

THE BEST PLACE ON EARTH.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 18th APRIL, 1880.

"I had rather be doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."—Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

"OUR God is in the heavens : he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." His arm is almighty, and his authority to do all his pleasure is rightful and eternal. He works in nature, in providence, and in grace, and no creature can stay his hand, or say to Him, what doest thou? God's absolute and mysterious sovereignty shines gloriously everywhere in revelation, in providence, and in grace ; and he has a right to exercise this sovereignty in all his dominions. There was much connected with the family of David that was mysterious and wonderful. It appears that his father was comparatively poor, and therefore David, who was his youngest son, spent the early part of his life in the field with a few sheep. We do not read much about his seven brothers, but David himself is a very prominent character, and his name appears most frequently in the word. Why Eliab and the other sons of Jesse were, so to speak, passed by, we know not, or why the ruddy youth was so extraordinary an object of divine friendship and love, we cannot tell. God, however, manifested his sovereignty, and did according to his will in the family of Jesse, by selecting David for honour high and permanent. I do not suggest that the brothers of David were not called by grace, I mean they never occupied a very prominent position, and their names do not stand out in divine history as the name of David does. David was the man after God's own heart, and divine sovereignty shines wonderfully in connection with his personal experience, which was very varied, a great portion of it being described. His experience concerning sin, concerning salvation, concerning the power and preciousness of the coming Messiah, his great Son, and concerning the parental tenderness and compassion of God his Father, was deep and wide. His experience also of the fickleness and hypocrisy of many of his fellow men and his experiences concerning the enemy who frequently smote his spirit down, and attempted to tread his honour in the dust, was bitter, though profitable. I apprehend that David's personal experience, as recorded in the word, took place as much for our sakes as for his own, for "No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself." Probably the trial of Abraham's faith was as much for the sake of future generations as it was for the sake of the good man himself ; and the various trials through which Jacob and Joseph passed, were designed to benefit us as well as those great and holy patriarchs. But with regard to David, why was he so sorely tried? Did his own personal faith and godliness absolutely require all the trials he encountered, all the difficulties into which he was plunged, and all the disappointments which he experienced from day to day? I think not. They were sanctified—abundantly sanctified to him ; but, "Whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." Recorded in the word are examples of human frailty, of human hypocrisy, of human friendship, and examples of the kindness, pity, and compassion of our God ; and, therefore every true believer on the road to a better world finds something, especially in the Old Testament, analogous to his own position and condition, and something to encourage him on his heavenly journey. I think David's diversified trials

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arose partly for the sake of the whole family of heaven. I have said that we have David's experience concerning sin and salvation ; and, let me add, that we have his experience recorded concerning the house of God also. David loved his Lord and his word, and his ordinances, and he also loved the place where God's honour dwelt. In the Psalm out of which I have taken my text, the good man opens his heart, and the spiritual eye can see what was in his breast ; for when we appear in believing sincerity before God, and the Holy Spirit influences our minds, and we open our hearts in public worship, God's dear people can see in some measure what is going on between the Lord and our souls. I am certain there is not a clause in this Psalm but what every child of God can adopt and make his own. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts ; my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Thus the Psalmist proceeded to unfold his feelings, and to declare his experience concerning the house of God. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand ;" and the courts of the Lord's house in the time of David were not what they were in the days of Solomon, for the temple was not then built. The old tent which Moses made in the wilderness several hundred years prior to David's time, was then in existence, and was pitched in Shiloh and in other places. Concerning that old structure which had doubtless been repaired again and again, David said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord ; that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." Our God does not need gorgeous places of worship, although he condescended to direct Solomon to build a costly temple, the architectural beauties and greatness of which were very vast and wonderful. God, however, dwells not in temples made with hands, but he inhabits the praises of Israel ; he dwells in eternity, and in the high and holy place, and one of his most special and favoured residences is the broken and contrite heart. "To this man will I look, and with this man will I dwell, who is of a humble and a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." We are prone—I say we, and you will not be offended—we are prone to carnalise the things of God, and prone to humanise God himself. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." Because men love to have costly and gorgeous places of worship, therefore they imagine that such buildings are more acceptable to God than others. Well, David loved the house of God, although it was at that time a mean and humble tent, and he said, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

I shall make a few observations, firstly on *the place*, the house of my God ; and, secondly, on *the speaker*, and *the fact he asserted concerning this place*. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

In the first place, let us contemplate *the sacred spot, or place*—the house of my God. Coming at once to the subject, I notice *that it involves two very important and precious doctrines*. First, the doctrine of relationship—my God ; and secondly, the doctrine of God's residence here on the earth. He has a house or houses here, where he dwells with sinful but saved men. Observe the doctrine or the grace of divine relationship. The Lord would have been God, and great and good for ever, had he never become *our* God ; but it pleased him in sovereign and eternal love to become our God, and I hope I am not wrong when I say it pleased him to become the God of most if not all my hearers. It was, "even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight." He might have lived alone for ever, in infinite, undisturbed and eternal pleasure, without the presence and praises of angels, and without the presence of men to reflect his glory ; but he resolved not to do so, but to live in the company of angels and men, not because he needed them, but because it seemed good in his sight. On his throne, which is in the midst of the universe, he might have sat in eternal satisfaction and delight ; but it is surrounded with mighty spirits, and with saved beings qualified to see his face, and to sing his praises which he receives. He has become our God, and having done so in covenant, we are safe ; for the covenant of grace

is ordered in all things and sure. And this good man, David, says in another place, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. This is all my salvation and all my desire." When a sinner is first convinced of sin, he sees God at a distance, and trembles before him, and is unable to appropriate the blessings of adoption. There is another way of speaking of these blessings in the day in which we live. It is said it is only to believe, to take God at his word, and to step over a certain line into peace, and that it is in the power of every believer, and indeed of every sinner, to step into salvation. I should really tremble to find myself preaching a doctrine like that. The person and the work of the Holy Spirit would not be required if the sinner could do this for himself. When first guilt is charged upon the conscience, and the heart is broken, and the guilty sinner appears before God, a thousand worlds cannot enable them to say, "My God." The God that opened his eyes and touched his heart must give him sufficient grace and spiritual power to enable him to appropriate the blessings of free grace. The Spirit of adoption enters deeply into the heart of that person, and carries him into a state of nearness to the throne of grace on which the Father sits; the blood of sprinkling falls upon his conscience, and removes his guilt, fear, doubt and darkness, and he finds himself in the full enjoyment of Gospel liberty, and says in all the confidence of appropriating faith, "My Lord and my God!" God belongs to his dear people as nothing else belongs to them. You have husbands and wives, and some of you have property which you appropriate and call your own. Every temporal thing must be lost or left behind; every natural and social tie must break, and every natural friend must die and disappear, and our own immortal spirits must leave these poor bodies which must return to the dust, and our souls shall return alone, unless Jesus Christ be with them, to God who gave them. But whilst husbands and wives die, friends disappear, and we shall be stripped of our social and natural all, here is a possession that we shall hold for ever; here is a privilege that we shall never lose; here is an honour and a dignity which are as lasting as God himself. If I have ever by divine teaching said "My God," that great Being will be my God when I die; and he will appear as my God when I shall stand in his presence in another world, and my ransomed spirit shall be filled with pleasure and delight in heaven in contemplating Him for ever as the Lord my God. Oh, friends, if you have an interest in God, you are rich to all the intents of bliss. You may not possess many temporal things, yet you are infinitely rich. It has been said that I never speak to sinners; let me, therefore, now say that if you had all the worlds which God has made, and had not a gracious interest in God himself, you would be found in splendid poverty, wretchedness, and ruin: for to possess the whole world and have no God, is to be left in eternal poverty. To be interested in God, and able to appropriate him by that faith which he himself works in the heart, is to be rich while we live, and rich when we die, and rich to all eternity. Brother, if God is your God, all of God is yours; the Father, with all his boundless love; the Son, with all his atonement, blood, righteousness, and fulness; and the Holy Ghost, with all his power and grace. This God is your God, and will be yours for ever. And all the attributes of God are yours. You talk much about the mercy, the love, and the grace of God: I wonder why you do not as frequently talk about God's righteousness and justice. His truth, his omnipotence, and his wisdom are as truly yours, or you are as deeply interested in them as you are in his mercy, grace, and eternal love. You want justice, truth, righteousness and wisdom as well as grace, love, peace, and mercy, and all the essential excellencies of God are round about you, and the whole of God's shadow is upon you. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of *my God*, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Well, God claimed David and regenerated him. He took the youth, and putting him into his bosom, he shed abroad his love in his heart, and filled him at times with pleasure such as the good man himself could not describe, and especially in his house. "A day, therefore," said he, "in thy courts is better than a thousand.

Now let us proceed to notice, secondly, *God's residence here*. I admire the

humility and adoration of Solomon, when he said upon the brazen platform which he had erected at the dedication of the temple—"Will God in very deed dwell on the earth with man, seeing that heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how much less this house which I have built?" He had adoring views of Jehovah, and correct views of himself—views which humbled his heart, and filled him with sacred and solemn pleasure and joy. The Lord does dwell on the earth, though he inhabits eternity, and is therefore in all the ages of time; and though he inhabits the high and holy place, and the broken and the contrite heart—as we said before, yet he dwells in his courts, in places like this, and in others similar to it; and hence we sing—

"Here, to these hills, our souls would come,
Till our Beloved leads us home."

He dwells in his courts as a King and as a Father. He meets his dear people here in groups. I suppose it was possible for God to have made some other arrangement than that which he has made concerning public worship. He might have saved and taken us through the world in an isolated condition, without requiring us to assemble ourselves together; but he has been pleased to appoint the means of grace, and to have public courts in this poor sinful world; and concerning his residence here, he has said, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread." Let us be plain, simple, and spiritual, not coveting extraordinary and attractive congregations, and let us never lose sight of the deep divinity of our heavenly religion, and above all let us never humanise nor carnalise the great God who has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Though I wish prayer meetings were not so limited in their numbers, yet let us not forget that half a dozen saints gathered together for prayer and praise around the throne of grace, pouring forth their hearts into the ears of their heavenly Father, is a sight for men, for devils, and for angels also. How great is the fact that the Monarch of the universe sits upon his throne and receives the humble offerings of the few poor worms whom he has drawn into his presence. When his Spirit influences their souls, and his love flows into their hearts, and the eye becomes moistened with tears, then the world recedes, and they enter into the experience of the godly man who said in my text, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Yes, God does dwell on the earth with sinful men. We have a day of rest; and, though I do not legalise the Sabbath, yet I am thankful for such a day, for then God enters his holy sanctuary and courts, and takes his seat among groups of his heavenly children met together in his name, and gives them his blessing. At times his blessing falls generally, and a whole congregation realise his presence, and leave the place, saying, "It was a holy time, for the promise was fulfilled." "The shower shall come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." This is how God brings us into love with his house, so that we need not a legal spur or whip to drive us into his courts. If our hearts have, in God's house, been baptized in love, and life, and light divine, and we have forgotten the world and risen above everything that was terrestrial, and sinful, and carnal, then we can enter into the sweet meaning of the fact, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Well, the Lord, having become our God, has appointed certain means of grace, in connection with which he says, "I will meet and commune with you here, and abundantly bless the provision of my house." How often have we entered God's courts burdened, wounded, and almost crushed by something in the world, or something in the family, or something connected with our own personal unworthiness and vileness; and how often has Satan sat with us, for he still comes to the house of God, as he did in Job's days, to scatter our thoughts, to carry away our feelings, and to tempt our souls. In such a state we have taken our seats in the sanctuary and as the service proceeded something in the hymn fell into our hearts, or a portion of the chapter rested upon our minds, or the prayer was

sweetly suited to our case, or in the sermon God showed his fatherly face and his parental heart, and shed abroad his love in our souls, and we forgot our bitter circumstances, our wounds were healed, and our tears were wiped away. Yes, brethren, when groups of his people meet together, in their midst is their Father and their God.

Do you ask me to define the house of God on the earth? I say it is a Divine meeting-place, for there God meets his children, according to his word. He has met me and you here and elsewhere, and blessed meetings they were. Oh it is worth more than language can describe to meet the Monarch of the world, the God of grace, our Father and our God in his own house. And it is a resting-place as well as a meeting-place. Here, says God, will I rest for ever, and when our hearts are in holy frames, and the Holy Spirit sweetly operates within them, we rest from our toil, our travail and labour, and forget the sorrows of the past week and the troubles which threaten in the future. We take comfort in the sanctuary, or rather God gives us more grace in his house, so that when Sunday evening comes, and the congregation breaks up, we feel refreshed and strengthened, and better fitted to meet Monday morning than we were when the Sabbath dawned. There are pleasures in God's house which the world can neither give nor take away. It is a meeting-place and a resting-place. And God's house is a feeding, or rather, a feasting place. It is a mercy to have heavenly bread and heavenly water, or a cup of heavenly milk; for although you may not be babes in grace, yet the children of God that are fathers and mothers in Israel and require the strong meat of the gospel, and want the minister to dive down into the deep things of God, never refuse a cup of God's heavenly milk. It is always good and acceptable, although it is babes' food; the young must have it, while it nourishes the tried believer. In a word, in God's house there is the bread of life prepared by God himself, the water of life from the smitten Rock, the paschal Lamb roasted in the fire, the wine of the kingdom, honey from heaven, and the milk of the word—all God's best, all for the poor, and all without money and without price, and God sitting with the guests; hence, "Whilst the King sitteth at his table my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." It is a meeting-place, a resting-place, and a feasting-place. The courts of the Lord are his sanctuary where he unveils his milder face, and reveals the love of his heart and the heart of his love to his dear believing and travelling children. So much for the doctrine of Divine relationship and God's residence.

Secondly, what shall we say about *the situation* of the house of God? If you ask whether I mean locality, I reply you may take that view of God's courts if you please. Ever since I first knew the Lord's name I have held that it is a great privilege if one's lot is cast where the gospel is preached and some saints live and meet together for worship. I know some of God's people in various parts of the country who are living where there are no means. There are buildings called places of worship; but the gospel in them is a curious one, or what Paul terms "another gospel." I know that many of God's saints in villages and in towns are saying with David, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." London is a wicked place, but it contains many saints as well as sinners. The best and the worst are here. If terrible sins are committed here and dangers everywhere abound, there are many Christians and many sanctuaries in the place. Our lot in London is cast in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage, whatever we may think of the place itself as a place. But not to dwell on that. It is a mercy, too, that we are permitted to enter God's house. Our forefathers loved the house of God as deeply as we do, but they were not suffered to enter it publicly as we have entered it this morning. They were driven from place to place, and from one country to another, and the world was not worthy of them. With what pleasure did half a dozen of them creep into a cave to call upon God and talk about eternal things, with what ardent feelings did two or three meet near an oven into which, if discovered while

reading the word, they might crawl ; for the word of God was precious in those days. Our privileges are common. Brethren, we do not value them as we ought. May the Lord be pleased to hand down to posterity our liberties and our privileges ; for it is one of our greatest mercies to be permitted to meet for public worship in the place where prayer is wont to be made, even if one is a door-keeper there. But look at the spiritual situation of God's house. Where does it stand ? Have you forgotten the words, " This is none other," said Jacob, " though no building was there ; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. The house of God, then, is the gate of heaven, and the gate is a part of the place or the premises, and the house of God on the earth is a part of heaven. Through this gate God comes to his children, and in his house on earth his children are near to heaven and have glimpses of that world.

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

Contemplate the scene in the wilderness when Jacob said, " This is the gate of heaven"—and what do we see ? The man himself, a ladder, the top of which leaned against God's throne, and the bottom of which stood on the earth, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and God himself standing at the top of it. There was the house of God ; there was the gate of heaven ; and something similar, I think, might be said concerning God's courts now on the earth. Here are the saints ; and angels, I think, are not absent from the place. The apostle says " for this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." " Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation ? and did not Jacob on his way to Padan-Aram require the ministry of angels ? Thus there was the ladder or Christ the Mediator, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, Jacob resting at the bottom, and his God presiding over all. This was the gate of heaven. Oh that we may realise in God's house the blessedness of his dear children, and ascend by this ladder into heaven by acts of faith ! and may the Lord reveal himself to us whenever we enter this or any other sacred place.

In the next place *the character of this house*. It is a palace or a temple. A savage lives in a cave or in a hovel ; the poor man lives in a cottage ; the nobleman lives in a mansion ; the king lives in a palace ; God lives in a temple. However mean in the estimation of many it may be, however small the place may be, since it is God's house and he is a King, it is a palace ; and since it is God's residence and he is Jehovah, it is a temple ; and the royal family of heaven meet their heavenly Father in his royal courts on earth. If you and I have faith, beloved friends, we want not in God's temple any pictorial, visible, or material representation of Him ; we want no marble nor other figures there ; we want not the Virgin Mary, nor the apostles, nor saints, nor any painted image of our Lord on the windows of the place to direct our heart's attention to our God. If our Father is in his courts, we have eyes to see him and ears to hear him ; for His presence is a Divine reality although he is invisible. He was really present in the temple, and the divine Shechinah between the cherubim was the symbol of his presence ; but he says he is here now, and he is a God of truth, therefore his presence is a reality. Oh for a holy hope and a heavenly faith in him when we are in his royal courts below. This earthly palace of our God is not a prison. It is sometimes painfully interesting to a minister to observe the countenances of his hearers. I have at times been much annoyed and embarrassed when I have seen persons listening, as I thought, with deep hatred to what I was saying, and looking at the clock impatiently waiting for the close of the service. I may occasionally have erred ; but generally, I think, my impressions have been correct. The place is to such persons one of bondage, and there is anything but pleasure, happiness, or joy in their bosoms. Let David, however, take his seat in God's house in the old tabernacle, and let the priests offer sacrifice and expound the will of God and nothing else, how does he like it ? A day there is better than a thousand ; and what is his general estimate of it ? " I would

rather be a doorkeeper here than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. The house of God, the palace of the great King a prison! It is to those that know not his name. It is a house of bondage to the ignorant, the carnal, and the enemy; but to the dear child of God it is a place of holy liberty, spiritual peace, and heavenly rest.

What is the furniture of this house? for God's house is well furnished. Why, there is the altar which both God and man require, and upon the altar behold the victim and the fire. That is God's table, and it is ours also. We partake of the altar, and so does God; for he is pleased with his dying Son, and we are saved by that which pleases him. The altar is a part of the furniture. Here is the laver to be washed in, and we need to be washed in Christ's blood, and with the grace of the Spirit. There is the throne, which is God's seat, and may he reveal himself to us whenever we enter his courts. To say nothing about the table of shewbread and the lamp. What ministers are here? They are very numerous. There is the mediatorial servant of God, Jesus Christ the minister of the true tabernacle. He is the High Priest of our profession, and takes our poor praises and prayers, and presents them to his God and our God. There is another Minister—the Holy Ghost. "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." And if the Holy Ghost is not in the house of God nothing good is done, and holy feelings cannot prevail. Then there are God's angels, and I have quoted that verse already—"Are they not all ministering spirits?" How can they rejoice over one sinner that repents, unless they know it in some way? Well, angels are here, and then if you care at all for the thought, here stands one of the little subordinate ministers of the house, serving under the Spirit and under the Master. Preachers have not to make the bread, nor the water, nor the altar, nor the throne; but they have to set forth ministerially, declaratively, and in expository forms as well as they can, their God, the throne he sits upon, the altar and what is upon it, and in general the furniture of the place, together with the provision which God has made for his people. That is all I will say on the place, as time is almost gone, and I ought to have dismissed this part of the subject before.

Secondly, *the speaker and the fact asserted.* The person speaking is David. Let me just say I have given this form to my subject because I wanted to say a word on the fact that he was a *competent judge*. This language is not what I have heard it called the whining and the canting of the ignorant. This is not the sanctimoniousness of a fanatic. I had rather be a doorkeeper there, does not indicate a meanness of spirit and a want of mind. I have heard persons sneeringly say, He that has a mind would never talk in that manner. Now David was a competent judge, much more so than those haughty spirits who thus contemptuously speak of the house of God, and the things of eternity. Let us look at this speaker who was both good and great. His experience was very diversified. He had been a shepherd, and knew what it was to be abroad with the sheep. He was a warrior, and one of the greatest, if not the greatest, soldier of his day, having meet and slain Goliath, taken off his head and taken his sword. He knew what it was to dwell in a palace. He had been with Saul in his palace, and I suppose the good man had one of his own, for he married Saul's daughter, and as his wife was the daughter of a royal house, David must have lived for a time in good style. Yes, he knew what a palace was, and what the tents of wickedness were; he knew what luxury was, for he had seen it, and lived in it; and he knew what royalty was; yet he said—and it is not the canting of a fanatic here—"I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Well, was he an ignorant man? Let us see. I hold that he was one of the most accomplished, if not the most accomplished, man of his time. Was it music? He was the best musician; hence he was sent for to play in the palace when the evil spirit came upon Saul. A skilful musician. Was he a writer? Yes, the best and the greatest of the day. Had he a mind? Yes, one that was deep and well instructed, having been divinely taught. The fact is, the greatest man

man then on the earth gave his estimate of the house of God, and said, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Then observe *the spirit of the speaker*. What is a doorkeeper? I am not sure that we get the exact idea if we think of our pew-openers and chapel-keepers. The person alluded to was a porter, for some of the Levites kept the door and were known as porters. David said I would rather be a porter and keep the door than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. The leading idea, however, appears to me to be this. Poor persons and persons in affliction took their places or their seats at the entrance of God's house asking alms. One sat at the beautiful gate of the Temple asking alms when Peter and John went in. I would rather be poor and live upon the fraternal donations of God's people than dwell in luxury in the splendid tents and palaces of wickedness and carnal ease. But there is yet another idea. If a person who had served his master six years did not wish to leave him, but loved him, and wished to remain in his house, the master was to take him to the door-post, and with an awl bore his ear through, and he became his servant for ever. Oh, says David, I so love the sacred place that I would never leave it, but would always live and work as a servant in the house, and be as one whose ear is bored to the posts of God's door—"rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Unlike the Pharisees he desired not the highest place in God's courts, lowly and humble from a deep sense of unworthiness, and of the honour of dwelling with God, the lowest, the meanest place contented him. He accepted the will and choice of the Lord; having only one desire concerning his sanctuary, which was to be there in any position. He would rather labour there than rest in the world, deeming godly work better than ungodly ease. Idleness is not happiness either on earth or in the church; all were made for active service, angels, saints, and ministers; even God himself worketh hitherto, and so does David's Lord.

Observe again, *David avows his faith*. In this avowal we perceive an appeal to God's omniscience. "Thou knowest my heart, O Lord, and my inmost desires concerning thy courts, that I have so set my affection to thy house and worship, that the hours I most prize are those which I pass therein. He also desired that God would be pleased in his love and providence so to arrange his circumstances that he might keep holy day in his courts and presence. He was not ashamed of his relation to God, neither did he fear to avow it publicly. The preferences and decision of the world were against him, and even now God's true and devoted worshippers are despised; but the saints are careless of the world's opinion, having felt richer pleasures before God than the worldling ever experienced in his unhallowed luxury, ease, and fulness. The verdict of majorities is not always true, and it is never correct concerning eternal and spiritual realities. If grace has saved us, and Zion's King is our God and Father, let us publicly avow the fact, and bless him for a name and a place in his courts.

The *fact asserted* in the text arises out of and rests upon the speaker's experience. God's house had to him greater attractions than the palaces of the great. God is in the sanctuary as he is not elsewhere; he is nearer to his children in Zion than in the world; in his house he shews his milder face, while in nature he appears as a Creator only. Yes, God, angels, and saints are in God's house; and if Satan is sometimes there also, it is better to be in conflict with him in the sanctuary than in sympathy with him in the world. In God's courts saints experience richer pleasure, more real profit, truer honour and dignity, and deeper peace than the wicked can possibly enjoy. There the Spirit seals them; there they have the earnest of heaven; there they learn more of God, and grace, and glory than elsewhere; there they are fitted for life and death; and there they see the King in his beauty—a sight never forgotten; therefore they would rather be doorkeepers in the house of their God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. May the Lord command his blessing. Amen.

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 30th MAY, 1880.

"But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."—MATT. ix. 12.

THE connection in which our text stands commences at the ninth verse of the chapter. In that and the following verses we have a view of a very interesting group of persons. How large the company was we cannot say, but a considerable number of persons were gathered together, and their different characters and dispositions manifested themselves under the silent operations of the omnipotence of Christ. In the ninth verse we are informed that as Jesus passed forth He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, "Follow Me." In the first place, therefore, we have a very interesting character, viz., a new convert, a person that had just been born again, one that had recently been transformed by the quickening grace of God. Matthew was a publican, sitting at the receipt of custom when the Master passed forth and saw him. "Where the word of a king is there is power;" and therefore where the word of God the Almighty is there is omnipotent power. What the thoughts and feelings of Matthew were immediately before he was called by grace we do not know; we may say, however, that he was a publican and a sinner, and a few moments before the Saviour made His appearance he had no idea whatever of a change of heart or a transformation of his mind, and none whatever that he would become a recipient of that holy and heavenly life which constitutes Christianity. The Master, however, passed by, and directed a mighty word to his heart, saying, "Follow Me;" and we are elsewhere informed that Matthew arose, left all, and followed Christ immediately. He did not, however, follow Him very far, for probably his house was somewhat near, and he invited the Lord Jesus into it, and it came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. I have said that we have here a very interesting group. In the first place we have this new convert; in the second place, we observe the apostles of Jesus Christ; thirdly, there were many publicans and sinners, some of whom, perhaps, were serious, others probably were more or less spiritual, while perhaps others mocked and sneered whilst they sat and listened to the Master. Then we behold, not only publicans and sinners, the newly saved Matthew; the apostles of Jesus Christ, but a considerable number of Pharisees, persons who were righteous in their own conceit, having no idea that they needed the sovereign mercy of God, persons who had quite sufficient moral excellency of their own to carry them safely through this world, calmly through death, and triumphantly, as they believed, into the world to come. And, then, in addition to all these characters, we have before us the Lord of life and glory. Here, then, was a congregation, a mixed gathering; and when the Pharisees, whose hands were so clean, whose

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hearts were so pure, and whose character was so perfect, when they saw that the Master was particularly familiar with the publicans and sinners, they proceeded to find fault with Him, and said to His disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

Now, I shall not divide my subject this morning as I sometimes divide my discourses, but gather up a few points which, I think, the words suggest to our minds, and mention them as I proceed.

We may notice, in the first place, the very *apparent fact* mentioned by our Lord, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Now, although I do not suppose that the Lord Jesus referred to Himself when He spoke of persons that were whole, yet it may do us no harm if we for a few minutes look at the character of this Great Physician. Our blessed Redeemer is the Physician of souls as well as of bodies, and we are informed again and again concerning Him, "in Him is no sin." A Physician who is himself diseased from head to foot may cure another diseased person. A medical man of great weakness and feebleness, and suffering from a fatal disease may cure hundreds and thousands of his fellow-creatures, but our Great Physician is whole, He is perfectly free from disease. We can communicate disease to one another, but we cannot communicate our health. Our great and glorious Redeemer can do this. He cannot communicate sin, for He is perfectly free from it. He cannot, like Adam, communicate guilt and corruption, or a moral disease to others, for He is holy, but He can and does communicate spiritual health, and has been doing so ever since He was on the earth. And mark, my brethren, the health which He imparts is His own; for He is not producing a spiritual state of things in us different from His own. That life which He imparts is His own life, and that health which He communicates is His own health. If, brethren and sisters, we are Christians, we know something of this Great Physician; and if we are of the family of heaven, we have been made in some measure healthy. Our great and glorious Redeemer is seated on His throne, and showers and streams of Divine influence which create and promote holiness or health are perpetually falling or flowing from His person to diseased creatures; He is distributing blessings among the poor and needy, and this work He will continue to perform until the solemn end of time. Had our Lord been diseased Himself He could not have cured us. Had He been capable of becoming diseased He could not have become the Physician of souls. Had not the Redeemer been perfectly impeccable, or absolutely incapable of sinning, He could not have saved sinners from guilt, and therefore when He says, "The whole need not a physician," it is a most apparent, an obvious fact that He Himself needed no physician. There was nothing wrong in Him to correct. There was no disease in Christ to cure. There was no stain in His character to remove. There was no feebleness in His arm to incapacitate Him for the great work of saving sinners. He was whole in all respects, body and soul; and both being united to Deity, our great Redeemer was absolutely whole. I shall not, however, tarry on that point. I thought an observation or two on the personal perfection of Jesus might be more or less welcome to my friends.

Let us, therefore, in the second place, think of heaven and contemplate the angels of God's power and glory. Well, they are all whole, and need no physician. They never required the interposition of the blood of Jesus between themselves and God. The intervention of the atoning Mediator they never needed. Although poets, who have great license, speak not only of the feathers of angels' wings, but also of angels' tears, yet I believe angels never wept. They are perfect strangers to sorrow, and they never knew a pain. They were created for pleasure, and pleasure filled them the moment they came out of their great Creator's hands. There can be no pain in heaven, and heaven is their home.

There can be no sorrow in the immediate presence of God, and that is where they dwell. There can be no woe in beings that are absolutely free from sin and absolutely perfect, and that is their exalted state and condition. They know millions of diseased beings, but they know not what it is to suffer themselves. They see the disease of sin in its nature, operations, and consequences, but they have no woeful experience themselves, and therefore we sometimes sing—

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

I would not be critical, because I do not think criticisms in the pulpit on ordinary occasions are profitable, yet permit me to say that mercy is a stream that angels never tasted. They taste the river of love and of eternal grace, but mercy is for the miserable, and they were never miserable. The blood of the dear Redeemer flowed, and they saw it, and they see it flowing still; they see diseased sinners washed therein, but they are never washed in that flowing fountain themselves. The whole need not a physician. Christ, therefore, needed none, and the angels of God's power and glory need none.

Now come down to the garden of Eden, and behold another interesting object. These observations are doctrinal, I know, yet they are true and scriptural. Enter Eden, the garden which was made immediately by God and planted by the great Creator's hand. There was every kind of fruit that man required, and every form no doubt of floral beauty existed there. In the midst thereof was the tree of life, and there was also the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Two pure and happy beings were also there, who were whole, and not diseased, for God did not make man a sinner. God made angels, but the fallen ones made themselves devils, and “God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.” God is not the Author of sin, and He never can be. God cannot be the source of moral evil. That moral disease of which we are speaking is cured by God, but not created, caused, or originated by Him; and therefore Adam was physically, mentally, and morally whole. His body, I doubt not, was excellent, strong, vigorous, and beautiful, while it was untainted, untouched, and unweakened by sin. His mind was all that the great Creator required it to be—all its essential faculties and powers were healthy or whole. He was morally perfect, for He was made in the image of God Himself, who said, “Let us make man in our own likeness,” and in the likeness of God made He him; therefore Adam was whole when he stood in his primeval innocence, and he needed no physician. Had spiritual healing, medicine and balm, been presented to him, he would have been ignorant of their uses, having no pains nor wounds, being perfectly free from evil. He was whole and needed no physician.

Now, let us come to what I consider to be the literal meaning of the text. Jesus needed no physician, angels need none, and Adam before he fell needed not the interposition of a saving Mediator. Pharisees, however, were present on that occasion, and they were whole in their own conceit, and in their own opinion they were full of holiness. We have the character of one of them drawn by Jesus Christ Himself. He is represented as a petitioner, and yet, although he professed to pray, there was not a single petition in his prayer. “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are; I do this, and that, and the other, and I especially thank Thee that I am not like that publican.” Now, that Pharisee was whole, and wanted no mercy. There was a Physician prepared by God, but he, being free from disease in his own estimation, needed or wanted Him not. “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” But when Jesus heard that, he said, as it were, Where should the Physician go to but to the hospital? and whom should He visit but the diseased? These

publicans and sinners are morally diseased, and I am the Physician; and, therefore, when He heard that, He said, "They that are whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick." What a mercy it is to be conscious of our sickness!

Distinguish, my friends, between need and want. All need Christ, the Physician; all, however, do not want Him. Those who want the Saviour feel their need of Him. The Pharisees needed Him, but inasmuch as they were whole in their own conceit, they did not feel what they needed, and therefore we may say they did not want Him. They were independent of Christ, and His blood and His mercy they despised. To wear the robe of another was not to their taste, for they were well dressed, perfectly free from blot and fault, and all that was displeasing to God, and some of them thought that they had performed works of supererogation. They had not only enough of their own to take them to heaven, but somewhat more to please the great Lawgiver, God. Such persons, as a rule, the Saviour turned away from, and the despised publicans and sinners had His merciful attention and regard. Let me speak plainly and say, My dear hearer, you may be too good for God, but too bad they cannot be; you may be too rich, but too poor you cannot be. You may be too well or too strong, but—and let me go as far as to say—too thoroughly and offensively diseased you never can be. The dear Redeemer is making for Himself, as the great Physician, an everlasting name. The heavens of eternal glory are to be filled and peopled with healthy persons, all of whom were under the shadow and in the region of eternal death.

Having made these few remarks as to the general and apparent fact, let me notice in the next place that the text suggests *Divine anticipation and provision*. We have a God who anticipates us and all our need, and the natural requirements of all His creatures, and therefore He is never nonplussed, and can never be surprised. Our Heavenly Father is always prepared for all that arises in time, and for all that occurs in connection with His government of the universe. Had there not been physical disease in this world, we should never have heard of medical science, and we should never have needed physicians. Disease first came into existence, and that gave rise to the healing art, and suggested the necessity of medical practitioners. Now we must reverse this order of things in the government of God. The Physician was appointed before the patient existed. The medicine was prepared before the sickness commenced. The balm preceded the wound; for the precious blood of Jesus is said to be the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. I believe these remarks will apply to all the offices and titles of our dear Lord. A person has a flock of sheep before he requires a shepherd, but our great and glorious God prepared or provided the Shepherd first, and then brought the flock into existence for him, or, rather, Christ brings the flock into existence for Himself. Our God anticipated and foresaw the fall and all its woeful, penal, terrible, and offensive consequences, and immediately after the crash, and the world had become a moral wreck, He came forth and said, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty, and I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David, My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him. With him My hand shall be established;" so that when the world become universally diseased God was prepared with a Physician; and when sin spread terribly and offensively, God brought out the grand provisions of His grace in the form of a divine and spiritual remedy, as it is written in Scripture—in the form of healing, fragrant ointment. "Thy name is as ointment poured forth." He revealed His anciently prepared balm. Hence, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there not a Physician there?" Indeed, in Christ Himself God had deposited all that guilty millions could possibly require; for "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Here is a healthy Physician for an unhealthy family, or a

Saviour, who cures sinners, who are His patients, in a manner that is peculiar to Himself. Not to anticipate myself, however, for we shall come to that presently ; therefore let us notice here that this disease is a moral one. Had it been merely mental, a schoolmaster or teacher might have healed us. Had it been physical, then ordinary physicians or medical men might have healed us. But the disease is a moral one—it is spiritual ruin—beyond the reach of teachers, beyond the reach of medicine, beyond the reach of philosophy, but not beyond the reach of blood, nor beyond the reach of the hand, the skill, and the wisdom of Christ, the great Physician. And this disease is universal. I do not mean to say that it breaks out alike in all. Every minister must in faithfulness to the Bible declare that all are diseased, and that the disease is universally fatal and absolutely incurable to all save one person, who is the blessed Christ of God. Some diseases are offensive, as well as painful and fatal ; and permit me just to remind you here that sin, that great moral disease, is unspeakably offensive to God. It is that abominable thing which His soul hateth, and the only thing in the world that He abhors ; this accursed evil, however, He loathes intensely and infinitely. He hates sin in all. It is offensive to His nature and perfections. I cannot explain the mystery, yet so it is, that whilst He hates the disease He loves the dying patient or the soul that is guilty and defiled. You have a dear child at home or elsewhere suffering deeply, and you fear the disease will terminate fatally. You loathe the disease, but love the dear little sufferer ; but you are quite helpless, being altogether unable to heal and cure the wasting beloved one. While, however, your God and Father hates the disease from which you are suffering, He has provided a Physician for you, and He comes and does what angels could not do ; he separates guilt from the guilty, sin from the sinner, and death from the dying transgressor, and casts the sin, the disease, behind his back, and puts the sinner into His bosom. “I am the Lord that healeth thee.” “By His stripes we are healed.” Christian brethren, take another thought here. This Physician is making no experiments. I do not know whether medical gentlemen are present or not ; if any should be here, perhaps they would not be offended if I ventured to say I have sometimes thought that medical men make experiments. I think that a great deal in connection with medical matters is but imperfectly understood. But our dear Lord makes no experiment, He never discovers like earthly physicians, that His medicine is a little too strong or too weak, and it must therefore be changed. No ; our great Lord is divinely skilful and infallible. He is responsible for the health of all the family of God. I would not use the word “responsible” in connection with Jesus if the Holy Ghost in the Word had not authorised me so to do. The covenant engagements of Jesus give rise, I think, to responsibility. He did as He pleased about engaging to heal us, but having pledged His word and name to cure us and to give us eternal life, He is bound to fulfil His word. God—whilst the patient is being treated—keeps His eye on the Physician, and resteth in His love ; for He knows there will be no failure under His saving, healing hands. He has never yet failed, though some of the worst cases imaginable, cases indescribably and inconceivably bad, have been beneath His care. The dying thief was healed. Manasseh was cured, saved, and glorified. Mary Magdalene was made quite whole, and is as healthy as Abel, and as Enoch, who on earth walked and talked with God. Oh, this Physician is responsible for the health and for the life of all His patients. This is peculiar to Jesus Christ, who said in the days of His flesh, “I will come and heal him.” Having received a description of the case, an ordinary physician would of course have said, “I will come and see him, or I will come and prescribe for him, and do all I can for him,” but no one ever thought of holding an ordinary physician responsible for the health and life of his patient.

All heaven hold your Lord responsible for your health, your holiness, and

your perfection ; they were guaranteed by the Saviour's solemn word when He became the Mediator of the covenant of eternal grace,

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

And what of all this ? Why, since God anticipated your disease and made provision for your holiness, since heavenly balm, ointment, and antidotes were prepared for you, the healing is progressing according to the good pleasure of His will, and though half the professors of the day seem to be much alarmed, and fearlest God should not accomplish His purposes, I believe that our salvation is in good, because in Almighty hands ; and therefore the Gospel affirms the fact that

" His eternal thought moves on
His undisturbed affairs."

Sometimes this Physician apparently defers His visit, I know not why, until the eleventh hour. I must not, however, say much on that point ; but if He saves at the eleventh hour, depend upon it the salvation is perfect and complete. He can effect a cure in a few minutes as well as in a few hours. Our God brought all His wisdom to bear upon the great provision He made, and therefore our health and our heaven are sure. There is a better state of things than this. We are not yet quite well, if I may so speak, we are not quite healed, because sin is still in us. The Saviour, however, has engaged to present us before His glory without spot or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. If He took us into heaven uncured, or imperfectly healed—and mark this—we should weep there, having sorrow and pain, but the Holy Ghost in the Revelation, anticipating everything of the kind, has been pleased to say, " There shall be no more pain, nor tears, nor curse, for the former things are passed away." We weep now, for we are occasionally in pain. Now we are burdened and distressed, but the sweet world to which we go is everlasting rest and day. Wonderful, truly wonderful, is the fact that of all the millions there, all are healthy, and all are whole. This was partly illustrated perhaps when Israel came out of Egypt, one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Old Testament, and yet a most important part of that miracle is too much forgotten. Perhaps there were two or three millions of persons—we cannot say how many, but a very large number—left Egypt in one night, they passed through the Red Sea, and entered the wilderness, and it is recorded by the Holy Ghost that there was not a feeble one among them. Think of London, with its millions, and suppose it contained three millions only, and all healthy, not a single diseased one among them ! The Lord said to the people I am the Lord that healeth thee, and will bring none of the diseases of Egypt upon thee. The God of holiness is the God of health, and when He speaks, disease obeys his voice. The Lord heals and helps His people, and though they limp and halt now, and sometimes reel and stagger, like drunken men, being at their wits' end, they shall be perfectly healthy on passing over the threshold of glory, and entering into the world of eternal happiness and rest. But let us proceed.

The text suggests to my mind, in the third place, *the necessity for the Saviour's mediation*. The whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick. Jesus is the Physician, and I have spoken of Him as such ; and now we notice the mediation of our Lord. For illustration's sake, imagine a diseased guilty, filthy, ruined sinner coming into the presence of unmediated Deity, or, to use a phrase which you frequently hear, and which you use yourselves—into the presence of a God out of Christ. What would be the consequence to the sinner ? Torment. No blood, no mediation, no middle Person to stand between Deity and his guilty, filthy soul. Without Christ's mediation the sinner would want God to hide His face, to conceal His glories, or to permit him to leave His

presence and the spot. All offensive and unclean, how tortured, how tormented he would be. No ; there is one God and one Mediator between God and man. He ever liveth to make intercession—and mark the phraseology—he ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God *by Him*. We come to Him, to Jesus, first, with all our sins and grief, and filthiness, and wants, and wounds. In due time we are stripped, stripped of all supposed excellency, beauty, and glory, and come to Him just as we are. Think of a sinner coming into the presence of God out of Christ in that state. His mouth would be closed in *hopeless* shame and confusion, and His soul would be tortured and tormented, for the presence of the holy God would be a hell to him. Bless God for the system of mediation and for the Mediator, Jesus, who stands between, and is the Physician of souls. He heals and sweetens, and perfumes our souls, and then presents His patients to His Father and their Father, who accepts and approves them in Christ, and for His sake ; and the glorious Gospel we preach assures us that we are complete in Him.

I pity the person making a profession of religion who ignores the mediation of our Lord. I cannot go into God's presence without Him, and I bless the God of infinite grace and wisdom that Jesus is where I need His presence, and is all I require Him to be for my acceptance. He received us when we came, and in due time He told us that our sins, which were many, were all forgiven.

Let us pass on, and ask, in the next place, *how He heals His people*. What is His method of curing sinners. Well, Himself took our infirmities, which is another wonderful proceeding ; He took our sickness, and bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Other physicians have never done that. Christ cures by taking the guilt of the sinner upon Himself, and by carrying it away into the land of forgetfulness. And what else ? He cures by imparting Himself to the sinner in peculiar conditions and forms. He obeyed the law and made it honourable. And what becomes of His obedience, which is perfect and divine ? He does not need it for Himself, angels want it not. He spent a saving life on earth and under the law, and the obedience He brought in is imputed to His patients, made their own, and by this we are healed. Then there were His wounds, and blood, and what use does He make of them ? We have healing from His balm-giving wounds, and purity from His blood. Indeed the Physician was Himself bruised, when what was in Him flowed forth, and the bruised Physician is laid upon the bruised patient, and by His stripes we are healed. Oh, this is God-like. The Healer comes into vital contact with the patient, and He draws from the patient that which God hates, and communicates to him all that God requires and loves ; and if this is not His method of healing sinners, I am out of the secret.

The *importance* of the health of God's people we infer from the magnitude of the provision made for them. The arrangements God has made, His deep contrivance, and the vast expense He has been at to obtain for them eternal health and life, all proclaim the great importance of their perfection. Every faculty of the soul is to be healed and free from disease. The understanding is to be enlightened ; the judgment is to be divinely corrected ; the will is to be filled with grace and righteousness ; the affections are to be separated from the world and sin, washed in blood and united to Jesus, and raised to heavenly things ; the conscience is to be purged from dead works to serve the living God ; and the memory, an essential part of the mind, which is now both a friend and an enemy, is to be sanctified. We often think of what we wish we could forget, and what we would remember we cannot think of ; and therefore the memory is, in a measure, diseased now. But the memory's operations in heaven will be perfect, complete, satisfactory, and pleasurable for ever and ever. Health is important, else so wonderful a Physician had never been appointed. Our destination demands health. A world of holiness ; and sin being a disease the

slightest remains thereof would be a sore and a blot there. Our associations demand health. We are to associate with angels, and, what is more, with God Himself for ever and ever. Our employment requires health. Here I am indisposed frequently, and wish—and I tell you a secret, and may the Lord forgive me—I sometimes wish, when coming to chapel, that I had not to preach, for, feeling my incompetency and the emptiness of my mind, I occasionally, perhaps frequently, dread the pulpit, and wish I had been called to serve God in some other way. There will be no indisposition of that kind there. The song will be welcome, the worship will be sweet, and we shall never be indisposed in soul. Jesus is the Physician, and the cure He effects is perfect and complete.

Lastly, if Jesus thus heals, and the healing involves all this and infinitely more, what is *the state* of the healed sinner? Well, it is a spiritual one, and let me say he is better in some respects than he was before. Hence Watts beautifully sings—

“He raised me from the depths of death,
The gates of gaping hell,
And made my standing more secure
Than ’twas before I fell.”

Adam was healthy, but his health was moral. The believer is healthy, and his health is spiritual and gracious. Adam had a perfectly holy life, but that life was loseable. “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.” The health mentioned in the Word in relation to Christ is not a return of the sinner when cured to his primitive condition; he does not go back to Eden, nor return to his original state. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, and he stands where Adam did not stand, and feels as Adam did not feel. He is a new creature, for Christ has healed him.

Then, as to the *present position* of these patients, I should say, and I say it without fear, that a person whom Christ has cured is among the best of persons on the earth. Why, if Christ has cured you, you are a better parent, a better child, a better servant, a better master, a better sailor, a better soldier, a better politician, and better in all respects; for Jesus improves all He touches as a Saviour, He improves and elevates and dignifies all He comes into connection with, and when diseased souls come into contact with this great Physician, old things pass away, and all things become new. A celebrated preacher, as you are aware, used to say he would not give a straw, I think it was, for that man’s religion whose cat and dog did not fare the better for it. Oh, Christ does cure effectually, and therefore if an uncured person, or an unregenerate person, is as such a good husband or wife, he or she is better still after grace has regenerated the soul. O may the Lord, the Holy Spirit, take the things of Jesus and show them to our minds, and realise to us the meaning of that quaint old saying of Quarles:

“He lays a wound upon a wound,
And makes the wounded whole.”

A wounded Christ on a wounded heart heals the soul and prepares it for God. May God command His blessing, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE MEEK EXALTED.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 13th JUNE, 1880.

