been brought to say, "My Lord and my God," does knowledge become stationary, and is no more imparted? We read like this, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The soul that has been brought to know that Jesus Christ is his Saviour and his Lord, becomes rooted and grounded in Him. As a building in course of erection rises higher and higher as

course after course is added, and as a tree that is rooted in good soil increases, and grows, and bears fruit ; so he who has this excellent knowledge of the Saviour increases with all the increase of God. But is there not a point where this knowledge will stop ? No, certainly not, "then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." But is there not a barrier or a limit somewhere in the future ? No, your knowledge of Jesus Christ will progress for ever ; for I cannot think that anything in heaven is stationary. Minds will rotate in the glories of Immanuel for ever, for the ways of God are everlasting. Oh, it is far better to know Jesus Christ than to possess fore-knowledge. You and I are sometimes, if I may speak for you, so rebellious, impatient, and foolish that we have a desire to look into the future. We seem to think that a measure of fore-knowledge would be beneficial ; but to know Christ is infinitely better than to know what will happen to-morrow, or next week, or next year. To be a saint is more than to be a prophet, foretelling future events ; and to be a saint is more than to be a preacher ; for a saint possesses grace which is more than all the gifts that ever were possessed by men on earth. The measure or extent of this knowledge is excellent.

In the fourth place its excellency consists in *its influence upon the heart*. "He that increases knowledge increases sorrow." But that will not apply to this knowledge. Yet it is true that he that increases knowledge increases sorrow, and I will show you how it is. Do you know much of sin ? The more you know of that apart from Jesus Christ, the more sorrow there is in your heart. Do you know a great deal about your depravity and corruption ? This knowledge never gave you a moment's ease. Do you know much about the world as to its hollowness and vanity ? then your sorrow is deep. Are you praying, like some of God's people, that you may know more about yourselves ? I would say very solemnly, as a friend and as a brother, Do not pray in that way, but pray that you may know *Him*. "Yes, but we cannot know Him without knowing ourselves." My friends, God will see to that. Ask God to reveal His Son to you, and to show you more and more of the dear Redeemer. As to ways and means, they are always in God's hand ; and if, in order to a further revelation of Jesus Christ unto you, it should be necessary to open up more and more to you the abominations that are within, let us leave that matter in His hands. There is a sting in all other knowledge, but none in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. If I know myself, my knowledge stings me ; and if I know the world, the knowledge stings me ; while if I come to natural things and general knowledge, in which there is nothing immoral, and nothing naturally wrong it is, to say the least of it, dry and unsatisfying ; but he that increases in the knowledge of Jesus Christ is neither stung nor left unsatisfied.

As to its influence upon the heart, first, *it transforms its possessor*, and hence this excellency ; for to know Christ savingly and experimentally is to be somewhat like Him ; for if we do not resemble Him, we do not know Him. The more we know of the dear Christ of God, the more thoroughly are we conformed to His image. You may know natural things, and your knowledge of them may increase, but it will never sanctify your minds, nor satisfy your hearts ; but if you know the Lord Jesus, and your knowledge of His person and work increases and grows, you are sanctified and

satisfied with an excellency which the world can neither give, nor take away, nor explain. It conforms the heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, this knowledge is excellent, because *it makes Christ precious*, not in Himself, but to our own hearts: "Unto you which believe He is precious." Now, I put it to you as a kind of test. Is Christ precious to you? I cannot answer the question for you, you must answer it yourselves. Is He sweet and precious to your soul? If so, you know him and your realization of His preciousness is one of the results of this fact; and hence "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord." And then again, this knowledge *is saving*. No other knowledge is so. I hesitate not to say to all my hearers who have any measure of spiritual knowledge, you cannot go to hell; eternal woe is not for you; there is not a lost soul that knows Jesus Christ us you know Him. Some talk about repentance in hell;" but there is no repentance there. The lost do not hate sin, nor desire to love God. They are where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, having none of that knowledge of Christ which melts the heart and kills its enmity. If, however, your enmity is gone, and you have a heart-melting and soul-sanctifying knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot be lost. Dr. Hawker is represented as having somewhere said to a good woman, but a tried believer who was complaining to him concerning her doubts, and fearing that after all she should be sent to hell; "No, you will not; Satan would not know what to do with you there; for you would always be longing after Jesus Christ. You'll never go to hell." If you have this knowledge of Jesus Christ, heaven is your home, and His presence will be your paradise for ever.

"There we shall see His face,
And never, never sin;
There from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."

The duration of this knowledge constitutes another feature of its excellency. It is a knowledge that will not cease. This is a grace which will not pass away, for we shall know for ever. Are your joys gone? You know Him notwithstanding that. Is your house full of sorrow, want, and woe? You have not lost your knowledge of the Saviour, and your mind will never become a blank in this respect. Have you many doubts and fears? You have some knowledge of the Lord, and when you come to die, and we shall all shortly experience that, your light and knowledge will not be put out. Then in heaven it will be perfect, and abide for ever, and your minds will drink of the river of God's pleasure to all eternity. Oh it will be heaven to be where Jesus is, to be with Him, to be like Him, and to hold uninterrupted fellowship and communion with Him. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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GOD'S LAW, THE REVEALER OF SIN.

A Sermon.

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 1st, 1885.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."—Romans iii. 20.

THE three persons in the glorious Godhead occupy official positions in the covenant of grace. It was the work of the Son to redeem from sin, and it is His work to intercede for redeemed sinners. It is the covenant and official work of the Holy Spirit to enter the heart of every redeemed man and woman, and to set up the spiritual kingdom of God therein; and hence the Saviour said, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak." There is perfect and eternal harmony between the glorious persons of the Godhead; for these Three are One,—not only in essence and nature, but in will, in purpose, and in power.

The call of Saul of Tarsus by Divine grace was a marvellous event; but I need not go into the circumstances connected with the salvation of that Pharisee. God had thoughts of love and peace, and not of evil, concerning him; and in a moment a light from heaven shone upon him, and he fell before the face of Him who spake. The arrows of the Almighty entered deeply into his heart, and one of the first words he spoke as a new creature in Christ Jesus was, "Who art Thou, Lord?" The Holy Spirit had entered the breast of that man, and his enmity was slain at once and for ever, and a measure of saving and Divine holiness was dropped into his pharisaic heart and he ceased to be a Pharisee and an enemy, and could no longer fight against his blest Redeemer. The Spirit worked in the heart of Paul very rapidly, as He sometimes does in grace and revelation. The salvation of sinners is, as a rule, a gradual work; but the Apostle was led very quickly into the deep mysteries of eternal life, as appears in the fact that he at once preached the Saviour; and the depth of his knowledge appears also in the marvellous epistles which he was afterwards inspired to write to several churches. One cannot read Paul's Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians without feeling that he was deeply acquainted with the law of God, and also with the glorious gospel of His grace. He tells us in his letter to the Philippians, that he was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and he died. He had much to do with the law, and he verily believed that he kept it in an excellent manner, and that his life was perfectly consistent with its requirements. He was then, however, in the dark, and had no conception of the spirituality of its light and power. When therefore the commandment came, sin, which he thought

was absent, revived, and he died. Then he came as a poor, guilty and condemned sinner into the presence of that Saviour whose name he had hated, whose cause he had persecuted, and whose grace he had loathed. He then appeared in all his nakedness, uncleanness, guilt, and hell-deservedness in the presence of the great God, and in due time the scales fell from his eyes, the chain was removed, as it were, from his soul, the balmy blood of the Redeemer was applied to his wounded conscience, and he was sweetly and powerfully led into the glorious liberty of the Gospel, which he subsequently preached. His testimony as a minister was always in harmony with his own experience, which was the result of the indwelling and operation of the Spirit of God; and he feared not the frowns, nor courted the smiles of man, and was "determined to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." How boldly he wrote in the chapter out of which I have taken my text this morning, "As it is written, There is none righteous; no, not one. There is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good; no, not one." These humbling facts are very offensive to some ears, and eyes, and hearts. Human nature, however, is polluted, and man is a guilty creature, and it is one great object of the gospel to lay the fallen sinner low, and to strip him of all his supposed excellencies in order that grace may reign, and Christ be all in all. We cannot be too low in the dust, and our sense of sin cannot be too deep; but we may be too good, too worthy, and too rich for grace, and for the God of mercy and salvation. The Apostle proceeded to say, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Justification by faith is a most important gracious truth, and a very sweet reality. It is sneered at in some places and spoken of contemptuously by not a few professors of religion who regard the imputed righteousness of Jesus as "the Antinomian's dress." I am sorry that any person professing to be a child of God should have ever found it in his heart to express himself in that manner. No, my friends, *our* righteousness is as filthy rags; it is a mercy to be stripped of it, and to cast it away for ever, and a privilege and a blessing to be dressed in that robe of the Saviour's obedience, by which the ungodly are justified and accepted for ever. Justification is the result of the imputation of Christ's obedience, who came to work out a righteousness for sinners. His life of perfect obedience being satisfactory, was put into the Father's hands, who accepted it, and now it is imputed to all that believe, even to all that come as poor, naked and guilty sinners to God for eternal life and salvation. Oh the blessedness experienced by sinners when that righteousness is imputed, and faith receives it! Then the soul leaps and dances for joy in the presence of God. "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness."

I want to direct your attention this morning, not altogether to justification, but to this clause of the text, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." I do not know how it is my mind has fallen upon this portion of the word. I am not a legal preacher, for I do not preach the law; I feel, however, that the connexion between the law of God and His gospel

is so close, that every minister should set forth the moral claims of God according to His law, by which is the knowledge of sin.

Let me in the first place, say a few words on *God's holy law*. The laws of God are two, at least we will mention only two, namely the ceremonial law, sometimes said to be the law of Moses, and the moral law which is denominated the law or the covenant of works, or the old covenant. Now I do not think that the apostle in my text referred to the ceremonial law, for it is not by that that one receives a knowledge of sin. It is true the sacrifices of that law were frequently repeated,—repeated every day, and that from age to age ; and the apostle tells us, that those sacrifices brought to remembrance the sins of the people every year. That law, however, is not in force now. It has been abrogated by our Law-fulfiller, and in its place we have the glorious gospel of the blessed God. We have now the substance, and not shadows and types. Therefore, by the law here, we understand the moral law, or the covenant of works, that wonderful and peculiar form of Divine truth which will remain in existence for ever. Now, let me observe here, that this *law is a Divine and righteous rule*, and that it is holy, just and good. I trust I shall not be the means of casting down any of God's little ones this morning. I do not like setting up a standard of experience, either in connexion with the law or with the gospel. The Holy Spirit is a Sovereign, and He works according to His own will and pleasure in the hearts of all God's saints, and I believe there are many in heaven singing the praises of the Redeemer, who, when they were here, were unable to refer to any particular date, or to describe any particular circumstances in connexion with their new birth. Dates and circumstances are not important as to one's personal godliness and safety. The great question is this, Are we saved ? Have we been quickened into life ? Do we possess the grace of God ? If we are alive from the dead, having been quickened by grace, the manner in which life was communicated was right ; for God only is the fountain of life. Do not allow, if I may so express myself, the devil to trouble you, nor to rob you of comfort in relation to this matter. If you are in the kingdom, and the Spirit is in your souls, all is well. Many now in heaven were, when here, full of doubts and fears, because they were not as tall as other saints, nor as strong as other believers, and because they could not name the day, the week, the month, or even the year, when they were called by grace. Yet, after all, it is a fact, that “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Well, the law is God's rule of holiness and righteousness, or the great revealer of right and wrong ; and this great matter is perfectly simple, since there is only one infallible rule. We are not to be judged by human rule, nor by any law but that which is heavenly and divine. Now, when God is pleased to apply this law to the law-breaker, the result is the knowledge of sin. I would not be fanciful, but I should like to say that the law is a divinely illuminated rule. You may apply a straight and perfect rule to an object in the dark, and the disparity between them is not seen ; but the law of God is full of light, so that when God brings it to the sinner and applies it to him, his conscience discovers his guilt, and he is amazed at himself. He then realizes the truth as to his state and condition, and he trembles at what he conceives to be the righteous

and inevitable consequences of sin. Yes, the law of God is His rule of righteousness and holiness. And let me say here, that this rule is immutable. God can never relax His claims. His holy and righteous law will always be a transcript of Himself, for it is intended to represent His character, nature and claims for ever; and if it were changed, it would cease to express the perfection and rights of Jehovah. My friends, some of you are aware of the fact that the law requires of you all that it required of Adam before he fell and became a transgressor and a sinner. Man is changed, but not the law. Whatever changes may have taken place in creatures, the holy law of God remains the same; and if we are to be justified and to live by it, we must possess the purity which Adam possessed, and the perfection in which he at first appeared, for it requires no less of us than it required of our first parent and head. But where is the man that can obey it, and whose character can possibly answer to its requirements? "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Our Lord did not experience any relaxation of the law, when its withering and powerful curse fell upon Him. If it could have been changed, or modified, or moderated, the Father might, and probably He would have relaxed its rigorous claims on the sufferings of His holy and darling Son; but God did not spare Jesus by abating one of His demands. God appeared in all His terrors as a Lawgiver to His beloved Son, and all that was required by eternal justice, righteousness, holiness and truth, was demanded of the atoning Saviour, and no favour whatever was shewn to Him. This is how you and I, if we are what we profess to be, are justified, how we are made perfect and complete in Him, and how we shall stand at the last great day in humble boldness before our God. And, although we are in ourselves transgressors of the law, and guilty sinners, yet let each one sing:—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge shall lay!
Fully through Thee absolved I am,
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

I remember having heard concerning a late godly minister, that on his dying bed he said, "If I had my life to live over again, I would preach more fully if possible the great facts which are embodied in Newton's words:—

"What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine."

This two-fold transfer of guilt and righteousness is a mystery indeed. It is God's prerogative to impute the guilt of sinful men to His dear Son, and the righteousness of the Righteous One to lost and ruined sinners. It is sneeringly said, Are we going to heaven on the legs of another? Is it not ridiculous, and absurd to suppose that man can be justified by a righteousness which is not his own? Or that he sustains a character in the formation of which he himself has had no hand? My brethren, this mystery is the glory of the gospel, and it glorifies its great Author God. We are nothing in ourselves but sin, uncleanness and guilt, but in

Jesus Christ we have that perfection which satisfies and pleases God. Give God the glory, while you expect a bright crown and a high and glorious throne above. Look for a heaven worthy of the character, love, fulness and power of your God. All that Jesus Christ was required to do to establish your character and to bring you into everlasting harmony with His Father as the great Lawgiver of the world, He did here on the earth. This is one of the brightest jewels of the gospel, or one of the greatest and most glorious facts revealed in this marvellous volume. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Apply this illuminated rule to ungodly sinners, considered apart from Christ, and oh, what vile, polluted, guilty creatures they are! Let them, however, be seen in Christ, be united to Him, and be found in Him, and then, though the rule is applied, God says, You are accepted in the Beloved, approved in Christ, and all fair, there is no spot in thee. In Christ, one is as perfect and as righteous as God requires him to be. The gospel proclaims this fact, and also how it is brought to pass. The law of God having been honoured by Christ and in the Christian, Jesus passed into heaven, and sat down justified at the right hand of God, and the Christian following his Lord is also justified in Christ's obedience and for His sake. A change of the law! I hold that if it were possible for God to change His law, it would be equally possible for Him to change His gospel; and if it were possible for either or both to be changed, all believing and holy confidence, trust, and reliance would at once cease. I am glad and thankful that the law of God can never be relaxed, and equally thankful that the gospel of God is the everlasting gospel. Let the law curse where sin is found, it is right that it should do so. Let the gospel, however, follow the law, bringing all that the Lawgiver requires, and then I am saved honourably and righteously and in a manner that is worthy of Jehovah Himself.

