

PETER'S CONFESSION OF FAITH.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 18th SEPTEMBER, 1887.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."—Matt. xvi. 15—17.

PETER was an extraordinary man, and he often spoke for his brethren, and was mouth for them on this particular occasion. His Master said, "I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock [which you have now confessed] I will build My church;" and thou shalt be a living stone thereof, and occupy a place upon Myself as its firm foundation, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now, I say this portion of the Word of God has been fulfilled from year to year, and from one month to another, until the present moment. The gates of hell have attempted to prevail against the church, and rivers (so to speak) of blood have been shed in connection with a public profession of religion. The gates of hell and the powers of darkness have always been opposed to God's dear Son, and His cause and interest in the world; but we leave that, however, and glance at the fact, "I will build My church upon this Rock." Where is the church of God now? In God the Father, and in His Son Jesus Christ. The church is upon Christ, the Rock of eternal ages; and let us bless God, dear friends, for this. Whatever may happen in the world, Christ's church is safe. Kingdoms may fall, politics may change, and change greatly too, and thrones and empires may tumble down, the church of God will stand firmly until the end of time; and then it will appear in full perfection and glory in a better world for ever. The Scriptures cannot be broken; for He who said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it," will see that this word be fulfilled unto the end.

"What though the gates of hell withstood,
Yet must this building rise;
'Tis Thy own work, Almighty God,
And wondrous in our eyes."

Families are dissolved, societies are breaking up, and all nature is changing; but the church of God is saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and can never, never be destroyed. Let us, however, confine attention to the words we have read.

There are four points to be noticed; I will mention them as I proceed, and offer a few remarks upon each of them. In the first place we have an important question: He saith unto them, not unto Peter singly or separately: "But whom, say ye that I am?" Let us tarry here a few minutes, and try to look at this great question. In general affairs public

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opinion goes for something, I dare say; but it goes for little or nothing in the things of God. The Saviour had previously put a question to His disciples; "Whom do *men* say that I, the Son of man am?" Not that our Lord thought or cared for public opinion; and yet, determined to pave His way to this question, He asked of His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" In the first question He introduces the words, "the Son of man," but in the text that phrase is left out. "Whom say ye that *I am*?" In answer to the first question, the disciples said, "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets. That is the opinion of the people. "But whom say ye that I am?" What think *ye* of Christ? Let us not go out of doors into the world for a correct view of the Saviour. Let us look at the Word of God, and hold it up to our experience, and see how we compare with the gospel. If that Christ who is formed in our hearts, the hope of glory, is the Christ who appears in the glorious gospel of God's grace, we are safe to all the intents of bliss. "Whom say ye that I am?" The thought strikes me here, that our dear Lord always turns His mind, as it were, towards and upon Himself; He always directs our attention to Himself; He always makes Himself very prominent and conspicuous, and is always determined to magnify Himself. It was perfectly right that it should be so on His part; for He was, and is, and ever will be, the greatest being in the universe. It is your privilege and mine to magnify Him, to speak well of His name, and to see that He is exalted, if possible, not only above all that is within and without, but above all blessing and praise in heaven. I should be a happy man if I could lift or raise the Saviour in my own heart above all the evil that dwells therein; and if I could set my Lord above all the circumstances which surround me, and keep my eye steadily fixed upon Him. My days would pass quietly away, and my nights would be calm and serene. Is it not a fact in connection with our experience, that we are so prone to magnify the creature, and our troubles, and to so magnify the nature and consequences of sin, that we almost lose sight of the great and glorious Immanuel, the blessed, the ever-reigning Christ of God. He is greater than the greatest, and higher than the highest, and stronger than the strongest; are these contradictions, or am I using superfluous words? There are men that are of the strongest; but our Lord is stronger than they. Devils are stronger than men; but our Lord is stronger than they. There are thrones which are comparatively high here, but His is the highest throne; and there are crowns that glitter much in this world; but on His head are many crowns, and it is our mercy that it is so. Brethren, let Christ be magnified in our life, our experience, and our progress through the world, as He will be in eternity. Yes, the Saviour turned His eyes upon Himself, and it was perfectly just on His part to do so, and ask the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" I should not like to ask my friends for their opinion of myself as a man, as a Christian, or as a minister. It is for me, for you, and for all God's people, to turn their attention away from themselves as much as possible to the dear and blest Redeemer; but it was the grand prerogative of Jesus Christ to stand out prominently before everybody and everything, and to place Himself above all, and say,

“Whom say ye that I am?” If we have low ideas of our Lord, we are in a strange position; but if He is our dear Lord, and we have been bought with His blood, and have some humble knowledge of that fact, our ideas and estimate of Him will not be low. We shall labour under the weight of His great name, and feel how heavy is His glory, and lament our weakness and inability to raise Him to the position which He has a right to occupy.

Now, I take it, my friends, that in the first place our Lord *appealed to the faith of His disciples*. “Whom say ye that I am?” We read in the 53rd of Isaiah, that when Jesus Christ should appear, the world, and especially the Jewish world, would see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. I am glad that the Holy Ghost has been pleased to add these words, “that we should desire Him;” for otherwise in this wonderful day of ours the world professes to see moral beauty in the character of the Messiah. They express this very guardedly, for they do not know Him, and their utterances are as dry as chips, if I may so speak. The infidel sees it; for a celebrated man who died a few years ago admitted that the character of the Messiah was very beautiful. Therefore the Holy Ghost has been pleased to add the words, “that we should desire Him.” Our Lord appealed to the faith of His believing disciples. Their faith was not very deep, or vigorous, or strong; nevertheless they did believe in God, and in their Lord and Master; and He appealed to their faith: “Whom say ye that I am?” What are your convictions, your thoughts, your feelings, your experience? “For, as believers in Me you have convictions, and they are deep, and concerning My person they are correct and true; therefore, whom say ye that I am?” O that our faith may be of that kind which animated the heart of Peter, and which elicited from the Master this benediction,—“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.” The people of God sometimes wonder whether their faith be a saving faith or not. The devil is permitted at times to cover their minds with darkness, and to utterly conceal from their eyes the nature of the good work which is going on within, and they stumble and draw conclusions which are as far from the truth as the heavens are from the earth. My dear friends, we cannot do without a living faith in the heart, and we can no more do without its great Author than the world can do without the influences of the natural sun. The soil which produces what man requires, may in itself be good and rich; but however excellent it may be, it requires the sun, the wind, and the rain, and other influences must be in perpetual operation, or all will become barren and desolate. As it is in nature, so it is in grace in this respect. Your heart may have been changed, and a living faith rooted therein, and that faith may have embraced the Saviour again and again; yet you are not independent of the great Author of faith, nor of the influences of heavenly love and rich and reigning grace. These are absolutely necessary; for if God hides His face we die; at least, our pleasure dies, and our spirituality withers. Therefore may the Sun of righteousness ever shine, may His warming influences ever enter and pervade our hearts and minds, and may that faith which worketh by love ever embrace the dear, and sweet, and precious name of Jesus; so that we

may be always ready to give a reason of the hope that is within us, with meekness and fear.

Then again, I think our Lord *appealed to the experience of His disciples*. This as to its spiritual power and reality perhaps was not very deep, yet, inasmuch as they believed in Christ, they had a measure of what is designated Christian experience. "Whom say ye that I am?" Who am I, and what am I to you? The Master would know from their own lips what He was in their estimation, and to their hearts. What am I in myself, and what am I to you? I do not suppose the words occurred to the mind of Peter, but methinks if they had he would have given utterance to them: "Thou art the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." Why, it was Peter, who said, after our dear Lord had delivered certain truths, and many of His followers left Him, and walked no more with Him, and He had said, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

"Depart from Christ! 'tis death! 'tis more!

'Tis endless ruin! deep despair!

I may hold my Saviour in a very awkward manner, and exercise my little faith upon His name very incoherently; yet, if I love His precious name, and have a measure of holy experience of what He is, and can say at times with the church of God, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!" perfection will come by and bye. I may be cast down and distressed because I am not perfect here and now, yet perfection certainly will come; for sight must follow faith, and fruition must follow hope. Turn your eyes within—I do not often invite you to do this—look into the deepest recesses of your soul, and say what Jesus Christ is to you? A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, a perfect character, an amiable Being, that Being who gave rise to Christianity, and upon whose name the church of God is built. Ah, my friends, can you not go a little deeper? Does not the name of Jesus Christ go through and through your heart? Are there not moments when that dear name absorbs you altogether, and you are completely lost for a few moments in the great and glorious name of the Saviour? As the fish in the sea is at home, and remains there until it be caught or die, so the child of God would ever be immersed in the great name of the Redeemer. In the glorious ocean of everlasting love He would dive, and bathe, and live; and as the fish finds its food in the ocean which is its home, so the believer finds his satisfaction and his all in the Christ whom his heart desires to love. O that we could love Him more, and serve Him better; lift Him higher, and realize more of the infinite sweetness and boundless preciousness of His great and holy name.

Now, our knowledge of Christ has a considerable influence in forming our character. Religious knowledge, as it is called, always exercises a powerful influence upon character. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. Their doctrine was leaven, which diffuses itself through the whole mass, and doctrines diffuse their influence through the character. If our knowledge of Jesus Christ be true and spiritual, our character will be true and spiritual also. Persons repudiate doctrines in the day in which we live, but be sure you never do so; for notwithstanding

their position and the manner in which people speak against the doctrines of grace, the doctrines one holds always have their influence upon character. The Pharisees and Sadducees were what they were owing to the influence of the doctrines they held ; and hence the Master says, " But whom say ye that I am ;" knowing well that their knowledge of His name had a great influence upon their whole life. Let me ever know the Lord as saved sinners know Him, and know Him so as to love Him intensely and increasingly, and my character will be acceptable in the sight of God. I want you to notice another point for a moment. Your estimate of Christ will influence you in forming an estimate of other matters. " Whom say ye that I am ?" Thou art my all in all. Well then, what do you think of sin ? I hate and loathe it. No being hates all sin unless he knows and loves the Lord. What is your estimate of yourself ? A man's foes are those of his own household. Self I would tread under foot and never follow it. It is a mischievous power ; Lord save me from myself. Enter my heart Thyself, and reign supremely and for ever there. What is your estimate of the world ? " Well, I see no harm in spending an evening in the theatre, or in the dancing room, or in the music hall, or in this, that, or the other entertainment." I rather think, my friends, that if your estimate of the Saviour were higher than it is, your estimate of theatres, dancing halls, and so on, would be very low. You would have low ideas, opinions, and feelings, in regard to them. Let Christ sit high in my heart, and occupy the best seat therein, or let Him have my best and noblest affections, and you may have all the theatres, entertainments, and their worldliness for me.

" Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me."

I once loved it, but I have been taught and brought to love another. I once saw beauties in it, but then I did not see the world from a proper point of view, nor had I ever seen the greatest beauty in the universe. But having seen Christ, and having had to do with Him, the world has lost its charms. Self, I would trample in the dust ; sin, I would divest myself of it, if I might and I could ; and I sometimes long for the time when I shall be wholly stripped of it, for mine eyes have seen the King in His beauty, and beheld the land that is very far off.

In the second place, observe *the important confession of faith*. It comes as an answer to this question. " And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." What did the Saviour ask the question for ? Not for information ; He knew what their feelings were, and what their utterance would be. What may we suppose the Lord put the question for ? To elicit this confession, and to draw forth this expression of faith and experience. And Simon Peter, not merely for himself personally, but as mouth for the rest, said, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Short but weighty ; a very few words, but every word is full. " Thou art *the Christ, the Son of the living God*." Here we have an important confession. They all believed the same thing, and I suppose their faith was pretty much the same as to its measure in all their hearts. However, there was no dissentient, no difference, not one of them held back any portion of his faith. The

whole eleven, excluding Judas ; whether he was silent or not I do not know—the whole eleven godly men threw themselves for eternity upon that person who was their Master, and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” First, in this confession of faith *the divinity of Jesus Christ* is brought out prominently. “The Son of God?” When I was a younger man, I used to speak with a great deal of fervour and zeal against Unitarianism and Socinianism. I suppose this is as a rule characteristic of young men; but I may be permitted to say to-day, though I am hardly such an one as John the aged, yet I am getting into years, and going down the hill, I am ready to say to-day with all the feeling I can command, that I do reject Unitarianism and Socinianism, and shall loathe it for ever. If I rob Christ of His Godhead, and reduce Him to a mere man, there is nothing in Him to save me. If He is only a man, a good man, a great man, the best man,—and I admit all that, yet He cannot save guilty sinners if He is no more than a man. I loathe the sentiment, and had almost said something more; but let me not express myself too strongly here. I loathe a sentiment, the result of the influence of which is to take the crown of divinity from the glorious head of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Secondly, not only did they believe in the divinity of the Lord, they believed that He was *a divine person* in the Godhead, the Son of the living God. If that does not indicate personality, where shall we look for it? What does indicate it? Christ was, and is, and ever will be one of the glorious persons in God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Wonderful that Peter should have learned so much, and that the disciples should have seen so much in Him. Equal with the Father and with the Spirit. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Thirdly, it included *His official work*. Christ is Divine, and a Divine Person, but He is Christ the Anointed, the Messiah, the Mediator between God and man. The confession comprehends all the Gospel. The Mediator between God and man. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And what is Christ to God and to His people? The great outlet of grace and mercy. Some of our towns have names which end with the word “mouth,” to indicate that their rivers are connected with the sea, such as Yarmouth and so on. Now what the river is to that part where it is connected with the sea, that the Lord Jesus Christ is to this poor desert world and His dear people that are in it. Christ the Mediator is God’s gracious mouth, through which He pours all His spiritual blessings into this poor dying world of ours. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter saw God in the man Christ. He saw Deity in Him behind His flesh, His human nature, His poverty, and His humiliation. His deity was veiled; but every now and then His Godhead broke out, “And they beheld His glory, (the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.) full of grace and truth.” The important confession.

Thirdly, *the important revelation*: “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” Bar-jona, the son of Jona or Jonas. Our Saviour referred Peter for a minute to His natural name and state. I do not know whether Peter’s father was a good man or otherwise. The Lord Jesus Christ did not say how it was; but He

knew his father and said, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona;" but when you were educated, trained and instructed, the revelation of Myself formed no part of the work of teaching; "for flesh and blood hath not revealed this fact unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." We are told that children come into the world perfectly pure and clean, and that they are just ready to receive like a clean sheet of writing paper what parents and others may impart to them. Well, whatever a child may bring with itself into the world, it brings no grace, nor the germ of saving religion, for that is subsequently revealed and given. "My Father which is heaven has revealed it to you, and not flesh and blood." Human nature can never discover the Saviour, nor find Him, can never get to love Him, nor come by its own power to rest upon Him for eternal life. Hear that trembling one as he stumbles along towards Christ, listen to him and mark him well, for he is a child of God though he stumbles.

"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."