"The Lord lifteth up the meek : He casteth the wicked down to the ground."—
Psa. cxlvii. 6.

ONE of the most important truths that God has revealed to us in His Word is stated in the verse which precedes our text this morning,—“Great is our Lord, and of great power : His understanding is infinite.” The child of God sometimes contemplates with peculiar and heavenly pleasure the infinite and enduring greatness of his God ; having at all times adoring views and apprehensions of His grandeur and glory. The Father is infinitely great, the Son is no less so, and the Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son ; and this three-one God is the God of Israel, the covenant God of salvation, and the great object of faith, and hope, and spiritual worship. It is probable, however, that the Psalmist refers in the 5th verse to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is infinitely great ; and as He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, He was great yesterday in the past, He is great to-day in the present, and He will be great to-morrow in the everlasting future. He was great in the estimation of Abel, the first saint that went to heaven ; He was great in the faith of Enoch, who walked and talked with God ; and He was great in the experience of that strong believer, Abraham, who is the father of the faithful ; and if our hearts have been divinely enlightened, and the Holy Spirit dwells and works therein, the Lord Jesus is unspeakably great in our estimation and experience. He is essentially great ; for whatever may be said of His humanity, He is the everlasting God ; and therefore in the days of His flesh on the earth, He laid His hand, as it were, upon His Father's throne, and said, “I and My Father are one.” He claimed divine equality with His Father, and standing on a level with His throne ; and within His hearing He declared that all-important fact. And Christ is great personally ; and when I say He is personally great, I refer to His complexity, for He is both God and man ; and this Mediator is infinitely great in His adorable person. His personal greatness can never be fully understood. The excellencies of His person are so exalted and glorious that it will be our everlasting employ to trace and adore them with our glorified powers in a better world for ever. We shall never want another sight, we shall never need another object. Our thoughts will always find their rest and home in Him. Our feelings and our motives will always find their all in the glorious Redeemer. However high the throne of Gabriel may be, that of the great Son of God is higher ; and however glorious angels are, Immanuel's glory surpasses all, for He is exalted above all principality and power. Our Lord is officially great. Is He a priest ?—He is our great High Priest. Is He a prophet ?—He is the great Prophet of the Church. Is He a king ?—He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. By Him kings reign and princes decree justice, even all the judges of the earth. A great monarch on the earth, one that presides over other kings and rulers, is an extraordinary object, and occupies

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a high place in the thoughts and estimation of the world ; but our great Lord has the highest throne in the universe, and He rules over all. Around Him stand ten thousand times ten thousand other thrones, upon which are seated minds made by power, and minds redeemed, and washed, and saved by blood ; while in the distance are the worlds which compose the universe, of which ours is a member ; and therefore He presides over all, ruling and governing as He pleases. "Great is the Lord, and of great power : His understanding is infinite." The infinite mind of our adorable Lord goes round the universe, and comprehends everything from the dawn of time to the last moment thereof. Jesus, our Lord, comprehends eternity and all that it shall contain. Every song that shall be addressed to Him, every heart that shall be before Him, and all the wondrous experience of the millions that shall occupy heaven for ever—all are perfectly understood and thoroughly comprehended by the infinite mind of our great Lord. New ideas can never occur, and new thoughts can never be suggested to Him. We are continually learning as time flows on, as events occur, and as circumstances arise ; but Jesus is before all time, and in advance of all circumstances, and—

"His eternal thought moves on
His undisturbed affairs."

Although He requires His people to pray, it is not for His information, for we can give Him none when we call upon His name. Prayer is a divine ordinance appointed for our benefit exclusively, and though we sometimes observe it with cheerfulness and pleasure, the Lord learns nothing from us. Oh the blessedness of being interested in a God so great, in a Friend so high, in a Being who can comprehend us, when we cannot, with our stammering tongues explain our feelings before Him.

In consequence of this greatness of the Lord the Psalmist says, "Hallelujah !" for this is a hallelujah psalm, of which there are several, and hence it begins with, "Praise ye the Lord." What are we to praise Him for? First, because He builds up Jerusalem. He gathers the materials, and cements them together with the love of His heart and the blood of His person : thus he builds up Jerusalem collectively and individually. He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel, and these are the materials of which Jerusalem is composed. Some are outcasts in their own estimation and experience. They have a measure of grace in their hearts, and the world has cast them out, and having only a measure of life, they fear they belong not to the church, and therefore they stand, as it were, between God's people and His enemies. They cannot unite with the latter, and they are afraid to join the former. They occupy a kind of middle position. Looking at God's enemies, they feel that they are not of them ; and looking at the saints, they venture to sing—

"With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity."

Let us not, however, forget that lepers were always outcasts. When the leprosy broke out in a person, he left his house and the city he lived in, if it was a walled one, and was obliged to reside in some retired spot or village. He was compelled by the law of Moses to put a piece of cloth upon his lip, and when he walked abroad if he met a person he was bound to cry, "Unclean ! Unclean !" Now the Lord, in building up Jerusalem, gathers together these outcasts of Israel, and says to them, "I will, be thou clean." He washes them, and makes them white, and brings them into living connection with Himself, and into affectionate union with His people ; and thus the Lord doth build up Jerusalem. "Hallelujah ! Praise ye the Lord."

Then, in the next place, "Praise Him because He healeth the broken in heart," A broken heart is a wonderful reality. Naturally it results in death ;

and hence we occasionally learn that such a person died of a broken heart. No earthly physician can heal a heart that is naturally broken, and no physician save Christ can heal one that is spiritually broken. When a heart is broken on account of sin, by the saving hand of divine grace the streams of godly sorrow flow therefrom, and the grace that made the wound is required to heal it. Well, He healeth the broken in heart. How? "He bindeth up their wounds." Without being fanciful, may I not say that He takes His precious promises, together with His precious balmy blood, and applies them to the wounded mind, and that thus the broken heart is made whole. "Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord, for He is great and His understanding is infinite." We have not time to go further into these matters; but "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names." Not only those stars which are visible in the heavens, but He holdeth the stars, or his ministers, in his right hand. He telleth their number; He knows how many there are, and how many he requires, and where they are to shine, and who shall see their light and rejoice in their ministrations. "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names. Hallelujah!" And then, "The Lord lifteth up the meek; but He casteth the wicked down to the ground."

In offering a few thoughts this morning on this portion of the Word, I shall name three points: first, *the character*: secondly, *the privilege*; and thirdly, *a few reflections upon the subject*. I may not tarry long upon the first two points,—the character—the meek; His privilege—"The Lord lifteth him up,—as I want to reach as quickly as possible the third point, viz., a few reflections on the subject, and I will endeavour to do so.

Let us, in the first place, make a few observations on the interesting *character indicated*. The meek. Some time ago I tried to preach a sermon on the grace of patience, and I said, by way of introduction, that it was a subject I scarcely knew how to handle, since I had not very much patience when I was tried and troubled. Patience is a grace and an operation of the mind upon which but few can preach experimentally. We may show the necessity for patience, and the importance of its exercise, but when we are in circumstances to require that grace, and to need that excellent power, we have too frequently found ourselves rebelling against God, rather than being passive in His hands. These observations may apply with equal force to our subject this morning. The meek. "The Lord lifteth up the meek, but he casteth the wicked down to the ground." I do wish most prayerfully, earnestly, and spiritually, that I had more meekness; and that in this respect I were more like Moses, the meekest of men; or, better still, more like our dear Lord, who was and is the perfection of meekness. "Come unto me," said this meek and lowly Lord, "and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." What is meekness? Naturally and morally considered, it is easiness of mind, or a state of mind in which one is not easily provoked to resentment. This is a literal definition of meekness. Hence the mind that is really meek accommodates itself to every occurrence; and therefore you perceive how difficult it is to be experimental rather than theoretical. O for such a mind as accommodates itself to every occurrence, every circumstance, and every event! When the wind blows roughly, meekness accommodates itself to the storm; and in a calm, it adapts itself to the stillness and tranquility. If a meek one is smitten, he does not return blow for blow, nor one hard word or sharp and angry look for another. Real meekness so suits itself to all things that its possessor is easy to himself and easy to other persons. Anger may arise in the mind of the lowly; but it is the prerogative or office of meekness to restrain it. I do not think that anger is, under all circumstances, sinful. "Be ye angry, and sin not." "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." And Jesus, in the days of His flesh, looked round about the congregation before Him with anger. When, however, anger

rises within, it is the business of meekness to restrain it; and when others are angry, and manifest and express their anger, meekness will hold us in, and hold us down, and prevent resentment. Now apply this to the child of God. I do not know much about natural meekness, and perhaps it is not my business to preach that which is merely moral; but that meekness which is spiritual, being one of the graces of God the Holy Ghost. Job said, "Why do ye persecute me? seeing the root of the matter is found in me." "The root of the matter" I understand to be the principle of divine grace, inserted by the Holy Ghost in a sinner's heart; and, as it is a vital root, it grows, and one of the branches springing from it is meekness. It may be a small and feeble branch; it may come up late, and grow very slowly; but it is there. Faith is one of its branches, and hope is another; love and gentleness spring therefrom, while temperance and meekness arise from the same principle. When meekness pervades the mind, and sheds its own proper influence upon all one's feelings and thoughts, what a blessed state of things exists within, for one then finds himself in a holy and childlike frame of mind. He is not childish, for there is a difference between childishness and childlikeness; and it does not follow that because a person is meek therefore he is childish, and has no mind, no soul, no power, and has lost his self-respect. Meekness is perfectly consistent with firmness; but with regard to his God and eternal things, and their claims upon him, he feels the importance of the grace of meekness, and of its peculiar influence upon his mind. We cannot produce meekness in our own breasts, but we can be angry in a moment. In that point of time we can feel, and have felt, the rising of wrath within; but when that passion has arisen, and anger has pervaded our minds, we find a storm raging within, which all our powers have failed to calm. We cannot calm such a storm, nor call into existence the excellency of meekness; or, if it is there, we cannot call it into vigorous act and exercise. Meekness is the offspring of God's grace, one of the darling creatures of His new-creating hand, and it is produced in the heart by God the Holy Spirit, and its great Author must promote its growth, and cause it to shed its own restraining, beautifying and adorning influence upon all the faculties and powers of the mind. Where does this grace of meekness flourish? Some persons will tell you that the more you know of sin the meeker you will become, the more you know of guilt, the humbler you will be. I say, apply this to the devil. He is a very great and monstrous sinner, and he knows it; but there is no being in the universe more proud than Satan, there is no being that possesses less meekness than he. No, my brother, we are not indebted to sin, nor to the corruption of our nature, nor in any way to ourselves for meekness, but to God only, for the slightest measure of this grace. And where does it show itself? Where does it best grow? Where is it most sweetly developed? Let my heart be conveyed to Calvary, let me sit under the shadow of the cross, let me be surrounded by the powerful blood of the Lamb, let me feel and know for myself that Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me, and I am then meek and lowly in heart; then I am childlike, and little, and humble in my own estimation, and shall surely feel that the brother that sits against me is better, and higher, and worthier than I; and if he mourns as I mourn, I shall feel that he never sinned so deeply as I did, but that I am the chiefest of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. "The Lord lifteth up the meek, but he casteth the wicked down to the ground." If we go into the house of God, leaning upon the Mediator and His work—if we fall upon the knee of devotion and prayer before the throne—if we have heartfelt fellowship with God—if we have real communion of soul with our heavenly Father—we welcome all God's sovereign will, feeling that all that will is love. Then a brother might smite us, we should not return the blow; or if a person cursed us, we should not be angry in return. If, however, one is not near to God, and the grace of meekness is not strong in its

influence, we may return anger for anger, and one hard word for another. Meekness thrives under the cross, and also before God's throne. Let us meditate upon the greatness and grandeur of our God, and let our souls enter believingly somewhat into the splendour, and grandeur, and majesty of Jehovah, and we cannot then be proud, nor feel that we are beings of any importance. Then all self-conceit and consequence leave us when we are immersed in the light of God's countenance, and surrounded by His splendour in Christ.

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

That godly man, Isaiah, was not a gross sinner, for he had been saved and pardoned, and yet all at once he says, "Woe is me!" What is the matter with him? "I am a man of unclean lips." Well, how did he know that? "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts," and I never before saw such a contrast as there is between the Lord of Hosts and myself, a poor sinful creature. "Woe is me." O let us meditate upon God, enter into his glory, be surrounded by the splendour of his excellencies, and we are humble, and little, and meek. Having made a promise to go quickly through the first part of the subject, that is all I will say on the character.

Now, in the second place, His *privilege and dignity*. "The Lord lifteth up the meek;" that is, He elevates his mind, his soul, his heart. Now experience comes into the subject here. One cannot speak upon this subject without being more or less experimental. Dejection—you know what that is. Depression of mind—you know what that is. Yes; but one may be dejected and depressed, and yet be proud, and inflated with a measure of consequence at the same time. Oh how important it is that we should be, when depressed and dejected, meek and humble, and feel as willing to remain in circumstantial darkness, if it be God's will, as we are to be raised out of it. "Not my will, but Thine be done," should it be best for me, Father, to remain in this condition. Amen—so be it. Yet permit me to breathe this petition at Thy throne; send me help from the sanctuary, and deliver me in Thy good time. Here is depression, and dejection, and meekness,—and He raiseth or lifteth up the meek. How does He do it? Well, we read of the shedding abroad of His love in the heart by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us, of an application of atoning blood, of the fulfilment of the promise or of the promises, of that mental state of things which sneerers at divine things call enthusiasm, of an exalted state of mind, and of elevated hopes and feelings. Oh when omnipotent mercy comes down underneath the depressed mind and the dejected heart, when the omnipotent and soft mercy of God comes thus underneath the mind, it bears it up beyond dejection and depression, and above the influence of circumstances. "He raised me out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and put a new song in my mouth." Oh the blessedness of being lifted up by God's hand! No angel can lift up a saint that is depressed, dejected and afflicted. The presence of all the angels of God would leave the tried believer in darkness and distress of mind, but—

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

Must we be meek in order to be so dealt with by God? We cannot be too low for God, but we may be too high. When we are very low, and helpless, and hopeless as to ourselves, then we are in a position to be lifted up by God, who "lifteth up the meek, but casteth the wicked down to the ground." We read, too, with regard to this lifting up, that the Lord raiseth the poor from the dust and the beggar from the dunghill, and that He "setteth him among princes, even

among the princes of his people? Who are the princes of his people? What do you think of Abel and Enoch, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? What do you think of those good men as princes? and what do you think of being seated with them? Why, we are seated with them in the kingdom, and the meek are with them in the Bible. Here we have their character drawn, their portraits given. God the Holy Ghost has photographed them for us, if I may so speak. The Lord lifteth the poor from the dust and the beggar from the dunghill, and takes them into affectionate association with these princes of the people. And he makes the meek to inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. By-and-bye, my dear brother, we shall leave the world and mortality, and these changing scenes, and pass away into those regions and realms, of which, while here, we form but a very faint and feeble conception. That will be a lifting up. Oh that will be a rising above the clouds for ever—above the storm and tempest for ever—above the possibility of weeping, and above all sorrow and all sin. I cannot tell what it is to be there, but our beloved friends who have recently passed away from us into those regions of unclouded day and unsullied glory, they know what it is to be both meek and elevated. They never were so meek on earth as they are now, and they never could have been so elevated, so exalted, as they are now. By-and-bye the clock of time will stop, and the mystery of God will be perfected and finished, and then our great High Priest will leave the holiest of all, draw aside the veil, come in all His official glory, with the trump of God and the voice of the archangel, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Then the meek shall be lifted up from the dust literally and eternally, and the wicked shall be cast down to the ground.

Let us offer, in the third place, *a few reflections* upon the subject. First of all, I notice that the text suggests or indicates *the rule of God's conduct*. "The Lord lifteth up the meek," and "casteth the wicked down to the ground." Here we have one of the rules by which God works. Now the peculiar nature of God requires this; for if He exalts anyone it must be the meek. It would be altogether inconsistent with the majesty of heaven to exalt the proud, or to sympathize with malice and anger: that would be unlike our God. His sympathies are necessarily with the meek. Anger, wrath, malice, He rejects, but He lifts up the meek, the humble and the lowly. The minister may be too high for the elevating hand of God, but too low he cannot be. Too high you may sit in your own estimation, but too low in the dust and in meekness for your God you cannot be. Rivers and streams always flow in valleys, and, as a rule, not upon hills or mountains; they seek the lowest levels, and there they flow; and the grace of God seeks the lowest levels, and there it flows most deeply and most copiously. The proud believer has a little grace, or he would not be a believer at all; but since he is governed by pride in a great measure, grace in his heart is shallow, weak, and feeble. The meek believer has great grace, for the Lord giveth it to the humble and the meek, whilst He casteth the wicked and the proud down to the ground. Here is the rule of God's conduct. Look at Nebuchadnezzar. We fancy we see him—his heart overflowing with pride and consequence, looking at Babylon, with its hanging gardens and wondrous walls, and all its pomp and riches and splendour. "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the glory of my majesty?" And God cast him down. Adam fell, for sin and pride swelled in his heart, and he was cast down to the ground. Angels fell, and it is said their sin was pride—and God instantaneously cast them down. Let us tell the truth:—The Christian is occasionally proud, self-conceited, and important; and does not a haughty spirit go before a fall? "Though all men deny Thee, yet will not I. I am ready to go to prison and to judgment with Thee." Have a care, Peter. Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. Such a spirit is the precursor of a fall. Pride is deeply hated

by God ; it is essentially offensive to the great Majesty of heaven. He casteth the wicked and wickedness down to the ground, whilst He lifteth up the meek. I do not know what induces me to go in this direction this morning. Most of my hearers are aware that I am a little out of my usual course ; but then I am not my own as a man, not my own as a saved sinner, not my own as a servant of the Most High God. My mind is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, here then we have, first, the rule of God's conduct,—the feeble, the faint, and those who are lowly before God, get the blessing. "The Lord lifteth up the meek."

Secondly, we have here *divine information given by God*. To whom ? To all whom it may concern. This is what the Lord intends to do, and what He has done in all ages of the world. First, it is information for the world itself, for it degrades the church, and sneers at the people of God. They persecute true believers. Though you say we live in excellent times, and there is no persecution now, let me declare the fact that the spirit of persecution exists to-day, as to its nature and properties, just as it was three hundred years ago. There is sometimes a persecuting look in the eye, which stings the heart very deeply. There is a mode of persecuting God's people even at the dinner table ; for I believe I have seen saints persecuted at home by their family at the table. Permit me to say—the very manner in which the food has been carved for and presented to them, has carried with it indications of hatred, bitterness, and persecution. Here is information for you, my friend ; here is intelligence from the throne of God. God has given you notice of the fact that He "lifteth up the meek." The man that you push down and tread upon, and whose name and honour you trample in the dust, that is the person that God cares for and loves, and whom He lifts up. "The Lord lifteth up the meek." If you cannot love the child of God as such, hold your tongue ; touch him not—he is a sacred character. He would not have been what he is had it not been for sovereign grace. He is God's workmanship and cannot help differing from you. Regard him, if you can, not as a hypocrite, not as a person full of whims and fancies ; regard him as the workmanship of God. By the grace of God he is what he is. God has given you information concerning him,—I will lift him up from the earth, and will cast you down. This is information for the devil ; and if the world do not believe it the devil does, and that necessarily ; for God, he knows, does exalt the meek, whilst he himself is cast down. But what is worse, if possible, the devil avails himself of this information in a manner that is just like himself ; for, knowing that God "lifteth up the meek," and casteth down the proud, he endeavours to make his people proud. Thus Satan makes it a part of his business to excite passion, and to light the fires of anger in our hearts, and to inflate us with self-importance and conceit, because it is God's method to lift up the meek, and cast the wicked down to the ground. He knows that God will not cast you away finally ; but he knows also that whilst pride prevails within you must live at a distance from God. Information for the devil ; and it is information for angels. They are meek, and in sympathy with the meek. A meek angel and a meek saint walk together. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation ?" Well, it is information.

Then it indicates divine operation. "The Lord lifteth up the meek." How ? Well, He worked all things after the counsel of His own divine will. He is always at work in relation to the devil, restraining him ; always working in connection with angels in heaven, and always working in the hearts of his dear people, and for them too. "He giveth more grace," and thus He lifts them up. What does it mean ? He gave us a merciful measure of grace in regeneration ; but He has given more since then. Meekness makes room for His grace, if I may so speak. Pride fills the heart, whilst meekness realises its emptiness. It

is one of the operations of meekness to empty the soul, or rather, to realise its need. Heart-emptiness is a state of things favourable to the reign of grace, and to the fulfilment of this text; for as new necessities sensibly arise He gives more grace; as new temptations come He gives more grace. But look rather at the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. I would impress this very deeply on your minds if I could. Take the fact, receive it, and carry it away with you. You have God dwelling within. God the Spirit is in you if you are Christians, for your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. This divine person is an internal workman. We are not to suppose that all our salvation is external,—that it was all done by grace on the cross or on the throne. No; there is a divine workman in the heart. And what then? He maketh intercession within, according to the will of God, and with groanings which cannot be uttered. There is a hand perpetually at work in the heart of the saint, and hence, says Paul, “I am confident of this very thing, that He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” There is a workman within, and another without. The Spirit interceding and working in the soul, and Christ interceding and working for the meek in heaven. I am not surprised, therefore, that the meek are lifted up, and divinely helped and blessed.

Fourthly, *this declaration has been verified*. A long cloud of witnesses are ready to prove, and they do prove, the truth of my text,—He “lifteth up the meek.” All in heaven are ready with their testimony to the faithfulness of God, and the truth of what is stated here. Let me take you for a moment to Babylon. There is Daniel and his conspiring enemies. O King, live for ever! Make a decree that not one of your subjects shall call upon any God for so many days, and sign it with the king’s signet. Let it be as the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” The decree was framed and signed; but notwithstanding, Daniel called upon his God; and the conspirators, watching him, rejoiced that they had caught him in the trap. What shall be done to him? Well, the decree must be executed, and he must be cast into the den of lions. His God, however, was with him there; and perhaps some of the happiest hours of Daniel’s life were passed in the lions’ den. “My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.” He is drawn out, and the conspirators are cast into the den, and before they reach the bottom the lions broke all their bones. It is not safe to touch the Lord’s anointed. “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” He “lifteth up the meek, but casteth the wicked down to the ground.” Well, here is true and everlasting comfort and consolation for all God’s beloved though tried people. But I have not time to go further into the subject. May the Lord command his blessing on the few remarks I have made, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE DIVINE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 1st AUGUST, 1880.

"I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

Ezek. xxxiv. 15.

THERE are several great and glorious doctrines of the Gospel which might be called central truths in connection with salvation, and one of them is that precious and powerful fact which is designated the everlasting love of God. This central truth has been uttered by God himself in a very forcible and comforting manner: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee;" and hence it is said elsewhere, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." There never was a period, therefore, in eternity (if we may speak of periods in connection with eternity) when God did not know and love his people, or when He did not know their circumstances and everything connected with their salvation and glorification. Hence the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting as to His purpose and decree, and to everlasting as to its operation, fruits and effects upon them that fear Him. And there are other truths of the Gospel which appear to emanate, so to speak, from this great central fact of our salvation. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ is the grand expression and embodiment of eternal love. God has loved his people, in his Son and will love them in Him for ever; and Jesus has brought this wondrous love of God from heaven to earth. Jesus came from Jehovah's heart, and is the great manifestation and expression of the infinite affections of the Father; therefore, the Apostle John says—"Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." He that knows Christ for himself knows the love of God, and he that embraces Christ for himself embraces all that God has to give. All the other doctrines of divine grace emanate from love divine, and all the promises also flow therefrom. Eternal redemption, justification and sanctification, with all other great revealed facts which constitute the meat and drink of spiritual minds proceed from everlasting love, and they are the medium through which God's grace flows into the heart. Every doctrine applied to the soul brings the sinner into vital connection with Jehovah, and by the Holy Spirit's power unites the heart to Deity; so that God's love flows through His truth applied to the conscience, and hence the sinner is said to know the love of God. The great facts stated in my text this morning are an illustration and a demonstration of God's love to his people. "I will feed my flock and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

Let us notice, in the first place, *the divine claim*. God, speaking of his people, says, "They are My flock." Let us look, in the second place, at *the divine engagement*: "I will feed My flock, and cause them to lie down." Let us, in the third place, contemplate *the comfort of the flock*, for it must be a comfort to be

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fed by such a Shepherd, and a pleasure and a blessing to be caused to lie down on green pastures by such a hand as that of God.

In the first place, let us look at the *divine claim*. God, contemplating his Israel and all the objects of his love, has been pleased to call them his flock. It is a great mercy to belong to the Lord, a mercy to hope that we are His sheep, a blessing to approach his throne, a favour to take hold of his strength, and a wondrous privilege to be embraced by God himself. God sometimes speaks to the heart, saying, "Thou art mine;" and thus addressed, his dear people say—"The Lord is our God." Now, the people of God are collectively considered a flock, descriptively considered they are sheep, and individually considered they are sheep and lambs. Hence, in the last verse of this chapter, we read, "And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God." Now a flock suggests the idea of numbers. In one respect God's flock is a little one, whilst in another respect it is large and numerous. Our Lord says, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." A few of God's sheep meet together here, and a few elsewhere, and these little congregations of spiritual and heavenly persons are indeed small and weak compared with the vast numbers that appear to be going down to the regions of eternal darkness and despair. Yet in another respect the flock of Christ is large and numerous, and hence the heavens will be filled with a number which no man can number. Christ knows the number of the sheep, but no creature can count them. No minister of the Gospel and no angel can number the sheep of the everlasting God. I apprehend that the heavens that have been prepared for this flock are very large, and the kingdom of glory is very extensive. I have no idea that heaven is a small world, or that the pastures of eternal pleasure are limited. Why may we not believe that heaven is, of all the worlds God has made, the largest, as we know it is the most glorious; and of that sheep-fold, that pasture of eternal glory, we are assured that it shall be universally covered with sheep, or that our Father's house above shall be well filled with the large family of his grace. What God intends hereafter to do on the earth we do not know; one thing, however, is certain—the dear Redeemer, the great Shepherd of Israel is on his throne, and he is perpetually saving sinners and gradually taking them to heaven. Probably during the latter times or the last ages of the world considerable numbers of sinners may be saved, brought into the fold, fitted for heaven, and conducted into the regions of the blessed. It is not, however, for us to speculate here. The flock of Christ, when it shall be gathered, when all the sheep shall be at home, or when all the ransomed of the Lord shall be found before the throne shall consist of a number which no man can number. A most important and the most important question to us is this—Are we sheep? Do we belong to this glorious Shepherd? Have we been called, and gathered, and brought into the fold? Do we know Immanuel's precious name, and are we followers of the Lamb whithersoever he goes?—

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

These feelings characterise the sheep and the lambs of Jesus Christ; and if those words are descriptive of your experience, there is a principle of life in your hearts, a principle of love to Jesus in your souls, and it is not in God to smite you judiciously—not in Him to send such souls down to the regions of darkness and woe. Oh, it is a blessing to be under concern, to have convictions, to be an enquirer. There are thousands, perhaps millions, in this city of London who do

not appear to be holy, heavenly, or spiritual enquirers. If we are under concern—if we are spiritual and heavenly enquirers after the Shepherd and his pastures—we belong to the flock of Jesus, and the Shepherd died for us. What some good old poet quaintly says is true or descriptive of your experience and mine: “Every sheep delights to hide under the tree where Jesus died;” and if you are a sheep and the purchase of the Saviour’s blood, you are enquiring for that tree, and for the bleeding Shepherd, and for the fountain opened, and God claims you as his own, and the promise or engagement mentioned in my text looks favourably and mercifully upon you—“I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.”

But a flock suggests to us not only the idea of numbers, but those of unity and variety. The church of God is one. Part of the flock are in heaven,—part of them are on the earth. The people of God, however, are one—one in Christ, one in his salvation, one in the love of God, one before the mercy-seat, one beneath the cross, one as to their life, and one as to their experience; and yet there is wonderful variety in his flock or in the church of God. In a flock there are sheep and lambs, and this is true of the people of God. Here sits one, it may be, that has just been born again; and although he is a spiritual person he scarcely knows what or where he is, and certainly he does not know whither he is going; but the life of God is in his soul, and he shall grow and become fat and strong and reach the pastures prepared above. Yonder sits another who has known the Lord for many years, his faith is strong, his confidence is steady, his hope is high and firm, and he lives, as a good old saint said to me, above the smoke of the chimney; he is above the clouds, and not much affected by circumstantial troubles and trials; he is a strong sheep—grace has made him so. He is not, however, dearer to the Master than this new-born lamb, nor worth more than this little child of God who is filled with fear, and doubt, and anxiety. The flock could not be complete without that little lamb; and the presence of that fat and strong one does not render the flock more complete, and therefore we have the idea of unity and variety. But we have the idea of association too; for sheep gather together and feed, and lie down and rest together, and so, when grace takes possession of the heart of a sinner, that person wants not only the Shepherd, he longs for kindred spirits—he looks for Christians, for believers, for saints, and when he has found a fold and a portion of the flock of Christ, he sings—

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

Thus when Peter and others were discharged by the magistrates, we are told they went to their own company. Yes, they sought the fold and the flock; for Peter had no idea of associating with the enemies of Christ or with mere professors of religion. When grace sets a sinner free from the love, reign and power of sin, he wants kindred spirits and seeks for the people of God, and when he finds a little group with whom he can sympathise, and for whom he can pray, he feeds, rests, worships, and lies down with them, and blesses God for Christian fellowship and the communion of saints on earth. The Lord says—My people are my flock. But does it not indicate dependence also?—for what animal is more dependent than the sheep? I will not speak positively, but I think I am correct—there are animals of almost every description living in a wild state, but few or no wild sheep. A flock of sheep needs a shepherd and cannot exist without one. Sheep are so defenceless, so exposed to danger, and so surrounded by enemies that they cannot exist without a protector and protection; and we may apply this to the dear saints of God. Jesus is the Shepherd of Israel, and Israel, his church or flock, exists because their Shepherd lives, and hence He

says—"Because I live, ye shall live also." Oh how defenceless are God's people without their God! How exposed to danger and death, which would swallow them up, were it not that God is their Shepherd and Keeper day by day. When we see a Christian persevere in a course of holiness through evil and through good report, when we see his religion flourish and his graces grow, when we see him triumph over difficulties and dangers, obtaining victories over his foes day by day, we may at once conclude that he receives influence from heaven, and that he is interested in the living reign and in the reigning life of our great Lord in heaven. Christianity is not self-sustaining. The believer is not a self-supporting character. Underneath are the everlasting arms, and as there is nothing superfluous in the government of God, that arrangement is a divine necessity; for should God withdraw his everlasting arms from underneath his church, his flock would fall, and all heaven would be disappointed for ever. "I will feed my flock, and cause them to lie down saith the Lord God."

Now this flock of the Lord Jesus Christ is a *growing* flock, for although we have spoken of its numbers, and of the fact that its number is known by God, yet, in a certain respect, it is continually increasing, and will, I apprehend, continue to grow until the end of time. As natural births and deaths are taking place, so spiritual births and deaths are occurring in this world. Jesus lives to send the Spirit, and the Spirit is at work on earth, entering the hearts of the dead, regenerating and quickening them into spiritual life, and everyone that cries for mercy from spiritual feelings, is a new-born soul, and every new-born soul is an addition to the flock of Jesus Christ. There are two doors open in the fold here—one that opens into heaven, and one that opens from the world. From the world the Holy Ghost is bringing the lost sheep into the fold, and through the other door Jesus the Shepherd of souls is conducting his people to the realms of endless happiness. Saints are perpetually going into the pasture of glory, and sinners are perpetually coming into the pastures of grace; and if we had spiritual powers, and could really discern what our Lord is doing upon His throne, upon the minds of coming sinners, upon the minds of saints here, and upon the minds of dying believers, perhaps we should never care to think about worldly things again, or to contemplate again the little matters of this poor dying world. Christ, the Shepherd of Israel, causing the folded sheep to lie down, calling others that have been long folded home to heaven, and finding those that were lost, putting them upon His shoulder, and bringing them into His fold on the earth. My flock "I will feed them, and cause them to lie down, saith the Lord." Well, now, every sheep is marked with the eternal name of the Shepherd. There are some persons who tell us that God may obliterate His name from His sheep, and that they may cease to be His property and His beloved ones. Now, since no hand but God's can write this name upon the sheep, and He is of one mind and none can turn Him, I am sure that having written it upon you, He will never remove it or suffer it to be obliterated—He will save you every day for His name's sake. He says, as it were, have I not written my name upon him? Is he not therefore mine, one of my sheep? and are not my honour, my glory, and my life bound up with his safety and his life? Yes, for

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

There is, however, this fact in connection with what I am dwelling upon—viz., that whilst the name of Christ is written upon every sheep, every Christian cannot see that name for himself. His fellow-believers can see it, but he cannot. Almost every other sheep in the fold or the pastures can see his religion, his

Christianity, and his spirituality, but he cannot see it satisfactorily for himself. But Christ has saved him, and marked him for heaven with His own great name.

In the next place, we notice the Proprietor of these persons or of this flock. God says, "It is mine." "I know my sheep, says the Lord Jesus, and I give unto them eternal life : and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." They are God's people by every important tie, and on every high and glorious ground. He made them, He redeemed them, He rescues them from the hand of the devil and from the world, He transforms them, He washes them, and makes them whiter than snow in His own blood ; he produces in them that very state of things which heaven, and God, and angels, and their happiness require. They are His workmanship. Angels admit it, and the devil admits it also, and is enraged at the fact that the Christian is the special, the spiritual, and the gracious workmanship of God. Go and rescue a sinner from the hands of the devil. Go and preach law and condemnation, and sorrow and suffering, as long as you will, the devil, in spite of all that, will hold fast the soul. Jesus, however, comes and claims him. He comes to the world and takes the soul out of its power ; he comes to the devil and takes the mind that He intends to save out of his hand. Deliver up that captive and let him go free ; for he is mine, says the Great Shepherd of Israel ; and the devil, though mighty and though full of rage, can never be a match for the infinite love of the great Shepherd of Israel. Is it a fact that having died for sinners and having died for me He may not have them and me ? Is it a fact that they may be lost, and that Jesus died for them in vain ? No ! His blood demands their salvation, and the cross of Christ requires their deliverance from death. If Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us, He will take us out of the world and out of the devil's service, from under the law, and out of ourselves and put us into His own bosom, and whisper that we are His. I will feed my flock, and cause them to lie down. Your Lord will never disown, neglect, nor forget you. If He ever thought of you and should not change, He will always think of you. If He ever loved you and should not change, He will love you unto the end. If His grace has made you sheep, and that grace should not alter, you will be His sheep as long as there is grace in the Shepherd's heart. "I will feed my flock and cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

Then thirdly, all this implies a Divine arrangement to fulfil this promise. I will feed them and cause them to lie down. What is this arrangement ? Well, look at the relation in which the sheep stand to Christ and Christ to them. He was constituted their Shepherd, and they were made his charge. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them Me" ; and I hesitate not to say that He has had His eye upon them ever since He received them from His Father's hands,

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

When He received you from His Father, and you became the great Immanuel's charge, Christ fixed His omniscient eyes upon you, and they have been upon your person ever since ; and He will see you through the world, through sin, and through all your temptations into heaven itself, to possess all its bliss and all its glory, for Christ is responsible for your salvation and glorification. Well, then, further, with respect to this Divine arrangement, places have been prepared for the Lord's people. Heaven is a prepared place, and hence, "Enter the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Two other places have been prepared for them—a place before the throne of grace, and a place beneath the cross. Under the cross you are sometimes privileged to sit—yes, there you are

favoured to lie down and experience the fulfilment of the promise in the text, "I will feed my sheep and cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." Then a place has been provided for you before the throne, and I think I see you, if I may speak for others, when pursued by the devil, when tried by the world, when oppressed with trouble, leave the family and the world and your fellow-men, and creep privately into the presence of your God to pray. Yes, you enter into the holiest of all, where no eye but God's sees you, and no ear but His hears you, and there you pour forth the feelings of your hearts and the wants of your souls. All this tends to complete the fulfilment of what is written here : "I will feed my sheep, and cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

Well now, let us pass on and notice secondly *the divine engagement*. I have been dwelling upon the claim. Here we have a divine engagement—"I will feed my flock, and cause them to lie down." Now this appears to me to amount to a divine and solemn obligation, and when I use the word "obligation" in relation to God or Christ I always feel that I am using very grave and important language. The word "obligation" should never be applied to God in connection with salvation except on the grounds of the covenant of eternal grace and mercy by which our God has bound himself to do certain things. He has pledged himself to take a particular course, and he cannot break His promise. This divine obligation can never be nullified, and He does not desire that it should become void. The Lord Jesus having assumed this obligation delights in it, and glories in fulfilling His engagement. We do not always delight in the engagements we make, and the fulfilment of them occasionally gives us pain, being contrary to our wishes and our will ; but our Lord is heartily in this great work of feeding His flock and causing them to lie down. His mind, His all is in it ; not only His power, but all His tenderness and sympathy, and love and affection ; and when a sheep lies down and rests under the softening influence of His love he looks on with delight, complacency, and satisfaction. I will feed them and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord. If this engagement were not fulfilled, the Father would be disappointed, the word of God would become void and untrustworthy, and Jesus would lose his character. He therefore having pledged himself to feed the sheep, to lead the flock, and to save Israel with an everlasting salvation, stands responsible for the peopling of the heavens, and for the safety of God's people here and hereafter. Can you rest here, my dear hearers ; those of you who know the Lord, can you rest here ? I will feed and I will cause to lie down. He is bound to do this. Can you rest upon this engagement ? Can you take it and convert it into prayer ? Thou hast promised to feed me and to give me rest, be it unto me according to thy Word. This divine engagement has been revealed and that for the information of all parties concerned. Angels know it, devils know it, the world may know it if they choose to give themselves the trouble to read the letter of divine truth, they may know what God's intentions towards His people are and what Christ is doing for them. He is feeding the saint and causing him to lie down and rest. A divine obligation. But here we have divine provision as well. I suppose that since God has promised to feed his people and cause them to lie down, the food is suited to their minds and the resting-place to their souls. Hence David says, "He leadeth me into green pastures, and causeth me to lie down beside the still waters. And what are these green pastures ? They are divinely provided and prepared. Where are they ? Just before the Shepherd's throne, which adjoins them, and the sheep feed and rest before heaven and beneath the Shepherd's eye, and the God of Israel viewing the pasture, the provision made, and all the sheep feeding and resting therein, says, "They are mine," and I feed them and cause them to lie down, saith the Lord. He that made the mind knows what it needs and wants, and he that redeemed and sanctified the immortal soul will feed and

satisfy it for ever. When divine truth is applied, and the promises are brought home to our hearts, do we not feel how divinely suited they are to our circumstances and requirements? Nothing in the world is half so sweet, and the world's best can never be half so precious or so profitable as five minutes intercourse with God, which melts the heart, warms the affections, and ravishes the soul. In fellowship and communion with the Most High we feed and rest. This deadens to the world, embitters sin, and dignifies and ennobles God's beloved people. Call it fanaticism or any other name you choose, religion is something more than notion, something is really known and felt; and if our souls are fed by God's hand here, and we lie down and rest before Christ's throne, we certainly feel and realize something; and therefore we have divine provision.

Then, thirdly, there is the divine act, I will feed and cause them to lie down. A certain operation is performed by the hand of God. He brings his people into sympathy with Himself and with the provision He has made for them and with the home He has prepared for them, so that the sheep love their Shepherd, their pasture, their food, and their eternal home. By what act does he feed the soul and cause it to rest? First he composes the mind, tranquillises all the feelings of the heart, and produces a state of calmness and serenity which is altogether spiritual and divine. But how? for he says—I will do it. Take the conscience pierced and stung with guilt and sin, and preach peace to it,—make it lie down,—give it rest,—satisfy it. You cannot do it, any more than you can cause a sheep to lie down and rest naturally, if it be hungry or in fear or pain. The suffering conscience can be eased only by God, who says—I will cause it to lie down. The blood of the Shepherd is applied, and guilt is thereby extracted, and the wounded soul is healed; filth and uncleanness are removed, peace pervades the mind, and all is tranquil and serene. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me" is food for minds and rest for souls. In this manner he makes His sheep lie down. Then there is the testimony of the Holy Ghost bearing witness with our hearts that we are the children of God. Then there is rest in relation to providence. How will it be with us to-morrow, next week, or next year? Some of the people of God are exceedingly tried and troubled with regard to temporal matters. "I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord of all," by giving them unbounded faith in the goodness of My providence in the wisdom of My arrangement. I will help them to leave themselves, their families, their business, and all their concerns in my hand—and thus He causes His flock to lie down. I can knock a sheep down, and perhaps, as an under-shepherd, I may have done so in preaching occasionally, but I cannot cause one to lie down of itself voluntarily. This is a divine act—this is the Shepherd's work—I will feed and cause them to lie down. Force a sheep down, knock it down, hold it down you may, but you cannot cause it to lie down. If Jesus the Shepherd comes and applies His blood and whispers to the heart, he produces holy serenity and tranquillity within; and the soul is satisfied and has enough. Let me just call attention to another point here, and that is the order in which these two blessings are promised. First I will feed and then, secondly, cause them to lie down; for if they are hungry they will not lie down: if they are in want, they can feel or experience no rest. Therefore God feeds, fills, and satisfies them, and then they rest. This is also indicative of health and of the absence of pain and fear. If a dog rushes into the fold or the pasture, the sheep are terrified, they all rise and flee. If no fear, however, is felt and all objects of terror are gone, and pain has been removed, and the hungry soul has been satisfied, then the soul finds peace and rest.

Now, thirdly and lastly, as time is just gone, *the comfort of the flock*. We have two or three points just to mention. Lying down indicates, first, satisfaction, secondly rest, and thirdly security. In the first place, here is satisfaction. There

have been times when we were satisfied with our salvation, with the providence of God, with God Himself, with what He has done, and with what He has promised to do. We have had enough, our hearts have been filled—in a word, we have been fed and caused to lie down. Then, secondly, we have the idea of rest. Lie down and rest. Not lie down anywhere, but on God's premises, on heavenly ground, where there is safety; on the mediation of Jesus, under the shadow of the cross, under the shadow of his throne, under the shadow of his intercession, where justice cannot smite us, where the law cannot curse us, where death cannot sting us, where all God's people lie, and where none but God's dear people are found. Lie down and rest, and these people come a good way for this rest, and sometimes they press through very thick and solemn difficulties. They come all the way from the world, all the way from Sinai, through temptation, and doubt, and fear, and trial. They come to the fold, come to the pasture, come to experience this sweet and heavenly rest. And, lastly, we have security. I will cause them to lie down, surrounded by Myself. It is not an open field, an exposed pasture, without hedges or fences—"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear him." God is under the flock, the Shepherd is round about the flock, he is in the midst of the flock, he keeps the fold. All is His, and He is a Shepherd, not of bodies merely, but a Shepherd and Bishop of souls. The Lord add his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE SAVIOUR'S LAST WORD AND DEED ON THE CROSS.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 8th AUGUST, 1880.

"And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."—Mark xv. 37.

WE have a very beautiful and touching representation of Christ and His church in the Song of Solomon. Jesus Christ is exhibited as the heavenly Bridegroom, and His church and people as His spiritual, beloved, and heavenly bride. Occasionally they appear together, holding sweet fellowship and communion with each other; occasionally they are separated, and then the bride is sad, her heart is heavy and distressed, and her language is that of complaint and sorrow. The daughters of Jerusalem are represented as attending the bride of the Lord Jesus, and on one occasion she says to them, "If ye find my Beloved, tell him that I am sick of love. To this charge they reply, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? that thou dost so charge us." This question having been put to the bride, she proceeds to draw a full length portrait of her beloved Lord. She describes Him as white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand; and, commencing with His head, which she compares to the most fine gold, she traces His beauties and His glories down to His feet; and having finished her description of Christ, she says, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." But I am sure it occurs to some of my hearers that in the church's description of the glories of her Husband she says, "His mouth is most sweet." She had previously said, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine;" and the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ is always sweet to the Christian. It is always sweet to the sensible sinner, to the tempted believer, and to the departing child of God. The mouth of Jesus is sweet in relation to His ancient and eternal engagements; for in the council chamber of eternity He solemnly bound himself to save them, to sanctify them, to see them safely through this world and to finally introduce them into the world of the blest; and when the mind is carried up to those ancient scenes of love, and the heart is favoured by faith to contemplate them, then the believer says, The mouth of my Beloved is most sweet. The mouth of Jesus is always sweet in relation to His promises; for they are all Yea and Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Every promise breathes the love of His heart, it expresses the merciful intentions of His mind, and it binds Him to a particular course concerning the welfare of His people; and when His promises fall as it were from His own lips upon our hearts, we realize the meaning of the church's language, "His mouth is most sweet."

The mouth of Jesus is very sweet in connection with the cross. Has it not occurred to some of our hearers that the Lord Jesus spoke seven times after they had nailed Him to the tree? In the first place, He said—"Father, forgive them;

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for they know not what they do." And in this prayer for sinners His mouth is most sweet. I know, said Jesus, elsewhere addressing His Father—"That Thou hearest Me always." Of course that prayer on the cross was heard, and, consequently, on the day of Pentecost, three thousand were pricked in their hearts; and, doubtless, among them were many who were actually engaged in His crucifixion. To behold the dear Redeemer nailed to the accursed tree: to see Him bleed and suffer, and then to sit beneath His shadow and hear Him breathe this prayer—"Father, for my sake, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—is, spiritually and unspeakably sweet to the broken heart of the sensible sinner. In the second place, Jesus said on the cross—"I thirst," in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. He thirsted naturally and intensely, but He thirsted penally also; and therefore as no being on the earth had ever thirsted before. They gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall, but He received it not. He thirsted that we might never so thirst, that He might qualify Himself, so to speak, to satisfy the thirsty soul; and He so thirsted that we might spiritually hunger and thirst after righteousness. In the third place, Christ said on the cross—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He was then in darkness such as had never before been experienced on the earth; He was then in penal darkness, his Father having left Him and turned His face away from Him. This experience was altogether new to the dear Redeemer, and therefore He cried—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He did not lose His faith or His confidence in God, for a doubt or an unbelieving fear in His mind would have left Him imperfect and unfitted Him for the great work of saving sinners, and therefore he said—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yes, Jesus was then left alone—left of angels, of His disciples, and of His Father, and then all the powers of darkness rushed in. Jesus was deserted, that we might never be forsaken, and He was left that He might be able to sympathise with souls in solitude; for, having been alone, He knows what darkness is, having felt it Himself.