Now let me look, in the second place, *at the fact asserted*,—"by the law is the knowledge of sin." I wish I might be the means of liberating some poor soul or souls this morning. "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" but it reveals nothing else, and I would impress this fact upon your minds. The law gives a knowledge of sin only. The great mistake which is everywhere made, and made every day, is that of looking to the covenant of works for salvation, or comfort, or as a ground of hope. There is no living water and no living bread at Sinai, nor an inch of ground there for a sinner to build a hope upon. "So terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." The fire there was a consuming one, and upon the mountain itself a tempest raged; but there was nothing for guilty sinners but curse and condemnation; for "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Salvation? Yes, there is salvation, but not on this ground. There is such a thing as a hope of salvation, but not here, my friend. The law neither reveals, nor generates, nor encourages hope, if rightly and properly understood; for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." What purpose, then, does the law answer? What design does it fulfil? By it is "the knowledge of sin." First, the law *reveals sin*. It is like a glass in which one sees himself. It correctly represents the sinner's character to himself, when the Holy Ghost brings it and places it before his open eyes. It reveals his spots,

his sores, and uncleanness ; and then, as I said a few minutes ago, he is amazed at himself. The law is not the origin of sin, any more than the glass is the origin of the defects and deformities it reveals. The law reveals deformity, but does not produce it ; and it discovers sins, but does not originate them. It is presented to the sinner, and he sees and feels himself a guilty wretch. By the law sin is revealed. Then, secondly, *it condemns the sinner*, and its only language is that of condemnation. It cannot possibly justify him ; for justification by that which reveals imperfection and crime is impossible. No, there is first the revelation of sin, and then the condemnation of what it reveals and of the sinner also. Then, thirdly, according to its fiery nature, *it curses the person* whose sins it reveals and condemns. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” Thus we have a revelation of sin, the condemnation of the sinner, and the fearful curse which inevitably follows. And what else ? It leaves him under the curse. But is there no hope ? No, not here. Is there no such thing as repentance ? No, not here. The law does not call for repentance, but for perfection. It tells me, that if I have done anything that requires repentance I am a transgressor, and as such I must be cursed and left to die. Hope and repentance,—and we will come to them presently,—are not here. A state of things different from that which I am now describing, comes into existence I know ; but it is not from the law, for by that is the knowledge of sin. Well, here then is the sinner who stands sensibly guilty in the sight of God. The curse hangs over him, and the law has left him on forbidden ground to perish, for there the curse must fall. He is far from God, and afraid of Him, and as the law does not give a hatred to sin, but the knowledge of it only, we sing,

“ Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone :
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve a heart of stone.”

And what is this knowledge ? It is not a transient thought, or a mere opinion. A convinced sinner does not say,—I think, I fancy, I am of opinion, that I am guilty before God ; neither does he extenuate the enormity of sin. He will not rush out of the chapel, disturbing the whole congregation, if the minister be faithfully and scripturally representing the true nature of guilt and sin. Oh ! if the law, and the law only were applied to all the world, how miserable all would be ! If all men were left with only a legal knowledge of sin, which is so bitter and tormenting, it would drive all from God, and make them afraid of Him. A knowledge of sin only, apart from mercy, hardens the heart, and leaves the soul at the threshold of hell, lost in fear, darkness and despair.

Now, thirdly, *a knowledge of sin is essential to salvation*. Without it there will be *no confession*. If one says, “I have no sin to confess,” he does not know himself ; but when a person is convinced of sin, he comes and confesses it before God, with feelings such as I cannot describe. Without a knowledge of sin there can be *no prayer*. Let me be faithful. Take this point home to yourselves,—without the knowledge of sin there can be no true prayer. Although these words are used, “And forgive us our sins,” you use the petition, and the words drop from your lips,

"Forgive us our sins ;" but if you do not know yourself to be a sinner, and have not seen your sins in the light of God's countenance, your prayer is empty, for the spirit of grace and supplication is not in it. Thirdly, without a knowledge of sin there is *no power to appreciate the Saviour, and His sacrifice, and His salvation.* "He that is whole needs not a physician, but he that is sick." He that knows not himself as a sinner will not come to the Saviour, but probably he will despise His name, and also those who follow Him ; but he that knows sin by God's teaching says,

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall ;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

"He helped me," said David, but it was "when I was brought low." Another says, "He has healed me." Then you were wounded. Yes, and the wounds were deep, and my apprehensions terrifying ; but Jesus has healed, and washed, and saved me. The application of the law, and the revelation of my sinnership, prepared me for that great Redeemer whose name I love. Without the knowledge of sin there is no prayer, and no due and proper appreciation of the worth and merit of the Saviour, nor of the power, and preciousness of His blood. The law knocks one down, and Christ comes and raises him up. The law curses the guilty, and leaves them ; but the Lord comes and blesses them, and sets them upon a rock. The law leaves them hard and rebellious against God, wishing they had been animals rather than men ; and Christ finds them in that condition, and purges them from sin, adorns them with His righteousness, and says, that they shall be with Him where He is. A knowledge of sin is essential to salvation. I have no disposition to go into controversy here, or to find fault with others ; but it appears to me, that if men who profess to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, knew the spirituality of God's law, how it strips a sinner, and stings the soul, we should have different sermons from many of those which are preached in the day in which we live. Here is an important scripture : "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." The sting is sin, and the law is strong, and it sends one's guilt down into the depths of the conscience. This sting is not like that of a serpent upon a rock, but like its sting upon the flesh. The law reveals sin in the very depths of the conscience, and produces a fire there, which nothing but the blood of Christ can quench.

Fourthly, *the true believer in Christ has nothing to fear from the law.* Hence Paul says, "May I be found in Him." The law is not terrible to those who are found in Christ ; for, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." I have said that where the law leaves one, Christ by the gospel finds him, and He removes him from his lost estate under the curse and says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." If we are under grace, we are safe ; since to be there is to be in Jesus Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." What for ? "That according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory

in the Lord." We have been to Sinai and were cursed, and we have been led to Calvary and have been blessed. All that was required at Sinai, we found at Calvary, and that for which we were cursed at Sinai, was removed on the cross; and all that the law says we must possess we come to Jesus for, and find it all in His glorious person and finished work. Hence, he that is in Christ has nothing to fear from the law. This illuminated rule may be applied, but as you are complete in Him, no fear need disturb your breast. You experience a satisfaction and peace arising out of the realized fact that Christ is yours, and you are His.

Fifthly, *my text is universally applicable*. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It applies to all, the lost and the saved. To all in hell and in heaven, and to all now going to both worlds. With this difference. The law is applied to God's saved people here, whereby they now know they are sinners before they go home; but it is applied, and listen to me sinner, to the impenitent in death, or when he stands before the throne of God, in another state and world. Then God's holy law will be presented to you, even in the presence of the great Lawgiver and Judge; it will then discover the fact, if it should not discover it before, that you are guilty. The wicked in perdition gnash their teeth being filled with anger and wrath, a very strong element in their torments being a knowledge of the fact that their sufferings are righteous and their punishment is just, and that the anger of God against them as His enemies is legally necessary. But apply my text to Christ. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." How so? The law, and the person and character of our dear Lord were compared, and He said, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Was not Jesus always in harmony with the requirements of God's law? When sin was imputed to Him, then the law by which the knowledge of sin is possessed, inflicted upon Him all its curses. Yes, the text is of universal application. I might have drawn *a few inferences from the subject*, but my time is gone. One is this, that the law of God does not originate sin, but reveals and leaves it. Another is, that Divine forgiveness is the removal of sins, which is peculiar to God's pardon. How solemn a thing it is to be condemned and cursed, and left for hell! And then, how blessed to meet the God of love with pardon for our souls! And then, how melting to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and to be assured that we have been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified," and we do not want to be justified in that way. Is not every saved sinner ready to say with Job, "Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul, I would despise my life." Oh, the blessedness of being redeemed by blood, and saved in the Lord, and by Him, with an everlasting salvation! The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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WELCOME HOME.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 13th, 1885.

Being the Thirty-third Anniversary of the Opening of the Chapel.

"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Matt. xxv. 23.

THIS chapter comprises the whole interval between the first and second coming of Christ. Therein we have a three-fold representation of the church under the Gospel dispensation. In the parable of the ten virgins, we have a view of the professing and visible church. Here Jesus Christ is to be regarded as having taken His seat at His Father's right hand, as the great Lord and Governor of all. He is, however, coming again at death and at the judgment. The ten virgins are represented as having each of them a lamp, and as going forth to meet the bridegroom; five of them, however, were wise, and five were foolish. Have we the oil of grace in our vessels? Does the Holy Spirit dwell within? Has the kingdom of heaven been set up in our hearts? In the second parable, we see the gospel church in connection with her ministers; for I take it that, notwithstanding what is said as to the talents, some of which all may be said to possess, this parable is to be limited to ministerial gifts and abilities. The "far country" is heaven, and the man that travelled thither is the great God-man Mediator. He had done His work; but before He departed, He called His own servants, and delivered unto them His goods. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "But tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." The gifts and abilities of ministers of the Gospel are very diversified. Hence to one, He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; and He said, Trade with these goods, and occupy till I come. In due time the Lord Jesus will come and receive from each an account of his work. In the latter part of the chapter we have, not a parable, but great, solemn and glorious facts stated in connection with the universal church. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." And addressing His beloved people, He will invite them into the joy of their Lord, and welcome them into the kingdom of eternal peace; and the whole closes with the final decision of the King, that "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. I have, however, to limit my thoughts for a few minutes to the portion of Divine truth which I have read, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Since we meet to-day more especially in connection with the anniversary.
VOL. IV., No. 33.—JANUARY 15, 1886.

sary of the cause, I should under other circumstances most likely have taken a somewhat different text : but inasmuch as it has pleased our infinitely loving and wise God to take to Himself our beloved brother,* I thought it necessary and proper, that some allusion should be made to that solemn event, and this portion of the Word occurred to my mind as being appropriate to the occasion. I know that the words in their original connection are limited to ministers of the gospel ; but then I am reminded also of what the Apostle Paul says ; “ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to *me only*, but unto *all them* also that love His appearing.” I therefore hope to be welcomed into heaven, not because I have preached the Word for a few years ; nor on account of a well-spent life ; but because the Saviour loved me, and gave Himself for me : and I certainly do not expect that my crown will be brighter than the crowns which others will wear ; for the reward is all of grace from first to last. I must die and enter into the presence of God as a sinner saved, and not merely as a minister of the Gospel. Therefore our departed brother stood where I trust I stand, and where you also stand. And he has entered into bliss eternal, as we confidently and gratefully hope, as a sinner saved by sovereign grace and mercy. I will mention some points which the text expresses, and endeavour to offer a few observations upon each of them.

In the first place let us notice, *the blessed and important relationship mentioned here.* “ Enter thou into the joy of *thy Lord*.” Not merely into the joy of God, or into the joy of Jesus, nor into the joy of the Lord ; but into the joy of *thy Lord*. Well, our friends who are present, and who constitute at least a part of the family, have a very comfortable hope that their father and my sister’s beloved husband, has entered into that joy ; for whilst he was here on earth Jesus was precious to his heart. They believe that Jesus was his Lord, his Saviour, and his God. But let us try to apply it generally to ourselves, “ *thy Lord*.” In what relation do we stand to the Saviour, and the Saviour to us ? You know that we generally hear persons express themselves in this manner concerning Christ, “ *our Lord Jesus Christ*.” His names are great and grand, and are fraught with grace and glory, and they indicate sublimities which we cannot describe : *the Lord Jesus Christ*. That little word “ *our*,” however, is a very wondrous and weighty word, as so much depends upon it. Can we use it, conscientiously, believingly, and adoringly, as saved sinners in the presence of God ? Do not take this word into God’s presence unless you know something of its meaning and have a good conscience in God’s sight. Many hesitate to use this word “ *our Lord*,” fearing they may never enter into His joy. No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost. It was His will and pleasure to become in a sovereign manner our Lord and our God, and this mystery and this mercy are so great and so sublime, and involve so much, that the creature cannot by any power he possesses know for himself that Jesus is his saving Lord. It requires the interposition and operation of the Holy Spirit to convince a lost and ruined sinner of the fact that Jesus loved him and gave Himself for him.

* A Funeral Sermon for one of the Members of the Church.

“ Oh, the happiness arising
From the life of grace within !
When the soul is realizing,
Conquests over hell and sin.”

Oh ! how blessed was that hour—and some of us cannot forget it, when we were Divinely helped to embrace the Son of God as our Lord, when we by faith rested on His dear name, and said, “Thou art the Lord our God.” Jesus is the *rightful Lord* of all His beloved people. “O Lord,” the Church says, “other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us ; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name.” Many cruel lords tyrannised over us when we lived “far from God by wicked works.” We were hurried along by this, and that, and the other lust ; a multitude of them strove within, and were rapidly carrying us down to the regions of eternal woe ; for their tyranny was very powerful. We were in bondage most deep and dark ; our wills and our affections were enslaved, our consciences were seared as with a hot iron, and all our emotions, sentiments, and faculties were chained by the lords which had dominion over us. Grace, however, reached our hearts, and snatched and delivered us out of their power, and we were brought, we trust for ever, from the tyranny and cruelty of the powers of darkness, to fall as the captives of God’s mercy with broken hearts, at the feet of our great conquering Lord. He had a right to claim us, to snatch us out of the devil’s hand, to bring us face to face with Himself, to convince us of sin, to cast us down by a merciful power into the dust at His blessed feet, and to pour a measure of His Spirit into our hearts. He had a right to assure us that He was ours, and we were His, and to lay His right hand upon us and say, “Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.” Ever since that moment and I trust I am not going too far, our Lord has reigned over and in us. There have been times innumerable when we have been in darkness deep and dense, when sin has risen and raged within, and our hearts have been sensibly full of evil ; still the desire of our souls has ever been to His name and to the remembrance of Him, and He that has our desires has our hearts. He in whom all our wishes centre is our Lord. He whom we would serve if we could with all our powers, is our Governor and Ruler. We cannot serve Him as we would for Satan holds us back and sin is a heavy load upon our minds. Were it possible, we would ever serve Him with all the powers He has endowed us with ; and therefore, He is our Lord. Thus He is our Lord and our God. I had not many opportunities of conversing with our brother, but we heard his experience, and were acquainted with his life, which now lies as it were before us ; we knew him also from his prayers which he offered here, and we are prepared to say gratefully before God, that we believe the God of heaven was his Lord and his God. “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Jesus is our *ruling Lord*. If He is our Lord savingly and in a new covenant way, He rules and governs within. Is it not sweet and precious to be ruled by Jesus, to be governed by His grace and power, and to feel the peculiar influence of His presence upon our minds. The happiest person on earth is the person whose soul is governed by the Saviour,

whose affections are set upon things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, whose heart has been made tender by the Spirit, and whose conscience has been cleansed and purified by the precious blood of the Lamb. I do not know what it is to be in heaven, but I am assured by God's holy word that our beloved Lord reigns universally there. There is not a sentiment, an emotion, a faculty, a thought, or a movement in heaven, but what Jesus guides and governs. There are no contrary influences and no adverse powers in that world of serenity and rest, but all are holy and Divine; all that sways minds in heaven is true and righteous for ever. Now and then, we who are here are favoured to feel somewhat of the precious power of God's grace, and it is sweet to have the whole mind for only five minutes swayed by the name of Jesus, and directed by His love. It is sweet in prayer and meditation to be absorbed in His name, having all our thoughts and all our faculties surrounded by the grace of Immanuel; then we know experimentally the holy meaning of His titles: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He saves; and "He shall be called Immanuel, which is being interpreted, God with us." Am I a fanatic? Do you think me so? Then I shall be one all the days of my life; for I am sure that this fanaticism will prevail in the kingdom of God for ever;

"For every power finds sweet employ,
In that eternal world of joy."

