

THE LORD'S VOICE IN THE GOSPEL.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 11th APRIL, 1886.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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BUILDING ON THE ROCK.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 18th APRIL, 1886.

"Whosoever cometh to Me and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock." Luke vi. 47, 48.

THE person, character, and work of the Lord Jesus are unalterably precious to Himself, to His Father, and also to every saved sinner; and hence the Word of God which reveals Him, is spiritual meat and drink to every gracious person. The Lord said, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." Since Jesus is precious to the believer, the Scriptures which testify of Him must necessarily be highly prized by all that know and love Him. Our Lord is precious in His birth, and His preciousness was realized when He was taken to the temple to be circumcised according to the law of Moses. The mysterious infant was taken by good old Simeon, and as He lay in his arms and the eyes of the good man looked upon the babe, he said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Simeon saw in that babe everything that he himself required as a guilty sinner, and also all that God required as a moral Governor, to satisfy His claim in connection with the salvation of men. Although the babe was in the arms of Simeon, his believing heart was resting upon the glorious name, the precious person, the faultless character, and the saving work of that apparently helpless child. To him the new-born Saviour was most dear. Looking at Him his heart was calm, and his mind tranquil and serene; for death had lost its terrors, and he was willing to depart. "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Jesus was circumcised, for He was a Jew; and He came, not to destroy, but to fulfil the law. He went from Nazareth to Jerusalem with His parents every year to keep the passover; for being a Jew He observed the law of Moses.

Passing over the interesting circumstance as to what took place when He was about twelve years of age, when His parents lost Him, and afterwards found Him in the temple among the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions,—we learn that He left Jerusalem, went home with His parents, and became subject unto them. To me it is a mystery

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that so large a portion of the Saviour's life should have had a covering as it were cast upon it. At twelve years old He went to Nazareth, and was with His parents ; and we hear no more of Him again until He was about thirty years of age. He was subject to His parents, and wrought at the trade of a carpenter. But as to His spirituality, how did He employ Himself ? Well, the Scriptures say very little, if anything, concerning that matter, during that long period of His life. Some good people refer to the 119th Psalm, which they regard as expressing the feelings and experience of Jesus Christ before He was manifest to the world ; and hence they say the frequent recurrence of the important words, "Thy statutes, Thy laws, Thy Word, and Thy testimonies." At all events we know that the Redeemer meditated on the law of God day and night, and that it was very dear and precious to Him. You are not to forget that He was first a babe, then a youth, and then a man. He grew in wisdom and in stature. He was not fully a man at first, but a babe. Bless His name ! He became in all things like unto us ; and thus He is able to sympathise with us, and to succour all His beloved brethren in the hour of temptation and trial. Our Lord came forth publicly when He was about thirty years of age ; and as He was circumcised when He was eight days old because He was a Jew, so He was baptized when He was about thirty years of age, because He was—not a Christian—but the Head of Christians, and of the Christian Church. And in allusion to His circumcision thirty years previously, and His baptism in the river of Jordan, he said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Having been baptized, He was led by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil, forty days and forty nights, and then He proceeded to choose His disciples, or twelve men to follow or accompany Him. Then He ascended the mountain and preached this wonderful sermon of which my text this morning forms the closing part. It seems to me that the men and women or the characters who build upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, are described in the opening sentences of this discourse. Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake ; for they all hear and do My words, and build upon the Rock. Try, my hearers, if you can at your leisure to connect the opening sentences of the sermon with what is stated here. Whosoever cometh to Me, even all that mourn, and all that hunger and thirst after righteousness, and hear my sayings and do them, I will show you to whom they are like.

Now let us confine our attention to the text, and endeavour to make a few observations upon it, as it lies before us. I want in the first place, to try to *illustrate the subject* ; and in the second place, should I have a few minutes left, I want to *offer a few reflections upon it*. In the first place, let us try to *illustrate the subject* indicated in our text. In doing this, we shall first have to notice a few things as to *the act here mentioned*, "*Whosoever cometh to Me*." This phraseology is of somewhat frequent occurrence in the Word ; at least, in the four Gospels, especially in that of John. Coming to the Lord Jesus Christ is a spiritual act, performed by a spiritual character, or by a true believer. Many persons came to Him when He was on the earth, who were perfect strangers to His character. Thousands saw Him, came to Him, heard Him, and followed

Him from place to place, who were not interested apparently in His great salvation. Therefore there is something special and particular in this important act of coming to the Lord Jesus. Our great Lord has Himself described it in a very interesting manner in the sixth chapter of John. "No man cometh unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me, draw him." And again, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." You are not offended when a minister uses the words, Divine appointment, and which are Divinely connected with our subject. All that come to the Lord Jesus Christ, do so by Divine appointment; therefore they shall and they must come. They come one by one. They have been coming ever since Christ was here, and God's eternally beloved ones will continue to come unto the Lord Jesus until all have reached Him, and Christ and His people are together in a better world, where they will live for ever and ever. My dear friends, if you and I approach the Saviour, we know what it is to come to Him, to remain with Him, and to hold sweet fellowship and communion with Him. Where do they come from? They come from afar, and hence we read that the sinner is far from God by wicked works. A man who comes to the Lord, comes a long way, and yet he comes in a short time. This is very paradoxical, but all Divine things are so. Morally considered, man is far from God by wicked works. When, however, the Holy Spirit enters the heart, and the grace of God begins to work in a sinner's soul, when his eyes are opened and his ears are circumcised, he wants what only Christ possesses, what the Gospel promises, and what others who have preceded him wanted and received. You hear the coming sinner—and some of you have been in that condition—saying,

"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."

But how does the sinner come to Jesus Christ? Are there any particular rules for a spiritual coming to Him, laid down in the Word? There is only one moving Spirit, and one great power only, by which they come; but they come in various ways. Saul of Tarsus came to Christ in a wonderful manner. Jesus first came to him, and then Saul's face was turned towards the Lord, with "What wilt Thou have me to do?" But sinners come to Jesus just as they are, and this is one of the great difficulties connected with the early experience of the saints. Many of God's people have fancied that they must improve themselves by doing something here and there, before they can be accepted by God. Whereas every one that comes aright to the Lord Jesus, comes just as he is. He comes unclean, to be washed; guilty, to be pardoned; naked, to be clothed, and poor to be enriched. We may be too rich for Jesus, but we cannot be too poor. We may be too good, but we cannot be too bad. We may have too high an opinion of ourselves for the Saviour, but we cannot think too meanly of ourselves for Him. A mass of sin, of uncleanness, and unworthiness is everyone that comes to Jesus Christ. If in coming to Christ you feel these solemn facts, you are coming in a right manner and spirit. The Saviour looks approvingly upon you, and He smiles as you advance by faith to Him, and now and then He drops a

word into your minds, "I will in no wise cast out him that cometh." If he brings a mass of sin, if he is exceedingly filthy and abominable, or if he should hesitate, doubt and fear, and for a time stand afar off, yet I will not cast him out. "He that cometh unto Me and heareth my sayings and doeth them, I will tell you to whom he is like." But the sinner, having thus come to the Saviour, what takes place between him and Christ? Why my beloved friends, such a person stays with his Lord. What a wonderful amount of religion there is abroad in the day in which we live! We have persons coming to Jesus Christ, and leaving Him again; coming to Him for salvation and obtaining it, and then losing it and finally leaving the Saviour. We read in the Word that God says, "I will put My fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." Religion—why one of its greatest elements is love, and if you have ever been brought to the Saviour, and led to love His dear name, you will stay and remain with Him, and pray to be upheld, sustained, supported, and kept by Him. Yes, having reached the Saviour, and felt in some measure His power and preciousness, you will stay with Him all the days of your life. Build upon Him as upon the Rock of Ages, and so build that the storms of life and death shall never remove you. Well, whosoever cometh unto Me. I have my doubts and fears, with regard to this important operation of the mind. You have frequently heard me refer to a period when I believe a change was wrought in my heart, when I came to the Saviour, and when the Saviour embraced me, and I embraced Him; yet I cannot believe nor be steadfast as I would. What a mercy it will be to get safely through all, and to be landed on that celestial, blissful shore, which God has prepared for His dear people. I suppose we shall have our fears and doubts, our darkness and our distresses, as long as we are here. Well, brethren, if we are founded on the Rock, if we are building upon the glorious person and finished work of Jesus, the floods many rise, the winds may rage, the tempests may be furious, persecution may be hot, we shall not be shaken so as to be removed; for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.

The character is further described, "Whoso cometh unto Me, *and heareth My words.*" What words? All the words of our Lord. There are doctrines, and promises, and precepts. There are Divine doctrines, or the doctrines of grace. These are the words of Christ which He has delivered, having brought them, as it were, from His Father's bosom and heart. And what are the doctrines of Divine grace but revelations of God's character and will, revelations of the connection in which He stands to His people, and revelations of their spiritual character. Never was there a day when the doctrines of grace were more deeply despised than they are to-day, and I am exceedingly sorry to see on the right hand and on the left certain indications which are likely to try and trouble the churches of Jesus Christ. It is said that it does not matter what we believe, so that we *do* believe; and as for doctrinal matters it is best not to trouble ourselves with them; if we are practical and our walk and conversation are tolerably pure and correct, all will be well. Doctrine does not affect the character. But doctrine *does* affect the character, which is always what it is as the consequence of the doctrine held, and there can be no experience worth having without heavenly doctrine. Doctrine lies at

the bottom, the promise lies upon the doctrine, and the precept lies upon promise. Begin at the bottom and build upon the Rock which the glorious doctrine of Divine grace reveals, then come to the promises, and thence pass on to the precepts: for he that cometh unto Me and heareth my words of doctrine, My precious promises, and the laws of My lips, is like one who in building his house digs deep, until he reaches the rock. Doctrine affects character and conduct. Have you never seen persons who hold back God's truth, give practical manifestations and exemplifications of this fact? Let me hear the Master's doctrinal word and live upon it, and my experience will be spiritual and heavenly. Let me hear the Master's promissory word, and live upon it, and my experience will be holy and godly. And if I hear the doctrine and the promise, then I shall want to know where and how I am to walk; and the Master's word gives me information on that matter also. "He that cometh unto Me and heareth My words, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like." As our time is going, let us dismiss that point and pass on.

In the third place, we are told that such a person *may be compared to a builder*. He is like a man which built a house and digged deep. A believer in the Lord Jesus is not an idler; and though a great deal is said about works in the day in which we live, a true believer in Jesus is a hard-worker. What shall we do that we might work the works of God? "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." And we read of the work of faith and labour of love. The work of faith is building on Jesus Christ. The work of faith is digging, and digging is hard work which the child of God knows something about, especially during the early period of his Christian experience. I will be very plain and simple here. The similitude before us is a very interesting one. He is like a man which built a house and digged deep; not a superficial workman who builds his hopes and expectations upon the surface; but building for eternity, he digs deep, and does not cease until he reaches rock, however low down it may be. My soul, he says, is precious; and I cannot be satisfied to build on the sand or to dig down a little way; I must dig, and pray, and, wait, and hope, until I can say, "The Lord is my strength and my salvation." He digs deep: first he digs through all ceremonies, and through the whole of the ceremonial law. Why, a man building for eternity does not found or build his hope upon shadows, and ceremonies are shadows. He cannot build his hope upon types, he wants the Antitype; and he digs through types until he finds Him; he digs through symbols to the great fact that is symbolized, and he goes through the sign to the substance. Take the Bible to him, and tell him to build his hope upon the words printed there, or upon certain sentences arranged. No, he says, I must search into them, dig into them, and find, if possible, the great Saviour whose name is therein. The mere word, Saviour, does not fulfil his hopes nor satisfy his wants. The Saviour whose name is written is under that name. The Redeemer whose name is here is underneath that name, and the believer sits with the sacred volume before him, searching the Scriptures, his eyes filled with tears; as he searches and digs, he lifts up his heart to God, saying, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." And by and bye the Holy Spirit applies a portion of truth to him, and he and the Rock meet for the first time; and he 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."

He that cometh unto Me and does not stop short of Me, nor go to any other being; but cometh unto Me and heareth My words, he is like a man which built a house and digged deep. He goes through all ceremonies and forms, down deep into the Word of God, and digs until he finds the Rock. Deep in the Scriptures, underneath all ceremonies, deep in the mind and purpose of God, hidden and concealed from the world; through the teachings and leadings of the Spirit, the earnest enquirer met the Saviour, and embraced Him, and realized the sweetness and preciousness of His words, "I will in no wise cast out him that cometh."

Fourthly, he is not only a hard-working person, but a *builder*; for he is like the man, who, having reached the rock, builds his house thereon. Now, Jesus is the Rock that believers build upon; for, bless His name, He is a Rock in all respects. His *person*. Oh He is a man! and occasionally I receive letters to convince me that Jesus Christ is only a man. I will tell you a secret. Sometimes one of my printed sermons is returned with notes placed in the margins, correcting me on various points, especially as to my views concerning the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and of Jesus Christ. I say that is a secret, for probably you did not know it before. Ministers of the Gospel encounter all kinds of characters, but none of these things move me. I have built upon the Rock, and I am not to be shaken by letters from London, nor from Scotland. I am a poor sinner, but my soul is solemnly precious; for "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is more precious than the world, and it must live when my body is dead, and I build therefore for eternity; I must have something divinely solid upon which to build my hope, and to rest my soul; and the Christ I believe in, and love, and preach, is truly God. He is verily man, but He is God and man in one mysterious person, and I build on this complex, mysterious, and eternal Son of God; He is Rock in His person and character, and I trust in Him,

"Whose honour is engaged to save
 The meanest of His sheep."

All other ground is sinking sand. There is vibration everywhere else; the thundering waves, and the roaring wind, will beat the house down, unless it is built upon the person and character of the dear Christ of God. His finished work, and His glorious fulness, are rock. God is in Christ, and the believer is in Him also. Every truly convinced sinner comes to Christ, hears His word, sits at His feet, and builds for eternity upon His precious and glorious name, founded upon a rock.

In the next place *his religion will be tried*. The flood arose, and the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it. What do you think of the flood of temptation? The serpent cast a flood of water out of his mouth to drown the woman. Then there are the floods of persecution which have always been raised by the devil, and cast against the people of God. But Satan has hitherto been overcome, and will be defeated finally and for ever. Again, there are the corruptions of the human heart, but these do not drown the builder, or affect his safety,

or shake his house. Again, we have deep trials and afflictions one after another. The wife is gone, the children are going, the father is gone ; bereaving providences are numerous, and stripping, and terrible. Can you leave Christ ? Have you mean thoughts of Him in consequence of affliction ? No, for what should I do, dear sir, now without my Lord ? His hand is apparently gone out against me, and His providence is mysterious. Christ, however, is the only source of comfort I have ; for,

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

Well, the floods beat vehemently on that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on a rock.

The last point is *the safety of this character*. “ Could not shake it.” Now I do not think I can do better by way of expanding this idea, than give you two or three passages of Scripture. First, the church says, “ I will trust.” That is good, but it is not all. “ I will trust, and not be afraid.” I will, and will not. “ I have built on Christ ; I trust in Him ; and as for the storm that rages and threatens to come against me, I will not be afraid.” Take another Scripture : Paul having mentioned a number of troubles, sorrows, and afflictions, says, “ None of these things move me ; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.” If none of these things move you, Paul, where are you ? On Christ, and in His hands. They may move others, even mere professors, but they move not me ; I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. Ah ! but Paul, something worse is coming, something still more severe and terrible. Well, let it come, Paul is face to face with death. There are the block, and the axe, and the headsman ; and the Apostle says, I am ready ; “ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” But are you willing to die *that* death, and to go to heaven *that way* ? Yes, if it is my Master’s will, I am willing. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day. Once more let me re-quote the portion which I named at the commencement of my discourse this morning ; the language of the happy Simeon. “ Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.” Why, he was an old man, standing just on the verge of the grave ; there was only a step between him and death ; and yet how calm, and serene, and noble the old man appeared with God’s salvation in his arms ! The floods of death could not shake him, and going into the presence of God did not alarm and terrify him. His old age, and the weight of his infirmities, were cheerfully borne. Lord, I am thankful that I may now “ depart in peace, according to Thy Word ; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” May it be ours to be coming every day to Christ, to sit at His feet and hear His words, and then to go forth into the church and the world to do His word, and so appear as believing builders upon the Rock. We shall encounter the storms and tempests of life ; but may it be ours to realize the blessedness of what is here stated, the house cannot be shaken.

What reflections might be offered upon the subject. My time is gone, and I can only just mention them. The first is this, that true godliness

or religion is not of nature. It is not natural to us. The religion indicated in my text, comes to one more or less advanced in life. It is not born with us, we do not bring even its germ into the world with us. The mother does not bring forth her child upon the Rock; but if saved, it is subsequently brought to build upon Christ; for true religion is something imparted, perhaps years after one's birth. The heart of a child we are told, is naturally like a sheet of clean writing-paper unwritten upon and unmarked, and prepared to receive just such impressions as precept and example may make, holy or sinful. If good influences bear upon it, it will become godly; but if bad, its natural purity will be lost. But we are born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and in sin our mothers conceived us; and if we are not brought to the Saviour, and never hear His words, never build upon the Rock of ages, what we brought with us into the world, we shall carry out of the world with us. The new birth does not take place after death; you do not find human nature coming to Christ, neither will you find it producing a desire to come to Him to hear his Word, and to build upon the Rock. A natural man building upon the Rock of Ages can never be. A sinner first comes by the Spirit to Jesus, then he hears His words for himself and for eternity, and then he realizes his condition, and looks for safety, and finds it only in the Lord.

The second reflection is, that God's dear people build for eternity, and not for a few years only, as houses here are built for sale, and not to dwell in. The child of God builds for eternity, and therefore the foundation is the first consideration. The house may be a small one; that is no matter, it will stand. It may not be very skilfully built; no matter, I am building as well as I can, or as well as the Holy Spirit helps me to build, and whether it be a pleasing structure or otherwise, I am anxious about the foundation. It may not be a very attractive object; but whether it has attractions or not, is a matter of little importance; I am concerned to build on the Rock. We must live for ever, and go into the presence of God; and we want to know what is underneath us to sustain and support us. We would not rest on anything out of Christ, or short of His dear name. Well, the child of God building for eternity sings—

“I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name;
On Christ, the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

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

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THE RIGHT HOPE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 2nd MAY, 1886.

“*And hope maketh not ashamed.*” Romans v. 5.

THIS is one of the most comprehensive chapters in the Word of God ; an epitome of the glorious gospel or of the covenant of grace. It is impossible to over-estimate the glorious doctrine of justification by faith. A very important question occurs in the Scriptures, “How can man be justified with God? or, how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” Yet God justifies the ungodly, and He is just in doing so. His glory is not tarnished, and none of His attributes and perfections are concealed ; but the whole of His character stands out most gloriously in the justification of sinners. The chapter opens with the word “therefore,” which directs our attention to what the Apostle had previously written. The last verse of the preceding chapter reads thus :—“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Surely this is the very marrow of the gospel, and the very spirit of the new covenant. Jesus Christ, who was delivered to death, was the Son of God. All the brightness, greatness, and glory of the Godhead are in Him ; therefore all the perfections of Jehovah are inseparable from His great sacrifice, so that their is more in the sufferings of Christ to put away sin, than there is in sin itself to put away the sinner ; and we sing of the blood of our Lord :

“It rises high and drowns the hills,
Has neither shore nor bound ;
Now if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne’er be found.”

It is the Spirit’s work to glorify the Son of God, the dear Redeemer, in the heart, by exalting His person and His precious blood above all the sin, iniquity, and guilt of the sinner. Yes, the Son of God was delivered to death for our offences ; and as He did not die in vain, but fulfilled the great purpose which He came to accomplish, He returned to heaven with those honours which He gloriously and justly won for Himself. “He was raised again for our justification.” It is perhaps impossible to say which of the two branches of eternal salvation is the more important ; the death of Christ, or His resurrection from the dead. Our great Lord died to put away sin, and it was put away when He said, “It is finished !” but He was afterwards buried. He is risen, however, from the dead, and is seated at His Father’s right hand, and all His people are risen with Him ; and if He, as the Head of the church, is justified, they are justified in Him, and for His sake. Therefore, says the Apostle ; “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh the blessedness of standing before God clothed with the righteousness of His Son, having received it by faith ; and how happy are they who can

say for themselves, He loved us, and gave Himself for us. It is a great thing to be all right, to stand before the throne of God without fault, and to be passed on for eternity, and for heaven itself, by the infinitely holy Jehovah. If, my brother, you are clothed with the righteousness of the Saviour, you are for ever justified, and in that respect, you are before God all perfect and complete; for "ye are complete in Him." Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. What a privilege is this peace, not only on the earth, and in our hearts, but in heaven also. Peace with God Himself, being in harmony with all His perfections. We are rather prone, I imagine, in contemplating this subject to feel that we and mercy only are bound together. My dear friends, if we are justified ones, we have peace with God's justice, and righteousness, and holiness also. We do not more deeply adore and reverence divine mercy, than we reverence divine equity and truth. All the attributes of God concur and for ever agree in our salvation, and they all appear in everlasting harmony in the formation of our character, and in our eternal inheritance of a better world. Hence we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only so, the Apostle says, "By Him also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Wonderful arrangement! and glorious indeed is the plan of salvation. The righteousness of Jesus is put upon the sinner, who now appears before the Lord who wrought it out. And the Saviour introduces him into the presence of His Father, and our Father, who accepts him therein, and for the sake of that High Priest who introduces him into His presence. "We have access into this grace wherein we stand," as righteous persons, as individuals who are free from guilt and condemnation, "and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And such is the influence of the grace of justification upon the heart of the justified one, that the Apostle proceeds to say: "We glory in the tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience." Glorifying in grace, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, is something that we can understand; but where is the man that can glory in tribulation? He that can say for himself, "I am justified by faith in Christ, and the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto me;" can say also, "I glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." Having preached from the latter part of this verse, I have not read the whole of it for my text this morning. Let us for a few minutes look at this portion, and try to express a few thoughts and feelings upon it. "And hope maketh not ashamed."

I should like, in the first place, to try to show you *what the believer's hope implies*. I desire to dwell upon the nature and operations of this grace this morning, because we are living in a day when some very strange things are said concerning the hope of God's people. Well, what does the believer's hope imply? It implies this fact among others, *that more has been promised than we have yet received*. So long as promises remain unfulfilled, the believer will be in a hoping condition. This is important, because there are persons, and their number is considerable, who wish to be thought very good people; and doubtless some, or many of them are so, who have some strange notions concerning the hope of God's children. They ask how you are getting on in relation to the things of God, and if in the simplicity of your minds, you answer that you hope you are

right, or that you are the Lord's, or that you are a saved sinner ; they stop you very suddenly, as if they were half-angry with you, with, "*Hope ! hope !* have you not yet got beyond hope ?" You are a professor, and have been one for many years, and you ought to be able to express yourself now more confidently. Well, my dear friends, I love the grace of hope and its operations in my heart, and I find that the Holy Spirit in the Word has been pleased to honour that grace ; and therefore I cannot speak contemptuously of it, nor of any person you says in the simplicity of his heart, "I hope that my soul is right in God's sight." Now let us look at this point for a few minutes. The promises of God are numerous and great, and such is their nature, that very many of them cannot be perfectly fulfilled unto us in this world. Since the promises are revealed and recorded in the Bible, and cannot be perfectly fulfilled unto us here, we must be the subjects of hope, looking into the future, and expecting something more than we already possess. The promises of God go right into the future ; they go into death, and pass quite through its valley, and enter into heaven itself, and cover all eternity. So long as there are unfulfilled promises, believers will look and hope for the promised good. The child of God cannot in the nature of things be satisfied on the earth. This is not his rest. The Lord did not create this world to be the home and the resting-place of His dear people. I do not think that our God will ever do anything to, or in the world for the purpose of constituting it the final home of His family. "Where I am, there shall ye be also." Well, Christ is at the Father's right hand, He is in that better country. "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Our Lord, therefore, is in paradise, the perfect and unloseable garden of Eden, in the kingdom of eternal bliss and glory ; and where He is, there His people must be also. If this world is not their home, if it is not to be their final resting-place, if they cannot possibly find all they require here, the grace of hope in the heart is given for the purpose of keeping them, as it were, on the look-out. They are sending their thoughts and expectations into the future, into that rest which is prepared for them in heaven, and which remains for the people of God. The strongest saint, and the most vigorous believer that has ever lived, was imperfect, and the most fruitful believer now on the earth is so also ; and so long as there is a sense of imperfection, there will and must be hope. If we were brimful, and could hold no more, we should cease to hope. If we were perfectly satisfied, and required nothing more, then we should cease to hope ; but although we have something in hand, we are not yet in possession of all that God has promised. Although we are saved sinners, we are not yet perfect. Therefore we are saved by hope, which maketh not ashamed. No, the child of God cannot be satisfied with his present attainments. Those persons to whom I have referred have not got beyond hope themselves, or if they have, they are living presumptuously. A humble hope in God is better than a whole heap of fleshly hollow confidence and presumption. I do not want, so long as I am here, to get beyond a good hope. I hope for help, and help comes ; and I shall hope on, and on, until I am helped for the last time, which will be in death, and then I shall enter into the hoped-for bliss and glory. My hope will then expire in full fruition, and I shall look forward with expectation no more. We are saved by hope which maketh not ashamed. Is it not thus with you ? Am I not giving ex-

pression in a humble manner to your thoughts, and feelings, and experience? Can the child of God while he is here, and the subject of indwelling sin, be in a position in which it may be correctly said of him, that he is beyond hope. So long as there is sin in us, we shall hope for the time when it will be removed. So long as we are conscious of imperfection, we shall hope for that period when we shall be made perfect. So long as we are not perfectly like the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall hope for that change when we shall see Him as He is, and be for ever with and like Him. The hope of the child of God implies the fact, that he is not yet satisfied, that he needs more, that God has promised to give him more than he has yet received, and that he is to be what he never yet has been. For,—

“It doth not yet appear
How great we must be made;
But when we see our Saviour here,
We shall like our Head.”

Again; the believer's hope *implies righteousness on the one hand, and spiritual relationship on the other*. It implies righteousness. What is before and behind the child of God? His sin, his guilt, his transgression? Then he cannot hope. If sin has not been put away, if guilt has not been expiated, if God, in relation to transgression, has not been atoned, then there is no ground whatever for a sinner to hope for God and for heaven. But what is really behind and before the child of God? The atonement of the Saviour. His well-done and finished work. Then he may and will hope. If sin has been carried out, and righteousness brought in, if the offence has disappeared, and that which is infinitely pleasing to God has taken its place, then one says, who can tell? I am a guilty sinner, but I venture to hope that God will have mercy on me. He can be merciful to sinners without injuring Himself, or dimming His character and glory; and since he can show mercy to the guilty, I will hope for mercy, and

“I'll go to Jesus, though my sins
Have like a mountain rose;
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.”

Well, here is the atonement, trembling sinner, and you who have recently been convinced of sin may cast yourself upon it. The Lord help you to build your hopes for pardon and for heaven, upon the precious blood and glorious righteousness of God's dear Son. But I said, there must be righteousness on the one hand, and relationship on the other, before there can be true comfort in connection with our hope. Where are you, and what are you doing? You are resting upon the atonement of Jesus. But what are you hoping for? Heaven, the inheritance? The heavenly inheritance goes to the heirs of God, even the joint-heirs with Christ; all these heirs are God's sons and daughters. If you are His child, hope for the heavenly inheritance; but if you are not spiritually related to Him, there is no ground whatever upon which you may hope for heaven. “Ah sir, Jesus died for me, and I stand there! The Holy Ghost bears witness with my heart, not only that Jesus died for me, but that I am a son of God, and joint-heir with Jesus Christ.” Then, hope for all God has promised, and for all He has prepared. In the first place, your guilt has been expiated, and God will never curse you. In the second place, you

stand related to God as a son or a daughter, and He will for ever bless you. Such a hope maketh not ashamed. Again, this hope *implies faithfulness and fulness on the part of God*. Suppose God should alter His mind? If that were possible, our hope would shake and give way. If His nature and love could change, we could not confidently hope; but He is in one mind, and none can turn Him. He loves with an everlasting love, and will never cease to be our Father, and we shall always be His children. He is the ever faithful God, and here you may build your hopes. But you are hoping for so much; yes, but not for more than there is in God. He is faithful to His promises, and faithful to His children; and He has not surpassed or gone beyond His fulness with His promises. They are large, but His resources are infinite, and therefore we hope for great things, and for the best, even for the best world, and the richest bliss and joy, all of which shall be everlasting. "And hope maketh not ashamed." I have made these observations on this point for the purpose of attempting to comfort the little ones in the family of heaven. Do not be cast down, my brethren, if you meet some of those strong and gigantic Christians who are always on the mount, always above doubt and fear, and who have got beyond hope. If you meet them, and they condemn you for your hope, do not be dejected. Look at the great man David. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? *Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.*" Yes, we rejoice in hope of the glory to God. We have not yet received all; we have much in hand, and much in possession, but there is more in hope and in the future. Hope, therefore, for the perfect fulfilment of the whole Bible; for this grace must abide and prevail until the whole volume of heaven is divinely fulfilled. So much for the implication which the existence of a good hope carries with it.