The power of flesh and blood does not bring poor sinners here. This is the result of a Divine revelation. Revelation is an uncovering, and the discovery of something that had been hidden and concealed. It is not creation. Distinguish between revelation and creation? My Father in heaven has revealed it, not created it. Christ was in existence before the Father revealed Him; and He was lovely, glorious and sweet, before we saw His loveliness, or realized His sweetness. Now there is the eye, and the object, and the light. The eye is faith, and the object to be seen is Christ, the Son of the living God. What is wanted but light? Not any light, artificial, educational, moral, intellectual or rational light merely; the light required is heavenly, special and divine, conveyed by the Spirit into the heart; flesh and blood cannot reveal the Lord. Here is the altogether lovely Christ, and here is the altogether sinful creature; and there is the Father on the throne, looking with approbation upon His dear Son, and with love upon the sinner that wants to see Him. The heavens are open, and light divine falls upon the scene, and to the sinner Christ is revealed in the heart, the hope of eternal glory. "You preach mysteries, and go in your experience so far in one direction that we cannot follow you." The Lord the Holy Spirit help you to follow me at some future time, if I now go a little too far for you. If the preacher knows anything of the Father's revelation, this is how it takes place. Now this revelation does not give us an interest in Christ, nor is it the cause of relationship. The theory, the doctrine of the present day is, that something must take place within, before we can be said to be interested in Christ. My beloved friends, revelation follows interest and proves relationship. If there had been no connection between you and Jesus Christ before He was revealed to your heart, there would never have been a revelation of Him to your poor soul. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." How can the Father draw one unless something is presented wonderfully

powerful in its attractions. Well, the attractions of Jesus Christ are wonderfully powerful, and God says, He has loved, and therefore He has drawn. He reveals His Son; and we, feeling the power of His attractions, as the objects of His grace, sing,

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

Fourthly and lastly, *the important benediction*: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.” “Blessed art thou.” Christ had blessed him, and then pronounced him blessed, and I think I had some little sweetness in thinking over this part of the subject when it presented itself to my mind in this form,—that when Jesus Christ pronounced the words, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona,” He was at that moment full of spiritual blessings for Peter, for God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ. Christ, if I may so speak, spoke in relation of what He Himself held for Peter. He had all the fulness of Peter’s grace in Him, or all the grace Peter required to save Him. All the love of God towards Peter was in him; and, speaking experimentally, for I love the experience of My Lord,—the Master said, “Blessed art thou in Me, Simon Bar-jona.” Now this blessedness is *the best*. We have other blessings; they are all good, but the best of other blessings is inferior to this one. Temporal things are mercies. We thank our Lord for temporal good, but they are not our God. Peter was blessed with the best of all blessings. Another thought is this, that the blessing was a *present one*. Now look at the words of the text again. “Blessed art thou,” not, Blessed shalt thou be by and bye; but thou *art* blessed *to-day*. Blessed art thou even now. Was Peter, then, without sin? No, yet he was blessed, though sin dwelt within. Take courage, then, my dear friend; you may be a blessed man or a blessed woman, although sin dwells within. Did the Master—and let us tread softly here—did the Master see any error in Peter’s mind? Yes, Peter had carnal views of the kingdom of his Lord, and his faith did not go far into the spirituality of His kingdom; yet he was a blessed man. Did the Master foresee Peter’s fall, and how far his sin and cowardice would carry him? Yes, but the Master did not withhold the information on account of that. Did blessings continue to follow Peter? Yes, for the curse never follows the saving blessing of God. The world may curse you, the devil may curse you, and you may be almost ready to curse yourselves sometimes; but if God has blessed you with spiritual blessings to-day, He will bless you for ever and ever. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE PERPETUITY OF DIVINE GOODNESS.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 16th OCTOBER, 1887.

"The goodness of God endureth continually."—Psalm lii. 1.

THE whole of David's life was a Divine illustration of the fact that the Lord reigneth, and it is our privilege to watch His hand in the operations of His providence; for "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." The providence of God works in the closest possible connection with His reigning grace, and hence we speak of the gracious and merciful providence of God. Nothing proceeds from chance,—accidents, strictly speaking, are unknown in the government of Him, who is doing all His pleasure; and during the past 6000 years, He has executed His good will and pleasure in the world, and in His church, and among His people. Famines have formed a part of the mysterious government of God, as peace and plenty have fulfilled His purposes, and individuals and families appear prominently here and there in connection with the operations of His hand. There was a famine in the land of Canaan before David was born, which led to the removal of a certain family of Israel into the land of Moab. Two of the members of that family married two Moabitish damsels. Both the husbands died, their father having died previously, and the widowed mother and her two daughters-in-law left Moab for Canaan. Oh it is most instructive and edifying to watch the mysterious and wonderful operations of God's hand, in the circumstances which led up to the birth of David! Ruth and Naomi returned to Canaan, and they entered the land about the time of the barley harvest. Ruth proceeded to glean. This brought her into contact with Boaz, who eventually married her, and a child was born, whose name was Obed; he became the father of Jesse, to whom a child was born, whose name was David. When David came into this world of sin and sorrow, he was taken, so to speak, in a very special manner under the omnipotent wings of his God. His father, Jesse, was comparatively poor: he had a few sheep. The other members of the family entered the army, and the young son David became a shepherd. The Lord called him by His grace, covered him all the day long with His feathers, and worked so mysteriously and wondrously, that he found himself at length on the field of battle. Goliath came forth and blasphemed the name of the God of Israel. David met him, and slew him. That circumstance brought him into prominence, and connected

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him with the court. Samuel was sent eventually to anoint him, and to give him a promise that he should one day reach the throne. The man after God's own heart passed through various scenes of sorrow and joy, darkness and light, trouble and deliverance from trouble. Sometimes his faith was low, at other times it rose very high : but God had made with him a covenant of royalty, and our God changes not. The good man was covered and defended in the midst of fires and floods, and flames, and at length God fulfilled His gracious promise ; the people anointed him with fresh oil, and he eventually became the King of Israel : but before he was crowned, he passed through many stormy seas, yet the God of heaven and earth kept His gracious eye upon Him, and did not fail nor forsake him.

The psalm out of which our text is taken, is connected with one of the trials of this good and gracious man. Having resolved to leave the land of Israel, through fear of the wrath of Saul, he entered the city of Nob, without bread, without money, and without human help. Abimelech the priest supplied him with holy bread, which was used in the temple ; and Doeg, one of the herdsmen of Saul was there, and saw what was done, heard what was said, and being an exceedingly mischievous man, he proceeded to give Saul information, and David said concerning this in the Psalm before us, "Why boastest thou thyself [in mischief,] O mighty man ! The goodness of God endureth continually." It is true I was supplied with bread, and through my own folly and fear, found myself in the land of the Philistines, (for some of the troubles through which David passed, he brought upon himself;) yet the goodness of God did not desert me, and the God of heaven and earth did not leave me : and notwithstanding the mischief you have been the means of inflicting upon the priests of the Lord God, His purposes have not been nullified, nor His promises broken, for the God of heaven remains the same : the goodness of God endureth continually."

Now I want this morning, if the Lord will enable me, to try to *illustrate the subject indicated in the text* ; and in the second place, to *draw a few inferences from it*.

In the first place, let us try to illustrate the subject,—and our illustrations will be very faint and feeble ; for there is no greater subject in the Word of God than this—"The goodness of God endureth continually." I have two things to notice in illustrating the subject, viz., *Divine goodness*, and *the fact asserted in relation to it*,—"that it endureth continually." In the first place, a few observations upon the goodness of God. Where shall I begin, and how shall I begin ? 'Tis an endless theme, and we thank our God for having revealed that fact unto us. It is as great as God Himself. That there is a God, is a fact which presents itself to us every day, and in every place. But further, God is good, and His goodness is unchangeable. Shall we speak in the first place for a few minutes of *the goodness of our God as a Triune God* ? We are not Socinians, and I think, we never shall become so. We are believers in the triune God of heaven and earth. The Father is good—ininitely and unchangeably, and eternally good ; the Son of God is good, and He is the great embodiment of the Father's goodness, and of all the goodness

of God. Whoever knows the Son of God, knows for Himself in some small measure, that God is good; for it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell in His dear Son: "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." God the Father is good therefore, and the Son is good, and the Holy Spirit is good. The Father's goodness appears as infinite in the gift of His dear Son. He is infinitely liberal. The goodness of God flows in this respect perpetually and everlastingly. All that God could give—I speak advisedly, and thoughtfully, and solemnly—He resolved to give to men, and all that He could bestow upon us, He did bestow, when He said to His dear Son, Go into the world and die, and bring the people near to Me. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also, freely give us all things?" I hold that God in creation does not fully appear. In creation, and in providence, we have parts of His ways. God has not equalled Himself in creation; and if the stars above our heads are worlds, His eternal power and Godhead appear in connection with the creation of those worlds. Nevertheless, God has not equalled Himself in creation; but I hold that He has equalled Himself in the great business of redemption and salvation. He has not given us a world merely, nor worlds; He has given us Himself, and an interest in Himself, and constituted us His children, and Himself our Father, and has said that He will be a Father to Israel, and to His people for ever and ever. The goodness of the Father. Look at the goodness of God in the Person and work of His dear Son. See Him coming as it were, from His Father's bosom. Oh, how good! He did not hesitate to leave, did not hesitate to come, did not hesitate to receive by imputation the sins of His people, did not hesitate to appear at once before His Father, and did not shrink from the blows that fell upon Him from the hand of Divine justice. Oh He was good to enter Gethsemane! good to go to Calvary, and good to put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. And since He is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the goodness which shone so gloriously in Gethsemane and Calvary, will flow and shine in a better world without interruption for ever and ever. And all this, my dear friends, is revealed to us in a measure by the good Spirit of God. "Thy Spirit," said David, "is good." Oh! it was goodness Divine and inexhaustible that led the Holy Ghost to arrest your heart and mine, that led Him to open our blind eyes, and unstop our deaf ears; and to open our hearts and minds to receive the atonement. And some of us will never forget the happy time when our burden was removed; when the sting of guilt was extracted from the conscience; when our filthy and polluted souls were washed, and when our nakedness was covered by the imputation of the righteousness of the Saviour. Oh, what moments of peace and joy! and what hours of sacred pleasure and delight we experienced under the influences of the good Spirit of God, when He was gradually fulfilling to us the Saviour's promise, "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." "The goodness of God endureth continually."

Now I want my friends to bear in mind that *the goodness of God is to be measured only by His greatness*. If you can say how great He is, then you will be able to say how good He is. All His greatness is in His

goodness, all His goodness is in His greatness, and all His attributes and perfections are good. Sometimes people contemplate with wonder and astonishment, the sufferings of the lost; and in the day in which we live, the existence of hell is denied, and it is said that God is so good that He will not and cannot eternally punish sinners as sinners. My dear friends, it is good to punish for crime; it is good not to overlook guilt; it is good to keep a check upon evil; and evil persisted in should be punished, will be punished, and must be punished. If God could look with indifference upon guilt; if He could tolerate sin; if He could free transgressors without an atonement, He would not be good; there would be something solemnly and seriously defective in His character. He is just, and that constitutes a part of His goodness: He is holy and true; and if He were not so, He would not be good. But since He is infinitely true, infinitely holy, infinitely and unchangeably just,—since He is unalterably righteous, He is a good God. If His righteousness became dimmed, or His justice relaxed her claims, He would cease to be good. I honour, I lean upon, His justice; I rest upon His righteousness, as a sinner saved by His mercy, and sovereign and divine grace. He is good as to all His attributes and perfections; His power, His unchangeableness, His holiness, and His truth, are all inseparably connected with the fact indicated in My text, “that God is good, and that His goodness endureth continually.” It is good on the part of God to put a bridle into the jaws of enemies, and to limit and restrain the power and operations of all people, and it is sovereignly good and divinely merciful on the part of God, to save poor sinners like you and me. My dear friends, goodness in the creature is measurable as to time and quantity, but the goodness of God is immeasurable and infinite. He was good before He made a world, and He made the world because He was good; He did not make it because He needed it, neither did He create angels because He needed them. His goodness broke forth and spoke, and there was omnipotence in that word. Let there be matter, Goodness said; and matter came into existence out of nothing. Let it take certain forms and shapes, and matter took those forms and shapes which the word of Divine Goodness gave them. And God brought angels into existence because He was good; filled them with His goodness, for He had formed them as angelic vessels; and thus He was good before He made the world, and His goodness is the source of creation, and providence, and redemption, and of the consummation of all things.

But in the second place, we have a fact stated in connection with the goodness of God: “*The goodness of God endureth continually.*” This well suits you and me, and all the poor, tried, and travelling children of God. I often look round about upon the changes which are perpetually taking place, some of which are wonderfully deep, dark, and mysterious; and I am obliged to try to reach the throne of my heavenly Father, and lean against it, and take refuge in the fact that the Lord reigneth, for I can find comfort nowhere else, than that His goodness endureth continually. It is an unchanging goodness in the midst of change, like the unmovable mighty rock in mid-ocean. The tempest rages, the waves and billows rise and roar; everything round about is terrible and fearful; vessels are

crushed, hundreds it may be go to the bottom ; but there stands the rock, and the waves and billows dash against it, and lose their force, and spend their power there. Not like an iceberg which might be as large as a rock, but which is tossed and tumbled by the wind and sea; that would be like a creature. But like a rock deeply rooted in the bottom of the sea, and which the waters, and the roaring tempests cannot move. And such is the ever-enduring goodness of God in the midst of changes. And this unchanging goodness manages all changes which are taking place round about it. God wills a change, and wills a multitude of changes, and brings them to pass. He presides over every change as it takes place ; but He Himself changes not. "He is in one mind, and none can turn Him ; and whatsoever His soul desireth, even that He doeth." He cannot change, because He is God ; and there are some things which our God cannot do, and inability in this respect on His part is a Divine excellency. He cannot change, He cannot lie, He cannot deny Himself, He cannot do wrong. "The goodness of God endureth continually." He changes wills, but not His own : He changes natures, but not His own. He changes words, or brings to pass events which falsify words ; but no events ever falsify His own word. Firm like a rock His promise stands : firmer than heaven and earth stands His glorious throne. And since God is infinitely good, goodness and mercy and eternal grace are connected with all He permits, and produces, with all He brings together, and links together ; and although there are mysteries which lie beyond the reach of our knowledge—grasp this fact as well as you can,—behind every cloud, and in every depth there is a good God ; and in connection with every deep and bitter sorrow, there is a good God. Changes within and changes without, all tend to verify the purposes of the unchanging God. If it were not that His goodness endureth continually, He would not be, I had almost said a safe,—well, He would not be (let me speak it with reverence) a worthy object of confidence. If His moral perfection, His eternal goodness were changeable ; if there might come a period when God could cease to be good, every angel would tremble, and every saint upon the earth would fear ; but here in this ever-raging and changing world there is one thing that changes not, and that is the goodness of God.

As time is going, let us pass away from this part of the subject, and try to draw *a few inferences* from it. In the first place, *the child of God finds comfort in the midst of changes*. The world we live in is a changeable world ; the creatures we are surrounded by are feeble and fickle. We cannot promise ourselves any abiding state of things out of God, and out of Christ. The sun shines in the morning ; but the day may become very tempestuous. Everything here seems to be, humanly speaking, unsettled and uncertain. The comforts we hold to-day, we may drop, or they may melt away in our hands to-morrow, and the force and strength with which we held them may even tend to melt them, like ice in a warm hand. There is nothing fixed or permanent here, but the fact that the goodness of God endureth continually. Yonder is your wife, you love her deeply and dearly, and have thanked God for her many times. She sickens, and dies, and your heart and

your home are full of sorrow. But she has left the goodness of God behind her, for that endureth continually. Yonder is a minister of the Gospel, who has been long with his people; they have loved him well, and he has been useful among them, and they have said, "What shall we do when he is dead and gone?" But he dies, for there is nothing abiding here. But the Gospel does not die with him; God does not change in connection with the departure of that servant of His. God was as good in taking him from the church, as He was in bringing him into connection with it. "The goodness of God endureth continually." Joseph said to his brethren, "Am I in the place of God?" Well, no creature can take God's place, or be a substitute for God; but the Lord can always take creature's place, and He will always be more than a substitute for him. Your wife cannot take the place of God; but her departure has left a void in your home which God is capable of filling. He is able to stand in every gap, and to fill it well. The minister that is called to be with his Lord, may be followed by another equally good; but whether it be so or not, "the goodness of God endureth continually." Creatures may be ours; their existence, and our possession of them, may seem to be essential almost to our life; they are essential to our comfort and enjoyment; but they are removed. I do not know whether cases similar to that of Job be taking place in the day in which we live; that servant of God, one of the richest men in the East, and one of the best men then living upon the face of the earth, applauded as it were by God Himself, as "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil;" yet God permitted the whole of the comforts of life that surrounded Job, to be swept away, and nothing left but a dreary desolate wilderness. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!" Changes take place; some of them fill us with bitter sorrow, break our hearts, and fill our eyes with tears, and constitute the pathway home a rugged one indeed; but

"He never takes away our all,
Himself He gives us still."