I am not surprised that the power of Christ's name over the mind should be so great and so effectual; for is not the influence of the devil over the souls of his slaves deep and mighty? Are there not times without number when his followers have not one moral thought or sentiment?—all being filled with sin and directed by the poisonous influence of Satan. The power of hell is sufficiently great to carry the whole mind before it; and yet that power, and Satan himself, are limited. But the power of Christ is illimitable, and His grace is omnipotent; hence there are moments when all the mind is sweetly absorbed in that which is heavenly, spiritual and divine. "Thy Lord." I am taking an experimental view of this relationship to-night. It was my intention when I came so to do. Jesus is Lord of all. I know the theory of this fact is very important and blessed; but experience is better than theory. The theory of divine things is good, for to know the plan of salvation is desirable; but it is infinitely precious to realize our interest in that salvation for ourselves. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And He is our *only Lord*. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee." There are none in heaven that we know as we know our Lord, none there that we can trust in as we trust in His dear name; none there in fact but Christ, that we can trust in at all. None in heaven but our Redeemer, into whose hand we can commit our cause, and none is there with whom we are, or ever have been, so familiar as we are with Him. Yet we have never seen Him with our mortal eyes, and our natural ears have never heard His voice. We, are however, acquainted with Him, intimate and familiar with Him; and hence we are expecting that when, like our brother, we shall pass away out of time into eternity, we shall find ourselves at once and for ever at home. He is the Lord our God. That is all I have time and strength to say on that branch of the subject.

In the second place, let us look at *the state indicated*. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." I do not know that I can tell you anything fresh about this glorious state "the joy of our Lord." The Redeemer said to Nathaniel, "Thou shalt see greater things than these." We have already seen great things; but God's revelation of Himself is gradual and progressive, and a knowledge of Divine things does not burst upon us all at once. The going forth of the Lord is prepared as the morning, and the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Our Lord said to His disciples in the days of His flesh, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" and therefore we learn little by little. Our progress is gradual, and our knowledge grows as the light continues to shine. We have here a little joy now and then; but the best, the greatest, and the richest is to come. Sinner, it is not so with you. Saint, it is so with you; for although you have seen great things, yet you will see greater still. Great things, I am sure are seen in the deep solemnities of death. I have never been there, although I once thought, many years ago when I was in the country, that I was not far from eternity. I saw great things then; my thought however as to going home, was not correct; for I was not in dying circumstances. Dying persons see great things when there is but a step between them and the threshold of glory; but greater things are seen when the soul glides out of the body, and the mind leaves the mortal case which now contains it: I mean this poor clay tabernacle. Then all that is essential to our minds will depart and step over the line of time into the wonder-world of glory. Then indeed greater things are seen, and what is most wonderful and mysterious is, the fact, that they will never lose their freshness nor their power to attract, and to draw forth every thought and feeling. Brother, be not afraid to die if you can help it. May God give us grace to triumph over the very fear of death. My text does not mention death directly or expressly so, and yet we cannot enter into the joy of our Lord without dying. The word represents death in a very blessed manner. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." It means dying, going home, leaving the world, dropping mortality. But this fact is not stated in these forms. Death has lost his sting, and I do not suppose we shall realize our fears and doubts when we are in the depths of Jordan. We shall, I trust, be able to say, "O Death, where is thy sting?" I do not feel it, I cannot see it. Where is it? I used to think I could see it, and was then afraid to die. I feared I should feel it when I came here. "O Death where is thy sting?" thou hast none for me. "O Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The best is before us, uncomprehended, unseen as yet. We can form no adequate conception of what our ever bounteous God has provided for us elsewhere. But it is the joy of our Lord.

First, it is His joy, because *He acquired it and has also a right to give it*. "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right of the throne of God." In the distance beyond the darkness the Saviour went through when He died, beyond it all was this joy of our Lord. He made a way for Himself into it, and a way for you and me also. He passed through the depths, and

went bleeding through the sorrow and shame, and died at the end of His saving career, and then rose triumphantly and took possession of His joy, and now He comes to His redeemed ones, saying, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." It is His joy by acquirement, and His also because *He possesses it*,—not for Himself merely, but for His beloved people. And this brings me to say that He will share it with us. I say *us*, for I trust I shall meet our brother again, and all those other happy saints also now in heaven, whose faces were once so familiar to us in this sanctuary, where we so frequently met and worshipped. Yes, we hope to meet those happy, heavenly, perfected spirits again, and Christ will share His joy with us and them for ever. Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. He and we shall sit at the same table, but He will be at the head thereof. In that world of feasting, rest, and eternal glory, He will unite with us in singing. Is it a fact that He will sing? Will He unite with us in singing the praises of God in heaven? He says so Himself in various parts of the Word of God. "In the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee." "The Lord thy God will rejoice over thee with joy and with singing." "A voice out of the throne, saying, Praise *our God*, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him both small and great." A voice. Where did it come from? "Out of the throne." What was it? "Praise *our God*." Who was the speaker? One of the family, the elder Brother, the God-man; and He says, "Praise *our God* all ye His servants, both small and great." It is His joy; He acquired it, He holds it, and He will share it with His people. It is *the joy of sight*, and not of faith. Now, we feel at times a joy and peace in believing. Distinguish between the two as well as you can. There is a joy in believing. "Whom, having not seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Now, if believing joy be unspeakable and full of glory, what must the joy of sight be, when faith will be swallowed up and lost for ever, in the full vision of God! You must see all that you now believe. You believe in Christ,—you must see Him. You believe in heaven,—you must see it. You believe in the prepared glories of eternity,—you must see them, enter into them, appropriate and enjoy them for ever. This is the joy of sight. Now we rejoice when we read about it, and hear of it, whilst we believe in it; but when the body is in the grave, and the immortal spirit is at home, then we shall know what the joy of our Lord is.

The joy of sight. What does it involve? So much that no tongue can tell you all. I will give you just one thought. The joy of our Lord involves *the perfect and everlasting fulfilment of every holy hope and desire on our part, and the perfect fulfilment of every purpose and promise on the part of God*. Oh, what a world is that where there are no wishes; and what a state is that in which there are no desires; and what a glorious rest is that where prayer is unnecessary! People, and even professors of religion sneer at hope, and say, "Hope, sir, are you still there! Are you not beyond hope? Can you not express yourselves positively and confidently?" My beloved friend, we cannot be quite full here; for were we brimful in this world, we should not pray for more. It is a sense of need that induces prayer, and want gives rise to fervent desire. We long for something at present unpossessed, and whilst we want something more, we ask and hope, and wish

and long for it. But when the vessel is full to the brim, there will be no more prayer. It is the joy of our Lord.

Thirdly, we have *the divine welcome*. "Enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord." This welcome will come from the lips and heart of the great fountain of this joy. He will not send a message that He is ready to receive us, if we are ready to go, or that He will permit us to enter. This invitation is peculiar to Himself, and such a welcome as we have never yet received from any friend. But this implies some most important matters. It implies *a meetness for heaven*. The unsanctified soul would feel no joy in heaven. Enter thou saint into it, however. "And they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage." Who went in? "They that were ready." And did they stay? "And the door was shut." "He shall be a pillar in the temple of my God, and shall go no more out for ever." A meetness for the glory of heaven and for the joy of Jesus. I have often thought of Paul's beautiful and blessed words; "To will is present with me." I put the test on a low step. Is it so with you? "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." If you can say, "To will is present with me," you possess a meetness for the joy of your Lord. To have been made willing in the day of Christ's power, is to have received a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. But entering into this joy, involves or implies *a solemn change*, yea, several solemn changes. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." It implies a change of place. The place that knows us now, will know us no more for ever. David's place was empty in the palace of Saul, but he probably filled it again. The seats, however, that have been emptied by death, will never be filled again by departed ones. They will know us no more for ever. The vacant chair, the empty room, the gap they will never fill again. They cannot be there and here too. When Jesus says Come home, they enter into the joy of their Lord. It involves a change of company. We shall then go to our own people in heaven, and be at once and for ever at home with them there. Our brother loved the saints when he was here, and he loves them now. The saints he loved here, were imperfect; but he is now with the just who are perfect before the throne. What is better than that, or equally as good, is the fact that he himself is as perfect as all the rest. It involves a change of employment too. "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening." Our brother did so as to temporal matters; but he did so also as to spiritual things. The morning and the evening, however, are gone, never to return again. The work and the labour are past, and he has ceased to toil, and has entered into rest. And how is he employed? I do not know, only as my Bible tells me that they have golden harps, and sing there; and that they view their Lord, rejoice in His presence, and commune with Him for ever. I do not know what all this means, but the joy of my Lord is before me. My hair is grey, and my powers are not what they have been, and I sometimes wonder whether I shall not soon go home. I shall meet you and others there.

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know,
All I desired or wished below;

And every power find sweet employ,
In that eternal world of joy."

Now this joy which blessed spirits enter into, enters into them. If I might illustrate the subject in a homely manner, I would say, the fish in the sea is at home in the water which is its proper element, and it imbibes that in which it lives. So we shall enter into that joy, and be filled therewith for ever. Thus heaven will be full of rejoicing ones, and they will be for ever full of heaven. When do they enter? Immediately after death; for, "Absent from the body, they are present with the Lord." How do they enter? Sometimes suddenly, as was the case, to some extent, with our departed friend. Some gradually fail and pass away; and others are taken home in a few minutes or in a few hours. The Lord Himself is Ruler here, and He does as He pleases in ruling over death, and over all the circumstances of our lives.

Lastly, and I must say a word on this point,—*This favour is a personal one.* "Enter *thou* into the joy of thy Lord." We shall not be lost as individuals in the crowd, not be overlooked or forgotten in the throng, neither shall we appear as strangers among strangers. Each one will be addressed, "*Thou.*" "Enter *thou* into the joy of Thy Lord." To the thief Christ said, "This day shalt *thou* be with Me in Paradise." As He said to the woman that was a sinner, "*Thy* sins are forgiven thee;" and to Peter, "I have prayed for *thee.*" Yes, the favour is a personal one: "*he* that endureth to the end shall be saved, and admitted into the joy of the Lord." And what is the result? Why, when the invitation or rather the order is received, the ties that hold the soul and body together break suddenly or gradually, as I said just now, and the soul steps out of one state into another, out of the house of clay, into "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." How does it enter? Without sin. The body and sin are left behind, and natural relations and relationships are left for ever. All is spiritual and divine in heaven. The body is left for survivors to bury affectionately and in hope. We bury our friends' clay tabernacles in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. *He* is not buried, but the clothes he wore; or the tenement he occupied fell down, and the ruins or remains you carried to the grave the other day. The tenant, the soul, "has entered into the joy of his Lord," without sin, without a stain, without a spot, without a wrinkle, or any such thing. May we live in Christ, die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his. The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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CHRIST'S ADVENT—ITS NATURE AND DESIGN.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 10th JANUARY, 1886.

"And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."—John ix. 39.

In this chapter we have some blessed information as to the mysteries of Providence. Nothing springs from chance; yet neither the father nor the mother of the blind man supposed that it was determined by God that Jesus should meet him, open his eyes, and save his soul. The eternal power and Godhead of the Saviour are also manifested in this notable miracle, and in the manner in which it was wrought. Then we see the progress of the work of grace in the heart of the man whose eyes had been opened. His views of the Saviour were at first indistinct, but he could positively say, "Whereas I was blind now I see;" and he knew that "a man that is called Jesus" had given him sight. The Pharisees were offended because Jesus had done this on the Sabbath day, and they cast the man out of the synagogue. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when He had found him, He said unto him, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?'" He enquired "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" The Saviour replied, "It is He that talketh with thee." The man immediately exclaimed, "Lord, I believe; and he worshipped Him." "Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."

The text divides itself into two branches,—first, *the advent of our Lord*; "I am come into this world;"—and secondly, *the design of His coming*; "For judgment I am come, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." These being the two parts into which the subject divides itself, I will try in an humble way, if the Lord will help me, to make a few remarks on each.

In the first place, we notice *the advent, or the first coming of the Lord into this world*. "I am come into this world." These are wonderful words by a wonderful Speaker, announcing a wonderful fact. Let us in the first place consider *the fact itself*. Our Lord came into this world. This is His own testimony. He has therefore been here, and He has returned to His Father and our Father, and to His God and our God. I do not know a more important fact in the universe than this, that Jesus Christ came from heaven into this world. Now suppose you lay as much

stress as possible upon the two words, "*this world*." How many worlds are there? I do not know. We have read about the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and of the ages which are past and gone; and we know that the general opinion of learned men is, that the stars which shine by night are inhabited worlds; but whether they be so or not I do not know. We know, however, that the Apostle Paul was directed to say in his Epistle to the Hebrews, 1st chapter; "By whom also He made the worlds." There are, however, three worlds at least, with which we have to do. There is one worse than this, namely, hell; and there is one better than this, namely, heaven; and there is this world, which lies between the other two, and which, so to speak, touches both. There is a way out of this world into hell, and there is also a way out of it into heaven. Yes, there are at least three worlds with which directly, or indirectly, we have to do; but if there are others in the universe, I do not think we have much if anything to do with them. I am sure God did not intend to teach us matters of science, when he gave us a divine revelation of Himself, and of His mind and will. The Word of God is very precious, and its information is deep, mysterious, and important; but His revelation of Himself relates to moral and to spiritual things, and not to material, philosophical, and scientific matters. It appears to me to be one of the great faults and follies of the day in which we live, that people go to the Scriptures for philosophical and scientific information, and finding statements which militate against their prejudices and prepossessions, they shut the Bible with a sneer, and declare that no dependence should be placed upon it. You and I have not so learned Christ. But suppose just for a moment there are other worlds, to whom do they belong? By whom were they made, and ruled, and governed? If there are other worlds and they are peopled as this world is, who is their King and their Ruler? Blessed be God, we have been taught to believe with all our heart, that if all the stars seen and unseen are worlds, they were all made by our Lord, and are all governed by Him who upholdeth all things by the word of His power. By Him God made the worlds. But has Christ been into any of them? We know not, beyond the fact that He is everywhere, for He is the eternal God, and is therefore an omnipresent Being. If the stars are all worlds, He is in them all, as He is in this one also. In this respect He was here before He personally came; and He will, as to His omnipresence, fill all worlds while they endure. But let us not speculate. If I could say whether He has visited other worlds as He has this one, and could tell you what He is doing for their inhabitants, I do not think it would be a profitable theme to preach upon. I mention these things however, in order that you may see how great is our Lord, and how vast is His condescension in fixing His special attention upon this world of ours. "I am come into *this world*." If He has been into other worlds, He had a right to go, and if He has done any special work in them, all glory to His name. He came here, and what is His testimony concerning this visit? "I am come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I am come, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

"I am come to bleed, to suffer, to die, and to save sinners in and by Myself with an everlasting salvation. That is better than speculation ; and yet the points I have introduced may serve to help us somewhat in understanding such portions of Divine truth as my text, or it may serve perhaps to intensify our adoration of the greatness, majesty, and glory of our God.