In the second place, let us say a word or two upon *the nature of this hope*. The germ of it comes into the heart in regeneration or the new birth, and it is inseparable from that principle of divine life, the possession of which constitutes one a Christian. The new birth is a perfect birth. The infant, notwithstanding its smallness, is perfect, and possesses all its parts and members at once. Development and growth will follow the birth. Its little arms and legs will become larger. And as it is in nature, so it is in grace in this respect. The new-born child of God is perfect as to his nature and parts, though not as to his strength and development. Therefore when the new birth has taken place, the germ of hope, and faith, and love, and patience, and joy, is in the heart. These graces are all latent, if I may so speak, in the principle of grace which the Holy Ghost at first communicates to the soul, and circumstances and facts will, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, develope them. A new-born child of God sees and feels he is a guilty sinner, and a sense of guilt makes way for hope; and in proportion as the character and nature of sin are felt, hope, is intensified, and as God reveals His mercy in harmony with His justice, faith rises high, and the soul becomes hopeful and sings,—

"I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if stay away, I know
I must for ever die.

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

And therefore, if I perish I will perish at the feet of Christ ; if I die, I will die in His presence ; and if I am cast into hell, I will humbly hope until the last. Delightful thought ! no sinner with this hope was ever lost. This is the nature of this hope. But I want to tarry a moment or two on a point which I feel is important, viz., that *this hope is sure and steadfast*. I have reached the conclusion that this is the only hope in the universe, so far as we know what is in the universe, that is absolutely sure and certain. When I speak of the believer's hope, I do not refer to something uncertain, but to that which can never be lost. There is no room for doubt as to the final fruition of the believer's hope, and I am speaking solemnly ; the believer must sooner or later possess, as the Lord liveth, all that God teaches his heart to hope for. Our God is the God of hope, and it is not like Him to induce a heart to hope for that which He does not absolutely intend to give. It is not like Him to bring us to expect blessings which we shall never receive. It is not like Him to create a desire and then to quench it ; for “ He shall fulfil the desire of them that fear Him.” It is sure and certain. What other hope is so ? “ I hope I shall live and see certain things.” But you are not sure that you will live to see them, for life is uncertain. You hope for health and strength, but you are not sure of them. You hope when you commence a journey that you will reach your destination, whether it be by land or sea ; but that is uncertain, for you may die before the end is reached : you may, and you may not. These are words which will not apply to the believer's hope. One is going to Australia, the captain of the vessel is an experienced man, the vessel is said to be a faultless one, and there seems to be no human reason why Australia should not be reached. The voyage is commenced, and hope fills the breast ; but it is an uncertain one. Now look at the believer, the child of God, in whose heart there is a heavenly hope. Grace has turned him, and hell and the world are behind him, and heaven and glory are before him. May there not be some failure ? No. May there not be some disappointment ? Certainly not. God has started him for heaven, and heaven must be reached, for his hope is sure and steadfast. God has set him in the way, and given him to hope for grace until the end of the journey, and has said to him, “ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, until I have done that good thing which I have spoken to thee of.” Walk on, my brother, and let us travel together. The way is straight and safe, and our Leader is infallible, and perpetually with us, while the hope He has given us is inseparably connected with God's honour. Nothing can quench it, nothing can disappoint it, for it is the hope mentioned in my text ; it maketh not ashamed, but is sure and steadfast. “ But all hopes are not uncertain, are they ?” Yes, all are. You have a dear brother, on whose love and resources you are resting important hopes. Have you never known brothers to become helpless or treacherous ? Ah, but there is the wife or the husband, and we may confidently hope in such relations. But have you never heard of a husband or a wife, after living in peace and pleasure a number of years, becoming changed ? There is no absolute certainty, no absolute fixedness connected with any hope, but that which

is heavenly and Divine. Yet natural hope is a pleasure, and we could not live without it. The world would be dark and miserable indeed, if it were a hopeless world; yet the hopes of the world are all of them, more or less, uncertain, unfixed, and unsteady. This is the only hope that maketh not ashamed. I had some important hopes a few years ago, but I have lost them; I will not tell you what they related to, but they were strong, and I felt as sure and certain about them as any person can feel about earthly matters. Disappointment has taken place. Oh! hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God. First, then the implication which hope carries with it, and secondly, the nature of this hope.

Thirdly, *the objects of it*. The objects of hope are unseen as we read at the commencement of the service this morning. "For hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." The hope of a believer goes through clouds, and beyond death, and the grave, and time. In the nature of things, the believer's hope must get into some bright place, and it remains on the wing until some fixed point is reached, or some desirable position appears. Hope cannot sit quietly and calmly in the midst of darkness and danger. One may be in these circumstances, but hope goes forward into the future; through the fog, and the cloud, and time, and out of this world into heaven, and rests in God, the invisible Jehovah. Guided by His word and directed by His Spirit, hope finds God and rests in Him. Faith believes the Word, and hope stands upon the threshold and looks out for the fulfilment of it. The soul sends its expectation forward into heaven, and into the future, beyond impossibilities and possibilities, into the omnipotence of God, and says, "I shall yet praise Him."

Fourthly, *the influence of hope upon its possessor*. Now you know, the object of hope is always desirable and attractive. We may expect evil, but we cannot hope for it. Hope longs for that which is good, excellent, valuable, necessary, precious; and this hope has an influence upon its possessor. In proportion as the attractions of the objects of hope are great and powerful, the heart is drawn towards them. God in Christ, is the object of hope and heaven; and heavenly glory are the objects of our hope. Christ draws hope; for souls are neither driven nor dragged to God. "Draw me: we will run after Thee." The beauties of the Saviour, and the attractions of heaven draw and influence our spirits. Then the very spirit and character of the object of hope are impressed upon hope itself. I beg your attention to this point, which I trust I have clearly put before you. Hope imbibes the spirit of its object, is impressed with it. If the object of hope is something earthly, the hope is an earthly one, and if something sinful and vile, the hope is an impure one. Thus if Christ is the object of hope, He is stamped upon the hope itself; and hence "every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as He is pure." As the object of the believer's hope is a pure Christ, so the person that hopes in Christ would be perfectly holy, and he is hoping for the period when all his impurity and imperfections will be lost, and he will be for ever like his Lord. Do not think that a hope so much Divine, so good, and so excellent, can be unclean or impure. Imperfect it is as to its operations and influence; but

it is a pure hope, like its object, Jesus Christ. He who possesses it is not a perfectly pure character ; but the grace itself, like its Author and object, is holy.

I thought I would say in the fifth place, a word or two, if time permitted, on *the final fruition of this hope*. It must be swallowed up, absorbed, and lost in perfect and full fruition ; but I cannot now attempt to go into that subject. The last point is that which is so prominent in the text, viz., the fact itself, "Hope maketh not ashamed." Adam was ashamed when he fell, in the garden of Eden. Jesus Christ, however, was not ashamed, though He gave Himself up to shame and ignominy ; and he who hopes in the suffering, dying and risen Saviour shall never be ashamed. The believer can never be ashamed of the foundation of his hope, who is Christ ; nor of the object of his hope, who is God ; nor of the company which hope carries him into, which is good company ; nor of the loss which his hope may involve him in.

"For why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain,
He told me no less."

"Blessed are they that are persecuted for My name sake." Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." Though I am a prisoner, I am not ashamed of this chain, for I wear it for Christ's sake. No, this hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the soul. And not ashamed of its fruition at last. My brother, the believer's hope is not greater than its object, and hence he will never be ashamed. You and I often hope as creatures for more than we get. Our hope is larger than the object when it is obtained. But our God is the object of this hope, and He infinitely exceeds the hope He gives. Methinks when we get to heaven we shall be constrained to say with the Queen of Sheba : I heard of Thy glory in my own land, and believed it not ; but now I see it all with my own eyes, behold, the half of it was not told me. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Brethren, we shall be surprised when we get to heaven. We believe a little that heaven is a wonderful world, and that Christ is a wonderful person, and that the pleasures and glories of Jerusalem above are truly great, but when we see heaven, and our Lord and enter into that bliss, perhaps we shall feel, as I said just now, that we did not half-believe it, nor half-hope for it, and that the half of what God has provided for us was never told us. The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 6th JUNE, 1886.

“To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.” Isaiah lxi. 2.

THIS chapter opens with an abundance of heavenly consolation, and with much of that kind of information which is essential to the salvation of poor sinners. In the first verse we have an encouraging view of God in His Trinity of Persons, and also a view of the spiritual experience of all that know the Saviour. In the first place, we have a view of the divine Trinity. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me. Here we have the Lord God, or the Father, and the Spirit of the Father, upon the Mediator, the blessed Son of God. Thus the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the glorious Trinity, are before us in this verse, in connection with the covenant of grace and the salvation of sinners. Here is the Anointer, the Father; the Anointed One, the Son; and the Anointing, which is the Holy Spirit. Our Lord was not anointed merely with the grace, the gifts, and the excellences of the Spirit, but with the Spirit Himself, who was given to Him without measure. In the second place we have a view of the three important and saving offices of Lord—our Prophet, Priest, and King. His prophetic office is thus indicated: “The Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek.” This sets forth His prophetic office; for all our light and information for salvation and for heaven comes to us through this great Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Mary, we would sit at His feet and learn His will, and hear His words, and receive that blessed instruction which the Son of God officially imparts. I am come to preach good tidings to the meek. And who are the meek? They are called the poor in that portion of the Word which we read at the commencement of the service,—the fourth chapter of Luke. Our Lord went into the synagogue at Nazareth, and stood up for to read; and the book of the prophet Esaias was delivered unto Him, and He opened the book and found the place where our text was written; and He read it thus: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.” The spiritually poor are meek, and the spiritually meek are poor, and Jesus came to bring good news and glad tidings to them. In the next place, His priestly office is here represented: “He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted.” Now, if it is His work as a Prophet to teach and give us heavenly and unctuous light, it is His work as our great High Priest to bind up broken hearts in His own blood,

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which is healing, saving, and balm. His blood in the word is applied to broken hearts, which are bound up by God's own hand, and the healed sinners live for ever. Naturally we associate death with a broken heart. If the heart is broken, death follows; but one cannot live spiritually with an unbroken heart. If our hearts are not broken spiritually, we can never live. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." It is a great mercy to have our hearts broken by God's own gracious hand, for if He breaks, it is His intention to heal and save; a broken-hearted sinner must therefore live for ever. Binding up broken hearts is marvellous work. This is what medical men cannot do for the heart naturally. God, however, is the Creator of the mind, and the Maker of the soul; and if He smites and wounds the heart, and breaks it, He is merciful and gracious to bind it up, and make it for ever whole. So here we have light coming from the Prophet, and the balmy healing blood coming from the Priest. Again, we have the kingly character and work of Christ indicated. "To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." This shows the kingly office, power, and glory of our Lord. Then, in the next place, if you follow me, or rather, follow the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the text, and in the context, you will see that we have a threefold view of the people that are interested in the official work of Jesus. First, they are meek; second, they are broken-hearted; third, they are bound, and in prison; and hence the Saviour comes to liberate them. First, as a Prophet he teaches the meek; secondly, as a Priest He binds up the broken-hearted, and thirdly, as a King, having all power and authority over all prisons and prisoners, He opens the prison, and proclaims liberty to them, and sets them free. The three persons in the Godhead, the three offices of our Lord, and the threefold view of every sinner saved by grace. The Lord, however, proceeds to say in the text: "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." I shall not reach the last clause of the verse, or if I do, I shall not say anything upon it; having preached from the words somewhere on a previous occasion, and no doubt I preached from them here.

Our attention this morning will be limited to two points, *The acceptable year of our Lord*, and *The day of vengeance of our God*. Now, first, if the Lord the Holy Spirit will anoint us with fresh oil, a few thoughts shall be expressed on *the acceptable year of our Lord*, mentioned in our text. *What is the Lord's acceptable and accepted year?* I should like to say that this year is not only the acceptable year, but the accepted one; for you know a person or a thing may be acceptable, and yet never be accepted. It is a very desirable, important, and precious year, both to the Lord, and also to His beloved church and people. But what is this acceptable year of the Lord? We know that the ceremonial dispensation was an important age, and that it was an association of types, shadows, and symbols, the importance of which has not altogether even now passed away; for sometimes the Book of Leviticus casts a considerable light upon the New Testament, just as the New Testament casts a glorious light upon the law and writings of Moses. That dispensation, however, was not the acceptable year of the Lord. It was a year, or a measured period of

time, during which the church of God were taught and instructed by symbols, types, and shadows ; but the priests by the offerings which they presented, never took away sin. The evil remained in God's sight ; the breaches of the law continued to exist ; the vials of Divine wrath were all of them full, if I may so speak, and none of them were ever emptied during that period ; for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. The sacrifices offered under that dispensation were therefore repeated again and again, year by year, month by month, week by week, and day by day ; and for aught I know, many of them were repeated hour by hour, for if a Jew committed a sin against God for which a sacrifice was ordered, he had to take his offering to the priest, who slew it, and presented it as an atonement to the God of Israel. This is now all over ; that state of things has wholly disappeared ; it was not the acceptable year of the Lord. It typified and symbolized that period, but God did not accept it as sufficient for purposes of salvation and sanctification ; and therefore when Christ came, He took away the first, that He might establish the second. This acceptable year is, as I take it, the whole of the Gospel dispensation, and that portion of the Word which is so unrighteously mangled, refers to this precious and important fact ; "Now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation." When Aaron appeared upon the scene, those words would have been inapplicable. Had they been used, they would not have conveyed a truth to the mind of anyone. When he offered sacrifices, it was not in the acceptable year of the Lord. Our Christ, however, came and offered Himself a sacrifice for sin, and finished His work most gloriously, and now the fact is proclaimed ; "Now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation." This also is how I understand that interesting and important parable, "The master of the feast sent forth his servants to say, Come, for all things are now ready." When Aaron offered lambs and bullocks, during those hundreds of years, all things were not ready. The veil of the temple was not rent, and the children of Israel as a body, or as individuals, were never permitted to go into the Holiest of all. The fires of Divine wrath had not been extinguished, and the glorious gospel table had not been spread in the sense in which it is spread now. When, however, Christ had fulfilled the great design for which He came into the world, then the gospel followed Him, and this is the great proclamation of the gospel,—“All things are now ready ; for the gospel dispensation is the acceptable year of the Lord.” We are told, that if sinners do not accept the offered mercy and salvation, they may never have another opportunity of doing so. They are now offered, and they should be accepted to-day, for there may be no to-morrow for them ; as if the acceptable year of the Lord, or the day of salvation were to be considered as a period consisting of twelve or twenty-four hours. My dear friends, the acceptable year of the Lord extends from the birth of the Saviour to His second coming, and this period will be acceptable to God until the Saviour comes again ; I may say in relation to this acceptable year, that the birth of our dear Lord was the first day of this new year. God showed triumphantly and gloriously that it was the beginning of this acceptable time ; for when the Saviour was born, an angel announced His birth to the shepherds, saying, “Behold, I bring you good tidings of

great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born *this day*, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And further, by way of indicating His acceptance of this year, a host of angels appeared, singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Well, that was the commencement of this acceptable year of the Lord. The day had dawned, the year had commenced, a new and very interesting period in connection with the government of God had been brought into existence, and everything connected with the birth of the Saviour was acceptable to His Father. But what constitutes it acceptable? Christ. His birth was acceptable—yours and mine were not. The birth of no other person has ever been acceptable, spiritually so; because we are born in sin, and shapen in iniquity. Christ was not born in sin, neither was He shapen in iniquity. His nature was pure, the babe was spotless. Sinning against His Father and His God was utterly impossible to Him. The Father looked upon His dear Son in the manger with approbation and delight, and rejoiced with angels and with saved sinners, that the accepted Saviour was born. Again, His life was acceptable. Now, men and women by nature live in sin; but "Which of you," saith the Master, "convinceth Me of sin?" No sin was committed by Him as a youth: but I cannot enter into that mystery, for a covering has been cast over the larger portion of the Saviour's life on the earth. No sin was committed by Him as a youth, none as a man, and none in His official character and position. He never made a mistake, or committed an error; anything like a fault never appeared in His work. He shone as a perfect light all the days of His life, the whole of which, from the moment of His birth, to the moment of His death and resurrection, was acceptable to the Lord. Then we come to His death. What was there in that to render this period acceptable to the Lord? Oh, He swallowed up the whole of the previous dispensation. No more lambs, bullocks, pigeons, turtle-doves; no more brazen altar, no more golden altar; and Aaron's house may leave the premises, for their priesthood is at an end. All was swallowed up when He said, "It is finished!" and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. And what followed? Why, a fragrance ascended to heaven and filled the holiest of all, and God said, "I smell a sweet savour of rest." Yes, the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed me to preach, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Well, this year is a somewhat long one. Eighteen hundred and eighty-six years of this period of the Mediator's work are past and gone, but I am not at all in love with the proceedings of those who are ever speculating as to the future, and the second coming of our Lord. I do not know when He will come; I know that He will come, and I am informed by the Word of God that He will come in power, and pomp, and glory. The date and circumstances I leave where they are. When He comes the second time, to be admired in all them that believe, this acceptable year of the Lord as such, will be at an end; and eternity—having no days and nights, and months, and years—will then begin. Thus I have made a few remarks upon what constitutes this period the acceptable year of the Lord.

In the second place, I shall offer *some proofs of the fact that this is the acceptable year of the Lord*. The first, and perhaps the only one that I will

introduce is this:—The holiest of all has been opened, the mercy-seat has been uncovered, the place is filled with the sweet incense of the Saviour's intercession, and guilty men draw near and speak to the great Majesty of heaven; and these are proofs of what is stated here, that this is the acceptable year of the Lord. That the holiest of all has been opened was shown when the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom at three o'clock in the afternoon. This was done by God Himself. Rent in twain, not from the bottom to the top, for it was not rent by a creature; but from the top to the bottom, for the hands that rent the veil in twain were from heaven. Why was it rent? To open the place that had never previously been opened, except by the High Priest once a year. It was opened for revelation, for communication, and for accession. And this we take to be a proof that we now live in the acceptable year of the Lord. The mercy-seat has been revealed, and there is nothing to conceal it. All the glories of the throne of grace appear, and the rainbow of the covenant is round about it. Sinners are entering, and you and I have done so. With trembling hearts and burdened spirits we crept into the holiest of all when we wanted salvation. We drew as near to the throne as we could, and said, God be merciful to us, for we are sinners. We lay before God in humble hope, until He deigned to forgive us. Bless His name, He has forgiven and blessed us in the holiest. Having accepted His Son, He accepted His work; and He accepted also all that He represented, though, when we first entered His presence we did not clearly know this. God looked at us approvingly, and as He delights in mercy, with infinite pleasure and satisfaction He pardoned our sins, and set us upon our feet. These are proofs of the fact that this is the acceptable year of the Lord. Besides, God has, in the holiest, all that He requires. We read about the blood of sprinkling, and I believe that many ministers when preaching on that theme, limit their thoughts to the sprinkling of the blood upon sinner's consciences. It is a fact that this is essential to salvation, and no minister should ever ignore it; but that is only half the great business, and I had almost said the lesser half, the greater being that of sprinkling it upon God's throne, thus pacifying Him, and harmonizing His attributes and perfections. Aaron carried the blood into the holiest of all, before he blessed the people, and in order that he might bless them, and Christ entered by His own blood into heaven itself, and presented His satisfaction and atonement to His Father, and thus made way for the Spirit to come to apply that precious blood to the sinner's conscience; therefore, this is the acceptable year of the Lord. I will only mention one other Scripture. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" and it does still much more abound. Look at the contrast: here is guilt, it is great, deep, hateful, and odious, though it is the guilt of a creature. What has taken place? The grace of pardon and justification, and there is more in grace to pardon the guilty than there is in sin to sink him into hell. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Look again; sin is infinitely offensive to God, a stench in His nostrils, He cannot bear the sight nor the odour of it, therefore He would have it put away. He sent His dear Son, who possesses all excellencies, human and divine, the sweet odour of whose sacrifice and merit annihilated the hateful evil, and now ascends

to God, infinitely greater in its sweetness, than was the other in its abominableness. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Condemnation is removed, and in its place we have God's justification. The curse is removed, and in its place we have the blessing. A broken law, and the wrath of God coming out against sin through that law; and in its place now we have the Saviour's obedience and blood, repairing every breach, and quenching all the fires of wrath. Hence the acceptable year of the Lord.

Thirdly, (I ought to have reached this point earlier, but I cannot always preach as I would and should.) *The results of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.* They constitute this period acceptable to God. I believe that by "acceptable" here allusion is made to the year of jubilee, which was kept as a Jewish festival every forty-ninth or fiftieth year: Christ came to proclaim the great gospel jubilee the acceptable year of the Lord. I will just mention three or fourth points in connection with my third branch, viz., the results of this work of our Lord. Very wonderful changes took place at the year of jubilee. In the first place, *liberty was proclaimed* to all servants, and particularly bond-servants; thus the nation was free. Every servant went out free, and Christ says, I am come to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, which is the Lord's jubilee. "To proclaim liberty to the captives." O Liberty! what a sweet word it is. A few hundred years ago many people in England and in other countries did not experimentally know the meaning of the word liberty. Civil and religious liberty,—liberty as Britons and liberty as Christians. Now I know what the word means by tasting the sweetness of the blessing. Yes, it is a great boon; but there is no freedom, no liberty like that which is proclaimed in the glorious gospel of the blessed God, in this acceptable year of the Lord. The church was indeed released by that dear Saviour who now proclaims this acceptable year. Secondly, *debts were remitted* all over the country. That was good news and glad tidings to debtors, whatever it may have been to creditors. Well, our dear Lord has paid our debts, and no one is wronged or injured. He came to pay the debt by bleeding, in order that He might liberate the prisoner; and then He proclaims the fact that all His redeemed are for ever free. Thirdly, *inheritances reverted to their original proprietors.* And heaven is our inheritance. I would not say that it was mortgaged; there were, however, obstructions in our way and we could not take possession until they were removed, which was done by the doing and dying of the Saviour: and all having been removed, we return to our inheritance, and shall soon take possession of it. Fourthly, and lastly there was a *cessation of labour*, or at least servile work for one year. The land was not to be tilled, the people, especially the poor, ate what the land produced; no servile work was done. Take these blessed facts, liberty in this acceptable year, out of debt for ever, our inheritance is in our possession or at least a part of it; for having the earnest we shall have the whole by and bye, and then we shall enter into rest. No more servile, legal, wearying toil and labour. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Are you meek? The Saviour proclaims this fact to you. Are you broken-hearted, or are you in prison? "I am come," says the dear Redeemer, "to proclaim the acceptable year

of the Lord." Other points which are in my mind and which appear in the text, I must leave for want of time. All this is proclaimed. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Our Lord did it Himself personally, and He is proclaiming it now by the ministers of the gospel. We are not to preach works, but grace; not the law, but the gospel; not bondage, but liberty. It is said we must preach bondage and sin. Yes, we advert to it, for the purpose of illustrating the greatness of the liberty. What we have to proclaim, however, is the acceptable year of the Lord.

Secondly, and very briefly, *the day of vengeance of our God*. The first is spoken of as a year, and the vengeance as a day's manifestation of God's wrath. Now, *the character of this vengeance*. It was deserved, for we incurred it, and it was due to us. The payment of this debt was delayed and deferred. The Lord says, I will defer mine anger, and hold back my wrath; I will take vengeance on sin, but not now. And so the wrath was treasured up, and the pouring out was delayed, but it was all righteous, and the vengeance of a God. The vengeance of a man in an official position, and having power is sometimes terrible. The vengeance of the pope used to be so, and I hope it may never be felt here again; the vengeance of the devil is terrible; but when God takes vengeance on a nation or a person, it is Divine, and it must be withering and fearful, for it is the vengeance of God.

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

and,

"On Him Almighty vengeance fell,
Which would have sunk a world to hell;
He bore it for the chosen race,
And so became our Hiding-place."

Come, poor sinner, unto Me; hide under the shadow of My cross, you are accepted for My sake. I proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God. This is the character of the vengeance. *The cause of it*. This is sin, which must be followed by manifestations and expressions of Divine wrath and vengeance. There is no escape; if sin is committed, wrath must be displayed. If we are sinners we have incurred wrath, and the vengeance of the Most High must follow. I call your attention to a little word in my text, "The day of vengeance of *our God*." If He is our God, will He pour out the whole of His vengeance, and be very exact and particular? Yes, He will, though He is our God; but He will pour it out in a particular manner because He is so. He cannot withhold it because He has become our God; for He is a Judge as well as a Father, a Lawgiver as well as a covenant God; and His claims as Judge and Father, are both of them most important, and the claims of neither can be remitted. Therefore as a Judge He will smite, and as a Father He will bless and pardon. Christ says, I am come to proclaim the great work, in connection with which God blesses and curses, pardons and punishes too. He will punish Me and pardon the sinner; curse Me, and bless My ransomed people. I am anointed with the Spirit, to proclaim good tidings. Thirdly, *the objects of God's vengeance*. Now a large field opens before me here. First, I

believe we should mention our Lord. The vengeance fell on Him, all of it. The flames of Divine wrath enveloped His soul; aye, and His person too. And as the sacrifices under the law were burnt and consumed, so the dear Christ of God was upon the altar and in the fires of God's almighty wrath; and had He not been an infinite Sufferer, those fires would have consumed and annihilated Him. But being infinite, though He was burnt through and through, yet He extinguished all those fires, and He Himself remained entire. God smites severely when He smites in wrath, but He never methinks gave blows so hard as when He smote His well-beloved Son. He smote Him not merely for time, but for eternity. Vial after vial He poured and emptied upon His glorious person. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him;" He made His soul an offering for sin. He poured His vengeance upon Him, because our sins were there. It was the day of vengeance of our God: it was the day of vengeance on Christ's part, for God took vengeance on our sins on the Saviour. Then Christ took vengeance on the devil, on principalities and powers. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and to restrain, frustrate, and overcome Satan himself. He overcame principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, and Christ struck hard when He destroyed the powers of darkness. Then again we read of wrath coming on the Jews. That day of vengeance of our God is past and gone. Canaan has been emptied of the Jews, and they have been dispersed and are now living under tokens of God's indignation and wrath. This is the day of vengeance of our God to them, because as a nation they rejected their King, the royal Son of David, and the Son of God. And then by and bye, and I do not say much about this matter, a day of vengeance is coming upon antichrist. "Babylon is fallen! is fallen!" are words recorded in the Bible. That word has not yet been fulfilled. The vengeance is deferred and delayed, but the time may not be very far distant when the prediction shall be fulfilled, and God and the world will say, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" That harlot, that mystery of iniquity and abomination, is treasuring up wrath against itself, and the day of vengeance is coming. What will attend the destruction of Antichrist I cannot tell, but one thing is certain, "He must reign until all His enemies be put under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." He will put down all rule, all authority, and all power, and He will go on fulfilling that word, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, until He shall come whose right it is to reign." And days of vengeance are in store for every heresy and system of error. As for the vengeance that God will take on His enemies at the last day, I must leave that; but whilst that day will be one of glorious grace and triumph to the righteous, it will be a day of vengeance to all that know not God. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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THE ACT AND TIME OF DIVINE DELIVERANCE FORGOTTEN.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 1st AUGUST, 1886.

"They remembered not His hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy."—Psa. lxxviii. 42.

OUR Lord said to the children of Israel, through Moses His beloved servant, "Thou shalt remember all the way in which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness." Those words are still fresh, and they are still in force. It well becomes the children of God even to-day, to remember the dealings of their Heavenly Father with their souls, and with their bodies also; but like the children of Israel, we are prone to forget our God, and to forget those great and gracious deliverances also, which he has so frequently wrought for us. God complains as it were of this in connection with the nation of Israel, in the psalm out of which we have taken our text to-night, saying, "Ye have turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel." Have you and I never "limited the Holy One of Israel?" Have not thousands of the members of God's church limited God, the great Head of the church, in every age of time? And is it not the policy of the devil to tempt the people of God to limit the Holy One of Israel? Satan knows well that in proportion as we limit our God our hearts are barren, and a spirit of rebellion prevails within. We are, if one may speak for others, exceedingly prone to limit God with respect to time, for we want to bind Him in relation to this point. We want Him to hear us, and to hear us now. We want certain blessings, and we want them to-day. We desire to see His almighty hand, and we want Him, as it were, to put it out of heaven at the present time. God, however, will not be limited by His creatures as to time. He will, and He must work, for He has bound Himself to do so; but He will work in His own way, and also in His own time. The children of Israel, like God's dear people now, sometimes in impatience and unbelief, limited their covenant God in this respect. Then, again, they frequently limited Him as to the blessings they wanted. They not only desired His blessing, but they complained if this or the other particular blessing was not given.

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Notwithstanding that God's hands are full of mercies, they mention particular favours or manifestations of His goodness, which they believe are needful, and they would bind the Almighty God to grant them what they deem indispensable gifts. Thus they limited the Holy One of Israel. Again, they sometimes limited Him with regard to their position, and their path or paths in the wilderness. And have you and I never said, in relation to providential and perhaps, in relation to spiritual matters also, "Lord, not that way, lead us not in that path." We have tried, and have done our very best, or worst, to limit the Almighty One of Israel as to this matter. God, however, has marked out the path in which His people shall walk; for "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," therefore, their goings are of the Lord. Our God will do all His will as to the paths in which He leads His people, as to the blessings He confers upon them, and as to the times and periods of appearing unto and for them. But, perhaps, one of the worst features of our experience is, that of limiting the Holy One of Israel as to His work and His power; hence it is said in my text, to-night, "They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy."

Having thus reached the subject, let me offer a few plain and simple remarks upon it. The text divides itself very easily into three parts:—First, *the hand of God*; second, *the day on which that hand appeared*; and third, *the fact asserted*,—Israel did not remember it.