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

In this respect also His mouth is most sweet. Then, in the next place, He said, looking at the dying thief—"This day Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." How sweet were those words—not to the Thief only, but they are most sweet and precious to God's beloved people now. Then, looking at John and his own weeping and suffering mother, He, with the perfection of human tenderness, said to the beloved disciple—"Behold thy mother," and to His mother—"Woman, behold thy Son." Then, in the next place, He cried with a loud voice and said—"It is finished." Six times the Saviour spoke on the cross, and every word is most sweet. And then, lastly, He said—"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and He gave up the ghost. "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." But we have to do this morning with the verse we have read—"Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."

There are two things in the words before us. First, *the last word*, and secondly, *the last act* of Jesus Christ on the cross. The last word—and He cried with a loud voice. The last act He performed on the tree; and He gave up the ghost into the hands of His Father.

A few thoughts, in the first place, on a very solemn subject; and may the Lord solemnise our minds and spiritualise our feelings; may the Holy Ghost be pleased to take our thoughts and hearts to Calvary, and enable us to sit down and watch the dying Saviour there. The tree, the cross of Jesus, is a central object—the great mystery of mercy, that attracts all the thousands of broken-hearted sinners.

“ There we would sit for ever viewing
 Mercy's streams in streams of blood;
 Precious drops, our souls bedewing,
 Plead and claim our peace with God.”

If we must meet the devil we would meet him there ; and if we must have sorrow, trouble and trial, we would feel them there ; and if we must experience the hidings of our Father's face, we would, nevertheless, sit under the shadow of the cross and wait till He reappears ; and since we must die, we would depart under the soul-purifying influence of the Saviour's precious blood, and so glide out of the body into the house not made with hands, and out of time into eternity, and so pass beyond the ever-changing scenes of earth to that eternal bliss which God has prepared for all His ransomed people. We have, however, now to consider the last word of the Saviour—“ And He cried with a loud voice,” or he shouted in death.

I notice, first, *the Person*, spoken of Jesus our suffering and saving Lord. I apprehend that this was the shout of our great and saving *Surety*, who—and I use the word thoughtfully and seriously—had become responsible for the salvation of millions. He had pledged His name, His word, and His honour for the perfect payment of all the debts of His people. Every eye in heaven was upon Him, and perhaps we may say that the eyes of countless enemies were upon Him also ; the devil knew that Jesus was engaged to save, and therefore his eye was upon the suffering Surety of the Covenant of Grace. Christ was responsible for all that were then in heaven, a most important point and well worth your earnest attention. He was responsible for the honourable and eternal salvation of all that were then with God in glory. Abel and Enoch were there ; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were there. Thousands, and perhaps millions, of God's people were in heaven when Christ was on the cross. Their debts had not been actually paid, and Jesus had not actually died for them. The righteousness which Jesus had promised or engaged to work out had not, then been actually completed, and yet they were at home, they were in bliss, they were glorified. Justice admitted them into heaven as they died, and their glory there was perfect and complete, notwithstanding that the debt-book had not been crossed and satisfaction for their sins had not been actually made. Jesus was therefore held responsible for the payment of all they owed, and for the expiation of the guilt they had contracted. He had His eye upon them all when He hung on the tree, and having the debt-book before him, He saw their names and the terrible amount that stood against them. He proceeded to pay all their debts and the debts also of other millions that were destined to be united with them in heaven. He obeyed, and bled, and suffered, and died for each and all ; and when He had reached the last name, and paid the very last mite, He cried with a loud voice, as the Surety of the whole church, and said—“ It is finished ; it is done ; and bowed His head and gave up the ghost.” It was the shout of our Surety. The righteousness was completed ; the demands of God were covered ; the liabilities of the sinner were met and discharged ; and all the wants and requirements of countless millions were provided for ; and the Saviour shouted and gave up the ghost. It was the shout of our Surety ; He had acquired a right to be acquitted, and a right to the acquittal of millions with Himself. All that He represented He obtained a right to possess ; and before He died and gave up the ghost, He demanded their release, their acquittal, and their everlasting salvation.

Having a great subject and limited time, let us proceed. In the second place, we notice that it was the shout of *a Sufferer*—the great Sufferer for sin. His sufferings were ended. That great branch of His work was completed and finished. The sufferings of our Lord commenced at His birth, and He lived in and waded through them for nearly three-and-thirty years. Privation and poverty marked His birth. Privation and poverty marked the whole of His

life. When He was preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and one said to Him, "Master, I will follow thee," he said—Sit down and count the cost, "for foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He provided pillows for other heads, and beds for other bodies, and comforts for all creatures—yet, at the very time He was opening His hand and satisfying the desires of every living thing, He was Himself in voluntary privation and poverty. He was the fountain of life and the seat and centre of all spiritual and eternal rest—yet He would live in poverty that He might sanctify it, and be able to sympathise with His people therein, and, as a brother born for adversity, walk through all the sorrows of all His brethren. His sufferings were not natural, not common, not ordinary sufferings; but penal, for He was regarded as a transgressor; and as *the* one criminal. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all. There never were so many sins gathered together before. Transgression and guilt never before appeared in so vast a mass. God, His Father, brought sin upon His Son from all quarters, from all parts, from all generations, and from all ages; and hence, in the 53rd of Isaiah, it is said—"The Lord hath made to meet on Him the iniquities of us all." There was the suffering Saviour, and upon Him was the accumulated guilt of accumulated millions. God ordered our sins to come towards Christ, and they rushed from all points towards the cross and lay upon one Great Being, who was, in consequence thereof, considered the criminal; and His sufferings were consequently penal sufferings. He suffered for the crimes with which He had been charged, and for the guilt which had been imputed to Him. The curse fell for hours, and fell incessantly upon our suffering Lord; and there was no interval of ease or comfort. The terrible storm raged while He was on the cross as it had raged during the whole of the preceding night; and when He was prostrate in the Garden of Gethsemane, the curse continued to fall until it was exhausted. When the fires of divine wrath were kindled, they surrounded the suffering Saviour—they scorched His body, they scorched His soul, they scorched His feelings and His thoughts, and they enveloped His whole person. My moisture is dried up within me like the drought of summer. All my bones are out of joint. My heart within me is melted like wax;—and it required something terrible to effect all this, and to melt like wax such a heart as His. The fire that melted it was the fire of wrath, and the curse that fell was that which was due to sin. Indeed, our hell was there, and Christ went into it and extinguished it; and when the last curse had fallen and the last spark of wrath was quenched, then the Saviour shouted or cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. There are sufferings for you and me; but no penal sufferings. God will chastise and correct His children, and visit them with painful operations of providence and grace; but He uses a fatherly rod, and not a sword. He mixes a bitter cup for us sometimes; but never a cup of wrath. He sometimes frowns or seems to frown upon us; but it is an expression of the displeasure of His love, while His frowns upon His dear Son were penal and indicative of anger, wrath, and curse. When, therefore, the Saviour had reached the other side of His sufferings and found that he was accepted, he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

Then, thirdly, it was the shout of a *Saviour*—not only of a Surety and a Sufferer—it was the shout of a Saviour—"Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins." He took all the church in the all-comprehending arms of His love and mercy, and placed them in His bosom and His heart and carried them with Him through His sufferings. The sea of wrath lay between the suffering Saviour and heaven; and Jesus entered it, voluntarily and confidently—determined to save. He entered that sea and carried with Him His charge, His wife, all those beings, those saints, that shall live in glory for ever. He carried them all with Him through the sea of suffering; and, having reached the opposite shore, He said—"Not one of them is lost;" and,

standing on that salvation shore, he said—"Israel shall be saved in Myself, the Lord, with an everlasting salvation." He had gained the prize; He had won the victory; He had fulfilled His engagements; He stood on new ground, and placed His church confidently before His Father's face, having made it nigh by the blood of His cross; and, having saved us honourably, and equitably, and completely, and eternally, He cried with a loud voice. Looking at His blood-redeemed people, the millions He had ransomed, and regarding His approving Father on His throne, He shouted and gave up the ghost.

Lastly, with regard to the person of the Speaker, it was the shout of a *Conqueror*. Not only the shout of a Surety, a Sufferer, and a Saviour—it was the Conqueror's shout. The world had been overcome, and it lay before the dying Saviour's eyes. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. You will have to go through it, and it will persecute you as you pass through it, and you will have many sorrows, trials and afflictions therein. Cheer up, I have overcome it. Then, secondly, Satan was conquered, defeated, spoiled, and that in all respects. As a serpent—his head was then crushed. As a lion—the Lion of the tribe of Judah had met the prince of darkness and overcome him. As a tempter—Jesus had been with him forty days, and the devil had exhausted all his temptations. As a liar—Christ the eternal Truth had overcome him, the arch-liar. As a tormentor—Christ had overcome him in that character. As a destroyer—his name is Abaddon and Appolyon a destroyer. He cried with a loud voice—Appolyon, the world and Death were overcome before the cross. The bitterness of death was passed, for he met and drank it. Death had lost his sting, and all were overcome, and the way to heaven was completed; and the Conqueror shouted and gave up the ghost.

Secondly, let us look at the *place*—it was Calvary, Golgotha, the place of a skull, or, in other words, the shouting Saviour and Conqueror was on the cross. —He had been mute before He was nailed to the tree, for He opened not His mouth. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." He had voluntarily placed Himself in that position, and it was not for Him, therefore, to express regret, discontent, or a change of mind. There were His solemn engagements before Him; and, as we have just said, our debts and all the curses of God were before Him, and He had engaged to meet, to pay, and to exhaust them all, and He opened not His mouth until He had done this. He opened not His mouth and was dumb. There is a time to speak, and a time to be silent. There was a time for Jesus to hold his peace, and there was a time for Him to speak, and a time for Him to shout. He did not shout until His work was finished; but when it was finished, and God expressed His satisfaction with it, he might well cry with a loud voice and shout—"The glorious work is done." But what shall we say about the cross? I wish I could give you a picture, a true picture of it. Have we no ideas of it beyond the fact that it was composed of two pieces of wood? I am sometimes afraid that that is almost the whole of our ideas of the accursed tree. Two pieces of wood nailed together and the dear Saviour stretched upon it. Well, that was the literal or material cross of Jesus, and which the Catholics, and the Ritualists—a certain section of the Church of England—think so much about. Why, if the wooden cross of Christ were here this morning, I would attribute no saving, sanctifying importance to it whatever. What do we understand by the cross? How shall I represent it to you? The cross of Christ was the collection, and association, and embodiment of all evil; all evil was there—the whole of it. Sin, curse, raging devils, angry wicked men, stinging death, the dark grave—all the woful consequences of Adam's fall, and all the woful consequences of man's actual transgression—all the wrath of God, the wrath of hell, and the wrath of the world were around the cross of Jesus. There He cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. If the cross itself was the association and embodiment of all evils, He that hung upon it was the embodiment of all good; so that we

have a marvellous contrast here :—the cross, a conglomeration of all that was abominable and evil : He that was nailed to it a combination of all that is good everywhere. All the love of God was in Him ; all the salvation of millions was in Him ; all that was precious to saved sinners was in Him. There hung our hope ; there hung the ground of our expectations ; there hung the cost of our heaven ; there hung our all ; and there Jesus cried with a loud voice. Three worlds were represented on Calvary. Heaven was represented ; the Father was there—Jesus was there—and I should think angels were not far off : “ which things the angels desire to look into.” This world was represented, and a wonderful representation it was ; all classes and conditions of mankind were to be found at the cross of Jesus. Hell was there. “ Now is your hour and the power of darkness.” Brethren, think of the cross, and think of it spiritually and graciously, and avoid—I had almost said—connection with those dangerous men and women who are ever more literalising and carnalising this great and mysterious and solemn cross of Christ. It is not a silver cross dangling from the neck—not a black one dangling from the side : that is not the kind of cross that Paul gloried in when he said, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus. The cross, that represented every evil ; and the Sufferer upon it, that represented every excellency and every good. And then, again, all characters were represented there—the wicked, and the righteous, and young converts. There were thieves, there were priests, there were pharisees, there were sinners, there were Gentile soldiers, there were saints, there were devils,—all seem to have been represented at the cross of Jesus. There was the roaring devil, the powers of darkness ; there were the raging Jews, there were the savage Gentile soldiers, there were the two abominable thieves, and yonder, in the distance, was the mother of the Saviour, and Peter and others sitting and watching Him there. All were represented at the cross of Christ, and all the attributes of God were there in Christ, and all of them appeared in operation. Sovereignty taking possession of the heart of a thief, and the power of divine grace transforming him in a moment and saving him, and the Saviour washing him in His blood—casting His delighted eyes upon Him, and saying—“ To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” What wondrous operations appear on Calvary, Golgotha, on the cross where the Saviour died ! Thus much for the person of the Speaker and the place.

Thirdly, *the fact*—He cried with a loud voice—He was not exhausted ; no being ever died as the Saviour died. We, as a rule, die gradually. Gradually our physical and perhaps our mental powers fail. Gradually our strength passes away, so that during the last few minutes of one's life, one is unable to articulate, and shouting on a dying bed and in a dying moment is impossible ; but Jesus shouted at the last moment. His life was whole within Him—all His strength was there—He was not exhausted. We have not a weak Saviour. He fell ; but He brought down all the powers of darkness with Him when He fell. He died, but eternal life comes out of His death ; and surely that death which yields eternal life must have been the death of a strong One—the death of an Almighty One. Yes, He was strong and mighty to save, and cried with a loud voice. Why, it was the voice of confidence and triumph ; He had no fear, no doubt, no anxiety as to whether or not He and His work would be accepted. There was the price, there was the obedience, there was the atonement, and He confidently put the whole into the hands of His Father and knew that they were worthy of His acceptance, and that they were all He had engaged they should be, and therefore conscious of personal perfection and official purity and completeness, He cried with a loud voice, and three worlds heard the shout. Heaven heard it, hell heard it, and this world heard it. And this shout of the dear Redeemer shook Judaism, and in a short time it fell all to pieces ; it shook the Jewish nation, and in a short time it was dispersed. “ Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word yet once more

signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain." And what things are they? The Gospel dispensation, salvation by grace, the kingdom of God's dear Son. The shout of the Redeemer shook the kingdom of the devil to its centre, and from or beside those ruins arose the temple and the kingdom of the dearly-beloved Son of God. Have you not heard a great deal of unmeaning talk about the words, "Now is the accepted time : behold, now is the day of salvation?" Why, when the dear Redeemer emerged from a long night—when He cried with a loud voice, then the darkness was passed, and the true light began to shine. He emerged from an old, an obsolete state of things—types, ceremonies and shadows were all behind Him, and He came forth as the Son Righteousness to inaugurate another state of things and to commence a new and an everlasting day. When the Saviour shouted, then was fulfilled the words—"Now is the accepted time : behold, now is the day of salvation." I do not believe in a day of salvation that has only twenty-four hours. "You may accept salvation to-day, but the day of salvation with you may close to-night" I do not understand such a day as that. God's day of salvation is not a short one. It reaches from the Saviour's shout on the cross to that second shout, when He shall come again, without sin, unto salvation.

Lastly, *the results* of this shout. The Saviour's resurrection was one ; and His ascension and glorification in heaven were other results. But what are further results of this shout? Go into all the world and preach the Gospel. The Holy Ghost is here ; angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation. Divine Providence is a special arrangement now, and over all its operations the Saviour presides, and He drops that precious promise upon every change—all shall work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose." And this shout shall be followed by others. I have already said that hell heard it and the world is hearing it. I do not suppose the dying saint shouts in death unless it is with his soul, and who knows what confidence, what joy, and what pleasure fill the immortal mind when it is on the lip of life, and there is but a step between the soul and heaven. Who knows but that the heart or soul shouts then. But by-and-bye we shall enter heaven, and when we arrive—and I hope it may be my lot and privilege to enter that glory-world—when we arrive, again they will sing "Hallelujah!" The Hallelujahs of heaven are incessant and perpetual. As saints arrive angels shout, and God Himself is pleased. By-and-bye the whole church shall be saved, and stand at the right hand of her Lord and Saviour. Then there shall be a universal shout of satisfaction, adoration, gratitude and praise. The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Yes, He went to heaven with one when he had completed the way thither, and He shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall be raised first ; and then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we be for ever with the Lord. The last shout the devil and wicked men shall hear, for Jesus will bring the topstone home with shouting, Grace, grace unto it.

Just one word on the *last act* of the Saviour, and I will close. He gave up the ghost, or His soul, or His spirit. When He had cried with a loud voice first, He did this *authoritatively*. I have power, said the Saviour, to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again ; I have authority for dying. Now, you and I cannot die when we please. Jesus had authority to die when He pleased, to lay down His life when He pleased and as He pleased. Some wish to live longer than they do, and a few perhaps wish to die earlier. The Saviour died when He pleased, and He was the only Person in the universe capable of so dying—that had authority to die when He pleased. He gave up the ghost. Then, secondly, He did so *voluntarily*, and hence the word—He *gave* up the ghost or His spirit. I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take

it again. No man taketh it from me, and not even God, my Father, takes it from me. It is my own life and I lay it down for the sheep, and I do so willingly. There was nothing forced at the cross on the part of the dear Redeemer. His heart was in the work. Had He not died voluntarily and freely, His work would not have been saving. Had He suffered against His will, God would not have accepted His work; or had He so saved us, we might have felt a check upon our gratitude before Jesus upon His throne; the thought that "He saved against His will;" would have limited joy in heaven. No! Looking at the Lamb that once was slain, we shall for ever feel that He died willingly and voluntarily for our sins, and that He *gave up the ghost*. It was this that made the atonement of Christ a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling Saviour, which fills the heavens of God and the Lamb. Thirdly, He gave up the ghost *confidently*, knowing that His soul was worthy of heaven, and worthy of the acceptance of His Father. Fourthly, this indicates the *reality of His death*. Some sneerers—but I have none of that class of persons this morning, and, therefore, I will content myself with mentioning it—some sneerers have said that Jesus did not really die, and that His death was not a reality. There was a separation between His soul and His body. The former was committed into the hands of His Father, and the latter to the grave. His death was a divine, a solemn, a necessary, a real fact. Lastly, He gave up the ghost *into His Father's hands*. "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit"—those hands that had been smiting Him for hours—and the hand of God is heavy—those hands that poured the curse upon Him, those hands that mixed the bitter cup, those hands that held the dear Redeemer to His engagements—into those hands he commended His spirit. The hands that you and I hope to fall into; and the departure of Christ into the hands of His Father has prepared God to receive you and me. The soul—the ghost of Jesus—has been there; and the ghost or the soul of every Christian shall follow. Looking at the dying Thief before He gave up the ghost, He said—you shall follow Me. "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise;" and as His soul was in His Father's hands he saw the thief's ghost or soul arrive; that soul has since been followed by millions, and we are on the road. Soon we shall follow, and when we pass through the solemnities of death, may we at last breathe our spirits into the hands of Jesus, who will commit them for us into the hands of His God and our God, and His Father and our Father. Amen.

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SALVATION DESIRED.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 22nd AUGUST, 1880.

"O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."—Psalm xiv. 7.

It is important that the child of God especially should have clear and correct views of the covenant of grace, and of the departments occupied by the three persons in the adorable Godhead. It was the official work of the Father to constitute Christ what He is; to give Him to die, and to accept the work of His dear Son. It was the covenant work of the Redeemer to take our nature; to come into our world, and to put sin away by the sacrifice of Himself; while it devolves upon the Holy Spirit to quicken and sanctify all that are loved and redeemed. In the first department, we have love eternal; in the second, we have precious blood, a veritable and glorious atonement; and in the third, we have gracious power, or the Spirit of God taking the things of Christ, and showing them to His beloved people. It was, I apprehend, some such view as this that encouraged and sustained the spirit of David in his dying hours, and caused him to rejoice in that Divine arrangement, which was "*ordered in all things and sure.*" We are sinners, but the covenant is ordered in relation to that terrible fact; we are in trouble, but all things are wisely disposed; we meet the devil, and are tempted and tormented, but God has anticipated that; and we are unworthy, and we fear death, but God has ordered all things well. The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but God's covenant shall never be dissolved, and His word shall never fail. Hence we read that the Christ of God was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Enoch rested upon the blood of Christ, although it had not been shed. Abel rejoiced in the atonement of the Redeemer, although it had not been made. "Abraham desired to see Christ's day, and he saw it, and was glad." Ten thousand sinners, saved by grace, came up out of the wilderness, under the Old Testament dispensation, leaning upon the dear Redeemer; and that is your position and mine. We are in the wilderness, but we are coming up out of it, endeavouring by Divine assistance to lean all our weight, as creatures, as sinners, and as saints, upon our covenant Lord. "O," said David, contemplating the abounding corruptions of the time, "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad."

VOL. III., No. 6.—OCTOBER 15, 1880.

We cannot, perhaps, do better, in contemplating our subject this morning, than to look at the three branches into which it naturally divides itself. In the first place there is *a most important subject indicated*—"the salvation of Israel;" secondly, *a fervent desire expressed*, "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion;" and, thirdly, *the predicted result of the realization of this fact*, "When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

Let us look for a few minutes at these branches of this great statement, and I can offer only a few remarks upon each of them. The first demands all the attention we are capable of giving, and all the thoughts we are able to bring to it. *The great subject indicated.* The salvation of Israel. Salvation is a lofty theme, and a most comprehensive subject, as it is the greatest and the most glorious work of God. It employed the thoughts and engaged the mind of Jehovah before the foundation of the world, and ever since it was revealed, it has excited the wonder and called forth the songs of angels, who are most inquisitive beings, ever inquiring into those things which relate to the glory of their Creator, it is said, concerning salvation, "which things the angels desire to look into." And there are millions of redeemed and blood-washed spirits in heaven, whose eternal business it is to contemplate salvation, and ascribe all the honour and glory of it to the Lamb for ever and ever. Beloved hearers, I trust we shall never be weary of salvation, and that we shall never tire in contemplating this glorious work of God. We shall want its grace and power when we die, and we shall experience all its greatness and preciousness beyond death, in a better world, for ever. It may be now we experience a measure of delight in contemplating the visible heavens, the sun, and the moon and the stars, and the other wonderful works of God, for all His works in creation are marvellous. The world in which we live, and from which we are passing, is wonderful. Physically considered, it is a beautiful and noble work of the infinitely great and glorious Jehovah; and our meditations upon it, sometimes give us a large amount of pleasure; but all other works are little compared with the work of Christ. The time will come when we shall cease to see this world, and, therefore, cease to contemplate it; when we shall ascend into the third heavens, and, therefore, cease to behold and contemplate those which are visible. What the third heavens are I do not yet know, except that they are the eternal residence of Deity. The dear Redeemer, and the holy angels, are there, and those heavens are the endless home of all the ransomed children of God! How we shall see God, and praise Him; how we shall contemplate God, and employ our powers before Him, I cannot now describe; but we are told that we shall enter into glory, and be immersed in the Saviour's light, in the Father's love, and in all the glory of the triune God. "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord?" But let us particularize a little, and collect our thoughts into some shape and order.

In the first place, consider salvation in *relation to God Himself*. "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" The salvation of Israel is altogether and unchangeably Divine. It is not angelic, it is not human, it is not of creatures at all. Angels are ministering spirits,

but they minister providentially, and under God. And ministers of the Gospel are the servants of the Redeemer; but that great power, or system of things which is bearing you through the world to the regions of eternal glory, is wholly and altogether Divine. It is the greatest conception of the mind of Deity. It was, if I may so speak, His first, His deepest, and His richest thought. The scheme of saving sinners is God's darling scheme, and His ideas concerning it are the very cream of His mind. I trust I do not err in thus expressing myself, but I want to honour my Master by giving you correct views of His great salvation. I have said that God's thoughts concerning salvation are the richest of His mind; for although all His thoughts are ever worthy of Himself, yet, in grace, we have the whole of God, and the best of His hand and His heart. How wonderful that sinners, such as we, should be so deeply interested in the condescending mercy of that God, who might have lived alone in eternal blessedness and happiness. God has made us social beings, therefore, we are not happy in solitude. "It is not good," said God, when He had made Adam, "that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Adam's happiness was not complete before Eve was made, and Eve's happiness was not complete without her husband. God has made us, in this respect, what we are; but God's happiness and pleasure depend not upon society. He did not need the presence of angels, though He made them; and He does not need the presence of men, though He has redeemed, and is saving them. Why is God, therefore, peopling the heavens with such creatures as we are? Why is He doing this at so great a cost, and why is the plan of salvation so Divinely elaborate and great? Why, as I said the other day in the country—and which a friend has reminded me of—it was just like Him! It was just like such a Being as our God to do this. Had He been less great, or high, or glorious, He might not have made angels, nor have saved sinners. All His greatness, graciousness, and glory, broke out in wondrously condescending forms in the vast affair of the sinner's eternal salvation and life. Well, having conceived and concealed in His own mind the great plan of mercy, in due time He gave birth to it; when salvation was seen, which is the outcome of God's love, and flowing out of His heart. It bears the impression of all His attributes. Its odour and fragrance are Divine. It brings with it evidence of the fact that God is its great source, and spring, and author. "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" Salvation is an everlasting display of our great and glorious God. We read in the Word that the earth, and the heavens over our heads, are only "a part of His ways." God's works in nature and in providence are partial and limited. He has not equalled Himself in creation; for He might have made this world larger, or otherwise than it is. He might have gone on creating till now had He pleased: and, therefore, in creation and providence His works are partial, and limited. But when we come to salvation by Christ and by blood, and by grace, we have the whole fulness of God. God has equalled Himself here. He has given much to all creatures, he has given a great deal to some creatures; but He has given all things to Israel! All He can communicate is the everlasting property of His favoured church and people. The world do not possess

the whole of God, and the children of Israel, as a national church, did not possess the whole of God; but that vast company of blood-saved sinners, of which we are speaking, possesses the whole of Deity. We have in salvation a full display of all the persons in the Godhead, a full discovery of all the attributes and perfections of Jehovah, and a full view of all the resources of the great and glorious God. For aught I know, he might have given us much, and that for thousands of years, and even for eternity, without giving us Himself; but it was His pleasure to give us His grace, and eternal life and salvation, and then to lift up His hand and swear by Himself that He would be our God, and that we should be His people for ever and ever. Here, then, Christian brethren, we have a full display of God, of all His Persons, perfections, attributes, resources, and glory. Salvation takes its rise in the heart of love Divine, and it flows like a mighty river clear as crystal, in a righteous and holy channel. There are no obstructions whatever in the channel in which it flows; for it rolls down from the heart of Deity through the man Christ Jesus and His mediation. It flows through His wounds, and in His blood, and, therefore, grace reigns righteously. This mighty river rises in eternity, and coming from God, and flowing through Christ, it reaches the sinner, and enters his heart; who, having been thus reached, is carried into a new realm, conveyed into a new state; for, being separated from the devil and the world, and the love and reign of sin, he is conveyed into the presence of God, and lodged personally and experimentally in the very bosom of his Father. The wish may be a carnal one, for aught I know; but I wish I could impress these facts upon the minds of my hearers. Brethren and sisters, if the blood of Christ has reached you, and salvation has come into contact with your souls, they have carried you near to God, and lodged and left you in the bosom of eternal friendship and love, and they will ultimately convey you to that better home and world, to that eternal rest which He has prepared for you. Here, then, we have salvation in relation to God; it is His greatest conception, the birth of His infinite mind, the great river that rises in His heart, and flows through the person and offices, and mediation of the Son. O that this salvation might be yours and mine, and O that its joys might fill our hearts all the days of our life! There are some professors of religion who seem to be quite satisfied with salvation; they like to hear the minister dwell upon the theme, and set forth the love of God, and the blood of Christ, and the power of the Spirit, and they occasionally make a few observations upon this great and wondrous theme; but its joys and pleasures they do not seem to covet, nor do they appear to want them. O that our hearts might, from this day forward, be filled with the Holy Ghost! O that our hearts might be filled with the joys of God's love! It is not enough, I think I may say, for me to know that I am God's, not enough for me to know that I shall die in the arms of Jesus, not enough for me to know that I shall reach heaven, and be for ever happy there. I unite with Dr. Watts in his hymn:

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

There are grapes growing in Eshcol; but I am not in Eshcol, but in the wilderness, and I would have some of the fruit that grows in Canaan. There are rich pleasures in heaven; but I am not there yet, but in a world of sadness, sickness, sorrow, and death, and I want, now and then at least a taste of the bliss and blessedness of heaven. David said, "Restore unto me the joys of Thy salvation, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

Secondly, look at this great work *in relation to the mission of Christ*. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." I apprehend David looked forward into the future, and contemplating the advent and incarnation of the dear Redeemer, he said, I wish He were here now, and I wish the time for the Son of God to assume human nature were come! "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" Well, in due time, God's salvation did appear in the person of Christ, and appear, too—which is a most wonderful fact—in the form of a newly-born babe. Deity was in Him, and all the millions of the church of God were represented by Him. That new-born babe was destined to bear the accumulated guilt of millions, and in that little span, apparently, of human life all the fulness of God had been deposited, which was to be developed and manifested in a marvellous and progressive revelation. He was invested with authority to save; He came with power to do so, possessing in Himself all that the salvation of millions required. He chose apostles: but He did not depend upon them. He was surrounded by friends: but He never leaned upon them, for He never went out of Himself for anything that He required to fulfil His Father's purposes and His own engagements. Precious blood was demanded by heaven: that of His person was precious enough for heaven. Infinite merits were demanded by God: His merits are sufficiently excellent for justice and for God. Christ was the great embodiment of the salvation of Israel, and in due time, that which was in His person flowed from Him. I beg your attention to the manner in which you are saved, for salvation flowed, and still flows, from every part of the person of the Lord. He has saved you by His body; He has saved you by His soul; He has saved you by both body and soul; in conjunction with His Divinity, God was in His body, and God was in His soul; and that complex, invaluable person gave Himself a ransom for Israel. Salvation flowed from His understanding, and His judgment, and His affections; it flowed from His eye, and His mouth; salvation flowed from His head, and His temples and side, and His hands, and His feet. See the suffering Saviour, and say with feeling, if you can, See how He loved us. "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" The salvation which was in Christ, and which comes from Him, flows not only from His wounds, but from every name by which He is known, and from all the offices which He sustains. It flows from His priesthood, from His prophetic office, and from His kingly character and glory. Every act He mediately performs is connected directly, or indirectly, with our salvation. Altogether, He is a Saviour—a Saviour as to His body, His soul, and His complexity. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." O, said David, since my all is in Him, and He is coming,—“O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!”

When this great Redeemer was here, He said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For, verily, I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them." David heard them, and saw them, and anticipated them by faith, and expressed his earnest, fervent desire, O that He were here! "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" Well, He has been, and saved us with an everlasting salvation. He did it all Himself, being alone in the great business, and had no helper; and blessed be His name, He required none. "Of the people, there was none with Him." His own arm brought salvation; and since He has done all the work Himself, and done it so well, let Him wear the crown, and let us ascribe all the honour and glory of our salvation to Him.

Thirdly, look at this salvation *in relation to itself*. I do not know that I can use a better word, as it is God's great and glorious work. And what shall we say about it? Why, in the first place, God's salvation annihilates, puts out of existence for ever, the cause of condemnation and ruin. You know the cause of ruin and condemnation is not sovereignty, but sin. The breach of the law or transgression, and guilt, are the cause of condemnation, death, wrath, and hell. Salvation is God's method of annihilating the cause of eternal death. He has put away sin. Can words be more comprehensive, or satisfactory, or explicit in their meaning?—He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He hath made an end of it; and since the words are the words of God, and express His great work, I believe we should take them in their literal and full meaning. He has removed sin, having put it away by His sacrifice. Now, you say, that is very good, and, doubtless, most sweet, if we could realise it. And does your ability to realise this fact increase its worth and value, and preciousness? There is much of what I may be permitted to call bad logic, in connection with the things of God and eternity. "Very great and very excellent, if we could realise it;" as if our ability to take hold enhanced and increased the value of Christ and eternal things. A gold sovereign is worth twenty silver shillings whether I possess one or not, and the salvation of God is infinitely precious and great, whether I realise that fact for myself or not. Now, let us pray for the Holy Spirit's presence and power, that we may realise the preciousness of that which is so precious in itself, that we may realise it for ourselves, and fall before our bleeding Saviour, saying, He loved us and gave Himself for us. Salvation not only annihilates the cause of ruin, it translates the sinner into a new region, a new realm, a new kingdom, even out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It raises the sinner higher than he stood before the fall, and carries him where Adam did not stand when he was an innocent man. It carries man higher than angels ever stood, and places him very near to the throne of God. I do not know how to explain it; it is so mysterious and marvellous; but our Lord has said, "He that overcometh shall sit with Me on My throne; even as I overcame, and am seated with My Father on His throne." Salvation, then, annihilates the guilt of sin, the cause of ruin and death, and translates the sinner. And then it transforms him into perfect beauty. Thou shalt beautify the meek with

salvation. Washed in blood, and filled with grace, and clothed with the Saviour's righteousness—that fine raiment of needlework, of which we read in the 45th Psalm,—no character can equal in beauty, or in moral and spiritual perfection, the saint, the child of God. Oh, your righteousness surpasses in excellence that of angels, and your knowledge and experience are beyond theirs; for

“Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love.”

Lastly, just a word on the sinner that is saved. What shall we say on salvation *in relation to the sinner*? When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people. Yes, we were captives, in bondage to sin, to Satan, to the world, and to ourselves. I have a little experience, and a limited measure of knowledge, and may, therefore, be permitted to speak confidently, and say, that there is no power but that of Jesus' blood and of grace, that can rescue an immortal mind from the tyranny of sin. Nothing but the power of His blood can remove guilt from a sinner's conscience, and no one but the dear and blest Redeemer can snatch a soul from the world and death. When God's salvation comes out of Zion, and enters the heart of the sinner, the captive is set free, the bondman is delivered, the debtor is forgiven, the dead is brought to life, and God is honoured. Salvation in relation to the sinner. One thought more, and I will have done. Salvation carries a saved sinner as far as it goes itself. Where does salvation go? To what point does it flow? Well, the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ reached the Father, and satisfied Him: hence we are made nigh by the blood of the cross. The salvation of Jesus reached Heaven, and if it is ours it will carry us thither. The salvation of Jesus is eternal; if it is ours, it will carry us into eternity. Hence “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” If the salvation of Jesus had set us down anywhere short of God, and His throne, we should have been left in bondage, and in death. If we have not been made nigh, we are still in captivity; but salvation carries sinners up to God, and connects them with God's throne, and inseparably unites them with heaven itself. O that salvation might come to you, and to me. Well, these are a few scattered, imperfect, and weak thoughts upon this great subject,—the salvation of Israel.

Just one word—for I have a few minutes—on the *fervent desire expressed*. O that it were come out of Zion. In the first place, let me say, that the Old Testament saints very earnestly and intensely desired the advent and incarnation of the Saviour. They were always looking and longing for His first coming, and, I have sometimes thought, that if we had more of their spirit, we should be looking and longing for His second coming, as Old Testament saints longed for the first coming of the Saviour. Are we rejoicing in the fact that He is coming again the second time without sin unto salvation? I see, or, I think I see, in this, the peculiar experience of a penitent sinner, who longs for a loving God, and the reconciled Jehovah in His own nature and flesh. He does not yearn for angels, nor for abstract Deity. He yearns, and longs, and looks for God—not unmediated, absolute, or undressed; but in the flesh: God, with all His greatness, simplified, modified, and moderated in, and by our nature. O that our Lord were here! It was a longing for the

incarnation of Christ. Then, secondly, it is the expression of a desire for a full, veritable, and everlasting atonement. O that that atonement now actually existed. This desire arose from hatred to sin, and from the believer's love of order and harmony; and the blood of Jesus reduces disorder and confusion to harmony and beauty. Christ is the Prince of Peace, and His atoning sacrifice produces peace, quietness, and assurance for ever! And it arose, also, from a knowledge of the insufficiency of the ceremonies of those days. The priest offered a lamb every morning, and another every evening; and the offerings were repeated again, and again, year after year, and age after age; yet, sin remained generation after generation, and the work was never done. The sinner was not actually saved, nor redeemed, and, therefore, looking at the labouring priest, and the rivers of animal blood that flowed, and the altars that smoked, and the expensiveness of the dispensation, and the weight of the burden, and the galling character of the yoke of the ceremonial law, the Old Testament church said, O that this were all over, and the shadows and types had ceased, and were swallowed up in the real atonement of Christ, or the salvation of Israel.

Lastly, and it may occur to some of you that this is the best part of the subject—it is a longing for an application of salvation. O that it were come! The wounds of a broken heart, the tears of godly sorrow from the penitent's eyes, the palpitating mind that is consciously guilty and at a distance, and the soul that is full of apprehensions, all say, O that He were here! O that salvation were ours! "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation!" Old Testament saints could not accelerate the birth of the Saviour, and New Testament believers cannot lay the balm upon their own minds. There is the blood, and there is the sinner that wants the blood which was shed for him, saying, Take the things of Christ, and show them unto me. As a patient on the bed sees the remedy on a table, and wants some nurse or kind friend to apply it, so the conscious sinner sees the remedy in Christ, and says, O that God the Holy Ghost would lay the balm on my heart, and bring the pardon to my soul. O that it were come! What then? When it does come, Jacob rejoices, and Israel is glad. Then springs up within the joy of pardon, liberty, peace, communion, and the hope of heaven. But I have not time to go into that branch of the subject, having taken up all the time allotted in offering thoughts on the first two particulars, therefore, I must leave the subject where it is. May the Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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CHRIST IN THE HEART.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 26th SEPTEMBER, 1880.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."—Eph. iii. 17.

THE connection in which our text stands commences at the 14th verse:—"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." For what cause? For an answer to this we must return to the 1st verse of the chapter; for the apostle now resumes the connection interrupted there. The prayer which he there commenced here begins anew. "For this cause" is repeated from the 1st verse, and therefore the connection is the same here as there. You Ephesians are partakers of grace, and therefore "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." It is for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the first place, you are loved with an eternal love; secondly, you have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus; thirdly, you have been quickened into life by the Holy Ghost; and fourthly, you have been united together as the stones of a building; and therefore I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And having spoken of the household of God, let me say, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." I pray that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

I will endeavour, in the first place, to *illustrate* this subject, and in the second place to *offer a few reflections upon it*. In the first place, let us *illustrate the subject*—Christ dwelling by faith in the hearts of His people. Coming at one to this interesting and important fact, let us notice the *residence* of the great Redeemer. I cannot tell you how Christ dwells in the heart otherwise than by quoting the word, and presenting to you definitions and descriptions given by God the eternal Spirit. We are informed in the text that Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and some or all true believers have something like correct views of this indwelling of the Lord, though this branch of Christian experience is mysterious and almost inexplicable. This is one of those ways of the eternal God which are at present past finding out. It is better felt than described, and hence sometimes we sing:—

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

We are assured that Christ dwells in the heart by His Spirit ; but do we know what that means ? We are informed that He dwells in the saints by faith, and by His word ; but who can fully describe this mystery ? It is, however, a fact, that there is no vital godliness in our breasts unless Jesus dwells there ; for “ If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His : and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” The Lord Jesus Christ is represented as having three or four residences, for while, in one respect, He is everywhere at all times, He is not present everywhere in a spiritual way and manner. In the first place, He dwells in the world of eternal glory, “ the high and holy place.” He is on the highest throne in heaven, and he wears the brightest crown there. Round about Him are gathered millions of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. Our Lord deserves the seat He occupies, the crown He wears, and all the praises he receives from the hosts of heaven. But His dwelling there is personal and invisible to us, and hence Peter says, “ Whom having not seen ye love ; and in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Christ’s personal presence is there ; but although He does not dwell in the hearts of saints as He dwells in heaven, yet He that dwells in ineffable glory on high, dwells also in the hearts of His people by faith. The very Christ that sits on the throne of heaven is enthroned in the heart of every saint ; and this is one of the deep and sacred mysteries of godliness. Then, again, we read that the heavens have been stretched out as a curtain, and spread out as a tent to dwell in. That language is sublime, and the thought it expresses most lofty and glorious. Can anything in the world be more grand than this, that the visible heavens are as a curtain, made by God and drawn by His hand,—that they are as a tent to dwell in ? In this tent creatures and their Maker dwell together, and here the great and glorious Redeemer resides as the mighty God. But He dwells not here as He dwells in the hearts of saved sinners. We have, therefore, now to consider Him as dwelling by faith in the heart.

I cannot help speaking just now of the words which the magicians addressed to Nebuchadnezzar in days of old. You remember the King of Babylon had a dream which he forgot, and that he called the magicians, astrologers and wise men together, and required them to tell him what it was. They were unable to do so, and he threatened them with destruction. They intimated to their royal master that his request was unreasonable, saying that no being but the gods can tell the king his dream, and their dwelling is not with flesh. That was their idea of the nature and character of the gods they worshipped and adored. They did not dwell with men or with flesh ; and so wonderful was this thought to Solomon, that when he stood before the altar at the dedication of the temple, filled with adoring gratitude and praise, he said, “ Will God in very deed dwell on the earth with man, seeing the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him, how much less this house which I have builded ?” Yet, thus saith the High and Lofty One, “ I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” Jesus, therefore, who is the everlasting God, dwells with men on the earth, even in the heart of every saint, and His indwelling constitutes the individual a Christian and a true believer. But let us notice the Saviour’s right to dwell in the

hearts of fallen creatures. You are ready to say, You need not dwell upon that, for our minds are sufficiently instructed and informed on that point. We know that Jesus has a perfect right to occupy the human heart, and to dwell by faith in His redeemed people. Well, I do not know that I ever advance anything new, for the Gospel I preach is the old-fashioned one, and it is my official and ministerial work to bring the grand old truths of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God before my hearers from time to time. I do rejoice in the pleasing fact that our Lord has a right to dwell in our hearts. I trust He is dwelling in mine ; and I shall have a word or two to say on temptation presently. He is dwelling in your hearts by faith, and I rejoice that He has a right to be there, and that the devil, who once held your souls, had no right to you. I rejoice in that fact, because, when sin reigned, the unclean spirit which occupied the house, was an usurper ; but now the dear Redeemer having entered your hearts, and taken possession of your affections, He lives therein as their Divine proprietor. He has a right, in every respect, to occupy your hearts, to claim your affections, to consecrate your thoughts and to save your souls. His right is founded on creation, for He that made the heart has a right to occupy it ; on redemption ; for He that redeemed you from all evil has a right to claim your souls as His dwelling ; and on conquest ; for Jesus sought us when we were strangers wandering from His fold, and by His grace and Spirit stopped us when we were going down to hell. Jesus killed our enmity, and threw the tyrant sin from the throne. The first blow of grace overcame you, cast sin out of its dominion, and laid you at the feet of Jesus, who, having thus conquered you, had a right to enter your hearts, and to ascend the throne and reign as Lord of all. Moreover, the heart thus conquered by Divine grace, freely and voluntarily surrendered itself to the Lord. There is now a popular phraseology which I do not care for in the mouths of many professors of religion. Much is said about the sinner's giving his heart to the Lord, and hence we hear persons say, "We are not what we were, for we have given our hearts to the Lord." Well, I have no objection to that phraseology in certain connections ; but before any sinner truly gives his heart to the Lord, the Lord takes it to himself. God always first conquers the heart and subjects the will to Himself before the individual becomes a saint. I am not surprised that he whose conscience is oppressed with guilt should fall at the feet of his conquering Lord with the prayer, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." We sometimes sing with holy pleasure.—

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

I wish I could produce a deep impression upon your minds respecting the glorious event which occurred when Jesus entered your hearts. There was a time when you were Godless and Christless ; when no power but that of sin and Satan reigned within ; and there was also a period when the devil's government was destroyed, and when, in your history and experience, the reign of sin for ever terminated. When grace commenced its work, a state of the deepest and most wonderful disorder and confusion prevailed in your poor minds ; for sin had lost the throne—the sceptre had fallen from its hands, and you knew not what or where you were. A revolution had taken place within, things having been turned

upside down. This was the commencement of the reign of grace in your hearts. The rightful owner of the heart had entered, and found everything within sinful, and revolted ; and putting His hand upon all the powers of the soul, He said,—They are Mine, for I have redeemed them, and therefore I claim the whole for Myself. In due time the Spirit reduced the confusion to something like order and harmony ; and light entered your minds, which revealed salvation, and directed you to the mercy of God. Yes ; there was mercy in the midst of the misery : and God heard your confession and your prayer,—“God be merciful to us sinners.” By-and-bye, Jesus having sensibly entered your souls, and the Holy Ghost having sprinkled the blood upon your consciences, a holy peace prevailed, and a heavenly satisfaction reigned, such as the world can neither give nor take away. He is in your hearts by faith, and there He reigns as the rightful Monarch of your souls. Paul prayed that His reign might become more and more powerful, and that His grace might go deeper and deeper into the hearts of His people, in order that they might be rooted and grounded in love eternal and divine. We sometimes sing Dr. Watts’ beautiful paraphrase,—

“ Enter with all Thy glorious train,
Thy Spirit and Thy Word ;
All that the ark did once contain
Could no such grace afford.”

When Christ entered your hearts, heaven was moved and angels sung ; hell was moved and the devil raged. And then that confusion occurred to which I have just referred ; but it was preliminary to a state of peace, satisfaction, and delight. He enters hearts as a Conqueror, as the King of grace, and as a God. As a Conqueror, He overcomes sin, asserts His right, and plucks the mind away from the devil. As a King, He ascends the throne, and rules within as Lord of all. As God, He depends not for admission to His own upon the free will of the sinner ;—for this is not like our Almighty God. The sinner did not ask Jesus to come down and redeem him, and he has no hand in his entrance into the heart. No ; the Lord openeth, and none can shut ; He shutteth, and none can open. He opens the heart, and brings into it a train of graces, and heaven, earth, and hell are affected by the change.