But how did Christ come into this world ? As no other being ever entered it. There was Adam in the garden of Eden ; " God took of the dust of the ground and formed it into a man, and breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Christ did not so come. Then Cain, the first-born of Adam came by birth. Jesus Christ did not come exactly in that way. Cain was born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and in sin his mother conceived him. Christ did not come in that way. How then did He come ? He came willingly, voluntarily, and intentionally. Did you ever hear of any other being who came into the world of his own will, and who resolved before birth to come. Why, our Lord existed before all worlds ; and He says, " I am come ; it was My intention to do so ; I came voluntarily." He came in a peculiar manner, but He did come, and tabernacled here. Angels came here before the Lord. Gabriel went to Daniel about the offering up of the evening sacrifice, and touched him, and said, " O Daniel, a man greatly beloved," " thy words were heard." But Gabriel came not as our Lord came, neither did any of God's angels so come. I have said that He came intentionally, and to fulfil a fixed purpose ; He came personally and visibly, yet He came by birth, else He would not have been our near kinsman ; and yet there were facts connected with His incarnation and His birth of a woman which were peculiar to Himself. Look at your Lord as you will, view Him from whatever point you please, you will always find that He is an unique person, or that there is none like Jesus in all the universe. He comes now spiritually, for has He not said, " Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them ?" And did He not say to His disciples ; " Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature ?" " Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Are we strangers to His presence ? If He be not here to night, yet He is sometimes present with us. Do we not now and then realize His nearness to us, and would it not be perfectly vain for the devil under such circumstances to tempt us that we are strangers to Christ. We feel the warming influence and power of the sun when he shines, and we know that the warmth comes from the sun ; and when the Sun of Righteousness shines, our hearts are warmed, and we know confidently that we are near to Jesus, and that He is with us. But there is a difference between His spiritual and His personal coming ; and therefore when He said, " I am come into the world," He meant, " I Myself am come, not typically, emblematically, or by influence merely ; but I am come in person into the world." That is all I will say on that point.

In the second place, let us look at *the mystery* connected with this fact. Let me go to the Apostle Paul for help. " Great is the mystery of godliness ; God was manifest in the flesh." That is how He came, or it indi-

cates the mystery of which we are trying to speak. Who is the Being spoken of? God. What did He do? Manifest Himself? How? In the flesh. Where? In this world God was manifest in the flesh; not concealed, neither was He changed. Did He reveal the whole of Himself, or all His glory? The world could not have borne it. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The glory of the Son of God broke forth, so to speak, visibly and strikingly now and then. He said imperatively to the devil, "Come out of him;" and Satan left that individual immediately. The devil knew the great Deliverer, and felt His power. "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." "Art thou come to torment me before the time?" Our Lord extorted from the devil the great fact of His Omnipotence. "Thou art the Holy One of God." It is Thine to torment me, and I shall be tormented, but there is a time for every purpose under heaven. Art Thou come to do it before the time? He that was manifest in the flesh was God. He walked on the sea as if He had been on dry land, and God was thus manifest in the flesh; He rose and stood in the ship when it was tempest-tossed, after the disciples had said, "Master, we perish!" Calmly and quietly, like the Master of the Universe, and the Ruler of everything, He rebuked the wind and the waves, and immediately there was a great calm. Was it a man, an angel, or an inferior deity that did that? "We beheld His glory," said John; we saw it when He calmed the tempest, walked on the sea, cast out devils, touched the leper, and made him perfectly clean, and raised Lazarus. But more especially on the mount of transfiguration was God manifest in the flesh. Why did He not assume a new nature? If the invisible God had resolved to become visible, it would have been perfectly easy for Him to have done so. Then there would have been no natural relationship between Him and men; therefore God manifested Himself in the flesh. He took the nature that fell, that sinned, that was under the curse, and that God had resolved to save, and to glorify. He Himself likewise took part of the same. But in order that He might take it in perfect purity and spotlessness, He took it in a special and supernatural manner. Still He was manifest in our flesh, and not in the angelic or any other nature, but in this flesh, or this nature of ours; and hence we draw near unto Him, and are not afraid. The great Majesty of heaven is at once a man, and the everlasting God. Is it not a mystery? "I am Jehovah, that is My name; but "I am come mysteriously and visibly into this world." This assumption of human nature by the Son of God was not a temporary arrangement to accommodate Himself to the limited powers and capacities of creatures here. Having put on our nature, He wore it all the days of His life in this world, and He will wear it in heaven for ever. I sometimes lose myself trying to realize a little of the experience of happy millions in heaven, who see Jehovah in the person of the man of Christ Jesus. The identical person that died on the cross, whose brow was torn with thorns, whose side was pierced with the spear, and whose hands and feet were wounded with nails; that very man, that very God man, who died in ignominy and shame, sits on the high throne of majesty,

and countless millions are round about Him beholding His Godhead and His glory for ever.

Thirdly, *the mercy* of it. His purpose in coming to this world was a very merciful and benevolent one. If an army invades France or some other country, the object is not benevolence or mercy, but victory. But when Christ left the Father's bosom and put our nature on, and appeared in this world, His intentions were gracious and loving. This was just like our God. "I am come for judgment;" but what form did the judgment take? That they which are blind might see. Blessed fact, "that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind." Then there was justice connected with this act, as well as mercy. Who would wish to see Christ without Divine justice blended with mercy? Well, my friends, love sent Him, love brought Him, and He brought the love of God with Him; for He is its great embodiment. Such was the love of God that heaven could not hold it. It broke forth from heaven, and rolled down into this world, in the glorious person of the Saviour. And what was the object of His love? Why, His beloved ones were in the sea of sin and guilt, and were being carried away to eternal death, and there was nothing between them and hell. Though they were the objects of His love,—yet apart from His coming, there was nothing between them and ruin. Had He not come, they must, notwithstanding all that had been decreed, have been cursed. But He said, "I am come, I have left My throne and My Father's bosom, to interpose My precious blood. He placed Himself between hell and His people,—between eternal wrath and the objects of His love. He came from His throne into the womb, from the womb into the manger, from the manger unto the end of the law. And thus He interposed His person, His sufferings, and His blood, between poor sinners and eternal ruin. I am come in mercy. He came into the world where this work was to be done. What He did here could not have been done elsewhere. He could not be cursed, nor smitten, nor meet the devil, nor be tempted, nor die, on His throne in heaven. Therefore He said, "I will go into the world to be smitten, and cursed, and weep, and bleed, and die. Blessed be His name, the great purpose for which He came was accomplished, and He returned to His Father, who crowned Him Lord of all, and placed Him at His own right hand, and He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. *What are the evidences* at the present time of the fact that He has been here? Well, with regard to His first coming, the world was spared till He came, and spared for His sake; and when He was due He appeared upon the scene, and said, "I am come." And what is the world spared for now? Look at London—our streets, our public-houses, our theatres, our casinos, and our thousands of wicked dens. London, however, is only one place, although it is a Babylon; in other parts of the country and of the world, there are dens of infamy and abomination as deep and black as any that exist here. Is the world spared for its own sake? Are not the patience and the long-suffering of God marvellous? But what is such a world spared for? Christ has been into it, and He has done a work here which renders it necessary that

the people interested in that work should come into existence and be saved ; and when the redeemed of the Lord are all gathered together, the world will end and time shall be no more. What shall follow time ? Eternity ; which will be spent, in hell by the blind, and in heaven by all who see. This brings me to say a very few words,

In the second place, on *the design of His advent*. "I am come for judgment, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." It comes to this, therefore, that sight and light are from Jesus Christ. *Divine illumination is one of the results of His advent*. The blind, I mean the spiritually blind, are not admitted into heaven. This world is full of blind men and women, but there is not a blind one in heaven. There is no blindness in God, nor in any spirit before His throne. He that is spiritually blind sees no beauty in the Saviour, and what is the reason ? Is it because there is none in Him ? Is He not all over glorious ? If such persons could be admitted into heaven, there would be no paradise, no pleasure for them. "I am come that my people might have their eyes opened." He came to open our blind eyes, and to shed a peculiar heavenly and new covenant light upon our dark understanding. Can we say with the good man, "One thing I know," and that one thing was, that "whereas I was blind now I see." The man seems to have reasoned fairly well. "Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes. Why should you say you know not whence He is, and cannot tell whether He be of God ; anyhow He opened mine eyes. This I know and cannot doubt it ; for whereas I was blind, now I see. The seeing eye and the hearing ear are both from the Lord. If your knowledge of general things is limited and shallow, never mind, though I would encourage you, and especially the young, to acquire what you can in that direction, if you can say with the good man, "Whereas I was blind now I see," you have the one thing needful, Christ has touched and opened your eyes, He has blessed you with the daylight of eternal truth and salvation, and has given you what thousands of your fellow creatures do not possess.

Secondly, *what do they see ?* What objects are revealed to them whose eyes Christ opens, and upon whose minds He pours light divine. One of the first things they see is sin, they have a sight and sense of it. They go together and are inseparable. And how does sin appear, and what is the experience of the sinner concerning it ? That it is an evil thing to sin against God. That is only half of it, and a terrible half it is, for it is sufficient to crush us for ever ; and let me say, See to it my fellow-sinners. But it is also a bitter thing to sin against God, and if Christ pours divine light into the understanding, and life into the heart, sin is seen to be a cursed and an abominable evil. It then appears to be against God when Christ opens one's eyes, this also is its sting and the force and power that drives the fact into the heart. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight. And when the evil of sin has been revealed in some measure, then there is a sense of the fact that it is also a bitter thing. Some of God's people

have so deeply tasted the bitterness of sin, that they have almost wished they had never been born, or that they had been mere animals : such is the anguish it produces. The Lord be pleased to save us from sinking into despair, and to encourage us to hope fixedly in His mercy, and in the merits of our dear Lord. What else is seen ? The way of salvation. My own sin against God is seen ; then as the light is communicated, the way of life is revealed. " I am the way, the truth, and the life."

" 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 grace shall I receive."

Two ways are seen—sin the way to hell, and Christ the way to God and heaven. But am I in that way ? is another important point requiring more light and further revelation. Well, the redeemed shall walk there. But one says, I am so ignorant and shallow-minded. " The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." But is there no possibility or probability of failure here ? " The ransomed of the Lord *shall* return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." What else is seen ? The three worlds I mentioned just now are seen in a true light. And how are they revealed ? Hell is revealed. People who tell you there is no such world, are blind. The Lord has not opened their eyes, for there is a hell. There was one in Christ's days, and there is one now, and it is seen when Christ opens the eyes of the mind. It appears thus to the soul that is enlightened. I deserve to sink into everlasting woe ; and if mercy divine had not interposed between me and destruction, I should have fallen into that pit. You did not at one time realize that fact. No, but Christ having opened your eyes you now see. This world seen in a true light is hollow ; you used to think it was full. " Yes, but mine eyes are opened, and my spirit renewed ; and the world is so vain and unsatisfying, that I sometimes long to leave it and go home. There is another world even heaven, and how does that appear ? My rest, my Father's house on high, my everlasting home and sweet and blissful abode. Hell I see, and I am delivered from it : this world I see, and I would tread it under my feet : heaven I see, and in my Father's house are many mansions, and there is one for me. What else is seen when the eye is opened ? That which shortens and lightens affliction : " Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are seen are eternal. See unseen things, invisible things ? " Yes, I am come into this world that My people might see that which mortal eyes have never beheld, and that they might hear that which human ears have never heard. May you not possibly be deceived ? My dear friends, if your

mental powers were sufficiently great to see the invisible spirits around the throne of grace, what millions of poor suppliants you would now behold; for it is a fact there are weeping, wondering spirits before that throne. But although they are invisible, it is a fact they are there, and God sees them, and they see God. I might go further into these matters, but time is gone.

Therefore notice lastly, *the measure or degree of light granted*. How much light have we? Some of us have not much; but I say this for your comfort—if Christ has opened your eyes, and granted you a little light, you have received enough to have been deeply convinced, for the light He gives leaves conviction and certainty in the soul. To some is given more, to some less; but to none is given a full and perfect knowledge of all. God has never given a sinner a full or an exhaustive knowledge of sin: if He did so, we should die. God has never fully revealed a sinner to himself. He keeps that sight for His own eye, and reveals a part only to men: and no creature in heaven has ever yet known or comprehended the whole of God. No, our knowledge will be progressive. When Christ opens our eyes, they increase in strength and clearness as years multiply,—unlike those of nature. The other day we did not use glasses; but the longer we live, the more we need them. Our mortal eyes grow dim, but the inner man is renewed day by day. “The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” We may be naturally blind before we die; but if Christ has opened the eyes of our minds, we shall see clearly and satisfactorily enough those objects which are invisible and Divine.

Now, as to the other persons He deals with. “That they which see might be made blind.” The Pharisees rejected Him; they were full of light in their own conceit, and hence those which see might be left in judicial blindness. It is the work of the devil to blind those that believe not, and since they are so conceited that they believe they know all they are required to know, God will leave them where they love to be, under Satan’s terrible influence. But the Lord has not left us there; for, through infinite favour, we who were blind, can now see. God grant His blessing, for Christ’s sake. Amen.


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THE SAINTS' REFUGE AND COMFORT.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 14th FEBRUARY, 1886.

"Come My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."—Isaiah xxvi. 20.