In the first place, let us make a few observations on *the hand of God*. "They remembered not His hand." We are now to lose sight of times and circumstances, at least for a few minutes, and endeavour to meditate upon the glorious hand of our covenant God. Sometimes we try to preach His heart, and at other times we preach His eye, while when so directed we try to set forth His attentive ear which is ever ready to hear prayer, or we dwell upon His bowels of mercies: but to-night for a few minutes we are to direct our attention to His hand.

I notice in the first place, that we, like the children of Israel are sometimes forgetful of *the oath of God*. Do you say, What has that to do with His hand? I will tell you, for perhaps you have forgotten the fact, and we are very prone to forget very much that is of great importance, God's oath is connected with His hand. There are various methods of taking oaths, and different countries take them in different ways. The children of Israel, or the Jewish nation took oaths or swore in the presence of God by lifting up their hands. Hence Abraham said, "I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet" from the people whom I have succoured and delivered, lest they should charge me with having been selfish and covetous. He deemed it a matter of importance to swear before God that in what he had done he was quite disinterested, and desired no material gain; hence, "I have lifted up my hand unto the Most High God." Well now, our God has in condescension to our weakness and darkness,—and I do beg attention to this,—in order that we may not forget His hand, in condescension to our feebleness, our God has said, "I lift up My hand to heaven and say, I live

for ever, so that we have God's promise and God's oath, and we often forget them both, losing sight of them altogether. "They remembered not His hand," which God lifted up for Abraham their ancestor and swore two things; first, "Abraham, I will be thy God," and I confirm My promise by My oath. I lift up My hand to heaven and say, By My life, and My name, and My honour, I will be Thy God; and secondly, I lift up My hand and swear, that having become your God, I will give you the land of Canaan." And our God has promised that He will be our God; and as an oath for confirmation puts an end to all strife,—God, because He could swear by no greater, swore by Himself, that He would for ever be our God:

"Abram, I'll be Thy God," He said;
And He was Abram's God."

And what He said to Abraham in covenant, that He says to every believer in His own great name whether he be great or small. "I will be Thy God;" and, further, having promised and sworn that He would be our God for ever, He has also promised and sworn that He will give us the land of promised rest. Do you always remember this solemn act of Jehovah, these holy promises of your God, and this solemn oath of the great I AM?

"His honour and His name's at stake,
To save me from the burning lake."

To come down as low as I possibly can, I think of Nehemiah's words, "Who *desire* to fear Thy name." There are those in the family of God who cannot speak positively with regard to the nature and character of their fear; but you can speak positively with regard to your desire to fear God's name. That desire must be fulfilled, for God is its Author, and its root is His grace, and you are among those honoured persons for whom God lifted up His hand, and swore by Himself that He would be your God for ever, and take you to dwell for ever with Himself. Now, as our time is limited, our remarks must be brief, and therefore, let that suffice for the first point. They remembered not His uplifted hand when He swore that He would save them.

In the second place, they remembered not *the almightiness of His hand*. They not only forgot how solemn it was, but they remembered not its strength. And if I may speak for you, you are very prone to forget the same fact. Our God, however, has said, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." I would always hear the voice of my covenant God and heavenly Father asking me as it were the question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Is there a rocky heart too hard for Me to break? Is there a knotty question too hard for Me to answer? Are there puzzling and perplexing circumstances too tangled for Me to unravel? Will you limit My wisdom? Will you regard Me as having an arm too short to reach you, or too unskilful to manage your affairs? They remembered not the strength of God's arm, and they forgot what He had done. They went back in their hearts, it is said, to Egypt, and remembered not what God

had done for them there,—how He put His strong arm underneath the whole nation, and lifted them all out of the fiery furnace at once ; and they forgot it all. They forgot also how marvellously He made a way for them through the sea and in the wilderness. They saw that great sight, the outstretched hand of God, in the fiery and cloudy pillar, they saw the whole host of Egypt behind them, and the rolling waters and dividing waters before them, and how God with His strong hand went before and opened a way for them all through the Red Sea. Having reached, however, the opposite shore of the sea, and seen all their enemies destroyed, it was not long before they began to talk about stoning Moses. You have brought us out of Egypt to perish here in the desert. Let us not pelt the children of Israel, for we are not better than they. Let us not cast stones at them ; for, like them, we have most ungratefully forgotten the strength of the arm of the Lord our God. He has done much for us, and in some respects more for us, spiritually, than He did for the children of Israel. Theirs was a temporal redemption, ours is a spiritual one. Theirs was a temporal deliverance, ours is a spiritual one ; and the marvellous manner in which the Red Sea was divided, was a manifestation of Divine providence, and providence is in many respects inferior to, at least it is always subordinate to God's grace. They forgot what He had done, and we forget what He is doing now ; whilst His everlasting arms are underneath us, and we are lying in them. Oh what provoking creatures are we ! and what a merciful God is ours ! We lie in His everlasting arms, and murmur and question His right to do what He is doing, or the wisdom of His dealings with us ! “ You may do this, sir, but we do not.” I am glad if you do not ; but my heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. I would have something in the church that I do not see in it, and something in this, that, and the other individual that I do not see in them, and a good deal in the circumstances of my life, that I cannot find in them ; yet the church is not mine, but God's, and all souls are in His hands ; and, therefore, it must be that,

“ My life's minutest circumstance,
Is subject to His eye.”

And yet, whilst everlasting arms are underneath me, and in my judgment and understanding I believe that I should sink into perdition were it not so, I complain of the conduct of My heavenly Father. They remembered not His hand, how strong it was, and how its omnipotence was displayed. Its omnipotence is being displayed now, and we forget what He has done, and also the strength of His arm with regard to the future. What have we to do with the future ? Nothing, or not much at present, except this one important point which should not be lost sight of, “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” This is a thousand times better for us, than if we possessed the spirit of prophecy, and could look into the future and see what God's arrangements are. Grasp that promise with all your hearts if you can, and you may leave the future where it is, in the hands of your gracious and covenant God. They remembered not the omnipotence of His arm. They forgot the victories He

had wrought for them, the way He had made for them, and how He had preserved them. The victories He had achieved for them. "His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory." That high and strong hand and holy arm hath gotten us the victory until now; and I do not, brethren, go too far, for are you not something more than conquerors and overcomers here to-night. Have you been trampled on and destroyed as a Christian? No, not yet. Then Satan has not finally overcome you, but in fact you are hitherto more than conquerors through the blood, and power, and word of the Lamb. Forget not the victories He has wrought for you.

Again, I sometimes think we are prone to forget another important point in connection with the wonder-working hand of God; and that is, how He preserved us, before we knew His dear name. "Preserved in Christ Jesus, and called." We are ready enough to begin with those matters with which God began with us, or that is how we express ourselves. My brother, God did not begin with you in your regeneration; the new birth was not the commencement of God's power, and favour, and mercy towards you. In point of fact, God's mercy and favour had no beginning. But let me speak of the actual and active manifestations of His power. The moment you came into the world the arms of Divine providence received you, and you were preserved in Christ Jesus before you were called. Many of God's people have had hair-breadth escapes from death, before they were quickened by His grace. The late Mr. Gadsby used to say, as I have been informed, and I think I have read it somewhere, in relation to preservation before calling: "The people of God cannot die, while in a state of nature, for the life of them." Not that they were alive in themselves, but

"He gave us grace in Christ His Son,
Before He spread the starry sky."

Saul of Tarsus could not die a Pharisee. The thief could not die before grace entered his heart, and sweetly forced him to say, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The jailor could not die before he was brought to say, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Yes, we forget God's strong arm, which preserved and protected us when we cursed His name, and by which we have been supplied, and preserved, and blessed until now.

Again, they forgot the *skilfulness of His hand*, as well as its strength. A person may have great physical strength, and yet not know how to use it; and if one be strong and ignorant, he may prove a very dangerous person. Our God's arm is an almighty one, and His wisdom is infinite and infallible. His great strength can never be employed against His people. He never guesses at anything, and He never chooses as we express it, the lesser of two evils. He is always right, and He always has been so. However mysterious His conduct may have been, and however deep the wonders of His providence may have proved, the keenest-sighted fiend has never yet detected a fault or a blemish in His character or His government. Hell has watched His hand, and would be glad to find an

error in God's conduct and operations; but He goes on working in a sovereign manner, and almightiness pursues an infinitely wise course. Has it not been so in your experience and mine? As I said last Tuesday, when preaching on an anniversary occasion at Gravesend, had I been permitted to have my way, I should now have been at Meopham, and not have settled in London at all; but my ways are not the ways of the Lord, neither are my thoughts His thoughts. Could I have had my way and have frustrated the purposes of God in that particular, I should have done the people in that place no good, and they would have done me none. Oh! it is best as it is; and, therefore, let us not forget the skilfulness of the hand of the Lord our God. How marvellously He worked when the first rank of the children of Israel were at the edge of the water, at the Red Sea. Perhaps the feet of the foremost were almost in the water, when God said to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward;" although at that moment there was no way for them to do so. They were to take God at His word, and as they went forward the waters were divided for them. Almighty power made a path, and infinite wisdom and skill guided the operations of God's hand and the people found a new way, a right way, an unexpected way, a safe way, a marvellous way, because it was made by the wonder-working hand of God: yet they remembered not His hand.

Again, they forgot *the fulness of His hand*. Not only its omnipotence and skilfulness but what was in it? What was in God's hand, then? and what is in it now? A sword was then in it, and a sword is there now. Joshua said, when a mysterious being appeared before Him with a drawn sword in His hand, "Art thou for us, or for our enemies?" and he soon received a satisfactory answer to his question. Your God has a drawn sword, not to smite you with, but your enemies. In another respect He is represented as having a sword girded upon His thigh. He has not done fighting yet, but has other blows to strike, other foes to destroy, other systems to cast down, and other conquering work to do. There is sword in God's hand, which He will bring down upon Idumea, and upon all the enemies of His church and people. Remember that He holds a sword. What else? He has a rod as well as a sword in His hand. "Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it. And who is the rod for? Not for the devil, but for the children of God; for whilst it is His intention to smite His enemies with the sword, it is His purpose to chastise His people with a rod. You do not believe this, perhaps. I have had hearers in this place occasionally, who were not believers in Divine chastisement. This I cannot help; for I do not consider when I enter the pulpit, or am in it, what my hearers believe or what they do not believe. I believe in Divine chastisement, and that God's hand holds a rod as well as a sword. I have some experience in this direction, for I have been chastised again and again, and I hope the Lord will never leave me to myself in this respect. Do not forget, then, the sword; and do not forget the rod. What else is there in His hand? "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red, it is full of mixture." How large this cup is I cannot tell; but "He

poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." But remember there was a cup in God's hand when the dear Redeemer was in Gethsemane; and the Saviour emptied it. Remember also the cup of salvation which is in God's hand. What shall I render unto Him? "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." Remember His hands are full of blessing, and every morning He comes into our rooms and fills our cups. Day by day, we receive blessings undeserved. Do you always think of this? Israel remembered not that His hands were full of blessings.

Then again His hand is a *bountiful one*. It is ever open. "Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." As the God of providence, He blesses the earth, and satisfies the desire of every living thing; for who can have temporal good without the goodness of God? and He has a right to supply from nature the ordinary wants of His people and others. And then, He supplies His people from that mediatorial fulness which it hath pleased Him should dwell in His beloved Son. From that immeasurably deep fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. Do not be afraid, for, Paul says, "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Thus we have God's upraised hand denoting His promise and His oath, the almightiness of His hand, the skilfulness of His hand, the fulness of His hand, and His perpetual bounty.

"Thus far we've proved the promise good,
Which Jesus ratified with blood."

Now, a word, and only a word, on *the day indicated in the text*. "They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy." I have selected this text because I trust it was applied to my mind by the Spirit; but when it came to me these two points especially impressed my heart,—*the hand*, and *the day*. Both were forgotten by the children of Israel, and both are forgotten in a measure by the Lord's people now. The day they remembered not. Well, what is there in a day? Very much, for first, it was the *appointed day*, and they forgot that; you have not forgotten the portion I read at the commencement of the service to-night, Genesis xv., "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and they shall afflict them four hundred years." A date was given, given by God, whose strong hand was forgotten. "They shall afflict them four hundred years; and I will judge that nation, and then bring out thy seed with great substance." Then mark in the 12th of Exodus what the Holy Ghost says, "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred years, even on the *self-same day* it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt." They forgot that day, and the hand that brought them out; and that very day, according to God's word, He delivered them. The deep affliction of Israel did not induce God to go there before He was due; and the hostility and opposition of Pharaoh did not prevent Him from going when He was due. When, therefore, the hands of the clock, as it were, pointed at the very

time God had indicated, He was there, with His high hand and out-stretched arm, and delivered His people. Our deliverances are appointed and God will come at the self-same time. Let us never forget what a hand we have to work for us, and that the operations of God's hand are all timed. Again, that day was *their birthday*, as a nation. "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you." Their deliverance from Egypt changed the beginning of their year. They did not live until God brought them out of Egypt. Their national life then commenced. And you and I did not live before we were born again, and when the new birth took place we commenced to live for God, and to live for ever. Let us not forget that day, nor the hand that regenerated us, and the fact that when we were born again, we came forth as God's children and as new creatures, to live a new life for ever and ever. We then commenced our journey to Canaan, so did they. This was the morning of our spiritual life ; and we sometimes sing,

" Thus far on our way to Zion,
We through grace divine are come ;
And the God whom we rely on,
Soon will bid us welcome home."

Do not forget the time when you started for heaven, though like many of God's dear people, you may not be able to indicate the exact period when the work of grace was commenced ; and do not forget the strong almighty hand which was then raised for your defence.

And lastly, this was *the day of Divine appropriation* ; for God said, The people in that iron furnace of Egypt are Mine, and I will go and deliver them, because they Mine. Relationship precedes deliverance, and deliverance proves our covenant relation to God.

Time will not admit of our entering upon the third point, *the fact asserted*, They remembered not the great deliverance the Lord wrought for them ; and although we also are prone to forget, can we not say and sing ;

" O bless the Lord, my soul ;
Nor let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die.

His wondrous works and ways,
He made by Moses known ;
But sent the world His truth and grace,
By His beloved Son."

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

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE: ITS TRIAL AND REWARD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 19th SEPTEMBER, 1886.

"Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."—Heb. x. 35.

IN the early part of this chapter we have the fact, that the ceremonial law had no power to take away sin. We have, secondly, the fact that Christ came to do that which the ceremonial law could not possibly do. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God! He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second." And thirdly, the fact that He did what He came to do; that He went through it all, and performed the great work, to the eternal satisfaction of His Father. He brought together into everlasting harmony all the attributes and perfections of God, and saved countless millions of sinners: He expiated their guilt, and satisfied Jehovah; and having risen from the dead, He ascended to His God, and our God; to His Father, and our Father. The Apostle then draws an inference by way of encouragement: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Marvellous arrangement! solemn operation! I wish I could explain these mysteries to my friends. "Through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." So that we go, so to speak, through the wounds of Christ into the presence of Jehovah; through His wounds into eternal salvation and life; and through His wounds into holy fellowship and heavenly communion with our God. Hence, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Then the Apostle proceeded to offer some exhortations, and among them are the words of our text,—*"Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."*

Having thus reached the text, let us tarry here and try to gather up a few facts from it. In the first place, I shall make a few observations upon *the privilege indicated in the text, or upon the confidence mentioned.* "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence." The word confidence is an important word; but it might have been rendered boldness or courage: "Cast not away, therefore, your boldness,—that boldness with which you

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are sometimes helped to enter into the holiest of all. Now let us look at this confidence in two or three connections, and first of all *in connection with prayer*. Cast not away your boldness in connection with this holy exercise of the mind. There are times when we draw near to God,—times when we not only enter into the holiest of all, but when we do so with holy boldness and confidence, drawing near to the mercy-seat and speaking confidently, though humbly, to the Lord our God. I have sometimes been found fault with to some extent, for speaking in so familiar a manner of the Lord Jesus Christ. I ought not so to speak, it is said, about those sublime subjects, and that great and glorious Being, the Everlasting God. My dear friends, I feel deeply convinced that one of the causes of the barrenness and sterility in our churches is our want of *nearness* to our God, and of *fellowship* with Him. The fact is, we are not half familiar enough with the Lord Jesus Christ, or with His God and our God, and His Father and our Father. One is never more spiritual than when he can put the little hand of his faith into the great hand of God's almighty power, and say in all the confidence of faith, "This God is my God, for ever and ever; He will be my guide even unto death." It is our privilege to have an infallible, a divine, and loving Guide, who will not leave us all the days of our life. May it be your privilege and mine, to draw very near to the throne; and speak with holy and humble boldness to the Lord our God; and at all times to have unlimited confidence in the fact that God hears prayer. I sometimes think that I pray without sufficiently realizing that God sits upon the throne to hear my petitions. My brethren and sisters, we need unlimited confidence in this truth, that God waits for His suppliants, and has bound Himself to hear them. This is the point to which people object, that God *must* now hear prayer. Why, He did as He pleased about giving us the promise, and binding Himself to take a certain course; but having given the promise, He is bound to fulfil it; and having indicated the course He intended to take, and informed me that I should find Him there, He is bound to pursue that course and to meet me according to His own appointment. Let us, therefore, have unlimited confidence in the wondrous fact that God hears our supplications and has bound Himself to answer them. There are times when we go into His presence with every faculty of the mind in holy exercise, and with every grace within alive with power; times when we leave the world behind us, out of sight, and out of mind, and when we feel as if no beings were present but God on the throne and ourselves at His footstool.

"Oh the happiness arising
From the life of grace within;
When the soul is realizing
Conquests over hell and sin!"

Is this familiarity forbidden? Or does it breed hardness of heart and sterility of soul? He that goes near to the fire is warmed; he that goes abroad in the day is in the light of the sun; and he that draws near to God in holy fellowship and communion is warmed and spiritualized in his inner man. "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great re-

compense of reward." Why the Apostle gives this exhortation we shall see presently ; but I would just introduce a fact here. We live in a day in which not a few sneer at the idea of God hearing and answering prayer. That event would have occurred, we are told, if we had never prayed ; and that combination of circumstances would have arisen if we had never petitioned the God of heaven. It is the policy of the devil in this way to check the confidence and to weaken the faith of God's people. An insinuation of that kind comes from Satan. Men far better and greater than these cavillers were hearty and confident believers in the fact that God heard and answered prayer. "I love the Lord," said a well taught and godly man, "because He *hath heard* my voice and my supplication ; because He *hath inclined* His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." As time, however, is going, let us proceed.

The next idea will be that of *our profession of religion*. Perhaps this was the primary idea of the Apostle in this portion of the word. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence or profession of the faith. Now a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, should be free and not forced. There are not a few persons, whose profession is a very forced affair ; and when this is the case, there is no spiritual confidence, no hearty and heavenly assurance. Our profession, dear friends, is free if it is true. It arises from a particular root, a heartfelt possession of the grace of God. The possession of God's grace is not the result, but the cause of our profession. Trace the free profession of religion down to its root, and you will find that it is deep in the heart. It is this that gives boldness, confidence, courage, perpetuity, freshness, and greenness to a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only should a profession of faith be free, but it should be open and visible ; and it will be so if it proceeds from the life of God in the soul.

"Ashamed of Jesus ! Yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away ;
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save."

Some of us think of the early days of our spiritual life, when our hearts burned with love, and our eyes filled with tears of sacred pleasure and joy, when we were ready to stand anywhere, and shine as lights in the world, from the love we bore to the Saviour's precious name. We did not mind nor care who knew that we were Christians. We were not ashamed of having been raised from the dust and brought from the dunghill. We were not ashamed of having lost our rags and been clothed with the garments of salvation. Oh that the warmth of former days were present with us now ! at least, this is one of the wishes and prayers of the preacher. You tell me we must live by faith. I know it, I know it well ; but I do not care for an icy faith that does not warm the heart. I do not care for a faith, nor for a profession of faith that leaves the mind covered as it were with snow. I want to be warm and fruitful. I want to experience the soul-softening and exhilarating influences of the great principles which I profess to hold dear. I want some feel-

ing in my faith. If my faith is of the right kind, it is a living one, and there will be corresponding feeling in the heart. Cast not away your confidence. Avow your discipleship; hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering; hold it fast openly, courageously and constantly; even all the days of your life; for this must be a life-long confidence.

But let us go a step further, and perhaps some of you will think this is the primary idea of the Apostle in the text. Cast not away your confidence *with regard to your interest in Christ and in the love of God*. We are terribly shaken sometimes concerning that matter. Are we interested in the love of God? Have we faith in that fact, and does our faith come from God? Have we the full assurance of faith in this great matter? If our hearts have not deceived us, (and we do not think they have,) we have been blessed with the full assurance of faith as to our personal interest in the love of the Father, in the blood of the Son, and in the sanctifying grace and operations of the Holy Spirit. Yes, you have been privileged to sing, with eyes filled with tears,—

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

I remember very shortly after I had been led into liberty, entering the chapel in which I worshipped, a few minutes too late (it was not my custom to be late,) and they were singing that blessed hymn,

“There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;”

and somehow the subject took hold of me before I reached my seat, and I sang and could not help it, as I walked down the aisle towards my pew. Oh, the happiness experienced by the child of God, who is confident concerning his interest in God, he rises high above the smoke, and fog, and clouds of doubts and fears. Oh! the joy experienced when God and the heart are sweetly united together. When God touches the heart one comes by faith into contact with Him: “I have loved thee.” Who speaks? God Himself. In the prophecies of Jeremiah you will find the words, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love; and therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” I cannot give up everything connected with that blessed experience. Darkness comes over my mind, hardness goes through my heart; I repine, I murmur, I rebel, I am so sinful; but I cannot give up that certain something which then filled my soul with unutterable joy and has left an impression thereon which abides until the present time. “Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.” Well, dear friends, our confidence is not in ourselves; or if it be, the sooner we cast it away the better. Neither is our confidence in the law, ceremonial or moral; our confidence is in a crucified Christ, a suffering Immanuel, a bleeding Redeemer. He is our only hope. Not Mary, not Peter, nor Paul, not an angel, nor angels; we go through and beyond them all. The only spot for us is the cross of Jesus Christ or His footstool. We feel we are not safe in any other

position, and that there is no danger there. We would sit there, and feel the sweet droppings of His blood all the days of our life. Then with regard to our perseverance and progress from day to day,—our hope, trust, and confidence are in Christ, and Christ alone. He has saved us from the curse, and delivered us from condemnation ; He has closed hell against us, and opened heaven for us.

“ He says that I shall shortly be
Enthroned with Him above the skies :
Oh what a friend is Christ to me !

Come, all ye that fear God, for I will not conceal it, but will tell you what He has done for my soul. Confidence with regard to what is underneath us ; the Rock of ages. Are you sure you are on the Rock ? Yes, on Christ, the solid Rock, I stand. Cast not away your confidence. You are safe there. All other ground is sinking sand. Underneath are the everlasting arms. Is it so ? Happy man and woman, who have under you not only the Rock of ages, for stability, firmness, and perpetuity ; but also the everlasting arms of the tender, kind, and compassionate God. As a mother holds her babe in her loving arms, so our Father has placed His everlasting arms underneath all His dear people. Confidence with regard to what is over us. What covers us but the shadow of the Almighty, the wings of Jehovah, under which Ruth came from Moab to put her trust ? God’s arm is under us, and the feathers and wings of God cover us all the day long. Sit down and rest, my brother,—not in carelessness, for if you are realizing the sweetness of these facts, you cannot be either careless or idle. Sit down and rest, or sing as you travel towards your heavenly home ; for nothing crushing can come upon you ; for God covers you, and nothing destructive can burst upon you from beneath, for the Rock of ages and everlasting arms are underneath you. Confident as to what is before you : for you know “ in yourselves that in heaven you have a better and an enduring substance.” It is substance, a better substance, an enduring substance in heaven. It is yours, and you know it in yourselves, which means, that you know in your hearts that you have a better and an enduring substance in a better world. Ye have it. We are not in possession of it yet ; but we have a right to it, and a meetness for it. “ Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.” Thus you are confident concerning your standing, confident concerning your covering, and confident concerning your future. But what is behind you ? The world and the storm, the curse and condemnation, the devil, and other enemies ; but they will never overtake to destroy you ; for He who guides and goes before you is your rereward also ; He comes behind, and follows every saint, so that ruin from behind shall never reach you. God is round about the saint, even before him, behind him, and above him. Here He lives and moves. “ The angel of the Lord,—pluralise the word if you like—“ the angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear Him, and deliver them.” Well, but that is not enough. “ I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” All that is very precious ; but, here Sir, in the heart, there is something wanted. Cast not away your confidence, for Christ dwells

there by faith, the hope of glory. The Holy Spirit dwells within. How do you know? Are you not a believer? You dare not say you are not. This is admitted solemnly, as in the presence of God. Then take God's own word: He that believeth hath eternal life, and the witness in himself. That is all I have time to say on the privilege itself.

In the second place, the Apostle speaks very confidently concerning this privilege. He says, "Cast not away your confidence." *It is a personal possession*;—yours. Many of the people of God believe, very firmly, within certain limits. Their confidence is very strong and deep up to a certain point, but they cannot go beyond it. Their confidence is strong as to the way of salvation, and the ability of Christ to save. They will sing as loudly as any,—

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

With regard to their personal sinnership and guilt they are confident, for they know it and feel it. The way of salvation they are firm believers in, and Christ, and Christ only is the object of their faith and hope; but you cannot induce them to appropriate the blessings, nor force them into this blessed state of things. We are dependent upon Christ for the expiation of our guilt, and we are equally dependent upon the Spirit for an application of the precious blood of Jesus. I have sometimes thought, that if preachers honoured the Holy Spirit more than they do, He would honour both them and their labours more than they appear to be honoured. If He is God let us preach Him, and give Him in our sermons a prominent position. If He is equal with the Father and the Son, let us never place Him behind the one or the other. I am afraid we do not think that He deserves to be as prominent as Christ and the Father. You could never have known the preciousness of Jesus, and His name would never have been to you as ointment poured forth, had not the Spirit taken you in hand and imparted a new and spiritual life to your souls. We go just as far in the things of God as the Spirit leads us; and the measure of the Holy Ghost which we possess, is just the measure of our personal religion. The steps which we take by ourselves we shall have to retrace; for there is no godliness whatever in anything that self does, nor in any feeling produced by the creature. Spirituality and personal and true religion, are all of the blessed Spirit. Do not flog a saint, therefore, because he cannot leap over the chasm that seems to separate him from peace and joy. He would advance further in the kingdom if he could; my brother, the Holy Spirit, must take him by the hand and introduce him into the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free. Remember the time when, as John Bunyan puts it in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the burden fell from your heart. When his pilgrim reached the cross, the burden fell from his shoulders, and he sang,—

"Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be
The Man that here was put to shame for me."

"Cast not away your confidence." It is confidence, and it is yours if you have been thus favoured.

Thirdly, *the exhortation*. "Cast it not away." Is it possible to do so? There are two classes of believers, nominal and real, and even the devil and his angels may be said to belong to the former class, for the devil believes and trembles. Satan is confident, and nominal believers may be confident also, but they are destitute of grace. Their confidence is connected with the doctrine, but not with Christ in the doctrine. A real believer is not destitute of grace, nor of light. He has a confidence which grows out of that life which springs out of the grace which comes from the heart of God. The grace that makes believers, comes from God through Christ into the sinner's soul. Life springs up, and confidence proceeds out of that life. Here are doctrines which we call the doctrines of grace, and you build upon them, you believe in them, and have unlimited confidence as to the fact that they are Bible truths. Is that all? Does your religion rest upon doctrines, merely? The faith that comes from heaven believes in doctrines, receives them, but it rests upon the Christ they reveal. The doctrine conducts the true believer's heart to Christ Himself. It is not a doctrine, merely, but a person that is wanted, even the Son of God. Faith looks for Him, and hope remains on the wing till Christ is reached. And when through Divine teaching and the application of the word, one has reached Jesus Christ, the sinner's Saviour and Friend, there he builds his hope, and experiences satisfaction. Now, this exhortation was necessary,—*"Cast it not away"* to avoid persecution. Perhaps you will remember the verses which I read at the commencement of the service. *"Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used; taking joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves,"* and so on. *"Cast not away your confidence in order to avoid persecution."* It is worth holding fast in storms and tempests. It is worth more than tongue can tell, or mind conceive. *"Cast it not away,"* owing to Divine denials. You have prayed for a blessing for months, or years, and have not yet received it. God seems to withhold what He has promised, and what He directed you to expect and hope for. He will come. *"Yet a little while,"* read lower down, *"and it will come, and will not tarry."* But sin is so prevalent, *"that when I would do good, evil is present with me; and that which I would not, that I do;"* yet *"Cast not away your confidence."* This was Paul's experience, and yet he said, *"I live, yet not I; but Christ liveth in me."* Are these contrary frames and powers possible at the same time? A raging storm through sin within, and confidence as to eternal things? Yes; and the more we are blessed and favoured by God in this respect, the more severe will be the temptations of the devil. In the next place, some of you, I know, pass much of your time with atheists or sceptics, at the bench, or the desk, or elsewhere, and are obliged to hear their scoffing remarks, which are blows aimed at you. Sometimes you are almost ready to give way; occasionally, your confidence staggers. Hold it fast! I know this tries your faith, for some of their questions are so cunningly and subtly formed, that you may not be able to answer them. *"The serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field."* The

devil is not a fool in that respect. His mind is deep, his cunning great, and his subtlety powerful, and these evils will sometimes roll against you, till you hardly know, in your bewilderment, what or where is the truth. Catch hold ! or rather, having caught hold of the Saviour's precious name, hold it fast ! "Cast not away your confidence," for

"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."