Although Jesus is in the heart, and intends to dwell there for ever, yet the old resident still remains therein. Let not my young friends—my tempted brethren and sisters—forget this. Christ dethrones and restrains the power of sin, but He does not at once destroy it. “The Canaanite is still in the land.” Satan still comes upon the premises—corruption is still inherent in our nature ; and hence the conflict. But “the elder shall serve the younger ;” and Jesus, being an infinite Ruler and the eternal God, shall prevail. Nevertheless, there is a conflict, and it rages during the whole of the life of God’s dear people here. There is no such thing as perfection in the flesh. There are persons who believe that they are perfect, and without sin ; but if they are correct, there is no conflict in their breasts. They tell us it is our duty to be holy and perfect in every thought, motive, and feeling ; at least, if anything like an unholy or irregular thought should enter the mind, it may be brushed away with all the ease imaginable. I know nothing about such a state of things ; and why the Lord has so arranged the experience of His

people it might be difficult to determine. He might have made us perfect when He first saved us, and at once have crushed all corruption and depravity, for He can and will do this by-and-bye. But this was not His will and pleasure, and He is wise and good. He enters hearts that are vile, prepares them for His own abode, brings with Him all the graces of salvation, and as their Monarch, fits them for Himself; but he permits the enemy to lurk therein for a time. Hence the tempter finds sympathetic evil in the saints, the creeping serpent stings and poisons, and "sin is mixed with all we do." "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Such was Paul's conflict, and such is the conflict of God's dear people now.

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

Christ having begun to save you, will carry on His work, and finally perfect it, and you shall reach heaven without a stain or a trace of sin. In yourselves you shall be as pure and spotless as you now are, as seen in the person of the Saviour.

Jesus loves His dwelling. I wish I could impress this upon your minds. He loves His own divine abode. It is said, concerning Zion, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion;" and "Here will I dwell, for I have desired it." You complain of the state of things within; nevertheless, Christ loves His house so well that He will occupy it for ever. Although the heart is sometimes contracted, and darkness prevails, and there is a painfully deep sense of unworthiness, yet Jesus loves his residence, and will never quit his own abode in His church and people. "Christ abideth for ever." It is said that one may lose his religion. Then one may lose his indwelling Christ; for if one's real religion is lost, Jesus has ceased to occupy the heart. It appears to me that the state of things which must follow the removal of Jesus from the soul is worse than that which preceded His entrance into it. It really must be very terrible to feel that we were once saved—that Jesus once dwelt within—that at one time we were going to heaven, and were God's children, having been born again. Surely it must be unspeakably tormenting to be filled with reflections such as these. No; Jesus so loves His dwelling that He will abide with us for ever. "He has said, I will never leave thee." God's Spirit will not let us go, for He holds the hearts of the saints for the Saviour; and He claims the whole, and, in a certain sense, He dwells in the whole heart. He holds the will, and it is His servant. He holds the affections, having detached them from sin, separated them from the world, and raised them from corruption to Himself; and hence the best affections of the heart are centred in Jesus Christ. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." Christ is in the understanding. It was once dark as night, but now it is light in the Lord; for Christ, who dwells in him, fills the understanding with holy light and unction. The Lord is in the conscience, which at first was filled with dead works, and afterwards pricked with guilt,—that conscience, which has been made soft, and sensitive, and tender. It is true there may be more light in the understanding than warmth in the affections, but, at other times, our feelings prevail over our faith. The understanding is not dark-

ness now. The will is Christ's obedient subject. The affections are rooted in him. The conscience has been purged from dead works to serve the living and true God.

Now, secondly, let me inquire *how He dwells in the heart*. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts *by faith*." Christ is not naturally in the sinner's heart. The principle of grace proceeds from God, and is produced in the soul by the blessed Spirit. There was a time when we were "without God and without hope in the world;" and had we been left to ourselves, instead of being seated in God's courts this morning, we should have been making haste to the world of eternal darkness and death. But here we are, in consequence of the fact that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. How by faith? Faith receives Him, and realises Him to the soul. Faith has its seat in the heart, and Christ is its object; and since the grace of faith is united to Christ in heaven and to hearts on earth, He dwells in them by faith. We believe with all our hearts in the Christ that is in heaven, and we believe in Him for ourselves. Faith gives Jesus a spiritual—a realised existence in the heart, which had been previously filled with sin and unbelief. Now, since Christ dwells by faith in the heart, it is not surprising that faith should be tried. Faith is tried, because it is by that grace that Christ dwells within. Hence we are sometimes tried concerning the fact itself. Does He dwell within? When our faith is thus tried, we let go our hold on Him, or we hold Him feebly, and should lose our hold altogether did He let go His hold of us. We are *safe*, for He holds us fast; We are *happy* when we hold Him fast. But safety does not depend upon our grasp of Him, but upon His grasp of us. Hence the importance of faith, which is tried as to the fact of Christ's indwelling. And since Jesus Christ is all to believers, faith is frequently tried concerning the person and word of the Lord. I do not desire to dip into the mire, nor to sally forth into the darkness. A word to the wise is enough. Has the thought ever entered your mind, and rushed through it,—Is the Bible true? or, Is there a God? and, if so, is He what the Bible represents Him to be? If the thought had *remained* in the mind we should have been left infidels or unbelievers. Such thoughts are the fiery darts of the wicked one, which pierce, wound, and poison when they enter the heart. God only can extract these arrows; and then, uncleanness being left behind, a fresh application of the Saviour's blood, by another operation of the Spirit, is necessary to remove the evil. Why are saints tempted in this way? Because it is by faith that Christ dwells within. Further, Jesus Christ dwells sensibly and experimentally in our hearts only as we believe, or according to our faith. The sinner believes with all his heart that Jesus saves from sin; so that, as the sinner's Saviour, He dwells by faith in the heart. He does not doubt that Jesus put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and that it was absolutely necessary He should do so; and holding that fast, so far Christ dwells in him. Now, if I say, my brother, come a step further with me. Let us both say, He loved us, and gave Himself for us. He replies, No; I cannot go so far. He loved His people, and gave Himself for them; and I would give a world, if I had one, to say He loved me, and gave Himself for me. His faith, you perceive, does not go far enough; and, since faith is the gift of God, I have no rod for such feeble ones in God's family. I will pray for them, and preach to them, and hope the time may not be distant.

“ When they shall clearly see,
Not only that Christ shed His blood,
But each shall say, for me.”

Again, although the saint at times calmly believes that Jesus loved him, and gave Himself for him, yet he cannot trust Him for to-morrow. He has committed his immortal soul into His hands for death and for heaven ; but just now he is in trouble respecting his daily bread. Unbelief and a tempting devil suggest that there is nothing but poverty or the workhouse before him. Notwithstanding that Jesus has saved him from penal death and ruin, he cannot always trust Him for daily supplies. You see Christ dwells *experimentally* in the heart as we are helped to believe in Him. When we can by faith embrace the whole person, character, grace, atonement and reign of Jesus, and cast ourselves wholly and entirely upon Him, then He is sweetly in our hearts; and we have no fear or doubt whatever concerning either His grace or providence.

Lastly, this *explains the work that is ascribed to faith*. Some of my younger hearers may be disposed to look a little into this point. It used rather to puzzle me that a great and wonderful work is sometimes ascribed to faith. Hence it is said, “ Thy faith hath made thee whole,” “ Thy faith hath saved thee,” “ Purifying their hearts by faith.” We live and walk and stand by faith. These are some of the wonderful works that are ascribed to faith. But my text explains it all. How doth faith make us whole? By embracing the Healer. How does faith save? By embracing the Saviour. How does faith purify? By embracing the Lamb and His blood. Thus faith lives, and stands, and walks in and by Christ. Faith performs wondrous things by having to do with its object. Faith without the blood of Christ would be as a sponge without water in washing the flesh. Faith is the hand that holds the truth of God concerning the precious blood of Jesus, and thus the soul is purified and the conscience is cleansed. It follows, then, that there was much significance in the Saviour’s words to Peter, “ I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Had Peter’s faith failed—utterly and entirely, and been destroyed—there would have been an end of Christ’s indwelling in his heart, but that did not happen. It has sometimes been hard work to hold fast the name of Jesus, and cling to the blessed Christ of God. There have been heartquakes in your breasts which have shaken your faith amazingly, and you will be glad to find yourselves in heaven. We do not want to go before our Father’s time, for we sometimes think of death with very peculiar feelings ; but if we were in the presence of our dear Redeemer, we should not wish to come down here again—not even for the sake of preaching His gospel. The present life is one of conflict, but, blessed be God, it is a life of daily victories. Some persons want us to put off the conquest till death. We want the victory every day. Now in all these things we are more than conquerors through Christ that hath loved us.

Then, thirdly, *the results of this indwelling*, I have spoken of the residence itself. I have tried to show how Christ dwells in the heart, and now, thirdly, on its results. What are they? You derive your designation from the fact that Jesus dwells within. You have much unbelief, but you are not an unbeliever. You have much carnality within, but you are not a carnal person. You are sometimes worldly, but you are not a worldling. You are tempted of the devil, but you are not his servant.

You are corrupt and sinful, but you are not dead in sin. And why? Christ dwells in your heart, and you are called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord has named. You are not a wilderness, but a garden, notwithstanding the many weeds therein. The weeds destroy not the garden, and we do not cease to call it a garden because they are there. Yonder is a field sown with wheat, and there are many weeds in it; but we do not call it a weed field, but a wheat field. So here Christ is in the heart, and the individual is a Christian, because Christ is formed in him the hope of glory. Then, in the next place, the Christian is through the indwelling of Christ a spiritual palace, a divine temple. A king dwells in a palace, and King Jesus dwells in your heart, and "God is known in her palaces as a refuge." As kings dwell in palaces, so God dwells in a temple, and Jesus in the heart by faith constitutes the saints the temples of the living God. As God dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem, so Jesus dwells in His spiritual temples now. Christ having been formed in the soul, the hope of glory, as we have said before, constitutes the favoured person a Christian, a believer, a manifested child of God. The consequence is, my dear friends, we are in a good state, and are infinitely rich in faith, for Christ has taken possession of His own property, and will occupy it for ever. He will wash it thoroughly, and cleanse and sweeten it for himself and for heaven; and having turned every evil and every foe for ever out, He will present His living residences "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." And I am sure I can speak for one and for all that know the Lord, and, permit me to be plain, we have proved Jesus to be a good tenant and proprietor. Oh! He is a good occupier—He pays well for His residence. Speaking of temporal things, you might not have had decent clothes to wear had not Christ been in your hearts. You might have been amongst the wretched, the low and the vile. Perhaps some of us had been in the deepest degradation to day had it not been for an indwelling Christ. People sometimes complain of the expensiveness of attending God's house, but it does not cost us much to serve the dear Redeemer. Our reputation, our character, our position, our hopes for heaven, and all that distinguishes us from the devil and from the lost in hell, we owe to the fact that Jesus dwells in our hearts by faith having been formed there the hope of eternal glory. Having exhausted the time with our remarks upon the saving relation of Christ to His people, we must conclude. May the Lord command His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

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SPiritual JOY AND PRAISE.¹¹

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 21st NOVEMBER, 1880.

"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright."—
Psa. xxxiii. 1.

THE God of infinite grace and mercy dwelleth between the cherubims, and will occupy that position until the end of time. All things are for the sake of God's church and people, and, therefore, the operations of providence are carried on in connection with their existence, their welfare, and their salvation. There are, at all times, hundreds or thousands of penitent sinners before the throne of grace. Ever since it was erected, God has said, "Here will I meet with thee, and here will I commune with thee." Penitent petitioners have appeared before it, and they have obtained mercy and found grace to help in every time of need, while the great Object of prayer and worship, looking at them, has been pleased to say, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." There would never be a true penitent were it not for undeserved and powerful grace, nor a spiritual petitioner before the Lord were it not for his saving purposes and power. A wonderful operation is, therefore, perpetually going on in this world; for God is arresting the minds of sinners, opening their hearts, imparting the principle of godly fear to their breasts, bringing them personally and gradually into His presence, and assisting them by His Spirit to open their mouths in prayer before Him; and whilst they are doing so, He stretches His wings over them, and claims them all, saying, They are mine, for I have formed them to show forth my praise. Those words indicate the origin of all vital godliness. It comes from God, it flows from His heart, and is communicated to sinners by His Spirit; and when this transforming principle is in the mind, God claims the person as His own. Our God avows the fact that every saint is His own workmanship, and He is not ashamed of him. God is not ashamed of His work in heaven, nor in creation, nor in providence, notwithstanding the many deep mysteries connected therewith. Our God is altogether incapable of error, and iniquity has never disfigured His name or deeds; for He is too wise to err^a and too good to be unkind^a; and, most harmoniously,

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

And if he is not ashamed of his work in providence, he is never ashamed of it in grace. My Christian brethren, God is not ashamed of your re-

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ligion, for He is its author ; and He is not ashamed of its legitimate consequences and effects, for he loves the fruits of those principles which He Himself implants. "This people have I formed for myself." They are, therefore, the workmanship of God. They are saints, who are holy ones. They are new creatures, for they are created in Christ Jesus. They are righteous persons ; and to such characters it is said, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely to the upright."

I will endeavour to direct your thoughts to the three important points before us—First, *the subject* ; secondly, *the object* ; and, thirdly, *the beauty and propriety* of spiritual joy and praise. The subject of spiritual joy and praise, "O ye righteous ;" the object of holy joy, "Rejoice in the Lord ;" the propriety and beauty of this act, "for praise is comely for the upright."

A few observations, in the first place, on *the subjects* of holy and spiritual joy and praise—"ye righteous." I was reminded this morning of a remark I made in a certain pulpit some years ago, that I had grown grey in the everlasting arms of God, my text on the occasion being the words of Moses to God's Israel, "And underneath are the everlasting arms." If those arms were underneath me then, they still sustain and support me ; and thus upheld and helped I have, as a minister of the gospel, endeavoured to direct the minds of my hearers to God's righteousness, and what it is that constitutes a sinner perfect and complete in His sight. I always feel, when the Holy Ghost directs me to such a subject as this, that my powers are barren and limited. What can I add to the many things that have been said upon the glorious grace and doctrine of justification ? Yet we must now say a word or two more upon the righteous, and show that they, and they only, can heartily praise the Lord for a new life, and that it is comely and proper for them to do so. My brethren, your state as righteous persons may well cause joy and praise, and provoke expressions of gratitude.

We may say a word about complaining and murmuring presently ; but now let us consider the happy *state* indicated, viz., a righteous one. If you are righteous, sing ; that is the language of the Bible, which is the Word of God, and I had almost said that is what the devil himself expects you to do. It is quite comely, seemly, and beautiful for you to do this. If you are right, cease complaining ; murmur not, and let your tears be dry. If you are right with God, sing ; for praise is comely for the upright. But what shall we say about this state ? Let us, first, remark that the justification of the church of God is a state of Divine and eternal perfection. Nothing can ever be added to it. Nothing can ever be taken from it. Sinners are justified by God on the ground of the mediatorial completeness and work of Jesus. Such persons are as righteous as God can cause them to be. In justification there are no degrees. It admits of none whatever. We have our measures of holiness and degrees of purity, and there is a growth, an increase of knowledge ; our faith, and hope, and love expand, and become wider, and stronger and stronger ; but justification remains for ever perfect and admits of no change. It is at present, and will for ever be, all that God requires. What a blessing to be in this state ! You say, Yes ; but I know there are objections and many fears ; but I speak the truth in

Christ however—the Word of God bearing me witness that the best robe is a complete dress for guilty man, or that his justification is sufficiently deep, and high, and broad and divine. If Christ died again, and I speak reverently, a better robe could not be produced, and richer blood could not flow than we now have in His finished work. “Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous,” for you are in a perfect state. How can that be? you object, when we are sensibly most imperfect. Distinguished between things that differ. Personally as to your sanctification, you are not yet perfect. Your state is in Christ, and you should distinguish between your state and your condition. Your condition, which is in yourselves, is variable; but your state, which is in Christ, is not so. Notwithstanding all your personal imperfections, you are viewed in Christ, and dressed in His righteousness. God declares that in Him you are without spot, and fair as the Holy One. This is righteousness, and if we are in this state, let us sing—

“ Let those refuse to sing
That never knew our God;
But favourites of the heavenly King
May speak their joys abroad.”

If there is only a measure of righteousness, something remains to be added, and the state is not yet perfect; but I do not understand degrees of perfection in the justifying obedience of the Son of God, whose work is honourable and glorious, and whose righteousness endureth for ever. If one is righteous through the imputation of the Saviour's obedience, he is perfectly justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. It is a state of perfection, and this blessing is yours, for it is the gift of God's hand and heart. Embrace it if you can, and howl not in this waste howling wilderness. Sing songs of praise and gratitude, whilst passing through this desert land to the regions of eternal bliss and glory; for, since you are in Christ, you are righteous for ever.

In the second place—This state is not only perfect; it is, as far as I know, the highest state in the universe, or the highest in which a creature can be found. The Pharisee thinks he stands high, but he is blind, and ignorant, and deluded. Adam stood high in Eden, having a righteous character, but it was not like this. He stood high, but not where the saints of God now stand. Angels stand high, and they are glorious creatures, but they are not new creatures; and not having been charged with sin, they never cost God half so much as sinners saved by grace. They stand where they were placed when Jehovah made them; and ever since they have served their Maker, and sung His praises. But we, who stood high in Eden, fell into the depths of degradation; and incarnate God came after us, and died for our sins, and carried us, by the power of His blood, beyond Eden, and beyond angels that never fell; therefore are we before the throne, and nearest to it for ever. Around the throne are circles of creatures. The innermost circle is composed of saints; the second is composed of angels, and worlds and other creatures are outside. Sing, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for you.

Then this state is an everlasting one. Adam was not absolutely secure;

and no wonder, because his security was in his own hands, and rested upon his own obedience ; and since he was a creature, and nothing more, his safety was not absolutely eternal. But you are on that Rock which is divine, and which never moves. God is in one mind, and none can turn Him. Whatever changes happen, they all take place beneath God's throne, for upon it sits that great Being, who says, "I am God, I change not." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." This is a state of perfection—the highest in the universe, and one that shall never end ; and if you are in it, sing and rejoice. I will turn to another point before I dismiss this part of the subject. It is sometimes instructive and encouraging to contrast facts in connection with our holy religion. Let us do so here. There is a prodigal, covered with rags, returning from the field, where he had lived with swine ; but now we behold the same individual covered with the best robe, with a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet. Observe the contrast,—the guilty sinner covered with rags, and the same person justified, being clothed with the Saviour's righteousness. Of such a character it is witnessed, "Old things have passed away, and all things are become new. The proofs of his disgrace, which were so offensive, are removed and destroyed, and the best robe is brought forth, and put upon him. And thus dressed, shall he mourn ? I know I have done so ; but I am now speaking gospel facts, and not merely the feelings of God's people. Are we clothed with this righteousness ? Is God's best robe our dress ? Do we appear before Him in it ? Then, O God, give us grace to rejoice and sing. Again, we have the sinking sand and the rock. "He raised me out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and hath put a new song into my mouth." Here is another contrast. A horrible pit, in which the sinner sinks, and in which he must remain for ever if grace divine does not draw him out. God draws him out, and places him on the Rock of Ages ; and let this inhabitant of the rock sing. Again, behold the dung-hill, with the beggar upon it ; and then behold a throne, and the same person as a prince seated there. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." Here is another contrast. Sin and condemnation are the dung-hill and the dust, and justification exalts the person, and entitles him to a throne. Sinners are lost and saved ; far off and made nigh ; condemned and justified ; poor and rich. For all things are theirs ; for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. These are some of your privileges. Live up to them, if you can. Some persons say, it is your duty to do this. If it is, few saints do their duty in this respect, and I cannot always do mine ; for our shortcomings are numerous and great. I am not, however, required to preach our experience for the gospel of God ; but that glorious arrangement, according to which there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, and then to leave myself and my messages in the hands of Jehovah. Your state, then, as a righteous person, demands joy and praise.

Secondly—"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous," not only on account of your state, but on account of your *experience*. Do you say that is

better. Why, you would have no experience were it not for the state. Therefore I like to speak first of the root, and then of the tree and fruit—first of the cause, and then of the effect. As to this experience, it is said, “the righteous have good things in possession;” while of the wicked it is said, “their good is not in their hand.” Who will show us any good is the unceasing inquiry of the world? And they are perpetually pursuing some imaginary good, which they never overtake; and therefore their good is not in their hands. But the righteous have good things in possession, and more in prospect. Do you say, we are poor, helpless, miserable creatures? I am almost ready to say, I am glad to hear it; for a sense of misery and wretchedness precedes joy, and peace, and songs of praise to the Lord. The sigh goes before the song, sorrow goes before joy, and the broken heart precedes the balm and the healing. If grace has made you unhappy, I thank God on your behalf; for joy, peace and salvation are coming. Do you belong to that tribe, concerning which some persons have said, they have religion enough to make them miserable, but not enough to make them happy? Yes, we do. Well, give up that which has so depressed you; abandon that which has made you so unhappy; return to your former course, and go back into the position that you have left; associate again with the world, and blaspheme the holy name of God; retain no longer that which breaks your heart, and fills you with grief, and keeps you awake at night. Give it all up. That is simply impossible; for notwithstanding our unhappiness, misery, and woe, we would not give up the little hope we have for all the world. Sing, my friends, sing! If there is a something in your hearts that is divine—that is more precious to you than the whole world—sing; for there are many persons who, though they had no hope, would sing loud enough if they had the whole world, while you have something heavenly in your hearts that is dearer to you than that. But we have at times to encounter the sneering infidel—and there is much infidelity at the present time—and he tells us that the Bible is a fiction, that our religion is a delusion, and that we are fanatical, ignorant, and shallow-minded. Well, my dear friends, it strikes me, and it always has so struck me, that our *fictions* are better than the infidel’s *facts*, and that our delusions and shadows are far better than the world’s realities. The infidel may keep his realities, we will keep our fancies. He may keep his facts, we will hold our fictions, and tell him before God, that our delusions afford us a purer, a holier, a more useful joy, than all his theories ever afforded him or others. Our so-called fables are so precious that they are worth retaining, especially when it is proved that they far surpass in value and solid usefulness the best that the world has to show. And this is the intelligent experience of all the righteous.

But let us come closer to the subject. What have we in possession? A meetness for another, a better world than this. We are in sympathy with heaven, and in harmony with God. It is said that Judas went to his own place. I suppose that means he went to the place with which he was in sympathy, for which he was prepared, and which was the natural climax of his principles. And we shall go to our own place, and that is not hell. We know and feel it is not; and we declare before God it is not our own place, for we are not in sympathy with malice, and enmity,

and uncleanness—and all these evils prevail in hell. We are in love with holiness and purity, and possess a religion by which we long for sinlessness, and for perfect conformity to the Son of God. Let such persons sing, for they are upright in heart, and righteous in Christ, and songs are comely from them. Not only so ; the righteous possess the earnest of heaven and glory, and not merely a pledge. They possess a part of the whole, and hold the deposit which God has given.

“ Beneath His smiles my soul has lived,
And part of heaven possessed.
I bless His name for grace received,
And trust Him for the rest.”

Is heaven a world of purity ? We have a little of it now. Is heaven the perfection of grace ? We have grace now. Is heaven perfect happiness ? We have joys and pleasures now. There have been happy moments in our experience, when the world, and sin, and self were conquered, and our souls were sweetly absorbed in God. Sing, O ye righteous ; your experience warrants it, for it is spiritual and divine. Again, look at your associations. “ And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.” Were we in covenant with death and hell ? Had we given our signature, and bound ourselves to be ruined ? I put it plainly. Had we pledged ourselves to live and die in the devil’s service, and has God disannulled that covenant, and cancelled that agreement, and are we free ? Yes ; we are no longer the devil’s followers, nor the slaves of the tyrant sin. God has taken possession of us for Himself. “ This people have I formed for myself.” Legal bondage, too, is ended ; for “ Ye are not under the law, but under grace.” The law once held you fast ; but that bond has been cancelled by the precious blood of Jesus, and you are free, and have passed into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, where you live under the reign and dominion of grace. And this heavenly righteousness influences all natural and social ties. Although some persons have maligned and misrepresented me in connection with this point, yet I hold that the religion of heaven includes and affects them all. The relationship between husband and wife, between master and servant, between brothers and sisters, is improved by grace. But then that relationship, though thus improved, must be dissolved, and for ever cease. What are the associations, the *eternal* associations of a righteous person ? I turn to a portion of the Word, and simply quote, and leave it for your private meditation. “ Ye are come to Mount Zion,” where milder words declare His will,” “ and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels ; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven ; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Sing, O ye upright, for the righteousness of Jesus Christ has brought you into association with all this. In such society as this I would live and die, and with these happy millions and our Lord I would be found in heaven for ever.

Lastly—Your *prospects* as a righteous man justify joy. And what are

they? I will mention one or two. "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Then let him sing. Concerning the righteous it is further said, "His path shineth more and more unto the perfect day." In the morning we have the grey twilight, which becomes brighter and clearer as the sun rises higher, and when he is in mid heavens it is perfect day. The sun never goes back; but having risen in the east, he rises higher and higher, which illustrates the course of a righteous person. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Our doubts and fears, our unbelief, our sins and corruptions—and we should not like to describe them to our fellow-creatures—have, at times, been almost more than we could bear; yet we are all here to-night.

"Mid all our sin, and grief, and woe,
Thy Spirit has not let me go."

We are afloat, although we have encountered many storms. We have been in the fire, but have never been consumed. We have been in the conflict, but have not been finally overcome. We have run here and there, and been out of breath, yet we are pursuing, and I believe that we shall get safely through, and reach the land of promised rest. Sing unto the Lord, O ye righteous. Soon we shall die; and what then? There is victory even there through the blood of the Lamb. And what beyond death but the portion of a righteous man,—the crown, the throne, and the kingdom. And what of the end of time, but the glorious resurrection of the body, when it shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Redeemer, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue even all things unto Himself. Here is the subject of joy and praise—the righteous.

Shall I say a word only on its *object*? "Rejoice in the Lord." Not in your works—the Pharisee does that. But you are a righteous man, having been made so by God, and therefore you must rejoice in Him. Not in rites and ceremonies. We pity—at least, I do—those deluded thousands, and the clergymen that are among them, who are rejoicing in empty human ceremonies, and are known as Ritualists. They, like popery, have their priests, and a combination of human rites and forms, in which they now rejoice; but soon they will all evaporate, and leave their souls uncovered. "Rejoice in the Lord," not in the inventions of the creature. But let us go further than this, and say, that though you have some grace in your hearts, "Rejoice in the Lord," and not in internal grace, which is variable and changeable in its degrees and exercise; and I must invite and exhort you to rejoice in what never changes. Thank your God for his grace in your souls. But hear Paul,—*"My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,"* and not in the grace that is in yourself. If you have some thousands in the bank, you are strong in that, and not in the few shillings you have in your purse. Your wants can be met by your resources at the bank, but not by what you have in your pocket. No; rejoice not in internal grace, and not in frames and feelings. You will sing when you are happy, when the sun shines, when the road is smooth, and when you can read your title clearly. What creatures of circumstances we are, for all of us are more or less affected

by them. Pleasant frames and feelings are not legitimate objects of joy, for they are limited and affected by the clouds and by the dust. But beyond the clouds there is God—His throne, and His covenant—where there is no change. Rejoice, therefore, in Him. Rejoice in what He is,—a triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Rejoice in His supremacy, and in His perfections, for they are all favourable to you. Rejoice in the complexity of Christ's person—God and man. Deity is revealed in the flesh, and through your own nature God is pouring forth the riches of His grace. Rejoice in His official engagements and work. He is a Prophet, and the light you have comes from Him. He is a Priest, and the peace and pardon you possess came from His sacrifice. He is a King, and, living under His throne and sceptre, you are His saved subjects. Rejoice in His work, which is honourable and glorious. Away to Gethsemane and Calvary, and sit down and watch the Saviour there. See Him weep, and bleed, and suffer, and die; and, contemplating the salvation that was in Him, and that flowed from Him, embrace this blest Redeemer, and the keen sword that Justice draws, all flaming and red, shall pass you by. “Rejoice in the Lord.”

The *comeliness* or propriety of all this—“for praise is comely for the upright.” It is becoming when we consider the character indicated. It is becoming and proper for a righteous person to sing, just as it is natural and becoming for a bird to sing, for a lion to roar, and for a hart to leap and bound from point to point. It would not be comely for an elephant to leap like a deer, nor for the hart to go heavily as the elephant. God has made everything beautiful in its season and place. A dancing elephant is a most unseemly and uncomely sight; but it is comely, beautiful and proper for saved sinners to sing and praise God. Besides, my friends, one gets no credit from being praised and commended by ignorance and wickedness. The ignorant and proud may accept the flattering commendations of the ignorant, but the wise and good estimate them at their real worth, or rather, worthlessness. If the unrighteous and unholy should rise before God's throne, and sing His praises, it would be uncomely. If an enemy should profess to rejoice in God, his conduct would be out of due course and order; but God, having saved, enriched, elevated, dignified, and united you to Himself by becoming your God, it is proper and becoming that you should rejoice in Him, and bless and praise His holy name. May the Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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PEACE MADE BY JESUS CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 12th DECEMBER, 1880,

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

"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all.)"—Acts x. 36.

THE chapter out of which we have taken our text is probably one of the most interesting in the word of God. It is full of holy doctrine, describes Christian experience, and indicates also the believing obedience of the followers of Christ. Cornelius was a centurion, and his company was situated at this time in Cæsarea. About the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon, he had a vision and saw a being who said to him, "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter." The good man inferred from this vision that some important message from heaven was about to be sent; and accordingly in obedience to the divine order, he sent to Joppa for Peter. But Peter was a Jew, and his Jewish prejudices were deep and strong. He almost hated the Gentiles, and was shocked at the idea of going into their presence and preaching the Gospel to them. It was therefore necessary that his prejudices should be removed, and that his mind should be brought into a healthier state. To effect this important change in Peter, a vision appeared to him, and he saw a certain vessel descending as it were from heaven like a great sheet knit at the four corners, let down upon the earth, and in that vessel were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Animals such as these were accounted unclean by the Jews, and as food they were condemned by the ceremonial law. As the sheet appeared before Peter and he examined its contents, a voice said to him, "Rise Peter, kill and eat; and he said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." This was something new to Peter, and indeed it conveys several great and important truths to every thoughtful mind. The sheet contained what to a Jew was unclean—four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Creeping things typifying such characters as are low and gross; fowls of the air representing persons who soar high, and are in their own opinion wonderfully good and excellent; four-footed beasts of the field, and wild beasts, unclean, unmanageable, and therefore prohibited. "Rise Peter, kill and eat." I have never eaten food like that, and such unclean flesh I cannot touch. "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." After the vision, there was a knock at the door. The deputation sent by Cornelius had arrived, and they were introduced to Peter. They delivered their master's message, and Peter with some others accompanied them to Cæsarea. Entering the place, they found

the good man Cornelius and a number of persons gathered together in his house, to hear what the Lord might have to communicate to them. Cornelius having described his vision, Peter opened his mouth ; for his prejudice was gone, and he was bound to deliver a message to them from God. Cornelius was a Gentile, a Roman, a Roman soldier, and a centurion, whose presence indicated Cæsar's supremacy and Israel's bondage. Nevertheless, Peter's prejudice was gone, and he felt that if his audience were comparable to the wild beasts or the creeping things he had seen, he was bound to believe that God either had cleansed them or intended to do so, and therefore he opened his mouth and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." It is possible to fear God with natural fear without working righteousness, but this good man not only feared God, he was devout and holy, and a worker of such righteousness as was acceptable to God. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) "that word I say ye know," and so on.

In looking at the subject, it will be proper to take notice of two points into which it divides itself. In the first place, notice *the great Peacemaker*, Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, and in the second place, contemplate *the peace he has made*.

An observation or two, in the first place, on *the great Peacemaker*, Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. We shall direct our attention, in the first place, to a few facts in connection with *the person* of this great Peacemaker. He is here named Jesus Christ, or the anointed Saviour, the great Being that was anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure, to save lost and ruined sinners, to magnify the law and make it honourable, and to fulfil all the deep and saving purposes of His great Heavenly Father. He was appointed to redeem, to make peace, and to save millions of sinners with an honourable and everlasting salvation. But, speaking of His person, we may notice His qualifications for this important work. What was it that qualified Him to make peace? In the first place it was His complexity, for He was and is both God and man. Had He not been human as well as Divine, he could not have made peace between God and man. Had he been only a man, and nothing more, though pure, and holy, and perfect, and the greatest man that ever lived, then peace by Him between God and the sinner would have been impossible; but this great Peacemaker was both God and man, and His two natures constitute one mysterious and glorious person. They are not to be confused. We may distinguish between them, but separate them we may not. God will never separate the two natures of His Son. Christ can never separate His humanity from His divinity, and when He died on the tree there was no separation between the two natures of Immanuel ; and there was no separation between the body of the Saviour and His deity when He was in the grave. Be assured, my friends, that since He that died was more than a man, He that was buried and that rose from the dead, was more than a mere man. Our Lord was buried, and rose again, in connection with His deity, as He ascended to heaven in both His natures, and this great God-man, and Mediator will ever sit upon His throne, the great medium of communication between the eternal God and millions of happy beings. The complexity of His person constituted an element in His qualifications for the work of making peace.

Look, again, at His character. Christ was both acceptable to God, and accepted by Him, and, therefore, when He gave His name in the council chamber of eternity, he was received with delight ; when He entered into covenant engagements on behalf of both God and men, the eternal Father accepted His engagement, and devolved all the weight of His justice and government upon Him, and hence it is said, the government is upon the shoulders of this great Redeemer. Had there been a flaw in His character, or a fault in His person, had there been the slightest doubt or uncertainty as to His perfect ability to save, His promises had been rejected, and He himself had been considered as quite unqualified for the work of making peace between God and man. He came from heaven with the concurrence of infinite wisdom and justice ; angels followed him from the skies, and triumphantly announced His birth : "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill towards men." As they announced the birth of the great Peacemaker, so they followed Him all the days of His life, and wondered where the scene of love would end ; and when this great peace was finished and completed they withdrew as it were their attention from creation, and desired to look into the mysteries of this great work of our Lord and their's : "Which things the angels desire to look into." And I apprehend that the devil was profoundly conscious of the satisfactory character of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he endeavoured to stain His purity, to warp His mind, and to draw and seduce Him to commit faults in all points, knowing that one wrong step on the part of the Saviour would have imperilled salvation, and left our peace with God impossible. But the prince of this world cometh. He saw him (yet people say He is not God!) "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" : nothing in me in sympathy with him, nothing that can possibly unite to him, or yield to his seductions. Those temptations of the devil were as the way of a serpent on the rock, or the way of a ship in the sea. A ship leaves no trace in the water, and a serpent which crawls upon a rock leaves no impression behind it. So Jesus, the Rock of Ages, came into contact with the old serpent, who cast his poison upon Him, and resolved to wreck His character, but left no mark whatever upon Him. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." That was the Being to make peace, a Being that possessed two natures, a Being whose character was immutably and essentially faultless ; and, thirdly, a Being whose resources were infinite and divine. A Being who could have been exhausted, whose resources might have failed, would not have been qualified for this glorious business of making peace between God and man. It pleased the Father, however, that all fulness should dwell in Jesus, and when He came to make our peace He brought all the necessary materials with Him. He brought, as I have said, a complex person, a glorious character, divine authority and power, and, therefore, in Himself there were all those elements which, combined and associated, constitute the sinner's peace with God. Was blood precious and divine required ? it was in Him. Was ability to work out a faultless righteousness required ? He was able to do it. Whatever was necessary to justify the ungodly, and to justify God in justifying the ungodly, our great Peacemaker possessed and produced. "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all." He was high enough and low enough ; for the Being that made peace between God and man ; was high in his character, and low both as to His condescension and His nature. He was high enough

for God, for He was God ; and He was low enough for man, for He was man. He was high enough in dignity, for He was faultless ; and He was low enough in His stoop of condescension, for He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. He was high enough and low enough, for when He stood here between God and man He laid one hand on the throne in heaven and the other on the guilty sinner down here, and said, "I and my Father are one." These are my sheep, and I am their Shepherd ; and on the throne is my Father, and I am equal with Him. They are in His hands, and they are in My hands too. I and my Father are one, and the distance, the natural and moral distance, between God and the sinner is filled up by the great God-man, who made our peace. He that made peace between God and man was necessarily in both worlds at the same time. Has this occurred to you ? If Jesus had not been in both worlds at the same time, He could not have made peace, and hence, in the chapter read at the commencement of the service, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, who *is in heaven*." He did not say, who shall be, or who will be, but even the Son of Man who *is in heaven*. Whilst He was effectuating our peace here, He was in heaven. He filled heaven when He appeared in poverty here, for His presence as our Peace-maker was necessary in both worlds: Here, then, we have our Lord's qualifications for making peace.

But, not to tarry too long in a place, let us notice, secondly, *the important position He occupied as our Peacemaker*. Where did He make peace ? Where did He stand ? In what place, or places, did He work ? Well, we again advert to the angels' proclamation when he was born, "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men ;" and we now refer for a moment to our Lord's own words to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you." Having made it, He did not take it away ? "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Why did not our Lord stay in heaven and make peace ? Why did He not settle the awful difference that had arisen between God and man on His throne, or in His Father's bosom ? Why did He become poor, and oblige Himself to say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head ?" Why did he not stay in heaven ? Could not a Being that was almighty have made peace in heaven ? Surely He could not. It was necessary that the Peacemaker should come down here, not only because the evil was born here as far as man was concerned, not only because sin was committed here, but in consequence of the peculiar character of the work that He had to do in order to make peace. There could be no peace without the infliction of the curse ; and Christ could not be cursed on His throne, nor in His Father's bosom. There could be no peace without personal contact with, and immersion in, the wrath of God ; and Jesus could not be immersed in wrath in the Father's bosom ; and, therefore, he said, Lo, I come to do on the earth what I cannot do here. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." He taketh away the first, which separated man from man, and man from God, that He might establish the second. Well, as He could neither bleed on His Father's bosom, nor be cursed in heaven, and both were necessary, He came down into the world where He could suffer, die, be buried, and rise again, in order that He might make peace. Preaching peace by Jesus Christ. Not only was peace made here, but as I said a minute ago, He

left it here for His church, for the Holy Spirit to apply, and for poor sinners to possess and enjoy. Bless Him for the happy moments when we realise the fact that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not stay till we get to heaven to enjoy, or to possess peace, or to know what it is ; for even Cowper sang—

“ What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still ! ”

And if he who was so trembling, so uncertain, and so gloomy, knew what peaceful hours were, there was in his time peace on earth, and a peace that was enjoyed. And peace is to be enjoyed here now. There is peace in heaven and glory to God in the highest ; but the gospel of peace is preached on earth, and the peace of the gospel is realised here. Not only did our Lord make peace here, He made it under the law, and became its end. He was born—which is a very significant assertion—he was born of a woman. Why was he not dropped down a perfect man from heaven ? or why did he not descend with a troop of angels in perfect manhood without coming into the world by birth ? He would not then have been like His brethren, and He would not even have been our brother, had He come into the world that way ; and it became Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren. They come into the world by birth, so He was born of a woman. What then ? He was made under the law, even a broken law. Adam was made and lived under a law that was not broken ; but as soon as Christ was born of a woman, justice put her hand upon Him, and the law took hold of Him. He was made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ; not that we might be adopted, but that we might receive the adoption of sons. Well, for three-and-thirty years He stayed under the law, obeying its holy precepts year after year. Behind Him was a past, a life of shining light, all perfection and glory. Before Him were breaches or sins, and the curse. He repaired the breaches as He proceeded towards the end of the law, and when He had reached it His cross was set up, and He was extended upon it, and the whole penalty of sin was poured upon His holy and glorious person. There He hung, and bled, and suffered, until the last sin disappeared, and the last drop was drained from the bitter cup, when He said peace is made—“ It is finished,” and bowed His head and gave up the ghost. “ Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

Thirdly—One word on *the persons for whom He made peace*. “ The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all.” He made peace for men, for His people, not for angels. I mean sinning, fallen angels. It is said in some quarters that there will be a time when even Satan himself will be saved, and all unhappy lost spirits will cease to suffer—and I suppose be taken to glory. Well, we have not time to go into those matters, and if we had I do not think it would be very profitable. I may just say here, that if Satan should ever be saved and taken to heaven, there must be a solid and glorious peace made first between him and his Maker ; and if Jesus Christ made peace in any way between God and lost angels, then I contend, and that very earnestly, that the angelic nature as well as the human was united to the person of Jesus. But “ He took not on him the

nature of angels," for it was not His intention to make peace between them and God. The good angels needed it not, and the bad ones were not included in the covenant engagements of Christ. He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. The superior nature of angels was passed by, whilst ours, though inferior was assumed. Poor human sinners were loved, and peace made between us and God. Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished O earth! He passed the rebel angels by, to take this feeble flesh of ours. O that my soul felt more and more of its indebtedness to the riches of Divine grace! There were thousands, probably millions, of happy spirits in heaven when Jesus made peace here. They were taken to heaven before their peace was actually made, and I am not surprised at it; because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The Father took His word, and rested upon His character. When Jesus made peace, He had His eye upon all that were in heaven as well as upon those that were then on the earth, and upon those that should be found on the earth until the end of time. His knowledge comprehended all and every one. Enoch was in heaven, body and soul. Elijah was there, body and soul. Moses was there, perhaps his body as well as his soul, but that is a matter of opinion; and Jesus had to pay all their debts, and He paid them all. The eyes of all in heaven were towards the Peace Maker between God and man. And now let me say that he made peace for all that are, and all that ever will be, before God's throne of grace. If there are not two thrones, God's throne has a twofold aspect; hence it is a throne of glory for heaven, and a throne of grace also for the needy on earth. Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy. There are singing millions before the glory throne, and he made their peace with God. There are praying thousands before the gracious throne, having broken hearts and wounded consciences, bowed down with a sense of sin, and by reason of the troubles of the way—all these on their knees before the mercy throne are interested in this peace with God, for Jesus is their peace. His universal dominion. He is Lord of all, of Jew and Gentile, and of all creatures, angels, men and devils, of all nations and of all worlds; and by Him we are authorised to bring this glorious word to you, preaching peace by Jesus Christ. I am sorry I have not time to enlarge further on this point.

Just a word on *the peace made*. This implies the existence of sin; for had there been no sin there would have been no blood, no Saviour, and no gospel of peace. If our salvation required the sufferings of so great a person as Jesus; O, how great an evil sin must be! What is sin? I do not know that I can define it. John says, it is the transgression of the law. What is that but that terrible evil that separates the creature from God, that alienates the mind from Him, that deforms the sinner and makes him offensive to the Divine Being. Sin is the root and cause of all moral enmity and hatred to God. Sin renders a holy God most terrible, and destroys the sinner, without the intervention of sovereign mercy. Sin desolates hearts, and families, and countries, and the world; and if it could enter heaven it would unparadise the place. The nature and tendency of sin are to undeify Jehovah. Such is its nature, that if it could rise high enough and strike hard enough it would dethrone the Author of our being. The spirit that says, Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy

ways, would, were it stronger, change or annihilate the God of heaven. It required something my dear friends to make peace between God and sinful creatures. Do not smile at sin or think it is a trifle. Ten-thousand times ten-thousand pains and agonies on your part would be insufficient to remove its guilt.

“ The sins of one most righteous day
Might sink me in despair ;
But all the sins of numerous years
Shall my great Surety clear.”

But what shall we say about this peace? Look, first, at the *nature of it*. And here let me observe that our Lord changed nothing for the purpose of making it. He changed nothing. Take that as a comprehensive fact. Sin itself—he did not change it, nor made it less evil than it naturally is, He altered none of its vile properties. It was loathsome, essentially hateful to God, and he put it away by the sacrifice of Himself. The law—he did not change it, for it is essentially immutable. He obeyed it, magnified it, and made it honourable. The wrath of God—he did not change it. God’s wrath is inconvertible, though not inexhaustible in relation to Jesus. He bore it all, exhausted it, and now none is due to the sons of peace. God Himself? He did not change God, nor induce Him to love you, nor alter His mind. That which was bad in itself he expiated and removed, and cast it into the depths of the sea. That which was good but hostile, the dear Redeemer honoured and magnified, and made for ever honourable. This is how he made peace. “Preaching peace by Jesus Christ.” Now this peace, my friends, changes all things in relation to all that have it, although Christ changed nothing for the purpose of making it. If we have this peace with God, our life is worth living. You know there is a question critically asked in certain circles—Is life worth living? I should be almost inclined to say no, if one has not peace with God. What is life? A vapour, a shadow, that appeareth for a short time and then passeth away. It is full of disappointments, and bitters, and changes, and perils; where clouds and darkness prevail, and nothing is fixed or certain, and all this is followed by a mysterious separation from this world called death. I hardly think life is worth living apart from God’s love and Christ’s blood; and I have Scripture for this, I think. It had been better for that man had he never been born. If we are at peace with God, our life is a precious boon. Our temporals are blest and are all the sweeter for the fact that we have peace with God. Our spiritual things are certain, and our circumstances take their shape and colour, and direction from the fact that we have peace with God. It may be that in trial, trouble, disappointment, and affliction, we linger out a strange, mysterious life, yet all our lingering pains and sorrows are sanctified, perfumed, and coloured by the fact that Jesus died for us. Yes, peace with God changes all things in relation to the beings for whom it was made.