THE Church of God is a redeemed and regenerated body of divine worshippers. Every redeemed soul shall be brought to worship His Redeemer; and every regenerated mind shall be led into the presence of God, whom he shall, as a new-born creature, reverence and love for ever. This subject is an important one, especially when we consider we shall be worshippers in heaven for ever. How we shall there worship our God, I cannot at present say; we are told, that we shall see Him as He is; that we shall be for ever with Him; and like Him, and that we shall for ever sing His worthy and well-deserved praises. The heavenly congregation are represented as casting their crowns at His feet, and ascribing unto His great Majesty all honour, power, wisdom, glory, and salvation for ever. Perhaps worship in heaven, though perfect and perpetual, will be far more simple than it is here. I refer to the fact, that here on the earth it consists of several branches, some of which will be unknown in heaven; for instance, preaching the Gospel, is a part of spiritual worship, but there are no preachers, and no preaching in heaven. When we meet together we read the Word, but we shall not need the portrait of the Saviour, when we see Him as He is; neither will it be necessary that we should read His written thoughts and mind, when we shall see Him face to face without a veil between. Again, we pray when we meet together here, but there will be no prayer in heaven. When we are now gathered together in the name of the Lord, we sing and we shall sing in heaven. The voice of prayer will never be heard there, reading the word will be unknown there; Elijah will never prophesy, and Paul will never preach, and you and I shall never confess sin. These, however, form branches of spiritual and divine worship now; hence the observation I made, that worship in heaven will be more simple than it is here. When we pray, we express want, desire and hope; but there will be no want, no desire, no hope there. We read the Word of God for edification and information, but these in heaven will be perfect and complete for ever, while we stand in the glory of our great Lord. When we preach the Word, we break the bread of life, and the idea is, that that there are hungry and needy souls in the house of God, and hence the Master said to Peter; "Feed My sheep, and feed My lambs;" but in

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heaven, He that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Probably therefore, worship in heaven consists in singing the praises of the Lord ; but whether that will be vocal or otherwise, I do not know. We know not how disembodied spirits before the throne express the praises of the Lord, and therefore it must all be reduced to this one great fact ; that God's people in glory, having entered the joy of their Lord, being living vessels of mercy, are filled for ever with peace, and love, and joy, and satisfaction, and delight ; and I am perfectly satisfied that we shall be able there to utter our gratitude and joy acceptably. However, we may sing I am quite sure that I shall in some mysterious manner give expression to the feelings of my soul, in a way that will be delightful to myself, and pleasing to God for ever.

I have made these remarks on account of the 1st verse of the chapter :—
 “ In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah : We have a strong city ; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” And then the song follows ; but whether my text constitutes a part of it or not, I cannot positively say. Several learned men believe that the following chapter should commence with my text. However, it is said to be a song, and the subject is salvation, which God will appoint for walls and bulwarks. The salvation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, appointed for walls and bulwarks, before the foundation of the world ; walls and bulwarks imply workmanship ; and materials, which are, love, blood, and power ; and the work involved in their erection, is that of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The fact that this city is thus walled in and surrounded by bulwarks, implies that there are dangers, and foes, and enemies round about ; nevertheless, the citizens within the walls sing, “ We have a strong city.” Hell and Satan are outside, and not inside, *for destruction*. He hurls his darts at the walls, if I may so speak, but his power is gone, at least it is limited. We have a strong city, for God's salvation is appointed for walls and bulwarks. Let us, however, pass from the song, and contemplate our God as saying to His people ; “ Come My people, there is a strong city and the gates are open, and I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Me.” “ Enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.”

Now let us confine our attention for a few minutes to these words, and it will be necessary in the first place to try to ascertain *what these chambers are*. “ Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers.” You will of course read the chapter at your leisure, and in so doing, you will perhaps try to connect the preceding verse with my text. “ Thy dead men shall live ; together with My dead body shall they arise.” This has led some good men to believe that by chambers here, we should understand the grave, and that God says to His people in troublous times ; “ Come home, I will receive your spirit into heaven, and your bodies shall be deposited in the tomb.” “ Enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee.” Well, we know the grave is sometimes said to be a chamber, and that when the human body is buried it is covered, and the door is closed, and the general impression left upon our minds, is that the door of that chamber will not be opened again until He who holds the keys of death

and the grave, and who opens and shuts, shall come and open it at the last day. That is a good view of the subject, and not to be despised ; but the question arises,—Does God call His people's souls to heaven, and their bodies to the grave, for purposes of safety, in danger, sorrow, or trouble ? I think He has other methods of relieving and saving them ; and therefore, by chambers here, I do not understand, the grave. Other persons regard these chambers as the promises of God, which is a good thought and very blessed. God's promises are chambers and well furnished, in which tried saints delight to hide. But are the promises the chambers intended here ? It is not what we may be able to bring to the Bible or to certain portions of divine truth ; but what do they mean, or what is the purpose or intention of the Holy Ghost in them. Others suppose that the chambers indicate divine providence, which is a good thought ; for the people of God are abundantly preserved, protected, and blessed therein. I will not take any trouble to, for a moment, to contradict the idea that there is no special providence. I dislike controversy, especially in the pulpit ; and the longer I live, the stronger that feeling becomes. There is a special providence, and it is a divine chamber ; for the Lord is pleased to spread His almighty wings of divine protection over His dear people whilst they are passing through scenes of suffering and sorrow in this world ; I do not however, think we are limited here to providence, or to the promises, and certainly not to the grave.

What, then, are these chambers ? Do not several portions of the Word occur to your mind with much power and sweetness in connection with this subject ? “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Come, My people unto Me, your refuge, your strength, and your help. Do not these words occur unto your mind. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and are safe.” This is the view I shall take of the subject this morning. The grave is a chamber, but it is the chamber of death ; but it strikes me that these chambers are living ones, and that the persons in them are alive, and not dead. Yes, “the name of the Lord is a strong tower,” having, not merely one chamber but many, which you and I are invited by our God to enter. What are these chambers, then ? Let me mention two or three of them. Whether I give you correctly the sense of the text or not, I am quite sure I shall give you God's truth ; for the facts which I am about to mention, are divine chambers. They are the attributes and perfections of your covenant triune God ; and I will mention two or three of them. What do you think of this one for instance,—*the everlasting love of God*. “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” There is a chamber for you, an ever open one, a place of refuge and of rest ; and when I can enter it by faith, I sit and sing,

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

The indignation roundabout may rage and prevail ; I see it and I hear it from the position I now occupy ; but God has loved me with an everlasting love, and I am therefore for ever safe. Thy chamber ; enter into it My people. What do you think in the next place of *the Omnipotence of*

God? Does not the poet express a sweet fact in a sweet form, when he says;

"All His omnipotence can do,
Is now engaged to bear us through."

That friend of yours is a strong man, but his strength is limited. But you have many such friends; perhaps so, yet their united strength is limited, and it is possible you may require more power than all your friends possess; but you can never require more than is in your best Friend on high. His arm is long enough to reach the most distant day and place, and strong enough to hold down the most furious foe out of hell or in it. Nothing can limit His power, and no one can restrain or check Him. "I will do all My pleasure, My people; I will save and protect you. Come into My arms, and enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." What do you think of *the unerring and infallible wisdom of God*? Jesus Christ is for us, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The postman knocks, and leaves a letter in the morning, the contents of which cast you into perplexity, confusion, and disorder. You can eat no breakfast, (allow me to be plain); for you see nothing but danger, and perhaps ruin before you, owing to the bitter intelligence you have received. What is to be done? You are at your wit's end, at the end of your wisdom also; you go to a brother for advice, but he is as puzzled as yourself; you visit half-a-dozen friends and relations, and lay the matter before them; but the circumstance is so intricate and perplexing, that you are still alone in darkness and fear. But you have a God in heaven whose wisdom never fails, and He has said, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." You bethink yourself of your chamber, and enter into your closet, and pour out your heart before Him, and if light does not shine upon the trouble which surrounds you, a heart-softening influence and mysterious power seem to descend upon you while you are on your knees, and you rise, feeling that God is at hand, that help will come. "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." The chamber of God's heart, which is everlasting love; the chamber of God's arms which is omnipotence; the chamber of God's unerring wisdom; for, "Is anything too hard for Me, saith the Lord?" Then, what do you think of *His eternal faithfulness*, or God's unchangeable character and nature. God is faithful. "David considered Ahithophel, and was staggered; for he could not have believed it. It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." I was never more cordially united to a person than I was to Ahithophel, and he has turned and given counsel against me. I will never trust a human being again." "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom is no help." Did you ever know the rain to go through the roof of God's faithfulness, or a destructive wind to pierce through the walls of His unchangeableness? No, the chamber is dry and healthy, and firm, and fixed, and though hurricanes rage, and tempests prevail without, there is no vibration whatever.

“On the Rock of ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?”

The chamber of God's faithfulness is a glorious one. “My people, the indignation will prevail, for I have come out of My place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth shall no more cover her slain; and whilst I am doing this, and My judgments are abroad in the earth, come to Me, and enter into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee, and hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.” I have not mentioned all the chambers, they are too numerous; but they are all yours, and they are all accessible; therefore enter into them.

There is another thought which I must express, and that is this; they are chambers for *hiding*, they are chambers of *rest*, of *safety*, and of *waiting*, until the indignation be overpast. They are *hiding places*.

“Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last.”

As the hen hides her chickens beneath her wings, so the attributes of God hide His beloved people whilst they are in this stormy and tempestuous world. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Satan cannot get at you there. Error cannot destroy you there. The hostile, dangerous, deadly influences surrounding you, cannot destroy you there. “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.” Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee.” Are not these chambers *resting places*? I never knew what rest was, (and that implies that I know something about it now) until I knew in some measure for myself, that Christ had loved me, and given Himself for me. I was all agitation, disorder, and confusion, before I knew that for myself. I knew there was such a chamber as eternal love, that many were in it, and I knew I was not experimentally there; but when the Lord said, “Come unto me, poor soul, and enter into rest;” then my agitated feelings became tranquillised, and my soul rested in the Lord. And then with regard to *safety*. What a blessing it is! The other day, when the mob were raging at the West End, and other parts of London, the idea of safety fled from the mind of almost everybody; I do not suppose there was much, if any sense of safety in Regent Street, Piccadilly, and elsewhere; danger, disorder, and confusion, robbery prevailed. Oh what a blessing is safety, and how sweet and precious a feeling is that of security! Well, there is no spiritual safety out of these chambers, and when we are experimentally in them, we are serene and calm. This brings me to notice that they are *waiting places*. We rest, are safe, and are hid in our God until the day dawns, until the morning comes, and whilst we are resting in the attributes of Jehovah, we say; “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” They are not cells, nor prisons, nor dreary, cold, or empty places; for they are full of God. There are water, bread, honey, milk, and wine, and all that can be required, in these divine and heavenly chambers.

In the second place, *the divine invitation*. "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers. This invitation implies that they are open. "Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort." They were opened by Christ, who said, "It is finished." Then the sluice of eternal love and grace was drawn up, and all the blessings of eternal mercy and salvation came rolling down from the heart of God into this world, for the hearts of millions of guilty sinners. Christ opened the chambers by His satisfaction, and He keeps them open by His intercession. "Father, keep them." "Father, I will that they be with Me where I am." "Father, I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but keep them from evil." Yes, the doors of God's omnipotence, and love, and wisdom, and faithfulness, and unchangeableness are opened, and therefore we are not straitened in Him, but in our own bowels. But I have this thought upon the subject. "Come, My people;" is just like our God. There is no sweeter word in the Bible than this little word, "Come," which is so to speak, always on the lips of our God. It is always "Come," with Him, when He addresses His people. He never says go, or get you gone, or depart; but come, come, "Come out of the world, and come out of Babylon, My people, and come unto Me." This is the first invitation He sends or gives. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Another invitation is; "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." I have thought that the throne of grace is surrounded by a strange throng All that labour and are heavy laden, all that are in trial and are bowed down, broken-hearted, and wounded are there. In the multitude of their thoughts within them, God's comforts delight their souls. One is praying against one thing, and one against another, and Jesus Christ smiles upon them all. But, may we come frequently. If so, how frequently? David said he went seven times a day, and he did not go in vain; but if we go seventy times a day, we shall find the throne occupied by God, and receive a divine welcome into His presence. "Pray without ceasing." But I am thinking of God's people in dying circumstances. Then it is Come, come up higher; come up to Me; "Enter not merely into thy chambers, but into thy eternal rest, even into the joy of thy Lord." This will be the last invitation He will give to His beloved people at the end of time. On the judgment-seat it will be, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Yes, my brother, the chambers are accessible, and Christ Himself is in them, and so also is the Spirit, in a peculiar sense, and therefore from them we hear the voice; "Come, My people, enter into thy chambers." This is how God addressed Noah. When the ark was ready, and the time had arrived, God said to him; "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." He did not go behind them and drive them into it; God Himself was in the ark, and He said, "Come thou;" and when all had entered, God shut the door, and all were safe.

Let us look at the *act*. "*Enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee.*" Thousands have entered and are entering now, and thousands hereafter will enter. But how are these chambers entered? We know how this is done, although we cannot enter them so frequently as

we desire. There is such a thing as entering into peace, or such a thing as that holy calm and confidence which the deriding world calls fanaticism. Now, say they, where is he? His lips move, and he takes no notice of the world; he is absent-minded, and beside himself. No, he is elsewhere, and not in this world, but in a better one; he is not in himself, but in God. Fanaticism, is it? Oh that there were more of it!

“O that we had a stronger faith,
To look within the veil;
To credit what our Maker saith,
Whose word can never fail.”

If Jesus assures me strength shall be my equal to my day, I welcome all His sovereign will, and bow to all the manifestations of His purposes; for I enter into peace, when I am helped to believe in His dear name. Where is doubt? Outside in the storm, is the doubter with His doubts. So long as I am in doubt, so long as I am under the influence of unbelief, I am outside as far as experience goes; but when doubt for the time dies, and unbelief is trodden down, and I can believe with all my heart; I enter into peace, for we which have *believed* do enter into rest. “*Shut thy doors about thee.*” What is meant? I take it there is some allusion here to the fact that the blood of the passover was sprinkled upon the lintel and door-posts of the houses of the children of Israel, when the destroying angel passed over, and the indignation prevailed, and perhaps there is some allusion also to the scarlet thread, which Rahab the harlot bound in the window, in order that she might be protected and saved. But better, if possible. Christ is a door both open and shut: Christ is our way unto God’s omnipotence, God’s wisdom, and God’s love, and if I may so speak, He closes up the way behind the poor soul who has entered into His chamber. What Scriptures are there for that? “I am the first and the last.” “I am the door; and we are admitted through and by Him, and He is the door closed; and we are safe because He is behind us. What does this mean in reference to God’s words, “*Shut thy doors?*” Faith in the fact that Christ is behind us, as well as before us. A Christ to lead us forward, and a Christ to be our rereward. We want the Omega as well as the Alpha; the last as well as the first. Well, what we need we have here. Lord, increase our faith, for so shall we enter in by Christ and depend upon His dear name as coming behind us. Shut thy doors about thee, and hide thyself. That is the act of hiding and shutting the door.

The fourth idea is that of *appropriation*. My people,—but that is only half of it, for how great is the love of our God! Come, my people, enter into thy chambers. *My* people and *thy* chambers. They are sacred to the people of God. Are they mine? If God tells me that I am one of His, then these chambers are my places of rest and safety. Lord, help me to enter them and live therein.