The abiding goodness of God supplies us with comfort amid the changes of life; and thus all is well. The gospel I preach is better than my faith, at least it surpasses my spiritual experience. I can murmur, and rebel, and find fault; I can pity myself, and try to take hold of the helm, and move it a little way in this direction, or in the other; but our God will hold it Himself, He will not surrender the reins to another; He will steer the ship and guide all the affairs of the world, and will have my confidence in the fact that He is unchangeably good. Well, then, if the house be stripped, or nearly so, my God, my best Father, my dearest Friend, remains the same. If the church wastes and dwindles, and the congregations almost disperse; even then with that cheerless prospect, "the goodness of God endureth continually." You lose your position, and are thrown down all at once from a condition, if not of affluence, yet of comfort, into one of poverty. Deep mystery! Why does God permit it? I do not know. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter. But behind it all, and through it all, there runs this precious fact of the

enduring goodness of our God. If it endures continually, it runs through every day, it runs into and through every place; it runs into and through every circumstance. If there were a day untouched by God's goodness, that day would see me perish. If there were a place visited by myself, but unvisited by God's goodness, there I should come into want or die. But "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me *all* the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Oh, God snatches away a comfort, because He sees that my possession of it would endanger me. He hedges up my way with thorns, because he sees I must go no further that way, and I am self-willed, and nothing but a thorny hedge, or impassable barrier would prevent me from running into danger and death.

Then, secondly, we infer, that as the goodness of God endureth continually, it supplies us with *comfort in our holy conflict*. Sin entered into the world, and the fall took place; but God did not cease to be good because man ceased to be holy. Born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, but God's goodness remains the same. Saul of Tarsus was a wicked man—a cruel persecutor—loving to shed the blood of the saints, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than taking care of the clothes of the persons who stoned the Nazarenes to death; but God loved him, and God's goodness covered him during his unregeneracy. And the man in the pulpit can also declare in connection with this matter, that before I knew the Lord, and loved His dear name, my spirit said, Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways; but God's goodness followed me, and I did not die, and could not die, because God had resolved to save me. His goodness broke forth and saved me, and it has followed me to this day, for it endureth continually. It is the same before calling, in calling, and after calling. There can be no increase or diminution of it. Do not think, my brother, that because now you love His name, therefore God loves you better than He did before you loved Him. No, there can be no change in our God. If He is God, He must be good; and if He is God and good, He must remain so for ever. Well, then, does sin dwell within? Yes, and it rages there also. Are my evidences bright? No, I have lost them, they are gone. My spirit says, Shew me a token for good, if I am Thine, reveal the fact to me again. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." My evidences are lost, but I myself shall never be lost. My assurance leaves me, but my salvation has been secured to me by my covenant God, and His goodness abides for ever.

"Unchangeable His will,
Whatever be my frame;
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same:
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

I intended to have enlarged a little more upon these matters, but our time is gone. Let me, however, just observe here, that it furnishes us with *comfort in relation to our trust in our God*. "The goodness of God endureth continually;" therefore the children of men put their trust

under the shadow of His wings. I go into a place, and my feeling is that it is only a temporary one. I take the position, and thank God for it, although I know it will not abide. But there is a refuge that will ever stand, and will ever save ; there is a position which is taken by the true believer which will never give way, never vibrate, and never shake, even the eternal goodness of our God.

Lastly, with regard to *the future*. How will it be with me to-morrow ? I do not know in some respects, in other respects I do. Circumstantially and as to matters of detail I do not know how it will be, but with regard to the grand reality itself, it will be with me to-morrow as it is to-day, and as it has been hitherto. "God's goodness abides continually." And when I come to die, how will it be with me then ? I do not know where I may die, or when ; and I do not want to know. I do not know the circumstances under which I shall die, and I do not want to know ; but underneath are the everlasting arms ; and just as a dear mother or father would not and could not possibly withdraw their arms from under the child in danger, especially if the danger were great ; so neither will God withdraw His everlasting arms from underneath my departing soul when heart and flesh give way. Therefore, Doeg, although you succeed in getting all the Lord's priests slain except one ; although you are a wicked man, and are strong in office, do not suppose that you will go on day by day through a long life unopposed ; but if you do, hear this great fact which cheers my soul, and comforts my heart : "The goodness of God endureth continually." The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 5th JUNE, 1887.

"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. . . . I am the Vine, ye are the branches."—John xv. 1 and 5.

THE Apostle Paul commences his Epistle to the Hebrews by remarking, that God has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. If God has spoken, it becomes all intelligent creatures to listen to Him. The words of God are always important, whether He speaks to saints in heaven, or to saints and sinners on the earth. God is continually speaking in nature, and in providence; but the most important of all His words are to be found in the glorious Gospel of His grace. Nature proclaims His eternal power and Godhead, and providence proclaims His omnipotence and His omniscience, and His goodness, and also the fact that all things are managed and controlled by His infinite wisdom, love, and power. But providence does not discover salvation, and nature reveals no atoning blood; therefore we do not see all of God in nature, nor hear all His words in creation. We do not see enough of God, nor do we hear enough of Him in nature or in providence, or in His general reign: God has therefore spoken again to us in these last days by His Son. His dear Son is the great repository of the Gospel, or the great embodiment of all the saving purposes of God, and He holds and reveals them all. It pleased the Father to communicate, so to speak, His mind to His dear Son; and having charged Him with all His purposes and intentions, He sent Him into the world to proclaim these saving facts gradually and progressively unto dying men; and Paul says in relation to this, "God has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." He spoke to Adam in the garden of Eden. But there was nothing about salvation in what God said to Adam before he fell. And He spoke to the children of Israel in Egypt by Moses and Aaron, and he spoke again and again to them in the land of Canaan by the prophets, and poets, and priests; but at last He sent His Son, and the message He has brought from heaven is a very wonderful one, even good news and glad tidings to guilty men, who deserved to experience the curse of God for ever. God has spoken to us from His throne in the height of His sanctuary in heaven. He has opened His mind to us, and He authorised our great Prophet and Teacher to reveal unto us what He in eternity thought and purposed,

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

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He hath spoken in these last days of the ceremonial dispensation; for Jesus came just before the abrogation of the ceremonial law, and the close of that system. When Christ commenced His public ministry, the last days of the ceremonial dispensation had arrived, and Christ went forth with the Gospel.

The Gospel dispensation also might be said to be the last days of time. Eighteen—nearly nineteen-hundred years of this dispensation are passed and gone. How much longer time will last we do not know, nor do we want to know; for “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The full Gospel, however, is proper to this dispensation. Anything clearer we could not have had, and anything more satisfactory to right-minded believers, we could not have received from heaven. The faith has been finally delivered to the saints of God, and another revelation is by no means necessary. The present revelation, as applied by the Holy Spirit to the heart, has fitted and prepared thousands, and perhaps millions for heaven. I have no idea that there will be half-a-dozen ways to heaven, or that the Holy Ghost works differently in one age from the manner in which He works in another. I am quite willing to be found a follower of them, who through faith and patience, now inherit the promises. Oh that my faith were as deep and warm as was the religion of the early church, or as strong and vigorous as was the faith of the apostles of Jesus. The way to heaven is God’s way. It is a Divine contrivance, and infinite wisdom arranged and planned the whole from first to last. Jesus stands between man and God, not only as a Mediator, and to atone for sin, but as a Messenger, even the Messenger of the covenant. He brings to us the mind and purposes of His Father, and also the love of His heart. Let it be mine, and let it be yours, to listen to this great Speaker to men, for God speaks to His people in these last days by His Son. Jesus, however, in speaking to men, always speaks of Himself. We inferior, weak, and insignificant servants of God, and ministers of the Gospel, are obliged to say, we preach not ourselves to you, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. No mere creature can say as did our Lord, “I am the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, or the Way, the Truth and the Life.” It is ours to proclaim the greatness, the graciousness, the mercifulness, and the work of another. It is ours to point with John to Jesus and say, “Behold the Lamb of God, which take away the sins of the world!” Our Lord, therefore, in preaching the Gospel, necessarily preached Himself. He could not otherwise set it before the people, for He is the sum and substance of the Gospel: He is in the whole of it, and the whole of the gospel is in Him. Christ and the Gospel are inseparable, and can never be divided. Without Christ the Gospel is an empty name—an unmeaning representation of empty doctrines and promises, if I may so speak. Christ is the fulness and the reality of the Gospel of God. It was for Him to say when the people appeared in the temple, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” But it is mine to say, If any man thirst, let him go unto Christ and drink. When the five thousand were fed, it was for the Master to say, “I am the Bread of Life.” And when He sat upon the well of Samaria, it was His prerogative to say, “He that drinketh of the

water that I shall give him, shall never thirst. The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

Perhaps a vine was seen by the Saviour as He walked, and He took advantage of that circumstance to preach that glorious doctrine, "I am the Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman." We say concerning Christ, "He is the Vine, and we are the branches: but He says, concerning Himself, "I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman;" and "I am the Vine, and ye are the branches."

Now, I do not know that I shall preach a sermon this morning, neither do I suppose that you will expect me to do so. Having been ill three weeks, and confined to my bed, it takes one some time to get well into harness again. However, I hope the Lord will strengthen me in my weakness, favour me with light, bring my soul somewhat into the liberty of the Gospel, and help me to say a few things in His name.

In the first place, we have here *the doctrine of the Church's union to Christ*. The leading point in the text is, union to the Lord. "I am the true Vine;" and again, "I am the Vine, and ye are the branches." I love to meditate upon this truth, especially when the unction of the Holy One drops upon my heart. This is a glorious reality; union to the Saviour, or the church's oneness with the dear Son of God, is essential to life eternal. It is *a secret union*. I wish, my dear friends, that when ministers of the Gospel preach on this, and similar themes, but especially on this, they would go a little further than they do. They are all very willing and anxious to speak of the believer as one with Christ, and as being found in Him, but I am sure they do not go far enough to satisfy many hungry souls. I believe, my dear friends, that the church of God was secretly in the Lord Jesus Christ before her existence became visible. Just as the branches were originally in, and grew out of the vine, so the church of God was originally, secretly, and intentionally on the part of God, in Jesus Christ the Mediator, the great root and head of grace,

"Before the day-star knew its place,
Or planets went their round."

You take an acorn, and plant it in the earth. If it should strike and grow, and become a tree, it is a fact that the living growing oak was originally in the acorn. Look at Adam and Eve, our first parents, in the garden of Eden; the human family was in them seminally and secretly, and was perfectly known to Jehovah. You and I were there, and all his sons and daughters were originally and seminally in them. You think of Abraham, the father of the children of Israel, the national people of God. All Israel were originally in him, and are called his seed; and though sometimes those words apply to Christ, yet the children of Israel are represented as the seed of Abraham, for the whole nation were in him, and God saw them there. Abraham was the root of that special people, and they were in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, before they came into actual being, or had any visible existence. And is it so with you and me in relation to Christ? (I am not very loud or rapid, but I trust we shall quietly give our attention to this point.) And was it so, that before our Lord came, before there was any actual necessity

for His coming, before the first hour of time, when God lived alone,—was it so, that in that root the glorious person of Christ, the everlasting God saw the whole of that future vine which shall fill heaven itself, and grow everywhere in that world of blessedness and glory? All were secretly and seminally in the person of our Lord. I know that sometimes we are referred to the soul as coming to the Saviour; but never forget that Christianity comes out of Christ, and that Christian men and women are the seed of Christ. I want you to remember that, as that tiny branch, that shoot, or the little bud on the vine, which will, by and bye, become a very considerable branch, and bear fruit, was originally in the vine, so every believer, during the first stages of his belief, and during the last stages of his triumph, was originally in the glorious Christ of God. “I am the Vine, and ye are the branches;” having had a decreative existence, and a decreative life in Me, before the foundation of the world.

Let us, however, leave that point, and notice, in the next place, that this union, as set forth in my text, is *a very close or near one*. Nothing can be closer or nearer than the union between the vine and its branches. They are not two, but one. The branches, the stem, and the root, constitute one vine. The branches may be very numerous, they may spread very far, and cover a good deal of ground; but wherever they may be, however far they may be from the root, being in the vine, and united to the root, they constitute, notwithstanding distance, a part of the vine. There is a union, an indestructible oneness, between Christ and His people, which is not a figurative oneness, it is a great fact. The church is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. You say, I do not know whether I am in Christ, but I am in the church. It is something to be in the church, but it does not follow that because we are in the vineyard that therefore we are in the vine. It is possible to be in the vineyard, and yet to have no union to the vine. You say your thoughts are in the Bible, and they are stable, fixed and rooted there, and that you are a firm believer in the Word of God. That is very well, and I am glad of it. Atheism I hate, and scepticism in all its forms and aspects is to be condemned. Yes, I am glad you are a firm believer in the Bible, but there is a difference between an historical and a vital faith. Your thoughts may be in the Bible, and the Bible may be in your thoughts; and yet you may not be in Christ the Vine. This is the grand essential. “I in them, and thou in Me,” and “they are Mine.” Brethren, where are we? You may bring a branch to the vine, lay it against it, tie it to it so neatly and skilfully that it may appear to be really a part of it; but if the union be not natural and vital, it will be barren and dead; so, if there be no union of heart and soul to Christ, there can be no spiritual life, and living and dying in this state we shall be lost, for we are not the Lord’s. The union between you and your wife is close and near, the union between you and your children is close and near; but it seems to me that the nearest, dearest, and closest union in the world, is that which exists through grace divine between Christ and a Christian, between Jesus, the root of all grace, and every gracious man and woman. It is a close and living union, else there will be no fruit; and I am sure there will not be any real, natural, or proper foliage, for the sap that produces the fruit produces

the leaves also, and both leaves and fruit are good. Is Christ in your heart and mine? The indwelling is mutual, the root is in the branches, and the branches are in root, and separation between the two in relation to Christ can never take place. Christ is in the Christian, and this constitutes one a Christian. The Christian is in Christ, and this constitutes him a living and an acceptable character.

"O may my soul be found in Him,
And of His righteousness partake."

I will not say much about myself; but when one is laid aside by the hand of God, and his condition, for the time, is said to be somewhat critical, it brings him into a serious mood and frame, and he looks about for the character and nature of his profession, and for satisfactory evidences of an interest in Christ. Oh Christian brethren, when the countenance changes, when health has left us, and pain shoots through the body from head to feet, and there is a difficulty in breathing, and one fears that his last breath may be not far off; then solemn reflections follow! Then one feels he is in a solemn position, and the great question then relates to my subject this morning. Where, and what am I? If I am not in Christ, a part or a branch of the Vine, whatever else I may be, whatever else my friends may have supposed I was, and am still, I am lost, and have nothing for God, or for eternity. Life is the grand qualification, the grand power and requisite for heaven, for its enjoyment, and for God. The life may be limited and feeble, but there must be life; heaven is not a world of death. Dead ones, and deadness are there unknown; life, and life eternal everywhere prevails in heaven. All is life, from the glorious Majesty of heaven, to the last arrival there. "All is life, but "without Me ye can do nothing." My religion may be talked about, my preaching may be spoken of, my profession of religion may be accepted, and my theory or views of divine truth may be quite scriptural. Have I life? Is the life of Christ in this poor heart of mine? "I am the Vine, and ye are the branches." This is a vital union. Do not go away and say, The preacher was very severe and bitter this morning. I am not so, but I feel in a measure the importance of the absolute necessity for union to Jesus Christ. My dear friends, this union is essential; for "without Me, ye can do nothing." We can sin, we can fall, we can slip, we can be barren, we can be cold, and we can yield to temptation; but without union to Jesus Christ, there cannot possibly be a single bud of spiritual power, nor a single swelling in the heart of heavenly life. As time, however, is going, let me mention one more point, and then I will proceed to another branch of the subject.