If you take away this book, or wish to shake my confidence in it, what will you give me in its place, that will do me as much good, or as truly satisfy my soul ? I must have something beyond myself to satisfy my mind. I find here under the unctuous power of the Holy Spirit all I need, and will, if God help me, bind the gospel to my heart, and hold fast my profession or confidence without wavering.

Now, I meant to have said a word in the fourth place on *the encouragement given* : "Which hath great recompense of reward." The reward of grace is a recompense. Every reward is not so ; but this is weight for weight, measure for measure, and duration for duration. Our weight of suffering and trial has been great, but this recompense is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Our sufferings are spread over the whole of life : everlasting rest will more than cover all. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think." Place your losses against your gains, your pains against your pleasures, your poverty against your riches ; and your heaven will swallow up all your sorrows for ever. The rest is infinitely beyond the toil and the labour. I will just direct your attention to a little word in the verse, and then close. That word indicates a certain connection between the confidence and heaven. It *hath*. What hath ? Your confidence hath great recompense of reward. The connection between perseverance and heaven is essential ; for God gives both grace and glory. It is to be found in the promise, in your hope, and in God Himself. Your confidence in God hath great recompense of reward. On what I have said may the Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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GOD PRAISED FOR HIS WORKS AND WAYS.

A Sermon—

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 7th NOVEMBER, 1886.

“And the heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord; Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.” Psalm lxxxix. 5.

THE love of God was shed abroad in the heart of the Psalmist, when he penned this comprehensive and precious portion of the Divine Word. His spirit was warmed and fertilised with grace Divine, his faith in his covenant God was strong, and his hope was fixed upon the mercy of the Lord. Contemplating himself as a sinner saved by grace, and considering also the greatness of the salvation in which he was interested, he expressed this resolution, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord (or Jehovah) for ever, with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations.” The Psalmist was experimentally acquainted with the triune God; when, therefore, he mentioned the great and glorious name of Jehovah, he had reference to the mercies of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. “I will sing of His mercies for ever.” This implies that he believed the mercies of the Lord would never cease; for “the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting unto them that fear Him.” Mercy assumes many forms, and flows in numerous channels, and goodness and mercy are following us from day to day, even all the days of our life. We sing of the great Three entering into covenant engagements for the certain salvation of all the objects of God’s love. We sing of mercy as it flows through the wounds of the Saviour, in streams of powerful, fragrant, and precious blood; and we sing of the mercy of the Spirit, which has opened our blind eyes, unstopped our deaf ears, and opened our hearts to receive the greatest boon that God can give,—the Divine nature, a new life, and the root of the matter. This also was implied on the part of the writer, that he verily believed he should live for ever and not finally fall from grace. But shall we not grow weary, and want some other subject to sing about in the presence of God? No, the mercies of God are ever full, and ever fresh and sweet, and their innumerable forms and expressions will engage the enraptured attention of all the countless millions of the redeemed and glorified for ever and ever. Heaven is a wondrous world, and our experience there will be marvellous, as I believe, and our song will ever flow from the sweetest joy that God can give. The pleasure will never become shallow or less than full and perfect. The Psalmist had referred more especially to the mercies of God, which are discovered and displayed in the

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covenant of grace. "I have made," says God, "a covenant with My chosen," I have ratified that covenant with an oath, for I have sworn unto David My servant. David was a type only, Christ is the Antitype. God made a covenant with David concerning his royal house, and He made a covenant with David's great Lord concerning all His own royal sons and daughters. "Thy seed will I establish for ever." If we only believe this, under the hallowing and helping influences of the Spirit of God, we shall pursue our pilgrimage with cheerfulness and delight. "Thy seed will I establish for ever." Do we belong to that seed? Are we among the purchase of the Saviour's blood? Have we been born again? Are our names registered in heaven? Are we among that large and mighty number concerning whom it is said, "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands?" Then let us take the comfort presented to us in these words, "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up Thy throne to all generations." And what then? "And the heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord; thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints."

Now having thus reached the text, I will endeavour, by the help of the Spirit, to make some observations upon it by gathering up a few points which it embodies. First, let us look at *some of the Divine wonders indicated in the text*: "The heavens shall praise *Thy wonders*, O Lord. Our God is a wonder-working God, and has been so ever since He commenced working, and He will never cease to work wonders. Having begun to work, He will continue His wondrous operations for ever. "I will work," whoever is idle, whoever opposes, whoever resists, and "who shall let it?" And what will He do? "I will do all My pleasure." Nothing can be plainer, nothing can be more absolute than this, "I will do all My pleasure." We contemplate the powers of darkness, for there are such powers in existence and operation; and we are thankful that they are chained and restrained, and that there is not a fiend in existence who can say, I will do what I please, or I can do all my pleasure. We contemplate ministers of the gospel, and deacons of Christian Churches, and persons of influence, and we are thankful that none of them can say, I will do all my pleasure. We meditate for a minute or two upon God's angels in heaven, and although they are like their Maker, and are in perpetual sympathy with the Holy God, these words never fell from their lips; Gabriel has never said, "I will do all my pleasure." It becomes us therefore, on hearing these words from God Himself, to study the character of the Being who says He will do just as He pleases in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. You know there is a saying which embodies a very great truth, although it does not occur in the Bible, "God is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind." He cannot change, He cannot deny Himself, He cannot lie, He cannot do wrong. Injustice and iniquity can never be charged upon our God, He works mysteriously, but He works in holiness; He works in the dark, but He is never wrong, and we sometimes look on with wonder and consternation, but He is never capable of making a mistake while doing all His pleasure. Seated on His throne, and surrounded by saints and angels, He is doing all His pleasure, and He will do all His pleasure on the

earth. Our God would be unhappy if He were not able to do all He wills to do. His arm is strong enough to do all He pleases, and long enough to reach the most distant friend, and the most distant enemy in existence. His ear is not heavy, that he cannot hear the voice of His people, the groaning of the prisoner, and the unuttered, and unexpressed desires of them that put their trust in Him. His eye, unlike yours and mine, never becomes dim ; for He is the same, and of His years there is no end. He is not affected by time nor by eternal ages, and the fact that He has existed from all eternity has never changed Him. He is ever omnipotent, and ever great and glorious. Therefore let us sit down at His feet, and watch His hand ; for He has formed a great plan which He is executing, and His operations are ever worthy of Himself. He has a right to do as He pleases in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Yes, God is a wonder-working God, and "the heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord." Now, if I were able I might try to go into the wonders of God in creation, in providence, and into His deeper and richer wonders expressed and revealed in His covenant of grace and mercy. I have neither time nor ability to set forth the wondrous works of God in creation ; but I frequently think of one or two expressions in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah and elsewhere, "Who stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." I always regard these words as most grand and sublime. The heavens over our head are stretched out by God's hand, not like an arch of granite, but like a curtain, and the hand that so stretched them out will roll them up and change them one day, as a garment that is worn-out to be laid aside. "And stretched them out as a tent to dwell in." Spread them out as a tent. And are the mighty visible heavens a tent only ? Why are they said to be a tent ? A tent is not a permanent building, but one set up with a view of being removed at some future time. The purpose to be fulfilled by the setting up of a tent is a temporary purpose, and when it is fulfilled the tent is removed. What a wonderful tabernacle is this ! Who dwells in it ? for He spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Worlds dwell there ; whether they are inhabited or not, I cannot say ; and it is not for me to dwell upon such a subject in a sermon. This world is peopled, and we, its numerous inhabitants are dwelling in this great tent. There is, however, a more wonderful world than this, and a state of things far more substantial and glorious than the visible heavens. "In my Father's house are many mansions," —not tents. In my Father's house are many mansions, and they are all to be inhabited. I tell you the truth ; "if it were not so, I would have told you." I am going out of and beyond this tent, to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again into this tent, and take it down, and fold up the curtain, and swear that time shall be no more ; and then, I will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also. "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord." In Thy works, Thy word, and Thy ways. The works of God are

"Immensely great ! Immensely small !
Yet one strange work exceeds them all."

The wonders of God appear in a blade of grass, and in a common daisy ; in mountains, and in grains of sand ; in the hugest creature, and in the tiniest being. I pity the person who fails to see the name of God upon every creature ; for He has left it indelibly impressed upon all the works of His hand. I am not, however, to go into these matters or the wonders of God in creation.

Since my text refers to the covenant of grace, and to David's great and glorious and reigning Son, let us limit our attention for a few minutes to the wonders of God in His grace and salvation. Can anything be more wonderful than the incarnation of the Son of God ? Oh that my heart felt it more deeply, and my lips spoke it more freely ! Can anything be more astonishing than the fact that the mighty God became a babe, that the infinite One appeared in a human form a few spans long ? "The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord." I am lost in this mystery, and can only mention it. I introduce it at this time to bring it before you as well as I can. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given ; and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." Of whom speaks the prophet this ? Of the Babe in Bethlehem, concerning whom the angels praised God in the visible heavens, and said to the shepherds, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." The infinite God appears in the form of a babe. The immeasurable, the unsearchable Jehovah, assumed a limited form, in a limited locality, for suffering and saving purposes. I am not speaking of God's essential greatness, but of what He was sovereignly pleased to become and do ; He became flesh, and dwelt among us, limited as to locality and form. That apparently helpless little one, whom Mary and Joseph looked at with wonder and astonishment, was the God that made the world, and upholds it by the word of His power.

"His shoulders held up heaven and earth,
While Mary held up Him."

Can you understand it ? My text does not say, The heavens shall comprehend Thy wonders, or fathom them, or reach their bottom ; for they are incomprehensible, unfathomable, and bottomless ; but "The heavens shall *praise* Thy wonders, O Lord ; Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints." But that is not all. That Babe became a Man of sorrows, and yet He did not cease to be God. No, all the Godhead was in Him when He worked at the trade of a carpenter, when He was baptized of John in Jordan, and when He stood unmoved and opened not His mouth while they spat upon Him. "Oh," said the infidel, "if Jesus were God, He would have struck the wretch dead in a moment that spat in His face." Devils might have done that, but it required the mighty God to bear it all calmly and patiently. Angels looked on and wondered where the scene would end ; when their Maker was thus insulted and degraded. "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord." The Man of sorrows born to enter into sorrow, to extract all the

penal bitterness from it, to sanctify it, to preside over it, and to convert it into a blessing to His people. Yes, He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Not only did the infinite One become a babe and a Man of sorrows, which was marvellous; He was made a curse for us. God made Him who knew no sin, to be—not sinful—but sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Our Lord was nailed to the cross, and all the terrible curses that were due to sin fell upon Him, and had He not been the mighty God as well as a suffering and sorrowing man, they would have withered and destroyed Him. He was strong enough, however, to bear it all, and to exhaust the wrath incurred by guilty men, and the heavens are still praising these wonders of our God. What followed? He became our salvation and our life. Oh that I might sit until I die, under the cross of this mighty and wondrous Sufferer, and experience the working of that wonderful power by which sin is pardoned, mortified and removed. I need not seclude myself in a monastery, or isolate myself from society in order to mortify sin. Under the shadow of the solemn cross of Jesus, and realizing my interest in this wondrous act of the Lord my God, my eyes fill with tears, my heart expands and melts, and my feelings become spiritual and holy. Brethren and sisters, we need more of that power which comes from God through the wounds, and sorrows, and sufferings of His dear Son. Well, the heavens shall praise Thy mediatorial wonders, O Lord.

What shall I say about heaven itself? I have not been there otherwise than I trust I have been at the gate of heaven by a living faith in the Lord my God. I think I know what heavenly joy and pleasure are, and what it is to be so near to heaven as to look down upon this vain world through which we are passing, without the slightest wish to live in it for ever. To look down upon its pomp, and show, and toys, and all its empty bubbles, with that gracious and spiritual contempt which is felt by one who almost joins in the songs of heaven, knowing that he is an heir of the kingdom, and longs to be there. But what shall we say about the wonders of God in heaven? "The heavens shall declare Thy wonders, O Lord." You that are parents are, I imagine, doing the very best you can for your children, for it is natural so to do. And God has done the best He could do for His children, wherefore He is not ashamed to be called their God. Whose child is that? It is the child of So-and-so, and he has done for him all he intends to do. He should be ashamed; for he might have done much more for him, without injuring himself or others of the family. The character of that saint or that pilgrim is marvellous. Who formed it? God. In what relation does God stand to that character? A Father. What provision has He made for that child? All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours, even all that God can give. "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord." The best world in the universe is our home; it was built by God, and fitted up and furnished by Him for His family, and all is ready for every child. It is a wonderful home, and the way to it is as wonderful as heaven itself. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." We are going to heaven by faith in a bleeding Christ. All other ways

lead to darkness, death, and destruction. He that is a simple believer in the dear Redeemer is in the way to heaven. "The redeemed shall walk there, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." A wonderful way to a wonderful home, and God's dear people are gradually and perpetually arriving. Three of our dear friends went a few days ago, and were received, I have no doubt, into everlasting mansions.

"Ten thousand to their endless home
This solemn moment fly ;
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die."

What wonders ! a world of light, a path of blood unto it ; redeemed and sanctified ones walking in that path, and gradually arriving there, and as they enter into bliss they are welcomed with an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God. Hallelujah ! "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord." I might go further into this part of the subject if I had time and ability, but the time is nearly gone.

Now, secondly, the text indicates *the character of this wonder-working God*. "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord; *Thy faithfulness* also in the congregation of the saints." I take it that the faithfulness of God, my dear friends, preserves His glory and reveals Him as a worthy object of trust. Our God cannot be unfaithful, the thing is simply impossible. He is not faithful because He wills to be so, His faithfulness is not the result of His sovereignty; He is essentially so, and He must be faithful, since He is the glorious Jehovah. Well, His faithfulness guards His honour, and He is the only object of hope and trust. If He were not faithful, or if we or angels had a doubt concerning it, that very doubt would leave all the holy joy and happiness of all angels and men impossible. But whatever change or changes may take place, He remains the ever-faithful God. It is the Rock on which His church is built, and without it there would be nothing firm underneath your heart and mine, and no safe foundation for His church and kingdom. But there is His covenant of grace, and also His beloved Son ; God is ever faithful to His covenant ; and to show that it is His fixed and unalterable intention to fulfil His promises, He has ratified His covenant with an oath. "Once have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not lie unto David." "On this Rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. His faithfulness sustains His word ; for without this fact the gospel would not be glad tidings of great joy, since it would be based upon nothing trustworthy. The Bible, however, and every gracious promise, are sustained by the unchanging faithfulness of God. This is the resting-place of the saints, "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." Into what chambers are we to enter but His attributes and perfections? and faithfulness is one of them. If I am blessed with a promise in the hand of my faith, and am permitted and enabled to enter as a poor pursued soul into the faithfulness of God, I can sit down and sing,

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

"Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints." God is faithful in His love. I have been loved, I think, by some few persons who have ceased to love me; I have not much to complain of in that respect however, for I have been highly favoured; yet we have been loved by persons whose love has ceased, for creatures are fickle. That was perhaps our own fault, but we have a Divine Friend, and our faults before God are more numerous than they have been before our fellow men; yet He has not changed, though creatures have. He is faithful in His love, and faithful to His Son; He said He would send Him, and He did so. He said He would smite Him, and His faithfulness to Himself and to His church required Him to do so, and He smote the Substitute of sinners. He spared not His own Son, because He was and is the ever faithful God. He laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, and then poured the curse upon Him, because He was faithful; and Christ having finished His work presented it to His Father, who faithfully accepted it. Christ rose from the dead as the Head and Representative of ransomed millions and entered into the presence of His Father with, "Here am I and the children who are interested in my mediation." And the Father was faithful to accept the whole. Then Christ the Redeemer is first, and all Christians behind Him. The little ones, feeble ones, faint ones, and fearing ones, are all accepted by the ever-faithful God. And what will be the result of all this? Christ, who is gone to heaven as our Forerunner has left

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

Thirdly, we have *the praising observers of all this*. "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord, Thy faithfulness in the congregation of the saints." By heavens, understand not the visible heavens, the sun, moon, and stars. They can never praise God for His works of grace. By heavens, therefore, understand the inhabitants of that upper world; as when we say London has done so and so, we do not mean the material city, but its inhabitants, so all the inhabitants of heaven shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord. The angels of God are students of His greatest work. They desire to look into the deep mysteries of redemption; "which things the angels desire to look into." Saints and angels constitute one vast congregation. There are two orders of beings, one of which is far more deeply interested in these wonders of God than the other; both orders, however, praise the great God for the wonders He has wrought. Angels will help us to sing the song of redemption up to a certain point, but they will be unable to go all the way through it: "Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins," and so on. Angels will be with us and hear our enraptured souls pour forth our spiritual, grateful praises before our wonder-working God and then they will join with us, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord; Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints."

Fourthly, *the fact asserted*. They will praise them, but not as we said a few minutes ago, comprehend them, not dive down to their bottom, for

these works of our God are perpetual wonders and will never cease to be so. This great miracle, or combination of miracles, will never lose its freshness or its power. Praise is due to God. "Give unto Him the glory that is due unto His name." Who can do that? How can we pay the debt we owe, or angels either. Angels do their best, and their best perhaps is great; but when all God's angels and all His saints united, have brought their all and their best, God will be exalted above all blessing and praise. How sweet, how blessed is the thought, that you and I are destined to unite with countless thousands of angels in blessing and praising our wonder-working God. I almost wonder how it is we are so prone to cleave to this world, and to cling to our present life, when there is a better world than this which is our home and our heaven, and

"Where we shall sing more sweet, more loud,
And Christ shall be our song."

But Watts has put it in the correct form when he says—

"But tim'rous mortals start and shrink,
To cross this narrow sea;
And linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away.

Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore."

Fifthly, there will be *perfect unanimity in heaven*. Saints and angels united in Christ, and united for ever in ascribing all majesty and glory to our wonder-working God. Brother, there will be no complaints, no doubts, and no fears there. We shall leave them all behind, with all trouble, turmoil, and care, and we shall be glad to leave them altogether with all our sins and imperfections and enter into that wondrous world which our God has prepared for us. We shall be at home in a moment there, and the spirit of eternal praise will instantaneously pervade us, and we shall unite with saints and angels in heaven at once, and with as much readiness as if we had been singing God's praises thousands of years. The Lord command His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

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PLANTED IN GOD'S HOUSE AND FLOURISHING IN HIS COURTS.

A Sermon—

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 12th DECEMBER, 1886.

(THE THIRTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THE CHAPEL.)

*“Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of
our God.”* Psalm xcii. 13.

THE Psalm out of which we have taken our text opens with this fact :
“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises
unto Thy name, O Most High.” Sometimes we give thanks unto the
Lord, when we do not sing, and perhaps there are times when we sing
with our voices without giving thanks to the Lord. It is good to do
both, to give thanks to the Lord in our supplications, and to stand before
God and sing His worthy and well-deserved praises. It is a good thing
to do this; for we are debtors, and it is right and proper that we should
feelingly acknowledge that fact. There are times when our hearts are
warm, and our breasts seem to swell with sentiments of gratitude to our
heavenly Father; times when we enter sweetly into the blessed fact that
we are debtors to the Father for His eternal love; debtors to the Son for
His sweet and precious blood, and debtors to the Holy Spirit for His
saving and sanctifying power. Well, the Psalmist proceeded to say, “To
show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every
night.” “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed:” and
this portion of the word will apply to this church and congregation to-day.
“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His
compassions fail not.” We have failed, the world has failed, and blessed
be the name of God, the devil has failed; but the mercies and loving-
kindnesses of our God have never failed. To show forth Thy faithfulness
every night. For it is said, “Thou hast made me glad through Thy
work, I will triumph in the works of Thy hands.” It is sweet to reflect
upon the work of the Father in imputing our sins to His dear Son, in
smiting Him with that curse which we had incurred, and in demanding
of Him that righteousness which we required. How sweet it is to know
that that righteousness was wrought out and brought in, and that He
accepted it of His dear Son on our behalf. It is also sweet to believe in
the work of Jesus Christ our Lord for us; to follow Him into Gethsemane,
and sit down and watch Him there; to see Him by faith, sweating great
drops of blood, and to realize in some measure the solemnity of the scene
when the cup was presented to Him by His Father, and He drank it

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quite up. How sweet it is to reflect upon what He is doing for us now ! His work is not yet completed ; for He is still saving His people, and He will continue this great work of salvation until the last day and hour of time. These works of our God are gladdening, for they are a source of joy and pleasure to us. "Thou hast made me glad through Thy work." If the work of grace has been commenced in our hearts, it will be carried on, and we shall be edified or built up from time to time, and grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord ; for God will not withdraw His working hand from that which he has begun to do for us and in us. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Therefore "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

I may have preached from this portion of the Word before, and most likely if I have done so the sermon was preached in this place. I thought, however, that we should meet this morning on what is commonly called an anniversary occasion, and these words occurred to my mind as appropriate to the event. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

Now, in the first place, let us make a few observations *upon the persons indicated in the text*. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord." These words are simple and easily understood. Are we among the honoured persons who are planted by God's own hand, in His own house, and who shall flourish in His courts ? Now, let us observe here, that we are *not by nature* planted in the house of the Lord. On the contrary, all the sons and daughters of Adam are represented as thorns and thistles and briers, and as in the desert. No, we are not naturally in the house of the Lord, or in the courts of our God. If, therefore, we are now planted in the Lord's house, and are really standing here, as the result of the operations of God's saving grace and mercy, a change has been wrought, and a great work has been commenced in our hearts. The hand of God has uprooted us from the wilderness, and transplanted us into His own house or garden, and caused us to take root in that soil which is altogether heavenly and divine. Oh, I have seen during my somewhat lengthened connection with the church of God, poor sinners rooted up from the desert by God, who will pluck all His people from the world ; and I have seen them transplanted by God into His garden or His house. It is a blessing, my dear friends, to be found here, a blessing to have been brought to love God's house, and to have been planted by God Himself in his own ground and in His own courts. If God uproots a poor soul from the world, and separates him therefrom, it is His intention to bring him to Himself, and to root, ground, and settle him in His eternal love and truth, where he shall flourish. In the next place, this planting is *altogether of God*. Believers are not planted in God's house by Acts of Parliament, nor by baptismal regeneration, nor by the laws of our country. You know that every Englishman and English woman who has been sprinkled or baptized in the Established Church, are regarded as members of that church, and children are taught to say and to

believe, "Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Yet people talk about the inconsistency of Ritualism, and furiously denounce Popery; I have no objection that they should do so; but, my beloved friends, what can you gather from such teaching in the Catechism? Little children, however, are not thereby truly planted in the house of the Lord, and they take no root therein in consequence of the sprinkling of water upon their faces, nor in consequence of what they are subsequently taught to believe. Those only that be planted by the Spirit in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. Again, some parents are privileged to see their children, or some of them, living in honourable connection with God's church on the earth. A father cannot, however, plant his child in the house of God. I know there are fathers and mothers present who are thinking of their beloved children, and whose hearts yearn over them, and they seldom go the throne of grace without presenting them before God, and asking Him to change their hearts, uproot them from the world, and transplant them into His house and courts. But a mother's affection cannot accomplish this, a father's love cannot root them there. All we can do is to take our offspring to the throne of grace and present them before our God, and in doing so perhaps we think of this sweet portion of the Word, "Those that be planted in house of the Lord shall flourish." "There, Lord, take my boy, take my girl; take them one by one, uproot them from the love of sin, separate them from the world, let the reign of sin cease within and over them; bring them into Thy sanctuary, and give them a love to Thyself, to Thy ways, and Thy people there. Oh! Father, that the day might soon come when I might see my children take root in Thy house, and flourish in Thy courts. There are Sabbath-school teachers present, and we are glad to see our brethren and sisters here, as we are glad to know how they are employed and engaged in yonder room. If you did not believe in my text, or that it expresses a very important and glorious fact, you would not rise early on the Sabbath morning, and go to your classes Sunday after Sunday. You know how blessed a place God's house is, and how rich a soil is that of grace; therefore you go again and again, prayerfully hoping that God may be pleased to bless the instruction you try to impart to the young ones from time to time. Then the text may be looked at in connection with ministers of the gospel. I know in one or two cases the Apostle Paul speaks of having planted; but when Paul planted and Apollos watered, God only gave the increase. Ministers of the gospel, however, cannot plant souls in the house of the Lord. I have heard of ministers, good and gracious men, who have been wonderfully earnest and active in obtaining additions to the church. As soon as the sermon has been preached, they have left the pulpit and walked up and down in the chapel, inviting friends to be baptized and to join the church. Perhaps I am a little too slow here; but whether that be so or not, I am sure that some brethren have sometimes been rather too fast. My brethren, we cannot do the work well; we cannot plant, or set men and women in the church of God. This is God's work, it must be done by Him only. If I bring one into the church, I cannot keep him there:

but if God brings a soul into the church, and roots him in His house and courts, he shall flourish like a palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. "Let us give God no rest, till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." The work is His; grace must do it, for mercy only can save the soul. Christians made by men are not lasting characters, and those members of a Christian church who have been planted by ministers will sooner or later be rooted up. Souls must be planted in Zion by God's own hand. In the next place, whilst we are on this point, observe that these persons are God's property, for they are planted in His house, and flourish in His courts. What is in your house is supposed to be your own property, and if you have a forecourt or a garden containing plants, and flowers, and trees, they are your own. God keeps a house on earth, and this residence is a beautiful one. We were observing last Lord's-day that the house of our God is a royal palace, and a glorious temple; I will not go so far as to say, that it has a forecourt, or a garden behind it; but the allusion is to Eastern houses, which usually have gardens in the centre of their quadrangles, in which trees are planted for ornament or for use. They are the property of the owner of the premises and if you have been planted in the courts of God's palace or temple, you are God's child, and you may take all the comfort you can possibly extract from this fact. The plant which My heavenly Father hath planted shall never be rooted up. Are you planted in the house of God? Do the roots of your religion enter into spiritual things? "Yes, but I have so many fears and doubts, and I am much troubled and tried here and there." Never mind that, where are you rooted? Are you fixed anywhere? Yes:

"I love her gates, I love the road;
The church adorned with grace
Stands like a palace built for God,
To show His milder face."

"I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." You are God's plant, or one of the trees of righteousness which are planted by our heavenly Father. You may not be satisfied with the greenness of your leaf, nor with your fruitfulness; and you may not be able to apply the word "flourish" to yourself, yet you are planted in God's courts. You are rooted there, and you are God's property, and if the last day should come to-morrow, or if you should be called home to-day, you would be caught up to meet your Lord, and be for ever with Him. God claims all that grow in His house as His own spiritual property, and He says, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up My jewels."

There are two more thoughts, before I dismiss this point: to be planted is, in the first place, to be rooted; and in the second place, we have the idea of fixedness. First, they are *rooted* in God's house, or in His courts. Rooted in what? In love. Whose love? The love that built and owns the house, the everlasting love of God. I will put it to you with all solemnity and seriousness, because it is a very easy and plain fact that lies upon the surface,—Are you not rooted in the love of God? You dare not say you are not. There is nothing so sweet to you,

no love so rich to your heart, as the love of God. Ah ! I desire to love. Well, that desire is love ; for if the very desires of your soul are rooted in the love of God, your souls are rooted there. Morally considered, a man is where and what he would be ; “ As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” And if you desire with all your heart to be found in Christ, you are rooted in the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. And then there is a being rooted in God’s truth, or in the everlasting verities of this Divine book. When people are rooted in the truth of the everlasting gospel they do not very easily depart from it, or if they do so for a season they will have to return to God with broken bones. I have an idea, and perhaps I am less charitable than some other ministers, but I have an idea that if God’s own hand has rooted a soul in His own truth, if God Himself has directed the root of true faith into His saving truth, that soul will abide therein. Does it not say, “ Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.” I am now limiting my observations, and they are strong ones, to the work of God, or to what our God has done. If I root anyone in the doctrines of grace ; I, or some one else, may at some future time uproot him again ; but if God roots the soul in His own everlasting word, truth will be held dear and fast all the days of one’s life. Mark, not those that come and go, but those that be *planted* in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. But that is not all. Not only are they rooted in love and in truth, they are rooted in Christ Jesus the Lord. And that even is not all. Rooted in truth, in love, in Christ, they are also rooted in God Himself, for ye are dead and mark, “ Your life is hid with Christ in God.” How deep one’s roots go down ; even into the depths of eternity, and into the very nature and heart of God, and God and the godly are united together.

Then in the next place, we have the idea of *fixedness*. Show me an occasional worshipper, and I will show you a lean believer.

“ 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.”

There are persons, and I am bound to believe that some of them are Christians, who are wanderers, religious gypsies, who are settled nowhere. You may see them almost everywhere, but they are stationary nowhere in relation to the house of God. Such persons are not useful to the church. They do not honour our holy religion ; they are not strong, neither do they flourish. If they are saints, they are lean and barren characters. Let one love God’s house, and let one’s very soul be rooted in the verities of the Gospel, and he will find himself under that cloud which is full of water ; for “ those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” Fixedness is essential to fertility of mind, and to spiritual fruitfulness in the things and ways of God. I have very imperfectly put this point before you, but so much for the persons indicated in the text.