Shall I say a word in the next place on the *extent of this peace*? Well, it is very large. Some people want to limit it, but I cannot. First, there is peace between God and man. That is blessed. God and man reconciled and made friends. Can we look unto Jehovah and say in thankful humility, we are out of debt! There is no legal difference, Father, between Thee and us; for Jesus loved us, and gave Himself for us. And

can and does the eternal God look on us and say, Thou art all righteous and all fair, there is no spot in thee! Wondrous Peace Maker and wondrous peace! Peace between God and man. Then peace between man and angels. The angels must follow their God, and if He is against the creatures they must be against them too. If God is not against us, none in heaven are against us. If God is for us, they are for us also. Therefore there is peace between men and heaven made by Christ. Then peace between Jew and Gentile. He has made both one and taken down the middle wall of partition that separated the two people, and made of twain one new man. Also he makes peace between man and circumstances. I welcome all Thy solemn will, for all that will is love. Then peace between man and man. Two wicked persons living in a state of enmity against God, are hateful and often hating one another. Living it may be in the same locality, they hate and curse each other. If they are both called by grace, and the fear of God is rooted in both their hearts, peace springs up between them, and they love each other and walk together to their Father's house. He is our peace. Peace between man and man, between man and angels, and between man and God. Looking at this peace in relation to God, it reconciles all His attributes. Righteousness and peace meet together. The sterner perfections of God meet His milder excellencies, and they embrace and kiss each other. Peace between my heart and God's law, between my soul and God's gospel, between my faith and God's providence, and peace between me and death: then how wonderful is the peace Jesus has made!

Lastly, *the application of it*. Is it mine? Yes, if you want it. If you cannot do, or live, or die without it. Is this the innermost experience and desire of your heart? You say, I do live, but my life is a miserable existence. I am daily sighing, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." What a boon I should account this blessing if I could say it was mine. Peace with God, and when shall I receive it? When shall I rejoice in it? I would give a world, if I possessed it, for leave to call it mine. Why, friend, you are not an enemy; having this desire, there is no enmity in your heart against God. You are reconciled, and therefore God and you are one. The sweet stream of peace flowing from the great Peacemaker will reach you to-morrow, or the next day, or some other time, as sure as there is a God of peace, and you shall have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And then in death, and what will that be? Why, there is peace between death and the Christian. Death will be victory, and not a calamity. It will be more than a victory, it will be a glorious triumph over all. "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

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THE YOUNG CONVERT AND THE AGED SAINT.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 9th JANUARY, 1881.

"O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth : and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not ; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."—Psa. lxxi. 17, 18.

IT is important that these two verses should be read in connection with the 16th verse of the Psalm. "I will go," David said, "in the strength of the Lord ; I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only." The circumstances by which he was at this time surrounded were painful and distressing ; but his conscience was spiritual and tender, and he could lay his hand upon his breast and appeal to the all-seeing God concerning the occasion of his affliction. As the man after God's own heart, the whole course of his life, with one exception, was pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. Nevertheless trouble reached him even on the throne, and so great was its force that for a time it drove him from his palace and from Jerusalem. For a time he tarried with his servants afar off, and was dependant upon his friends, although he was the rightful king of Israel. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous ;" and if they are in mansions, in palaces, or on thrones, even there troubles will surely reach them ; for it is through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom of God. If one's temporal circumstances are comparatively easy, and his path comparatively smooth, yet, since man is a sinner, and sin is a terrible power, there will be a conflict in his breast, which will last as long as life itself endures. Hence David said "now, I will go in the strength of the Lord ;" and this resolution receives an illustration from the conduct of Abraham, of Jacob, and of the children of Israel. The Lord, at Ur of the Chaldees, imparted grace to the heart of Abraham, and said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." Abraham conferred not with flesh and blood, but obeyed the Divine command, and went out, not knowing whither he went. This furnishes a striking illustration of David's resolution, "I will go in the strength of the Lord." It was perhaps thought that Abraham was presumptuous to leave his country and kindred, not knowing whither he went. But if he knew not whither he was going, he knew whom he was going with ; and since the God who called him was present with him, he felt he could not be in a wrong position, and therefore he went in the strength of the Lord. So Jacob, having served Laban for a considerable time, was ordered to depart from him ; and he went in the strength of the Lord. He left his uncle,

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but had not gone far before trouble overtook him, which he overcame by God's strength. He was then informed that Esau would soon meet him, when there wrestled with him a Man until the breaking of the day. In answer to his prayer, God blessed the fearing saint, and he went forth and met his brother in the strength of the Lord. He had previously said, I fear Esau, and well he might ; but inasmuch as he had obtained God's blessing and authority for the journey he was taking, he went on that strength and met his brother. Israel were ordered out of Egypt, and they went in the strength of the Lord. They reached the Red Sea, and there were no vessels to convey them across it. Yet the Lord said, Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward. Moses delivered the divine command ; and, as the people proceeded, the sea was divided, and they were justified in going forward, for they went in the strength of the Lord. So David, having met Goliath, and many other foes, in the strength of the Lord, comforted himself with this fact in old age and bitter trial, the Lord is my strength and righteousness, and I will trust in Him. "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

The text is a comprehensive one, and full of gracious matter. It contains some clauses upon which I cannot touch, or must touch very briefly, since I wish to direct your attention to two points ; first to the *Young Convert*, and secondly, to the *Aged Saint*. If I confine my remarks to these two points of Christian character, two or three clauses in the text must be passed over.

Let us, in the first place, offer some remarks upon the *Young Convert*. David said, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." There are some ministers of the Gospel—good and gracious men without doubt—who are frequently preaching special sermons to the young, and publicly announcing their intention of doing so ; and I have sometimes wondered why, if particular classes are to have ministerial attention at stated times, old sinners and saints should be left out. My friends, the Gospel should be preached to all ; it being adapted to the requirements and circumstances of both old and young. Let us by all means have suitable words for the young ; but, at the same time, let us not forget the old and grey-headed ; therefore to-night we will offer a few remarks to each character. In looking at the young believer, I shall invite your attention to two points ; first, to the *fact asserted*, O God, thou hast taught me from my youth ; a very pleasing and important fact ; and, secondly, I will *draw a few lessons from this fact*. In the first place, let us look at the *fact asserted*, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." Here notice the divine and important distinction. Have we, or any of us, been taught by God from our youth ? You remember some words in one of Dr. Watts's hymns, in his little book entitled "Divine and Moral Songs"—

"It saves us from a thousand snares,
To mind religion young."

Probably, for the word "mind," it might be better to substitute the words "have" or "love ;" for it is a mercy to be under the saving

influence of religion when one is young in years. David, it appears, was called by grace very early ; and when he was old, looking back through a period of nearly seventy years, he said, " O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth ; and in this respect he was mercifully distinguished ; for it is not the privilege of all young people to be taught by God in early life. I hope my friends will not either misinterpret or misrepresent the thoughts which I am attempting to express. Is it not so ? Does not man go astray from the womb, speaking lies, and, as a rule, does he not stray far and long in sin, transgression, and wickedness, and frequently into vices which are exceedingly damaging and terrible ; and, therefore, David having been called in youth, or in very early life, was mercifully distinguished by God. I remember, (and forgive me for adverting to my sinful self,) that when I was about sixteen years of age I made a public profession of my faith in Christ, the Lord having called me when I was about fifteen. David, perhaps, was called earlier than that. I now look back upon the first fifteen years of my life with peculiar emotions. Such was my recklessness, buoyancy of mind, strength of spirits, and love of sin, that if God had not laid His hand upon me early, it is impossible for any creature to say what depths of evil I might not have gone into. Oh, it is a mercy to be called young, and to receive light from the throne of God in early life. God had a very important work for David to do, and He always fits and prepares His instruments for Himself ; and therefore in early life He rooted the principle of Divine grace in the heart of the youth, and thus distinguished him from his fellow creatures. It was David's honour to be in Christ early. I use those words because Paul, speaking of certain individuals, says, " they were in Christ before me." Of course Paul does not refer to the eternal purposes or decrees of Jehovah, nor to the covenant of grace which was made early, and ordered in all things and sure ; for so all the people of God were loved and chosen, and united to Jesus Christ at once, and in that connection they have ever since been viewed by God. When, therefore, the Apostle speaks of being in Christ early, he refers to regeneration, or to that change which takes place when the Holy Ghost enters the heart, convinces the conscience of sin, and brings the sinner with trembling and supplication into the presence of his Maker and his God. This, we say, is an honour ; for the Word assures us that such are saints. Beloved young friends, (and I now address myself to those of you that know the Lord,) what would your character have been to-day had you not been early taught by God ? What would your social position have been, had not the Lord put His fear into your hearts ? Perhaps no person whom you now call your friend would have known you to-night. Or that woman now sitting by your side as your wife, would have been unknown to you, had not the Lord taught you in your youth. Salvation not only meetens and fits its possessor for heaven, it does a world of good whilst in the present life, whilst we are passing through its changing scenes. Your moral character, your friends, your associations, and your social comforts, have arisen out of, and are based upon the fact, that the Lord taught you when you were young. It is a blessing to be called at any time, an honour to be saved at any moment, but it is a special favour to be in Christ in one's youth. Yes, it is a blessing, if one having lived forty or fifty years in sin is called

even then ; but it is a most distinguishing honour to know the Lord in early life. Some of you were when young led to the house of God ; accustomed to kneel beside those you loved, and that loved you, whilst they prayed for you, you have, in answer to their prayer, received grace and been brought into the church, and are living in honourable connection with the excellent of the earth, having no taste for the vices and abominations by which you are surrounded. Dear young brethren and sisters, you are great debtors—debtors for eternal love, precious blood, and for the good Spirit of God. I know parents cannot give grace nor save their children ; but I know also that they experience an inexpressible delight in seeing them called, and called in early life. It kindles joy in us to see young persons turned from this world towards a better one, and taken out of the power of the devil, and from under the dominion of sin, and placed in the kingdom of God's grace. Young Christian brethren and sisters, be thankful to your heavenly Father that He has thus distinguished you.

Let us notice in the second place *the confidence expressed*. “ O Lord, thou hast taught me from my youth.” The name of David's father was Jesse ; and since he was descended from Ruth, it may be that grace distinguished several generations. Be that as it may, a believing parent has, no doubt, his eye affectionately and prayerfully fixed upon his beloved children : but though David often heard his parents talk about eternal things, yet he said, *Thou* hast taught me, O Lord. Parents may speak to their children from day to day ; if any mind is savingly informed, God is the teacher. Whoever the messenger may be, the message always comes from God. Again, the Levites and priests were teachers under the ceremonial dispensation, and since David was an early attendant at the house of God, he heard their expositions of the law ; but he says, O God, thou hast taught me. And what was the youth taught by God ? Now here we must come to old-fashioned matters, and they are not the worse for being old. We must take notice of sin ; for the youth was taught that he was a sinner, and I know there are persons quite ready to deride us when we speak of the sinnership of the young. However, if God teaches any one spiritually and savingly, He always reveals the fact that he is a sinner. Of course David was not convinced of sins which he never committed, nor of immoralities in which he never lived, and when he presented himself as a young petitioner before the throne, his prayers differed no doubt from those prayers of a person who is called in the middle of life ; yet David knew and felt this fact, “ I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” He was brought to compare himself with the requirements of God in His law. He stood before that holy glass, and although his immoralities were not like those of an older person, yet he felt he was a guilty sinner, and prayed to be washed and cleansed. He was also taught the way of salvation ; and further, he was led therein. In early life he not only saw the Saviour and believed in Immanuel, he embraced Him as his salvation, and God as his covenant God and gracious Father. And let me here say, beloved friends, that dates in connection with divine teaching are wholly immaterial. There may be some young friends present to-night who are ready to cut themselves off because they cannot speak of a terrible law work in

their hearts ; nor say, when God began to teach them, or when the first ray of heavenly light entered their minds. Dates here are quite unimportant. Never mind when the first ray came. Has light entered your hearts ? Do you know you are sinners ? Do you feel that without an interest in the doing and dying of the Saviour you must be ever lost ? If so, be satisfied, your knowledge is divine ; and you know where divine knowledge comes from. Since light and life are within, and both are divine, you may say, " O God, thou hast taught us from our youth."

Let us, thirdly, observe that this divine teaching was the groundwork of the life-long profession of David. I refer to no individuals present when I say, some of us have seen much in young professors which has occasioned peculiar feelings ; we have watched their course and conduct and been disappointed and tried, although, perhaps, few ministers have less to complain of in this respect than myself. It has been my privilege to receive a considerable number of young persons into this church, and my comfort to see a large number of them so walk as to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. But alas ! I have seen some relapse into the world, depart from the truth, walk no more with Jesus, and concerning faith and a good conscience make shipwreck. They have brought reproach upon the cause of God and almost broken many hearts, and occasioned many sleepless nights. David, however, was enabled to say through an eventful life, I have shown forth all thy wondrous works. How was it he was green and fruitful when he was an old man ? How was it he departed not from the truth and the ways of God ? It was all owing to the fact stated here, " O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." Christian brethren, man teaches heads, but God teaches hearts. When man takes up religion, he takes up one that is convenient to and that harmonises with his feelings ; but when God gives religion, he gives one that is holy, immortal, and heavenly ; Divine religion cannot be accommodated to the tastes of the immoral, the wicked, and the dead, for it transforms the mind and brings the sinner into harmony with God. David having in youth received the true grace of God, was trained and led by the wisdom of God, and took his form, character, and complexion as a believer from the Divine teaching and knowledge of his heavenly Father. Friends, never regard what is said about the dimensions of a congregation, the position and standing of a church, the size of a chapel, nor the popularity or unpopularity of the people. All that will go for nothing when heart and flesh fail, and there is but a step between you and death.

"The one thing needful, dearest Lord,
Is to be one with Thee."

And if you are one with Christ, your hearts are vitally connected with God's eternal truth ; you love God's people, whether they be many or few, popular or otherwise ; and your prayer is—

"With them numbered may I be,
Now and through eternity."

Now a word in the second place *on the lessons to be drawn from this fact*, " O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." The first that comes forcibly upon my mind, and upon the minds of my hearers, is that God

is a Sovereign. If you thought I should introduce this truth, you were correct. God is a Sovereign, and it is useless, if not wicked, to deny that fact. He is a Sovereign in providence, in nature, and in grace. Grace is sovereign, and this is essential to its existence. God was not bound to give it. There was nothing in Himself nor out of Himself to compel Him to impart it to the guilty; but He resolved to be practically gracious, and the only reason He Himself assigns for the fact is this, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy." And God is a Sovereign as to the persons that receive it, and the time when and the place where it is received. He is not influenced by creatures, nor governed by anything out of Himself. His own will is the rule of His conduct in the communication of undeserved and saving mercy. No one feels more deeply than Christian parents that God is a Sovereign. Where is the godly father or mother who would not if they could change the hearts of their children? I have now in my mind a number of friends, members of this church and congregation, who are parents, praying for their children; and the very fact that they are praying for their beloved ones implies the sovereignty of Jehovah. You have again and again said to your God, If Thou wilt Thou canst change their hearts, renew their minds, and make them clean. The work is God's—and He is a sovereign; and it was David's happiness that he could say, "O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth." We have abundant proofs of all this in history. Jeroboam, a wicked man with a wicked wife, had a son who died when a youth; and the divine testimony concerning him was that there was some good thing in him towards the God of Israel. Josiah was called when he was young, for in the sixteenth year of his age he began to seek after the God of David his Father. And in David also some good thing was found. Timothy, from a child knew the Scriptures, which make wise unto salvation. Mysterious as the sovereignty of God may be and is, it is nevertheless a fact that as to the communication of His grace and the distribution of saving blessing, He does according to His will.

Then, secondly,—and will my friends the Sunday-school teachers take notice of this?—according to my text the gospel, or God's everlasting truth, is perfectly suited to the minds of youth. "Thou hast taught me from my youth." All knowledge is not suited to the minds of the young; but divine truth was suited to the young minds of David, Jeroboam's son, Josiah, and Timothy. The gospel is beautifully and blessedly adapted to immortal minds, whether they be young or old. My dear young friends, though you have many notions in your minds and feelings in your hearts, there can be no thoughts and no feelings that can for a moment be compared as to excellency and worth with that experience which is the result of the operations of Divine Grace in the soul. The gospel is fitted for the human heart, and no wonder; for He that made the mind is the Author of the gospel and of salvation. The great God of heaven is the Author of those doctrines of which some persons are afraid, though they are the realities of Divine Grace. The mysteries of God's truth have different shapes and forms. Sometimes they are presented as milk, and as nothing is so suited to the requirements of the new-born babe as its mother's milk, so nothing meets the requirements of

the young immortal mind like the sincere milk of the word. It is the bread of life ; the young may not be able to eat it as the aged saint eats it. Let the teacher and the preacher break it up into little pieces, or simplify the mysteries of eternal truth. Never dilute the milk : never adulterate the bread when the young are being fed ; for gospel truth is suited to the minds of the young. Do not say that doctrine is too high and that mystery is too deep, but teach and preach the doctrines of grace and the mysteries of the gospel ; but pray for Grace so to speak of them that there may be milk for babes and strong meat for fathers and mothers in Israel. Though I must leave this part of the subject, I will just say that the importance of eternal truth grows with God's people. David advanced in knowledge as his years increased. In Ezekiel there is a beautiful illustration of the growth of God's children in grace. The angel led the prophet to the waters of the sanctuary, which at first were ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then loin-deep, and then they became a river which one could not pass over. The young believer is ankle-deep in truth ; but whether it be shallow or deep the water is the same, it is the sanctuary water and sanctuary supplies. There are waters ankle-deep for the young believer, and as he advances in grace he finds there are things so wondrous in God's word that they become a river so deep that he cannot fathom it, and so wide that he cannot swim across it. David was in these deep waters when he penned my text, "Now I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not."

As I am oftener preaching to the aged than to the young, I will say only a word in the second place about *the aged saint*. "Now I am old and grey-headed, O God forsake me not." Look at his character—he was old and grey-headed ; look at his temptations which I suppose beset him, for not being an old man I can hardly preach experimentally on this point. I do not believe in experience coming from an inexperienced person. Young ministers cannot introduce a ripe and wonderful experience into their sermons, and when I hear it done I have my thoughts. If I were now to preach the experience of an aged saint of seventy years it would not be my own, for though I have been called old, I am not by a considerable distance where David was when he penned this portion of the word. I may say that what is a temptation to a young man is perhaps none whatever to an old one ; and it is impossible for the young to enter into the peculiar influences which beset the aged saint. David though he was an old and grey-headed saint felt that danger was near, and he was tempted and tried even then. He had not put off his armour nor sheathed or cast away his sword, and therefore not having learned to stand or to go alone he prayed. He had a life-long experience, but that was not enough, hence Be with me and forsake me not, O God of salvation. A life-long experience is good, but we shall want more than that when we are old and grey-headed ; and when we come to die we shall need more than past experience. Experience is an argument, and a plea which we may use before God, but at last it will be this, "O God, forsake me not." And then we have the position of the good man. When he was a youth the world was before him, and doubtless it looked very pleasing, for it generally does to the young, and I would not say a word to check their happiness, or obscure what appears to them to be so pleasant

in the future. Let them live and go forward, and they will find all out in due time. The world lay before David when he was a youth—now as old and grey-headed it was behind him. There was a difference between the youth and the old saint; for life had been real and stern to him. The ties that had united him to this world were loose, and giving way one after another. His heart and his flesh were failing for danger was then near, and temptations were then peculiar. He felt then as deeply as ever that he was a sinner. I used to think that the old saint was almost perfect, and on the safe side of sin; but now I find that in growing in knowledge one increases his knowledge of sin, of himself, and of his wickedness, and that the saint has to fight until he reaches the very threshold of heaven. He lives in a state of conflict until the last day of time. There is no putting off the armour, no sheathing the sword or surrendering it until the body of this flesh is put off. Perfection in the flesh! What vain-glory, and what wickedness is the sentiment. No, brethren, we must fight till we are old, if we live to be aged, and fight till we reach the threshold of heaven. The young saint puts on the armour; the old saint is ready to put it off. "Now I am old and grey-headed, forsake me not." Just one word on his prayer—"Forsake me not." Others may leave us when we are old, if for no other reason they will for this one, we shall cease to be within their reach. There will come a moment when the dearest earthly friends will be unable to help or reach us; or when perhaps we shall be wholly unmindful of their presence, their tears, their words and their prayers. There is a point, I know not where it is, between the consciousness of what is taking place about us and eternal glory, where the soul lies beyond human help and the influence of human sympathy. Lord, when I am there, be with me; forsake me not at that solemn moment, O God of my salvation. And then as to his prospect? Well, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." What a contrast between the youth David breathing his first prayer, and the old grey-headed saint committing himself for the last time into the powerful hands of his covenant and gracious God! May we die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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RIPE, READY AND GATHERED.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 27th, 1881.

"Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."—Job v. 26.

WE have many important directions in the word of truth, one of which is given by David, the man after God's own heart: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." It appears from the nature and form of this direction that there are on the earth such characters as perfect men. Men and women are not perfect in themselves, but they are so in the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Apostle says "Ye are complete in Him." God's people are "accepted in the Beloved," and for ever "approved in Christ;" and while His eye is fixed upon them as they are in His dear Son, He doth not behold iniquity in Jacob, neither doth He see perverseness in Israel; and Jesus, their heavenly Bridegroom, gives this testimony concerning their perfection, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." It appears, therefore, that God's people are righteous in Christ, or perfect and complete in "the Lord, their righteousness." One of these favoured ones we are directed to mark; for his end is peace. But the psalmist went on to say, "and behold the upright." Every perfect man is upright, and every experimentally upright individual is perfect in Jesus Christ. We cannot separate perfection from uprightness; but it is important that we should distinguish between the two excellencies. The believer is perfect in Christ; but he is experimentally and practically upright, as the workmanship of the Holy Ghost. His perfection is owing to his union to Jesus,—his uprightness is owing to the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit; therefore in this direction we have the work of the great Redeemer, and the work of the blessed Spirit of God. Thus, we behold the individual in his justification, and the same character living a life of uprightness and honesty here on the earth. The prophet says, "observe him; mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; mark him as he leaves the world for the church, as he leaves the kingdom of darkness for the kingdom of God's dear Son, as he leaves the tyranny of sin for the reign of divine grace, and as he with his face towards Zion inquires the way to his heavenly and eternal home. If we mark him as he leaves the world for the church, and sin for holiness, we shall not fail to observe that he has a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a burdened conscience, and that his eyes are filled with the tears of penitence, whilst he falls upon the knee before the throne, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And if we further mark the progress of this person, we shall find that, being led by the Spirit, he is gradually introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God; for we shall discover that he is washed in the precious blood of Jesus, and clothed with His obedience, and that he realises the fact that he is for ever justified by

the Lord. If we further observe the progress of this individual, we shall find him in the field of conflict, living a life of warfare with himself and the world, and the devil, frequently wounded and sometimes overthrown and trodden down. But marking him from day to day, we shall certainly observe that he goes on conquering and to conquer, through the blood of the Lamb. Following him through the field of conflict we shall ultimately be in his dying chamber, where his heart and flesh are failing, and where the hands of his beloved family and friends cannot reach him, nor their sympathy influence him. We shall then find, *unless* his mind has given way, or he is otherwise unable to express his feelings, that he is on the Rock of Ages, and leaning upon the Lamb of God and His precious merits; and when we put our ears down to his dying lips we shall probably hear him say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." His beginning was not peace, but sorrow; his progress through life was not always peace; was not always war; his end however is peace, for he is a son of peace, interested in the God of peace, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps his heart and mind at the end of his journey. Some of you are ready to say, "But the end of every Christian does not appear to be peace." You and I know little or nothing about the end of the believer. We see, if I may so speak, only the beginning of the end, while there are convulsions, sufferings and pains, both physical and mental. The devil may go with the child of God down to, or almost to, the end of life. A few moments, however, before the tie is snapt, which unites the soul and body, God is on the spot; the Redeemer is near; the Holy Spirit is putting his last touches, so to speak, to His internal work of grace; and the end of that man is peace. Well, and what then? why, "He comes to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

I desire to make a few observations this evening on this portion of the word, appropriate to the departure of our beloved brother Minton, and sister Cartledge.* I had the mournful satisfaction of occupying this pulpit last Wednesday afternoon, in connection with the interment of the remains of our beloved brother, and I made some remarks in relation to his life and death. It may not, therefore, be necessary for me to refer very copiously to him personally at this time. The text is literally applicable to him, and I am thankful to say that it is equally appropriate to our beloved sister. It is a somewhat uncommon coincidence that both of them were in their eighty-second year, both of them had lived very long in connection with the church of God, and I think I have been informed that our sister was once or twice heard to express a wish that she might die and go to heaven, when brother Minton went. If she ever had such a wish, and expressed it, it is not a little singular that she died the same morning, and for aught anyone can tell, at the same hour; so that the two aged saints met together at the same time, at the threshold of heaven, and were both of them led by the hand of the dear Redeemer to their respective thrones, whereon they now sit and sing in

"A long and everlasting day."

A few points have occurred to my mind in connection with the text I

* The former the senior Deacon of the church at Chadwell Street, and the latter a member, both of whom departed this life on the 16th Feb., at the age of eighty-one years respectively.

have read. Those points I will mention as I proceed, and make a few observations upon them. Our subject is the death and removal of the saints of God, but more especially of his aged children.

I notice, first, that the death of the aged saint, like the death in fact of every true believer, *is the perfect and satisfactory fulfilment of all the purposes of God concerning him.* There is an important connection between seed time and harvest, and between the growth of the corn in the field during the winter, the spring and the summer, and the time when the sickle is put in. And here God, by his servant says, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." The field is ploughed ; the seed corn is taken into it ; the sower scatters it abroad, it falls into the earth, and becomes buried there. It receives, day by day, and hour by hour, the influences of nature, according to the laws of God. The vital principle which it contains is developed, and there is "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." The full corn having appeared in the ear the influences of nature continue to operate upon it, so that it ripens and becomes fit for the sickle, and in due season it is cut down and carried to the stack, or conveyed to the garner. Now all this is beautifully and appropriately applicable to the beloved saints of God, who are compared to ripening corn. Every believer contains the vital principle of grace, which is gradually developed in his experience and practice, so that he grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. When years have passed away, as was the case with our beloved friends, they become ripe for death and eternity, and heaven, and are gathered by God into their eternal rest. We bless God for the grace by which they were saved, and for the ripening and maturing influences which fell upon them, while we were favoured with their presence and their prayers. But let us apply this to the eternal God, for we have said that the death of his children is a satisfactory fulfilment of the purposes of Jehovah. It fulfils the decrees of the Father. Do not you believe it? I, and several hundreds now within these walls believe that the names of our beloved friends were written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world. Do not be offended, beloved hearers, at this great, gracious, and precious truth. It has brought a heaven of joy and a paradise of holy delight into the hearts of thousands of poor mourning sinners here. Yes, the names of our dear friends were written in heaven. They were given by the Father to His dear Son, and concerning both of them, the Saviour said, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." All that were given to the Saviour He became responsible for. My dear sister, and beloved friends, your departed husband and father, was in the hands of the great Redeemer, who had become responsible for his character here, and for his glorification hereafter; and when the spirits of our aged brother and sister entered into the world of eternal glory, the Father smiled, the Son received them with pleasure and delight, and the Holy Spirit saw in their glorification the completion of his work, and the fulfilment of all his purposes and designs, for the death of saints fulfils the purposes of all the persons in the Godhead. They were both in the Saviour's eye when he was on the cross ; they were both in His heart when it was pierced. They were both one with Him when He died for sin, and when He bowed His head in death, saying, "It is finished." Then he had reference to them, and to not a few persons here to-night. Let each ask, Did he refer to me? "Father, I have

finished the work thou gavest meto do;" and having done so, He went to heaven, where He has represented them ever since; and there would, therefore, have been deep disappointment there, had they not arrived, according to God's eternal purpose and intention. Therefore, as a harvest-home fulfils the hopes of the husbandman, so the glorification of the immortal spirits of God's people fulfils the eternal designs of our Father God, and also the engagements of the Son. Moreover, the Holy Spirit entered their hearts, and sanctified them: "for He that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit:" and as God finished the great work of creation, and the Saviour finished the work of redemption, so the Holy Spirit finishes in due time the work of the sanctification of the saints; and at a moment of which we have only the faintest idea, he touches the heart, if I may so speak, for the last time, and perfectly conforms the mind to the image of God's beloved Son. Then they are of full age, and perfectly ripe for heaven, and come to glory like as shocks of corn come in in their season. Thus the death of our beloved friends has fulfilled the purposes of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There is a connection between a sinner's first conviction and his eternal knowledge in heaven; between his first sigh and his everlasting song; between his first prayer and his endless praise; between his first act of faith, and his sight of God in glory. Have you been convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit? If so, that conviction can never be rooted up, nor drowned, nor obliterated from your conscience. You will carry it down to the grave, and it must be followed by all the glory of heaven. Do you remember the time when you sighed for mercy, and felt ready to sink into eternal darkness and despair? That sigh was certainly connected with your dying victory, and your everlasting song, "for he that has spiritually sighed on account of sin, shall finally sing on account of salvation. Grace cannot be separated from glory. The harvest must follow the seed time. If God has sown seed in your hearts it will grow, and come to maturity and perfection, and flourish in all its native fulness and glory in another and better world. The connection between grace and glory is natural; it is that kind of connection which exists between the babe and the man, between the dawn and the day, and between the bud and the flower. If God has given you grace, all His glory is yours. Twilight comes from the sun, and if God has visited you with a little twilight you must enter into everlasting day, and the Sun of righteousness will shine upon you in all His power and glory for ever. If there are budding hopes, and desires, and expectations in your hearts, they have been formed there by the Holy Spirit, and they must open, and all their spiritual glories must appear, for the desires of the righteous shall be fulfilled, because they are the productions of God's power. Thus we see in the death of a child of God the fulfilment of all the purposes of Jehovah. The husbandman is glad when he receives his corn into the barn, and the child of God is received into heaven with joy, satisfaction, and delight. Angels rejoiced when our friends arrived. I do not know how immortal minds commune in heaven. Not a few beloved brethren and sisters have left this church for glory, who when they were here held sweet fellowship with our brother. Did they recognise him and our sister when they arrived? We feel a pleasure in congratulating one another on escapes from danger, and on happiness possessed. Who can

say they were not recognised? We are, however, sure that God rejoiced, and angels rejoiced, and I cannot but think that our glorified friends rejoiced also, when they saw our brother and sister enter into their heavenly rest. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

Let us pass on, and notice, in the second place, that the dying child of God is here represented as *being ready and ripe for heaven*. "Thou shalt come like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." A person said to me the other day, "You know that a generation or two ago it was the custom of old-fashioned people to say, such and such persons were ripening for glory." Well, it was their custom so to talk about growing in grace; but why should we speak of this in connection with bygone generations? It is still a fact that God's people are ripened for glory. I do not care, my friends, for new forms of expression in connection with the things of God and eternity; for it very frequently happens that new expressions embody new ideas, and modern thoughts are not always better than old ones. No, we will retain the old expression, and say that we believe our friends were ripe for glory, and that they were ready to depart for heaven. Now, many doubts and fears arise between seed time and harvest, and frequently the interval between the two periods is one of considerable anxiety. If, however, the weather is favourable, and the process of ripening goes on naturally and satisfactorily, the farmer looks on with pleasure; and, if he is a good man, he looks on with gratitude, and, by and bye, the corn is quite ripe for the sickle, for removal to the stack, or for the garner: all which you may apply to the child of God. There is "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear;" and the influences required to ripen souls for God, and glory, and heaven, are heavenly influences. I do not know whether other saints ever act as foolishly as I have sometimes acted. I have occasionally tried to work myself into a spiritual frame of mind, and force myself into a gracious position; but the work is God's. The corn cannot ripen without the sun, and the saint cannot grow without the Holy Spirit, nor come to maturity without the influences of heaven. I believe it was the privilege of our beloved, departed brother, whom we knew so well to receive frequently the showers of divine blessing. Many times have we heard him pray, when his petitions were truly spiritual, although he was engaged a good deal in the hurry and bustle of life and business. There were times when the sun shone upon him, and the gentle gales of grace reached him, which generated new power and new feelings in his heart, and we think we saw him gradually ripen for heaven, and that rest which God had prepared for him. Beloved friends, God never cuts His corn green, or gathers His fruit unripe. - I do not receive the expression that persons are cut off and removed in the midst of their usefulness, for "Man is immortal till his work is done." Surely the text is true "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a *full* age," and if the age is full, no further additions can be made to it. It is full in God's account, and full, too, as to the experience of His beloved people. Oh, it is a mercy to have lived long enough, according to our own feelings and experience—a mercy to be able to say when God calls, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." But let us come a little closer to this point,—ripeness for death and heaven. In the first place, the body becomes ripe for the grave, and the soul for heaven and eternity. Our friends were, in this respect, ripe for both

places. We have seen our brother tottering in the chapel, and, as well as his feeble legs would bear his body, walk up into his position here, and we have heard his faint and feeble voice.* We have seen his physical infirmities increase upon him, and we observed him stooping lower and lower, until last Wednesday we saw him laid in his grave. He was ripe for the bed of dust, for the house appointed for all living. The grave is a bed, it is a place of rest. In that bed his rest will be undisturbed. That cough is for ever gone, and the body of the saint now rests in a bed, which is suitable, a dusty bed. A feather bed, a bed of down, or of any other similar material, would be most unsuitable. Such beds suited him well before he was ripe for the grave, while his afflicted body had life in it. Natural life being gone, and he having become dust, a dusty bed became most suited to his condition. And it is his *own*. "Thou shalt come to *thy* grave in a full age." There we leave him in peace till the last great day, when the trump of God shall sound, and every grave shall be opened, and our brother's eyes shall see the descending Saviour without a veil between.

But the soul is ripe for heaven, whilst the body is for the grave. And this ripening of souls is a progressive and gradual work. I cannot say that I can speak experimentally on the subject; but I have made my observations for a number of years, and have seen aged saints grow in Christian simplicity, and the sight is truly beautiful. I have seen them grow in spiritual humility, and the sight is most encouraging. I have seen them grow and ripen in heavenly-mindedness, and have loved them for that excellency. We have said this work proceeds gradually, and let us notice this point. As the Christian ripens for heaven and becomes ready to depart, the world is given up. Having done with it, he says, "Say no more to me about the world." Then all speculation is surrendered, it is wholly given up. If two or three young friends enter the dying chamber, and introduce theological points, concerning which there is a good deal of controversy and speculation, the dying saint says, "I don't want to hear it. My time for those things is for ever past. I am beyond all speculation." Yes, that is given up. In the next place there are one's own secular affairs. He says, "My house is set in order. I have, through divine mercy, made all necessary arrangements, and no more do I want to think of secular matters. Business occasionally occurs to my spirit, but my mind is almost now beyond it." Then comes the family—"Yes," he says, "hear what I have to say—I am your dying husband, your dying father, your dying friend," and a few solemn observations are made, and then the saint says, "I am now able to surrender all, and willing to leave you all in the hands of my Father, and my God." The world is given up, speculation is ignored, secular matters and business are surrendered, and the family is committed to God. One stroke more, and only one, and that is to snap the tie that holds the mind to the body. That being done, and the cage having been opened, the immortal spirit takes its flight fully ripe for the realms of eternal glory. Yes; the text indicates spiritual maturity, the ripeness of a saint of God for his heavenly home and inheritance.

But that is not all. It indicates his *worth and excellence*. "He shall come as a *shock of corn*." What makes the child of God so valuable? I

* He for many years led the praises of the sanctuary.

a certain sense the soul is always precious ; for " What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." Two or three things, however, ought to be looked at in connection with this. Notice the price paid for its redemption ; notice the divine treasure which it contains, and notice the relation in which it stands to God. That must be most precious to God, which cost the Saviour His life, and blood, and sufferings. It is not a weed, but corn, precious grain, dear to God, and dear to all in heaven. And notice what such a soul contains—" The fear of God, which is His treasure." We have this treasure in this vessel. The kingdom of God is within you. The life of God is in the soul of the saint, and hence its worth, its excellence, and its importance. Again, a believer is a child of God, and children are dear to their parents. The life, the health, the happiness, and the character of their children are matters of importance to parents, and if that is so to beings so imperfect as we, what shall we say concerning the eternal love and purposes of Jehovah? Are the presence and the character of your child important to you? Oh, the salvation of God's beloved children is a matter of infinite importance to Him, and hence the excellence and the value of a child of God. But let us pass on.

It gives us the idea of *safety*. " As a shock of corn comes in in his season." When the corn is abroad it is exposed to storms, and drought, and blight, and a variety of unfavourable influences and accidents as we express ourselves. When, however, it is cut and garnered, it is safe. The child of God is safe whilst he is here, safe in the hands of Jesus, and safe beneath his eye ; but he is not serene and tranquil, neither is he at rest. Safety is of the Lord. We thank Him for the safety, the serenity, and the tranquility of heaven. Let us look at this subject. Our dear friends are now above temptation. Here they were tempted, and met the powers of darkness, and their minds were at times terribly tossed about. Safe they were, but they were in the field growing like corn, exposed to the rough blasts of life. All that is over. Had they been perfect, temptation had not been dangerous to them. They were not perfect here ; and while they were not quite ripe, temptation was a danger, and they were prone to yield and fall. Possibly they did so occasionally. Satan is the prince of the power of the air, and the god of this world, and he makes the most of it ; and, therefore, he goes with the saint to the very door through which he passes out of this life, and gives him a thrust at the last minute or two ; but having passed over the threshold into immortality he is safe for ever, above temptation, and beyond the reach of sin. Then, again, there are errors : and, although believers are safe here, there is such a thing as error of judgment. Nobody supposes that either of our dear departed friends was perfect ; they knew in themselves they were not so. They deplored it, they confessed it, they made it a matter of prayer. It is not, however, for us to talk about their imperfections : whatever they may have been, they are both perfect now. If they erred in judgment here, all that is over. If they erred in conduct, and now and then took a wrong step—and who does not?—all that is past. They will never err again ; all error of judgment, of conduct, and belief is with them for ever past and impossible—and they are now above faith and hope. Their faith is turned to sight, and their hope to the full fruition. All they expected, and infinitely more, they now possess and enjoy for ever. I may say here, our faith sometimes leaves out facts

which it ought to embrace, and probably it takes in points which are not the truth of God. Sometimes our hope embraces objects which ought not to be embraced ; while objects that ought to be embraced, hope passes by. Hence faith and hope are both imperfect here ; but the great Object of faith and hope is now before their eyes. They now possess all, and are immersed in all the grandeur and glory of God. "I will that they be with me, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me." Oh this freezing, snowy world ; these windy, stormy, tempestuous scenes, where there are perpetual disturbance and apprehension, all are now beneath them. They have crossed the flood, and entered into that peace, of which they formed, when here, but very faint ideas. There they bathe their weary souls.

" In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble rolls
Across their peaceful breasts."

"As a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

Then we have the death of the child of God as taking place *at a seasonable period*—of full age. Not cut down by judgment ; their natural life not shortened by sin. You know what I mean when I so express myself. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" There is such a thing, however, as wasting one's energies, and, humanly speaking, shortening one's life ; but here were two saints who reached a full age—three-score years and ten ; yea, four-score years and more. They were, as God says of Abraham's life, full of days. No more could be added ; for that which is full can receive and hold no more. Abraham and our friends lived long enough to fulfil God's purposes, and they felt in themselves that they had lived long enough in this dying world. Of days they were full. God's work is a progressive work ; for the heavens have been receiving His people for nearly six thousand years. Creation was finished in a few days, and redemption was finished in three-and-thirty years ; but the peopling of the heavens is still progressing. Sixty or seventy years ago our friends were called by grace. They advanced gradually towards their home. Here is a church of 300 members or more, and we are all wending our way towards the same country, and in a very short time we shall all be there—at least, I hope so ; and our children are coming up we trust to take our places. "Instead of the fathers shall come up the children ; whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." A stream of sanctified minds is constantly flowing upwards into that better and brighter world. The thrones are being occupied, and God is gradually crowning His people. The heavens are being filled, and soon the great mystery of salvation and redemption will be completed, and God will say, "It is done." When heaven is full, all will be perfectly satisfied, and Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all God's angels, and His saints will rejoice for ever. Amen.

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LIVING WATERS.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 13th, 1881.

"And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be King in all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one."—Zech. xiv. 8, 9.

THE two disciples at Emmaus said one to another, after their Lord had left them, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures;" for we are informed that, "beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." The God of heaven is the author of the Bible; and as the author of a letter understands its meaning, so the Lord only can give a full and an exhaustive exposition of the Scriptures. Not only is God the best expositor of divine truth; His expositions are always accompanied by the unctious grace and influence of the Spirit. The Saviour speaks through the word to the heart, and a power accompanies His truth, such as never attends the word of a creature, not even of an angel, and therefore the disciples said, "Our hearts burned within us." A heart-warming by Jesus Christ is a great and special blessing. The fire which He kindles is spiritual and divine. It consumes lust; it scorches sin; it destroys the influence of self, and it produces a heavenly and a hallowed state of things in the breast, such as the world can neither give nor take away. Hence the Redeemer said to the Jews on a particular occasion, when he was disputing with them, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." It should not be forgotten that when the Saviour mentioned the Scriptures, the Old Testament only was in existence, or the writings of Moses, and David, and Samuel and others. The Gospels had not then been written; Saul of Tarsus had not been called, and the Epistles to the churches had not been penned; yet the Saviour said, "Search the Scriptures" (meaning the Old Testament) "for in them ye think ye have eternal life." The idea of eternal life in the Scriptures is true; for in them you have a description and a representation of its source and spring; of the manner in which it is communicated to human hearts, and of its progress here and its consummation in the realms of glory hereafter. The thought concerning eternal life in the Scriptures is correct, only one thing you lack, "They are they which testify of me;" and since in them you think you have eternal life, search them carefully, and you will if you come to them with unprejudiced hearts and with unveiled eyes, see that the life they represent flows from me; for they testify of me. Hence the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. The books of Leviticus, and Numbers, and Deut-

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eronomy, and all the Old Testament writings are a prophetic and typical representation of the glorious person and finished work of our great Lord. The New Testament, therefore, is truly important, as showing the fulfilment of the Old. It is important to its author God; that it is the glorious gospel of the blessed God. It is important to angels; for "unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God;" and "which things the angels desire to look into." They read the gospel, for aught I know, and they understand its meaning, although it contains a spirit and an excellency which they have never tasted. They are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation;" and whatever is important to the saints is certainly important to their guardians. And the gospel is important to every child of God on the earth, and to every one in heaven; for although there are thousands of happy, glorified spirits before the throne, the whole of the gospel has not yet been fulfilled to them, or not to all of them. Enoch's body is there; so is the body of Elijah; and so are the bodies of those saints that were raised from the dead when Jesus came from the grave: but, for the most part, glorified spirits are disembodied, and are waiting for the morning of the resurrection; and therefore the gospel is still important to the glorified, because much of it remains to be fulfilled to them. And is not the gospel important to the devil? Beloved friends, it is your bulwark which God has placed between you and destruction; and it is the sword you use, the weapon your heavenly Father has put into your hands, with which to meet the devil, and the fiery darts of the wicked one. Well, therefore, might the disciples say, when He expounded to us the Scriptures, our hearts burned within us; and well might the Saviour say, "Search them, for they testify of me."

I have read a portion of divine truth this morning which beautifully illustrates the gospel. I do not usually take texts such as this; but it is a part of the Word of God, and it occurs in the writings of a prophet who is wonderfully evangelical, I mean the prophet Zechariah; and since I believe the gospel is in it, I have read it to you, and will, by the help of God, make a few observations upon it. I shall mention a few points as I proceed, and remark upon them as I do so.

In the first place, the text illustrates *the nature of the gospel of God*. Will you look at your Bibles, and follow me? "And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." These living waters are God's eternal truth; they are the glorious gospel of the everlasting God. Jesus said to his disciples, before he left them, "But tarry ye at Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." On the day of Pentecost the promised and expected power fell upon them, and Peter, for the first time, preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. When they, however, had received power from on high, they manifested no anxiety to leave Jerusalem to spread the gospel abroad. They remained there until persecution arose; and when Stephen was stoned to death, and James was killed with the sword, then the brethren were scattered abroad. I do not know whether the disciples would ever have left Jerusalem had not persecution driven them out. However the spirit of opposition and oppression began to express itself in very terrible and bitter forms, and the brethren were scattered abroad,

carrying the gospel with them, and in the course of time those holy and qualified men went into all the world and preached it to every creature. Now here is a literal fulfilment of this part of my text, "And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." "All my springs are in thee, O Zion; and they are all in thee, because my God is there." Zion would be nothing without its God, and we should even there be dry and thirsty for ever, without the fountain-fulness of the Saviour. God is in the midst of Zion, and therefore from her a fountain proceeds, and from Jerusalem living waters flow, which are the glorious truths of the blessed God. Let us tarry here for a minute or two, and look at this great sight; and I wish I could portray it as I think it ought to be described: but my abilities are limited, and therefore the good I would in this respect I cannot; whilst that which I would not, I do. Let us look, however, at these living waters proceeding from Jerusalem towards the former and the hinder sea; or at gospel doctrine, and grace sweetly flowing from our God. What is the source of these waters, or the spring of the gospel? I do beg your attention here, for I would apply truth to your minds and drop it into your hearts if I could. All the precious doctrines and promises of the gospel come from the heart of Deity; from the fulness of Jehovah; from the bosom of your heavenly Father. I confess there is a phraseology employed which I do not quite comprehend. I would not be hypercritical, yet I never quite understood the words "from heart to heart." I have heard very good people pray, that grace might flow from heart to heart, as oil is poured from vessel to vessel. Now I cannot give you grace out of my heart, and you cannot give me grace out of yours. What the wise virgins said to the foolish ones is still true, "We cannot give you of our oil." They had oil in their lamps and in their vessels; but they said, "Not so, lest there not be enough for us and you." No, the oil which a saint possesses he needs for himself; or the grace that is in the hearts of true believers is for their own personal salvation: and therefore grace flows only from God's heart to yours. It flows from the heart of the Father to the family, from Christ to His people, and from the Spirit into the hearts of lost and ruined sinners. This is the "from-heart-to-heart" work that I pray for especially in connection with myself and my beloved friends and hearers in this place. These living waters do not come up from the world, neither do they flow from Sinai; for from God's right hand went a fiery law for them. There are thunders, and smoke, and lightning, and a voice of words, and the sound of a trumpet in the wilderness on Sinai: but it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go forth, not from Sinai, but from Jerusalem; not from that state of things over which Moses presided, but from that state of things in which the dear and blessed Christ of God is all in all, for all our springs are there. These living waters are the truths of the gospel, and I trust that no one present despises the doctrines of divine grace, nor says with some people, "they are dry." Why, they are living waters, which surely cannot be dry. Remember, my friends, if there is any dryness in connection with religion, the drought is in yourselves, and not in the doctrine. The absence of moisture is in the creature, and not in the blessed gospel of God. No, the heart into which the water flows is dry, but heavenly truth is divinely cooling and refreshing. I think I know the meaning of our friends; but I do not

like to hear the term—dry doctrine. What is it in God's revelation that that is spiritually dry? The fault is ours, and not God's.