This union, which is vital and essential, *is indissoluble*. Nothing can separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Christ's Father is the Husbandman. He holds the pruning knife, but He was never known to separate a branch from the vine, it was never His intention to separate Christ and the Christian. There are suckers here and there which threaten to waste, so to speak, a very considerable amount of sap, and it is necessary that they should be removed, and the pruning is by the hands of the great husbandman. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; for the removal of the superfluous

growth is painful. Sometimes that which enfeebles us by absorbing that which should flow elsewhere, is some sweet comfort which we hold very dear, and off it comes, and our heavenly Father knows what he is doing. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it." You know what He does with every branch that beareth not fruit; but oh, you fruit-bearers, expect to be pruned and to be purged by the God of infinite wisdom and love. I remember, some time ago, reading, I think, in a sermon preached by a minister on this point, that he said, while watching the proceedings of a gardener who was pruning a vine, "Are you not removing too much? Are you not using the knife too freely?" The man said, "You mind your business, sir, and I will mind mine. You go and preach, and I will not interfere with you. I will prune the vine, and know how to do it, and you are not to interfere with me in my work." And the following season proved the excellence of the man's knowledge and work. Our God is wise, and what should be removed He removes, and He removes it as He pleases. The knife may be some bitter affliction, or some sharp word. One says, Oh, the Word was preached, and it cut me down, for it went into the very depths of my spirit, and seemed to be all against me! Yes, the pruning knife is sometimes the Word. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Indeed, no sanctifying blessing can attend the operations of our God, without the Holy Spirit. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it." It is not His intention to separate from the Vine, though the pain be bitter, the darkness dense, and your feelings be misery itself. Mine have been so. Oh that it were always otherwise with me! Your sufferings may be great; yet, if you are in Christ the Vine, you are there for ever, for a separation between Christ the Vine, and the branches, can never take place.

Our second point will be, *the place occupied by this Vine*. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches," and "My Father is the husbandman." Well, this heavenly Vine was not planted in Eden. There was a vine there, but there was a worm at the root of it, and the whole died and became corrupt. The Lord has a vine which belongs to another system, to another branch of His dominion, character, and government; and where does it stand? In Canaan? No, a national vine was there. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt," found room for it and planted it here; but that vine has been destroyed, and the vineyard broken up, and it lies in wretchedness and ruin. Where is this Vine, then? "My Father is the Husbandman." What do you think about the everlasting purposes of God? Christ the Root is there, and if you are united to Him, you are united to Him, who, as the Root of this Vine, is in the eternal purposes of God. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ, in God." Your life is in Christ the Root, who possesses all fulness, and is in God Himself, even in His eternal love. What do you think of the covenant of grace? There the Vine stands. There Jesus has been planted, there He lives, and His people live in Him. The union between Christ and believers is a covenant union. What do you think of God's everlasting love? My brother, this Vine is in God's heart, and is it not sweet to be thus united to Him? It grows in His heart, for His dear Son, the Son of His love, is in His own bosom, and there

He will remain for ever. And the Vine of which we are speaking is Christ made visible. The existence and character of the Root are revealed. This vine is visible as to its branches, but not as to its Root, and yet we know that that vine yonder has a root, because it is a living reality. If all the men in the world came to reason us out of the belief, that there is no root to that vine, they would fail. That there is life is evident, for see the leaves, and look at the grapes, and these would be impossible without a living, and life-giving root. The root of the matter is in every believer, but it is concealed. The world cannot see it, but they see its branches and its out-growth in his walk and conversation. You know, by your own personal experience, that your religion has a root, and that that root is divine; not in the ordinary sense of that word, but that it is a special, a gracious, a spiritual root. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Thirdly, the text indicates *the unity of the church of God*. "I am the Vine. Then believers, or Christians and Christ bear the same nature. That little branch of the Vine is of the same nature as the root. There are not two natures here; sameness is here a leading fact. The unity of the church appears in its sameness of nature, and sameness of name—Christ and Christians. The root and the branches have only one name. "There is a vine;" and we do not enter into particulars and say it has a root, and so many branches. It is a vine, and the name includes the whole of it,—all that is invisible as to the root, and all that is visible as to the branches, and so we have a growing, a visible church, which is more or less fruitful; a church that lives because Christ lives, and that lives the life which He lives. "Because I live, ye shall live also." A few thousand years back, one of the first branches of this Vine appeared in Abel. He belonged to this Vine, and not to a different one, or another order of things. Enoch, who walked with God, was another branch; and Noah, who was accepted by God, was one with us. Moses and Aaron, and all Old Testament saints, were branches of this Vine. Then came the apostles, who were followed by the early churches of Christ, and ever since the Vine has been growing and bearing fruit. Yes, it is a growing Vine, and Jesus will produce all that He engaged to produce, before the foundation of the world, and the Vine will be beautiful and glorious at last. Beauty characterizes it even now; but when all God's people have been made visible, and all the branches are of full and perfect growth; and when fruit hangs on every branch everywhere, the vine will be marvellous indeed. It will fill all heaven, as Israel in Canaan, and as the posterity of Adam fills the world in which we live. The unity of the church of God, for there are not two churches.

Fourthly, shall I say a word *on the fruit it bears*. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." Ah! I wish I were a fruitful branch; and yet, let me not complain, let not ingratitude and unthankfulness, or hardness of heart prevail; if I bear some fruit I would be thankful, and bear still more. Every tree bears fruit after its own kind, and Jesus Christ will see that *this Vine* bears fruit after His kind. True Christianity is from Christ, He produces it all. He brings the Christian as such into existence, and fills him from Himself. The best life on the earth is that which is lived

by the Christian in fellowship with Christ. He draws supplies of grace silently, day by day, from Christ the Lord. The life that is in the Vine circulates quietly. I will not now say anything about the noise of an "army" in the streets, nor how much holy life there is in connection with drums and fifes, and the rest of it. I do not think the grace and life of Christ circulate with show and noise. The branches, I do not think, become any more beautiful for that. They grow in Jesus Christ, and the life that flows from the great root in God's almighty heart, silently and secretly rises up through Christ, and circulates through all the Vine, even in every branch thereof; and the branches, as I said some time ago, spread far and wide. I am not bitter nor bigoted, believe me; therefore I say, I believe that some of the branches in this Vine are to be found amongst other Denominations than our own. Not a few of them are wrong in their heads, but right in their hearts, having the one thing needful. One in Christ, the great Root, though time and space may separate them. I do not believe in all that one and another says, but I do believe that the Lord knows His own people, and will save them all. Well, they all meet and unite in Christ, the great and glorious Root of life and fruit. What do you think of faith? Union is before faith, and faith springs from it. What do you think of repentance? The eyes filled with tears. Union precedes repentance, and repentance proves it. If you will take a bunch or two of good works, have them by all means; but good works, as such, can never be found, unless there is union to the dear Christ of God.

Fifthly and lastly, *the great Proprietor*. "My Father is the Husbandman." It follows, therefore, that this Vine is not a spontaneous growth; it did not spring up accidentally, but was planted by the Father. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word." So that here is the Christian, and the Christian is in Christ, and Christ is in God; and God, therefore, is the great Proprietor of all. May the Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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MAN'S WRATH USED AND RESTRAINED BY GOD.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 18th DECEMBER, 1887.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."—Psalm lxxvi. 10.

"IN Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel." It is a blessed thing to know God; but a right, a true knowledge of Him is limited to a particular place or people. In Judah, (or in the church,) is God known, for a refuge. In Israel He is known as their strength, and covering, and protection. His name is great in His church, not only as a body, but considered individually and personally. O that it were greater in our faith, our hearts, and our affections! Excess is impossible here. "In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling-place in Zion." The church had been surrounded by enemies, and a multitude of dangers had threatened her with destruction: her doubts and fears ran high, and her unbelief at times was so strong, that she feared being carried away. But man's extremity is God's opportunity; and "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." The Lord appeared on the scene; He opened a door for Himself, and made bare His mighty arm, and scattered their enemies; and restored security, serenity, and tranquillity to them; and they were led to say, in the language of the text, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

Now, let us look for a few minutes at the subject. I shall try to show you, if the Lord will be pleased to help me, how this is exemplified and verified. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee." The text expresses a very wonderful fact. The wrath of man shall praise God, and if all his wrath is not employed in that direction, the remainder of it shall He restrain. How does the wrath of man praise God? I notice, in the first place, that the wrath of man praises God *by fulfilling His purposes*. Surely that which fulfils the purposes of God praises Him. If it proclaims His being, His character, and the general and special operations of His hand, it praises Him. The child of God does not fail to see the work of his God, and the hand of his heavenly Father in connection with the circumstances of his life. If lightening and thunder were unconnected with the hand of God, they might frustrate His purposes, destroy faith in His holy Word, and leave ruin where salvation should be found. But,

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

No, there is not a raging tempest, not a gale of wind, nor any movement in the universe of God, apart from His presence or from His superintending wisdom and goodness. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee." Intentionally so? No: the devil is full of wrath; but he has never intended that his rage should praise the great Maker of the world. The

wrath of man is indeed bitter, perpetual, and abiding. Yet it is not the intention of wrathful men to praise God, or to fulfil His purposes. Was it the intention of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar to do so? Was it the intention of Pharaoh to fulfil the purposes of God? No: Sennacherib went against Israel full of fury and wrath, with the intention of destroying, if possible, that peculiar people; but God was pleased to put His hook in his nose, and His bridle in his lips, and turn him about as He pleased. When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Canaan, it was his intention, if possible, to destroy the people, or to carry them away, and to finally separate them from their land by swallowing them up and absorbing them in his own kingdom and country. But if he was the sword, or any other weapon, that weapon is represented as having been in the hand of God. Man cannot do what he would; and, blessed be God, his wrath is either diverted or restrained, by Divine power. Man means one thing, and God intends another; for "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will." A river of water may be diverted from its course, and turned into another channel, without becoming changed itself: the water is not changed, but remains the same as it was when it flowed in its original channel. The Lord is represented as so reigning and presiding over men, that He turns them about whithersoever He pleases. He does not always quench the wrath, nor put an end to the enmity. No; the burning enmity remains, and the wrath continues; but the heart in which they rage is under the management and control of God, and He turns the evil into channels, whereby He accomplishes His own purposes, and fulfils His own designs. Now, this is never the intention of the devil, neither is it the object of the enemies of the church of God. They intend to bring misery, wretchedness, want, woe, sorrow, distress, destruction, and death if possible, upon the people of God. They raise their hands, and intend to bring them down very heavily upon the hearts, and heads, and homes of God's dear people. God, however, watches the enemy, and interposes His own hand, and the wrath of men sometimes falls upon objects which they had not contemplated previously, or it turns as it were upon themselves; for there is a God on His own high throne, and He presides over all the commotion and confusion which are ever happening in the world, whether they seem to be under the control of man or not.

Let us now pass on to illustrate this point. Our Lord, just before He went to heaven, said to His disciples, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Mark the words, and observe the order given. "Tarry in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." How would you have understood these words? Why, that after you had been endued with the power, it was your Master's will that you should leave Jerusalem. I think that is fairly implied in the words. The disciples observed the former part of the order, and remained in Jerusalem until the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they were endued with power from on high. And what did they do? They preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. What, however, followed? They remained in the city, and manifested no desire to leave the place, and were in no hurry to go abroad,

although the Master had said to them, "Go into all the world." They were in Jerusalem, making themselves as comfortable as they could, having forgotten, apparently, the Master's orders, to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel;" and if I may be allowed so to express myself, they would have remained there until their dying day if persecution had not burst forth. But the wrath of man broke out, and a fire was lighted in Jerusalem, which raged, and became very fierce, and it scorched some of them. I beg your attention to the fact, that upon the persecution which arose about Stephen, the disciples were scattered abroad. And what was it that scattered them but persecution? Had it not been for the wrath of man, or persecution, on that occasion, the disciples might not have left Jerusalem. They liked the place well, and were well off too, and their feelings and experience were on the whole agreeable; they were full of the Holy Ghost, and held fellowship and communion with God. The church was very large and very prosperous—three thousand, or perhaps five thousand members; and they had all things common. What could be better? Permit me so to speak. What could be happier or more agreeable than that state of things? A large church in the metropolis of Canaan, where God's Zion had stood for generations and for centuries, and they themselves so gifted that they could preach the Gospel in all languages. Nothing could be more agreeable than this; and it seems as if they were for settling down and taking their ease, at least, to some extent. But a persecution arose about Stephen and others, and the fire which was lighted, instead of being quenched, spread far and wide, and its heat was so intense that the disciples were scattered; and Philip went to Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. Would he have gone there had it not been for persecution? Philip went down to Samaria, and Peter also; and others went abroad, and carried their religion with them, together with the Gospel of God, and they spread the savour of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, the Lord. Their flesh loved ease, but their spirits were the residences of the Holy Ghost, and the thrones of Jesus. They could not separate themselves from their Lord, therefore they carried the mark on their foreheads, and had no desire to have it obliterated or concealed. They were not ashamed of their Master's name, nor of the holy and peculiar savour of His truth; and their Lord was with them. You cannot separate the odour from the ointment, nor fragrance or beauty from the rose; and God's servants, the apostles, carried with them the Rose of Sharon, and the ointment which had been applied to their own hearts, and had healed them. Their spirits were filled with a rich perfume from Heaven, which they diffused abroad. Thus, the fire that burned some of them out of Jerusalem, fulfilled the purposes of God. It compelled them to go forth, as the Master had bidden them, and to carry the Gospel here and there, to all the world; and they continually experienced the fulfilment of that word,—“And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Persecution is to be deprecated: I pray against it, and plead against it, and do trust it may be the pleasure of the Lord our God to save His people from its cruel bitter power. Perhaps, however, it is not wrong to say, that there may be some things in the world, and some things in the church, worse than persecution. Persecution, perhaps, is not the very

worst state of things that might prevail. But, at all events, if it be terrible, and rages, God turns it to account. If it be as a fierce fire, God watches its progress, and controls or checks it, so that it burns only here and there, according to His will and pleasure; but it is not a non-entity with regard to the fulfilment of His purposes. It is an agent, albeit a repulsive one, whose object is hostile to God, and not to fulfil His great designs. God says, as it were, to the devil, thou shalt not smite with that weapon where thou pleasest; I will rule over thy proceedings. Thou shalt not hold those reins, I will hold them Myself. If it is a chariot of war, and intended to carry war, death, famine, and destruction among My church and people, I will manage and control the whole matter in My own way: therefore, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