Now *the promise*. “ They shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

Do you not like that? Do you wish God had stretched it a little further and made it a little longer or wider, and said, They shall flourish in the world also? You cannot talk about the world, nor your trade and business; for all in secular things is in confusion and unhappy uncertainty, and has been so for months or years. You do not flourish in this respect. And what then? Why, I am glad to get to God's house, and thankful to sit at His feet, especially when He is pleased to visit my soul and raise my mind above the darkness, uncertainty and confusion that prevail outside. I dread Monday morning, especially, when I have been favoured with a good Lord's day, and the rain of heaven has fallen upon me, and I have heard the word with pleasure and profit, and have worshipped God with satisfaction and delight; when I have been constrained to say, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." At such times I think of that congregation which never breaks up, and wish I were there; and of that Sabbath that never ends, and wish I were spending it on high. But there comes the dark, icy, stormy Monday morning. No! I do not flourish in the world; then it is a blessing if we flourish in the house of God. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord *shall* flourish in her courts. If affliction and sorrow are outside, it is a favour and a blessing to meet God in His own house. They shall flourish, that is, they shall grow in three or four respects. They shall flourish with regard to their leaves or *their profession of religion*. I cannot speak lightly of the profession of these living plants, or of the leaves of the trees. They are God's creatures, His hand made the leaves as well as the fruit. If there is life in our root, and our religion is a living one, we shall bear leaves as well as fruit; and I hold that it is honourable before God, and in the sight of the world to have one's profession kept, protected, and prolonged from day to day, and from year to year. Some men, perhaps, are character proud, I am not one of them. I have nothing to be proud of, and yet I do go to God, saying, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." If the world will throw mud upon me, and mere professors will sneer at me, let them do so; yet I would live uprightly, honestly, and soberly in this present evil world. A character formed and kept by God Himself is no small mercy. They shall flourish as to their leaves. "His leaf also shall be green, and he shall not cease bearing fruit."

Then in the next place, *there is fruit* as well as leaves. "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ the Lord." Rooted in love is the point we have dwelt upon. What will the fruit of such a plant be? Love, like the soil into which the root strikes. The roots of our religion strike into the love of God; and if we bear a little fruit, and we may not bear much, I would that we were more fruitful; if we bear a little fruit it will be the fruit of love. I love Him, because He first loved me. The roots of my religion strike into His love; and being rooted therein, we love God Himself, His people too, and His house also. They shall flourish as to their fruit. Where is he rooted? In God's truth. What fruit does he bear in consequence of this? The fruit of truth or sincerity. He is sincere. "Thou requirest truth in the inward parts," and that fruit is borne, since the believer's roots strike into the

great truth of God. His religion is a true one, his hope is a true one, his profession is a true profession. He is not a hypocrite, but a true living, loving child of God. His roots strike into Christ, and what fruit does he bear? He is like Christ; he is rooted in Christ, grounded upon Him, and he draws supplies from Him, and he is a Christian. He is rooted in God. What fruit does he bear in consequence of that? Godliness. And what is godliness, but godlikeness? He is like God in some measure because he grows in God; like Christ in some measure because he is rooted in Him. He is true, and upright, and honest, because he is rooted in saving truth. He is a loving saint of God, because he is rooted in His everlasting love. He grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then again, there is a *flourishing in gifts*, as well as in grace and in profession. If I had time, and thought it would be profitable, I could go a considerable distance with regard to gifts in the church of Jesus Christ. There is a young man, a mere youth, in all simplicity he relates his experience, and the church rejoices in it and receives him. It is believed that he is a godly youth, and to all such we say, "Come in, ye blessed of the Lord." Having been a member of the church some months, he is asked to open his lips in prayer, and he declines, and no wonder. He declines the second or third time, but eventually he opens his lips a little in prayer, and the simplicity is beautiful, and taking, and inviting; and he does so again and again. By and bye he is asked to join the friends in the Sunday-school, and soon there appears a budding gift upon that youth which gradually develops. That bud swells, and opens, and it soon appears that he possesses the gift of thinking, and of communicating his thoughts to others. The brethren like to hear him pray, the children love to sit and hear him speak, and by and bye he is invited to speak in the Lord's name to a handful of people, and he goes. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish" as to their profession, flourish as to their graces and fruit, and flourish as to their gifts. Oh! the churches of Jesus Christ have been nurseries in this respect, I am sure. Members have detected the gift, it has discovered itself, they have fostered and utilized it; and now there stands forth a minister of the gospel who is more or less useful, who only a few years ago was received as a youth into the church, possessing at that time apparently no striking gift at all. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." That is the promise.

Now, thirdly, all this is *absolute and certain*. They *shall* flourish. There is no conditionality about it, and nothing uncertain. They shall flourish in the courts of our God. And why? Because they are *living plants* and not dead stakes driven down into the garden, not posts placed on the premises and rammed in their places. A post or a stake may stand for years in good soil, but will never flourish or grow. The child of God, however, is a living character, and therefore he shall flourish. Secondly, because it is a *Divine life*; thirdly, because *the soil they are planted in is good*; and fourthly, because they are *well planted by God's own hand*. I might take a very vigorous living plant, and set it in my garden, and so bungle, owing to my ignorance of that business as to kill

it. God takes the sinner out of his state, communicates a new life to him, and puts him into new soil of His own preparing ; He plants him well, and waters him with His blessing, and keeps the garden from day to day, lest any hurt it ; He waters it every moment : and if souls do not grow with such treatment as this, we shall be surprised indeed. It is God's own work from first to last. "They shall flourish in the courts of our God."

Lastly, *the fulfilment of this promise*. "They shall flourish in the courts of our God." Now, this promise has been fulfilled ever since God has had a house on earth, and ever since His earthly courts have received His dear people. Now, take a young man again, and I do so because the next verse speaks of bearing fruit in old age. Take a young believer, called by grace in early life, and brought into living connection with the church of God at a very early age. I can talk on this topic, because I have some personal experience myself in this direction. I was about sixteen years of age, when I was baptized and received into the church, and here I am to-day, and most of you know how old I am now. I have been a poor member of God's church, and an unworthy one, ever since I have been connected with the church here ; but, bless God, I have never been rooted up ! And I have not been left to wander from God's truth, from His house, nor from His ways. I am not sorry, but glad ; for

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

Well, there is the young believer, a sapling just planted. Will he grow, will he be an honour to his profession and an ornament to the church ? He becomes married, has a family ; he is a solid character, and is chosen deacon, and he serves the church. By and bye his hair becomes grey or his head bald. He is an old man. What of that ? They still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing. To bear a little fruit in youth, and not to cease bearing fruit when one is seventy or eighty is a blessing. Oh ! what a patient God we have, and how deep is His loving-kindness. Chadwell Street owes much to Him ; for not a few of our dear friends, who entered the church when young are holding on their way. Yea, we are all debtors for God's mercy and truth to us.

Another year is now passed and gone, and another anniversary has been reached ; I have made a few observations as appropriate as I could upon the subject. The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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EPISTLES OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 9th JANUARY, 1887.

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Cor. iii. 3.

THE children of God are most important to their covenant and gracious Father. Hence He has said, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." God is the Former of all things as the Creator of all; but He forms His people as new creatures in Christ Jesus the Lord. Their character is new, their associations are new, their life is new, their course is new, and their end is new, and the Divine Speaker very positively says, "They shall show forth My praise." There will be no failure here; for He who converts a sinner, and saves him with an everlasting salvation, can so support and sustain him, that he shall show forth the Saviour's praise for ever. The care of God over His people is so important that it is variously illustrated in the Scriptures of divine truth. Sometimes they are represented as His sheep and lambs. "Feed My sheep," Peter, and "feed My lambs." How interesting is the connection between God, the great Shepherd of Israel, and His large and numerous flock, which are made manifest from day to day! He goes before them, and leads them, sometimes in green pastures, and sometimes in a wilderness. Canaan, however, is before Him and them also, and He will never leave them nor forsake them; and all the sheep shall enter into that rich pasture of eternal glory, and feed and rest for ever. At other times they are a garden, and even each saint is so represented: "And their soul shall be as a watered garden," where the graces of the Spirit thrive and grow, being watered with the dew of God's blessing and favour. I believe there is an internal beauty seen and recognized by God, and approved of by Him, which we ourselves are not ready to admit the existence of. We look within, and see nothing beautiful; nevertheless the spiritual beauty of the saints of God is a reality; for if our hearts are at any time a watered garden, and heavenly plants are growing therein, there must be a beauty, a fragrance, and a glory there, which are peculiar to the people of God. Then again, the saints are living stones, for our Christ is building a temple of mercy and glory, and the work is gradually growing and rising. The foundation was laid ages ago, even before the foundation of the world; and it is said, that "the top-stone shall be brought home with shoutings, crying, Grace, Grace unto it." Believers are living stones, and

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there is not a dead one in this living temple ; a dead stone therein would destroy the character, beauty, and value of the whole building. Yes, there is life in the foundation, and life in every stone that is laid upon Jesus Christ ; so that the temple is a living structure from the bottom to the top-stone. And in our text, the saints of God are compared to epistles or letters. " Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

Now let us go a little way into the mysteries indicated in this text. And the first thought that occurs to my mind as requiring amplification is *the character indicated*. Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ. The first fact to be noticed here is this, that God's dear people are the property of Christ, He is their owner. He recognises them now, and at the last day He will avow his connection with them before assembled worlds. They are mine ! are words which are rather frequently upon my mind : " Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren," so the Lord will speak at the last day. Looking at His people on His right hand, He will say, " My brethren ;" we are now Christ's brethren, and we shall be owned as His brethren then. Satan, and angels, and the world, and you also, shall hear these words ; and I imagine that such an avowal from the lips of the royal Judge will fill us with a boldness and a confidence such as we could not possess here : " My brethren." Well, they shall enter into heaven ; and although their bodies will not have been there before, they will enter behind their Elder Brother with confidence and comfort, feeling that the heavenly world is their own home, and that the great King of it is their Brother. It is a great thing to belong to the Saviour ; not merely to be a professor of His name, to have a theoretical knowledge of it, or to be able to discourse upon religious topics and doctrines ; but to belong to Him, to be embraced by Him, and to embrace Him in return. Oh happy church, and happy men and women who can say, " My beloved is mine, and I am His." He lays His hand upon the sinner's soul and says, " Thou art mine ;" and the sinner, with the arms of faith, embraces his Saviour, and says, " My beloved is mine, and I am His." I do not wish to preach a fanciful sermon, but it seems, however, that the idea is, that the materials of these letters are the Lord's. " Ye are the epistles of Christ," who does not write His epistles, or have them written, on materials not His own. Therefore, first of all, *the materials* are His in various ways. " Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me ;" and in the course of time He writes His laws of love upon them all. He has redeemed them from death and ruin, and taken them out of the hands of punitive justice ; and in due time he sends His Spirit to write His laws upon the fleshy tables of their hearts. He calls them by His grace, and separates them from the world ; he puts a new and everlasting principle into their hearts, and then the Holy Spirit writes His laws and precepts therein. The materials or the persons are Christ's property long before they are His letters ; for long before Christ is in them they are in the love and the hands of the Lord. They are His own property, and one

person after another is taken, and the Holy Spirit proceeds to fill them with Him, which He does gradually and progressively, and every letter is returned to its great Author, the dear and blest Redeemer. Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Jesus Christ. Not only are the people of God the property of Jesus Christ, *the contents* of these letters are Christ's; and for this reason I imagine saints are said to be His epistles. Are we living epistles of the living Saviour? If so, there is something of Christ within, for one is an epistle of the Lord because Christ is formed in his heart, the hope of glory. If Jesus is formed in your hearts, you are one of His living epistles, and your contents are acceptable, spiritual, and heavenly; for they are of God, and Christ Himself dwells in you. These letters are all of them, not about the devil, nor sin, nor this world, nor nature, but about some aspect of the character of Jesus Christ, His person, His offices, His love, His favour, His friendship, His sacrifice and His death. My dear brother and sister, if Christ is formed in your hearts, the hope of glory, I do not say you are always thinking about Him; but your best thoughts are His, your highest, purest, and noblest feelings are His, your consciences are His, and your affections are His. If Jesus is written within, the writing is not dead, but living writing, the soul is alive to God. All is living here; Christ in the heart is a whole and a living Christ, and hence He says, "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. I love a feeling religion. Some persons speak, or seem to speak, against feeling in connection with these matters. Surely if the Holy Spirit has formed Christ in your heart and mine, there will be some feeling and experience. You take your pen and write a letter upon a sheet of paper; and though all is plain, clear, and legible, and well written, yet all is dead and not a letter moves. There is no life in the material parchment or paper, and no life whatever in the characters; but here everything is vital and alive. Religion is a vital reality, and grace in the heart is a living power. Jesus formed within, the hope of glory, is not a dead Christ engraven upon dead stones, nor a dead portrait drawn with pencil or pen, upon a dead sheet of paper or dead canvas. All is living and vital, all moves and produces feeling and experience more or less deep. A living Christ is in a living soul, living laws are in living force, and a living power moves living principles, which must last as long as their Author, the everlasting God, endures. What strange epistles, what marvellous records! Everything connected with the person of Christ is peculiar to Him, and everything connected with the salvation of the Son of God and Christian experience, is peculiar and strange, especially to the world. Ye are the epistles of Christ, for first the material upon which the Holy Ghost writes is His, and secondly their contents are Christ's, since all relate to the dear and glorious Son of God. Hence we read of His love being shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. But as time is going, let us proceed, and without being fanciful let me say, *that every one of these letters is addressed to Christ.* Not only are the contents all Christian, but everyone is addressed to the Saviour, and is intended for Him, and shall be received by Him. Sometimes our letters are lost, though they are important; but not one of

these epistles shall be lost, however small it may be. A saint may feel he is very small or insignificant, yet if the Holy Ghost has written a line, or formed Christ within, he is an epistle and cannot be lost, but must go through all the various trials and changes of the world to Christ in heaven. They go through water, through fire, and through darkness, and through Satan's hands occasionally; but he cannot hold them, tear them up, nor obliterate their contents, nor alter what is written. He may be permitted to cast darkness upon the work, and to blind the eyes of the child of God, so as to render Him incapable of reading what is written within; but the work of the Holy Spirit can never be obliterated. And should they fall into the devil's hands he cannot destroy them; for, to change the figure, My sheep are in My hands, and in My Father's hands also, and none can pluck them out of either His hands or Mine. Therefore the letters which the Holy Ghost is gathering together, and filling up and completing, are being conveyed to heaven, and some of us expect that we shall soon be there, and every one being addressed to Jesus and filled with matter fetched from Himself will be admitted into glory. Jesus will receive and recognize and acknowledge everyone; and receiving these epistles into heaven He will be crowned by saved sinners as Lord of all for ever and ever.

Now, in the second place, let us notice *the writer of these epistles*: "ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." The Spirit of God therefore is the writer, and Christ is the matter of them. This indicates an important fact, which I wish were universally believed, even by professors of religion. I fear, however, it is not. This important fact is, that there is nothing in the human heart for God or for heaven, before the Holy Ghost begins His work. There is not a word, not a syllable, not a stroke, not the slightest measure of heavenly religion in the heart of a natural man. "How severe you are!" No, I am not, I am speaking the truth *in love*. If morality is there, I thank God for it, for it is an excellency; I wish there were more of it, and that all hearts and lives were full of it, and that every man and woman in the world were governed by its dictates and power. But morality is not spirituality. There is nothing for God or heaven in the human heart until the Holy Ghost commences His work. Nothing spiritual can be found in the soul of man before the Spirit takes possession of the mind in which the letter is to be written, and commences the work of grace therein. "Ministered by us, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." Well, now let us look at two or three Scriptures. The Holy Spirit writes for Christ, and writes about Him. He writes for Christ, therefore He writes under the Mediator's throne; "He shall take of Mine, and show it unto you." And what is the result; does the sight make no impression upon the heart, or leave no mark thereon? Does it not? If the Holy Ghost takes the things of Christ and shows them unto me, what I see becomes stamped upon my heart, and the impression cannot be removed. Thus the Spirit writes these living epistles for Christ and for heaven. "He shall glorify Me. Where? in heaven? No, it was the Father's work, and not the work of the Spirit, to glorify Christ, by placing Him at His own right hand. The Father received His Son, and glorified Him there; but Christ says,

“The Spirit shall glorify Me.” How, and where? Why, “He shall glorify Me by taking that which is Mine, and showing it unto you. He shall lead you into all truth; He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that He shall speak.” Do His words leave no mark, no impression, no line whatever behind them? Oh, when He brings the things of Christ into the heart, and writes them in the fleshy tables thereof, an impression is made, which, as we said a few minutes ago, hell cannot remove. Yes, the Holy Spirit is the writer of these letters. And let me here say, that the writing is so good, (and I want to comfort some little one if I can,) that Jesus Christ is pleased with the whole of it. There are no blots, no inaccuracies, and no blemishes, and altogether the writing is inimitable and perfect. Do you say I have been accustomed to think that my writing, or the petitions which I present to God, are blotted and blurred here and there? I am not now speaking of your prayers and offerings, but of the Spirit’s writing and work. Your petitions are blotted and blurred; but when the Holy Ghost begins these letters, He intends to finish them, and it is His purpose and intention that everything in them shall be perfect and divine. The work of the Holy Ghost imperfect! No, not one stroke is faulty, and Christ is pleased with every letter, for it is the writing of His own blessed Spirit, of that mighty person whose work it is to glorify Him in the hearts of His dear people. “Do you think He has begun to write on my heart?” I must leave that between God and your own soul. All I can say is this, that if He has written Christ’s law in the fleshy tables of your hearts, those lines are good and perfect, and inimitable; no one can imitate the Spirit, and no being can write like Him, and His writing is always recognized by Jesus. Therefore the work of grace, whether it be strong or weak, whether it be shallow or deep, the work of grace is a saving work, and every gracious work will and must be followed by glory. Christ accepts the Spirit’s work just as the Father accepted, and still accepts the work of His dear Son. The work of the Holy Ghost *in the heart* is as perfect in its progress as is the work of Christ *for the heart*; and when each letter is completed and delivered, it will appear that the work of the writer is as perfect and complete as was the work of Jesus Christ Himself. The Spirit is the writer of these epistles, and His writing is divinely good and acceptable. Angels could not write like it, ministers could not write like it; “ministered, but not written by us.” And let me say another word for your comfort. The Holy Ghost leaves nothing out that is essential. I write a letter and post it, and then it occurs to my mind that the most important thing I had to say I forgot; but the Holy Ghost is perfect here, omitting nothing that is essential to salvation. One says, “But my brother So-and-so goes further in his experience than I do; besides, my experience is not like his in many respects and particulars.” Never mind, if your experience is the result of the operations of the Holy Spirit, it is good, and He will leave out nothing that should be in your heart. And then, again, as to the writing of the Spirit. There are no deletions, nothing can ever be erased. We prepare a manuscript, and it contains a multitude of deletions and corrections; we run the pen through a word here, a sentence there, and alter the construction

of a page elsewhere ; but nothing of the kind takes place in these letters, nothing is deleted, and nothing altered. The Holy Ghost goes on quietly perfecting His work as He proceeds, and this year perhaps with some of us the last line will be written, and we shall be sent to heaven, and received there with joy, for God's people enter into the kingdom with expressions of eternal joy. The Holy Spirit is the writer.

Thirdly, *the experience indicated*. Now here I beg you to notice that the text contains two negatives and two positives, "*Not with ink, and not on tables of stone*. Two positives, "*But with the Spirit of the living God, and in the fleshy tables of the heart*. All this to me is beautiful, comprehensive, and expressive. Written not with ink. True religion is not a work of art. Ink is made by man ; therefore it may indicate human operations, human power, or human influence. The religion of Christ's dear people is neither artificial nor superficial ; it is not the result of the operations of human skill or power. A man, a minister, an angel cannot make anything that can possibly be a substitute for the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Written, but not with ink, which might be removed, or as I said just now, erased. "Yes, but there could be no deletions if the letters were upon tables of stone, and chiselled or cut very deep." Have you never seen names and writing on stone almost or quite worn out ? Time will obliterate what is engraven on stone ; but these living characters, written in the living heart of man, will last as long as life itself endures. Written not with ink, for it is not a human religion. Not on tables of stone, for they are natural, hard, and dead ; and the religion of heaven is not natural, but spiritual.

And what are they written with ? Not with ink, and not on tables of stone, but with the Spirit of the living God. What is the Spirit of the living God, and what comes from Him but life ? He is the Giver of life ; and nothing approaching to death, or that might finally terminate in it ever came from Him. The Holy Spirit quickens the dead, and they live for ever. He does not disseminate a mortal or perishable principle. He is the living Spirit of the living God. He comes for the God-like purpose of putting new life into dead hearts and writing living characters therein. Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of God ; not on tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart, which indicates experience. Not fleshly, but fleshy. Fleshly tables would have indicated that which is carnal and sensual. Fleshy tables of the heart is in harmony with what God has promised concerning His people. "I will take away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh." If God has done this for us, I am sure that an amount of experience must be the result of such an operation. I will take away the heart of stone, and not write upon it. That writing took place on Sinai, under the law, but not on Zion under the gospel. Under condemnation, there was a writing by God Himself upon the stony tables of law ; but under justification the scene is changed, the fleshy tables of the heart are prepared, and God the Spirit writes therein. I would not be fanciful, but I have seen anchors and various other figures pricked with colouring matter into the arms and other parts of the body of persons, and they remain in the flesh as long as the flesh lives, and cannot be separated therefrom. They

are there, and their bearer carries them with him wherever he goes. You might deeply engrave a figure upon a stone, and in course of time it would disappear ; but what is written or stamped upon the new heart will remain there as long as the heart itself remains. This new heart can never perish, and the laws written upon it will last for ever. The two negatives and the two positives. Not with ink, but with the Spirit ; not on tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Fourthly, *the instruments*. "Ministered by us." When the apostle went to Corinth, he did not find epistles of Christ in that city. The Holy Ghost had not then commenced His work. The materials were there, and this was the process ; Paul preached, and the Holy Ghost, the Writer of Christ's epistles, influenced him whilst he did so, and as he preached Christ the Holy Ghost wrote the truth in the Corinthians' hearts, and the apostle, when there was a necessity, for it, said, "Ye are our epistle, ministered by us, written not with ink, nor with our hands, but with the Spirit of the living God. When I came to you, you knew nothing spiritual, and possessed no religion, except that of idolatry. The Holy Ghost led me as I declared the things of God, and the Spirit applied them to you, and wrote them in the fleshy tables of your hearts, and so you became the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. The instrument, the pen may be good, and the ink and paper perfect ; but there can be no writing without a hand, and no good writing unless the hand be that of a good writer. Good writing is not always owing to the quality of the pen ; for a good writer may write well with an inferior pen. A minister of the gospel may be regarded as the instrument, the hand that holds him is the hand of the Spirit, and the man of God speaks under the unction of the Holy One. That unction comes from the Spirit, through the instrumentality of the man upon the hearts of the people, and so letters are written for heaven and for God. The instruments.

Then fifthly, *these letters are at present open ones*. "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." Open. We generally close and seal letters, but these secrets God is not ashamed of, and the Holy Ghost is not ashamed of His work. If these epistles are full of Christ, by all means let them be seen, and known, and read of all men. Christ is in three places. Personally, He is in heaven, at the right hand of the Father ; declaratively He is in the Bible, even everywhere in the Scriptures, for "they are they which testify of Me ;" vitally, experimentally, and practically considered, He is in His people : "Christ in you, the hope of glory." What He is at the Father's right hand, that the Bible declares Him to be, and what He is declaratively there, that He becomes experimentally in the heart. Hence the Word we speak of is the Incarnate Word, the written Word and the engrafted Word of God. Christ up there in all the glory of His person, Christ here descriptively in all His fulness and suitability, and that same Christ in our hearts the hope of glory. And this is an open secret, though it is "with them that fear Him." It is, however, apparent to others, for there is something unusual, uncommon, and supernatural in a living and loving child of God. May Christ be seen in you and me by the ungodly

world, may we be known and read of all men. When the Corinthians were called by grace, and the Spirit began to write these letters, all their friends and relations saw the difference, and so Paul says, "Ye are our epistle."

In the next place, *the use to be made of them*. "Ye are manifestly declared." What use did the apostle make of them, or how did he regard them in connection with his preaching and his labours everywhere? The Apostle says, "Do we begin to commend ourselves, or need we as some others letters of commendation from you?" No; false apostles and preachers in the days of Paul, in the city of Corinth, wanted letters of recommendation from the Corinthian church, say, to Ephesus, to Philippi, or to other places where they were not known, or had not been heard of. They wanted testimonials as to their ability and the genuineness of their religion and usefulness. "Oh," says the apostle, "I go not so low at that, I want no letters of recommendation from you, nor from any great personage, to make way for me to another part of the world. If I go where I am not known, and they ask me questions as to what I have been doing, and where I have been preaching, I say I have been to Corinth, and preached the word there, in much affliction and tribulation; but the Holy Ghost has saved many sinners, and I am satisfied as to the fact that I am a man of God and an apostle of Christ. A church has been planted there, souls have been saved, and God has been honoured; and if I were a deceiver or false prophet, that would not have taken place. Paul wanted no letters testimonial written on paper or parchment to carry in his pocket, for see the preceding verse, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts." We do not carry these commendatory letters in our pockets; but in our hearts, and which are known and read of all men. Sometimes ministers have to fall back upon this kind of evidence; their minds are so dark, and their hearts so shut up, that they turn round and look behind them, and thank God that they have not altogether laboured in vain, nor spent their strength for nought. Oh, if God has called one soul by my poor ministry, I have much to be thankful for now, and for ever and ever. I think the Lord has called more than one; for I have been much favoured in that respect in days past and gone, and perhaps shall again. They are epistles in my heart; may they all be known and read of all men, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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CHRIST EXPOUNDING THE SCRIPTURES.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 30th JANUARY, 1887.

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning Himself.” Luke xxiv. 27.

SPIRITUALITY is one of the greatest and richest glories of the gospel dispensation. No material or architectural greatness or gorgeousness is required for the kingdom of heaven. The foundation of the church is spiritual, the church itself is spiritual, the Head of the church is spiritual, and the whole is animated by one Spirit from the foundation to the top-stone, or it will be so. Acceptable worship is a spiritual exercise, and the great Object of worship is a spiritual Being, and the religion of heaven is intended to spiritualize the mind. Hence the *Christian* experience of a believer, the battles he fights, the victories he wins, and the triumph he obtains in a dying hour are spiritual. His entrance into heaven will be spiritual, and his joy there will be spiritual for ever. We are therefore to separate as well as we can, all that is sinful, fleshly, and material from the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” May it be yours and mine to be favoured with large measures of spiritual life and power; for whilst it is exceedingly easy to be carnal, it is, if one may speak for others, difficult to be spiritual. Yet it is most important that we should be spiritual in everything connected with the service of our God.

I make these remarks because the disciples and immediate followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of His flesh, had very carnal views of their Master, and of that kingdom which He came to establish. They regarded Him, correctly enough, as the Son of David, for He was truly his son; and they rightly regarded Him as the heir of his throne, for Christ was the heir to the throne of David. They thought, however, that He came for the purpose of rescuing them as a nation from all foreign powers, and restoring again the kingdom to Israel. When, however, He was crucified and buried, and even after He had risen from the dead and had been seen, Peter said, “I go a-fishing,” and his brethren said, “We also go with thee.” Peter’s idea appears to me to have been something like this. Our Master has been crucified and was buried, and while it is true He is risen again, yet we shall see no more of Him; we are poor, and notwithstanding what He said as to our becoming fishers of men, and that we should be fed, yet I fear these words will not be fulfilled. As our money is spent, and we have no bread, we must return to our work for a living, and therefore I go a-fishing,” and his brethren said, “We also go with thee;” and that night they caught nothing—and no

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wonder, for they went without Divine direction. Jesus stood on the shore, but they knew not that it was Jesus. "He said, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No. Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find." They had not their Master's authority for fishing the first time; but now they had it, and they were successful. When they went in their own spirit, they caught nothing; but when they cast the net into the sea at the bidding of their Master, they drew it to land full of great fishes. A fire was there, and fish laid thereon and bread. Who had made the fire? Their Master. Where did the fish come from? Not from the full net which they had drawn to shore. Their Lord had provided the fire, and the fish, and the bread, and He had prepared the meal for them, and therefore He said, Come and dine. You said yesterday that you would go a fishing, for your unbelief suggested that you would see me no more, and that I should not supply your wants according to My promise. Now come and dine, but not on the food which you have procured, or even dressed or prepared. But come and dine on what I have provided. I will make you fishers of men, and as the labourer is worthy of his hire, you shall have bread to eat, and raiment to wear.