Well, here are streams flowing from Jerusalem towards the former, and the hinder sea." What do you think, for instance, of the broad and deep stream of eternal redemption? "Having obtained eternal redemption for us." Why, beside this stream we could rest till we die. At this stream we desire to live, and into it to plunge every day; and of this living water we would drink every hour. And what do you think of the stream of divine pardon. He hath cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Who did that? God. How was it done? By an act of almighty grace. Where are our sins? Out of sight. How so? They are in the depths of the sea. Then they can never be reached; can never be seen, and the cause of condemnation is out of existence; for sin is drowned by God.

"If sin is pardon'd, I'm secure,
Death has no sting beside."

What a load leaves the conscience when guilt is removed! and what ease and pleasure fill the heart when a sense of pardon is created! I love experience in connection with these doctrines; or, in other words, I love to drink of these living waters that flow from Jerusalem. And then, what do you think of the stream of peace? for this is another gospel truth—"peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." When He gives peace, who can give trouble? and when God calms the mind, who can disturb it? It is said that oil makes troubled waters smooth, and the precious blood of Jesus Christ, applied by the Spirit to the troubled conscience, calms it, produces a serenity and quietness which, being the peace of God, passeth all understanding.

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

We will not naturalise or carnalise the subject; but it is pleasant, especially during the sultry months of summer, to sit beside a flowing stream of water, clear as crystal, and most agreeable to occasionally bathe therein. I would bathe in redemption's stream, in the stream of pardon, and peace, and drink these living waters again and again, until I reach the sea of grace and glory in a better world,—

"Where I shall bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast."

There are promises, too, exceeding great and precious, all being yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Look at them, how they flow? They make no babbling noise, for the channel is too deep. Onward they flow towards their absolutely certain fulfilment. God is behind every promise, causing it to flow, and He is before every one as to its fulfilment, and its consummation. "It shall be in that day that living waters shall go forth from Jerusalem."

Now if these living waters flow from the heart of God, there must be

a purpose in His mind to fulfil. They do not flow accidentally, and God is not a purposeless Being, without intention or design. Having opened His heart, and His hand, and given these glorious truths, we conclude that great results will follow. What purposes are being fulfilled by these flowing streams? They are living waters, and it is God's intention to convey life, and quicken the hearts of dead sinners. Wherever the waters flow there shall be life. My trembling friend, have these waters reached your heart? A drop of them is a drop of life. Therefore, if gospel grace has reached you, there is life in your mind; for our God cannot be a disappointed Being.

“His eternal thought moves on,
His undisturbed affairs.

When we have matured our plans and schemes we watch for the fulfilment of our hopes with a good deal of anxiety; and often as our projects proceed circumstances arise which disappoint us here and there, and, by-and-bye, the plans wholly fail, and we are disappointed. It is not so with our God. He is on His throne, from which the water of life proceeds, and it flows according to His good will and pleasure. It enters the heart of the drunkard, of the covetous, of the unclean, and of others, and arrests them. Then tears of penitence and godly sorrow fill their eyes, and they fall before the throne for mercy. Yea, God's intention is to quicken souls by these flowing waters, and to cool, refresh, and fertilize immortal minds. “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” A new state of things is brought into existence. And is not the Gospel refreshing? If not, I wonder what our Lord commanded it to be perpetually preached for? and what these waters continually flow for? Oh, the gospel is refreshing and fertilizing. If you take a religious novel—one that is very religious indeed, and read it, you will rise from the reading barren enough; and, not only so, there will be a good many noxious ideas in your mind. But if the gospel of our God flows in some of its forms into our minds, barrenness disappears, and our souls are no longer parched, but become like well-watered gardens. These are some of the intentions which God is fulfilling by that glorious gospel which flows from Himself.

Nothing can be a substitute for the gospel. I wish it were believed by all persons, including myself, that nothing can be a satisfactory substitute for the gospel. Take a person dying of thirst, and give him ten thousand sovereigns, you make him rich in money, and the gift is an important one; but it is not the kind of thing he wants. He will die with the sovereigns at his feet, or upon his person. He wants water to slake his thirst, and not gold. So a poor sinner, who is convinced of sin, and wants to know in what relation he stands to God, and what God is to him—give him a world, give him two, yea, give him the material universe, and his thirst will remain; but let these living waters of divine information and revelation flow into his soul, and he drinks and slakes his thirst, and blesses the name of the Lord his God. Nothing can be a sufficient or satisfactory substitute for these living waters. Well, the whole scene is changed by the gospel. A paradise—better than Adam lived in—springs up, and a race of new creatures comes into existence, and all shall live for ever and ever. These are a few observations on the

nature of these living waters. Only I may just add, that they are "living" in opposition to a pool of water which is stagnant. Living water is flowing water, just as a living coal is a burning coal. We read of burning, or living, coals on the altar, and of living waters here. The world is a stagnant pool of offensive water; but the Gospel of God and its grace is living water. It contains life, it conveys life, it refreshes life, and it flows perpetually from God towards sinners and into eternity.

In the second place, we have *the extent of this blessing*. "Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea;" or, in other words, from east to west, or from sea to sea. "His dominion also shall be from sea to sea, even unto the ends of the earth." From east to west—from sea to sea. The knowledge of God was for ages confined to one land, and one particular people—the land of Canaan, and the children of Israel. The land of Canaan was surrounded by Gentile nations, all of which were lost in idolatry and heathenism, hence the promise embraces Gentile sinners—even this highly favoured land of ours. These living waters have reached this country, and hundreds, and thousands, if not millions, of immortal souls have been saved. From east to west they flow, or wherever God has a people to be saved. You say, I am sure to put it in that form? Yes; I must so put it. For wherever God has a people there these living waters shall flow. He sent them into every place whither He Himself would come. To Paul, in Corinth, the Lord said, "They threaten you, but they shall not set on you to do you any harm; for I have much people in this city;" and these living waters flowed there. Ephesus was terribly disturbed, and the town clerk said, "We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar." But although they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" the living waters flowed, and carried the idols away, and washed and purified the minds of many of the people, who brought their books into the marketplace and burnt them in the presence of the disciples. They shall flow from Jerusalem to the former, and the hinder sea." Ephesus was one of the most idolatrous, obscene, and grossly unclean cities in the world; and who would have thought there were persons there to be called by grace. Corinth was little better than Ephesus in this respect; yet God said, "I have much people here." Paul also went to Rome. How many of God's people there may be at Rome now, I don't know. Thank God there are some; for there is a Baptist congregation, if not more than one, meeting for worship under the very walls of the Vatican. The Pope, possibly, has peculiar feelings when he remembers what is going on there. Well, in Babylon, in Sodom, and in Egypt there are some of God's people, and there were perhaps more in the days of Paul. God had some people there; and then, in this part of the world, God has much people. Brethren, let us pray that gospel truth may never cease to flow here. It is the glory of the country. Look at countries where Roman Catholicism prevails, and what moral dearth appears! If there is not commercial, political, or intellectual death, yet spiritual death reigns. Beloved friends, let us bless God, and acknowledge His goodness that we have the gospel. I don't know what our great statesmen, or her Majesty, may think is the foundation of England's greatness and glory. I believe, most heartily and thankfully, that if one may speak

of national greatness, our greatness and importance are all derived from the saintship in the country, and from the truth of God, or from the fact that these living waters flow copiously and abundantly in the land. The former and hinder sea, or from east to west—

“ Jesus shall reign wher’er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run.”

Well, since time is going, that is all I can say on that part of the subject.

In the next place, observe *their perpetuity*—“in summer and in winter shall it be.” These living waters flow from the point where the sun rises to the point where he sets, or from sea to sea, and they flow perpetually ; “in summer and in winter shall it be. That is to say, they shall not dry up in summer, and they shall not freeze in winter. Many streams dry up, or become offensive in the hot months of summer, but these living waters shall not be so. Many streams and rivers, even the Thames itself, have been frozen in winter ; but these shall ever flow. Trade and commerce by natural rivers may be suspended for a time, but God’s grace and His new covenant truth can never dry up in summer, nor freeze in winter. But this may be taken in relation to the experience of the saints. We have our summer and winter seasons. We remember the time when it was summer with us, in the morning of our spiritual life and career. How sweet and precious was the gospel then ! Summer time has passed away, and we have had our winters, and been frozen, stripped, and made desolate as fields and countries are by winter. The truth of God, however, has not been frozen ; the grace of God and the gospel have continued to flow through that frozen state of things. In summer and in winter shall it flow. You may have your summers of prosperity, and your winters of adversity. Eternal truth will never change, it is the same in heat and cold—cooling in sultry summer, and warming in freezing winter. It is like the Saviour’s obedience, which is the robe of Righteousness, white and clean for summer and for winter wear, screening us from the scorching sun, and from the freezing, cutting wind and weather. As this righteousness protects from heat and cold, so the gospel is for summer and for winter.

Fourthly, *its effect considered in relation to God*. “And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. Literally, over Gentiles as well as Jews, and that in relation to His grace, mercy, and salvation. He shall be king over all. Our dear Lord has acquired a right to reign, and that right He is exercising ; and, in doing so, He causes these living waters to flow, thus accomplishing His purposes and fulfilling His designs. Beautiful subject, if I could put it before you properly. The gospel enthrones Jesus, and as the late Mr. Irons sings—

“ The only gospel that we own,
Sets Jesus Christ upon His Throne.”

It lays the sinner low and exalts the Saviour ; and hence as the effect of these flowing waters, the Lord shall reign over all the earth. The gospel enthrones Christ experimentally ; it exalts Him in the hearts and minds of saints. They love Him sincerely, supremely, and there are times, I think, when they love Him with all their powers, and each one feels that—

“ Had I ten thousand thousand tongues,
 Not one should silent be ;
 Had I ten thousand thousand hearts,
 I'd give them all to Thee.”

“ And the Lord shall be king over all the earth.”

In the next place, we have the idea of *spiritual subjection to Him*. “ In that day shall there be one Lord.” Dagon must fall before Him, for no idol can retain his position and influence when the Lord is there. Hence, when the ark was carried into the temple of the Philistines in the morning, old Dagon, part fish and part man, had fallen from his position. Wherever the Lord is, He will be alone in His lordship and reign. Other gods, wherever they be, must come down before the Lord of all. Take this in relation to experience. Do you say, We are not idolaters in this country? I wish we were not. We do not, indeed, worship idols made of gold, and wood, and silver, and marble ; but we read that “ Covetousness is idolatry.” That their belly is the god of some persons, and that pride and conceit rule over others. These all come down when these living waters flow into the heart ; for they carry Jesus into the throne, and there is only one Lord there. Covetousness, uncleanness, and pride, are conquered at least, and Jesus reigns supreme. There is only one Lord ; for the conscience, for that power cannot serve two masters, and Christ will not share the conscience with another. “ One Lord, one faith, one baptism : one God, and Father of all. “ There shall be one Lord over all the people, under all circumstances, and at all times ; for one is enough, since He is great and good, and therefore sufficient.

And, lastly, *unity divine and perpetual*, “ and His name one.” One way of worship only. One name in prayer only. The names of Mary, Peter, Paul, John, and others, are useless before the throne. The name of Christ is all in worship, in prayer, and in salvation. But principally as to His followers and subjects, His name shall be one. The father gives his name to his family. Israel gave his name to his descendants the Israelites. A husband gives his name to his wife. A country gives its name to natives ; hence we are English, and the natives of France are French. God is our Father, and we take our name from Him. Christ is the church's Husband, and she takes her name from Him. Heaven is our city, and we take our name from that country, and hence we are citizens of the new Jerusalem. But what is it owing to? The flowing of these living waters, and the blessed transformation accomplished thereby. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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ZION GRAVEN ON CHRIST'S HANDS.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10th, 1881.

"Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."—Isa. xlix. 16.

OUR text this morning forms a part of the Saviour's answer to Zion's complaint. Zion's God and King had given many exceeding great and precious promises to His people; but, inasmuch as there appeared no immediate probability of their fulfilment, "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Although we have the Bible, the covenant of grace, and God's eternal truth, we usually express our feelings, though they are seldom if ever a safe rule of judgment, of conduct, or of faith. "God is in one mind, and none can turn him; and whatsoever his soul desireth, even that he doeth:" therefore we may be sure it is His determination to fulfil the promises of His love in His ways of providence, grace and salvation. God's promises are very ancient, but they will never lose their force, nor cease to be full of grace and power. He was most merciful and loving in giving them, and he is most true and faithful in remembering and fulfilling them. But as there is a time and a season to every purpose under heaven, there is a time for the fulfilment of God's word to His people. Nothing can hinder that God who has said, "I will work, and who shall let it?" and no power can hurry the operations of Him whose arm is omnipotent, and whose will is the rule of His conduct. Zion contemplated her circumstances, and having lost her faith, or nearly so, she said, notwithstanding the promise, the veracity and the faithfulness of the Promiser,—*"The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."*

I shall not stop to enquire whether this may or may not have some reference to the captivity of Israel in Babylon. Let me at once say, that Zion's words express the feelings and experience of most of the people of God at times. When it is dark, we imagine we are forsaken. When cir-

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cumstances run contrary to our will, our wishes, and our interests, we are apprehensive that we are not the Lord's people, and are ready to say, "The Lord hath forgotten us." The following words, however, seem to carry with them a kind of contradiction, "And *my Lord* hath forgotten me." *My Lord*. Why, if Jehovah is our Lord, and we are His people, divine forgetfulness is impossible; He will never forsake us, and His words are most comprehensive and important, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." A husband leaves his wife in the morning, and goes into the city or elsewhere, but he does not forsake her. The bird leaves its nest for the purpose of obtaining food for its young, but it does not forsake them. We leave the house of God after service, but we do not forsake His earthly courts. Now God never forsakes His people; and what is more, he never leaves them. As their Husband, He is always present with them; and they are ever under the shadow of His wings. A hen leaves her chickens, which are occasionally under her wings, and they are scattered about, and unprotected. But God never withdraws His protection from His saints, for His providence and blessing are abiding. God proceeded to say, "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" It is not said, her son, or her daughter, or her child. A mother may forget for hours, or even days, her child that is grown up, and has left home; therefore the Lord has been pleased to say, her *sucking* child, which lying in her lap, and living at her breast, she cannot forget. "Yea, she may forget," through affliction, insanity, or some other cause. "Yet, will I not forget thee;" for my love is infinitely stronger and more tender than that of a mother towards her child. "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

I have always regarded these verses as expressing one of the most important and soul-sustaining truths of the word of God. It is really wonderful that God should be so condescending. I know not which more to admire, the infinite greatness of Jehovah, or His infinite condescension. He is infinitely great in His majesty, and He is infinitely merciful and condescending in expressing Himself in terms like these, for the comfort of the troubled hearts of His people. I know not, although I have read this verse, how to preach from it. Many ministers of the gospel preach frequently, it may be from this portion of truth; but there is something so mysterious and merciful in it that I am sure it contains depths which have never been fathomed, and can never be measured, by either men or angels; therefore we shall remain upon its surface this morning, and take a few steps in various directions, whilst we look at this profoundly interesting fact: "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands."

I shall divide my subject into four heads. It is not usual with me to do so, but I see four important branches of truth in the words we have read. In the first place, *the great fact itself*, "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands, and thy walls are continually before Me;" secondly, *The great purpose to be fulfilled by this fact*, that I might always see thee; thirdly, *This fact avowed or declared*. Why does the Lord reveal

His mind so fully? Fourthly, *An important direction given to Zion, to behold this fact.*

Now in the first place, let us look at the fact asserted. I think we cannot do better than look at the great Speaker. Who says this? Whose language is it? Who is the Speaker? Our Head, our Redeemer, our suffering and risen Saviour; our reigning and adorable Lord, who is at once the eternal God, and bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Does He speak as a Saviour? All His saved people He sees upon his hands. Does He speak as the great High Priest of our profession? All He has saved from guilt, and that shall live with Him in heaven for ever, He sees upon His hands and His heart. Does he speak as our Husband (for thy Maker is thy Husband), He sees His bride perpetually before Him, and also the walls by which she is surrounded. Does He speak as the Shepherd of the flock of Israel? Do not think the preacher goes too far, or that he is too minute or particular. Jesus, as the Shepherd of the flock of God, sees all the sheep upon His hands, and the vast fold and pasture, wherein they feed and dwell, are ever before Him. He cannot, therefore, forget the sheep, nor their fold; the spouse nor her house; His saved people, nor the walls of their salvation. It is important, perhaps, to be remembered by our fellow creatures, especially by those who may have some influence upon circumstances and persons that we are interested in; hence friends sometimes say, "If anything should arise that you think will be favourable, remember us. Now, if to be remembered by our fellow creatures is important, how comforting is the fact that our Lord will not forget us! Sometimes friends have asked me to remember them in the pulpit in public prayer, and I have said I would do so, but have forgotten it, and this has perhaps occasionally wounded their feelings. I cannot always remember the promises I make, nor the engagements into which I enter. It is important to be remembered by friends on earth, and by angels in heaven, but up yonder on the supreme seat of glory sits the everlasting God, who speaks so that the universe may hear, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands," and therefore, O Israel, thou shalt never be forgotten of me. Jesus our Saviour, our Lord, our all is the great Speaker here.

But what are we to understand by this peculiar operation of having "graven us upon the palms of His hands." Does He speak in relation to the cross and the wounds He there received. Does He speak in relation to the throne and His scars in heaven as he stands before it. Does He speak as our living and loving Lord, who in His own person bears our names? I would not twist this nor any other part of the word of God, but I think with some excellent men, good and great writers, that the Saviour had reference to the wounds he received when suffering, bleeding, and dying for us. He has graven us upon the "palms of His hands," and not merely as some writers observe, as we tie something round our fingers in order that we may remember something. His hands were pierced; His feet were nailed, and His side and His heart were opened by the sword of Divine justice, as well as by the soldier's nails and spear, and

in that way our names as saved sinners, were graven there, and His beloved ransomed bride is ever present to His view.

“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.”

And we are told that Jesus in heaven appears as a “Lamb as it had been slain.” Our Lord does not suffer in heaven, but having bled on earth He took His atonement to heaven, and appears there as a Lamb that has been slain; and though His wounds are not now bleeding, nor gaping, yet, so to speak, the scars remain. They remain beneath His own eye; before His Father’s eye, and to the everlasting wonder and astonishment of angels, and the millions of the blood-washed there. All see the glory of divine justice and mercy in the scars of their reigning Lord, and whilst Jesus appears there with His scars, we shall never forget sin, nor what salvation cost, nor the loving and bleeding heart of our Lord; and if that were possible in heaven we should weep tears of thankfulness and joy there, as we sometimes weep here in astonishment before the cross of Immanuel. Jesus is the Speaker here. He speaks as our suffering Saviour and reigning Lord. Again, the names of His people are inseparable from His living person, engraven on His hands, not only when He hung on the cross, but they are there now. The Lord liveth for ever, to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. Their persons and names are inseparably connected with their living, reigning Lord, and whilst He shows His hands the Father sees not only Jesus himself, but those that He represents, even all that fall His feet, saying, “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death;” or, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.”

Then, secondly, let us proceed to the act itself. He says, “I have graven, not written, thee upon the palms of My hands.” It is elsewhere said we are written in heaven, and written in the Book of Life. Here we understand, or think we understand, the Spirit’s meaning; but Jesus here speaks of His hands, and of His people, and says, “I have graven thee there. They are not merely written; their persons or likenesses are not merely drawn; their character is not merely delineated, but graven “upon the palms of His hands.” Sailors show the forms of anchors and ships punctured in their arms and elsewhere, but that is not an engraving, and, therefore, our Lord uses a word which, as it appears to me, is applicable only to Himself—“Zion is graven upon the palms of His hands, and there will remain for ever.” Ink may be removed, painting fades in course of time, and drawings lose their freshness; but a name graven upon one’s hands or person lives, with the person, is inseparable from him, and he carries it with him everywhere. So the names of God’s people are always in Jesus their Lord. From this, beloved friends, we learn that Christ’s love will never change, that an

alteration in His heart or feelings will never take place, and that an erasure from His hands can never happen. Where is the man—or the woman—who believes in the possibility of a child of God falling out of the hands of his heavenly Father, and sinking into eternal perdition? This cannot take place, for underneath are the everlasting arms, which sustain and support all He has graven there. Before I dismiss this branch of the subject, I will add another word on the fact, that the graving is on “*the palms of His hands.*” Likenesses of beloved friends are placed in lockets which, perhaps, may not be put on; they appear on brooches, which are not always worn; and sometimes they are painted and framed and hung up on the walls before one’s eyes; but your names are not in ornaments worn by the Saviour, nor are they hung upon the walls of heaven before the eyes of angels, but “graven on the palms of His hands.” You are in the life of the Lord of all, and inseparably one with the Christ of God, who is the King of Glory. A name graven upon the hand can never be lost except the hand itself be amputated. The arms of Jesus are omnipotent, and the names upon them shall there remain for ever. The people of God are offensive to the world! Their names are cast out as vile, and they are regarded as “the scum and off-scouring of all things.” Be it so. They can bear all this, for the estimation of the world will never affect or injure them. Their names are in heaven, indelibly graven upon the person of their living and beloved Lord. The speaker is Christ, and the act is that of having engraven the church on His hands. And do we not see a beauty and a glory in the Saviour’s words? “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” Everlasting in strength. The arms of creatures ache, but God’s arms are everlastingly strong. They are everlasting, too, in duration; for Jesus is the everlasting God and Father, who never withdraws divine support from His feeble children. A mother cannot have her arms perpetually beneath her child. Friends cannot be unceasingly sustaining the weak and feeble; but there is never a period when the arms of Jesus are not underneath His Zion or His church and people. The arms that supply the world, that uphold the universe, and that are engaged to work all things together for good, bear your names and your all, and Jesus sees you as He works in nature, in providence, and in grace.

Let us notice, secondly, *the great design to be fulfilled by this fact.* This is expressed in the latter clause of the preceding verse, “Yet will I not forget thee.” We observe here, that the names of God’s people are graven upon the hands of Jesus for a memorial. They are to be remembered for ever; for divine forgetfulness is simply impossible. Can God forget anything? I know the infidel has sneered in reference to the memory of God, because He has said, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Then says the atheist, “God has a short memory, at least in relation to sin.” God will never remember our sins upon or against us; for He remembered them finally upon the Redeemer, and He was so marvellous a sufferer, and so complete a Saviour, that He expiated their

guilt, and put them away by the sacrifice of Himself, and, therefore God says, I will remember them no more. When it is said, "Our names are graven on the hands of Jesus," it means, that His people are especially remembered by Him. All other beings are generally thought of, or remembered, as creatures in God's providence; but His covenant people are lovingly and savingly remembered by Him, and hence "They are graven upon His hands." What an honour it is to be affectionately remembered in heaven, and tenderly thought of by the Lord on the throne, and to be so near to His person. He cannot look at His hands without seeing you; nor have respect to Himself without remembering you. You cost Him His blood, and now He lives to make intercession for you! therefore, while He is perfect in heaven, you cannot be forgotten there.

"And thy walls are continually before me." This, in the first place, I will take to mean, the bounds of our habitation are fixed, and the local residences of God's people are known. We read in the Proverbs that Christ rejoiced in the habitable part of the earth, and that His delights were with the sons of men. Thus, my Christian brother, your name is on Christ's hand, and your residence is always before Him. Your local residence was not left to uncertain circumstances or chance; for—

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

"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Since the word "more" is used, a comparison is introduced; therefore God does love the tents of Jacob, where morning and evening vows are made and paid, where the word is read, and fellowship and intercourse with God are held. In the tabernacles of the righteous the voice of joy and gladness is heard. Your name is in heaven, and your residence on earth is ever before His eye. He keeps His friends, protects their persons, and supplies their wants. Is your house full of sorrow? Your Lord knows its measure, its bitterness, and its weight. Is your house full of joy? Be thankful to the Lord for it. Are you removing from place to place? There is nothing accidental or contingent in the government of your God. Your persons are safe in His hands, and your residences are all arranged and appointed by Him that loves you thus. If these points are true, and I am satisfied they are, we may well say—"Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord!" If I had time, and thought it would not be out of place, I might mention the circumstances connected with my coming to London. I am sure I had no desire to come. I wrote, and schemed, and planned against coming, as some of my hearers know; but the bounds of our habitation are fixed, and the purpose of the Lord shall stand. It was the intention of the Great Redeemer that I should come and labour here, and here I have been sustained through a period of twenty-nine or thirty years. "O Israel, thou shalt never be forgotten of Me;" for "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before Me."

Again, the text indicates the safety of the people of God. They are "Safe in the hands of Jesus." My sheep are in My hands, and in My Father's also, and no man is able to pluck them out. Satan can never erase your name or reach your soul there; and the winds and storms of chance and human accidents can never shake the hands of your exalted and reigning Lord. You are as safe there as if you were in heaven. I made this observation some time since, and a good brother, who has since died and gone to heaven, said he was hardly able to receive it. Why, is not the saint secure on earth, since safety is of the Lord? If the sheep of Christ are in His hands, and their names are graven there, are they not as safe as the glorified before the throne? Here they are passing through storms and darkness, living in a state of conflict, and surrounded by difficulties, but their safety is of the Lord. Is not the spiritual presence of God sufficiently saving? and are not believers blessed with it upon earth? Is it not as real and effectual as His personal presence in heaven? My brethren, Christ can neither forget, nor lose you; for He has graven you on His hands. Once more: "And thy walls are continually before me." Some writers tell us that the Lord here refers to the broken and ruined walls of Jerusalem, after the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar and his army. I do not think that ruins are before our Lord in heaven. What are the walls of Zion? Passing over the ceremonial law, which was a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile, until the Lord Jesus came and removed it, He having engaged to fulfil all the types of the ceremonial dispensation, they are that salvation in all its branches and perfection, which God has appointed for walls and bulwarks. Your salvation, including such divine appointments as these, is before Him. "I," saith the Lord, "will be a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her; for the mediatorial work and fulness of the Redeemer are the church's salvation." And further, "Are not angels all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation." And again, shall not "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose?" These walls of divine providence and grace are ever present to our Lord. Thus we have the city with its walls before God, and every citizen's name upon the palms of His hands. And, again, the text indicates the preciousness of the saint. You are near to your Lord, so near that you and He are one, and so mysteriously close is this union that you cannot be separated from Him. He is your Head, and you are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." His own members cannot be unsafe or forgotten, and you are as near and dear to Him as eternal love and mercy can constitute you. Brethren, look at the dignity of your character, the height of your position, and the honour conferred upon you! Do you think you are insignificant and nothingly? I have no doubt you have those feelings, and express them in all sincerity; but there is another side to this question—you are one with Christ, and your dignity is divine. Whilst you are in His hands and your salvation is before Him, you cannot be insignificant or unimportant.

Then, thirdly, *this great fact has been declared*. Jesus has spoken it for the information of all. Both angels and devils know it and believe it. Only man doubts or denies it. Brethren, take this for your comfort. This great fact is not at all altered by our experience. You say you do not know whether your name be there, and, like Zion, you complain, "The Lord hath forsaken me and forgotten me." In the darkest night, in the deepest waters, and in storms of doubts and fears, your names are on His hands. This great fact remains unchanged, by your imperfect experience in the flesh. It is blessed to know and realise it for ourselves, but the Lord is infinitely greater than all our doubts and fears, and by-and-bye we shall be surprised with the greatness of the glory provided, and with the excellency of that rest into which we shall enter. Notwithstanding our doubts and fears, we shall get through and pass beyond all darkness and night, and realise all our desires, or lose our hope in full fruition—

"Our names from the palms of His hands,
Eternity cannot erase."

Lastly, *the direction given*. "*Behold this, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.*" It is something marvellous. Hence "*behold*" it. It is something adorably deep and great, hence it is introduced with a "*behold.*" But are you in trouble? Behold this fact. Are you tempted. Behold your name is there. Are you persecuted, sneered at, contemned? Behold this divine memorial. Are you filled with fear and terror in relation to death? Behold these marks of indelible grace for your comfort. And when we are in the swellings of Jordan may we experience the verification of that truth, "*Underneath are the everlasting arms;*" and as we pass away may we realise all the blessedness of this divine arrangement—"I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands, thy walls are continually before Me." Amen.

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THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE, TESTIMONY, AND RESOLVE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24th, 1881.

"O Lord, thou art my God ; I will exalt thee ; I will praise Thy name ; for Thou hast done wonderful things ; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."—Isa. xxv. 1.

THE work of the Holy Spirit in the great economy of salvation is most interesting and wonderful to the church of God. It may be looked at in connection with the humanity of the Saviour, in connection with the saint, in connection with the Scriptures of divine truth, and in connection with Himself, as the witness of the covenant of grace. God the Spirit had much to do with the humanity of our beloved Lord. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." The Spirit anointed the humanity of Jesus, and filled it with the grace and gifts which as man he required for His important work. Then it is the work of the Holy Spirit to form Christ in the hearts of sinners, the hope of glory. The bodies of God's people are the temples of the Holy Ghost, who is the Author of all personal godliness and true religion. "Being confident," says the Apostle, "of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The Spirit, therefore, having entered the heart of a sinner, dwells perpetually therein; and since He is never idle, He works until the day of the Lord. His office is to quicken, sanctify, and purify the soul, to produce graces therein, and to preside over our spiritual and holy exercises, till all is consummated in the realms of eternal glory. And then the work of the Holy Spirit should be looked at in connection with the Scriptures of divine truth. Holy men of old wrote as they were divinely inspired, and therefore the Holy Spirit is the author of the Old Testament, and also of the New. "He," said the Saviour, speaking of the Spirit to His disciples, "will show you things to come, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Then the Scriptures are occasionally applied to the hearts of men, and every time an application takes place the hand of the Spirit should be recognized, and His power acknowledged, for it is as impossible that a creature can apply the word as it is that he can fulfil it, since the fulfilment and the application of the promises are both of the eternal Spirit, who shows the things of Christ to men. If the blood of Jesus is sprinkled upon the conscience, the Spirit does it. If the word of truth casts a light upon one's soul, it is through the operation of the Spirit, and of one rises above his doubts and fears, that happy state of things is always owing to the presence and

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operation of the Spirit of God. We are saved, in fact, by a triune God; and therefore it would be wrong to say that He preaches the whole Gospel, who dwells exclusively upon the Father's love, or exclusively upon the mediatorial work of the Saviour, or exclusively upon the operations of the Spirit; for we are saved by Father, Son, and Spirit, and love, blood, and power enter in all their fulness and glory into our personal and eternal salvation. Jesus died and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and its results are applied to the sinner's conscience, by God the Holy Ghost. The question has been asked, "Is it possible for one to know, while in this world whether he is a child of God. Well, I think, in relation to that question that persons "do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." Is not the Holy Spirit the witness of the covenant? and is it not said that He shall bear witness with our hearts that we are the children of God? Surely as a divine witness His testimony and evidence are always convincing and powerful; therefore if He comes into the heart and bears witness therein that the person is a child of God, the matter is settled; the soul is satisfied; doubts and fears depart; holy light breaks in upon the mind, and the heart is filled with a peace and a joy such as the world can neither give nor take away. There are in the experience of saints doubts and fears, and seasons of darkness, but there are also times when they rise above them all, and each says, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me. The words I have read this morning are the words of Isaiah, and the prophet spoke with considerable confidence, saying, "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."

Let us notice the three parts into which the text seems naturally to divide itself. In the first place, we have *an expression of strong confidence*: "O Lord, Thou art my God." In the second place, the text contains *the church's testimony*: "Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Thirdly, we have *the resolution of God's people in relation to this fact*: "I will exalt Thee; I will praise Thy name."

In the first place, the text contains *an expression of strong spiritual confidence*: "O Lord, thou art my God." There are many saints, and perhaps a considerable number of them are present this morning, who would give the world, if they had it, for leave and power to use this language in God's presence. "O Lord, thou art my God." The great truths of salvation are abiding facts. All underneath God's beloved people is rock. Their salvation is not based upon sand. All is settled by God, and settled for ever, whether we believe it or not; whether we have comfort and consolation or not; whether we can embrace the facts of the Gospel for ourselves or not, all is settled, and our souls approve it well. Life is a great principle, and a grand reality in our salvation. There was a time when you were dead, but you are not dead now. There was a time when you were far off, but you are not far off now. There was a time when you were an enemy, but you are not an enemy now; and you feel that if hell conspired with the world to convert you into an enemy they could not do so. You have cast away the sword which you once used against God and His cause, and His truth, and you can never use it again. You feel that whatever God may be pleased to do in what-

ever path God may be pleased to lead you, you can never again hate His name, His people, His word, His house, His ways, nor His cause. My beloved friends, if that is your feeling and your experience, there is life in your souls, and that life is eternal; for Christ never gives any other to His people. "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." God is yours, whether you have embraced, or can embrace Him as such or not. And all the fulness that is in Christ is yours for ever, whether you can realise that fact for yourself or not. The work of the Holy Spirit is a progressive work; for He takes the things of Jesus, and gradually reveals them to the souls of God's people, and there is a time and a season for every purpose—

"The time of love will come,
When you shall clearly see,
Not only that Christ shed His blood,
But you shall say, for me."

Since God is your God, and has constituted you His beloved children the matter shall sooner or later be perfectly clear and plain to your minds, and you shall leap for joy in the presence of your gracious Father.

But let us look a little closer at the subject, and make a few observations in the first place on the *relationship itself*. "O Lord," said the prophet, "Thou art my God." God would have been Jehovah, for that is His name, had He not become our God. He did not constitute Himself our God because He required company or needed society, for nothing can ever increase the greatness, the glory, or the blessedness of the infinite Jehovah. He was perfect when He lived alone, and infinitely blessed before He made the world. It is quite immaterial whether the world was made six thousand or six millions of years ago; it was made, and made by our God; and there certainly was a period when it did not exist, and when its mighty Maker lived alone, in His own essential eternity and blessedness: therefore it was sovereignty that gave birth to the world; to the universe, and to individuals. He might have lived in everlasting pleasure and delight, had He resolved to people the heavens with angels only; but He resolved to take human beings into His glory, and to surround Himself with them, and fill them for ever from and with Himself, and to please Himself in their pleasure, to delight Himself in their delight, and to rejoice in their joy. When we can please our fellow creatures righteously and becomingly, we feel a pleasure in doing so, and our God takes a pleasure in saving His people, and in pleasing and satisfying them for ever. He speaks exultingly, when He says, "And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness," saith the Lord. O, I feel just now as I have before felt. I wish I could, but perhaps the wish is sinful or fleshy,—I wish I could apply this fact to the minds of my hearers, and raise you from the dust, and the dunghill, and carry you out of all your darkness: but Paul plants and Apollos waters; God only can give the increase. Well, this awful, great, glorious and incomprehensible Being is our God. Let us notice, that every person must have a God, and the saints therefore, have their God, who is peculiar to them. It is useless for persons to talk about Atheism or simple infidelity. Does the Atheist really believe there is no God? I much doubt whether there is a sincere and hearty Atheist in the world; because, if there are times

when the supposed evidence on which his infidelity rests ceases to be entirely satisfactory to Him, that fact destroys the perfection of his Atheism, and such a person is hardly a complete Atheist. Well, the child of God has a God and He is Jehovah; and the prophet speaking for you and me, says, "O God, thou art my God." The nations that surrounded the land of Israel had gods of gold or silver, or wood, or marble; and as for Roman Catholics, I don't know what are their gods, but the true believer has one God and one Father, and there are times when he falls upon his knees before His Father's throne, and says, "My Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." We cannot go higher than this, my brother, and if we stop at any point short of this high and glorious one, we cannot be satisfied. If you can say, through divine teaching, "O Jehovah, Thou art my God, you are as high as it is possible for a creature to be. Higher you cannot go, and a lower place than this affords no satisfaction, and no peace.

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

There is the regenerated sinner, first in the dust; but as he is a new-born person there is divine life in his soul. He begins to ascend, and rises higher and higher in hope and prayer; for his new life came from his God on high, and it rises towards its source and fountain. He rises higher and higher, and remains upon the wings of hope, and every day his language is, "Say to my soul, I am thy salvation. O God, forgive my sin; remove this load; drown these fears and doubts; and if Thou art mine, reveal that fact to my longing heart. He remains upon the wings of desire, and will not rest upon any being short of God, nor at any point lower than His throne. He rises, until the Holy Spirit carries him into the bosom of Jehovah, when he says, "O Lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." With less than this we are not satisfied, and if we are not here we do not feel that the everlasting arms are underneath us, and we can find no peace. If there is life in our souls, we cannot be happy in any position, except in the heart and the arms of the everlasting God.

But how is the Lord our God? He is our God in our nature, and therefore, he is wondrously near to us. He is our God in covenant, and therefore the privilege is absolutely certain and sure, and He is our God as to our hope and faith. He is not only our God in our nature, and in the covenant that is ordered in all things and sure, but in our hearts formed there the hope of glory. The name of Jesus is written with the finger of the Holy Spirit upon the fleshy tables of the regenerated soul, where it is indelible, for what power can remove it? It may be overwhelmed and covered by doubt and darkness, but there it is the handwriting of God, and it can never be obliterated. The Holy Ghost, the great Artist of heaven, is forming Christ, the hope of glory in hearts which are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, who is the first-born among many brethren. All Christians are like Christ, imperfectly here, and perfectly in heaven; and He is filling in the great outline which He made when He first arrested your redeemed souls.

He is perfecting the work which He then begun, and thus the Lord is your God in the affections, the feelings, and the experience of your immortal minds. And then He is your God in all the future, however long or short it may be here, and in all the endless future hereafter. If he was ever your God, He is so to-day, and will be so to-morrow; and when the film of death comes over your eyes, and you are beyond the reach of human sympathy and power and affection, then He will be present as your God; then when the flesh having been dissolved, and the soul having left the body, the grand secret, as one said, will be known; the eternal vision of our God in Christ. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This is relationship. Our God in our flesh, and not a distant or an unknown Being. We shall not be far from Him in heaven. It is not true that we shall be satisfied, if we just get over the threshold of heaven and see God in the distance in that world of glory. That expression does not represent the great fact of eternal perfection and glory. Heaven is our home. Our God made and furnished it for us, and constituted it our inheritance; and surely if we are His children, and heaven is our inheritance we shall feel when there that we have a right to possess and enjoy the whole. I do not know how to explain it, and God grant that I may not be permitted, or influenced to speak, so as to create the least feeling of pride or hypocrisy in the minds of any of my hearers, yet I boldly assert the fact that since heaven is our home and God our Father, we have a right to be received there, for it is the inheritance of the saints, and it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Now, Christian friends, this appears to me to exalt and dignify our character, and stamp a greatness upon God's beloved people. It changes the nature of affliction. It lifts and raises the believer above the common level of mere ordinary creatureship. "O Lord, Thou art my Maker." The devil might say this on the ground of creation, for God made him as a creature, though not as a devil. "O Lord, thou art my Benefactor." The worst of men may say as much on temporal grounds, and those that fall down before idols, and worship them receive benefits from God, which tend to make life pleasant. "O Lord, Thou art my Saviour." Go higher. "O Lord, Thou art my God." Go higher. "O Lord, thou art my Father," for perhaps he might have become our God without becoming our Father, and constituting us His children. "O Jehovah, Thou art my Father." Go higher. You cannot. Only let me survey this great object. "O Lord, Thou art my life, my love, my everlasting all." The Lord's portion is His people, and the Lord Himself is the everlasting portion of His people. "O Lord, Thou art my God."

Now let us notice *the assurance*. The prophet spoke confidently. There are times when the child of God does not hesitate to say before the throne and in God's presence, "Thou art mine." Some good people are wonderfully afraid that ministers should make hypocrites of their hearers. They know that there is such a mountain as Pisgah, but they do not like to see God's people upon it. But there is such a mountain, and I for one love to stand upon it occasionally, although I do not always dwell there. I love to stand upon this holy place, and look across Jordan, and behold the land of promised rest, that flows with milk and honey. A faith's view of heaven is very refreshing, for

"As when the weary traveller gains
The height of some o'erlooking hill,
His heart revives, if 'cross the plains,
He eyes his home, though distant still."

Thus looking across the plains that separate him from his home, his heart is cheered, his mind is comforted, and he chides the distance that lies between him and his journey's end. So there are times when the child of God is raised above the sands of the desert, above the desert, and above the clouds, and looks across death into the promised land, and sings—

"There is my hope, my portion fair;
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home:
For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come."

"O Lord, thou art my God." But try to picture to yourselves the saint standing thus before his Father's throne, and communing with Him. My dear hearers, try to realise this attitude and the importance of this intercourse. "Thou art my God." Observe, there was nothing between God and the prophet on this occasion, or between Him and the speaker. The words were addressed to God himself. Thou, O Jehovah, art my God. There was no barrier to prevent his approaching to His throne; nothing diverted his attention from God; nothing drew away his thoughts, or scattered his feelings, or held any faculty of his mind; but his whole soul was intently fixed upon one Being, between whom and himself there was not a cloud; nothing whatever to prevent him from saying, in all the confidence of faith, "O Lord, thou art mine," and he spoke the truth, for there was no dissent expressed by the God he addressed. The utterance was not contradicted, nor was it ever falsified. Upon his knee the prophet or the saint said, "O Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the covenant of grace Thou art my God." And there was nothing in his own heart, which at that moment contradicted his words. His heart went with his lips, and his utterance expressed the sentiment, the experience, the confidence of his soul. There was harmony between his lip and his life, between his utterances and his sentiments, between his faith and his confession before God. And there was nothing behind the speaker that contradicted him, and nothing on the right hand, or on the left to whisper loud enough to check his faith. His sin distracted not his soul, and no feature of the Divine character caused him to tremble. All in God was amiable and agreeable; his own heart was in unison and harmony with the utterance of his lips. All behind him, all before him, all roundabout him, united with the prophet, when he said, "O Lord, Thou art my God." O, let me have this faith, and as much of it as the prophet had on this occasion, and I pity princes on their thrones, and meet death calmly, victoriously, and triumphantly; for we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. The relationship, "my God." The assurance experienced the confidence expressed, "O Jehovah, Thou art my God." Oh if our faith were always strong, and always kept its hold, what churches we should then have! and how wondrously ministers would preach! and our books would contain most

spiritual matter, confirming to souls and glorifying to God. My dear friends, the nearer we are to God, the holier, if you please, the humbler, and the heavenlier we are; for it is heaven on earth to be near to Him. It is holiness and happiness, and bliss supreme to lose our sinful, moral, and religious selves, in the grace and glory of our covenant God. This is an age of theories. Everybody has one or more of them. There is not much nowadays, I think, that is practical and experimental. If a few questions concerning our religion he asked, you very frequently, find that they are dictated by a spirit of carnal curiosity, relating to mysteries which it was never God's intention we should pry into. Here is a mystery that we cannot comprehend, a sea without a bottom or a shore. May we be like the fish, which lives in the mighty ocean, which they never cross nor fathom. There they live, and move, and have their being, and are at home. And in our incomprehensible God let us pray for grace to live. We can never understand Him, and never search Him out. O for a simple faith to say, "O Jehovah, Thou art my God."

Lastly, on this point. *The consequences* of this relationship. He is ours to love. "Thou art mine." The only God I love. How is it with you, my friend? are there two or three, or more gods before you dividing your hearts? No: O Jehovah, Thou art the only God I love. That is well. "O Jehovah, Thou art the only God I can trust in; all my hope is in Thee, and all my salvation is based on Thy name." Well, you are nearer than you thought you were. There is one God, and Him only you know; Him only you love, Him only you trust, Him only you worship and serve, and Him only you desire to resemble, and dwell with for ever. Say then, "O Lord, Thou art my God," for He is yours; if these are your experience and your feelings. What of all this? Why, a person thus trusting in the eternal God carries his confidence with him into the world. Having said before God's throne, "Thou art mine;" he cannot cloak his religion, or conceal his principles. If he has said as a hearty believer, and in adoring gratitude, "Thou art my God," he will come out from His presence, and go forth into the world with that sentiment, and it will take a practical form, and he will sing or say—

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

For God is mine, and I am not ashamed of Him. He is my Father and my all, and I glory in Him. I will exalt thee; I will praise Thy name, for ever and ever. Such a person carries his boldness with him into the world, and cannot be a hypocrite. Hypocrisy in such a person is an impossibility. He cannot conceal his God in worldly company, and seem to take part with those that hate Him. He cannot play the hypocrite in the church into which He comes, saying, "Come all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He is to me, and what great things He has done for my soul." As He cannot conceal his God in the world, so he does not wish to conceal Him in the Christian church. Thus much for the confidence expressed.

In the second place *the church's testimony* to the great and important point, "Thou hast done wonderful things, Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Now this is the testimony of all God's people. Seeing, says the Apostle, we are compassed about with as great a cloud

of witnesses, and everyone of those witnesses bears testimony to these two facts that God has done wonderful things, and that His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. One does not contradict, but corroborates and confirms another. This is the universal and uniform testimony of all that have ever said, "O Lord, Thou art my God." Jacob on his bed with his dying breath said, in effect, "Thou hast done wonderful things, Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." My God, forgive me, for I used to say, "All these things are against me." Now, looking at them from another point of view, and in the light of eternity, I say, "Thou hast done wonderful things, for Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." We have not much concerning the dying experience of Joseph; but we are informed that when he died he gave commandment concerning his bones. "I die," he said; "but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land into the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." This was his testimony that God's counsels of old were faithful and true. "By faith He gave commandment concerning his bones." I do not know who had charge of the bones of Joseph during the forty years' journeyings in the desert. I suppose the tribe of Ephraim or Manasseh, or both of them, carried them about in the wilderness, and when they were settled in Canaan they buried them there. "O Lord, Thou hast done wonderful things." He gave Abraham a promise concerning the departure of the children of Israel. After 400 years that event became due, and God was on the spot to fulfil His promise, for His counsels of old were faithfulness and truth; and that very night the children of Israel went up harnessed out of Egypt towards the Red sea and the land of promise. The Lord does wonderful things. See the whole host of God, the children of Israel on the salvation-shore of the Red Sea, while Egypt's army was at the bottom thereof, and the redeemed people were enriched with their armour, and the spoil. The sea returned to its natural state and condition, and all their enemies were drowned. Then Miriam and the children of Israel, sang this song, saying, "The Lord is a man of war," or in other words, "Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Soon my friends, we shall be on our dying beds, and how we may die I do not know; but it will be so divinely, spiritually and savingly pleasant to lie in the everlasting arms which are underneath us, and look into the face of our smiling God, and say, "O Lord, Thou art our God; Thou hast done wonderful things." When we are with Thee, and a few months only will elapse before that happy period comes, we will exalt Thee, and praise Thy name for ever and ever.