Before I leave this point, I should like to give an illustration or two from the Word of God. "The wrath of man shall praise Thee." The wrath of Esau fulfilled the purposes of God, for it was the means of sending Jacob to his uncle Laban; and the results of his visit there were truly important. One was, his marriage with Leah and with Rachel. Another, the birth of the twelve patriarchs, or the heads of the tribes of Israel; Joseph and Benjamin, and Judah, and their brethren; so that the fact that the wrath of man praises God is shewn by this historical event. We have, further, an abundant and a very striking proof in the reconciliation of Esau to Jacob. "Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob." God, however, resolved that this should not happen. The wrath which was kindled and cherished in Esau's heart, continued to rankle for many years, but at last he was unable to carry out his intention; God so turned and over-ruled it, that it accomplished His pleasure and fulfilled His purpose. When Jacob returned, after many years, to Canaan, he was a rich man, had a large family, and eventually he met his brother Esau, who had four hundred men with him. Esau's heart was then boiling with rage, and he was now determined to execute his purpose. I said I would slay him, and so I will; and he took four hundred men to surround and destroy him. But "the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." See them after Jacob had obtained the blessing. Behold Esau and Jacob meet: but whatever has happened? they are on each other's neck, kissing each other, and offering presents and help! Oh, your God is Almighty! Carry by your faith His almighty power into every circumstance of your life. The fire may be large enough to burn down the whole of Jerusalem; but it shall not consume a single stick, unless it be the will of God. Persecution may rage with sufficient fierceness to destroy whole churches; but there is a bulwark around Zion, and a God that makes the channels here and there. If the flood rises high, and threatens to drown the city, our God will cause as much of it as He pleases to praise Him, and restrain or divert the rest, as a miller stops the stream when he has ground his corn. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

Let us take another illustration. Look at Joseph and his brethren. Surely in that case the wrath of man praised God. They hated that

young fellow, Joseph. Perhaps there was a measure of fault in the youth, and a greater measure of fault in his father, who was dotingly fond of him, and made him a coat of many colours : but whatever the measure of hatred may have been, there it was in Joseph's brethren. Their hatred was not a weak sentiment, nor something transient, which endured for a short time, and then passed away ; it was an abiding sentiment, and by and bye they said, " Behold, this dreamer cometh ; let us kill him, and then we shall see what will become of his dreams." The wrath raged in their hearts, and they cast him into a pit, but eventually sold him to Ishmeelites, who resold him as a slave to Potiphar, and the remaining circumstances of the life of Joseph you are well acquainted with. But was it necessary that Joseph should, for his own sake, be sold to Potiphar ? Was it necessary that he should go to prison, and become a subordinate governor there, or that he should interpret the dreams of the butler and baker ? By all this he was gradually drawing near to the throne of Pharaoh, and over that process God Himself presided. The means by which Joseph was carried to prison were diabolical, and the agencies hellish. The instrumentality by which he was carried towards the throne of Egypt was hateful to God ; but He was pleased to make use of it : for " the wrath of man shall praise Him." God had great purposes to accomplish by His servant Joseph, and He took advantage, so to speak, of his brethren's hatred, which, as a strong current, carried him where his services were required. The flood of hatred carried him into Egypt, and eventually into the royal palace, and then to the second seat of power in that country. Then Joseph's brethren, and their father's house, were saved and made glad ; and the very Messiah Himself, if I may so speak, was, as to His incarnation, involved in the preservation of Joseph. Thus, " Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee." I might go further, and speak of Pharaoh. " Who," said he, " is the Lord ? I know Him not, neither will I let Israel go." Ah ! but you shall, Pharaoh ; whether you know the Lord or not. If you knew the Lord, your heart would not burn with rage and wrath against Him. It is a fact you do not know Him ; but your wrath shall praise Him. At the appointed time for Israel's release, the wrath of Pharaoh was so deep and strong that the royal and wrathful fool actually, as the Bible tells us, " assayed " to go into the sea also. The Israelites were there by Divine command and authority ; but what right had Pharaoh to follow them into the sea which had been divided ? He went, however ; and his object was to swallow up the whole company that went before him : but God was there, and said, " Surely the wrath of man shall praise Me, and the remainder of wrath will I restrain ; " " For this same purpose, Pharaoh, have I raised thee up ; that I might show My power in thee." Well, we might pass on, and just notice Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar ; but we go further, and meditate for one moment upon the most diabolical act that was ever performed, the most hideous and hateful crime that was ever committed ; but even *that* praised God. The most diabolical act that ever was committed in this world was the murder of Christ, the Son of God. " Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." " Of whom ye have now been the betrayers and the murderers." No crime committed was so black, so

hateful, or so abominable as that, so far as man was concerned. But what came of it? "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee;" for out of that Jewish hatred and diabolical wrath, arose, according to the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, the fulfilment of His grandest purpose, and the grandest combination of deeds that God ever achieved. Out of the blackest and most hellish evil, the results through God are heaven, and grace, and godliness, and eternal life. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee." I did not intend dwelling so long on this part of the subject; but I have left myself a little time for other matters.

Having noticed, in the first place, that the wrath of man praises God, because it fulfils His purposes; not intentionally on man's part, but on the part of God,—I observe, secondly, "*Surely* the wrath of man shall praise Thee." Do not lose sight of the *surely* here. The wrath of man praises God, *because it proves the reality and vitality of grace in the heart.* Now that which satisfactorily and scripturally proves me to be a child of God is good; not in itself probably, but as to the result of its operations. Perhaps some of you have read ecclesiastical history, and portions of it in relation to the church of God in Scotland. Think of those brave, courageous men, the Covenanters, who opposed the nation's religion. Think of the blood-thirsty Claverhouse and others, with their dragoons, who were always about in certain parts of Scotland, wreaking their wrath, and the wrath of the king, and of the country, upon those good and godly men; but they could not destroy the grace that was in their hearts, nor put out those lights which God had kindled, nor warp or bend those characters which God had formed. Persecution did not destroy them. May the Lord be pleased to deliver us from such a trial. It did them, however, no harm finally; but indirectly it did them good. They never more deeply loved their Lord, or cleaved closer unto Him, than when they were hunted from place to place in that cruel manner. The wrath of man took the form of the bitterest persecution. And did they fail? Did their hopes give way? Certainly not; they remained in persecution what they were before they entered it, and they emerged therefrom more deeply convinced than ever of the power of the presence of their great and glorious Lord. Thus the wrath of man praised God. The more water, as Bunyan has it, they poured upon the fire, the more fiercely it burned; for there was on the other side of the wall, One that poured oil upon it. If hell pours water, God pours oil, and creature wrath can never quench the fire which God supplies with oil. You have been persecuted, but did not lose your religion, and saw no reason whatever for giving up your principles. No, certainly not. Are you prepared to go there again, should necessity require you to do so? Yes. Then surely the wrath of man praises the Lord. Why, trial roots the child of God more deeply in God's verities than tranquillity and serenity. A tree in winter may be an unsightly object; there are many branches and twigs, but neither leaves, nor fruit, nor a green bud can be seen. Of what use is the tree? Why, it is rooted in the earth, and the raging winds and hurricanes and storms, before which it bends, give new strength to the unseen roots far down in the soil, so that whilst no visible growth goes on outside, there is abundance of growth going on below. The process

is invisible ; the wind which you fear will uproot the tree, or break off its branches, strengthens its roots and it remains where it did and what it was. It was an apple tree before the storm, and it is so now. It was rooted before the storm, and there it is now. The difference is this ; its roots have spread further than they were before. They occupy more ground, having struck deeper and wider into the soil. The tree was never so deeply rooted as it is now, owing to the storm and the winter ; and the next spring and summer will shew how much good the storm did. And sanctified affliction and trial will, under God's blessing, show how much persecution, and the wrath of man, may do for God's dear people.

Thirdly, the wrath of man praises God, *because it drives its objects unto Him*. When I say its objects, I mean the objects of man's wrath, or the persons at whom wrath is aimed. It sends them to God ; drives them into their refuge. Yonder is a house, it appears to be a very strong one, but it is somewhat isolated. It is a refuge for wayfarers and pilgrims who are overtaken by storms. One says, " Well, I do not want to enter it, but will take a note and draw a sketch of it, and shew where it is situated. The weather is fine, and all I now require is just to know that it is there, and what it is there for." But by and bye there comes a downpour of rain, a furious storm, and then the speaker runs into it, and becomes personally and experimentally acquainted with it, which is far more than taking a sketch thereof. God is our refuge and strength, as our refuge in every place of danger and trial. But what do you know about it ? Have the wrath of man, or persecution, or the storms of life, overtaken you, compelling you to make use of Him ? Yes, blessed be His name, *He is my refuge and strength*. He is not merely a refuge and strength for others, but He is so to me, and a very present help in trouble. This is due to the storm, for thus I have become acquainted with the shelter and refuge. Otherwise my knowledge would have been theoretical, and I unable to give an experimental account of God as a refuge, while now I know Him to be mine. Dear friends, the wrath of man praises God, when it is so sanctified that the objects thereof are driven into His presence. It intensifies prayer, and that which leads one to pray and intensifies prayerfulness of heart does one good. It may be a sword, or a spear, or an arrow, or a fire, and one may be scorched and burnt. It may be a loss or a cross ; but if it sends us into the refuge, and intensifies prayerfulness of heart, it does us good ; the devil has no cause to rejoice ; and " Surely the wrath of man shall praise Him." A dog let loose in a meadow among a flock of sheep, will have a peculiar effect. Scattered all over the meadow before the dog entered and began to bark, all now run close together. And if the wrath of man has ever had the effect of uniting God's dear people, and binding them closer together than they were bound before, it praises God. My brother, God is with you in the flames and in the floods of human wrath, saying, " Fear not, thou art Mine ; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Thus, my brethren, the wrath of man surely praises God, and the remainder of it He restrains. God works by the various

methods of love and hatred, by friends and by foes. I will not say that He does as much by overruling the agency of wrath, as He does by love, and yet He works by both powers. He works by the love of His own heart, by the love of His dear Son, and by brotherly love in His church and among His people. He works by love and by wrath. A river of love comes down from heaven, the streams of which make glad the city of God, and He works by this. There comes an eruption, if I may so speak, from the depths of hell; fire and vapour of smoke in persecution, for how terrible are some of the forms the wrath of man has assumed! and what shall be done? God is there, and if He will, He can quench it; but if He does not, He can and will restrain it; for "the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." God's chains are very strong, and yet they are not visible. The restraints which He casts upon the wrath of man are the events and circumstances by which they are surrounded. One says, if that event had not happened when it did, I should have carried my point. And earth and hell would carry their point if God were not beforehand with them: and that circumstance did arise, that event did occur; for "surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee." If sin were not restrained, what would it not do? Sin has never, except in one instance, namely, on our suffering Lord, run on to its natural depth and goal. If a stronger power than sin had not opposed, sin would have flooded the universe with destruction and ruin. Such is the nature of evil, that it would ruin families were there not some sort of restraint upon it. We have known families ruined by the sin and wrath of man. It would destroy churches, and desolate and ruin nations and the world, if it were not checked and restrained. God will not permit anything to arise, but what He intends to control. Nothing came into existence without God's permission or power, therefore nothing in existence can frustrate His great purposes. The devil may be strong, God is stronger than he. Hell may be deep, Heaven is higher and greater than hell. The cunning of Satan may be measureless to us, if I may so speak; the wisdom of God is infinite and perfect. Give Him, my soul, thy cause to plead, and thyself to keep; nor doubt the Father's grace. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

With deep sorrow, the Deacons have to announce the decease of Mr. John Hazelton, the beloved Pastor of the Church at Chadwell Street, and Preacher of these Sermons. He fell asleep in Jesus on January 9th, in the sixty-sixth year of his age, and the thirty-sixth of his Pastorate. Arrangements have been made to continue the publication of the Sermons for fifteen months, in order to complete the fifth volume.

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“WHAT WILT THOU THAT I SHALL DO UNTO THEE?”

A Sermon -

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 8th MAY, 1881.

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*“And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.”—Luke xviii. 40, 41.*  
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EVERY branch of the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ is of unspeakable importance to all who are concerned therein:—to God, to angels, to all that are in heaven before the throne, and to all God's dear children now living on the earth; and since there are perhaps millions of the objects of God's love not yet in existence, the mediatorial office and work of Jesus Christ are important in relation to them. Salvation is one great whole, and God is accomplishing His merciful purposes in relation to that glorious work. The operations of Divine power are advancing, and our great God, seated on his throne, says, “I will work, and who shall let it?”

The sufferings of our dear Redeemer on Calvary, constitute a divinely important part of our salvation; and the Saviour's intercession in heaven is an equally important branch of His work. It is a most encouraging fact that He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. In the intercessory prayer of the Son of God addressed to His Father just before He left the world, He said, “Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.” It appears, therefore, that Jesus Christ has been communicating eternal life ever since these words were uttered, and that fact was expressed by Him. There are not many of us who fully appreciate the marvellous truth, that the stream of eternal life is perpetually flowing from the throne and heart of God. With our mortal eyes we see things that are visible, and with our mortal ears we hear the sounds that are round about us; but how seldom do we contemplate the sacred spiritual mystery referred to! Our dear Lord loves to communicate those blessings He has obtained for His people, and the right to distribute which He has acquired! In the days of His flesh His salvation was occasionally very manifest; but now as it reaches the hearts of sinners, it is, for the most part, a blessing invisibly communicated.

When the poor man, to whom my text refers, was made experimentally the subject of faith, I do not know; it is, however, certain that he was a believer; for the Master said, “Thy faith hath saved thee;” and therefore he was a spiritually living person. He was, however, tried with poverty, and afflicted with blindness; for he was a blind beggar, sitting by the way-side, asking alms. Hearing a crowd of persons approaching, he inquired what it meant, and was told, “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by:”

VOL. V., No. 22.—FEBRUARY 15, 1888.

and he cried, saying, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me; and they which went before rebuked him," Bartimæus, as Mark tells us he was named, is not the first that has been rebuked by his fellow-men for calling upon God in prayer; we are prone to injure one another, and there is something very solemn in wounding the heart of an individual who has been touched and saved by grace. That friend near you may not express himself as you do, his language may be somewhat strange; but deal kindly with him, it may be that there is a little grace in his heart; and although he is awkward in his expressions, do not cut him off, nor rebuke him because of that fact. Notwithstanding all rebuffs, the blind man cried so much the more, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and if the water is dammed up, the banks will be overflowed, and the country flooded. He cried so much the more, "Have mercy on me!" His religion was not to be quenched; his wants were not to be supplied by any other person than the Saviour; he had an experience which was at that time peculiar to himself; and he said, as it were, mine is an urgent pressing case. And Jesus heard his cry, and stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him. He did not request His disciples to do it; neither did he invite the poor blind man to find his way to Him; but he commanded him to be brought; and when he was come near He asked him saying, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" and he said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

The words to which I would more especially draw your attention this morning are these: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" In offering a few observations upon them, let me first call your attention to *the character of the Speaker*. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" In the second place, let us look at *the character of the person addressed*, for though he was poor, and a beggar, we shall have something to say of the excellency of his character; and thirdly, let us look at *the importance of the question* put to him by the Lord.