The two disciples who left Jerusalem for the village of Emmaus were perhaps animated by a similar spirit, and as they walked towards the village the theme of their conversation was the crucifixion of their Master. What were they going to Emmaus for? I imagine they were under the influence of unbelief, and thought they had seen the last of Jesus. They had lost, or almost lost, their confidence, and hence they said, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." We thought so, but our thoughts were not correct; for He was crucified, and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. The Master, who had joined them, said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Our Lord did not speak in anger when He called them fools. O fools, or foolish ones, for not believing all that the prophets have spoken; "ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

I desire to call your attention this morning to the words I have read, which are very comprehensive, and let that be our first thought. *The Saviour's exposition on this occasion was a most comprehensive one.* Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. This comprehensive exposition is not recorded. Several things are mentioned in the Word of God which I have been carnal enough at times to wish had been more fully recorded; and I have sometimes heartily wished that it had pleased the Holy Ghost to record this marvellous exposition of the Scriptures by our Lord. He that writes a letter is supposed to know the meaning of its contents, and as Jesus is the great author and substance of the Word of God, He certainly understands every portion thereof, and his exposition on this occasion must have been most instructive. We are sure it was so; for, whilst it appealed to their heads and enlightened them, it appealed also to their hearts, and warmed them. He opened their

understanding and poured light into it, and He reached their hearts and warmed them with a fire which was altogether His own. Expositions of Divine truth are sometimes wonderfully dry, when given even by great expositors and learned and eloquent men. They are addressed by man to the human eye or the ear, or they may go further and reach the understanding and judgment, but the heart is so mysterious a part of our constitution that it cannot be reached for spiritual good by any power but that of grace and God. Satan cannot reach the heart unless he is permitted. God, however, can always reach it, and put into it just what He pleases. It was not necessary that our Lord should, in order to warm their hearts, be seated on His throne. He was the risen Lord of the Church ; all power was in His hands ; and whilst this marvellous exposition was proceeding their hearts were touched and held fast in a mysterious manner by His spiritual power, and, having recognized Him subsequently, they said, The mystery is cleared up now. We understand the secret well enough. "Did not our hearts burn within us, whilst He talked with us by the way, and whilst He opened to us the Scriptures?"

Let us, however, look at the comprehensiveness of the Saviour's exposition. Although we do not know its matter, we do know what portions He expounded, and that is what I mean by comprehensiveness here. He began at Moses and then went through the prophets, and, lest there should be any misunderstanding, the Holy Ghost has been careful to inform us that He went also into all the Scriptures ; and a little lower down we are told that all things that were written in the Psalms concerning Him should be fulfilled. One thing must not be lost sight of, and that is, the Scriptures that the Saviour expounded were those of the Old Testament, for the New was not then in existence. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, had not written their gospels ; the Holy Ghost had not been given ; the Day of Pentecost had not arrived. Saul of Tarsus, who is a very large writer in the New Testament, was then a Pharisee, and had not then been called by grace ; and the Epistles of John and others, and the Book of the Revelation, were not in existence. The Scriptures, therefore, which Jesus expounded were the Old Testament. And Christ said on another occasion :—"Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they which testify of me. Now let us glance at a few only of the many things in the Scriptures which concern our Lord. "Beginning at Moses, He expounded unto them the things that concerned Himself." Where did Moses begin ? He began with the creation of the world ; but we will pass over that, and consider the world as having been created, and man as having fallen ; for before the fall of man there was no revelation of a Mediator, and no promise of the Messiah. Immediately, however, after the fall of man another revelation commenced ; and there, I think, the Saviour began His exposition. What is the first thing Moses records about our Lord ? "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." That was done, and the enmity commenced very early, and its raging power has continued until now. It prevailed in the days of Cain and Abel, in the days of Moses, in the days of Christ, and it exists even now.

“Water and fire maintain the fight,
Until the weaker dies.”

The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would. Well, did not our Lord touch upon the seed of the woman? If he began at Moses and pointed out the things which concerned Himself, He would say to Cleopas and his companion: Hear the word of God by Moses, for he wrote of Me. Influenced by the Spirit, Moses predicted that I should in due time appear on the earth as the seed of the woman, and that I should bruise the serpent's head, and that the serpent should bruise My heel: it was necessary that that word should be fulfilled. My heel was bruised, but the heel he wounded has bruised his head; for Christ has “destroyed principalities and powers.” We cannot tarry long in a place here. Christ, perhaps, then proceeded to the glorious ark, to righteous Noah, to the marvellous deluge, and to the miraculous salvation of an elect world. Elect! Yes; for the beasts, the birds, and the men and women were chosen, and they entered into the ark. It was a little world, a chosen world, a saved world, and a world that floated upon the bosom of the deluge in perfect safety with God. The ark had no rudder and no anchor, and it was not an open boat. No rain came through its roof, no water passed through its sides, and no one died therein; all were healthy and well. Our Lord would not tarry long, but, probably, He would refer to that matter as one of the things which concerned Himself. Then did He not discourse rapidly as no other being could possibly discourse upon the fact—“The bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it;” and then, perhaps, he went from Moses to Isaiah. “For this is the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.” We cannot go further; but there are two other points in the writings of Moses on which He may have said a word. Abraham's ram, caught in a thicket by his horns, and his words to Isaac, “God will provide Himself a lamb.” As to Exodus? The paschal lamb, that wonderful ordinance of God, was most likely expounded. No doubt He showed that Christ was the antitypical Lamb, and that the cloudy pillar, the smitten rock, the falling manna concerned Him. They did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. Did Moses smite the Rock, and had that act no meaning? It was necessary it should be smitten, to typify the sorrows, sufferings, and wounds of Christ; and as the waters gushed from the rock when smitten, so salvation flowed from Christ's great person when He was smitten on the tree. “All things concerning Himself.” We might go further in the Book of Exodus, but time fails. In Leviticus there are shadows of priests, and altars, and a tabernacle, and sacrifices, and blood, and water, and oblations, all of which concerned our dear Lord. Coming to the Book of Numbers, and Moses is still the writer, we mention only one point, viz., the serpent of brass. “Set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.” “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” Perhaps these were the words he used when He

expounded that matter, which was one of the things that touched Himself; and Balaam also was led prophetically to speak of the Star which should come out of Jacob. O friends, search the Scriptures—they are mines of truth, and full of heavenly gold. We should like to have heard our Lord's exposition of those parts of the writings of Moses which represented things concerning Himself. What then about Deuteronomy? There is nothing there, or not much, containing things concerning Christ. Yes; the six cities of refuge, three on this side, and three on that side of Jordan, one of the most glorious types of our glorious Lord. We who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us in the Gospel. What a flood of marvellous light came upon the minds of those two disciples as that glorious Expositor of the Word of God proceeded with his exposition. Well, I might go on to speak of Joshua leading the people over Jordan, the Ark of the Covenant carried before them, and the walls of Jericho, which fell down flat at the blast of the ram's horns. I might have spoken of Joshua as that strange person appeared to him saying, "Art thou for us or for our enemies?" who answered, "Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." I might speak of Judges as containing things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ; but what do you think about Ruth? Would the Saviour touch upon Ruth, and Naomi, and Boaz, and so trace the birth of Christ's ancestor David? Well, then on through Samuel, speaking of the Stone and Shepherd of Israel. To Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra, and so on, for all the Old Testament, my brethren, is full of Christ. His eye, or His heart, or His hand appears on almost every page. "Beginning at Moses and rapidly passing through the Prophets and all the Scriptures, He expounded the things concerning Himself."

Then secondly, notice *the limitation*; for whilst the exposition was very comprehensive, it was also limited. He expounded all *things concerning Himself*. The exposition was full, but it all related to Himself. They did not then know that He was referring to Himself, but to the Messiah; their eyes being holden that they should not know Him. Now as to the things concerning Himself. Would He begin with the creation? would He allude to that? Why not? In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth. Who is God? Did Christ the Son make the heavens and the earth? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God; all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Things concerning Himself. When the fall took place, perfection was lost, and man was plunged into darkness; Adam and Eve stood trembling and shaking, expecting the execution of that sentence, the meaning of which they did not understand. All at once a new scene was opened, and something else appeared in the midst of the darkness and the awful ruin; for a new state of things was revealed. God opened another door in heaven, and revealed another plan, the grand central object of which was the Messiah, the Son of God, the seed of the woman, whose name under this dispensation and in our lives and hearts is the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the grand central object after the fall. Are you afraid to sing the words of Kent:—

"Here Satan was nonpluss'd in what he had done ;
The fall wrought the channel where mercy should run."

No thanks to sin, that we have mercy, or that we have any good whatever ; and yet our great and glorious God took advantage of the fall of man, and of the introduction of that abominable evil, sin, to reveal that greater state of things which He had in His mind, and to bring out of His bosom His everlastingly beloved Son ; and Jesus appeared amid the ruins. He expounded the things concerning Himself. The curse was over the ruined world, and Christ would say that it should in justice be so ; but look into the ruin that followed the fall, and you will see the Messiah, whose sufferings and death now astonish you. The promised One voluntarily took the sinner's place, and engaged to bear the curse incurred by man, and "ought not Christ to have suffered these things therefore, and to enter into His glory?" The great, or rather the greatest object after the fall, bless God, was not the devil, not sin, not Adam ; but the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. Then comes redemption, and Christ is the greatest object here. Then comes another paradise, another garden, infinitely better than the former one, which was lost, and infinitely superior to the Adamic dispensation, and our dear Lord is all therein. Hence He limited His exposition to things that concerned Himself.

Let us notice in the third place, that the things the Saviour expounded *were vital to Himself, and to His people also*. If I had not found the word "ought" in connection with the suffering of incarnate God, I should never have used it. I should never have believed that it might be applied to the sufferings of Jesus. Ought not Christ,—the Christ you have known for three years, whose sermons you have listened to, and at whose feet you sat ; the Messiah, as you thought Him to be. Ought not that Messiah to have suffered what He did suffer ? Was there anything wrong in it on the part of God ? Everything was wrong on the part of the Jews, as His persecutors and murderers ; but was there anything unrighteous on the part of God or of Himself ? Were His sufferings wrong on His own part ? Was He not pure ? He was. Holy ? Yes. Then why did He suffer ? Because "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all." And since He agreed to bear them all, "ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" You prepare a contract and bring it to me for my signature and seal : I read it, and if any parts of it are difficult, I ask for an explanation, in order that I may fully know what I am committing myself to. I read the document, all is explained to me, and I thoroughly understand it, and I sign it, and thereby bind myself to fulfil the conditions indicated therein, and ought I not to fulfil them ? Having given my name, have I not bound myself, and is not my fulfilment of the covenant a matter of vital importance to my name, and character, and reputation ? Did not Christ give His name ? and oh, let me speak with reverence and with love, did He not sign the covenant, and thereby bind himself to pay the debt ? Did He not ask in marriage union to himself, the church of God, although He knew and foresaw that she would be a poor bankrupt ? Did He do this with His eyes open ? Did He take the church which He knew would be ruined in Adam, from His Father, with the intention of

saving her, cleansing her, paying her debts, setting her free, rectifying her, and making her all she should be, and was He not bound to do it all? Thus, ought He not to have suffered? By way of leading their minds into this mystery, He, beginning at Moses and all the prophets and going through the Scriptures, said, as it were, I find, and you will find that the uniform tenor of the whole is that Christ was bound to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory. Yes, these things were vital to our Lord. He did as He pleased about giving us the promise: that was a matter of His own sovereign will. But having given us the promise, He is bound to fulfil it. He did as He pleased about entering into the council of peace and the covenant of grace, but having accepted it and pledged His word, He is bound to fulfil every part thereof; therefore,

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

Fourthly, *this exposition was very suggestive.* Beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, and Scriptures. What does it suggest? Why not, only that Christ is everywhere in the Old Testament, but that Old Testament saints were just such believers as we of New Testament days are. In whom did Old Testament saints believe? In Christ. So do we. There are not two Christs, one for the old church, and another for the Gospel church. He is the corner-stone, which as you know, unites two walls together, and Jesus Christ is the corner stone that unites the Old Testament and the New. The prophets and the apostles, the Old Testament church, and the New Testament church, and thus there are not two bodies, but one. One faith, one Lord, one Spirit, one baptism, and one hope of your calling. The only difference between the two is this; they looked forward into the future by the light of the Old Testament, and saw Him coming; and we, in the light of the New Testament, look backwards, and see Him as He was when He was here on the earth.

“My faith looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
While hanging on the accursed tree;
And hopes her guilt was there.”

If old Abraham had sung those words, the alteration necessary for him would have related to time only, and would not have been great. My faith looks on to see the burden Thou shalt bear, when hanging on the accursed tree, my hopes all centre there. “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it; and was glad. The old glorified saints of God looked right through the Old Testament into the New Testament times and saw Him coming, and the people of God of this dispensation look through the New Testament into the future and see Him coming again. By faith they saw Him in relation to His first coming, and now we see Him by faith, as to His second coming. Oh, what a glorious gospel we have! What glorious lessons we have for ourselves and our Sunday-schools! My brethren and sisters, the gospel of the blessed God is glorious indeed. We have the type in the Old Testament, and the Antitype in the New. The type beautifully sets forth the Antitype, and the Antitype explains the type. In the Old Testament we have the shadow of the Lamb, and in the New the Lamb Himself, or the Substance that

cast that shadow. Our brethren who lived thousands of years ago saw Christ in His shadow, but we see Him in substance; but the same Christ is seen by both parts of the people of God. It comes, therefore, to this, my brother, with regard to the type and the substance; here is the Rock itself, not the shadow of one; and eternal life, and not mere water flowing from the rock in the wilderness. Here is the true manna, the bread of life, which our heavenly Father has given, and which the former manna was a type of. Here is the brazen serpent lifted up, Christ the Mediator between God and man, the only saving sufferer for sin, and round about the pole of the Gospel, thousands of poor sin-bitten sinners are looking, and they feel the healing influence that emanates from the exalted Christ of God. Oh glorious exposition! May the spirit of it animate our hearts and minds all the days of our life. I wanted to have directed your attention to some other matters, but my time is gone.

As to the second coming of our Lord, just observe *that it will fulfil the New Testament as His first coming fulfilled the Old*. I am afraid my friends, we are not sufficiently earnest in our meditations upon the second coming of Jesus. His first coming was a Divine reality, an expected reality, and a reality which fulfilled the hopes of all who looked for Him. He has been the first time in accordance with Old Testament declaration. Well now, in the New Testament it is said, He will come again, and He is coming again too. And where are the things in the New Testament, which in this respect concern Him? Everywhere, but especially in the Book of the Revelation. I am getting to think that the book of the Revelation is a kind of summary of the whole. The things concerning Christ in the Old Testament and the New are all summarized here. He is the Priest and the King, and the rainbow is round about His head, and there is a river of water of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. He is the Lamb who looks like one that has been slain, and here are the thousands of redeemed ones on Mount Zion. In the nineteenth chapter we read, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." and "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." Heaven and earth are passing away, and the word of the mighty angel is fulfilled that time shall be no more. Read the Revelation, it is full of things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ. And by and bye Christ will reach the last page of that book, and then the heavens will be drawn aside, the veil of the temple into which our Lord has entered, and our great High-priest will reappear and come the second time, without sin unto salvation; and as Aaron, having left the holiest of all, appeared before the congregation, lifted up his hands and blessed them, so our Lord will come forth and re-appear, and lift up His priestly hands, and finally bless all that are looking for His appearing. May you and I be looking for Him, and be found of Him in peace at last, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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"OUR ROCK."

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 27th FEBRUARY, 1887.

"For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Deut. xxxii. 31.

THESE words are among the last that Moses ever delivered from God to the children of Israel. The chapter opens very solemnly and gloriously. Moses said: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew." And what was his doctrine? "I will publish the name of the Lord. Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is a rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." His doctrine was the character and the works of God. He says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain;" that is, occasionally and irresistibly; for who can prevent the rain from falling? And as the rain cools, moistens and fertilises the earth, so the doctrines of divine truth and grace, when they fall upon the heart, cool, comfort and fertilise the soul, and cause it to be as a watered garden. The doctrines of grace cannot be dry, if they "drop as the rain and distil as the dew." The dryness is in the creature, and never in God. The emptiness is in man, and never in the word; and if the doctrines of divine grace are dry to you and to me, it is not owing to any deficiency in them; but the fault, if fault there be, is always to be found in the creature. And as a shower of rain nourishes the herbs and grass, so the doctrines of grace, and the grace they reveal, nourish and comfort the souls of the people of God. Let us, therefore, love these holy truths and hold them fast, and pray for showers of heavenly rain in connection with them; and let us especially contend for those great facts which are embodied in the early part of this chapter. God is a Rock, His work is perfect. His work in creation is perfect. In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them. Since that day He has never created a stone, nor a drop of water, nor a man, nor a fish, nor a fowl of the air, nor a beast of the field. He finished and completed as a Creator His work in six days: all was perfect and good, according to His own testimony. His work is perfect in providence as far as He has gone with it, for He leaves no imperfections behind Him. Sometimes workmen, even the best of them, do their work in a somewhat imperfect manner, although it is their intention to complete and perfect the work they have in hand; but on reviewing what they have done they are not always satisfied. Our God, however, is always satisfied with what He has done, and on a review of the operations of His hand in the past He is satisfied and pleased. His work is perfect, even when it is not completed, and He will finish the whole. His work of salvation is also perfect, although in some respects it is not yet completed; therefore it is said, "Who are kept by the

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power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Now this is one of the doctrines of grace which was well known to Moses, which He insisted upon and brought before the children of Israel just before he stepped out of this world into heaven, and concerning which he said, "it shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew." He refers to the name of God, to the perfection of His work, and to His character; that He is a God of truth and without iniquity, and that He is just and right. In this manner the good man commenced this song, introducing into it a number of very solemn and important matters until he reiterated the fact asserted in my text, for their rock,—that is, the rock of the enemies of the children of Israel,—“their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.”

Now having thus reached the text, let us try to go round and through the fact asserted, and make a few observations upon it.

The first thought that occurs to my mind is this,—That *God is a Rock*. “their rock is not like our Rock.” This of course is a figurative, but a glorious representation of the everlasting God; God is a Rock, and not sand. I think we have had some holy feeling in singing the words:—

“On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

Was the poet right? Is not the assertion somewhat too wide? Is all other ground sinking sand? Think of those two lines in connection with my text,—“Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges.”

To depend upon our works, our good behaviour, and good conduct, is to build upon sand. To trust in national privileges as the Jews trusted for salvation in their relationship to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is to rest on sinking sand. “Do you mean to say, that if we do the best we can, every day and every hour of our life, we shall not be rewarded for so doing?” We may obtain something for doing so here; but our works are not rock, and are worth nothing as the ground of salvation. In this respect they must fail; they are not perfect, and they are not sufficient to sustain a good, comfortable, or a happy hope as to the future and heaven. God and God only is the Rock. May it be yours and mine, therefore, to be found building upon Him; for He is the Rock of eternal ages. But let us look more closely at this subject.

In the first place, God is said to be a rock *on account of His firmness and fixedness*.

“Is He a rock? how firm He proves!
The Rock of ages never moves;
And the sweet streams that from Him flow
Attend us all the desert through.”

The Rock of ages. The patriarchal age is past and gone, but the rock of that age stands where it stood then, and to day our God is what He was then. What Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph and others found Him to be, that you and I have found the Rock of ages to be to-day. The aspect of the world has changed since the days of the patriarchs, all of whom have left time for eternity, and are now in heaven; and manners and customs have altered and changed: but our God remains, and is the same; for Our Rock is not like their rock, being eternally firm and fixed.

Then we may notice the ceremonial age, which was an important one; for very much was done during that lengthened period of time. Were there two rocks for the two ages? No, one only, even Jehovah. Was He changed or altered in any respect from what He was in the days of Abraham, and Enoch, and Abel? No, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Ages with their freezing cold, and ages with their burning heat, ages with their rivers of blood flowing in war, and ages with all their multiplied changes came against our Rock, surrounded Him and passed away, and left Him the same, behind them all. This is what He is, my brother; no change can ever take place in Him. He is the Rock of eternal ages, therefore our Rock is not like theirs. And He stood not only during the ceremonial age, but the prophets wrote of Him, rested on Him, entered into Him, leaned upon Him, raised His honours high, and set forth His greatness and His glory; He was to them, and to the church of God through the whole prophetic age, what He is to us and to all. Another age came, and it is gradually wasting and passing away, the age of Christianity, and we are living in the 19th century of this dispensation, and oh what miserable and wicked attempts are made to misrepresent, or to conceal and hide this great Rock, and the persons who are making those attempts are guilty traitors in the sight of God! But they can neither alter nor move Him. He is, and will and must be, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, notwithstanding all that enemies can do or say. What He was to Paul, what He was to Peter, James and John, the Apostles of the dear and blest Redeemer, that He was to the following generation, and to the next generation also; and as generations rose and lived, and laboured, and withered, and decayed and passed away, they all of them left behind them the Rock of eternal ages. When I first knew Him, or rather when my eyes were first opened some years ago, I embraced this Rock for shelter, and entered into Him; and what He then promised to be unto me and to do for me, all that He has been to me, and has done for me. Therefore I take an offering and come into His presence, and proclaim the greatness, and righteousness, and holiness of the character of my Lord. Yes, our dear Lord is a Rock on account of His firmness. He is firm as to His love. There is no love like His; it never changes; it cannot be greater, it cannot be less than it is; it could not have been earlier, and it will never end. Sin—it is not in the power of sin to damp or cool it; nor to divert or separate it from its objects. It is the love of God, and therefore not moving sinking sand, or soft clay, or changing earth; the love, the everlasting love of God is a Rock. I wish I could bring it vividly before you, and give you a due idea of its fixedness and firmness, amid the ever changing scenes that are taking place in time, in human affection and human character. Here is a fire, the steadiness of whose flame has never been interrupted. Here, to change the metaphor, is a mighty ocean, upon which there has never been a wave, it is placid, calm, serene, quiet, bottomless and shoreless. Winds and storms, and tempests have never raised a ripple upon the clear, and crystal and transparent sea of the everlasting love of God. Here is a divine fact vast as God Himself. He does not love a little, nor with an affection that can be measured. His love is Himself, for God is love; and if God can be disturbed, His love may be disturbed; if God is a Rock, and

can never move,—then, since God is love, His love is a rock, and vibration or oscillation can never happen there. Oh happy man and happy woman whose souls are lying quietly, calmly and believingly in the everlasting arms of the everlasting and ever-loving God. A Rock—not only as to His love, He is a Rock as to His purposes. “My purpose shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” “My brother,” one says, “I have been thinking of what took place the other day; although we made such an arrangement, it now appears that we must alter it, for it will not do to proceed in the direction in which it was determined to proceed.” “God is in one mind, and who shall turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth.” If I cannot bend circumstances to my mind, my mind must bend to circumstances. God will never bend His mind to circumstances and events; for His will and not circumstances give shape and form to the intentions of God. He will make everything yield to His own purpose, and never alter His thoughts or change His will. All shall be brought into conformity to the ideas of Him who is a Rock, and whose work is perfect. Then, my brother, what are His purposes concerning us? “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.” Did He purpose to save you? then He will do it. “Oh, but sir, I feel this, and that, and the other.” My dear hearers, do not just now introduce your poor feelings. They are not rock you know, but like feathers floating in the air; you may feel thus and thus, and be here and there and elsewhere, but do you not know that God purposed to save you? You know He did so, you know your desire to be saved is so intense that you would give a world to know that you are saved. Then you are saved, my friend; for that burning, prayerful desire is a part of salvation, and a token of life in your heart. This is not a universal feeling. All men and women in the world do not want to be saved. They push away God’s truth concerning salvation, and turn their backs upon it, and loathe it on various accounts. They regard it as a state of bondage to keep the Sabbath, or consider it as the Lord’s day, to read the Bible, to associate with God’s people, and to pray and sing psalms; they deride, or if there are some who do not thus treat the things of God, they treat them with absolute calm, and quiet indifference; but you are not indifferent; your soul is agitated, troubled and tried, therefore the beginning of salvation has taken place in your heart and your mind. Then I want you to go back to the great origin of this salvation, even the purpose of God; for as He purposed to save you He will do it, although you have such bitter feelings. He has saved you, although you are the subject of such sorrow. The Rock of ages never moves; and you are on the Rock. You rise and sink upon it, and your hearts are contracted and expanded thereon, but the Rock itself never expands nor contracts, and it never shakes. What shaking hearts and trembling minds are found thereon! “Our Rock is not like their rock, our enemies themselves being judges.” God is a Rock as to His love and also as to His purpose; and is He not a Rock as to His fulness? The rock in the wilderness was smitten by Moses, and who thought there was water in it that would flow from it after Moses had smitten it, and who thought it would continue to flow and follow the people forty years! They all drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ. Do you think

the water was there naturally or miraculously, even for Christ's sake? There would have been no smiting of the Rock, and no gushing of water from it had it not been for Christ who was behind it all. They all drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But the water that followed the children of Israel through the desert was material water, although it was no doubt better than the water obtained from places round about. It was rock water, brought out in a miraculous manner by God for His people. Here we have the Rock of ages smitten.

“Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee :
Let the water and the blood
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

The water gushed out and flowed among the dry places like a river. Well, our Christ is a Rock in regard to His fulness, and these streams will ever run with waters sweet and clear. He is inexhaustible, and His blessings cool, comfort, and refresh the soul. We have tasted this water and there is nothing on the earth like it. We would go down upon our hands and knees, and drink and drink again of the water of life that flows from this Divine and glorious Rock. There is no rock like our Rock with regard to His fulness. I must pass from these matters. He is a Rock, then, as to His firmness, His love, His purpose, and His fulness. I want you to distinguish between immovable and immutable. The Rock of ages never moves, but that which is always in the same place may not always be the same in character. Jesus is immovable and He is immutable also, and can never change Himself. The Rock is always there, and He is always Rock ; and the supplies that flow from Him are perpetual, and as I said just now their cooling nature is sweet and heavenly. I was never satisfied, and I never knew the meaning of the word satisfy, till I had a draught of water from this Rock, and was helped to say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” May it be ours to sit under the shadow of this Rock, and to drink of these living streams during the few remaining months or years we may tarry on the earth.

Now their rock and our Rock were objects of trust. By their rock understand their idols, their deities, and by our Rock understand the true and living God. Now both are objects of trust, but theirs is not like ours as an object of trust and confidence. I do not think that the heathen who repose their trust and confidence in their idols are unagitated and unmoved in trouble, or with regard to the future ; but when you and I are helped to cast ourselves unreservedly into the arms of God, and to rest upon the person, the promise, and the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we do not go too far when we sing—

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

Are we in the midst of the sea, and does it rise and rage? do its waves mount up to heaven and go down again into the depths? There is a rock even there, and you and I are upon it, and though the scene is terrible, and everything is in itself most alarming, our steady souls fear not upon the rock, upon which through favour Divine we are resting. Their rock

of trust and confidence is not like ours. They shake and tremble, and their hearts rise and sink again ; but the good man resting upon Jesus Christ for all he needs here and hereafter is unagitated, unmoved, and undisturbed. Do you say I am going very high ? I do so because I am standing on the Rock—if not experimentally so for myself, I am ministerially so for you. I am speaking of a high point of Christian experience ; the child of God is not moved, and cannot be moved, so long as the Holy Ghost holds his feet upon the immovable Rock of everlasting ages. He raised me out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my going ; and I could not help singing, for he hath put a new song into my mouth. Their rock and ours differ in this respect,—theirs is an object of sense and reason, but ours is an object of faith. They have no god but what they can see, and the gods they see they have made for themselves and placed in their temples. Their rock is not like ours. Our God is in the heavens, and we say of Him as Peter said, “whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Their rock is an object of reason. One says, “Do you believe what is stated in the Bible?” Yes, I do, sir. He replies, “I do not. It is contrary to reason.” I care not about that, I am not so deluded and empty as to base my firm belief upon purblind human reason. Our reason is not rock. “It is with me, sir.” Then your rock is not like mine, our enemies themselves being judges. If you say that what does not square with your reason, you will not believe, you are on the sand, and your building or hope will prove at last to be without a foundation. I shall not build upon reason, nor upon sense, nor upon a God I can see in a niche in a temple ; and yet I would as soon build my hope for heaven upon an idol as upon human reason. What are you building your hope upon ? The Rock of ages. Where is He ? Everywhere. Where is He as the Rock of ages ? In heaven, in the gospel, before me—and what is blessed, He is underneath my faith, my hope, my life and underneath my soul. “Why, you are a strange man, to build on what is apparently contrary to reason, and which you cannot explain.” I am glad I cannot fully explain the foundation of my hope; but my soul is thereon, and I hold fast the Gospel of God. Cleave to your idols, hang on your godless though religious systems, hug your Unitarianism and Socinianism to yourselves as tightly as you can, my faith shall go beyond all sense and reason, and beyond all creatures to the unseen though not unknown God, and all my hope shall rest there, whether I sink or swim, whether I am lost or saved. But I have no doubt with regard to the issue; for

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

Secondly *the appropriation*.. He is not only a Rock in Himself, He is *our* Rock. By the will of His love, and the love of His will, He is our Rock. He will be so because He loves us, and He loves us according to His sovereign will, for He is our Rock with all His heart. Now as He is our Rock—take the following facts. He is our Rock to hide in, not to talk about merely, though if we love His name and hide in Him, we

cannot help talking about Him; but He is not only our theme, He is our hiding place. More than that, He is our Rock, because we have *been hidden in Him*. What is the difference? To hide there is my act, but to be hidden there is the result of an act of another. I run to Him and try to hide myself there, but I am hidden there by God Himself. How is that? Behold, said God to Moses, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock; and I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by." God places His people in the cleft of the rock, so that it is not merely run and hide in Him. We do run, and are favoured to hide in Him; but that is not the whole of it. It is the work of God to take the running, timid, trembling soul, and put him into the cleft of the Rock, and then the hand of omnipotent power covers him for ever. "I will cover thee with My hand." And what then? Why, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Let it be so, O God. We can well bear the sight, and the sight of all that agitates the world if we are in the cleft of the Rock and covered with Thy hand. Well He is our Rock to hide in. He is our Rock to rest upon, to confide in, with a calmness and tranquillity of mind, and experience which nothing can disturb. If He speaks peace, war cannot break out; and if He says to the storm, Peace, be still, there is a great calm, for He is obeyed in a moment, the wind drops, the sea becomes smooth, and all is quiet and serene. O, if you are on and in Him, resting upon this Rock, you enjoy a solid peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away. Your Rock to hide in, and your Rock to rest upon. And what is better, if possible, He is our Rock to inhabit. We live in the Rock of ages. "Let the inhabitants of the Rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains." And then He is ours, as I said just now, as to all His fulness; thus in Him we have peace, safety, and plenty.