Fifthly, *the occasion of this invitation*, Until the indignation be overpast. This does not mean the indignation of man, but of God, for the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. God expresses His indignation in various ways and it arises sometimes on account of national sins. Let us pray for England, our native country, and the land of our fathers’ graves, where God has

manifested Himself so mercifully and graciously for so many years. Our national and political sins are great; I am also persuaded that our church or ecclesiastical sins are provoking to God, who may manifest and display His indignation on their account. Perhaps he is already doing so. How does He express His indignation at and his hatred of a nation's sins, a church's sins, political sins and social sins? Sometimes He does so by taking the bits out of the mouth, and laying the reins, so to speak, for a short time, on the neck of the destroyer. If the passions and powers of the ungodly, the vile, and the cruel, be unbridled, unchecked, and unrestrained, God only knows what the consequences would be. Come, hide yourselves in Me, until it be overpast. It will not last for ever. I am angry with the people, but the indignation is but for a little moment: whilst however it prevails, enter into thy chambers and hide thyself until it be overpast. He sometimes expresses His anger in connection with war, with famine, or with bad seasons and depression in trade as now. I do not know why I am going in this direction, but we cannot help feeling and perhaps fearing also; for if there is not war, nor a famine of bread, yet want and suffering prevail. The Lord has a controversy with us, and there is no possibility of telling what the future may present, or what the will of the Lord may be. Here, however, is the believer's refuge at all times; resting and hiding in Him. "Enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, and hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be over past. Then again an epidemic may prevail—cholera, fever, or small-pox. When Thy hand is lifted up, they *will not* see; but they *shall* see, whether they will or not, and be ashamed for their envy at the people. Lastly, *our comfort in all this*. First, it is brief indignation, and secondly it is passing over. Hide thyself for a *little moment*, until it be *past and gone*. When a certain great man called one of the fathers, was banished from Alexandria, his friends expressed their deep sympathy with him and their sorrow and pain at his removal; he said, "It is a passing cloud, it will soon be over." Persecution is a cloud, but thank God it is a passing one, and not everlasting suffering. It will soon be over. All glory to His name, there are resting-places and chambers of safety for His dear people to hide in, until the indignation be overpast. The Lord grant His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.


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THE SAINT'S TESTIMONY AT THE END OF HIS JOURNEY.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 14th MARCH, 1886.

"Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word."—
Psalm cxix. 65.

It is by no means difficult to connect this text with another portion of the Divine Word, which is equally sweet and precious. Moses, just before he died, blessed the children of Israel, and said, "Yea, He loved the people: all His saints are in Thy hand; and they sat down at Thy feet; everyone shall receive of Thy words." Here we are informed where the people of God are, what they are, and where they may be found. We are told what they are. God's saints. We are informed where they are. In God's heart; for "He loved the people," and they are also in His hands. One of the consequences of these facts is described. "They sat down at Thy feet, every one shall receive of Thy words." Are we saints? Are we scripturally numbered with the people of God? If so, we are in the bosom of God's everlasting love; and the words spoken to His people in days of old are still in force, and apply to us to-night. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Not a few of the people of God are asking, whilst they are in God's hands:—

"Tis a point we long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do we love the Lord, or no,
Are we His, or are we not?"

"If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." And though doubts and unbelief prevail, and the heart is agitated with fear, the Redeemer continues to hold fast all the objects of His love, and all the saints He has made; and it never ceases to be a fact that they are all in His hands. They are in His forming and shaping hand, and He makes them what they are; and as saints they are His workmanship. They are in His preserving and supplying hands, and underneath them all are the everlasting arms of God. He has rescued you and me from death, and deserved ruin, and ever since we have been sustained and supported by His everlasting arms. At times we have been in trouble and in deep waters, yet the everlasting arms of God have never ceased to be underneath us. Therefore, when waves have rolled over us, and Satan's temptations have tormented us, they have left us in the arms of our God. And when death overtakes us, and it may not be long first, we shall meet him in the everlasting arms of God, which will bear us up out of the chilling flood, the cold valley, and the darkness of this world, and set us down in the realms of eternal bliss, for, "where I am, there

shall also My servant be." He has loved us with an everlasting love, and love cannot be finally and perfectly satisfied without the presence of its objects in a better world. What inference, however, may be drawn from these words? Why, that the saints being in God's love, and in His hands, sitting at His feet, and receiving His words, are individually brought to say, "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word. They rest in the love of God, they feel His arms underneath them, they sit at His feet, and hear His words; and whilst there is but a step between them and death, they review the past, and say, "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servants, O Lord, according unto Thy word."

I have read this text to-night because I was requested to do so. The conversation which I had with our sister resulted in what might be called an expressed desire on her part that I would make a few remarks upon these words. Her dear husband,* whose departure from us to heaven has to be noticed to-night, had these words upon his mind, and they may be regarded as his dying testimony. "If Mr. Hazelton," he said, "should say anything about me, when I am gone, let him, if he thinks well, base his remarks upon the words, "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word." Most of my hearers are aware that I do not care much for what are commonly called funeral sermons, and such sermons preached by me are not, on the whole, funeral sermons at all. I shall, however, make a few remarks upon these words, viewing them in relation to the life, and death, and glorification of our well-beloved brother. I shall mention some points which I see in the text, and make a few remarks upon them as I proceed.

Let us look, in the first place, at *the great subject indicated*—God's dealings with His people: "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord. May it be my privilege and yours, beloved friends, to say, with all holy fervour and earnestness, when we are on the verge of Jordan, "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servants, O Lord." So shall we die in peace; for we shall be in the arms of Jesus, having our aching heads upon His blessed, loving bosom, and feeling divinely assured that sinking is impossible. O to die with the eye of faith fixed upon the name and covenant-engagements of Jesus, and perfectly satisfied with what God has done for us, and has been to us, through the whole of our life. Observe how David speaks. He does not address a fallen *creature*, and say, "*He* has dealt well with me," neither does he address these words to an angel, but he turns his eyes towards God Himself, and says, *Thou* hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord." The subject indicated in the text is the dealings of God with His people in providence and in grace. I do not think it is necessary that I should say much about the providence of God in relation to our departed brother. I am sure he reviewed God's providential conduct as well as His gracious dealings with him. Our brother was a sufferer, and knew well what it was to be tried while he was here. Nevertheless he was rich as a Christian, through favour divine, and had an eye to see and watch the providential hand of his God, and a heart filled with the glorious doctrines of divine grace,

* A funeral sermon for Mr. E. Cobb, a deacon of the church at Chadwell Street.

and looking at the left-hand operations of God, or His providential dealings, he said, "Thou hast dealt well with me in that respect, O Lord." And then, reviewing the operations of His grace, he said, further, "in that respect also, O God, Thou hast dealt well with me." It is well the child of God should watch the providential dealings of his Heavenly Father ; for we do not see much more, if I may so speak, than half of our God, if we limit our attention to that which is spiritual and gracious. What is providence ? It is God at work. God bringing events to pass. God ordering the circumstances of our life. God bringing the links together which make up our life, and connecting them ; and God making a whole chain, the length of which differs with different persons. Sometimes the chain is ninety years long, at other times it is fourscore, and sometimes threescore years and ten ; but it is always composed of a multitude of important links. As to our brother it was one of considerable length, and some of its links were very mysteriously made and put together by the skilful hand of God. And when the last link was added, our brother, whilst he was able to speak, emphatically said, "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word." Certain events and circumstances have tried and distressed me. Some of my nights have been dark and long ; sometimes the road has been exceedingly steep and rough ; nevertheless, I am now within sight of heaven, and the light of home is shining faintly upon me ; and I can say all has been well, and, on the part of my Heavenly Father, all has been just what it should have been. I am not surprised that it should be so, because the rule by which God works is His mercy, and the work and worthiness of His dear Son. If God dealt with us according to our merit or demerit, where should we have been long ere this ? He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. He has not consulted our character nor our capabilities. God turned His eyes upon Himself, and looked into His own bosom, and, so to speak, asked Himself the question, "Shall I glorify My mercy by saving that sinner ?" And He resolved to manifest and glorify His mercy by saving our brother. Having in mercy saved him, He dealt mercifully toward him all the days of his life ; for if God has begun to have mercy upon you, He will always deal mercifully with you. If He should come with a rod, the hand of mercy will hold it ; and if He should come with a large cup full of bitters, mercy will mix it, and present it to your lips. If He should seem to hide His face, it will be an act of mercy ; for having begun to bless you, He must, in order to be consistent with Himself, continue to bless you, for a fountain cannot send forth bitter water and sweet, nor salt water and fresh ; and two opposing powers cannot proceed from the heart and the mouth of our God. If God, therefore, has spoken well concerning you, He will continue to do so for ever. And then God works according to the worth and merit of His Son. The question arises, if I may so speak, for whose sake shall I do this for them ? I cannot do it for their sakes. On what ground shall I deal well with them ? There sits God's beloved Son. His person is the embodiment of infinite excellencies, and a glorious combination of divine worth and worthiness ; and the Father finds in Him ten thousand reasons why He should snatch the sinner from the fire, quench the enmity of his heart, constitute him a new creature, and set his soul

on high. It was because Christ was worthy that God resolved for His sake to deal well with His people. In some respects God deals well with all. At all events He does good to all, "and His tender mercies are over all His works." Yonder is a man that curses God, and God blesses him temporally. He blasphemes his Maker's name, and God covers him with His protection, and spares him from day to day ; for He is good, and He doeth good : and a solemn end is coming. But let us restrict our observations to the people of God. He deals well with His servants by *evil* things as well as by things which are *good*. He deals well with them *by evil things*. "All things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose." I mean, by evil things, poverty, privation, suffering, trial, disappointment, bereavement, and the like. Many of God's dear people—indeed, all of them—have their sorrows, trials, afflictions, wants, and woes ; and God deals well with them in all these things. No penal evil can be squeezed out of any circumstantial evil which may affect and afflict the people of God. The outside may be repulsive and terrible, and we may start at the appearance of the exterior of the circumstances of our life. There is no penal evil in the trials of God's people :—

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain.
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

There are, if I may so speak, so many layers around the design of God in the circumstances of our life, or so many rinds to be removed before it becomes apparent. The outside one is rough ; the next is bitter, and so is the third and the fourth ; and as days, weeks, and months pass away, layer after layer is removed, we get at the kernel which is in the very centre of the whole, and fall on our knees, and say : "Pardon, O Lord our God, our rebellion and impatience. I wondered where the scene would end. I wrote hard things against myself, O God, and against Thee also." Whoso is wise, and quietly observes these operations until the kernel is reached, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Yes, He deals well with His people by what may be called evil things. And He deals well with them as to *good things*. What do I mean by that ? I think it is as difficult, if that word may be used, for good things to do us good, as it is to bring good out of evil. How so ? Let a man—a good man—prosper in temporals and in spirituals, but especially in temporals ; let him have all that heart could wish, and be surrounded by comforts from day to day, and from year to year ; and if God should not bless him, and regulate his heart, or if He should suspend His influence, the very blessings of heaven will prove evils to him. His table may become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling-block and a recompense unto him. His very plenty may and will drown him, unless the restraining and regulating providence and grace of God should hold him up and hold him fast. People talk about adversity and poverty as if they were the very worst aspects of life. They are bitter trials ; but as far as one's personal religion is concerned, one needs as much of God in prosperity as in adversity. Well, our brother said, "Thou hast dealt well with me, O Lord, according unto Thy word." I have not time or strength to go further into this matter. Let these

few observations suffice for the first point—namely, the subject indicated in the text.

The second point suggested is *the rule of God's conduct* : “Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant . . . according unto Thy word.” Now, my friends, the word appears in a threefold form. First, in a *promissory* form ; secondly, in a *petitionary* form ; thirdly, in a form of *gratitude*. In the first place it appears in a *promissory* form : “Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee.” There is the word in a promissory form, as it came from God's own lips to His servant Jacob. He did not give particulars to Jacob as to what He would do, but informed him how He would work in connection with his life and circumstances here. I will never cease, Jacob, to deal well with thee. Jacob, however, is a representative character, and his spiritual descendants, even all God's Israel, are entitled to that promise. If that promise was given to our spiritual father, we, as his spiritual children, inherit the blessings which were promised to him ; and we are entitled to them, and over our heads, though they ache, hang the words spoken by God Himself. “I will deal well with thee.” That is one form in which the word appears. In the second place, it occurs in a *petitionary* form : “Deal well with Thy servant, O God, according to Thy word.” Was there any need for that prayer, after receiving such a promise ? Yes, there was great need for it ; and the necessity was very spiritual and pressing. God says, “I will deal well with thee ;” and we fall upon our knees, in the storm and tempest, with—“Thou didst say Thou wouldest deal well with us ; deal well, therefore, with me, O God, according to Thy word. And thirdly, it appears in the form of *gratitude*. God has dealt well with me, and I would gratefully acknowledge the fact as expressed in my text. Now, how sweet and beautiful is all this—is it not ? Originally the words are God's, and they express His divine purpose and intention. He resolved to deal in a particular manner with all His people. He resolved to bring His wisdom to bear upon the circumstances of their life, to bring His omnipotence to bear upon their preservation and protection, to bring His knowledge to bear upon contriving and arranging for them, and to bring His love to surround them with all the worth and merit of His dear Son to save them. Then having formed such resolution in His infinite mind before the foundation of the world, He came out of eternity into time, out of invisibility into manifestation, and out of eternal silence to speak, and the word He spoke was—and wonder at it !—“I will deal well with thee, Jacob and Israel.” The words are to be considered as having been addressed to you and to me ; and have not those of us, who are bald or grey, had to plead this promise again and again, Thou didst say, Thou wouldest surely do us good, and deal well with us ? The devil tempts, and his temptations are sometimes so vile and hot that you would not like to explain or disclose them to your fellow-men. The thoughts of your mind, and the horrid evils injected into your soul by the fierce and foul “prince of the power of the air,” sometimes stagger you. O Lord, I am so bewildered and tempest-tossed, and cast about, that I am ashamed of myself. If I am Thine, and I trust I am, Thou didst say Thou wouldest help me and do me good. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me ; let them be turned back and brought to confusion

that devise my hurt. O Lord, stand Thou between my soul and all my foes. Our brother had to plead this promise, and so have you and I. We shall have our fears, for we are not perfect. And is this state of things to last as long as we are in the flesh? If I may so speak, I begin now as it were to believe that it will be so. We do not yet believe with half our hearts. I once thought I should become better, and be able to meet the devil, and die to the world, and have less and less difficulty in meeting sin; but I am now ready to say with the Apostle Paul, "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now I can do nothing without Thee. Make haste, O Lord, make haste! Pluck Thine arm out of Thy bosom, and work for my deliverance. Deal well with me. Yes, the promise drops upon the heart, and works therein under the influences of the Spirit in a mysterious manner, until we pour it out again in the form of prayer, and plead it in a petitionary way with the Promiser, and He fulfils it; and His poor servant says, "Thou hast dealt well with me according unto Thy word."

I have said that the word of God is a revelation of His will. This promise is so, for it reveals the purpose of His mind. It is written here, and applied to the heart; but it is the fruit of His great purpose. What the root of the apple tree is to the apple itself, that the purpose of God is to His promise. His purpose is the root of the promise, and the promise is its fruit. Christ is the tree of life, "bearing twelve manner of fruits." God says, "I will deal well with thee," and that promise binds Him. If I use the word "oblige," or "obligation," in reference to God, I always do so reverently, and never otherwise. The Lord has assumed obligations which He is bound to fulfil. He did as He pleased about giving the promise, and signing the deed, and pledging His honour; but having done so—

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

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" "Ought" is obligation, is it not? Does not that word imply a bond? "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? When the terrible account of the immeasurable debts of innumerable millions was presented to the Lord, did He not do as He pleased about accepting the whole, and becoming the Surety of the new covenant. But He did sign the whole, and made Himself responsible for the payment of every farthing. And ought He not to fulfil His engagements? Is He not an honourable Saviour, and is not His honour dear to Himself and to His people? Thou hast dealt well with me; but it is not, after all, so surprising, because Thou saidst Thou wouldest do so. Thou didst bind Thyself to take a particular course, and pursuing that course according to Thy promise I have been so well dealt with, O Lord. This promise is not only the rule of God's conduct, it is also the rule of our faith. I prayerfully wish I could believe this all the days of my life. God is governed by His promise, and why should not you and I be governed by it too? Sir, you know. Yes, I do know; and my knowledge is painful and bitter. The good that we would we cannot, and that that we would

not that we do. Yet the word of God's promise stands, and my prayer is beautifully expressed by Watts :—

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

But whether I can believe or not, God abides faithful ; He cannot deny Himself. It will all come right at last. It is right now ; but at last we shall *see* and *feel* that all was divinely right, and according unto the divine word.