I. In the first place, let us make a few observations on *the character of the Speaker*. Jesus is the Speaker, and He is represented in the context as the "Son of David," and "Jesus of Nazareth;" the poor man himself called Him, "Lord;" and therefore it will be important, and I trust somewhat profitable, for us to contemplate the character of the Speaker here. I notice in the first place that the poor man who cried to the Saviour regarded Him as *the promised Messiah*, as the Son of God, as He concerning whom Moses and the Prophets had written; and when the people said that "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," he did not address Him by this title, but at once said, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Now there is something very significant and important in the fact that Jesus was not called the Son of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob; He is said to be the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David; but not in so many words the Son of Abraham; and yet He was one of his descendants. How was it that He was addressed as the Son of David? Abraham was never a ruler and a king; Jesus Christ is King, and Lord of all. I want to call attention to the fact that He who addressed the poor man on this interesting occasion, was a complex person, He was the great God-man

and Mediator,—the Lord Jesus Christ,—bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh ; and it may be said of the circumstances recorded in the text, “God was manifest in the flesh.” Jesus appeared on that occasion as a man, “clothed with a body like our own,” dressed in our human nature. He did not assume any other nature, for no other one was interested in his doing and dying ; but “He took upon Him the seed of Abraham.” Now, this is a great mystery, and it will remain infinitely deep to all eternity, how two dissimilar natures are united in one great and glorious person. He did not assume an angelic nature, nor another nature differing from the human ; He might have created another nature for Himself, but had He done so He could not have saved human sinners, and therefore He assumed human nature ; the God appeared in the man,—the perfect God appeared in the perfect man ; and we have the words of a God here speaking through a man’s lips. “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?”

Unmediated Deity, God out of Christ, can do nothing for sinners ; and the sinner can have no consecutive or comforting ideas in his own mind concerning unmediated Deity. God out of Christ is indeed a consuming fire, and can never say to a guilty wretch, “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” No, He took the nature that had sinned, and veiled His majesty and divinity behind it, and came as the great healing God of heaven and earth, and addressed Himself to that poor wretched beggar, and said, “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” He did not appear to him as a legislator, or as a judge ; for it is never the business of a law-giver or judge to consult the will of a criminal. What would be thought of a judge if he said to a prisoner on trial, “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” It is the business of a judge to administer and enforce the law, and to consult, not the criminal’s will, but the law and righteousness, and justice concerning the case. No, had Jesus appeared to him as a Law-giver, or in His judicial character, the will and feelings of the poor man would not have been referred to ; he would have been told to go his way, into utter darkness. But having assumed the nature of the man, and having resolved to save him ; and having, in fact, already done so, and created spiritual life in his soul, He appeared to him in a human form, full of attractions, excellences and beauties ; and checked the impetuous feelings of the suppliant’s rebukers. The blessed Jesus is human and divine ; all the majesty of God is in Him, all the omnipotence of Jehovah is in the Man Christ Jesus, for He is the everlasting fulness of heaven and earth, and His divine excellencies constitute that consuming fire before which the wicked cannot stand ; but all that majesty is softened and modified by His humanity, and all the glories of Deity fall in saving power and influence upon blind beggars, and lost and ruined sinners.

Now let us pass on, as time is going, and notice in the second place that the words of the Saviour implied *His Divine fulness*. Make known your requests ; ask ; open your mouth wide ; ask for as much as you will ; “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell ;” and if *all* fulness dwells in our Lord all the fulness of nature must be there ; all the fulness of light is there else He could not have been the Light of the world, nor given sight to

the sightless eyes of that poor man. All the fulness that saints require here, and all the fulness they will require hereafter dwells in that Man of sorrows, who was poor, and walked along the dusty roads of Judea, and who, sitting on a well, said to the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Great is the mystery of godliness; the Author of heaven sat on that well; the author of all heaven hung on that accursed tree. He it was who said to Peter, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto Him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, "Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea and cast an hook and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money, that take and give unto them for Me and thee." As tribute was due, and He had not the money to pay it with, He had to work a miracle for the purpose of appearing honest in the sight of all men. That poor Person, who for *our sakes* became poor, contained within a poor human body all the fulness of the Godhead, all the fulness of the Christian's life, and all the fulness of heaven. I do wonder why ministers of the gospel and preachers of religion want any other theme to dwell upon, and that they should depart in preaching from the great and glorious person of our Lord. He is the wonder of heaven, the masterpiece of all the works of God. Angels can never explore the mysteries of His glory, for there is indeed everything that is unfathomably deep and indescribably excellent in the dear Son of God. He never experiences a difficulty in saving a soul. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast. He put on our body, and wore it at once, and will wear it for ever. He experienced no difficulty in fulfilling the law, and He experienced no difficulty when He met His heavenly Father. And when the curse was inflicted on Him, there were no regrets on the part of Jesus Christ; He never said, The punishment is more than I can bear. Omnipotence was under that burden; an omnipotent Saviour was underneath that withering, flaming, burning curse; an omnipotent Saviour was underneath the interests of countless millions; and no difficulty was experienced by Him, for in Him all fulness dwells. And now He comes to sinners and saves them. To me it is most astonishing that men should misrepresent Christ in His saving work as they do in the day in which we live, saying that, He stands by the sinner and entreats him to be saved, and holds out His hands to him from hour to hour; and having sent out thousands of invitations which are not accepted, He turns away disappointed, and that because the sinner will not allow Him to save him. The Saviour spoke like a God, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" His fulness is Divine; He touches the will and the affections, and detaches them from sin and the world in a moment; He touches the immortal soul, and snatches it from the fire, and rescues it from the tyrant's hand, puts it into His precious blood, and washes it and makes it whiter than snow, saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

My dear brother and sister, has He healed you, and opened your eyes, and unstopped your ears? Can you grasp this idea, that your health and life are in the Lord Jesus Christ, from whom you have received your salvation, and that there is health enough in Him for you, and life, and pardon, and peace, and heaven enough in His dear person to fill your vast desires for ever and ever?

My friends, if there are ten thousand worlds in the material universe, Jesus contains more than they all contain; for He is their Creator, He made them all; and so the Saviour is greater than His salvation, as the Creator is greater than creation; and therefore all fulness dwells in Him; and this full Saviour, who has never out-promised Himself, and whose purposes have never proved larger than His power, took all His fulness to blind Bartimæus, and said, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" First, the Messiah, and secondly, His eternal fulness, appear in connection with His character.

Now let us notice another point, viz., *His deeds*, or His operations. He has only to leave the sinner where he is, He has only to leave us in our sins, under a broken law, and we shall, as sinners, sink into eternal woe. If the Saviour should say, "Let him alone," and pass on, and do nothing, hell, and perdition and eternal darkness are absolutely certain. It is not merely His thoughts about us, and the expression of those thoughts in the glorious gospel of His grace; it is not merely what we have done for ourselves, or what others have done for or against us; but it is, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" My beloved friends, if Jesus has done anything for us, we shall never forget that blessed work? It is well to forget a good deal that our fellow creatures have done for and against us. I should like to forget hundreds of things, but though my memory is treacherous to good things, yet I can remember hard words, or blows, and cruelty from my fellow man; but I cannot always remember all that the dear Lord has done for me.

There are some points, however, that can never be forgotten by me. When I was but a youth of sixteen years of age, I was dancing in the road that leads to hell, and was making as much haste to eternal darkness as such a boy could make. I well remember a dear old saint and his wife, who lived alone in a little cottage, and who were in the habit of reading the word of God and praying every night; and night after night I went and gathered up a handful of small stones, and threw them at their window to disturb them at their devotions. But subsequently that dear aged saint of seventy-two, and that boy of sixteen years, who had persecuted him, were baptized on the same occasion, and became members of the same church. And I well remember the dear old people pouring out the feelings of their hearts when I told them that it was I who used to trouble them.

Well, I shall never forget what the Saviour has done for me; how I lifted up my hand against Him, and He would not be wroth with me; and how I smote His people, and He loved me notwithstanding all; and by and bye He put the hand of His grace on my heart, and killed my natural enmity, and made me a friend; and now I rejoice that

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

There is another thing in connection with the Saviour that will never be forgotten by us, and that was the time when He proclaimed liberty to the captives, and took the chains off our souls, and the sting of guilt out of our consciences, and quenched the fire of apprehended wrath. Truly, we have abundant cause for sweet meditation upon this blessed question put by our Lord.

Many times have I been in the pulpit, full of doubts and fears, my knees knocking together, as if I had not the slightest strength in my legs, when suddenly all my doubts and fears have been removed, and as I have proceeded, I have been set at liberty. “True religion’s more than notion ; something must be known and felt.” When this dear Saviour comes, and does something for us in trouble, we remember it all the days of our life, for the manifold works of our dear Redeemer can never be forgotten by us.

Lastly, as to His character, it is *perfection*. “He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” I will say for your comfort, if the Lord will be pleased to comfort you with the observation, that if He has laid the foundation of your faith, He will finish it ; “and He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.”

If you go about the suburbs of our great cities you will see carcases of numerous houses that have not been finished, perhaps for lack of funds ; but there are none of the Lord’s people, standing and waiting for further means and further ability in the dear Redeemer. He is full enough to satisfy all on earth, and to fill all in heaven ; and if, therefore, He has given you a little faith, a little love and grace, He will give you glory by and bye. A sermon is delivered by a preacher, and he is ashamed of it, or dissatisfied with it. There is a piece of work performed by another individual ; it is like him, and it is not finished, and far from excellent. But here is a beggar, only he is blind, but not spiritually so. He is poor, and asks alms from door to door ; but he is a believer, a child of God, one of the Lord’s precious jewels, and there is a place for him in the Mediator’s crown, and Jesus will bedeck Himself with that jewel, and will wear it among the rest. A great deal must be done before He can enter into bliss, but the Saviour has pledged Himself to finish His work, and glorify that individual. “And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.”

A few words only on *the character of the person addressed*. May I give you a test ? There are two classes of persons in this world, and there are two classes of persons in the two worlds that are to come. There is a worse world than this, and the wicked are there ; and there is a better world than this, and saints are there. There are two classes of persons here—saints and sinners. If the Lord Jesus Christ came to you with this question, “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee ?” what answer would you return Him ? Would it be, “depart

from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways?" Oh, no I could not for ten thousand worlds say, Depart from me. But if you were a stranger to eternal things, a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, that is what you would be saying, and that is what you would mean; and when anything like a Bible thought came into your mind it would disturb you, and you would crush it if you could. Nothing is so unwelcome as thought about the future to a natural man or woman; but if you are a living soul, such thoughts are welcome; so too is He that produces them, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. It is not, Depart from me, but

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

When blind Bartimæus was brought to Jesus, how his heart thrilled with pleasure as He approached the Saviour, and when he heard those omnipotent words, "Receive thy sight," and opened his eyes; how he leaped with joy, and with what heartiness he became a follower of his living, loving, and saving God!

I would say first, that he was a *living character*, because he was a believer: "Thy faith hath saved thee." The Master knew that by the way-side, nigh unto Jericho, the poor man sat begging, and He was drawn to the spot by blind Bartimæus and his faith; for faith attracts the Saviour, and faith and its Giver are sure to meet sooner or later. Bartimæus had not previously met Jesus; he had faith, however, in the promised Messiah, and when he heard that He was passing by, he cried, saying, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And then we see grace and its Author meeting and embracing each other.

Secondly, he was *willing to be saved*, and willing to receive and experience the operations of God's grace. I beg attention to a fact here. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Is it not most unusual to consult the will of His creatures? No, not so unusual as you suppose. Does He consult our will? It seems so, "What wilt thou?" Well, if He consults the will of His creatures, and follows it, He first rectifies the will; for "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." And having done this great work, He then places Himself before the needy one with, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" If you desire Him, He will receive you; for your will has been rectified by His Spirit, and your experience will be as described in the text.

"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek."

Lastly, he was a *saved sinner*. "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole," or saved thee.

One word on *the importance of the question*. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Why did the Saviour put it in this form? To discover character for the information of others, and perhaps for the further information of the poor man himself. The Lord had formed his character, and delighted to manifest the operations of His own hand. He put the question for the purpose of making it apparent what the man was in himself. And was not the question asked for the purpose of

eliciting prayer? He did not put the question for His own information, He knew what the man wanted and what he was about to receive; but He will have His people, by prayer and petition, ask for the blessing. What wilt thou then, Bartimæus? "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Receive it, said the Lord; and his eyes were opened; and he glorifying God, followed his healing Saviour. Do you not in this see the authority for prayer? The Master says to you and me, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Open thy mouth, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" do not speak as though there were any limitation. If you want things for the body, and mercies for the soul, and blessings for this life, tell me. If you want meetness and a title for the world to come, open thy mouth wide.

"He Himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore, will not say thee nay.

"Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much."

I do not know whether he was born blind or not; but his eyes were opened, and he saw. If he were born blind, he saw himself naturally in a new position, and viewed objects he had never seen before, and never realized in connection with their colour, or form, or shape, before the opening of his eyes. It was this that gave him, for the first time communion with the world he was living in; for light and sight give us communion with the objects before us. In receiving spiritual sight, he saw sin, and the world, and its emptiness; he saw his Lord, and he saw his all in Him, and became a follower of his Benefactor and Saviour. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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By MR. W. J. STYLES.

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“THE HIDING OF HIS POWER.”

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 17th MAY, 1874.

“*And His brightness was as the light ; He had horns coming out of His hand : and there was the hiding of His power.*”—Habakkuk iii. 4.

THE words of my text appear to have been a part of the address of Habakkuk to Almighty God, the God of Israel. This portion of Scripture has a literal, as well as a spiritual meaning, and it attracts us to history, as well as to the grace and love of Jehovah's heart ; and the prophet, it appears, proceeded to encourage himself in relation to the certainty of the return of the people from Babylon, to the land of Canaan, by contemplating the previous operations of God's power.

In looking at this portion of the Word, and trying to apply it to ourselves, and to the feelings and experiences of God's people generally, I will, in the first place, try to *illustrate the text*. “There was the hiding of His power;” and I will, in the next place, *draw a few inferences* from it.

Let us attempt to illustrate this interesting portion of the Word of God. “There was the hiding of His power;” or, in other words, His hidden or concealed power. Where was the hiding of His power ? In His hand, or in His side. He had bright beams, or horns, coming out of His hand ; and there, in that hand, or in that side, “was the hiding of His power.” Let us notice, in the first place, in connection with this part of our subject, that *there is more of our God concealed than is revealed* ; and I do think that this is a very important fact. Bless His name, He has revealed Himself, and we adore Him for His glorious manifestation ; but He has not revealed the *whole* of Himself, because He is an infinite Being ; His character is infinite, and it will always, in a certain sense be true, that in His hand and in His arm is the hiding of His power.

Our God is *inexhaustible*. He can never exhaust Himself by *revelation*, or *communication*, or *operation*. Now, will you look at these three points for a minute or two ? God can never *exhaust* Himself by *revelation* ; for He can never reveal the whole of His character and fulness, infinity and glory. My dear Christian friends, if we have God for a Father, we have an infinite Father ; if the great God of heaven is our covenant God, our portion is indeed an infinite and endless one. Man can soon reveal the thoughts of his mind, and disclose the intents of his heart, and perhaps it would be perfectly easy and possible for angels, and even for Gabriel himself, to disclose all his thoughts and experience ; but our God can never pour out all the thoughts of His mind, and the love of His heart, nor reveal all the grandeur of His glory ; for our God is infinite, and He has to do, not with infinite beings, but with finite crea-

tures ; and when an infinite Being has to do with finite beings, His revelation of Himself, of course, can only be limited and partial, and therefore, "Canst thou by searching find out God ? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?" We have a revelation of God in the Gospel, a partial and limited revelation of God to our own hearts, and we have a revelation of God in the visible heavens, and in the earth also ; and we have a revelation of God in the system and operations of Divine providence ; but all these revelations are limited, and we may say, There is the hiding of His glory and power, as well as a revelation of them. His arm is omnipotent, and can never be weary ; His love is infinite, and can never be fully described ; His character is boundless and eternal, and no finite being, therefore, can circumscribe the everlasting God of heaven and earth.