Thirdly. *God our Rock is incomparable*. Their rock is not as our Rock. An incomparable God is ours, an incomparable rock is the Rock of salvation. He is incomparable as to His nature, as to His covenant relationship, and in various other respects also. I have already spoken of Him as the foundation of our hope, the home of our souls, and the rest of our minds. Now what is in Him, and what comes from Him? Honey, water, oil, blood. This is quite in accordance with the type itself, for even in this chapter we read of honey from the Rock. Sometimes infidels have rather sneered at the idea of honey from the rock, quite forgetting that a rock was one of the most common bee-hives in the land of Canaan. They obtained their honey from the rocks. Bees were abundant, and they produced their honey in rocks, so that honey flowing from the rock was by no means an unfrequent sight. This is beautifully descriptive of our dear Lord. Oh what sweetness comes from Him! His word is sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb, and as the honey flowed down the rocks in Canaan, so life, and spiritual heavenly peace flow out of Jesus Christ, the Rock of ages, for you and me. Their rock is not like ours. Then again oil out of the rock. Rather recently, you know, this has been verified; for now we have rock oil in general use, though the oil of Canaan was probably that of the olive. The unction, or the oil of the Holy Spirit is perpetually flowing from the Holy One, Jesus Christ. Here is oil to anoint, and honey for sweetness, from our Rock.

There also is water to slake our thirst, and wash our persons and garments in. But here is blood from the rock. You have this thought in the words of Toplady

“Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

Cleanse me from its guilt by blood—justification, and from its power by the water—sanctification. Water and blood, a double remedy for a double disease, intended to effect a double cure. The blood and water come, and grace flows, and a cure is effected through faith in the dear Redeemer. Their rock is not as our Rock. We sit calmly therein and are safe, or stand upon its summit and look into eternity therefrom.

Take the following thought, and then I will close. Their rock is not like ours as to *guilt*. Man has a power within called conscience, and he cannot get rid of it, it is a moral power, and its operations are about moral matters. Sometimes conscience is burdened with guilt, torn, lacerated and bleeding, and there is no help, no remedy for a bleeding conscience apart from blood, and this flows from our smitten Rock. Conscience comes to Christ and relies upon Him. His blood is applied to the wounded soul, and peace, healing, and comfort are experienced. Our Rock is incomparable with regard to the conscience. Incomparable also in *trouble*. Where is the idol that can help its worshipper in trouble. In trouble the child of God may be calm, and then he says, “my Rock has left the words on record and we believe them with all our hearts.” That ‘all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.’”

“In trouble what a hiding-place
Have they who know the throne of grace!”

Thirdly, their rock is not like ours as to *prospect*. Ascend mountains as high as you will, the Himalayas for instance, which, if I mistake not, are the highest in the world, yet you cannot reach heaven nor see into the future. Let me stand, however, upon this Rock of ages, and I shall see the King in His beauty, and behold the land that is very far off, and the future will not seem to be an uncertainty. The rock of idolaters leaves them in doubt as to whether they have souls or not, and what will become of them. Their rock cannot reveal this to them; but standing upon the Rock of ages, we look forward into the future and sing—

“There is my home and portion fair!”

Their rock is not like ours. We die where we live, and we live where we hope to die, on the Rock and in the everlasting arms of God. May the Lord be pleased to command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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GOD GREATER THAN MAN.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 20th MARCH, 1887.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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DIVINE VISITS AND THEIR EFFECTS.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 24th APRIL, 1887.

"For the Lord of Hosts hath visited His flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle."—Zech. x. 3.

It is a fact both interesting and grand, that the blessings of our God are continuously falling from His hand into every part of the universe, and upon every creature therein; and hence it is said, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." And as it is in nature, so it is in grace. Spiritual life is almost infinitely superior to natural life, but both are the same in their great Author. Natural life and all its blessings come from God's hand; but spiritual life and blessings from His heart. The blessings of our God take many forms, and they come to us on different occasions, and for various purposes. God is bound to bless His people, having pledged Himself to do so by His promise and His oath; and therefore the church has said again and again, "Our God will bless us." The Lord is now granting His people spiritual blessings, one of which is a visit from Himself now and then on the earth. Hence my text says, "For the Lord of Hosts hath visited His flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle."

Let us tarry here. I shall go round this interesting portion of the Word, and endeavour to dip into it here and there if possible. "The Lord of hosts hath visited His flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle." I shall not burden your mind or memory with a multitude of divisions and sub-divisions. The text, easily and naturally divides itself into two branches namely, *Divine visits*, and *the effect which they produce*. Divine visits: "The Lord hath visited His people, His flock the house of Judah." The effect produced thereby: it makes them as His goodly horse in the battle.

Now, in the first place, (and here I shall be experimental,) let us look at the first branch of the subject, viz., *the fact that the Lord visits His flock*. Here there are three things, and I will name them at once; *the majesty of the Visitor*, "the Lord of hosts;" *the nature of His visit*; "He hath visited His people;" *the limit mentioned here as to His visits*, "He hath visited His flock the house of Judah." I will not say that we shall exhaust the text if we go over this ground; but I think it will appear that these three points cover most of the surface of it. Let us look at *the majesty of the Visitor*. "The Lord of hosts hath visited His flock." I should like if I had time and ability to take twenty minutes or half-an-hour upon this peculiar and wonderful character of our God, "the

Lord of hosts." I do not know a sweeter title, nor anything more grand or glorious, in connection with our great and gracious covenant God, than the fact that He is Lord of all. Since He is Lord of all, He is Lord of hosts; and there is not a host of beings or of things anywhere in existence but what is presided over and managed by our great Lord. There are the hosts of angels, and He presides over them all, being Lord of all. There are hosts of glorified ones in heaven; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Enoch and Methuselah, Noah and a host of others. Heaven, perhaps, is not half-full. This, however, I do not know; but it is a prepared place for a prepared people, and the people of God, the flock of Jesus Christ, are wending their way towards heaven; and

"Ten thousand to their endless home
This solemn moment fly;
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die."

Yes, there is a host of glorified ones in heaven, and our Jesus is Lord of them all; He presides over all their fulness, all their actions, all their joys, all their emotions, and all their pleasures. "He is Lord of all." They are not there as they were when here. Here they had two natures,—there they have only one. Here they lived a life of conflict,—there a life of victory, triumph and joy. While they were here, He was their Ruler; and now they are there, He is their great and glorious and loving Lord.

There are hosts of devils; we know not whether they are as numerous as God's angels. Some writers of considerable repute, and said to be famous for deep thinking, have an idea that as many, or almost as many angels fell as remained in heaven. That is speculative, and I am getting almost past that; but I just mention it. Some of my young friends might like to think the subject over. I do not know how many fell, but the powers of darkness are very numerous, and the devil and his angels are a host; but Satan himself is not the Lord of them all, or at least, he is not their first and supreme Lord, for our great and glorious Saviour is Lord of all the hosts of fallen spirits, and He will preside over them for ever and ever in spite of all their powers. What hosts of human creatures there are in this world! What vast hosts there are in the visible heavens—the sun, moon, and stars—"He bringeth out their host by number; for that He is great in power: not one of them faileth." If those mighty and glorious stars are many of them suns, as we are told, and I do not much mind whether it be so or not; but if many of them are suns and centres of other systems, how marvellous is the fact that He who died on the tree of Calvary, and was in the garden of Gethsemane is Lord of all! Not one of them could exist a minute without Him. All would fall into disorder and confusion, were it not for His almighty power; for all the hosts of stars, of angels, of men, and devils, together with all the circumstances and events of time, are managed by His hand and controlled by His will. One great will presides over all; one great mind is Lord of all, and therefore

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

I say, I should like to dwell upon this theme; but we cannot take up every point, not even every point in our text this evening. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord of hosts. If God is our God, let us sing and triumph, and rejoice in the fact that He is Lord of all. If there were one creature He could not reach He would not be happy; and we should have to say of the world, for ought I know, that it was not safe. If there were only one combination of events and circumstances that He did not manage and control, we should have a measure of doubt, anxiety, and fear. There is, however, no circumstance, no event, no combination of circumstances and events, but what are managed and controlled by the dear and precious Saviour whose character is portrayed in my text. "The Lord of hosts hath visited His people, the house of Judah."

But let us turn our attention to another aspect of the subject. Is He Lord of hosts, and does *He visit us*? Then take this thought, (I dare say it has occurred to your minds already,) that our God is infinitely condescending to visit poor creatures like you and me. You cannot dwell too frequently, or think too deeply or prayerfully, upon the greatness of Divine condescension. Try to get that idea into your minds, my dear hearers: "He humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth;" so the Word informs us. "*He humbleth Himself.*" He is so high, so great, so majestic, and His grandeur and splendour are so dazzling, and His self-sufficiency and power are so marvellous that He necessarily sits upon the highest seat, and is exalted above all blessing and praise; and when He notices anything out of Himself He must necessarily stoop, humble Himself, or bow down. To notice anything out of Himself is an act of condescension on the part of God. He cannot make His own equal, and a being equal to Him can never come into existence. He views Himself with pleasure and delight, loves Himself with all His powers, and that necessarily and righteously so. He views the operations of His hand with satisfaction; but when He looks at other things, he sees them down there—not on a level with Himself, and he humbles himself and stoops to behold what is said and done in heaven. Well, if He stoops to behold what is done in heaven, how marvellously condescending must He be to visit poor creatures like you and the preacher. "The Lord hath visited His flock, the house of Judah." I have sometimes heard the word condescension applied to the creature, but I have not always cared much for it. Sometimes we are informed that Her Majesty takes a drive, and now and then calls at the house of some comparatively poor person, and this is represented as an act of condescension. So it is, and it makes and leaves a deep impression upon the hearts of the persons visited. If it is condescension on the part of earthly royalty to enter a cottage, and to pay a visit to a cottager, oh what shall we say concerning the visits of the great Monarch of the Universe! for He condescends to enter cottages, aye, to enter some exceedingly strange places, and to bless poor sinners by remaining with them five or ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or half-a-day. I am not quite sure, and will not speak positively but very reverentially, and before

God,—I am not quite sure that He has not been with me for a week,—not of late ; but when I first knew Him, I thought my joys would never end and my pleasures would never cease. I thought I should leap and sing all the way to heaven. The presence of God was there, and that for a considerable time. Oh, how condescending on the part of the great Majesty of Heaven to pay such poor creatures, such sinful creatures as you and me a visit now and then ! “The Lord hath visited His flock.” How condescending and how kind ! But notice that although He is so great, and His majesty and splendour are infinite, He never visits as a stranger. We never have to ask Him who He is, nor what is His name. We know Him as soon as He comes, He brings such blessings with Him, and leaves such impressions behind Him, that we are always quite satisfied as to the character of the Visitor. A stranger calls, and one says, “Some one wants you, sir.” Who is it ? “I don’t know, he is a stranger.” We go and meet the stranger, and assure him that we have no knowledge of him. This never occurs when an interview between God and His dear people takes place. God is not a stranger. Are you familiar with Him ? I wish I were more so. People have told me that I ought not to speak in so familiar a manner about the God of heaven. O my dear friends, if the Lord of hosts has been pleased to become my God and Father, I am quite sure that I may speak to Him as my God, and I am also sure that I may with filial confidence and comfort appear in His presence. I will speak in a familiar manner of the Lord of hosts ; for although He is so far off, and so great as to His essential majesty and glory, no being is so near to me, perhaps one might say, so dear, as is the Lord of life and glory. And if the Lord of hosts is my Father in one respect, or my Elder Brother in another, I will draw near, if I am permitted and helped, as a child to my Father’s throne, and converse with Him, draw near as a brother to my great Elder Brother, the High Priest of my profession, to commit my cause into His hands ; for though He is great, He is infinitely good and gracious, and not a stranger to His people. And does He not find them sometimes in strange places ? He visits His people where they can hardly visit one another. I remember many years ago, perhaps as many as thirty—a generation has almost passed away since that time—I was invited and pressed to visit an old lady, who was a good woman, an excellent saint, and a rich believer, but I was told that I must expect to see a good deal in the surrounding circumstances which would be very unpleasant and disagreeable. You are ready to say, How could a good woman live in such a condition ? She was an invalid, and could only move as she was helped by others. Unhappily, those she was surrounded by did not care for her religion, and I do not think they cared much for her. She held fellowship and communion with God, however ; and although when I went I hardly liked to sit down in the room, yet it was a treat to pass a quarter of an hour with her. The Lord of hosts used to visit her, and the Majesty of Heaven used to enter that room and visit her, which made her like His goodly horse in the battle. She was no ordinary believer. The Lord in visiting His people goes where they can hardly go. Sanitary precautions

and laws were not, thirty years ago, what they are now. The dirty little street which stood in Shoreditch, like a great many others, has been taken down, and new buildings of a superior character erected in their place. I mention this to show that all places are alike to the Lord of hosts, though they are not so to you and me. It is pleasant, if we visit the sick, especially God's dear people, to find them amid comparatively pleasant surroundings, though poor; but the Lord will visit His people whether they be in the lions' den, or in the fish's belly; whether they be shut up in prison, as Paul and Silas, or banished to the ends of the earth. The Lord will visit His people, and make them like His goodly horse in the battle.

Lest we tarry too long in a place, let us dismiss that point, and look secondly, at *the nature of the visit*. "He hath visited His flock." Now His visits are always to be taken as evidences—but of what? As evidences of friendship. Visits paid by man to man are not always evidences of friendship. If the Lord however is pleased to visit a poor soul in a gracious and merciful way, His visit may always be taken as proof of His love and friendship. It is the visit of a Friend, not of a stranger, nor of an uninterested being. God is interested in you, and you are interested in Him. The interest is mutual, for He is yours, and you are His. We cannot get up to His high throne, nor appear before Him when we please, therefore we should be comparative strangers to Him, if He did not give us a revelation, a manifestation now and then, or pay us a visit occasionally. His visits transform our souls, and reduce the confusion that prevails within to order and peace in a moment. Our passions are calmed, our murmurings cease, our lusts subside, our sins hang their heads, and I had almost said disappear; for

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

Has He ever paid you a visit? Then He is your friend, and like Abraham, you are the "friend of God." But that is not all. His visits are occasional, and that idea is almost inseparable from a visit. He does not dwell with us in the sense in which He dwells in heaven. He never leaves His people providentially or powerfully, or as to His saving presence—but they are not always sensible of His presence: He walks beside them, and takes care of them, without speaking. He may not speak for a day or two, or three; and we then say, Speak Lord, for Thy servants wait to hear; be not silent unto me, lest if Thou be silent to me, I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Well, whether He speaks or not, He walks with His people; and hence "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." His visits, however, are most sweet and illuminating, but they are only occasional. In heaven God will not visit us, nor shall we visit Him; for heaven is our home. He is with us now spiritually: He will then be with us personally, and we shall be personally with Him. Oh! His presence makes heaven, and one cannot be otherwise than heavenly, whilst God is near. If the sun has risen, darkness cannot prevail. It

cannot be night as well as day; and if God visits His people, the soul must necessarily be cheerful, possess pleasure, and be filled with a peace such as the world can neither give nor take away. Well, His presence, His visits are occasional; He comes now and then, and we wish they were more frequent, or that they lasted longer. Let us bless His name for the privilege of any interviews with the Lord of hosts. "The Lord hath visited His flock." The Lord's visits are not only occasional, they are sometimes unexpected. He comes suddenly, when we are not looking for Him. Has He never visited you in the street? I think many a saint of God, as well as good John Newton in the days of old, has been suddenly blest in noisy Cheapside, or in other crowded parts of London. When the multitude seemed to be thinking of nothing but the world, and business, and all seemed to be disorder and confusion, then one individual in the middle of the pavement has been wending his way leaning upon the arm of his beloved Lord, thinking nothing of the crowd, nor the hum and noise prevailing, nor the glitter and brilliancy roundabout. Oh! Christ was with him; the light of His countenance upon His heart. The Lord was visiting Him. Our God is an almighty Visitor: He can turn night into day, disorder into order, and confusion into serenity, and bring us into a state of heavenly solitude, in the midst of a multitude; for one may find himself, as it were, alone with God, whilst he is surrounded by thousands of persons. Oh the influence of these visits upon the mind is truly wonderful. I know it is so; it has been so sometimes with me in this pulpit, and many times in the old one which was removed a few years ago. A verse of a hymn, a portion of the Word, or a thought suddenly sprung up in the mind. "That was accidental, sir." No. "You forced your mind?" No, I did not; I forced nothing. But all at once the thought, the feeling sprang up, and my mind was cast all at once into a peculiar frame, so that instead of finding myself in darkness, I was surrounded by light; instead of being fettered and chained, I was at liberty, walking in such freedom as nothing but the visits of the Lord can lead one into. "The Lord hath visited His flock, the house of Judah." His visits are occasional; they are sometimes sudden and unexpected, and they are all of them foretastes of the joys of heaven. I love the words of the poet—

"Where He has spoke a promise once,
The eternal grace is sure."

And again,

"Did Jesus once upon me shine,
Then Jesus is for ever mine."

Ah! but we change. Yes; but He never changes. If He has visited you once, and assured you that you are His, you will be His for ever; or Christ will have to unsay what He has said, or alter the thing gone out of His mouth. Surely it will never be said of Christ, that He once told such a person that He had saved him, and that He loved him, but that now His love had ceased, and though He was once saved, the whole affair was reversed. No, no; all is settled, and is sure, if we have received a visit from the Lord. Look back; remember the way in which the Lord

has led you. Have you received a visit from Him? If so, heaven is yours, and you know in some small degree what its joys and pleasures are.

I will leave you to meditate upon *the limit*.—"The Lord hath visited His flock, the house of Judah."

Secondly, *the effects of these visits*. "And hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle." This visit causes this effect. There is a considerable difference between a sheep and a war horse. Yes; the presence of the Lord with His people has a wonderful influence upon them. But let us try to gather up the points: "As His goodly horse in the battle" or a war horse. A war horse is *royal property*, and does not belong to any private individual. Horses in the army belong to the monarch; at least, the matter is thus expressed, Her Majesty's army, or Her Majesty's cavalry. Persons thus visited and blest by the God of heaven, are thereby declared to be His royal servants, and the property of Jehovah Himself, the Lord of hosts. He bought them everyone: He has marked them everyone—He claims them everyone—He employs them everyone—everyone is set apart not for ordinary purposes, or to be as draught horses, employed in common work, but for military purposes; to enter the field, and to fight the battles of the Lord; and by way of preparing them for their life-long conflict; He visits them—He strengthens them, and as it were, transforms them, so that the minister says,—

"Hast Thou a lamb in all Thy flock,
I would disdain to feed?
Hast Thou a foe before whose face,
I fear Thy cause to plead?"

The child of God, blest with a visit from the Lord, regards himself as His property, and as having received an infinite honour from heaven, and he is not afraid of the field of battle, nor ashamed to enter it, and fight in connection with the cause of his God as a royal servant.

Secondly, "His goodly horse in battle" *is trained in a special manner*. The goodly war horse is trained for military work and service. "All Thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the strength and peace of Thy children." "He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms." The Lord's people are in a militant condition here, and they have a military training for it, and in due time they are led into the battle, trained by God's grace, and Spirit, and Word, to fight all the days of their life. "The Lord hath visited His flock, and has made them like His goodly horse in the battle."

Thirdly, *they are obedient*. This royal and divine war horse being trained by God for holy service, becomes obedient to the Lord of hosts. Love follows love, and it will do so unless some external force be employed to prevent it. But here the love of God shed abroad in the heart will evermore bind the mind to follow its loving God. Now if the Lord has visited me; if He has saved me with an everlasting salvation, and assured me of the fact, I say with Saul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Where wilt Thou have me to go? I surrender my will to Him—He has

conquered and overcome me, and become my Lord and Saviour. I surrender myself to Him, and follow Him whithersoever He goes. And then follows, *swiftness*; for He "makes them like His goodly horse in the battle," which is not lame, nor stiff, nor past work, but in good order: I have compared thee to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot: perhaps in the war chariot. At all events love Divine sweetly constrains to obey swiftly.

"'Tis love that makes our cheerful feet,
In swift obedience move."

"Matthew," said the Lord, "Follow Me!" And he rose up, left his desk, his books, and the money, and followed Him. Saul was called by grace, and visited by the Lord, and like a goodly war horse, he ran swiftly almost all over the world, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. Three thousand were pricked in the heart on the day of Pentecost, and they made haste, and very quickly obeyed, and were all baptized in one day.

Fifthly and lastly, *courageous and bold*, "like His goodly horse in the battle." Evil report. Paul says, "I have gone through it." When I heard it, I did not stop. The evil reported of me was great, cutting, and severe; but I did not stop, and they did not retract it. It continued. I met it—went into it, and went through it—through evil report and good report. Which is the more dangerous of the two? I think a good report is more likely to engage our attention, and induce us to hesitate and stop; for it is so agreeable. A good report is perhaps the more dangerous of the two, but like a "goodly horse in the battle," He went through both. Both were enemies, or might become so; but Paul went on his way through all. That was like him, and also like all whom the Lord has graciously blessed and visited.

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes."

The Lord visits His people, and that makes them strong, bold, and courageous. May the Lord be pleased to visit you and me more frequently, if consistent with His sovereign and gracious will, and He shall have eternal praise, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE RAINBOW ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 19th JUNE, 1887.

"And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."—Rev. iv. 3.

THE book out of which I have taken my text is filled with Divine mysteries, which I do not profess to be able to explain. I have invariably felt that time is the best interpreter of the unfulfilled word of God. Our God will verify His own word and fulfil every one of His predictions, just as He will fulfil all His promises, in due time. We cannot look into the future; but we know all future events and circumstances are under the management and control of infinite wisdom.

The two chapters now before us, viz., the fourth and fifth, contain certain facts which may in some measure be understood. I take it that notwithstanding the figurative character of my text, it symbolizes and expresses very beautifully and sweetly a great and precious gospel truth.

Let me first say, that I take it that the Being that John saw sitting upon the throne here, was not the Lord Jesus Christ, nor the Holy Spirit, but God the Father; for in the following chapter we are told that there was in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written, and that eventually the Lamb went to Him and took the book out of His right hand, and that He proceeded to open the seals, and to make known its concealed contents, which were the eternal purposes and decrees of God.

Let us limit our attention for a few minutes to the words we have read, and take the text as it stands before us. We have *the throne*, and *the bow*, and *its position*, and *its appearance*; and if we have time we may close with *one or two remarks* upon the subject.

In the first place, let me look for a few minutes at *the throne* indicated in our text. A door was opened in heaven, and a throne was set there, and one sat on the throne. I love the idea of a Divine throne, and I desire to carry that idea with me everywhere. I cannot afford as a poor, trembling, and exposed creature, to lose sight of the fact that my God is on the throne. I was observing that such is our state and condition here, that we cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that our God reigns. He holds the reins Himself, and has held them for 6000 years or thereabouts; and if the world should stand 6000 years longer, He will be found in the same position, reigning over all. Our God is interested in the preservation of the world; and especially so, in the preservation of His church on the earth. He is more deeply interested than I can describe to you, in every event that occurs, and in every circumstance that

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attends His people and His creatures generally. God's eye is everywhere; and so is His power, which is omnipotent; and we have to do with this great and glorious Being, who is our covenant God, seated upon His own throne, managing the affairs of the universe, and accomplishing the deep-laid purposes of His will.

Observe, in the first place, that *God's reign is absolutely necessary*. Imagine that our God suspended or withheld Divine influences from the world for an hour, or that He withheld the Holy Spirit and the power of His grace from His church on the earth for an hour! If God absented Himself from His church, would not hell rush into it; and if He absented Himself from the world, or withdrew His influence and suspended His government of it, would not disorder, confusion, uproar, death and destruction everywhere prevail. If our God simply raises His hand, or gives an enemy a little more rein than usual, what terribly destructive work goes on and prevails! I cannot describe the nature, properties, and power of sin. It has disorganized and deranged everything, and infused the most diabolical spirit into the human heart; and if God did not restrain its power and operations, the world would become an aceldama. As it is, there is much confusion and destruction continually raging; but God keeps His eye upon every movement, and never loses sight of one fiend. "Fiend, sir." Yes, fiends; call them evil spirits if you will, God never ceases to watch the enemy, nor the motions of enmity in the hearts of creatures, and

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

His moral government is absolutely necessary. God is a moral Governor, and will never cease to be so; and He is perfect in this respect. Looking at His moral government in connection with the mediation of your dear Lord, we have a very vivid representation of its immutability, spirituality, and infinite depth; and also of the fact, that God as the Divine Lawgiver cannot change. We live in a very evil day, as to the atonement of Christ. It is ignored, cast down, trampled upon; and some professors are so profoundly wicked, that they can and do sneer at the idea and fact of an atonement for sin by the shedding of the blood of Immanuel. Our God is a righteous Ruler, and will uphold and honour His moral glory, in spite of all the powers of darkness; therefore He would not and could not take sinners to heaven apart from the mediation of His Son. If you desire to see the moral grandeur of God, and the extent and power of His law, go to Gethsemane and to Calvary, and read the fact that the justice of God is inflexible and unchangeable in a suffering Christ, in the garden and on the cross. He that sweat great drops of blood was God incarnate; and what fell upon Him then, you and I shall never fully know, for it can never be measured. It was the wrath of God, and the punishment due to sin inflicted by His insulted justice. The bitter cup that was pressed to His lips was mixed by God, who was angry with sin, but who loved the sinner, and who because He could not otherwise consistently with Himself, save sinners, sent His Son and smote Him. Jesus fell beneath the weight of our guilt, and emptied the cup of wrath Divine. Yes, the moral government of our God is a fact.

Look at God's government in providence, and rejoice in the fact that He reigns everywhere; therefore

"My life's minutest circumstance
Is subject to His eye."

Five sparrows are so insignificant that they are sold for two farthings, yet one of them cannot fall to the ground without our heavenly Father. "Some people," it was said the other day sneeringly, "believe that everything is arranged by God, and falls somewhere under the appointments of Jehovah." I am one of the men who believe in this; our God presides over the whole system of providence, over all risings and fallings, over all that is straight, and all that is crooked; over all that is pleasant, and all that is painful; over all that lasts a few weeks or months, and all that suddenly occurs and rapidly passes away. All is managed and controlled by Him who sits upon the throne, which was and is surrounded by the rainbow. A throne was set in heaven, and one sat upon the throne. Watch the operations of providence, and do not forget that the hand of God is always connected with them all. Chance and fortune have no existence anywhere in Divine providence. Our God's great mind superintends the whole, and His skilfully working hand manages and overrules all from first to last. All would otherwise be disorder and confusion. I repeat what I have often said, there would be no orderly or blessed connection between one day and another, and no consecutive and important connection between one event and another, if God Himself did not preside over the whole system. The great wheel of Divine providence has a ring so high that it is dreadful, and it is full of eyes, for there is no ignorance whatever connected with this work of God, who turns and guides the whole. He never allows another hand to hold the helm, or to direct a single motion. Our God is supreme, and will be everywhere and do what He pleases, and being everywhere and doing what He pleases, He is accomplishing the purposes of His will, and is saving sinners like you and me. God's providential reign is necessary.

But what shall we say about His spiritual reign? What is the character of the throne He sits upon? It is a *throne*, denoting the fact that His authority is supreme, and that He will never surrender it to another; but it is a throne of grace, as well as a throne of government. Let us come boldly to it, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. If God in one respect, sits on that throne, and manages the affairs of all worlds, in another respect, there flows perpetually from His heart a river of water of life which indicates the riches of His saving grace. Bless our God, His throne is approachable. John was not far from it, the twenty-four elders and the four beasts were near to it. By the four-and-twenty elders I understand the heads or representatives of the whole church of God under the Old Testament and the New. They are near the throne, for God is approachable, and the rainbow of the covenant is perpetually visible. They are worshippers, hence they have harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. Sometimes they pour out their hearts in prayer before God, for their souls swell and contract and they are burdened and distressed;

and sometimes they are greatly favoured, and having harps they sing the worthy praises of God and the Lamb. Thus our life is made up of prayer and praise, sorrow and joy, pain and pleasure, nights and days. Let us pray in the night, and not be cast down; and we will sing in the day when the Sun of Righteousness shines. Let us bless our God for any measure of joy, and when it is His pleasure to bring events to pass so as to fill us with sorrow and pain, may it be ours to look at the covenant bow, and accept His will as Divinely good. A throne is set in heaven, for God's reign is necessary. His reign is also internal and experimental for God dwells in the heart. It is our mercy, my brethren, that He reigns *over* every heart, if He does not reign *in* everyone in an experimental and spiritual manner. There is, therefore, no heart in this world that can do what it would. The heart of the wicked, the heart of Popery, the heart of Mahommedanism, and the hearts of Satan and his angels, are all under the reign of our God, who checks and restrains them as He pleases; but He reigns in a special, saving, and spiritual manner in the hearts of His dear people. And is it not sweet, precious and fertilising to feel the reign of God's grace? Time then glides away very agreeably, and the troubles of life are not then magnified, but they are minified, and become less and less, and we become patient and sing—

“I can do all things, or can bear
All sufferings, if my Lord be there.”