Thirdly, in the text we have *the good man's review of God's dealings with him* : “Thou *hast* dealt well with Thy servant.” What is there behind you, my brother ? Just what was behind our departed brother. On God's part, a long unbroken line of fulfilled promises all the way through life, and of Ebenezers on his part. I know not how many ; but he saw them, one after another, extending through a period of many years. I believe he occupied the Lodge for forty-nine years, and he knew the Lord before he went there ; and through a period of fifty years he had been engaged in setting up stones of help, or Ebenezers, and writing upon them, “Hitherto the Lord hath helped me.” There was a trial sent and a promise given, and God fulfilled it ; and he set up an Ebenezer there. Another sorrow came, and another promise was given, and God met him and fulfilled it ; and another stone of help was raised. His life was full of waymarks and Ebenezers, because full of divine interpositions and gracious providences. When he was about to leave us, he looked up to his heavenly Father, and said, “Amen ! ‘Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant.’” Brother, you have fulfilled promises behind you ; and before you are promises that must be made good. Sometimes you are afraid they will not be fulfilled. Do not fear. Look behind you, and review what God has done, and then remember the unfulfilled promises that lie between you and heaven ; for God's word is divinely firm :—

“Thy God hath said (His word shall stand,
Not like the writing on the sand,
But firm as His decree)
That when thy foes—death, hell, and sin—
On every side shall hem thee in,
A wall of fire I'll be.”

“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” O may it be our privilege at last, on our dying pillows, to look back upon the past—whether it be a long life or a short one—and feel satisfied, and say in God's presence, and just before we enter into His glory, “I would not have anything altered. I did complain at the time, and thought the bitter was too bitter, the fire was too hot, and the bereavement was too terrible ; but now I see things in the light of heaven I would not have anything otherwise than it has been. Improvement I now see would have been impossible. I have been guided by Thy wisdom, and protected by Thy power, and I have not now a word of complaint to drop, for all has been right and divine.” Blessed man ! Blessed God ! who can and does bring His dear servants into such a position as this.

Fourthly, *all this is finally acknowledged*. The form in which the text appears is that of a thankful acknowledgment of the goodness,

wisdom, and grace of God. Acknowledge the kindness of your Father. He deserves it at your hands, for He has dealt well with you. Withhold not the praise that is due to His name. Had it not been for His mercy and His grace, we had not been here to-night; and I know not where we might have been. Therefore, withhold not from Him the glory that is due. It is a debt you owe, and He demands it of you.

Lastly, this is *a dying testimony of one of God's saints*. Aye, I might say, perhaps, of all of them; but it is of this one. This is what he had to say on his dying bed; and the words expressed his feelings, and set forth his experience through a period of seventy-five years. This text expressed the feelings and the faith of an excellent saint of God: "Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord." Many of my prayers have been heard, and it is well. Others have not been answered at all, and it is well. There is as much mercy on God's part, in refusing to hear us, as there is in answering us. Whether He hears or does not hear, He deals well with His petitioning servants. He withholds good things, as our brother felt, that He may give us better. Gold is good, but grace is better; and He withholds gold from many of His people, but He does not withhold His grace. Health is good, but sanctified pain and affliction are better than sinful health and sinful ease. Better be in the furnace with God's blessing, than to lie on the lawn with His displeasure. It is better to be driven by an enemy into God's presence, than to be drawn by friends out of it. Yes, friends may draw one out of the presence of God; but if an enemy threatens, and I flee from him, and run into the presence of God, the enemy does me more good than the kindness of my friends. Well, this was the dying testimony of our beloved brother: "Thou hast dealt well with me, O Lord, according to Thy word." Time is more than gone, therefore I must close abruptly.

Our dear brother was so well known, that further remarks from me in relation to his religion, his character, and his course are altogether unnecessary. He was one of the thirty-six who were formed into the church thirty-four or thirty-five years ago; and those friends are nearly all of them gone home. I was not among the original number; but I was, together with my wife, added very shortly after the formation of the church. Thus I am in this respect almost left alone. Another generation, if not two, have risen up since that time. Our brother was helped to live from day to day a practically godly life. Everybody who knew him loved him. One might sometimes have thought that he came under the words, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." I do not know that I ever heard any one speak ill of our brother, yet He is not surrounded by woes. He was a happy saint, and his spirit is now as happy as God can make him before His throne of eternal glory. May you and I "die the death of the righteous," and may our last end be like his, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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STRENGTH AND PEACE.

A Sermon—

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 26th APRIL, 1874.

“The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.”—Psalm xxix. 11.

THE Lord Jesus Christ, just before his death, said to his disciples,—“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Very frequently are the hearts of the followers of the Lamb of God troubled; for “In the world they shall have tribulation.” It is impossible that the child of God should live in this world without experiencing trouble. The devil has great power. It is true he is chained, and the hand of Omnipotence holds the chain by which he is restrained; yet the chain is long, and the power which the devil now possesses is too great for feeble man. He is permitted to tempt every child of God, and stir up the depths of evil which are in his heart; but he is never permitted to destroy an object of God's love. Whilst a child of God is on the earth, he finds himself in the field of conflict, and he is frequently pierced with the poisoned darts of the wicked one; and since there is a principle of holiness in his heart, he cannot be otherwise than troubled. Again,—“The Lord trieth the righteous.” He is sovereignly pleased to do so, and it is impossible that the children of God should avoid or escape trouble; for it is God's intention to try that faith which he gives, and to test the religion which he imparts to the heart; and therefore their way will sometimes be rough, their burdens heavy; and every Christian will be found carrying a cross. Hence the comforting exhortation of the dear Redeemer,—“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Faith is a precious grace, and one of the most important gifts of the Lord our God. What could the child of God do in temptation without faith? As it is, his faith sometimes reels, and he is ready at times to say,—“My hope is perished from the Lord.” What could he do in this world of perpetual, uncontrollable change without faith in God? Faith may well be said to be a saving grace; for the Apostle says,—“We are.....of them which believe to the saving of the soul.” I have no means of knowing the mind or experience of an atheist, or a deist—if a deist be one or two degrees better than an atheist—when the storms of life are raging; I do not know how an atheist or a deist then feels. In the storms of life, the child of God sometimes reels and staggers like a drunken man; and were it not for a little faith in God, a little hope in the mercy of heaven, and for the strong hold which God has upon the immortal mind, they would carry his religion away. Faith is so precious a grace that it cannot be lost, and the soul in which it is seated shall be saved for ever. It is a mercy that the least measure of faith is saving. I wish I could always believe this for myself, and I had almost said I wish I could induce all my hearers—my spiritual hearers—to believe this for themselves,—that the least measure of faith is saving faith. Just as gold-dust is precious as well as a sovereign, or that piece of gold which weighs several ounces or a pound; so a little faith in the heart is heavenly gold, and God will see that not a grain of it shall fall to the ground or be finally lost. If you have a grain of this

gold of heaven—if I may so illustrate the subject—in your hearts, you are rich. Notwithstanding the fact that you feel your poverty and wretchedness, your hearts are rich; for every one's heart in this poor world is not favoured to possess a grain of this heavenly gold: and therefore faith in the least measure is an infinitely precious boon. It appears that the faith of the Psalmist was in vigorous exercise when he penned this beautiful and glorious song out of which I have taken my text this morning. The faith of the Psalmist saw God in everything; and that is most desirable. It is the devil's policy and object to divert the attention of the people of God from the fact that God is in some way connected with everything. He is connected with every tempest that rages, and every storm that brings or leaves desolation behind it. He is connected with every trial, every wave, and every billow; and the Psalmist's faith realised this fact when he penned this song,—“Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty; give unto the Lord glory and strength, give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” And why? “The voice of the Lord is upon the waters, the God of glory thundereth.” It is, to a certain extent, proper to speak of thunder as the result of the operation of the laws of nature, but it is better to see the power of God in the tempest; and therefore the Psalmist says,—“The voice of the Lord is upon the waters, the God of glory thundereth.” The infidel does not see God in the thunder, and sneers when we speak of thunder as the voice of God. Nevertheless the Psalmist said,—“The God of glory thundereth, and the Lord (or Jehovah) is upon many waters.” The voice of God, he says, is “powerful” and “full of majesty;” it breaks the cedars of Lebanon, and makes them to skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. Then he proceeded to set forth the fact that God was in the lightning as he was in the thunder; for the voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. Does not faith bring us into blessed nearness to God? And does it not calm and tranquillise the heart when it is surrounded by circumstances of affliction and sorrow? “Let not your heart be troubled.” Does it thunder? I am in the thunder, and the thunder is my voice. Does it lighten? I am in the lightning, and my voice divides the flames of fire. Are trees and forests uprooted? It is by the breath of my mouth. I bring wind out of my treasures. View me in connection with all things. “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” And thus the Psalmist proceeded with his exhortation until, reaching the tenth verse, he says,—“The Lord sitteth upon the flood.” What sublime language! What a glorious fact! Jehovah sitting upon the flood, and sitting upon it, too, during a tempest! The waves that rise and the billows that rage do not shake his throne, do not endanger his government or dominion. “The Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.” Praise him, bless him, adore him; for, in addition to all these, he “will give strength unto his people,” and he “will bless his people with peace.”

First. There are two blessings indicated in the text—strength and peace; and, in the second place, there is a divine assurance given in relation to them,—“The Lord will give strength,” and he “will bless his people with peace.”

I. There are two blessings indicated in the text, and both of them are very important. The Lord will give strength, and the Lord will bless his people with peace. Beloved hearers, we may be sure that if Jehovah will give us strength, we shall have *suitable* strength, for God never disappoints either himself or his people in this respect. If they want strength, he will not give them something else; and, if they want bread, he will not give them a stone. If they require gold, and must have gold, he will not give them something else which will not fulfil the purpose of gold. He made the heart, he knows the heart, he has bought it, he inhabits it, and he searches it; and there is no being in all the universe that knows what kind of strength is required by the saint but God himself. If he has bound himself to give strength unto his people, we may be sure that he will give it in suitable forms and measures. Here we are this morning, in the house of God, able to say,—“Having obtained help of God, we continue unto this day.” This was how Paul expressed himself. Having obtained strength, we stand; having received the fulfilment of the promise, we are here. “Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls,” said the leader of Israel, “that not one thing has failed of all that the Lord

your God promised you. Therefore, God, in giving strength to his people, considers their necessities, measures their requirements, examines their exigencies, and suits his mercies to their circumstances. We may be sure, in the second place, that, if he will give strength to us, we shall have it *seasonably*. Help from a fellow-creature, sometimes comes too late. When he brings us help, we may, with tears in our eyes, say,—We wish you had come yesterday; we wish you had brought that help last week, or an hour or two earlier; the evil has reached us now, the crisis has come. We thank you for the kindness and affection of your intention, but the help, though it would have been available yesterday, is not early enough to do us good. But our God comes seasonably; he never was known—and he has been dealing with his people for about 6,000 years—to come a minute too late; so that every saint that has been received into glory feels that he was strengthened by God in a suitable and seasonable manner. Then, again, if God strengthens suitably and seasonably, the strength which he imparts is always *sufficient*. He never comes with *nearly* enough. He always brings sufficient strength when he meets his people; and if he communicates new strength to the fainting, feeble, and reeling mind, the mind feels that the new strength communicated is sufficient for the day and the evil thereof. My brother, one says, you have brought that which will, in some measure, strengthen me; but if it had been a little greater, if there had been a little more of it, I should have been perfectly delivered from my trouble, and extricated from my difficulty. But the Lord will give suitable strength at seasonable times, and that suitable and seasonable strength will always be sufficient to answer the purpose for which the Lord is pleased to give it. What a God we have to do with! I may repeat what I have said so frequently,—We do not need a better God nor a better arrangement of things than that which has been fixed by our God; nor do we want a better covenant of grace than that which is already in existence; but we do want more faith, and we feel the importance of the prayer of the disciples,—“Lord, increase our faith.” Let us go a little further into this first blessing,—“The Lord will give strength unto his people.”

1. In the first place, he will give strength for the purpose of answering all his own purposes concerning his people. I hope you will turn that fact over in your minds. I do think it is important. It comes, therefore, to this. He will give strength to his people, for his own sake. It is sweet to view the operations of God in connection with the honour of his own great name. He will give strength for the sake of his own purpose, decree, word, and thoughts concerning them. Listen to it. He will give strength for the sake of his own character, name, and fame. Are his name and fame connected with the strength of his people? You will, if you carefully read the Bible, find that it is so. “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord your God; but for my great name’s sake.” If he will give strength for his own sake, his people may be sure that they shall be blessed with strength and help. Every child of God is a subject of divine purposes which can never be fulfilled unless God gives strength. Every child of God is a centre of divine decrees, which will be fulfilled in his personal happiness for ever; but all these would be frustrated, and God would be disappointed, if he should not give strength, and help, and peace unto the person that is thus the centre of so many important purposes. Every child of God is compassed with dangers and personal infirmities. While we are here, our infirmities will be great and numerous, and it is impossible that we can live here without living in danger. Now, is my life the subject of divine purposes? And are they to be fulfilled in my personal salvation? Are my infirmities numerous and great, and are the dangers I am surrounded with sufficient to swallow me up, and will God lose his aim if he loses me? Then, Christian friends, we may be sure that he will put underneath the saint his everlasting arms, and give strength to his people for his own great name’s sake. What are God’s purposes concerning his people which must be fulfilled by the impartation of strength to them? In the first place, it is God’s intention that every one of his children should be a sanctified, an enduring sufferer. It is God’s purpose that every one should be a sufferer; and, blessed be his name! that is not all his purpose. It is his intention that every child should be a sanctified and an enduring sufferer—a sufferer that shall derive benefit, and profit, and improvement

from his sufferings. Is God's intent that his people shall be all the better for the fire, the storm, the water, the tempest, and the disappointment; and all the brighter for the furnace? Is it God's intention that you should experience all this? Then, in order to realise that intention and fulfil that purpose, he must give you strength and help, or your afflictions will never be sanctified, and you will not be able to stand under them. He that feareth God shall come forth of them all. They shall emerge from their troubles, their furnaces, their floods, their difficulties, and their sorrows all the stronger, all the more heavenly minded, all the more spiritual, for their disappointments and troubles. Then, if this is his intention, and he should not change his mind nor alter his purpose, God must give strength to his people, or there will be disappointment. Again, it is God's purpose that every one of his children should be a victorious soldier, a conquering warrior in the field of battle. Are not the promises of God absolute in relation to this matter—that every one of his children shall be not only a soldier but a conqueror—aye! and *more* than that, a conqueror through him that loves him! I sometimes feel ashamed of myself for hanging down my head, and being full of unbelieving fears concerning the conflict and its issues, just as if I had not overcome thus far. I suppose the devil blinds me,—I forget the great fact, that I have overcome thus far, or I should not be in the pulpit to-day; and you have overcome thus far, or you would not be in holy connection with the church of God to-day. You are mourning, weeping, groaning, and lamenting, as if the devil had you under his feet, and had conquered and ruined you; whereas, my dear friends, you are here to-day in the field of battle, armed with all the armour of God, with your faces towards heaven and your backs upon the world; and, though you are out of breath, you are standing—though you are faint and feeble, you have not been driven out of the field—and though you have been wounded, and bleed from the wounds, you are not destroyed; therefore, you have gone on conquering day by day, and, as the Apostle says—and he was divinely inspired,—“In all these things,”—*in them*, he speaks in the present tense, in all these things we *are*—not we *shall be*. That would have been true. “In all these things we *are* more than conquerors, through him that loved us.” And if all the world, or that diabolical power that prevails over the children of disobedience—if all that power is against me—if all that hostility is opposed to me, and I stand and am here to-day as a monument of mercy—I have been strengthened by God. Ah! but the future! Leave that with your Lord. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

“He that hath helped me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through.”