As our God is inexhaustible with regard to revelation, so He is inexhaustible in relation to *communication*. He can never communicate the whole of Himself to His creatures, nor all His goodness to this big world, and to the millions of creatures that are in it ; He is communicating, and has been communicating His goodness to His creatures for six thousand years, but the ocean of goodness in the bosom of God, is just what it ever was ; giving, as we frequently express ourselves, does not impoverish Him, just as withholding can never enrich Him. He can never exhaust Himself by communicating. How much grace has been communicated to sinners, and how much grace was necessary to take those millions of spirits to heaven, who are now before the throne of God ? My dear friends, our God is as full of grace to-night, as if He had never communicated a drop ; as full of grace as if sinners were not now before the throne ; and therefore, whilst He gives, He receives ; whilst He communicates, He retains His fulness ; whilst He reveals Himself, there is more of Himself concealed. "There was the hiding of His power."

And then, it is a pleasing fact that our God can never become exhausted by *work* ; He can never become exhausted by the operations of His arm. "He fainteth not, neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding." Underneath you are the everlasting arms of omnipotence ; you ache upon those arms, but they never ache beneath you ; you are often faint and weary upon the arms of God, but they are never feeble, and are never weary underneath His dear church and people. Moreover, He is at work in heaven, and in the earth, and in the hearts of His dear people ; and He is at work in connection with the mysteries of Divine providence ; and the arm of the everlasting God is still vigorous, and strong, and almighty. But, although very much of God is concealed, there is enough of Him revealed for saving, sanctifying, and comforting purposes ; enough of our God revealed to save sinners, and to elevate the degraded ; to raise the lowest, and to sanctify the guilty. We bless His dear name for the little knowledge we have of Him, and for the light with which He has been pleased to favour us, and we rejoice in the fact that the best is to come ; that the richest, in some respects, is still in the future, and that the brightest is yet to be manifested. We are going through that which is revealed, into that which is concealed.

We have the present revelation, and a concealment of grandeur ; and in the future, the glory of heaven is concealed ; and we are going through

the Bible, to the God of the Bible ; we are going through the promises, to the great Promiser Himself ; we are going through the rays of light with which we are favoured, to the great Sun Himself ; we are going through streams, and through rivers, which are a present revelation, into an infinite ocean of joy and bliss, and grandeur, and glory. And therefore, beloved friends, may God help us all to live in the expectation of receiving a full, sufficient, and satisfying disclosure of Himself in another world. We have much, but there is more coming ; we have that which is unspeakably blessed and good, but the most blessed of all the gifts of God are yet to be revealed and experienced.

Let me try to enter a little further into this subject, and notice, in the second place, that there was a *hiding of God's power in the incarnation, humiliation, and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Contemplate your dear Lord from the manger to the cross, and you will have an illustration of my text ; contemplate Him as a babe, as a youth, and as a man ; there was the hiding of His almighty power, in each stage of His life on earth. How feeble was the babe ! and yet omnipotence was in Him, though it was invisible ; nothing of it was seen as He lay helpless in the manger, and on His mother's bosom. But,

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

That babe in the manger was the mighty God ; "there was the hiding of His power." That youth, who, at twelve years of age stood in the temple, discussing with the doctors, was the God of infinite knowledge ; and yet that fact was hidden or concealed. He who was smitten and bound, and scourged, and spat upon, and nailed to the tree, was the everlasting God. He was crucified in weakness, and weakness concealed His almighty power. "There was the hiding of His power," beneath His poverty. How poor was Jesus, and yet how rich He was ! all riches were His native right 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." His power was concealed by His poverty. Again, "there was the hiding of His power" when the devil tempted Him in the wilderness. Omnipotence hid itself, and at that particular time refrained from exerting its might ; and when the devil tempted Him forty days and forty nights, there was an almighty Being, but the almightiness of His being was concealed. A frown of Christ might have sent the devil to hell ; a word from the tempted Son of God might have swept Satan from Him in a moment ; but He gave Himself up, in order that He might learn how to sympathise with His dear, suffering, and tempted people. Then look at Him when He was apprehended. "Whom seek ye ? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth." "I am He," said the Lord of life and glory ; "and they went backward, and fell to the ground." "If, therefore ye seek Me, let these, [My sheep and followers,] go their way." There was a revelation of His power there ; He then had bright beams coming out of His side, and out of His hand, and those bright beams frustrated, and cast down for a moment, those who went to apprehend Him ; but He again withdrew or concealed His power, and gave Himself up—and see a man bind Omnipotence. See sinful man binding the hands of Jesus, and

tying them close to His side; it was the creature binding the Creator; it was the hell-deserving sinner binding the Holy God of heaven and earth. He submitted, and there was the hiding of His power. And then they scourged Him; the ploughers ploughed upon His back, they made long their furrows. He might have spoken a word, and swept them all to hell in a moment; He might have struck them dead, and all the soldiers too; but He came not to destroy life, or to display omnipotence in that form. "Then did they spit in His face and buffet Him." The French infidel scoffed at these words. He said, "Why did He not evince His greatness, and strike the wretches dead? He could not be the everlasting God thus to submit to be spit upon, and to have His hair torn out!" And so the unbeliever derided this solemn scene. Well, my friends, any devil could have resented that conduct, and have prevented the rabble from spitting on him, or have visited those who committed these acts with vengeance and wrath; but it required a God to bear it, and omnipotent mercy and dignity to submit to that abomination. When He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and when Jehovah Jesus was nailed to the tree—there was the hiding of His power. Omnipotence nailed to the cursed tree by feeble men, by Roman soldiers! By wicked hands they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. "If thou be the Son of God," said they, "come down from the cross, and we will believe thee." They spoke unintentionally and unbelievably a truth when they said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." If the matter had been reduced to a question of omnipotence, He might have left the cross; but He was bound by His own word, and by His own covenant engagements to hang there and die; and therefore He could not honourably leave the cross until He had done His work—"there was the hiding of His power." In the redeeming work of the Lord of life and glory there was a hidden power, it seems, that impelled Him, and the people knew not what it was that led him to submit to all that suffering, but that power caused Him to progressively fulfil the purposes of God. The omnipotence of Christ, which might have struck all His enemies dead, was then concealed from human view. Was not also the hidden power of the suffering Jesus felt in heaven? but no one on earth saw it; the power of the suffering Son of God was felt in hell, for Satan's head was crushed; but no human eye saw it; and the power of the suffering Son of God is, I would venture to say, felt here tonight. The power of Christ crucified is the power that will travel on through time, and roll on to the very end of the world, and into and through all eternity.

My dear Christian friends, the power of the Cross of Christ and of the incarnation and humiliation of the Son of God is the greatest power that I ever read of, the greatest power that I ever preached, and, blessed be God, the greatest and sweetest power that ever reached my heart and that I ever experienced. I know something of the power of the world, of sin and sorrow; something of the power of my wicked, sinful self, and something of the power of the devil; and, blessed be God, I know something of the hidden power of Calvary and of the incarnate Son of God; and when the power of Christ crucified touches the heart, guilt is removed,

tears are dried up, wounds and bruises are healed, and the devil is put to flight. Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

There is *the hiding of the power of Christ in connection with the Gospel ministry*. It was so in the days of the Apostle; it is so in the present day in relation to common and ordinary ministers of the Gospel. Peter stood up to preach his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, and the Holy Ghost came down from heaven, and though Peter was only a fisherman he spoke in a very marvellous manner as he preached Christ and Him crucified. There was a hidden power in the word—three thousand were pricked in the heart, and were brought to say, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” And God has been pleased ever since to connect omnipotent power with His word and with the preaching of the gospel. The power is not in the earthen vessel: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Why, what can that man do who is not much of a preacher? His talents are very small, he has not many to hear him; what can result from his ministry? Well, he can do, and will do, and shall do, just what God Almighty is pleased to accomplish by him. “There was the hiding of His power” when the ark was carried round Jericho seven days, and when the priests blew trumpets of rams’ horns. But the people of Jericho did not believe in the power, although it was in the ark and the rams’ horns. There was the mysterious cloud that conducted the children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness, and what was in that cloud?—the hidden hand of God. God said to Moses, of the children of Israel, “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.” But who saw that arm? It was hidden in the divine Shekinah, and God put forth His power and brought out the vast host of Israelites from Egypt; and that high Hand in the cloud took off the wheels of the chariots of the Egyptians in the middle of the divided sea, and brought the waters of the sea into their natural and original position, and the concealed power of God destroyed that hostile army in a night, and afterwards fed His people for forty years in the wilderness, and supplied them also with water, and with an unseen hand protected them during the whole of that time, and at last brought them into Canaan. There, in the ark, and in the rams’ horns, and in the cloud, and in the Divine Shekinah, was the hiding of His power; and here, in the ministry of the Word, is the hiding of His power. When the gospel has been preached, you have often felt a wondrous influence, and your hearts have been touched; you have realised a power that you could not see, and the blessedness of which you could not possibly describe. Oh, how sweet is the hidden power of God, as it is put forth in the glorious gospel of His grace!

But again, there is *the hiding and the revelation too of God’s power in the preservation of His people and in the perpetuation of their spiritual life*. Many years ago, when I made a public profession of religion, not a few of the people with whom I was associated, and with whom I worked, laughed and sneered in a manner that would have been very provoking to me

had not my heart been sincere—and they predicted my downfall. They told me that I should soon be with them again, and soon come out of that moping and melancholy state, as they called it, into which I had entered; but I have not been suffered to make shipwreck of the faith, and it is now between thirty and forty years ago since the Lord called me by His grace.

“I have been upheld till now :
Who could hold me up but Thou.”

It is not in the strength of the creature, nor in the power of the Christian, nor of any man of God, to sustain his religion; no man can keep alive his own soul. My dear brethren and sisters, I wish you could believe that it is literally a fact that just as the sun pours his own light upon the earth, and just as the earth is influenced thereby, so the believer actually and literally receives blessings from his God on heaven's high throne; and these blessings sustain and support him, and perpetuate his spiritual existence. There is nothing seen, for there is the hiding of His power; and the preservation of every Christian is the visible result of the invisible power of Jehovah—it is the public effect of the unseen hand of the everlasting God. And, therefore, in your lives as Christians there is the hiding of God's power, and the manifestation of it, too, in your maintenance in the ways of the Lord. Your spiritual life to-day is a demonstration of the fact that the everlasting arms of God have been and are underneath you.

Then, again, there is *the hiding of God's power in the very blessed results of our trials and troubles, our woes, and our sorrows*. There is a Scripture which is frequently quoted, and often mis-quoted by saying, “shall work.” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Well, then, if these words are fulfilled, Omnipotence must work, and Omnipotence has worked, and is working, and will continue to work, for that Scripture must be verified from month to month, and from year to year, down to the very end of time. All things work together for good; then there is a hidden power connected with every disappointment, with every trouble, and with every sorrow. Let me illustrate this point. Look at good Jacob; his cup of sorrow was very full, and the bitter trouble which God mixed for him was always in his house, and very frequently in his hands, and placed to his lips too; and Jacob more than once said, “All these things are against me.” I cannot refer to the different circumstances of his life that are recorded, but they are all present to your memory; and now look at them in connection with my text. “There was the hiding of His power”—one circumstance was connected with another, as links in a chain; one event was connected with another; the fears of one month were chained to the fears of another; and by-and-bye, when Jacob was a very old man, news reached him that Joseph was alive. The wagons were sent, Jacob went down to Egypt and saw his son once more, and died, after blessing Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and his own sons. And now listen to what he said just before he departed, “I had not thought to see thy face, and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed: the Angel which redeemed me from all evil bless the lads.”

How different this language from that which he had used in earlier days, when he was surrounded by evil circumstances, and everything seemed against him ; but on his dying bed he found himself in a paradise of blessings, having emerged from a wilderness of sorrow, and trouble, and doubt. The Angel which redeemed and fed me, led and clothed me all my life long ; the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads ; and let my name be named on them, for I am not ashamed of it, I received it from God. There was the hiding of God's power in the coat of many colours that little Joseph was clothed with ; there was the hiding of His power in his dreams, and in the telling of them to his brethren. There was the hiding of God's power in the cruelty of his brethren, and in the fact that the Ishmeelites came past at that very moment, else as the world would have it, he would have been left in the pit to die. There was the hiding of His power in selling him in Egypt, and to Potiphar, and in his being imprisoned, and in the dreams of Pharaoh, and the baker and the butler. God has bright rays of light coming out of His hand, and there is the hiding of His power.

Let us pass on, and notice one thing more. We see *the hiding of God's power in the precise and accurate fulfilment of His own word* ; for events, notwithstanding they are strange ones, transpire for the exact verification of the word of God. There are no accidents, for all the events of time and the circumstances of the believer exactly fulfil the Bible. Look at this fact in relation to some of the solemn scenes *when our Lord Jesus was on the cross*. First, they gave Him vinegar to drink ; secondly, they pierced His side, and there came out blood and water ; and thirdly, they refrained from breaking His legs. You see the hidings of God's power if you look beneath those three facts. The soldiers acted according to military duty when they took Jesus and crucified Him ; morally it was not their duty, but they acted under authority. It was not their duty to offer Him a sponge full of vinegar, but they were bound to nail Him to the tree, and to remain on Calvary as long as He lived. But Jesus, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, "*I thirst*," and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth, and Jesus said, "It is finished." Now, this was the fulfilment of God's word. It was an excess of duty on the part of the soldiers when they gave Him vinegar and gall to drink ; but had not that occurred the word of God would not have been verified. Then it was the duty of the soldiers to break the legs of the malefactors, and they came and brake the legs of the first and of the other ; but when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs ; and there was the hiding of His power—"a bone of Him shall not be broken." Then, again, it is said, that one of the soldiers with a spear, in wanton cruelty, pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water ; and thus the word of God was again exactly fulfilled.

So every word of the Bible must be fulfilled ; and there is a hidden power at work which will verify every statement of our God. Now, you may take this and apply it to Popery. We are praying that God would hasten the destruction of that most pernicious system. His power is hidden. He could destroy it to-morrow, and annihilate it in a moment if he saw

fit so to do. But there are evils in existence which are not ripe for universal destruction. His power is ready, and waiting; His hand is concealed; and at the appointed time will be seen the fulfilment of the glorious word of the everlasting God.

Lastly, as to *the inferences*, there was the hiding of His power; or, in other words, and we receive this with gratitude, there are *the hidden ones of His power*. Where? He had horns coming out of His hand, and there in His hand of power are His hidden ones. Of His sheep He says, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand;" and, "No man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

Oh to be hidden in the hand of God! "All His saints are in Thy hand," concealed and hidden there from death and destruction.

Again, there is *the hiding of His saving power*. The hand that holds the saints, holds the saint's salvation, grace, and daily strength. He that holds you, holds all that is necessary to carry you safely through life and death into eternity.

Lastly, there is the hiding of his power, or *there is a refuge in His hand*; that is a refuge into which the righteous run, and where they are concealed, and hidden, and for ever safe. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." Where is Paul? Hidden in God's hand. Where is Elijah? Jezebel intends to murder him; for she has said, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them, by to-morrow about this time." Where is he? He is effectually hidden in the almighty hand of God; and therefore,

"If I am found in Jesus' hands,
My soul can ne'er be lost."

May God command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Recently published, price One Penny.

THE SERMON PREACHED BY Mr. J. S. ANDERSON,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

DECEASE OF Mr. JOHN HAZELTON:

TOGETHER WITH

THE ADDRESS AT THE FUNERAL SERVICE,

By Mr. W. J. STYLES.

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SPIRITUAL RECEPTION, RETENTION & REPENTANCE.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

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

"Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent."—Revelation iii. 3.