(For want of room, the remainder of the Sermon is omitted.)

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PENITENCE AND PARDON.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 22nd, 1881.

"I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."—Psa. xxxii. 5.

WE know from the word of God, and also from our own personal experience that sin is of a hardening nature; it hardens Satan, and also every one living and dying in a state of impenitence. And sin has at times hardened many of, if not all, the people of God. We learn that sin hardened Abraham, who, on one occasion, said to his wife, "Say thou art my sister, that it may be well with me, for thy sake." And sin hardened and injured David, the man after God's own heart. I need not go into the circumstances connected with his terrible fall. All of you remember that he fell foully and far, and that in all probability he lay in the mire for a considerable time. For a time his heart was hard, his affections were cool, his conscience was seared, and he lived to prove that sin deceived as well as stained his soul. In due time, however, fresh grace was communicated to his heart, and the prophet Nathan was sent to him with a parable and a message from God. David having heard the parable, replied, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, and the application was immediately made by God through Nathan to his mind, "Thou art the man!" David's heart gave way; his conscience was broken, and pierced afresh; he was filled with the grace of repentance, and the streams of godly sorrow at once flowed again from his heart. Nathan, however, did not leave the palace without communicating comfort and consolation to the troubled mind of the transgressor. Notwithstanding, said Nathan, that thou art the man, and that thou hast fallen foully, "the Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." David, therefore, came forth pardoned and forgiven, but with very peculiar feelings, and walking very tenderly, he says, "Come all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." I think we have a representation of the riches of divine grace towards David in the Psalm out of which we have taken our text this morning. The good man had been saved, and was walking in liberty, but He did not forget the evil into which he had plunged, and out of which God had saved and delivered him. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." This Psalm was penned by David in relation to his fall, and to his experience, when Nathan was sent to him. He says, however, when I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me." My beloved friends, the hand of God is very heavy and strong, and with great ease He puts it upon the sinner's

conscience; and it is perfectly useless for even the believer to attempt to get beyond it. One may be in affluent circumstances, and appear in public with a smile upon his countenance, whilst the greatest misery and the bitterest grief may prevail in his heart. The heart is God's creature, and he can manage and control it as he pleases. David, therefore, could not silence his conscience, nor deliver himself from the misery with which he retired at night, and with which he rose in the morning. He was the greatest king then living, and sat on the highest earthly throne, and had a divinely favoured people to govern; but for days, if not for weeks, he was one of the most miserable persons upon the earth. Guilt was in his conscience, which with the heavy hand of God produced so strange an experience that he says, "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Sometimes mental trouble affects the body, and sorrow and grief are indicated in the countenance; and hence, perhaps, David says, "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

Let us look at the two branches into which the text divides itself. First, *the penitent sinner*, and secondly, *his pardoning God*. The penitent sinner: "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions." God pardoning the penitent: "And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

A few observations in the first place, on *the penitent sinner* before God. It may be said in some quarters that I am a doctrinal preacher; but all who are accustomed to hear me know that I am always blending doctrine and experience. I am one of those ministers who believe that if the grace of the doctrine enters the heart, there will most assuredly be Christian or spiritual experience. I shall have to preach experimentally, at least for a short time this morning; for I cannot speak of the penitent sinner without doing so. Let me look first, at the *character* now before us. I have just said a few words about David, and the text literally refers to him—a royal personage, but a guilty sinner, a person who had sinned, to use a common phrase, against light and knowledge. David had lived in a state of nearness to God, and God had greatly blessed and favoured him. When, therefore, he committed adultery, he went against that light which he possessed, and ran in direct opposition to that saving knowledge which God had communicated to his heart. The penitent was David, the divinely appointed king of Israel, in the dust before God. But every child of God is a penitent, and must be so, as I understand the matter, as long as he is on the earth, for there is something paradoxical and mysterious in the experience of a Christian. I do not know whether it be so with you or not; but I pray, and I hope sincerely, that my heart may be filled with godly sorrow every day, and yet I do not desire to be miserable and wretched, nor to be filled with darkness and doubt. I do, however, every day ask my heavenly Father to favour me with the grace of repentance, and to make me to live under its sacred, and sanctifying influence. I would mourn without being miserable; I would experience godly sorrow without being wretched. I would repent of sin without feeling or fearing that I was going to hell. Is this your experience, and are these your prayers? The living Christian is, or would be, a daily penitent, as he appears before God. I do not think you can

well enter into the holiest of all, and fall before the mercy-seat to present petitions without confessing you are sinful. Do you go to God without mentioning sin, without confessing it, without acknowledging the fact that you are undeserving, not only as a creature, but as a sinful being? Well, David was a penitent, and so is every living child of God, whose heart is right. I do not know whether I may be the means of comforting any of the people of God this morning, but I should like for a few minutes, to look at this spiritual penitent, for he is a very interesting character. The person who goes into God's presence to confess sin and transgression has a conscience containing life, and consequently, feeling. There must, however, be something besides life and feeling to produce repentance and sorrow in the presence of God. These must be a burden on the quickened conscience, and every spiritual penitent petitioner is a burdened, sensible sinner. We may be burdened, but not loathe the burden. Or we might be burdened with something valuable; but sin upon the conscience is loathsome, abominable, and hateful. God hates it, angels hate it, and saints hate it, as an abominable thing. Every penitent says, "*My sin, my transgression.*" It is not only vile and loathsome, it so pierces the conscience that peace under it is simply impossible. Guilt is a fiery evil—it burns in the heart; and were it not for divine grace and pardon it would burn to the lowest hell. Oh, how the sinner is tormented, whilst guilt lies upon his soul.

Now something else must be viewed in connection with this. Here is the penitent with his living conscience, and a burden upon it; but he will not confess sin nor loathe it, unless there is something holy there. God requires truth in the inward parts, and truth in the soul of a sinner, and guilt upon it, result in a terrible conflict within. Guilt and holy truth within will be sure so to clash as to produce bitter grief and sorrow, and the person so afflicted will certainly say with David, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord."—

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

"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."

"I acknowledged my transgression, and my iniquity have I not hid." I cannot speak positively, but I believe I am correct in saying, that when a person is charged with some great crime it is preferred that he should plead, "Not guilty," in order that a fair trial may be had, and his guilt or innocence be apparent to all. Hence most murderers, though consciously guilty, plead "Not guilty," and the trial proceeds. But this never takes place before God's throne. Nothing of the sort ever occurs in the high court of Heaven. God does not require the sinner to plead "Not guilty," in order that a trial may follow; and the sinner cannot so plead before Him, but—

"Guilty I plead, before Thy throne,
And low in dust I lie,
Till Jesus stretch His gracious hand,
To bring the guilty nigh."

A poor sinner could not be induced by any power to plead "Not guilty" in the sight of a holy God, the light of whose countenance is so clear and strong. When you first appeared before God as a sensible sinner you felt he was looking you through, that he knew your every sin and stain. Your own memories and minds were so wonderfully active that they somehow brought up to view sins which had long been committed, and the remembrance of which had passed away from your mind. God places our iniquities before our eyes and his own, and in the light of his own countenance, and when one is conscious of this he dares not, if he opens his mouth, plead "Not guilty." Standing before God, and under His law, he acknowledges God's right to do as he pleases with him, and Dr. Watts never penned a greater truth than when, by way of expressing a portion of the believer's experience, he sang—

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

The great God is on the throne, and the poor penitent sinner is before him with, so to illustrate the subject, a rope round his neck by way of expressing his conviction that he deserves to die. He goes to God from necessity, and feeling he is guilty he surrenders himself to the God of justice and truth, saying, "If justice should take its natural and due course, I must go to hell, where I would declare the righteousness and equity of the Divine proceeding; but, O God, if Thou wilt, Thou canst hold out the golden sceptre, and have mercy on me, and pardon all my sins. The sinner has no reason to assign why he should not be sent to hell, except what he sees on the cross of Calvary. Jesus died—He died for sin; He died for sinners; perhaps he died for me. If thou wilt for His sake hold out the sceptre, and bid me touch it, I shall for ever live. I trust I am not setting up too high a standard of experience. I would not make any of God's little ones sad, nor cast down nor dispirit any of His beloved children; yet by the law is the knowledge of sin, and the sinner before he is sensibly pardoned must know that he is a sinner; he must be taken into the presence of his Creator and his God; He must see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and mourn over it in God's presence, and throw himself with all his guilt and sin upon the mercy, the sovereign mercy of God, combined with the merits of His dear and blessed Son.

Although Dr. Watts' lived many years ago, the religion of his days, and the words in which he expressed it, very well agree with the feelings of godly people now. We are said to be very much in advance of those times, and ought not therefore to use language which, though suited to by-gone days, ought not to be employed in connection with experience now. Well I shall use the following as long as I live—

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

Here, then, is the sinner, with life in his conscience, and guilt upon it, surrendering himself to the justice of God, in order that he may obtain mercy. What a wonderful mystery! At the feet of justice God shows

mercy, and there the guilty says, "If I be smitten, the blow will be right; but if God will be merciful, I will bless His holy name." "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Repentance prepares the heart for God, who being a God of infinite wisdom and order, will not lay the blessing of pardon upon hard, unfeeling, stony hearts. It is his intention that pardon shall not only purify the heart, but produce pleasure therein, which can never take place unless one has felt something of the terrible nature and properties of sin. Therefore the heart is first broken and made contrite. The poor sinner is made to mourn with bitter feelings over the fact that he is guilty, and whilst he is in suspense as to his destiny, and wonders whether God will have mercy on him, in due time the pardon comes, and is deeply appreciated. He is the man to receive forgiveness; it produces a pleasure which the world can neither give nor take away. A sense of pardon cannot exist in an impenitent man or woman. The sorrow precedes the joy, the penitence precedes the pardon; the pain precedes the pleasure, and the night here always goes before the day. You know nothing about pardon, nor the pleasure of Divine forgiveness, if you have never felt the burden of guilt upon your hearts. David leaped for joy, and sang the praises of his delivering God, for his moisture had been turned into the drought of summer, and the hand of God had been heavy upon him. He that has been bound in prison appreciates liberty; he that has been overwhelmed in poverty appreciates a comfortable competence; he that has lain long on a bed of affliction and pain appreciates a state of recovery and health, and he that has trembled before God as a hell-deserving sinner appreciates that pardon that assures him of God's favour, and of his interest in heaven and eternal things.

In the next place, *the state indicated*, if I have not included this in what I have already said—he is a confessor of guilt before God. Now let me notice that repentance is always deepest at the cross. I speak, I think, experimentally, and not merely from what I have read. The Apostle was of the same judgment, when he said the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone."

Ministers and preachers make a serious mistake if they think that by preaching law and damnation they can produce real repentance in the hearts of their hearers. "Oh, there is no godly repentance in hell. Hell cannot melt hearts, nor give contrition to minds. Repentance deep and true takes place under the cross, or before the dying Christ. I would not set forth, or introduce a multitude of feelings in connection with this matter, yet I cannot separate repentance from feeling. Have you been as a guilty sinner to Calvary, and realised in some measure your interest in the meritorious sorrows and sufferings of the Lord? If so, I know what your feelings and experience were—

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

The wretch that lies in the condemned cell awaiting the morning of

execution may hate the crime which has brought him into that condition, not for its own sake, but because of its fearful consequences. It is to cost him his life, and therefore he wishes he had not committed it. He is sorry, and repents of the crime he has committed; but if Her Majesty pardons him, and sets him free, all his remorse and compunction disappear. Now, a child of God, a living penitent before the cross, sees sin in its awful consequences in the agonies and death of Jesus, and then he deeply repents, realising the fact that the Saviour suffered for him. Sinai produces certain feelings, for "By the law is the knowledge of sin, but the law can never give repentance." It does not come that way, nor from that source. It does not flow from the covenant of works in which God appears in his judicial character, but through the wounds of incarnate God. Our vileness is contrasted with God's goodness; our moral deformity with God's beauty and excellency. The fact that we hated that God, who loved us so deeply, filled our eyes with tears of godly sorrow and joy. Thus we see the penitent before God, confessing his guilt and transgression. I said, "I will confess it." Everybody that goes to church and reads after the minister, confesses he is a sinner, and this is believed to be a true confession of sin, though it may be done in a flippant and thoughtless manner. There is not only the fact but the fault of sin. Every one may confess the fact, but everyone does not confess the fault. Then there is the punishment due to sin. I am a sinner; my sin is odious and hateful, and if thou shouldst deal with me accordingly, and reward me according to my iniquity, where Thou art I can never come, for I must sink into eternal darkness and woe.

The object—I said I will confess my sin unto the *Lord*. I know James has said, "Confess your faults one to another," but that relates to faults which brethren commit against each other. I need not now dwell upon Popery nor Ritualism, nor that detestable thing—the confessional of the church of Rome. I feel as if I could place my head on the block rather than go to a priest of Rome to confess. May no one belonging to us ever become so degraded and blind as to confess to human priests. Persons so doing must be lost as to what is morally good, and sweet, and excellent, to say nothing about spirituality and matters that are heavenly. I said I will confess to the *Lord*. There was the priest before David, the high priest of that dispensation, a very important personage, standing between God and Israel. David might have gone to him to confess. "No," I said, "I will confess my transgression unto the *Lord*. I must go into God's presence, and up to His throne. I want no human mediators, and human priests will not do for me now." I am a sinking, miserable wretch. "I will confess my transgression unto the *Lord* only." Remember that God sustains a threefold character—a Judge, a King, and a Father. As a Judge He receives the criminal into His presence, and condemns him. As a King, occupying the throne of grace He exercises His royal authority and mercy, and says, "Thy sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" and the pardoned sinner having passed through that blessed state, enters into the presence of God as his Father. "This God is my God for ever and ever, and He will be my guide even unto death."

My beloved friends, God loved you into Himself before the foundation of the world, and He has loved you out of the world; but the only way by which you get into this love of God experimentally, is through

pardoning mercy. Here is a loving God, and a guilty sinner, and between them are the iniquities of the sinner, who does not know whether God loves him or not. However, when God removes the sin he removes a barrier, and the forgiven one is carried into the love of God, and the patient waiting for His dear Son. God expresses His love in Jesus' blood, and we pass through His blood into the realisation of this everlasting love. "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord."

Just one word on the *forgiveness*, and then as time is nearly gone I will close. The Author of pardon, "And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." He to whom we confess transgression may either punish sinners or pardon them. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" We have absolution, I know, in connection with the church of Rome; but there is only one source of pardon, one Being only can forgive sin, and that is the great Monarch of the universe. God does not pardon in His judicial, but in His royal character; and when pardon comes from the throne, it is valid and sufficient. All the powers in the land might rise up against the freedom and liberty of the individual that was pardoned by Her Majesty. The command having, however, proceeded from the throne would prevail over all. And if the God of heaven has pardoned your sins, the prince of this world may rage, and the powers of earth may persecute; doubts and fears may at times fill your minds, and your apprehensions may cause much unhappiness and woe. There is no appeal from Him; neither can any say unto him, "What doest Thou? Look at your pardon? Has it God's signature; does it bear the impress of heaven?" No other is valid; no other is good; no other will take you to heaven. "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." A minister of the gospel when he was on the earth, having a conversation with an individual whom he thought exceedingly flippant, in relation to the joys and pleasures of the Christian, asked him an important question, and was answered, "God has forgiven my sin." I think friend, the preacher said, "You have pardoned yourself, and set it down to God's account. It will not stand." Look my dear friends, at your state; if you think you are forgiven, and are satisfied that God has passed by your transgression. "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Turn it over, and examine it. Where did it come from? The King of grace? From no other can this grace proceed. Have you met God, and discovered His anger, and has it passed away? If so, you may go on singing—

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

Then, secondly, we have the *act*: "And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." God is not only the author of forgiveness; He is the giver of it. I do not know whether it had been possible or not for God to have originated pardon without communicating it with His own hands. We have not, however, to do with what might have been, but with what is. God separates the sinner from his sins, the guilty from his guilt, the ragged from his rags, and clothes him with change of raiment. He casts his sins into the depths of the sea, and puts the sinner into His bosom. He removes the disease, and places the healed child in His presence to enjoy

communion with Himself for ever. He removes sin by pardoning it; He removes it from His book. I have blotted it out. Oh, that He would speak this to us this morning, causing us all to hear it. The hand of mercy with the blood of Christ is drawn over the dreadful page, and then He tells us He has done it. Oh, what sweet words! I have blotted out thy sins and transgressions, which He removes from between the sinner and Himself. God said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." The idea is that sin lies at the door as some dangerous beast, so that no one can go out of nor into the house. What is in the house must there remain, and what is outside must also remain. Sin and guilt lie at the door till God takes them away. He opens the door, and enters the house. Having cleaned and consecrated it, He introduces liberty, peace, and purity. "And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

The experience of this. Oh, what a terrible possession, what an awful appropriation—*my sin!* Why, sin was ours, as nothing else was ours. It is ours, not as our limbs, wives, children, homes are ours; but it is ours in a very solemn manner. And God is our salvation, and our all. The question has been asked, "Is it possible that one can know whether he is pardoned or not." Yes, it is. Is it possible to know we are sinners, and to know it confidently, beyond all doubt? Yes, it is very possible to feel it, and to mourn over it. Do you think if God can convince of sin, He cannot with equal power and ease convince of pardon? The Holy Ghost is not less strong than the devil. Surely, if God the Holy Ghost convinces of sin, He can and does assure us that our sins are forgiven; for both facts are revealed by the same God.

The effects of all this. Pardon influences our life, the government of God, and our death, and our eternity. "Smite," said Luther, "Smite, O God, if thou wilt. I am pardoned." Blows from God's hand will not injure us, if we are forgiven—

"Safety on earth, and after death,
The plenitude of heaven."

And then at the last day we shall be presented without spot or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. What a wonderful experience ours will be! Once guilty without knowing it; then guilty having a knowledge of it; next guilty and pardoned, and then as pardoned sinners obtaining the victory in death, and entering heaven, whiter than snow. Happy art Thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord? Amen.

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CHRIST EXALTED, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 10th, 1881.

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."
—Acts ii. 32, 33.

It will be remembered that before His ascension into heaven the Lord said to His disciples, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." But they were to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Having given this charge to his disciples, Jesus ascended to His Father; and our Father, to His God and our God, from whence in due time he fulfilled the promise which He made to His disciples, and also the covenant engagements into which He had entered with His divine Father. On the day of Pentecost He poured out in a miraculous manner His blessed Spirit upon His church, according to His word, and the hopes and expectations of His servants. Peter had preached in the day of Christ's flesh; but he never preached the Gospel before the death and resurrection of the Saviour, as he preached it on the day of Pentecost, for we learn that when Jesus spoke, concerning His death, Peter took Him aside, and rebuked Him. Peter could not bear to hear of the sufferings and death of His Master, and none of the disciples would accept the fact that He was about to leave them, and therefore, they said one to another, "What is this that He saith unto us: A little while, and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while, and ye shall see me; and because I go unto the Father? What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith." However, the time came when Jesus died, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and the disciples having lost the personal presence of their Master, remained, according to His orders, in the city of Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost the promise was fulfilled; a marvellous measure of Divine "power" was poured down upon their heads and their hearts, and the Old Testament—the New was not then in existence—appeared to them as a new book. The prophecies, the promises, and the doctrines of grace, as recorded in the Old Testament were understood, and Peter, for the first time, "preached" the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." On the day of Pentecost they saw that the death of their Lord was essential to salvation; that the blood of the dear Redeemer was required to put away sin, and that God could not be just, and the justifier of the ungodly, without the interposition of that Ransom. Therefore having received

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the Holy Spirit they proceeded to address the multitude in various languages. Some of the people sneered and mocked, and others said, "These men are full of new wine." But Peter being divinely inspired, rose, and preached the Gospel in the new light and power which he had received from heaven, and my text forms a part of the first sermon preached after the outpouring of the Spirit. "This Jesus," said Peter, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Let me endeavour simply to illustrate the text, and in so doing you perceive that we shall have to notice three things. First, *the resurrection of the Lord*; and, secondly, *His exaltation at the right hand of God*; and, thirdly and lastly, *the effusion of the Holy Spirit*: "He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

In the first place, let me offer a few observations upon *the resurrection of our glorious Lord*. I dare say some of my remarks this morning will be doctrinal, but I have long believed that there is no spiritual meat or drink, no spiritual honey, milk or wine, for the saints of God, without the glorious doctrines of grace. The incarnation of the Son of God is a wonderful doctrine; His obedient life and sacrificial death are glorious themes, and it is also very blessed when one is influenced by the Holy Ghost to dwell upon His burial and resurrection. It is said emphatically in the Word, that Jesus died, and *was buried*. He did not return to life immediately after He had died on the cross. It was necessary that he should enter the grave; necessary that He should lie there three days and three nights; necessary that He should conquer death in his own territories, and necessary that He should sanctify the tomb for the sleeping dust of all His blood-bought people. Our great Redeemer is now Lord of all, having taken possession of all things for Himself. He has taken possession of His church; He has taken possession of all the grace that is required to save His people; He has taken possession of death; He has taken possession of the grave; He has taken possession of heaven, and of all those mansions which eternal love ordained; and He has left on record a blessed and precious promise for His people: "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." In looking at the resurrection of Jesus, we shall first regard it as a proof of the fact that His great saving work is done, or that redemption is finished for ever. Had not redemption been completed, had not our debts been fully and eternally paid, had not our guilt been quite expiated, and our sin wholly put away, Justice would not have opened the Saviour's tomb, and eternal righteousness and truth would not have permitted our great Surety to leave the prison. Blessed for ever be the name of the Redeemer, He is not in the grave, but on the throne; He is not in the world, but at the right hand of God; and that He is there proves the real and blessed fact upon which our hope rests, that redemption's great work is done; that the perfections of God have been brought together in everlasting beauty and harmony, and that there is eternal peace between the everlasting God and man. That the blood that was demanded has been shed, and the atonement that was required has been made and taken into heaven, appeasing for ever the great

Jehovah on His throne, Christ's resurrection makes clear. I hardly know how to receive the words of Dr. Watts, when speaking of God's throne—

“Once 'twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame.”

Well, the throne of God is not now a seat of wrath, neither does it shoot devouring flame; for the blood of Jesus has been taken within the vail, sprinkled upon that high and majestic throne, and there are no fires now to quench; no curses now to inflict, and no attributes now to reconcile. The heavens of eternal glory are everlastingly filled with the fragrance of the Saviour's atonement, and mercy reigns over guilty men. Grace reigns righteously and equitably; so that God is just, and yet the Justifier of them that believe in him. When the blood was taken into heaven, God smelled a sweet savour of rest, and eternal justice descended in connection with angels, and rolled back the stone that was over the grave of Emmanuel, and He that was dead came forth, and thus the resurrection of our Lord forms a part of the foundation of our imperishable hopes. He has left the tomb. This Jesus has God raised up; for His work was done.

Let us look at this subject for a few minutes. His work as *a servant* was done. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and engaged to serve His Father by fulfilling His laws and demands, and by accomplishing His purposes; for His work consisted in obeying the law, and making it for ever honourable. Our Lord commenced His work of obedience when He entered the world; for He was made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law. He lived for three-and-thirty years under a broken law, and obeyed in the place of transgressors, and as He proceeded with His work He left perfection behind Him, whilst before Him there were guilt and curse. He gave a glory to every precept, or a perfect obedience to every requirement and demand of God, and having reached the end of the precept His cross was set up, and He was nailed to it, where He bore the penalty due to sin, and bowed His head, and said, My work as a Servant is completed; my obedience is perfect and saving. He took His obedience, and presented it to His Father, saying, Father, will it do? And the Father said, I am well pleased with Thee, for Thy righteousness' sake, for Thou hast magnified the law, and made it honourable. And now that same righteousness, as He sits upon the throne, He presents to the guilty, sensible sinner, and says, Sinner, will it do for you? It is My obedient life, and My Father has accepted it with tokens of divine approval—will it do for you? And this righteousness cast upon the guilty, and covering the unclean, induces him to sing—

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully through Christ absolved I am,
From sin's tremendous curse and shame.”

Yes, the work of the Redeemer as the Father's Servant is finished. The sufferings of our Lord were penal. He bore every penal woe; swallowed up every penal sorrow, having received every curse. The curse of God is a heavy, fiery, and burning reality. It is hell, and it raged around

the suffering person of the Redeemer, as He hung on the accursed tree. As it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." His precious soul was filled with a sense of wrath, and His precious heart was enveloped in the curses of a broken law. God smote Him as He never smote a being before; for there is not a mere creature that could survive the blow that fell upon the glorious person of God's beloved Son. The damned in hell suffer the curses of the law, but they fall not there upon lost finite creatures as they fell upon our incarnate suffering Saviour. God took all the vials of wrath which had been accumulating from the fall, and emptied them upon the head of His Son, and Jesus lived to receive and to exhaust them all; and when the last drop had been poured out, the Father said, "It is done;" and Christ said, "It is finished," and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. There are now afflictions for me and for you, but nothing penal has been left by our Lord. Our sufferings are not judgments, but chastisements; they are not curses, but blessings. They do not come from the judicial, but from the parental hand of our God. They do not come from the broken law or the law of works, but from the covenant of eternal grace. They are not intended to appease God, to satisfy justice, or to remove sin; for all that was done by our great Emmanuel, and He that did it all has been raised from the grave. "This Jesus," whom we preach, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

The work of Christ as *the Captain of salvation* was completed. The world was before Him, with all its blandishments, pleasures, pains, and curses: It was before Him to condemn, and to applaud; but our great Emmanuel was equally dead to its applause, its condemnation, its pleasures, and its pains; and went on conquering and to conquer, in His own great might. Just before He met the last foe, He said to His disciples, "In the world you shall have tribulation," and it will be deep and bitter; for "the time is coming when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Sometimes our brethren in prayer say, "We are passing through an enemy's land to our heavenly and eternal rest." Dr. Watts was not of that opinion—

"We're marching through Emmanuel's ground,
To fairer worlds on high."

There are enemies in the land; but the land itself belongs to our Lord, the world having been conquered and overcome by Him. It is Christ's property, and He reigns in, and reigns over it, for His beloved people; and hence as the Conqueror of the world He said, "Be of good cheer." You shall have tribulation below, but you shall have peace in Me. And what was Christ's conflict with the devil, during forty days and nights in the wilderness perhaps we shall never know. I would not go too far or too deep into the mystery of temptation; but some of my beloved friends have met the great arch-fiend more than once, and received his arrows, and been tempted by him to doubt almost everything. You have been tempted to doubt the existence of almost everything recorded in the Bible, and to doubt the existence of beings whose character is

described there. Have not vile thoughts, abominable feelings and heart-polluting ideas swarmed in your minds, and have you not under such circumstances been filled with terror, and shaken as an aspen leaf? Oh what were the temptations that surrounded and enveloped the great Captain of our salvation! The devil invented all he could invent, and forged every arrow that he could forge, and hurled all at the Lord of life and glory. But, bless His name! it is said that "when the devil had ended all the temptations he departed from him for a season;" and our Lord came forth unstained, uninjured, and undamaged. Satan's temptations on that occasion were as the way of a ship in the sea, or as the way of a serpent on the rock. The Rock of Ages was there, and the old serpent crawled about Him, and had it been possible would have injected his filth into His glorious person; but the Redeemer was untarnished by it all. His work as a Conqueror was completed, and hence He was raised from the dead. But He had another foe to meet, and that was death, with its ten thousand stings: for "He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man." I wish I could enter deeply into the fact that our blessed Redeemer bore all the terrors of death that were due to our transgression. What it is to die we do not yet know, and what it is to die for sin and under the burden of guilt we cannot tell; but our Lord met death with all its stings, and tasted it for everyone that shall sing His glorious praises in heaven. And when the sting of death was quite extracted, and death itself was wholly conquered; then our Lord bowed His head, and gave up the ghost; and because the world, and the devil and death were all vanquished at His feet, having lost their power, the Father raised Him from the dead. And, lastly, his work as a *priestly Saviour* was completed. As the great High Priest of our profession. He offered Himself without spot to God, and having expiated and put away our guilt, and appeased the eternal Jehovah, He has entered within the veil, there to appear in the presence of God for us. The resurrection of our Lord is a proof of the fact that salvation is a finished work. If it were not, the resurrection of Jesus would have been impossible. He is not in the grave; He is risen, and we rejoice.

In the second place His resurrection *is a sweet pledge of ours*. It is a proof of the completion of Christ's work, and a pledge of the resurrection of His people. He died as a common person, I mean as the Head and Representative of the church. He was buried as a common person, and not as an isolated individual, and in this capacity He rose from the dead. When He came out of the grave He represented all His beloved people, and inasmuch as He who is the resurrection and the life, and also the great Head of the church is now living on high, where He is His members must also be for ever. Our union to Jesus requires our resurrection. I have sometimes had some serious, and I trust profitable thoughts, whilst speaking over the remains of some of the saints of God. The grave is not a pleasant place to look into; but when we view it in connection with the Lord Jesus, we feel there is mercy connected with our death and burial, and our rest in our dusty beds. As surely as the body of our Lord is in heaven, so surely will all the bodies of His people be raised from the dead. And what a wondrous sight will be seen at the

last day, when every grave will be opened, and countless millions of ransomed beings will lift up their heads in the dust, and be drawn out of their graves; for their Lord is the resurrection and the life. He will communicate new life to the dust now sleeping in the grave, and by His almighty power raise every ransomed body, and form and fashion it like unto His own glorious body, when it shall be caught up to meet Himself in the air, and so shall it be for ever with the Lord. Beloved friends, we shall see and meet our friends again. The eyes of Job, which saw his three or four friends, shall see his descending Lord, for himself, and behold Him, and not another. Since death is inevitable, and we are certainly going to the grave, and must become dust again, oh how pleasing and sweet is the fact that the day is coming when death shall be swallowed up in victory! The blood of the Lamb demands our resurrection. It speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and among its other demands it requires the glorification of our bodies. I have sometimes made observations here and elsewhere in relation to the bodies of the saints, some of whom I have heard speak as I have thought very improperly and unscripturally concerning their bodies. If our souls, they have said, get to heaven, and enter into rest, we care not what becomes of our bodies. But your Lord cares for them, and has made himself responsible for their resurrection. He is to present your bodies at the last day, before the glory of God's presence. They are purchased property, they are the temples of the Holy Ghost. The body of Jesus was raised, and the bodies of His people cannot be allowed to remain in the tomb. A sweet pledge is the resurrection of Jesus, of the resurrection of His people.

Lastly, with regard to the resurrection of Christ—*it is the pattern of the resurrection of His people*. The minds of the saints are conformed in some measure to Jesus Christ in this world. He is holy; so are they. He is spiritual; so are they. He was filled with the Holy Ghost; and they possess a measure of the same Spirit. The life of Jesus is in every saint; and every saint is a Christian, because Christ is formed in him the hope of eternal glory. But our bodies, beloved friends, are to undergo a change similar, perhaps, to that which our minds passed through in regeneration. I have no authority for saying that the Holy Ghost will regenerate our bodies, but the resurrection of the body will, in some measure resemble the regeneration of the mind. Now the body is a burden to the mind. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." We sometimes experience considerable difficulty in bringing our bodies up to the sanctuary, and when they are there they frequently burden our souls. There is drowsiness, and a want of liveliness and buoyancy which interfere with our spiritual worship and comfort. Soon our bodies will be spiritual, like the glorious body of the Lord Jesus, and when He has put if I may so speak, the last touch to His work by raising us from the grave, and making us completely like Himself,—what shall we be, and how shall we appear? Brethren, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Eternity will never, like time, cause infirmities and defects upon our parts and powers. Immortal youth and vigour, and

strength, and buoyancy, and spirituality will characterise the persons of all the people of God. "This Jesus hath God raised up." And the fact that He did so proves the completeness of our redemption, supplies a pledge of our perfection, and is a pattern of our resurrection.

Let us notice in the second place, one or two facts in connection with *the exaltation of Jesus*. "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted," it was necessary that our Lord should be honoured for His work, and His exaltation is the glorious reward of His sufferings. He entered heaven justly and righteously, having a right to do so, in consequence of His own personal worth and merit. We enter behind Him in His name, and in dependence on His worth and merit. He leaned and rested, and depended on Himself alone. He lifted up His head with confidence and joy when He reached the portals of eternal glory, and, conscious of His own worth and worthiness, He went up to the right hand of God. Divine justice seated Him on the throne of honour, and put upon His head the many crowns which now adorn His brow, for He is worthy to sit there; and worthy to receive all the ascriptions of praise and glory which are presented to Him. He is the only worthy one in that glorious world. Gabriel never speaks of worth or worthiness, and the saints that are glorified have no thought of personal worthiness; but our Lord is conscious of the fact that He is worthy to sit, and live, and reign over all, for ever and ever. He is rewarded for His work with a seat at the right hand of God.

"His work for ever is complete,
For ever undisturbed His seat;
Myriads of angels round Him fly,
And sing His well-gained victory."

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

And who is it that sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high? The Lord that died for us? Flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. He is our Brother. If when we were in trouble we had a brother in a high place that could and would help us, what hope and confidence that fact would inspire us with. O friends, eternity is before us, and we have immortal minds to be saved from sin, and carried through all our trials and troubles here. Our Brother is on the throne, our Jesus is Lord of all; God has exalted Him at His own right hand, and He reigns over all. John saw a book in the hands of Him that sat on the throne, and heard a voice saying, "Who is worthy to take it, and to open the seals thereof?" Of all that John saw, not one in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth could open the book. John wept, and one said to him, "Weep not; for the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof." And John looked, and saw a Lamb in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain, who took the book out of the hand of the Father. And what is He doing now? Why, the book of God's purposes is before this exalted Lord, who holds the reins of universal dominion in His hand, and

“Here He exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown ;
And there the following page He turns,
And treads the monarch down.”

As a minister preaches, this exalted One drops his grace into the hearts of sinners and saints, regenerating the former and edifying the latter, proving that he is Lord of all. Whilst all this is being done, there are hundreds of saints on their dying beds, not far from their home of glory; and He that sits on the throne attends to all their wants, and sees them safely through. Our exalted Lord is receiving those for whom He died, helping them on their way to the heavenly home, is present with them in their last moments, and meets them at the threshold of glory, to welcome them to their everlasting home and rest. He is exalted at the right hand of God. There is not a world, but what is His, nor a devil but what He controls, nor an event but what He influences. The circumstances of our life He connects together in a way that is worthy of Himself. That which is casual, and called an accident, He controls and manages.

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

He that is your Lord was the “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” It is divinely right that He should sit on that high throne, and manage all the affairs of the universe. But that is not all. He is the object of eternal worship. He that is exalted above all blessing and praise represents Deity, and is Himself the eternal God. How great is the mystery of godliness ! We do not expect to see three divided persons in heaven, certainly not as painters represent the Trinity—the Father as an old man, the Son as a young man, and the Holy Ghost as a dove. Oh how prone people are to carnalise eternal things, and even Jehovah and His character.

“The God shines gracious through the man,
And sheds sweet glories on them all.”

The Lamb of God embodies Deity, and all the perfections and attributes of Jehovah. Thus all the inhabitants of heaven fall before our exalted Lord, and sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, and power, and glory for ever.” Amen.

(The remainder of the discourse is omitted for want of room).

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THE REDEEMED PARDONED AND INVITED.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, JULY 31st, 1881.

"I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins ; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." Isa. xlv. 22.

THE Apostle Paul describes the word of grace as the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. It is so, because it represents the glorious Jehovah himself in His Trinity of Persons, because it describes His thoughts, His purposes, and His mind, and because all its doctrines and truths are divine. There is a natural glory, but the glory of the gospel surpasses that ; and there is a moral glory, but though all moral glory is to be found in the gospel, yet the glory of the gospel is chiefly gracious and spiritual, and that which is spiritual is the highest manifestation of the blessed God. There is not a doctrine of grace, nor a promise of love, nor a precept of holiness recorded in the word but what is divinely important and glorious. And, then, if you contemplate the influence of the gospel upon the hearts of sinful creatures, you will perceive Paul's reason for designating the word the glorious gospel of the blessed God. I suppose that the gospel has no influence whatever upon the minds of angels, and no particular influence upon Satan, or if it has it restrains and defeats him, and fills him with bitterness and fury. The Gospel, however, has ; when divinely applied, a peculiar power upon the minds of lost and ruined sinners ; and hence, when that large congregation was assembled on the day of Pentecost, and Peter preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, three thousand persons were at once pricked in their hearts. Their enmity was at once and for ever killed, and grace divine transformed their souls, and every individual became a true believer in Jesus Christ. Now a person may preach very logically, eloquently and profoundly, no transforming influence is ever felt by his hearers without the grace of the Spirit. If, however, the power of the Lord accompany the preaching of the Word, a wondrous transformation is certainly the result. The sinner is converted into a saint, the rebel into a friend, the slave into a child, the distant is brought near and made the possessor of a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Now since the Gospel is so glorious, both as a system of divine truth as well as a saving power, every doctrine is or should be dear to every believer, and he should speak well of all its holy truths. The Saviour said, concerning Himself, "I am the bread of life, and he that eateth Me even he shall live by Me." But the bread of life is presented to us in many different forms, or Gospel facts. There are many glorious doctrines of grace, each of which might be considered as a loaf of heavenly bread, representing

something in connection with the person of Christ or His work for sinners or in their hearts. We have this evening to contemplate two or three of the doctrines of Christ. Our God seated on His throne, says, "I will work, and who shall let it!" thus challenging the universe of minds and worlds which revolve around Him; and thus seated He also says, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." Let us by the Spirit's assistance first contemplate *the two facts mentioned*; and secondly, *the invitation given*. Beginning at the bottom of the text we read, "I have redeemed thee;" and then, looking at the former part of it, we read, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." The two facts, therefore, are *eternal redemption and Divine forgiveness*; and the *invitation given*, is "Return unto Me."

In the first place, let us look at the *two facts asserted*. God has redeemed His people and blotted out their sins. Now what shall be said about redemption? In the first place; redemption precedes pardon, in the covenant of grace, and also in relation to the experience of God's people; and therefore although it occurs at the bottom of my text to-night, I have placed it first in my sermon. We shall say and feel much concerning it when we are before the throne. We read that the angels of God, and His other creatures generally, sang the song of creation; and we also read, that a multitude will be found in heaven who will be eternally employed in singing the song of redeeming love,—“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” We now stand upon the shore of redemption, but in heaven we shall find ourselves in its deep and boundless sea. We now contemplate redemption as it were at a distance, but in the Redeemer's presence, we shall be immersed in all its holy pleasures. I have tasted, if I am not deceived, the fact that Jesus and His blood are precious and powerful; but we are not yet capable of feeling very deeply or of thinking very profoundly. Our experience in the present life must necessarily be very shallow; for our powers are exceedingly limited, and our thoughts even when they are somewhat free are always few and most uncertain. We are, however, through redeeming love, going into the state of the blest, where the thoughts and the mind will be perfect, where the feelings of the heart will swell into holy joy and remain in perfection for ever. Then these eyes, which have been redeemed, will be fixed upon the glories of the dear Redeemer as He is seated upon the throne of infinite majesty, and we shall see enough in His glorious person to engage our thoughts and feelings, our affections and all our powers and faculties for ever. It is a privilege and a mercy to see redemption extending into eternity, as we stand as it were upon its gracious shore. Let us try to direct our attention for a few minutes to two or three facts in connection with this glorious theme: “Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.”

I notice in the first place, that redemption demonstrates, expresses and makes a way for the everlasting love of God. Did Christ redeem us from all evil, in order that he might love us, in order that our names

might be written in heaven, in order that he might become one with us, and we one with Him? Oh love is before all things, and Christ's blood expresses the infinite love of God. Our names were in the book, and therefore He redeemed us. Our persons were loved with an eternal love, and therefore Jesus would bleed for us. We were secretly and in covenant one with the dear Redeemer, and therefore heaven could not hold Him. The bosom of His Father could not retain Him. He would not remain seated upon the throne of ease, pleasure and glory. Since His bride was lost, and His members were ruined, and the people whose names were registered to everlasting life were fallen, and had become guilty and corrupt, He would redeem them to God. He assumed our nature, He came into our world. He took our place, He died in our room and stead and obtained eternal redemption for us. My dear friends, the blood of Jesus Christ was seen by scores, and perhaps hundreds of persons, in the days of His flesh. The soldier that pierced His side saw it; the man or the men that nailed His hands and feet to the accursed tree, saw it; the wretches that smote Him when He was before Pilate saw it on His heavenly face; Pilate saw it, when he ordered Him to be scourged, and the people in the court saw it; but that blood did not affect Pilate, nor soften his heart; it did not sanctify the soldier that pierced Him, neither did it at all subdue or conquer the enmity of the wretches that smote Him—and why? They had no perception of the love that prompted Him to shed that blood. And, if we literally saw Christ now on the tree, and the nails in His hands and feet, and the wound in His side, and the water and the blood flowing forth and the crown of thorns on His head, and His temples torn and bleeding we should be unmoved, unsanctified, and unblest, unless we sat beneath the spiritual shadow of that dying, loving Redeemer, and said with Paul This is the result of the fact that “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” There is love with Christ's sufferings; and if there is no sense of this in connection with His blood, no influence is felt by the immortal mind of the sinner.

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

If I were an eloquent speaker and could command the most powerful and wonderful language, so as to enable me to depict and pourtray the physical agonies and sufferings of Jesus, I might perhaps draw tears from your eyes, and excite your natural feelings; but all that would be nature and not grace; it would be carnal and not spiritual. It is the love of the Saviour, the infinite affection of the great God in the broken bleeding heart of Emmanuel that melts the heart and fills the eyes, and brings us down into the dust of self-abasement and adoration before the great and glorious Redeemer. “I have redeemed thee;” and by redeeming he has expressed His eternal love towards us. And let it be remembered too, that the redeeming blood of Jesus not only demonstrated and expressed the love of God, but that it made a way for that love to flow. The mediation of Jesus and the wounds of God's dear Son, are, so to speak, the channel in which the heart of Deity flows; and the glorious medium

through which His everlasting love enters sinners' hearts. Oh how sweet to sit with the volume of heaven open before one's eyes, and behold in the Scriptures of eternal truth, the wounded Son of God ! It is whilst thus beholding Christ that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. I do wonder what many professors of religion obtain their comfort and consolation from. What it is in connection with their religion that humbles and abases them, before the eternal God. Many deny, not the existence of the Saviour's blood, but its necessity or its virtue. They tell us that He died as an example, and not as a sacrifice for sin. We admit that Jesus died as an example, and to confirm the truth of the Gospel which He had preached ; but He also gave himself a ransom for us, and died in our room, place, and stead. "By His one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." As a guilty creature, I can find no comfort apart from the agonies of my Lord ; and as a filthy sinner, I can find no ground to build a hope upon apart from the fountain of a Saviour's blood.

Let us not forget that the redeeming work of Jesus explains all the evils from which He has redeemed us, nor can they be fully explained in any other way. You may talk about sin, and the curse of the law, and the severity of Divine Justice,—those facts cannot be seen or correctly and adequately understood unless you know something of the sufferings of the dear Redeemer. Do you want to know what sin is ? You must go to Gethsemane and to Calvary. There see how black and awful is the nature of sin. Behold the incarnate Redeemer fallen in Gethsemane, and speak lightly of sin if you can. Hear the Son of God, that made the worlds, and upholds them by the word of His power, groaning on the ground. See the Son of God in the garden covered with sweat and blood, and ask what it all meant ; and the answer is ready at once—He suffered for sin. How easily I use the word suffer ! You hear, and have heard it thousands of times—He suffered for sin ; but oh, I wish I could lead your minds into His sufferings. He suffered for crimes and for guilt that He Himself did not commit nor contract, for abominations, which we ourselves gave birth to, and for evils which were hideous and hateful. "The Lord hath made to meet on Him the iniquities of us all."

See the consequences of sin also in the suffering Saviour. The cross of Jesus is the great expositor of sin, of love, of law, of justice, and of eternal salvation. Sometimes preachers addressing their hearers, desiring I suppose to save their souls, by creating a measure of alarm and terror on their minds, have been heard to say, "If you could look down into the pit, and see the flames of hell, and hear the groans of the lost, you would at once yield to Jesus, and give your hearts to Him." My friends, the consequences of sin are felt in hell, and might be seen in some measure if we could look into the pit ; but for these purposes it is not necessary that we should either ascend to heaven, or descend into the deep ; "for the word is nigh unto thee." Jesus, the mighty God became incarnate, and died for sin ; and in that behold the awful hell that sin merited and sinners deserved : for the cross of Christ explains it all. Do you desire to see the nature of God's law ? Read it in the great Law-

fulfiller. Do you want to learn how severe Divine Justice is? I would not ask you to look at the judgments of God on nations, on individuals, or on the lost and ruined. I would ask you as the saints of God to go to Calvary and see Justice with her unsheathed sword all flaming and red, and the innumerable curses of a broken law, all around the innocent person of Jesus, and then reflect not only on what sin must be, but on the severity and inflexibility of the eternal justice and righteousness of God. "I have redeemed thee."