Do not talk about a religion that has little or nothing to do with the heart; do not talk about grace that does not reign in the soul, subduing sin, and that does not sometimes produce a holy state of things within. We are not quite strangers to heaven, nor to the joys of that celestial world. A drop of honey reaches us now and then, or a drop of holy unction falls occasionally upon one's heart. Then all is composed and tranquil, for all becomes calm and serene when God by His grace is felt to reign over all that we are the subjects of. The internal reign of God is necessary.

Notice in the next place, *that God's reign is universal*. “His dominion ruleth over all.” I do not trouble myself now concerning the stars and heavenly bodies as to whether they are worlds or not. I do not know what they are; in the Bible they are called stars, and in one or two places we read of Him that made the worlds: “By whom also He made the worlds.” Well, whether they be worlds or not, they are ruled by God, all being His creatures. And if, as we are told, there are thousands upon thousands of them, then with all my heart, I believe they all belong to God: “He bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by their names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth.” And the reign of God in distant worlds, is as necessary there as here. But we have now to do more especially with three worlds, with earth, hell and heaven. There is a world worse than this, which is hell, and we trust we have been saved for ever from that. There is a better world than this, even heaven, a place prepared for saints, the residence of our dear Lord, and the inheritance of the saints, and we have to do with that world and also with God the King thereof.

We have, however, to do at present with this world, and very much to do with it too. It is not all bad here, and it is not all good. There is here a large measure of that which is evil and hellish ; but there is also, thank God, a measure of that which is heavenly. Sin rages here, and grace prevails here and there. It is a middle world between the other two, managed and controlled by God. It is connected with heaven by Jacob's antitypical ladder ; and it is connected with hell also, alas ! by a broken law and sin. If we are saved, our faces have been turned towards Zion, and we are going to that blessed place. But our Lord reigns over all the nations of the world, which mystery I cannot explain. What darkness, superstition, cruelty, and diabolical evil prevail in many of the nations of the earth ! but we will leave this mystery for the present where it is. There is a throne, and One sits upon it ; and all the nations of the earth are beneath His eye, and under His dominion. God reigns over worlds and nations, over cities and over villages ; and I have known and still know some villages in our favoured land which have been graciously blessed for years. You may go into some provincial towns and not find the gospel of God's free grace, but there are villages here, in which stand sanctuaries, and where the pure gospel of the grace of God is sweetly preached. But

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

Well, His throne is approachable, and His reign is universal.

God's reign is *gracious and everlasting*. His throne will never be empty. Our good Queen has been seated on her throne for fifty years ; but it must be left, for earthly monarchs are mortal, notwithstanding their grandeur, majesty, and glory ; and the throne of England will be empty some day, so far as its present occupant is concerned. "And what are your feelings about it ?" Why, God save the Queen ! I can and do go as far as that, for I am loyal. Well, though the throne of England be empty, yet your royal Father will never die, nor be unseated, nor vacate His high seat of Divine and heavenly honour. "His dominion ruleth over all," and His kingdom shall stand for ever and ever. The purposes and decrees of God are both barriers and outlets. They are barriers, for He says concerning every enemy and every hostile power, Thus far mayest thou come, and no further ; and here shall thy rage and power be stayed. Popery would rule the country, and the world, if it might and could ; but there is a point beyond which its power cannot go. Whatever Mahomedanism may now be, there was a time, many centuries ago, when the false prophet would have prevailed over all the nations of the earth, if he might and could ; but there was a point beyond which he could not go. And there are persons and systems in existence now which would swamp, drown and annihilate the great principles of Divine and eternal truth if they could ; but there is a point beyond which they cannot go. Reading recently a paper concerning the Jubilee, the writer rejoiced in a good many things, regarding the fact that many great and important changes had taken place during the last fifty years ; and one thing in which he rejoiced was the removal of Calvinism from the Church

of England, and in a great measure from the professing church altogether. He was so strangely out of order (not to use a harsher word,) that he said, that by the departure of Calvinism, life has been made sweeter, and the sting of death has been taken away. Only think, that the removal of Calvinism destroys the sting of death! That spirit, my friend, would cover the world, and drown the professing church if it might and could; but the God of truth is on His throne, and nothing can go beyond the barriers of which I am speaking. But if Divine decrees are barriers on the one hand, they are outlets on the other. The waves of opposition dash against the decrees of God, but they go no further. Through these decrees on the other hand, there flows the river of peace and grace, and truth and love, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. I do not wonder at John being in an ecstasy when he saw this. "And I was in the spirit, and heard a voice saying, Come hither, and I will shew thee things which must be done hereafter." That is all I will say on this point. I am afraid I have taken too much time on this branch of our subject this morning.

In the second place, a word on *the bow*. "And there was a rainbow round about the throne." Not a military bow, not a weapon of war, not a bow with an arrow in it, and arrows did not appear lying upon the throne of Him that sat in the midst of the bow; but a rainbow, a sign of peace, a symbol of reconciliation, the covenant of grace was round about the throne. God said to Noah, "Behold, I do set My bow in the cloud." It is God's bow. The natural rainbow is His, and the mystical or spiritual rainbow of the covenant is also His. Just as the creature has not, and never had, the slightest hand in producing the natural rainbow, so neither has the creature the slightest hand in producing, arranging, or securing to himself the blessings of the covenant of grace. The natural rainbow is God's creature, both beautiful and grand, and it indicates the greater grandeur of its Creator. Well, as that is God's own work, and no hands but His made it, so this is God's eternal covenant with His well-beloved Son, concerning the thousands and thousands that shall for ever be before His throne. Not to go into the matter naturally, how is this rainbow formed? We know that the natural rainbow is composed of various colours marvellously blended, and united very beautifully to one another. You cannot tell where one colour ends and another begins. Each colour, however, is visible, and the whole seven are essential to the perfection of the bow. How is the bow of the covenant formed? With all the promises of God, and His great oath running through them all. All the blessings of the covenant, and the grace of all blended in a Divinely beautiful and glorious manner, with all the attributes of God, omnipotence, love, wisdom, grace, mercy, peace, truth, and eternity. All the perfections of God are blended wonderfully and gloriously in the covenant of His grace, by virtue of what our great Head is and has done. As there can be no natural rainbow without the sun and rain, or a watery cloud; so neither can there be any spiritual rainbow without the presence and the glory of the great Sun of Righteousness in heaven. Our dear Lord has done His work, and what work was that? The deluge in Noah's time drowned the world, and the deluge of divine wrath fell

on Christ, and He bore it all, and now God says, sitting on the throne, "For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with Thee nor rebuke Thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from Thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on Thee." Hence, there is the bow: the deluge having fallen upon Jesus, and passed away for ever, God sitting on the throne says, Now I do set my bow here, Christ the glorious Sun is risen, the once suffering Son of God is ascended to heaven there to, shine for ever. And this forms the bow of the everlasting covenant, by which God resolves to do you good for ever. There was a rainbow round about the throne: this bow can never be broken.

I like the idea of Dr. Goodwin, for I am a lover of Puritans, notwithstanding all that is said against Calvinism. Goodwin, Owen, and such great and good men I dearly love. Dr. Goodwin says, "You are not to suppose that the bow appeared like a half-moon or semi-circle, like the ordinary rainbow, but that it surrounded and encircled the throne, for it was *round about* it, in sight unto an emerald." Why, that is such a rainbow as never was seen before! It is so, and the covenant of grace is unique; indeed, there is nothing like it, the rainbow of the covenant round about the throne. Will there ever be a storm there? No, God has sworn that he will not be wroth with us, nor rebuke us. No, the rainbow will never be removed, a breakage will never occur in it, and an opening will never happen; it is fixed round about the throne, and the covenant of grace will stand for ever.

Thirdly, *its position* round about the throne. Visible, fixed in its position, and never varying. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My mouth." It was visible to all alike. The natural rainbow is so; it is not formed for private individuals, or to be seen privately merely, it is for the world to look at, and millions may and can see it, when it appears in the heavens; and all the church of God are favoured with a sight of this bow. Brother and sister, when you go to the throne to pray, look at the bow, it is always there, it is your privilege that God is a covenant God to you. Do not forget the bow, it is round about the throne, visible to all. Round about, so that in whatever way God comes to you, He comes as your covenant God, whatever He sends to you comes through the covenant bow and is a covenant gift, whether it be divine chastisement, divine direction, or a measure of divine honey. And if you go to God in prayer you are heard, because you are loved with covenant love, and your prayers ascend to heaven and are answered in accordance with the covenant arrangements and promises of God. Round about. On the right hand the bow appears, on the left it is seen, before and behind it is the same; and as to past, present, and future, the bow or covenant of grace surrounds all.

The *appearance of the bow*. "In sight like unto an emerald." Green is the prevailing colour of the natural rainbow, and the emerald is a green precious stone. How shall we spiritualize this? I do not care much for spiritualizing; God's covenant is always fresh, always new, always agree-

able to the eye. Perhaps it appeared like an emerald to indicate the fact that as green is probably the colour which is most suited and agreeable to the human eye, so the covenant of grace is said to be like an emerald, because it is always agreeable, attractive, and acceptable to the true believer. What grandeur and what grace are here ! What majesty appears in the ordinary bow, and what majesty and grandeur shine in God's covenant bow ! What grace as well as grandeur is there, even about the throne ! " I will not be wroth thee," come and " call upon Me in the day of trouble." But I have contracted guilt. " I will not be wroth with thee." I am suffering from the fact that I have fallen into trouble. " I will not be wroth with thee." Come and tell Me all, for I wait to be gracious. " Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." So that we have the coming of the trembling, burdened, broken-hearted sinner, and God inviting him near. And notwithstanding the fears of that sinner God says, " I am not angry, fury is not in Me : I look at the bow, the promise I have given, and the covenant I have formed with My dear Son on your behalf. Come, therefore, and open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

As for *the remarks*, I think I must leave them, except that I will just say that clouds and darkness are round about Him. Do you say I had forgotten that text ? No, I have not. " Behold, I do set my bow in the cloud, and I will look upon it ;" therefore, if clouds and darkness are round about Him, the bow of the covenant is there also, and may be seen in the cloud by a living and strong faith. Another thought strikes me. Great troubles were to follow, and did follow, as we read in this book ; but all that followed was preceded by this marvellous arrangement for the comfort of John and of the church. There is the throne, and our God upon it, and the rainbow of the covenant is round about it. There are the elders, and the four beasts before the throne, in peace and safety with God ; so that all that subsequently happened was ordered, arranged, connected together, or permitted by the covenant love and wisdom of our gracious covenant God. And as Kent sings :

" Here, when thy fears begin to rise,
And hope in disappointment dies ;
This cov'nant bow thy fears shall quell,
'Twas made for thee in all things well."

May the Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE DIVINE PRIVILEGES OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL BIRTH.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 14th AUGUST, 1887.

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."—Gal. i. 15, 16.

WHEN the Lord had saved Saul of Tarsus, He sent Ananias to visit him and deliver an important message. Ananias offered some objection at first, which however, was wholly removed by Saul's saving Lord, who assured him, "that Saul was a chosen vessel unto Him, and that He would show him how great things he must suffer for His name's sake." His grace led him in a trying and thorny path to his heavenly home. Saul first suffered in relation to his own personal interest in Christ, then in relation to his brethren; then in relation to the churches of Jesus Christ, the care of which rested upon him from day to day. The apostle was meek, no doubt, and when it was necessary he dealt very gently with the people of God; but he was also a very earnest, courageous, and faithful man. He loved the honour and character of his blessed Master, and the glorious gospel of the blessed God was very dear to his heart; and hence he said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." He then deemed it necessary to advert to his unregeneracy in connection with his regenerated state and condition. The gospel he says, which I preach, I received not from man, "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Then he adverted to his former state and condition: "You have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how beyond measure, I persecuted the church of God and wasted it." "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

Now let us look at this portion of the word, more especially in connection with ourselves. Paul by grace had experienced the revelation in his own heart which he sets forth here; but in this respect, all the people of God, more or less generally, resemble him.

I desire in the first place to call your attention to *the two births*. "But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace." I shall have an observation, perhaps, to make upon effectual calling; but I want now to draw your attention to these two acts of God,—separated from the womb, and called by grace. Most of my hearers are aware that I do not care so much as I used for

critical preaching ; for criticisms in the pulpit are not, I think, on the whole, meat and drink. Yet it is important that we should distinguish between things that differ ; and when certain points should be distinguished from each other, it appears to me to be necessary that a minister should not pass lightly over them. " Who separated me from my mother's womb." He here refers to *his natural birth*. " Called by His grace," refers to *his spiritual birth*. Every living child of God is, as such, twice born. To be born naturally is common to all men, to be born spiritually is limited to a number known to God alone. When we look at this mighty London, and see in its streets many thousands of people, and hear their conversation, and observe their conduct, the thought arises in our mind, they have no fear of God before their eyes. Oh what filthy conversation, what sinfulness, what depravity, what wickedness, and what abomination prevail among our fellow citizens generally ! " God is not in all their thoughts," or " All their thoughts are, There is no God," (as the margin reads.) All these have been born into this world, and born to die ; but few, very few comparatively speaking, have been called by the grace of God. Now in our congregation this morning, is it too much to express a hope, a belief, that most of my hearers have been called by Divine grace. If, my dear friends, we have not been called, it were in many respects better that we had never been born naturally. Our Lord said concerning the traitor, " Well would it have been for that man had he never been born." To be separated from our mother's womb, and left in that condition is to be in and of the world ; and to be under the reign, power, and dominion of sin, and under the law of God which is broken, and therefore under the curses of that law. If, however, in addition to this natural birth, we have been born again, and effectually called by grace Divine, we have been brought into connection with God's church, and with the kingdom of heaven. To be separated from our mother's womb connected us with this world ; but called by grace we became connected with heaven, and were brought into vital and experimental connection with God's dear Son. Born into this world naturally, we appeared as creatures only ; but called effectually by God's grace, we appeared as new creatures. " If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, and all things are become new." Born into this world, we are born into the kingdom of nature ; and there, if uncalled, we shall live and die, and find nothing but eternal death and woe ; but by effectual calling we appear not merely in nature, but in grace. By the new birth we obtain a standing, yea, a seat and resting place in the kingdom of grace. Called out of darkness into God's marvellous light ; translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Born naturally we are in sin ; born spiritually we are in a state of holiness. Born naturally we are sinners ; born spiritually we are saints of the Most High God. If I have been born only once, I shall die twice : if I have been born twice, I shall die only once. If I know nothing of the new birth, I shall die a temporal death and an eternal death ; but if born spiritually, I shall die a temporal death only, and on me the second death will have no power. Paul was as a Pharisee, as a persecutor, as a bitter hater of the Lord Jesus Christ, going hellward ; but he says here somewhat triumphantly, " It pleased God,

who separated me from my mother's womb," and who even then had thoughts of life, love, and mercy towards me, to reveal His Son in me. And when that revelation took place in his heart, his enmity fell down dead, and he ceased for ever to persecute the church of God. The glorious gospel of the blessed God became new to him altogether. Old things passed away, and behold, all things became new. The first and the second birth; a natural, a spiritual one. Born of the flesh, and born of the Spirit. Born for this world naturally, and born spiritually for the world to come. Under my first birth I appeared as a son of man, as a child and descendant of Adam, and no one knew what God might do for me. Born again the second time, regenerated by the Spirit and grace of God, I appeared as one that was united to the second Head, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. In the first Adam we appeared as his children and descendants; polluted, because our ancestor was so, guilty because he was so, fallen because he was our fallen head. And when it pleased God, who separated us from our mother's womb, and called us by His grace, to reveal His Son in us, then we appeared vitally connected with Christ the Head of grace. As Adam was and is the head of nature, so Christ is the Head of grace, the Head of life, the Head of peace, the Head of salvation, and the Head of all the called and uncalled Church of the Most High God.

Now in the second place, let us say a word or two upon *effectual calling*. I said some minutes ago, I did not care for criticisms in the pulpit; and yet I will just observe here that it may be necessary for my hearers to distinguish, when they read the Bible, between regeneration and calling. They are not identical, or the same thing. Regeneration and calling are not synonymous terms. I know persons put two or three important branches of Divine truth together, and never distinguish between them, as conversion and regeneration, and regeneration and conversion. With them regeneration is effectual calling, and effectual calling is regeneration. But, my dear friends, they are three distinct and different forms of truth, and the children of God are more or less experimentally acquainted with each. Regeneration is the first act that God performs upon the heart of a sinner, and when the new birth really takes place it is perhaps almost impossible to say. I do not know when I was born naturally, only as I am told, I have no experience or recollection, or any personal experience in connection with that event; and yet I know it took place. Neither do I know precisely when the Holy Ghost secretly and silently entered into my heart. "Oh," you say, "when you were converted." No, conversion follows regeneration. Then you say, "When you were effectually called." No, effectual calling follows the new birth. In regeneration a new life from God is dropped into the soul; and what then follows? The eyes are opened, the ears are unstopped, the dead heart lives, and the insensible spirit becomes sensible. In the new birth there comes that which subsequently realizes that one is a sinner, that he is lost and ruined, that nothing but the intervention of almighty grace can save him, he becomes sensible of all this, and his sensibility is the result of life. Life precedes everything. "Ye must be born again." "But God calls the dead, sir?" I do not think so; for "*If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*" God first gives life, and then there is

an ear to hear, and God calls, Come unto Me. Effectual calling follows regeneration, and conversion follows calling. Conversion is a visible and outward change, a change of course and character. The world sees the conversion, the heart hears the heavenly call, and the God of all grace is viewed as the author of the vital, living principle of religion within. Calling is threefold, or it was so in Paul's case. First, he was called to be a saint; secondly, he was called to preach the word, and thirdly, he was called to the apostleship. First, Paul was called to be a saint, a holy one; and he says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." God always makes Himself heard, He never calls the sinner in vain. Paul was called up out of the depths of sin and bitter enmity against Christ, into another state. He was called up from the abomination in which he had naturally lived, into fellowship and communion with God. Oh what a contrast between Saul on the knee of prayer before the mercy-seat, and Saul of Tarsus the Pharisee and bitter persecutor! He now preached the faith which he once destroyed. No man that ever lived knew better than Paul, what it was to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. And then again, some of God's people,—but I shall not tarry here, because it is a somewhat personal matter,—some of God's people are called to preach the word. And do you know, if not, I will assure you, that I have rather strong feelings concerning a Divine call to preach the gospel. "No man taketh this honour upon himself." I believe that a Divine call to preach is absolutely essential to the acceptable, proper, and useful preaching of the word. All are not preachers. God converts a sinner into a saint, and then, if He intends he should preach His word, He gives him in some special way a call to the work of the ministry. Every minister of the gospel should be able to say, I am where my Saviour has placed me, I am what He has made me, and I am doing what He has called me to do. Paul was called to preach the word, and so were many others. Paul, however, was called to the apostleship, called to be an apostle. He was not therefore, the pastor of a church, nor was he permanently settled anywhere. It was his work, as one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, to fly abroad as it were in the world with the everlasting gospel of God. Nevertheless he presided over other ministers, and exercised a very important and necessary influence over the churches of Jesus Christ. He had, however, a conscience void of offence in the sight of God and before man, in relation to his preaching, and his apostleship also, for he could always lay his hand as it were upon the order which he had received from heaven, to occupy the apostolic office, and to preach the glorious gospel of God's grace. Some of my hearers know that it occasions much trouble and trembling of mind and heart, when we are not satisfied that we are following the Lord, or when we doubt whether God called us into the position we occupy. Sometimes I think our heavenly Father permits us to stray and wander for the purpose of embittering things to us which are contrary to His own mind and will. When this is the case, He keeps His eye upon us, and hence as we stumble on in the dark, having no nearness to the throne, and no fellowship and communion with our God, we are very depressed and distressed. Oh there is true peace only in the path in which the Lord leads His people! Paul called to be a saint, a preacher of God's word, and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Further, "And called me *by His grace*." This indicates three or four things. First, it indicates *the source of Paul's salvation*, the grace of God. Secondly, it indicates *the peculiar power by which he was saved*; the power of God's grace. Then it indicates *the nature of the salvation*; it is a gracious act. And does it not indicate *the end of it*? "The Lord God is a Sun and Shield, He will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." But He calls His people by His grace, and that indicates *the source of salvation*, which is God's free favour and sovereign mercy. Oh I have sometimes been melted—would that the melting were more frequent—under a consideration of the absolute sovereignty of Divine grace in my own personal salvation! Pride—I cannot be proud as a saved sinner, for I am saved by grace. Stone my fellow creatures! I have not a stone to cast at any fellow creature; for I should have been in the depths of iniquity to-day, had it not been for undeserved mercy.

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

God might have withheld His mercy from me. There was no influence out of Himself that induced Him to save me. The reason of my salvation was in the breast of God, in the heart of Jehovah. He found the cause in His own everlasting love. What had Saul of Tarsus to present as a reason why God should save him? The blood of the saints was upon him; bitter enmity raged within; he never mentioned the name of Jesus of Nazareth without feeling the deepest and bitterest contempt for that name; and I think sometimes of what an old London minister used to say, "*Jesus Christ saved Saul of Tarsus, it was just like Him to do so; but I would never have saved him.*" That was human and like sinful fallen man; but it is not like the God of grace and mercy. He called me by His grace. We must go to heaven as debtors, and also live as debtors here; for our own works are not once to be mentioned in connection with our salvation. And then, secondly, I want you to bear in mind that grace here indicates *the nature of the power by which sinners are saved*. God upholds all things by the word of His power, but He does not uphold all things by His *gracious power*. He made the world by power, not by gracious power. He blesses the springing of the earth; He has put power into the sun, which exercises an influence upon the world and upon the whole system of which it is the centre. These operations go on from day to day, and from year to year; but all that power, though it is of God, is not His gracious power, for that which saves sinners is grace. Omnipotence is in grace, and grace is in omnipotence. It is a power adapted to the sinner's mind, that arrests the heart, and produces a loathing of that which is naturally loved by sinful men. It transforms the sinner, and constitutes him a new creature; it crucifies him to the objects of his sinful love, and creates new tastes, new desires, new wishes, and new longings in his soul; so that although he is the same individual, he is a changed character; for he is saved by the grace of God. And then, my dear friends, if you have been called by God's grace, your faces are towards heaven. *Glory must follow grace*. The grace of God in your hearts cannot be lost, and its operations upon you

cannot become null and void. God's work will never be undone, the impressions made by grace can never be removed. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." In this dying world, where we are surrounded by the bitter circumstances of life, how sweet a thought is this that we are going to heaven; that our religion is of that nature, that it requires heaven to consummate it! It cannot be finished in this world, and it cannot be left unfinished. It must be completed, not here, but there; not in this poor, dying state, but in a better world. Called by grace, not to occupy positions of uncertainty, not into a doubtful condition, but unto eternal salvation, being kept therein by God's mighty grace, until the end of life; and then called into eternity to possess all the bliss of being, for ever. Having been separated from our mother's womb, called by grace, and experienced a revelation of God's Son in us, we are going to rest, peace, and perfection on high.

Now one word more before I depart from this point, and that is this, *that God's calls are always heard.* He can make the sinner hear and obey also. He that is regenerated, and called by grace, is never left where he was, nor what he was. God is sure to overcome; He never speaks nor works in vain. I do not care for the idea of a desire to save as applied to God. It is said, God desires you to do this, or that, or the other. Beloved friends, He calls effectually, and one hears and turns towards the God that calls him, and thus conversion follows His call, as I previously observed. When the regenerated believer is called by grace, and converted, he commences his journey towards heaven. He may be burdened, his heart may be broken, his eyes may be full of tears, he may be sorely distressed and deeply tempted; yet, having been regenerated and called and converted, he is now on his way to the heavenly world, and he feels that

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where he goes."

Another thing that follows God's call is that the called one *is justified in appropriating all that is good.* "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Now, have we been called? If so, the sweet promises of our God, and the precious doctrines of Divine grace, even all that God has treasured up in the person of His Son, are ours for ever. Take the whole volume of God, and press it to your hearts, for all the promises revealed therein are yours for ever, for God has called you by His grace.

Now, thirdly, *the revelation.* "It pleased God, who called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me." It is a *Divine revelation.* It pleased God to reveal His Son. Some speak as if it were possible for the sinner to reveal Christ to himself, or possible for Sunday-school teachers and ministers of the Gospel to reveal Jesus Christ to the hearts of the people. My dear friends, a divine revelation is a marvellous mystery and mercy; and just as you cannot command the sun to shine, so neither can you reveal Jesus Christ to your fellow creature, whatever powers you may possess. The natural sun must reveal himself, and God must reveal Himself to the heart, ere any true knowledge of Him can be possessed; therefore Paul ascribes all to His God, It pleased God to reveal His Son in me. Peculiar expression—"to reveal His Son *in* me;" not *to* me.

God has revealed His Son to all, so far as the Bible is concerned ; He has revealed Him unto the world in writing ; but He has not revealed Him in the hearts of all the world. All that read the Bible, read about Christ ; and all that hear Gospel sermons hear about Him. This is an external revelation of Christ. But whilst the ear catches the sound, and the understanding is, perhaps, somewhat enlightened, the heart remains untouched, unfilled, unsanctified, and unsatisfied, without a special revelation by God. He that made the heart can reach it, and He that is the God of salvation can save it ; and when He brought a light into your heart you could not put it out, and no power could quench it. You first saw you were a sinner, and then God came with the revelation of His Son ; and this made Paul leap for joy, saying, " He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Thus the revelation is divine. *It is internal.* This revelation embraces new objects ; but let me not be misunderstood here. Revelation is the uncovering of something that was concealed, and was not known. Revelation is not creation. Objects revealed were in existence before a revelation of them takes place. Why, therefore, do you say that the objects revealed are new. In this way : if a person born blind should receive his sight, the sun which has been shining 6000 years would be a new object to him, but not new in itself. If one that was born deaf, and had never heard a sound, should have his ears opened, a clap of thunder, which is very common would be new to him. And God's dear Son is in existence before He is seen and known. God regenerates the heart and makes it capable of seeing and appreciating Christ, and then He reveals His Son in that heart, and thus the objects seen are new. " Ah me !" one is ready to say, " I read the Bible before, but now it is a new book to me. I heard of Christ before I knew Him, but now he is a new Saviour. I used to hear about His salvation, but now I see all in a new light ; God has revealed His Son in me." This revelation becomes impressed upon the heart which is favoured with it. All revelation is not impressed upon the mind ; but if God reveals His Son, and mark this, in one's soul, it becomes impressed with the object revealed. Thus Christ is formed in you the hope of glory. A revelation impressed upon the heart, is a deep, an abiding, a living one. Not dead strokes drawn upon a dead heart, but living lines upon a living heart, drawn by the hand of the living God. All is life. " I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." The heart is a living one, the lines written upon it are living lines, the Son of God is a living Person. He is life itself. " This is the true God and eternal life." When a revelation of Him takes place, His image becomes stamped upon the heart, and He is thus formed within, the hope of glory, and the subject becomes a living Christian. What constitutes real Christianity ? An approval of Christianity ? No, but a revelation of God's Son in the heart ; and if we have not been favoured with this internal revelation, we are not true Christians. If Christ has been formed within, we are Christians indeed, and our sympathies are with our Lord. " Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee."

Fourthly, *the Apostle's confidence and assurance.* I dare say the wish on my part is a carnal one, in fact, I think it is so. I will, however, give expression to it ; I wish I were able to lead every child of God in

this house this morning into the position occupied by Paul when he penned these words. He was satisfied that he had been born naturally; God separated me from my mother's womb; no doubt existed as to his natural birth, and he was equally confident about his spiritual birth. Read on: "He called me by His grace." Paul was as satisfied concerning the second birth as he was concerning the first. I say, I wish I could lead all my hearers into that position. No one doubts his first or natural birth. Oh that every saint of God might be led to realize for himself very confidently, that he has been born again. I know there are many of God's people who are tried on that point. Because they cannot describe any particular circumstances connected with their regeneration; therefore they conclude they have not been born again. Because they cannot give dates and places in connection with their new birth, therefore they fear they have not spiritual life. Well, my dear friends, whatever your experience of doubts and fears may be, the time is coming when, having been called by grace, the revelation of Jesus Christ will be made by the Holy Spirit in your hearts, and all your darkness, suspense, and uncertainty will depart. If you have been called by grace, you are as truly a child of God as Abraham who is now before God's throne.

What may *we learn from the subject?* Who knows the destiny of an infant? When Saul was born into this world, who in heaven or on earth thought that that little helpless infant, which was perhaps embraced by the father and rejoiced in by the mother, would become what he through grace divine did become? That he would sit at the feet of Gamaliel, become a stiff and strong Pharisee, go through the blood of the saints, and rejoice in it, and then become a praying penitent, trusting in the name of his Saviour, and a preacher of the faith he once destroyed, and at last enter Rome, as a prisoner, and die there for Christ's sake, saying, "The time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Who could have thought that that little infant born in Tarsus was destined to become all that! You take your darling children in your arms, and press them to your lips and breast, but you know not what God may be pleased to do with them. Pray for your children, and I will pray with you for them, as I have prayed for my own and would again if I had others. Pray that God, having brought them into natural existence, would call them by His grace, and reveal His Son in them. To make them rich, healthy, and high in social position, may be very well as far as it goes; but an internal revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ is eternal salvation and life. The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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