Again, it is the intention of God that every one of his children shall be a persevering follower of the Lamb. If it is his intention that you and I shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, until he shall have led us into heaven, he must give us strength, or we shall sit down and stop short of that which is necessary to fulfil his design. The Lamb of God leads some of his followers into painful and difficult circumstances, through which they could never go unless they received strength from on high. Well, what is your experience as a follower of God? It is this. You are “faint?” Yes. But where are you? Pursuing, through mercy—pursuing. Yes; the experience of Gideon and his little army is the experience of every child of God. Faint, yet, through mercy, pursuing; and it is God's intention that every one should get through all his trials, sorrows, sins, and conflicts, and enter into that better world, to reflect his glories and honours for ever. Then, if God's purposes terminate in heaven, and it is his intention that you should reach that glory world, he will fail, and he will lose his pleasure, his pains, if he should not verify my text,—“The Lord will give strength unto his people.” But once more. He will give strength unto his people, for the purpose of fulfilling all their requirements as new creatures. The old creature requires a great deal; the “new creature” requires more. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” In Christ. Ah! that is the place in which he strengthens his people. A new creature in Christ. Leave the sinner for a moment. We know what he thinks he needs. Go back to the Garden of Eden, and look at Adam be-

fore he fell; for he was not, as a holy creature of God, what a Christian is now, neither did he require, as an unfallen and innocent being, what a saved sinner requires. Go to the Garden of Eden, and you will find that a saved sinner requires more from God than Adam required. Go to angels, and you will find, if you look carefully into the matter, that the child of God travelling through this world requires more from God than angels require. They never sinned, never needed blood, never forfeited and lost their righteousness. They do not know how pardon tastes, nor what it is to have guilt removed; they do not know what it is to have infirmities, to fall down under weighty sorrows, and groan before God. Angels do not know this; but the new creature knows it, and, therefore, requires more of God than angels themselves require. If we are new creatures, God has made us what we are, and he, therefore, is the Author of our holy desires, our hopes, our expectations, and the holy aspirations of our minds. And can he have taught me to desire that which he does not mean to give? Can he have taught me to hope for that which has no existence in his covenant? And can he have given me to expect that which he does not purpose to supply? Oh no! He created the want because the supply was in existence, and he gave the hope because it was his intention to swallow it up in the fruition himself. Therefore the Lord will give strength unto his people. And what strength is required by the new creature? Well, there is one name in the Bible which is an all-comprehending name, and that name is Christ—and it seems to me that Christ is the strength of the new creature. If any man be virtually in Christ, he will require Christ, and Christ only will be his strength. Does a convinced sinner require a substitute? The Lord gives one. Does a new creature require a Friend before the throne? He liveth to make intercession for us. Does a new creature require Christ in the heart—the hope of glory? There he is—his likeness drawn there by the hand of God the Holy Ghost. Does a new creature require peculiar supplies from the fulness of God? It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell. Christ, then, is everything—in life and death.

“When ye hear my heart-strings break,
How smooth my minutes roll;
A mortal paleness on my cheek,”—

Ah! that will come. That must come. But what of the “paleness on my cheek?” What if the heart should fail! What if the soul should despair! No,—

“And glory in my soul.”

And what will diffuse a glory through the soul in the solemnities of death? Christ in the arms of one's faith. The Lord will give strength to his people. First, then, as a new creature, he will give every one of them strength to remain, to continue to be what he has made them. Do you say, “I shall lose my religion.” If God has given you a religion, you will not lose it. “I shall lose my Christianity.” Never; if God has made you a Christian. “I shall cease to be what I have been.” If you are a humble hoper in the mercy of God, he will give strength to the new creature he has brought into existence, and it shall never cease to be.

2. He will give strength to his people as new creatures, to enable them to do all that he requires them to do. He will never require any of his dear children to do more than he will give them grace to enable them to perform. You—masters, and fathers, and mothers—may lay too heavy a burden upon your servant or your child. You may lay a few pounds too much. But our God will never lay more upon his people than he will give them grace to stand under; for, as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” God always weighs two things in relation to his people,—first, the burden, before he lays it on the shoulder; and secondly, the strength required by the bearer to enable him to bear it; and God gives just as much strength as is necessary to sustain the soul, and no more. He will give strength to enable you to do all that he requires you to do. “I had a very difficult duty to perform, and I trembled at it; but I was obliged to meet it. I tried to evade it, but I could not, and I thought I should have been half-ruined or destroyed; but I met it, and performed it to the best of my ability, and, thank God! he was better to me than all

my fears." Truly he was; for he will give strength to his people, to enable them to do all that he requires them to do, and to go wherever he requires them to go.

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

3. Thirdly, he will give strength to his people, to enable them to overcome all that are against them. Is the world opposed? We shall get through it, and leave it behind us. Is hell opposed? The last step we take on the earth shall be taken as conquerors over the threshold of heaven; for "the very God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Think of stepping as a conqueror from the neck of your enemies over the threshold of eternal happiness and glory. I *believe*, however little I may *feel*, that if I am a child of God, no difficulty in my pathway will be too great for me. You know I am not telling you that I always believe this with sweet heavenly comfort; but I must preach the gospel. I believe that no difficulty will be too much for me,—no danger, or depth, or height too great for me, and no enemy will be too strong for me, if I am a child of God.

4. He will do it to glorify himself in the eyes of all. In the eyes of the devil, whilst the devil is overcome by every saint. He will do it to glorify himself in the eyes of angels,—to justify their early songs; for angels sang when you first shed tears of repentance before the throne. When you first fell on your knees as humble penitents, there was joy in the presence of the angels of God; and the angels of God shall see every penitent sinner enter into heaven, and God will be glorified in that way. He will glorify himself in the eyes of the world. The world has stood around the stake when martyrs have been burning, and talking, and singing, and praying, and shouting, and have been foiled and disappointed. They saw there was something connected with the men and women that were burning that they could not reach; that there was an influence in operation that they could not control; and it was so, for the Lord gave strength to his dear people then in the fires of martyrdom. And then at last, before assembled worlds, God will present his church to himself; then will be a visible verification of the words, "These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Thus the Lord will give strength to his people.

II.—He will bless his people with peace. Mark—"He will give strength to his people," and then "he will bless them with peace." Is not strength peace? No, not necessarily so. Strength is not always peace; hence there is many a sad and sorrowing soul strong enough to bear the burdens that are laid upon him, that is, comparatively speaking, a stranger to peace. He is strong enough to climb the hill, but he is far from happy; strong enough to bear the cross, but he is very uncomfortable; strong enough to stand in the field of battle against the devil and all the powers of darkness, but he is wonderfully wounded, and he bleeds at every wound; strong enough to hope in the mercy of God, but he has many doubts and fears at the same time;—and therefore, is it not a fact that the blessings of the Gospel are stated in the Word in beautiful order? "He will give strength to his people, and bless his people with peace." The word "peace" is a very sweet word. I do not know a word that indicates greater sweetness than the word peace does. National peace is a great blessing. Peace in the family, how desirable a blessing that is! We have known families in which there have been continual contention and strife. What a blessing is peace in the church of God! We have heard churches called bear-gardens. The church of God a bear-garden! How unlovely! How unlike what it should be! and how unlike what it really is when God is pleased to give peace!

1. He will bless them with peace *with himself*. Now, this may exist without the sinner's knowledge, and when the sinner has no comfortable faith in the fact. This peace was made by Jesus Christ between God and the church, when he said, "It is finished!" And how is this peace made? By the interposition of blood. There can be no peace between God and guilty man without the peace-making and peace-speaking blood of the Lamb. Man may talk of his works—work as hard as he can all the days of his life, and interpose them, after he has performed them, between God's throne

and his heart—it is impossible that human works and excellencies can establish a settled peace between God and the soul, since there can be no peace between God and the sinner without the intervention of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. This peace with God is made by the interposition of *blood*, and perpetuated by the eternal worth and fragrance of that blood, for it is an offering of a sweet smelling savour unto God. God keeps his eye upon one object in relation to your salvation, my brother,—the fountain of the blood of his dear Son; and so long as that fountain appears beneath God's eye, there will be peace in God's mind towards you, and towards all that are interested in it.

2. He will bless his people with peace in their consciences. Sooner or later he will do this; for if he has given grace, he means to give peace; if he has given life, he means to give *health*. He will bless his people with peace in their consciences; for the blood of Jesus Christ is a guilt-extractor. I do not know that I am coining a word—I am applying a word to the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which, I think, may tend to illustrate its power on the conscience. The blood of Christ *draws guilt* out of the conscience. I dare say you have heard of a person who suffered greatly from a small piece of iron which had got into his eye. Various means were tried to remove it, but all failed. Feathers, hair, the human tongue, were applied. At last a magnet was thought of, and applied to the eye. It drew the iron out, and, of course, ease soon followed. There is only one thing in the dominions of God that can draw piercing, stinging guilt out of the sinner's conscience, and that is the blood of Jesus Christ. Man may do what he pleases, guilt will remain in the conscience, and pierce and sting him morning, noon, and night, until the blood of Christ is applied, and then guilt comes out, and what is the result? Why, the feverish state of the soul ceases, the *moral* thirst is slaked, the wound is healed, pain subsides, serenity takes possession of the conscience, and we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. He will bless his people with peace in the church. I have already made one observation on this. Members of a Christian church, notwithstanding their Christianity, are such imperfect beings, that unless the Lord gives his people strength and blesses them with peace, there will be discord, discontent, and dissatisfaction among them. If God blesses every member of the church with a measure of peace in his own heart, that will go far towards the preservation of peace in the church; if he clothes every member with humility, so that each brother esteems others better than himself, that will go far towards the preservation of the peace; and if he helps the minister of the church to preach the gospel of the grace of God, so as to feed the church, that will have a wonderful influence upon a church's peace. If there are not power, unction, life, and variety, in the minister, and if there is not upon all these the blessing of God, there will not be enough for God's people.

4. He will bless them in death with peace, and bless them in heaven with peace. I think this is a wonderful demonstration of the divinity of religion. Tranquility and confidence in the deep wonders of a dying hour, when heart and flesh are failing, when eternity is near, and all one's life and time are behind him,—then to have peace is one of the most wonderful illustrations of the divinity of religion. "No fear, Sir. No; this is one of the best—this is the best moment of my life. I have no doubt, no fear, no anxiety;—if I have a wish, it is that my dear Lord would come quickly and take me to himself." What a blessing is peace in death! Death comes without a sting and without terror. We usually associate the idea of coldness with death; but really death seems to lose its coldness, if we may credit the observations of dying saints, when Jesus Christ in their arms. Can an angel give a dying man peace? Can all heaven, without God, come and give a dying man peace? They cannot do it; and therefore the Lord blesses his people with peace—and he blesses them with peace for ever in heaven. That is a world of rest—a world of peace. Bless us there with peace, because sin will be eternally absent, and holiness and perfection eternally present;—bless us there with peace, because there every hope and every desire, every expectation and every prayer, will be satisfactorily and eternally fulfilled.

II.—The assurance given,—“He will give,” and “He will bless.” Now, how will he do it? First, through union to his dearest Son. He will give us strength and

bless us with peace through union to Christ. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." Christ is the root of our life; and just as the branches are at this season of the year, deriving the sap in a wondrous manner from the root of the vine, so the Lord Jesus Christ causes to proceed from himself fresh measures of his Spirit, fresh communications of his grace, and fresh impartations of his fulness; and thus he gives his people strength, and blesses them with peace: and all this is as silent and certain as is the circulation of sap in a vine or in any other plant. Take a vine, however,—how silently the sap circulates through the whole! It ascends from the root, proceeds through the trunk, and then diffuses itself through all the branches and sprigs, and twigs and leaves, and by-and-bye, in a few weeks or months, all will appear in that beautiful result—a vine loaded with grapes. The sap ascends, and fills every part of the vine noiselessly—yet life flows everywhere. And the Lord gives his people strength, and blesses them with grace, in this silent but sure manner.

"O may my soul each hour derive
Thy Spirit with delight."

Just, then, as the most distant branches derive their life from the root, so the feeblest saints derive daily strength from the exalted Jesus in another world. He will give strength, and bless his people with peace.

Secondly, he does it by constituting himself their stronghold. The Lord is a stronghold in the day of trouble. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous runneth, and there is his strength. The conies are a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rock; and you know a feeble, tiny worm may have its hole in a mountain; the whole mountain is over it, covers it, shields it, defends it. What is the strength of the worm? The mountain. What causes the worm to be secure and peaceful? The mountain. Conies are a feeble folk;—perhaps we are to understand by "conies," rabbits. Rabbits are feeble, but they make their houses in the rock. What is the strength of the coney? The rock. What gives it its serenity and tranquility? The rock. What is the strength of the feeble believer? The Rock in which he lives; the Rock of Ages that is round about him—that is underneath him. And the Lord will give strength to his people by giving himself to them, by covering them, by shielding them, by opening his arms and inviting them into his bosom, and helping them to run there.

Then, in the next place, he will do it by rooting and grounding them in the great verities of the gospel; for he that is rooted in the truth of the gospel is rooted in God himself; and what a mercy—what a blessing it is to be rooted in the everlasting God. Just as the tree receives nutriment from the soil in which it is planted, and that continually, so the Christian receives spiritual nutriment from his God; and just as the soil in which the tree is planted holds it fast, so God holds fast the believer, the roots of whose faith have struck into God's character and love. There is almost as much of a tree concealed in the earth as is visible above the surface. The tap-root of an oak, we are told, strikes to a depth into the soil equal to the whole height of the tree. What does this teach us? If the Christian is a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, it teaches this fact,—that there is as much of the Christian unseen as seen—as much of the believer in God concealed, as there is of him in the world revealed. Aye! and depend upon it we may go further here,—there is *more* of the believer in his God than the world sees of him; and being so rooted and grounded in God and in eternal things, there is a fulfilment of this text in his experience,—*"The Lord will give strength, and the Lord will bless his people with peace;"* for *"underneath are the everlasting arms."*