Redemption is perfect and complete. It covers the whole ground ; hence, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Redemption covers every sin, and removes every stain and trace of guilt. It is as broad and as long as the law. It is high enough to reach Jehovah's throne, and vast enough to comprehend and honour all the moral government and attributes and perfections of God. It is finished, it is settled ; and our souls approve it well. Our dear Lord became capable of doing this work, and it is very blessed to reflect upon the manner in which it was done. Had He not been human and Divine, he could not have redeemed sinners. He took our nature, the nature that fell ; the nature that was beloved ; the nature that was guilty ; the nature that was to be redeemed ; the nature that was to be taken to heaven and immersed in God's glory for ever ; that nature He assumed and appeared in ; and as every priest must have somewhat to offer, it was necessary that our High Priest should have an offering to present. There was his spotless humanity. He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. That holy humanity was inseparably and mysteriously connected with His Godhead. This man bled, and suffered and died, and the Deity in the man gave an almighty force and virtue and glory to the blood that He shed. "Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee." As the text is a large one, and the subject is very deep, we can only remain a few minutes here and there upon the surface ; and therefore I will pass on.

Notice the second fact—pardon. "I have redeemed thee;" therefore "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." My dear friends, we have to thank God for the figurative language He has been pleased to use in mercy and condescension to the shallowness of our minds and the feebleness of our understandings. The Bible is full of figures which are spiritual and divine. If God had not represented Himself and divine facts in pictorial forms, we could not have well understood Him ; and therefore it is said in the text, not I have pardoned thee, I have forgiven thee, but "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Is there not a difference between transgression and sin? I do not know that there is as to their nature. Perhaps there may be some difference as to their depth or measure. Some sinners have apprehensions of the enormity of their sins much wider and more comprehensive than those of others. But no matter what your conceptions of sin may be, or what may be your doubts and fears on account of it, there is grace enough in God to forgive all, and depth enough in the Saviour's atonement to drown all, and power enough in the Sun of Righteousness to blot all out, whether they appear as clouds thick

or thin. Now sin is here compared to clouds and thick clouds. What is a cloud but a collection of vapours drawn up from the earth and the sea towards heaven, intercepting the light of the sun. How full of significance is this language, and how sweetly it attracts our thoughts! Are not clouds or exhalations from the earth figures of our sins and guilt, which have risen towards the throne of God, and intervene between Him and guilty man, concealing Jehovah from their view? God seems to be surrounded with the clouds of our guilt, so that our prayer is shut out, and we feel as if it could not pass through. Clouds sometimes portend a storm, and hence persons who are weather-wise, looking up, say "a storm, a tempest is coming;" so the clouds of our sins, having ascended towards God, threaten us with a storm. Those clouds are charged with curses, and if they are not blotted out or removed, they will break with curses on our heads. A cloud casts a shadow, greater or less according to its size and shape; and the cloud of your sins casts a shadow—oh how thick, and dark! upon your guilty soul and mine. The Scripture speaks of persons sitting in the shadow of death. Do you know what that shadow is? Have you any definite ideas concerning it? Beloved friends, if the clouds of sin are blotted out, the shadow of death disappears, but if they remain between you and God, you are sitting under it; and living and dying in it, you will pass into the dense darkness of eternal death and destruction. But, "Behold, I have, blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins."

How are clouds blotted out? They are dispersed by two powers, the wind or the sun, or by both. And this will illustrate the pardoning acts of our God. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions. Who speaks? Our Lord, as the Sun of eternal Righteousness. If the whole visible heavens were covered with blackness, there is power enough in the sun to clear it all away; and sometimes, the whole of it disappears in a few minutes or even moments. Two figures are used to illustrate pardon in the Word of God; first, the blotting out of sin by the sun; and secondly, the drowning of sin in the sea. Here forgiveness is represented as a blotting out of sin as the sun blots out a cloud, and elsewhere it is said, "Thou hast cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Now there is depth and room enough in the sea to receive and drown a mountain as well as a mole-hill. The sea can cover one as easily as the other. And a cloud may be thick and large; but the mighty sun or irresistible wind disperses it effectually. The sinner may have lived before effectual calling, a moral life, and may not be chargeable with gross immorality, the Sun of Righteousness blots all out—thick or thin, large or small. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions. And what then? When the cloud is parted, and dissipated, it will never re-appear. I wish I could impress this upon your mind; others may appear in the same place, and other exhalations may arise, they are blotted out again. So, after a sense of pardon, other sins may follow; and what then?

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee,
Or who hath grace so rich and free!"

My daily sins I want blotted out at night; my nightly sins I want

blotted out in the morning. O that God would say to us,—“I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions!” Sometimes the clouds are blotted out and scattered by the wind ; and if the Sun of Righteousness disperses sin and guilt meritoriously, oh how sweetly does the testimony of the Holy Spirit scatter them by power, applying the words of my text,—“I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions. Under this word we would retire to rest every night, and betake ourselves to our daily duties every morning, and then finally enter the solemnities of death; for this only can give us courage when that hand is upon us from which we shall be unable to release ourselves.

In the second place, a word should be said on the order of these blessings. Redemption, first and then pardon ; for redemption by Christ justifies God in pardoning the guilty. I believe that God would not be justified in pardoning sin without blood ; for “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Blood therefore was demanded, not common ordinary blood, and not extraordinary blood offered in an ordinary manner ; but the offering was to be unusual, extraordinary and singular. The person redeeming, the blood that was shed the manner in which it flowed, the circumstances under which it was shed, all were to be extraordinary. The blood was to be invaluable, rich enough for God himself ; and such was the precious blood of Christ. It was to be shed voluntarily : and Christ laid down His life for the sheep : no man took it from Him, for He laid it down of Himself. This invaluable blood, voluntarily shed, was to be placed before God Himself, and Christ has entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us ; and thus God holding the atonement, pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin. The atonement calls for pardon, Jesus at God’s right hand demands it, and God will not withhold it. I have redeemed thee ; and therefore I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions and thy sins.

Thirdly, this fact declared by God. He says, “I have blotted out thy sins,” and “I have redeemed thee.” He avowed this before the world began in connection with the covenant of grace. Having loved the people, and provided a Mediator and Redeemer for them, and settled the great scheme of an atonement for sin to His own infinite satisfaction and delight, He came forth as a promiser, saying, “I will forgive their sins and transgressions, and remember them no more.” And this precious fact was avowed by Jesus on the tree. Sin was upon Him whose worth and power were infinite; therefore it gradually disappeared and when the last stain was gone, and the last spark was quenched, and the last item of the bill was paid, he cried with a loud voice as our conquering Redeemer—“It is finished;” and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. And this great fact is declared in the Gospel, and it is this that makes the Gospel what it is. The Gospel is not, as we said at the commencement, a merely moral book ; it is full of spiritual facts, and the stream of a Saviour’s blood flows from Genesis to Revelation, and the atonement of the Son of God constitutes the Bible most important to God, and precious to man. If this stream could be dried up or cease to flow, the Bible would have no force or influence for saving good upon the immortal mind. I have done it. And a revelation from heaven to that effect being necessary,

the gospel proclaims the good news from God. I have blotted out thy sins for ever. The next point is in the opinion of some the most important of all. Say to my soul, I am thy salvation. Let Thy Spirit bear witness with my spirit that I am a child of God, and that my sins and guilt are for ever pardoned. If it be thought that I advert to myself rather too frequently. I do so because that period of my spiritual existence can never, I think, be forgotten. We cannot forget the wondrous hour when God said to us, "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee." Then the storm that threatened, disappeared, and was feared no more ; for a holy calm and serenity prevailed. Then God appeared to us as our God. He loved us, and He smiled, and our hearts overflowed with love to Him. One thought more. This changes everything in relation to the pardoned sinner. Changes everything, you say ! Does it change sin ? Does it change the sinner ? Does it change the law ? Does it not, my friends, change the dispensations of God ? He does not deal with pardoned sinners in the common and ordinary manner ; for their afflictions are not judgments or penal woes. Having blotted out your sins, and redeemed you, He has laid aside the sword, and taken the rod which is now all He holds to correct and chastise his people : His sword is for your enemies, and not for you. Having blotted out your sins, He can never curse you. See whether your sins are pardoned. I do not say, Get a pardon ; but may the Spirit bear witness with your hearts that Jesus died for you : for then you may go on singing through this waste, howling wilderness to your heavenly home. There will be fires to go through, but not fires of wrath. There will be waters to pass through, but they can never drown you, and heavy blows may fall upon you, but they will be from your Father's hand. Then death itself is changed. The immortal Watts' words will always be upon the minds of God's people on the earth :

"If sin be pardoned, I'm secure ;
 Death has no sting beside :
 The law gave sin its damning power,
 But Christ my Ransom died."

I have redeemed thee, and blotted out thy sins. Redemption is the ground of God's claim. The removal of sin makes a way for the saint ; and then God says, "Return unto Me." I merely advert to that now not having time to go into it. Return unto Me ; for, having redeemed thee, I have a right to possess thee. I have blotted out thy sins, and cleared the way, therefore return unto me. I thought I would have said a word on this subject in relation to God, and also in relation to His people. To whom are we invited to return ? God says, to Me. In what aspects does He appear ? Return unto Me, your everlasting Rest ; walk, and work and toil in a legal spirit no longer. Return unto Me, and I will give you rest. Return unto me, your Refuge, your God, your All. Amen.

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BOTH ONE IN CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

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

"And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."—Heb. xi. 39, 40.

THE Apostle assured the church at Corinth that he was "determined to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." That feeling influenced him in Ephesus, in Thessalonica, and in Philippi, and it prevailed in him also as a spiritual and heavenly writer. When he composed this Epistle he was divinely inspired, and felt that he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit; therefore in writing this letter he knew nothing but Christ, and Him crucified. He had very great and important objects in view. In the first place, it was his intention to establish the greatness, glory and divinity of the Saviour. In the second place, he determined to establish the superiority and perfection of His work, and in the third place he resolved to shew the deep and eternal importance of faith. We have therefore before us faith and its great object, or rather objects. The faith of God's beloved people centres in the person of the Saviour, and the believing heart rests upon his finished work. For the purpose of establishing the infinite dignity and glory of the Son of God, the Apostle shows us in the first chapter that Christ was higher than angels; in the second, that He was higher than Adam when He stood in a state of innocence and purity in Eden; in the third, that officially Christ was higher than Moses; in the fourth, that He was higher than Joshua, who was the conqueror and saviour of Israel; in the fifth and seventh chapters he exalts Christ above Aaron and the whole of the Levitical priesthood, and introduces that mysterious character Melchisedec, who was king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. Having established the personal dignity of the Saviour, and His official greatness and glory he proceeded in the second place to set forth the character, greatness and glory of his sacrifice—this we have in the seventh, ninth and tenth chapters of this most important epistle. And inasmuch as it required a very large measure of merciful and mysterious power to wean the minds of the Hebrews from their original state of things, he proceeded in the latter part of the tenth chapter to set forth the necessity, the nature, and the importance of faith. In the latter part of this chapter we have some important words of exhortation. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. You profess to have been called by grace, to have accepted the Messiahship of Jesus, and to be resting upon His sacrifice; for this you have already been afflicted, and as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ you will yet be persecuted. Do not, however, cast away your confidence, which hath

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great recompense of reward; for ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise: for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. I trust you are righteous persons, and believers in Jesus Christ; and the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Having introduced in this manner the grace of faith, and dwelt upon its properties, qualities, and powers, he proceeds in the chapter out of which I have taken my text this morning, to give us examples of its strength, and triumphs, and glories. It is not necessary that I should go through the chapter, having read it at the commencement of the service. Having introduced a considerable number of names, and brought before us a long list of believing heroes, he says, "All these having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

I will endeavour in the first place to *illustrate the subject before us*, and in the second place, to *offer a few reflections upon it*.

In the first place, let me endeavour to *illustrate the interesting subject indicated in our text*; and in doing so, you observe we shall have to direct our attention to four or five points. In the first place, certain persons are mentioned; then it is said concerning them, that they were well reported of, or that they obtained a good report through faith; thirdly, that they did not receive the promise; fourthly, God had foreseen or provided something better for us than was provided for them, and that for this reason that they without us should not be made perfect.

A few thoughts on the persons referred to, "And these all." I will not trouble you with many observations upon what writers have said concerning these persons. Some writers limit the text to the names which are mentioned just previously, Gideon, and Barak, and Samson and Jephthah, and David, and Samuel, and the prophets; but inasmuch as these two verses form part of the whole subject, I apprehend that by the persons referred to here we are to understand all that were mentioned in the chapter. The first name that is mentioned is Abel, the second Enoch, and the third, Noah. "And these all obtained a good report through faith." We have, therefore, a very considerable number of believers extending from Abel, the first martyr, to the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. One believer followed another, trusting in the same promised Saviour, and each succeeding saint resembled the others that preceded him, and notwithstanding the large number that appeared upon the scene in the Old Testament dispensation, the object of their faith was one and the same. If types were presented, they directed them to the Lord. If promises were given, they related to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. If typical persons, times, places, or things were offered, they all terminated in and received their importance and their meaning from the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore Abel, who stood at the altar, and saw his sacrifice consumed with fire, looked through his lamb as it was burning to the Lamb of God, whom the Father had promised. Enoch, we learn, had this testimony, that he pleased God, and that he walked with Him, and we are sure that no guilty sinner can ever walk with God apart from atoning blood, or converse with Him with delight apart from the Mediator; and, therefore, Enoch in walking with God leaned upon the Saviour,

and rested upon the sacrifice that was to be made for sin; for Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We learn also that Noah had this testimony, that God saw him righteous in his generation, and that God accepted both His person and His offering. Well, all the Old Testament saints looked forward to the Saviour; for God had given them a promise, and the Promiser was divinely and immutably faithful. The removal of sin was absolutely necessary, and that could not possibly take place without the interposition of a great and a glorious Saviour. "And these all obtained a good report through faith." You observe, my friends, that some of them were patriarchs; others were judges; others were kings; others were prophets; whilst a large number, how many I know not, were martyrs or witnesses for God; and the Apostle describes the sorrows they experienced, and the terrible scenes through which they passed. They experienced "bonds and imprisonments; they were stoned; they were sawn asunder; they were tempted, were slain by the sword; they wandered about in sheep's skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy." They were worthy of a better world, at least so the Saviour expresses Himself. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Persecution has always raged in the church of God, and very much blood was shed in connection with God's dear people under the former dispensation. Well, these all obtained a good report through faith.

I notice from this, in the first place, that God has always had a people in the world. There has never been a period when there were no saints on the earth, and I do not think there has ever been a generation that did not contain some of the children of God, and hence grace reigns from age to age, from year to year, or from one generation to another. Grace reigned and triumphed in the deliverance of thousands, and perhaps millions, before the advent of the blessed Christ of God, and it is a very interesting fact that Old Testament saints died on the bosom of the promised Messiah or Christ, and that as their ransomed and regenerated spirits entered heaven; Jesus Christ passed His word for their eternal justification; and hence Christ is said to have been the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Justice admitted Abel into heaven, because Christ was responsible for the payment of his debts; and justice admitted Enoch body and soul into heaven, because he was in Christ, who was responsible for his eternal salvation. Many thousands or millions were at rest when the Saviour left His glory for this world. Many were before the throne whose debts were not actually paid when they entered heaven, and therefore Christ, descending from His Father's bosom, said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." And when justice met the Saviour on the wondrous hill of Calvary she brought the bond with her, and the great work of payment took place. The dear Redeemer groaned, and sweat, and suffered, and bled, and gradually "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;" and having paid the very last item, and drained dry the cup of wrath, He bowed His head in death, and yielded up the ghost, saying triumphantly, "It is finished." Then the debts of all in heaven were paid, and the glorification of Old Testament saints was divinely justified. Then also countless millions of sinners, reaching down to the end of time, were interested in the sorrows and sufferings of Him who bowed His

head, and said, "It is finished." Dearly beloved hearers, were you and I there? That is to say, were you and I in the mind of the Sufferer? Were your sins and mine imputed to Him? And when it is said, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all," were *our* iniquities included in the wondrous act? Did He expiate *our* guilt? Did He put away *our* sin by the sacrifice of Himself? I remember the time when that to me was an all-absorbing and an immensely important question. I knew I was a sinner, and groaned beneath the awful fact that I was guilty in the sight of God, and never since have I prayed more intensely for pardon, or for an application of the Saviour's blood, saying, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Well, God has always had saints on the earth, who have always dealt with Him in connection with His word of promise. How do you deal with God, the object of your faith? How does the believer generally deal with Him? For religion is something more than notion; something must be known and felt. The Christian deals with *Christ*, and the godly man deals with *God*, and the believer deals with the great *object of his faith*. By the Spirit, through the medium of the word, we have dealings with the God of heaven, and through promises which have been fulfilled in a great measure, while Old Testament saints dealt with Him, through promises which were not then accomplished. "Abraham desired to see my day, and he saw it [in the distant future,] and was glad." He saw Christ's day through the unfulfilled promise, and so dealt with the Saviour. Our Lord has now been on earth, that promise has been fulfilled, and we, as believers, deal with the same blessed Emmanuel, through the word which has been performed.

Then, again, the text teaches us that the saints of God have always been a persecuted people. "And if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus he must suffer persecution." God forbid that the spirit of persecution should rage and prevail again; yet, if saints were more like their Lord, if true believers came out more thoroughly from the world, and bore testimony more courageously to the greatness and glory of the Redeemer, would not a larger measure of persecution prevail than is experienced in the present day. My beloved friends, much is concealed here and there, and there is a vast amount of worldliness in connection with the church of God. If we more thoroughly resembled our Lord; if we came out from the world, and were more decidedly separated from it, would it not look down upon us with deep hatred and contempt? The spirit that burnt martyrs years and ages ago, would, if it might, show itself in terrible forms again. However, the people of God have always dealt with their God by faith, and have always been a persecuted people.

In the second place, *These all obtained a good report through faith.* Not through works. They were all of them believers in Christ, but not workers for salvation. They were gracious persons, and, practically considered, they were zealous for good works. Their works were good, but they arose out of the principle of faith which God had implanted in their hearts; therefore, they obtained a good report, not through works, but through faith. They worked not for life, but from it. They worked not for salvation, but because they were saved. They worked not in order that they might become interested in the favour of heaven, but because they were interested therein. They did not work to constitute them-

selves children, but because they were children. They worked not in order that God might write their names in heaven, but because their names were written there. All their hope was in the Saviour, although He had not then appeared. All their trust was in the promised blood, although that blood had not been shed; and since Abraham believed with a heavenly faith that was counted to him for righteousness—not his faith, not his act of believing, but the object of his faith, or the great Person and work in whom and in which he believed. It is not the act of faith that justifies, but the obedience of our Lord, even the robe of righteousness itself, cast upon the sinner, and received by faith, that justifies him in the sight of a holy and heart-searching God. They received a good report through faith. First, they received it from God. God testified, it is said in the early part of the chapter. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.” Here was a good report received from heaven and from God by Abel, the first saint that entered heaven. O what a blessing it is to receive an intimation of this fact from the throne of God. Abel’s heart must have leaped for joy; faith opened a glorious prospect before him. The God to whom he offered the sacrifice assured him that he was a righteous man. He received through faith a good report from the God in whom he believed, and the true believer now needs to hear the voice of God; for the ministry of God the Holy Spirit is essential to real comfort and consolation. Abel would have been miserable before the smoking lamb had he not received an intimation from God that he was righteous. And then, as to Enoch, he had this testimony, that he pleased God,—a good report from God Himself. They received through faith a good report from man, also; for the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain. Hence Laban said to Jacob, “I have learned by experience that God hath blessed me for thy sake.” The world sees something very peculiar and mysterious in the saints. They “gaze and admire, yet hate the change.” The same may be said of Samuel, and of other Old Testament saints, who received a good report from men. But they received a good report from their own consciences likewise. You say, that is a dangerous position, since “he that trusteth his own heart is a fool.” But is it not said that the blood of Jesus purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living and true God? And we read of such a thing as “a good conscience.” I take it that a good conscience is a living, a holy, a blood-washed conscience, and a conscience that is washed with the blood of Jesus, and filled with the truth of God, bears testimony to the mercy and the grace of God, and rejoices in the fact that God accepts us and approves of us in Christ. “A good name,” it is said, “is better than precious ointment;” and it is a mercy to be written in heaven, to be approved by God, and to have a good name in connection with the church of God. Money can neither buy nor retain a good name, which is the result of faith in God and the outcome of the reign of divine grace; and if we possess this good name, we are debtors to undeserved mercy and favour.

In the third place, they *received not the promise*, that is, they received not the fulfilment of it. They had the promise of a Saviour. The Seed of the woman was promised, but the thing promised was not actually

seen or embraced. Let me call your attention to what took place in the temple, when the dear Redeemer was taken as an infant, and presented to God. Good old Simeon took the child up in his arms, and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Abel, Enoch, Methuselah, and the rest of them, obtained a promise of the Messiah; but the Messiah in the flesh they saw not in their days. But Simeon saw and embraced Him. John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." They had Him in type: we have the great anti-type. They had Him in figure: we have Him in fact. They saw Him in the distant future, but

"My faith looks *back* to see,
The burdens Thou did'st bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

They received not the promise.

God having promised some better thing for us. Something better than the figure, better than the shadow, better than the type of the former dispensation. "The law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did: by the which we draw nigh unto God." And what was the better thing God had promised for us. The children of Israel, under the former dispensation, had a good priest: we have a better one. They had a good altar, for it was built according to divine directions: we have a better one. Their sacrifices were good, because they were divinely appointed and divinely accepted: the Sacrifice on which we lean is infinitely better; so that we have a better hope, a better Priest, a better altar, a better covenant, a better sacrifice, and a better dispensation. And this is the principal idea of the apostle. "God, having provided something better for us:" a better dispensation, a better covenant, with better promises, a better Priest, and better blood.

In the last place, the reason assigned, *That they without us should not be made perfect.* That is to say, the Old Testament saints could not be made perfect without the better thing which we possess, and which God had provided for us. They were not made perfect by the type, but by the anti-type, which is infinitely better. They were not made perfect by the figure, but by the fact which belonged, in a special manner, to the present dispensation; and without this better thing, which *we* now possess, under the gospel, *they* were not made perfect. Not only so, the Jewish and the Gentile church are one; for all true believers, of all periods, are united in Christ. The Jewish church cannot be perfect of itself, without the Gentile Church. The Gentile church cannot be perfect without the Jewish; for both the Jew and Gentile are perfect in the Lord. Jesus is the cornerstone that unites the former dispensation with the present one, the former church with the present one, and the former privileges with those at present enjoyed. All are one in the Lord Jesus; and Christ and His sacrifice was the better thing provided by God for us; therefore their dispensation could not be perfect without ours, and they in heaven cannot be perfect without us. The whole church of God is but one. Every stone must be there, every branch of the vine must be there, every member of the body must be there, every saint of God must be in his proper place, for if one

be missing, the church will be incomplete and imperfect. That they without us should not be made perfect.

Now let me, in the second place, endeavour to offer *a few reflections upon the subject*. We learn from the subject that faith in Christ is absolutely necessary, and that it is given by God on the very ground of the provision He has made. The provision made for sinners necessitates the existence of faith; and since no sinner can give himself faith, for it is the gift of God, the faith which the believer possesses grows out of the early provision which God made for him. If God had not provided a Saviour for you, He would never have given you faith. If he had not provided a salvation for you, He would never have constituted you a believer. A believer is convinced of sin; he kneels as a penitent before God, into whose presence he is brought, and all those exercises of the mind arises out of faith. Do they not? Let me be plain here, and be well understood. Is conviction of sin the offspring of faith? If you did not believe, you would not feel convinced you were a sinner. Is kneeling before the throne of God the offspring of faith? It is so. Then the penitent petitioner is a believer. God has given him faith, and made him a believer, and He has done this because He has laid up salvation and life for him in His dear Son. My dear friends, your faith comes out of what God has provided for you; it arises out of the fact that He intends to give you Himself and everlasting life. The scope of faith is very wide and large. The grace of hope relates to the future, and not to the past. Hope looks into the future, and expects the fulfilment of all the promises God has made. Faith is retrospective, as well as prospective. It goes back into eternity, and forward into the future happiness and glory of God's dear people. Faith stands, if I may so express myself, in Christ, between the two eternities, and contemplates God's ancient purposes in the past, and the fulfilment of those purposes in the distant future, and thus faith arises out of the good things which God has provided for us. Faith is the hand that takes this good thing, the eye that observes this good thing, and the arm that clings to the Saviour, and holds Him fast. The necessity of faith thus arises out of what God has provided for His dear people.

Secondly, *the fulfilment of God's promises is progressive*, and hence His going forth is prepared as the morning. First, in the Garden of Eden one promise was given; and then God gave another, and another, and another. Then He gave types one after another, until at length the day broke, and the Dayspring from on high visited us. It was twilight before, not broad daylight; but when the Saviour had put away sin, by the sacrifice of Himself, there was a verification and illustration of the text, "Now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." How that Scripture is battered about! almost everybody that preaches, takes it sometime or other for his text, and tells you that God's day of salvation consists of four-and-twenty hours. Why, God's day of salvation extends from the death of Christ to His second coming. A long day, the day of the Saviour's power. When Adam fell, darkness covered the earth. God placed, if I may so speak, a star into the heavens, over this dark world,—the first promise; a second star, and a third, and a fourth, and then thousands appeared, and the moon shone brightly in Solomon's time; but it was night, and not the day of salvation. At length Jesus came,—the Sun of Righteousness arose, and

the presence and sacrifice of the Saviour put an end to night, and brought in the great Gospel day ; and then was fulfilled the word of the prophet, " Now is the accepted time." The types and ceremonies could never put away sin. The bullocks, and goats, and pigeons which were offered, never removed transgression. Christ has done it, done it well, and done it for ever ; and now, therefore, is the accepted time. The faith of God's people, and the fulfilment of His purposes, are gradual. All His operations are progressive in individual saints, and in His whole Church collectively. There is a growth in grace. I do not know how to explain the mystery, but the church is compared to a temple, the stones of which are said to be living stones. Each stone possesses grace and life, and it grows ; and the whole temple also grows, and gradually rises higher and higher, and will continue to rise, until the top-stone is brought home with shoutings, crying grace, grace unto it. Oh, what a scene will be presented to assembled worlds, when the mystery of God is completed, when Old Testament believers, and New Testament saints, are all at home in that one happy, blessed, and eternal rest, which God has prepared for us. Man is capable of producing that which is wonderful, and some of his works are truly so. Contemplate the work of God. Here is His workmanship ! And when the Holy Ghost has completed His work in you, and you are changed into the image of God's dear Son, you will be the perfection of beauty. " All over glorious is our Lord," and all over glorious His church will also be. The work of God in fulfilling the promises is progressive.

Our privilege. God having provided some better thing for us. That dispensation was good ; this is better ; and heaven is best of all. We stand between two dispensations. Ours is better than the former one, but not so good as that where we shall see the Saviour as He is, without a veil between. Our privileges are superior.

Then, lastly, the *glorification of New Testament saints*. Their glorification is essential to the perfection of God's church. They without us will not be made perfect. What then ? We are hoping to join them. Although I should not be scriptural in speaking of hope in heaven, yet they are expecting our arrival there. Their bliss is full, their joys are deep, and their pleasures are divine. They have not, however, yet received their bodies. They will come with the Lord, when He comes the second time ; for all His saints will be with Him. His voice will break up the tombs, their bodies shall rise. We New Testament saints shall not prevent, or go before, them that are asleep. When their bodies are raised, and re-united to their spirits, then the living shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and Jewish believers and Gentile saints, united together in Christ, shall all be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we all be for ever with the Lord. Since, therefore, we shall be united to them, and they are expecting to be united to us, the perfection, the completeness, and the consummation of all cannot take place until all God's church are with their Lord in heaven. Amen.

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SPIRITUAL LIFE AND ITS SUSTENANCE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9th, 1881.

"The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."—John vi. 52, 53.

"NEVER man spake like this man." This testimony came on a particular occasion from persons who probably were or had been enemies to the Saviour. They saw His person, they formed a part of the congregation that he had addressed, and having listened to the discourse which He delivered, and considered the extraordinary manner in which He spake, they were altogether unnerved, and their hand could not perform their enterprise; therefore, although they were sent to apprehend the Lord, they returned to the Jewish Sanhedrim without Him. And when the magistrates saw that they had not made Christ a prisoner, they angrily said, "Why have ye not brought him?" And they at once replied, "Never man spake like this man."

We may take these words of the officers, and apply them generally to the Lord Jesus. He was a Teacher sent from God, and was perfectly acquainted with all the thoughts, and purposes, and intentions of His heavenly Father; and coming from the bosom of eternal love as the great heavenly Prophet, He revealed to the world, but more especially to His people, the eternal things of God. And since all the deep things of God centred in Himself, it was necessary that Christ should preach His own person, and character, and fulness. Hence the Jews frequently complained that He bore witness of and concerning Himself. Since Christ came to introduce the gospel, and He was, and is, and ever will be, its sum and substance, He could not possibly preach that gospel without preaching His own great self; and hence He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life:" and John says, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." When ordinary ministers preach, they point at the person of their Lord and Master, and try to set forth, and describe His person, His character, and His worth, for they preach not themselves unto the people, but Christ Jesus the Lord. When Jesus, however, preached, He referred to Himself, and setting forth the way to heaven, He said, "I am the Way;" when speaking of life, He said, "I am the Life;" and when speaking of the truth, He said, "I am the Truth." "I am *the* Way, *the* Truth, and *the* Life." He always represented Himself as the perfect embodiment of all grace and life, and as all and in all to His people; hence He said, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." I give the water of life, and am the true Rock, from which it flows. And contemplating in this chapter the manna which fell from heaven, and which

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the children of Israel seem to have supposed Moses gave them; He said, "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven: for the true Bread is He which came down from heaven." This seemingly perplexed and puzzled His numerous hearers, and they said, "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it that He saith, I came down from heaven?" Oh, there are mysteries in the Saviour's person which will never be fathomed, and it is not perhaps very surprising that the unregenerate Jews did not understand the Lord. Jesus said, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him; and then He proceeded to set forth the exercises and the triumphs of faith, presenting Himself as its great object. The Jews strove among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."

Let us look at a few points which the text holds out; and first, that it indicates *the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ*: for elsewhere He says, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." The assumption of our nature by the Son of God is a glorious fact, and a great mystery; hence, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Let us tarry here a minute to look at this heavenly bread, and what it is composed of. Our thoughts cannot go far into this mystery; for the powers of our minds are limited, and our experience of this great truth is exceedingly shallow: still we may consider a few things in this heavenly food, which is—the flesh and the blood of our Lord.

I notice in the first place, that *our Lord assumed the whole of our nature*. Let us give our attention for a few minutes to the fact that the Lord Jesus possesses not merely a body, not a soul merely, but a human body and a human soul, perfect manhood, the whole of our nature. And why has He assumed the whole? Because the whole had sinned, and He came to redeem and rescue all that was lost. The whole of our nature was beloved by God in heaven, and the whole is to be perfected and glorified before the throne of God. We infer the certainty of the resurrection of the body, from the fact that our Lord assumed a human body, and we infer also the certainty of the perfection of our nature in heaven from the fact that our Lord assumed a perfect body with all its parts, and a perfect soul with all its powers and its faculties. Is it not encouraging to you to know, and do you not sometimes dwell upon the fact with pleasure, that your God possesses a human mind, and all the powers and affections of a real man. Mark, I shall show, or try to show, presently, that the man is inseparably connected with the God. Still you are not to forget that your Lord is a true man, and that human nature in all its perfection is in the great and glorious Redeemer; for were it not so, how could He say, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed?" If the Lord Jesus had not assumed the whole of our nature, the salvation of that part not assumed would be simply impossible, and a part of the creature would thus be lost, and perish; for He saved only what He embodied and represented. Bless His name! He took a whole and perfect human body, and a whole and perfect human soul; for God had loved our whole persons before the foundation of the world, and pre-

pared in heaven a place for our bodies, and a blissful state there for our souls: therefore the Redeemer says, in this interesting discourse, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." Again our Lord took human nature in all its purity and perfection; for had He not so taken it, redemption by His sufferings and death would have been impossible. The contrivance of our God, by which the humanity of the Saviour appeared without a stain or a spot, was divinely deep and wise. There was nothing to dim His character or to stain His glory. "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of the Highest." The guilt of Adam's first transgression was not naturally upon Him, neither was that corruption which we inherit from Adam inherited by the Lord. The man that stood in the midst of the congregation on this interesting occasion was poor, despised, hated, and contemned, but He was absolutely pure; He was morally transparent and utterly incapable of sin. This is the flesh you eat, whilst you live by faith upon Jesus, and the blood you drink is the pure and precious blood of this glorious Emmanuel. Then in the third place, notice that the nature assumed by our Lord was taken into the closest possible union with His Godhead, and therefore in this mysterious and glorious Christ, we have the great and wondrous God-man. If His humanity were not inseparably connected with His Godhead, there would be no virtue or power in either His flesh or His blood to give or to sustain eternal life. God was in the man, and the man was in God; and the Godhead of the Saviour gave divine power and glory to His obedience, unspeakable virtue to His blood, and a grandeur and a glory infinitely high to the solemnities of His death. Christ's humanity is inseparable from His Godhead. I am afraid that some of God's dear people occasionally get an idea into their minds, that when the Saviour was dead His Godhead was in some way separated from His humanity. Oh when our Lord assumed our nature He took it to hold as His own for ever and ever. Death cannot separate the souls of His people from their Saviour, and death could not separate the Godhead from the humanity of the dying or the dead Redeemer. The Godhead went with the spirit of our Lord to heaven, and it went also with the body of our Lord into the grave. Had it not been so, we should have the discomfort of considering the grave of Jesus as having been occupied by a man, or by the body of a creature only. No, it was not so; but as some old writers have somewhere expressed themselves, the Godhead held both the soul and the body of the Redeemer when He was dead. As a person takes a sword in its sheath and draws it from the scabbard, holding the sword in one hand and the sheath in the other, so the Godhead of the Saviour held both His soul and His body. His Godhead, in concurrence with the Father and the Spirit, brought His soul and body together again, and reunited them; when He rose from the grave, the Lord of life and glory, and so He became living bread and living water to lost and ruined sinners. This is the bread they live upon in heaven. This is the bread sensible sinners live upon here. My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. Beloved friends, we are deeply indebted to the rich and sovereign mercy of God. I do not know whether it would be quite correct to use the word local or localised in connection with Jehovah,

and yet I have sometimes thought that if I did use that word I should not be misrepresenting Him. The great Jehovah in the man took a local dwelling, so to speak, and appeared therein to guilty men. Jehovah who is as to His essence everywhere, appeared with all His essential perfections in certain localities, when He took our nature and appeared in our flesh. When the Saviour sat on the well, Jehovah was there; and when He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head," Jehovah was in the speaker; and when He came under the law lived and died under it, Jehovah in the man was there, in that obeying, suffering, and bleeding Lamb.

Now let me say, if I can, how it is that Jesus Christ thus considered is life, and meat, and drink, to the immortal mind. I repeat what I have said, God was in the man, and the man was in God. The Being, therefore, of whom we are speaking is the great Godman, and He is in the Divine Word, to which He gives life and power; for "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life;" and His word dwells richly in the hearts of His dear people. The word is in them; Christ is in the word, and He is God-man and Mediator. Oh then I see how He is our life, and how His flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed; for both are in the Word, and His humanity and His Godhead are both portrayed therein. Through the gospel flows the rich river of His blood, and as through the Spirit I embrace the gospel I live on Christ, who is its sum and substance.

Now let us notice a second point. The text denotes not only the incarnation of the Saviour, but *His crucifixion*, also. You observe, I am not going far about this morning, but am bringing before you to the best of my ability the good and grand old-fashioned truths of the gospel. "God forbid," says the Apostle, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is very certain that the flesh and blood of Jesus cannot be either life or meat to us as sinners apart from His bleeding and suffering. Perhaps this idea entered into the minds of the Jews when they strove among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" No doubt their ideas were carnality itself. Now the animals which became sacrifices under the law, and food also for the priests, had to be slaughtered; their blood had to be shed, and their carcases or portions of them, had to be burnt upon the altar before they were considered complete sacrifices, and before the priests could take possession of them. Now we have the person of the Lord Jesus in all His perfection first, and then secondly, we have this perfect person slaughtered; for He is the Lamb slain decretively, from the foundation of the world, and actually in the fulness of time. An unsuffering Christ is not bread; an uncrucified Emmanuel is not our Saviour or our life. We must have His person in its entirety and perfection, and we must have Him under the hand of God's severe and immutable justice. "Awake, O sword against my Shepherd, and smite the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord. Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones." And here is life and food for dying souls, even a suffering Christ calmly, patiently and vicariously bearing

sin under the severe and terrible justice of God. Yes, this great victim was slain, and so became our life and food; for God is satisfied, and we are saved, and faith rests upon the fact. The victim was slain, and bread corn is bruised; for otherwise, however good and perfect they might be the former could not have saved, and the latter could not be bread, and this precious Christ was bruised for our iniquities, and died that we might live. The rock in the wilderness contained, by Divine appointment, the water that Israel required, but it had to be smitten. "He smote the rock, and the waters gushed out, and flowed among the dry places like a river." As to the crucifixion of our Lord, notice two or three interesting features of it. In the first place, we cannot live upon Jesus, nor eat His flesh, or drink His blood, unless we have some hope at least that He was our Saviour, and died in our place, room, and stead. I am sorry much of the preaching of the present day sets forth the sufferings of Jesus as intended to confirm His doctrine, and to constitute an example of patience and quiet endurance of pain and wrong only. Jesus, however, died as a substitute in the room and the place of others. He took the position which the sinner had by sin made for himself, and over which were gathered all the awful curses of God's law. The sinner was removed, and our blessed Emmanuel being found in His place received all the penal consequences of His sin. Do you remember the time when you first tasted Christ as to this fact? See Paul writing his Epistle to the Galatian church, I had almost said with his heart filled with the flesh and blood of Jesus. "I live," he says, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." If the law permitted such a thing, and a person sufficiently benevolent and loving could be found to do it, I do not know what a criminal under sentence of death might feel if he saw a substitute take his place, and die in his stead, especially if he saw him led to the gallows, and writhe in agony for his release and life. What the feelings of the guilty one might be I cannot tell. But I think I know in some measure the experience of the saved sinner, whilst by faith he sees Emmanuel bearing his crimes, led away to be executed, nailed to the tree, and bleed and die for him: then he falls down, and says, His flesh and blood are my life, my sustenance, my all. Wonder, O heaven, and be astonished, O earth! the great Emmanuel died for me!

The death of our Lord was sacrificial. When we speak of the sacrifice of Jesus, we mean that His sufferings were not only penal, but expiatory. There were no errors in His character to correct, and no sin in His nature to expiate, and therefore the sufferings He endured were due to the sins which had been imputed to Him. And they were expiatory sufferings too; for when He said, "It is finished," a cloud of holy fragrance ascended from the cross to the very heavens, and the throne of God, who said, "I smell a sweet savour of rest." When Noah's sacrifice sent a sweet odour upwards God said, "I will no more destroy the earth by a flood; and I do put My bow in the cloud, and when the weather is terrific, remember this My pledge." When the Saviour died, His sacrifice filled heaven with perfume, and God said, I will not be wrath with thee. "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." The rainbow of the covenant is round about the throne, which is a peaceful sign to you. Oh, his flesh and blood are meat and drink indeed, and they give and sustain eternal life to His beloved people. One or two more facts before I leave this point. The Saviour's sufferings were voluntary. On that, however, we have recently dwelt, therefore let us notice again that all His sufferings were in harmony with law and justice. The nature that fell raised fallen sinners high. The nature that sinned was punished; for God condemned sin in the flesh. Through man's sin heaven was closed, and by man it was opened, and the once lost and ruined sinner enters in perfection! Oh there is harmony, beauty, and glory in this great salvation. The sufferings of our Lord were necessary to pacify God, and to purify the sinner; and lastly, they were meritorious. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." Here the devil was conquered in a manner in which perhaps defeat was not expected. The very nature that he crushed, and spoiled, and ruined, and out of which all holiness was squeezed, that very nature reappears in wondrous connection with Jehovah, and destroys the works of the devil. And this great sacrifice becomes the guilt-annihilating centre of all spiritual minds, and of all the attributes of God. Where God finds rest and satisfaction, there our souls find all that we require for life, for death, and for eternity. "Except, ye eat my flesh and drink my blood ye have no life in you."

The text denotes, in the third place, *union to and communion with Christ*. Eating and drinking. Of course this refers to the operations of a living faith in the heart. I need not say that this eating and drinking are not natural, but spiritual. It is, however, important to observe, that the acts of eating and drinking here mentioned are not what are commonly called sacramental acts. Almost everyone, I am rather sorry to say, that observes the ordinance of the Lord's supper, turns to the 6th chapter of John for arguments in favour of its existence and obligation. I do not, however, believe that the Saviour referred in this chapter to that feast which is called the Lord's Supper; for, in the first place, the bread and wine used at the Lord's Supper are not the flesh and blood of Jesus, but symbols or emblems of them; and we do not have life from symbols, but from the realities symbolised; and hence my text says, and Jesus elsewhere in the chapter says, My flesh must be eaten, my blood must be drunk, ere eternal life can be had. Thousands eat the sacramental bread who never eat the flesh of Jesus; and thousands drink the sacramental cup who are altogether ignorant of Christ's precious blood. Do not make or construe this into an argument for your disobedience to our Lord's loving commands. Thousands are in heaven, possessing eternal life, who never sat at the Lord's table. I say, for God's sake, for truth's sake, and for the sake of a good conscience, do not construe this fact into an argument in favour of your indifference to Divine ordinances; for "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Yet not ordinance bread and wine are meant; but my text indicates spiritual desires, holy longing, and heavenly hungering and thirsting after Christ, and righteousness, and eternal things. Faith gives its object a being in its own seat. I do not

know if I can better express the fact. Faith brings that in which it believes into the mind which it occupies itself, and that determines its own nature. If a person's faith is in his head, it is only a notional or natural faith, and Christ is in the intellect only. If faith is in the heart, and is inseparable from Christ, it gives the crucified One an existence in, or realises Him to the immortal mind, and gathers round its great Lord the thoughts, the affections, the hopes, the desires, and the feelings of the soul; and they all rest upon, enter into, and feed on this blessed Christ of God. I trust and believe I am correctly and scripturally representing the believer's eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man.

Fourthly, the text indicates another fact, *that this is essential to life*,—Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood, ye have no life in you. This appears to me to be very plain and simple, although such great facts inseparable from salvation lie upon the very surface of the subject. My brethren, the intellect may be clear, the mental powers may be extraordinary, morality may be faultless; but he that is Christless and graceless, is lifeless. He is dead in sin, dead in law, and dead to God. Now let us not forget that all death and all life were in the Saviour on the cross. All death was in Him—penal death I mean; so that when He died, death was destroyed; and having destroyed all penal death, the great fountain of eternal life, flowed and he that receives it shall never die. I have said that all of death and all of life was on Him. The cause of death was on Him: the sins of His people. Having put them away, and expiated all their guilt by the sacrifice of Himself, He destroyed the cause of death; and He lived till that was done. I desire to impress this upon your minds, that Jesus lived long enough to destroy death, and put away sin. He did not die before that was done; then having obeyed all, atoned for all sin, and destroyed the cause of death, He had a life to lay down for the sheep. "It is finished," he said. Why did not He then come down from the cross and go to heaven. Did He speak the truth when He said, It is finished? or did He mean it was nearly finished? The great penal portion of His work was finished and complete. And what then? Why having destroyed sin, the cause of death, by removing all imputed guilt, He laid down His life for His sheep. I give unto them life, life more abundantly, eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands. Here is meat and drink such as the world knows not of. We live not by a natural faith, nor by intellectual powers merely; but by a living, heart-felt faith in the Christ of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Now, finally, *this greatly simplifies true godliness*. Sometimes ministers take great pains in setting forth the evidences of spiritual life, and of God's love to His people. Now nothing to my mind can be simpler than our Lord's method of representing eternal life and godliness: "Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood, ye have no life in you." A hungry person having a sight of bread, or only thinking of it, is not satisfied; and a person may contemplate Christ, or think upon the Lord, and never taste Him. A person may describe the properties and qualities of bread, or he may take bread to others and never taste it himself. Many preachers, perhaps, have ministerially carried the flesh

and blood of Jesus Christ to their fellow creatures, who have never tasted it themselves. Paul lived upon what he preached, and so does every godly minister ; and I am quite sure that those men are the most blessed and successful preachers who live upon the gospel which they preach to others. Now this simplifies personal godliness, which is—"Christ in you, the hope of glory." As the food we eat, if it be duly masticated, is incorporated with our bodies, so the reception of Christ by a living faith implies and is followed by a union of Christ and the heart, a union of Christ and the affections, a union of Christ and all the graces of the Spirit in the soul.

All this furnishes preachers with a theme. Have I a minister here this morning ? If so, I may be permitted to say, My brother let us gather a lesson from this subject. It ever supplies us with a theme. What are we to preach ? Eternal life. Where is it ? In Christ. How is it received and sustained ? The sinner receives a dying and risen Emmanuel and lives ; and his spiritual life is sustained and developed by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus, or by holy fellowship and communion with the Christ of God. Have we a living faith in Jesus ? Are our hopes spiritual, and do they centre in Him ? For in the twofold government of God, a person is what he desires to be. When I say His twofold government, I mean His moral and His gracious government. In the moral government of God, the Saviour tells us that looks and desires are adultery. "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her committeth adultery in his heart." These are not my words, but the Saviour's exposition of the holy law. Thus the thought of foolishness is sin. A person, therefore, is in God's sight what he desires to be ; and this rule exists, and is in full force in His gracious government also. I would be thine. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." My heart desires with all its powers to embrace Thee and to love Thee. I would not be deceived, deluded, carried away, disappointed in relation to these important matters, for all the world.

" Could I command the spacious land,
And the more boundless sea,
For one blest hour at Thy right hand,
I'd give them both away."

Then you are a Christian, you are a living saint, you are a child of God ; for in His gracious kingdom a sinner is what grace has brought him to desire to be. If your faith and hope are in the slain Lamb, and you desire to live upon His flesh and blood, Christ is yours and you are Christ's for ever and ever. Amen.

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