We have a whole flood of Divine revelation in the word of God, and certain branches of it are especially important and precious to the believer. Among other facts, we are assured that no Scripture is of any private interpretation. That is information from God Himself, and such information as cannot fail to bring a measure of consolation into the heart. Therefore the promises which were given to Abraham and to Jacob are not to be limited to their persons, their circumstances, or their lives. If we limit those promises to them, they have no force whatever to-day, they have no meaning for us, and it will do us no good to read them, nor benefit us to meditate upon them. No scripture, however, is of any private interpretation; and therefore the promises which were given by God to Jacob, are fresh and green to-day, and are applicable to the saints of God at the present time. How sweet and encouraging is this fact, especially when we think of that important promise, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." "And again it is said, "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Yes, the family of God is one family; and what one saint requires in connection with salvation, all need, and the promises which were given to Old Testament believers are also the spiritual property of those under the Gospel dispensation. Hence, as God said to Jacob that He would be with him in all places whithersoever he might go, He was, according to His promise, always with that good man, and Jacob is with His good and gracious God now.

But the promise is being gradually and progressively fulfilled at the present time, and no man received sweeter fulfilment of it than did that disciple whom Jesus loved. The Master had told Peter that He should be crucified, that one should gird Him and carry Him whither He would not. Immediately afterwards Peter, under the influence of the flesh, said, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" He is the youngest of us all, he leaned upon thy breast at supper time, thou art apparently exceedingly intimate and familiar with him; it has sometimes occurred to our minds that something special in the future belongs to him. "What shall this man do?" Jesus saith unto him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me." It is important that we should know and attend to our duty at all times. There was a certain sphere, within which Peter had a right to move, but beyond it he

had no right whatever either to stand or to speak. "The secret things belong unto the Lord or God ; but things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." John did tarry till the Lord came, that is, until the destruction of Jerusalem ; and by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ we are frequently to understand the destruction of that city. Satan is a cunning foe, but I think wisdom is too great an excellency to be ascribed to him. His knowledge is very deep and comprehensive, and his cunning is wonderful, and I have no doubt that he was quite confident that if He could get John banished to the Isle of Patmos his apostolic career would be ended ; he was banished ; but if his mouth was stopped, his usefulness did not cease. We are told by John, that he found himself on several occasions especially, in a very happy and sweet frame of mind, and he had not been long on the barren island before he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard the voice of one that spake, and turning round to see the speaker, he was favoured with a glorious view of his beloved Lord and Master, and hours of holy and heavenly intercourse, and communion, and fellowship, between Christ and His dear John passed away, and John saw, in a marvellous manner, the whole of the future of time.

The words of our text were addressed to the Church of Christ at Sardis, and the Lord said, " Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die ; for I have not found thy works perfect before God." " Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent." Whatever may have been the condition of the Church at Sardis, I am perfectly sure that the words of the text will apply to the people of God at the present time, and perhaps in this place they will come home to the people ; and therefore I feel no difficulty in reading them to you this morning. Now I purpose endeavouring to look at the words as they stand ; they naturally divide themselves into three points : Divine *reception* of something spiritual, *retention* of that which is received, and *repentance* enjoined upon the Church of God for back-sliding and departing in any measure.

In the first place, let us look at *the spiritual reception indicated*. " Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard." Let us try to remember *what* we have received, if we have received anything, and let us come down to the text, and try to bear in mind *how* we received it, and then let us look at the *exhortation*. Now, in the first place, a few remarks upon *what is received* by the saints of God. Are we saints ? If so, we have received something, we have received much from God ; and if we are saints, and have received much from God, we are marvellously distinguished thereby from our fellow creatures, for the grace of God in the heart is something which cannot be concealed. It is said of Jesus Christ, that he could not be hid ; and if Christ is formed in our hearts the hope of glory, it will be impossible for us to conceal our religion for any length of time. What is received, therefore, by the poor sinner ? The word " receive " is rather frequently applied to blindness. " What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? " " Lord, that I might receive my sight ; " and the great Physician said, " Go thy way : thy faith hath made thee whole ; " and immediately he received his sight ; and therefore

I put these two points before you ; first, life, and secondly, light. First, life is received into the heart from God, and then the eyes are opened. " O sir, the eyes are opened before life is received into the heart." Do you think so ? Do not you think that life is the first blessing that God ever communicates to the soul ? He said, " If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." Now, the dead have no ears to hear. Life is communicated to the heart, and the hearing ear is at once given. Life is communicated to the heart, and the blind eyes are at once opened, and if there is a little life in the soul, we shall be sure to pray for more and clearer light. Remember, therefore, what you have received. You have a life which is peculiar to the believer. You are the possessors of principles which Adam, before he fell, was a stranger to, and of realities which the angels of God know, experimentally, nothing of. They are learning of you. They are, if I may so speak, sitting at the feet of the saints, or at all events, they are standing before true believers ; for we read thus, " To the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." They know nothing experimentally about repentance, but they see its fruits and effects in penitent sinners. They know nothing experimentally about pardon, for they never committed a sin, their names were never stained, their consciences—I suppose they have some such power—were never stung or pierced. Angels are strangers to your experience, as really so as is the ungodly world. The ungodly world sees the fruit and effects of the grace of God in your heart, and they hate what they see. The angels of God see the fruits and effects of God's grace in your heart, and they love what they behold ; but they never felt as you have felt, and therefore the words of the Master are very important indeed. " Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard." But what is received, and what does Jesus Christ here more especially refer to ? To God's eternal truth, to the glorious and precious word of Jehovah. Remember what in that respect you have received. Have you received the truth of God in the love of it, received it for its own sake, in connection with its own special and peculiar power ? If so, you are a peculiar person, you belong to a peculiar people, and are interested in the deepest and richest love of God, only there are times and seasons when we backslide ; and then we hold, as it were, rather loosely the great facts which have at times been so sweet and precious to us. Hence the importance of the exhortation,—“ Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard.”

There are many systems floating about in the day in which we live, and there are thousands of open mouths and ears, perfectly ready to receive and imbibe those systems. No matter what systems are afloat, and what religious theories are launched, there have always been persons found quite ready to adopt them, and imbibe them, and to shape their life and conversation according to them. I am praying that I may know the truth, and nothing but the truth, and that I may be brought to love it, and to love it intensely and increasingly. " Lo ! here is Christ, and lo ! there is Christ," are words which may be heard anywhere and everywhere, and that almost every day in our life, for there are lords many, and gods many, but there is only one Christ who belongs to God, and only one Christ who is

formed in the heart, the hope of eternal glory. Has he been formed in your heart and mine? A whole Christ, not *a* Christ, but *the* Christ, the Christ of God, that Christ on whom Jehovah leans, and in whom He puts His trust. I think I am right in expressing myself thus—that Christ in whom Jehovah puts His trust, on whom He leans, His delight, His darling, His chosen, His elect—has that Christ been formed in your heart and mine? If so, we have received the Word of Truth; for just as the melted wax receives the impression of the seal that is placed upon it, and just as the impression made upon the wax remains thereon, so, when the Word of God was applied to your softened hearts, holding, as it did, the image of the Saviour, the image of Christ was stamped upon your hearts, which were thus prepared to receive it, and there it is to be found to-day; and since the work of God can never be undone, the work of the Holy Spirit can never be nullified; Christ formed in you, the hope of glory, will remain there; though now it is sometimes covered with corruption, and guilt, and sin, still it is there, and will remain there for ever and ever. Sometimes it will be so dark that you cannot see it, and you question the reality of your religion, but “if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” I have been trying to preach the Gospel for many years, and some time ago, a friend hearing me preach, who heard me when I was a youth of between nineteen and twenty,—for I began to preach when I was, I think, about nineteen years of age—said, “Why, you preach the same Gospel now that you preached at Mount Bures and Bungay!” I replied, “Well, my friend, it would be strange if I did not preach the same Gospel, for I never learned another. I never knew another, God has been revealed another to me. I have never loved another, and I have never leaned or rested upon, or confided in another. The Gospel of the grace of God which I received at first, I love to-day, and I feel that if the denomination of which I am a member should melt away and disappear, I should retain, as well as possible, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. But let us pass on, as time is advancing, for I am thinking of that sweet portion of the 5th of Romans. “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” What have we received? Life and light. What have we received? The truth of God, and Christ Jesus Himself, in connection with the truth. What have we received? The atonement. How have we received that? We will speak on that point presently. Where have we received it? Not merely into our heads, but into our hearts. It forms, not merely an article of our creed, but it constitutes the ground and principle of our immortal spiritual life, and it fills our souls; for just as a lump of lead sufficiently large to fill a basin, would, if dropped into the basin, when filled with water, force all the water out, and make way for itself, and remain there afterwards, so the atonement, when dropped into the heart of a sinner, by it guilt is forced out, the pain ceases, the bitterness departs, and the sacred pleasure remains, and the heart, instead of being filled with that which will condemn and occasion curse for ever, is filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. What we have received is the atonement. And then “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all

things." As, however, time is going, and we desire to get through the subject, let us pass on to another point.

Remember how thou hast received it, "*how* thou hast received and heard." How did we first of all receive the truth of God? I shall pass over the idea as to whether we were passive or active; I do not understand those matters. In the new birth, I speak positively; the sinner is passive in the hands of the Holy Spirit, divine life is dropped into the heart at a particular moment, which is perhaps unknown to every creature, and that state of glory which will be consummated above, is there and then commenced. Development follows. But how have we received and heard the truth? Did we receive it as judges? sit in judgment on the preacher, or his text, or his sermon, or his method of handling his subject? No, if what he said were the Word of God, and came through him, from God, into our hearts, we did not receive the truth as so many judges. Did we receive the Word of God as critics? Did we criticise almost every sentence that we received? Oh, just as the mighty river rolls on, and carried all before it, so, when the truth of God came into your heart and mine, it carried all opposition before it, and we had neither time nor disposition to criticise any portion thereof. It came so forcibly, and was so attended by a power, we could not resist, that it carried every objection before it, and though we had vowed and vowed again that we would never make a profession of religion, nor be classed, or numbered with those "meet'ners,"—some of you know what I mean by that—yet when the truth of God came, and entered with omnipotent power into our hearts, we had no idea of criticising either the men who believed it, or the great fact itself. Did we receive it as reasoners? This is a wonderful day for reasoners; and many a one says, I will not receive what does not square with my reason, and that which is contrary to it is to be rejected and disbelieved. How do we receive it then? From necessity. Now consider the matter—at this time of day we bless the Lord we could not help receiving, for we were compelled to do so from necessity—all over guilty, we knew it, we saw it, we felt it, we groaned beneath the terrible load, and we trembled in the presence of a Holy God. We said in all sincerity,

"If our souls be sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

and when the pardon came, and the Word of Divine forgiveness proceeded from God Himself, we received it with holy pleasure and heavenly joy, the load fell from our consciences, the burden was removed at once, and no criminal doomed to death, lying in his condemned cell, could feel more deeply on receiving a pardon, than we felt on receiving an assurance from God that our sins, which were many, were all forgiven us. The criminal would not criticise the pardon, nor make remarks upon the handwriting, neither would he find fault with the messenger that brought it from Her Majesty. The thing itself would be all to the criminal, and Divine forgiveness from our God is received by the sensible sinner with the deepest wonder, love, readiness and astonishment. Lord, the sinner exclaims, I am a leper, I am loathesomely unclean, I am gradually dying, and this disease must terminate in death sooner or later, and sooner, rather than

later, I think it will be. "If Thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Having thus presented our leprous selves before Him, and declared our faith in His ability, we knelt in his presence and watched Him, and waited for His decision, and when He looked approvingly and smilingly, and said, "I will, be thou clean;"—remember how you heard that! Remember how you received that Divine assurance from the great Healer's lips. Or, taking the sinner as a bankrupt, as poor and unspeakably needy, having nothing to pay, with eternity before him, and nothing to enter into it with but guilt and damnation, and death; then observe the Saviour meeting him, and not only healing his soul, but dropping these words into his heart, "Things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." How did you receive that? The dying sinner, the poor bankrupt sinner, the guilty sinner, the lost sinner; oh, when such persons hear the Word of God for themselves, their feelings are indescribable indeed. So that it comes to this; when the Master says, "Remember how thou hast received and heard." We received the Word from necessity, as poor sinners lost and ruined; and thankfully and adoringly we received it, feeling that our former doubts had no good ground, for they carried us so far, we feared, at one time, that we should be sent to hell. Whilst we looked for hell, He gave us heaven, and whilst we expected to be cursed, His blessing fell upon us. Now, said the church's Master, I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, what you have received, and remember how you have received it.

A few words only on *the exhortation*—"Remember." We cannot very well afford to lose sight of our conversion. I know the future is very important; but there is a vast importance attaching to the past also. If our dying day is an important day, our birthday was also important; and although we may not be able to say where we were born, nor just when we were born again, yet it is a fact that we have been born again, and it is also true that our religion, as to our experience, had a commencement. Let us, therefore, not forget the past in this respect, nor the fact that what we received from heaven, we received as from the grace of God. We did not receive it as a debt, nor because we wanted nor desired it, nor because we worked hard for it; but because it was God's good will and pleasure that we should receive the treasure that enriched us for Himself and for heaven, for ever and ever. I had nothing but what would have sunk me to hell when I received the religion of heaven, and I would remind all of you of the fact that you had nothing but what would have sunk you into eternal despair, when God laid His hand on your heart, and communicated life thereto. Remember it, brethren! Remember, how on hearing, you received the Word of God.

In the second place, what was then received *was to be retained*. "Hold fast and repent." Hold fast! why? Because, by doing this, we shall be distinguished from our fellow creatures. All men are alike as to state and condition in respect to sin. The grace of God makes a difference for eternity, and this difference is more or less visible, as we observed a little while ago. Moreover, hold fast that which we have received, safe I had almost said, from spiritual and moral putrefaction. You have heard of

decay, there are such things as decays in Christians; there is such a thing as deadness in connection with the religion of heaven. Grace is salt. "Have salt in yourselves." If we hold not fast the great truths of the gospel by which we were saved, and have been saved till now, we shall become corrupt, and weak, and withered. Take the man or the woman that gives up the veritable facts of religion, the real truths of God, that denies heartily and boldly what he or she professes to have received; show me such a man or such a woman, and I will try and keep my eye upon them, and expect that sooner or later terrible, dismal, perhaps revolting effects will flow from their departure from the truth of God. There is nothing but powerful truth that will hold fast the soul. Give up this point, and that, and the other point, and you become weak in proportion as mighty truth is surrendered and given up. "But you are in the minority, sir, and your views of religion are very unpopular." So was Christ, and so was His Gospel in His day. He was always unpopular, and He always will be unpopular. Noah was an unpopular man, those that were saved with him in the ark were unpopular; but the truth of God was in them and with them. Better, better, far better be in the minority and be saved, than to follow the multitude to do evil, and to sink into evil for ever at last. Hold fast that which you have received, remembering how you have received it. It will encourage others to do so if we do so. The Lord help us therefore in this respect. I have heard young people express themselves in a very characteristic manner in relation to persons who have changed their sentiments. "They used to speak very boldly and courageously of their creed—we are not quite prepared to disbelieve them, and yet we acknowledge that what they are doing, and have done, causes us to stumble very much;" to be sure it does. The eyes of the weak are upon us, my brother and sister—bear that in mind; the younger branches of the family are following you to heaven; they are genuine, and they are trying, some of them, to imitate you,—see that you are in the right way, that you are in a proper condition; carry all that is worth carrying with you, and drop nothing. If you drop something, and take no notice of it, they will begin to wonder why you threw away something that you have been carrying days, or weeks, or years; and if you cast it away, they will be induced to fear that there is not much in religion. Oh, the eyes of the weak and of the young are upon you. "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent." How long are we to hold fast? As long as we live. Show me something better than my religion, and convince me that it is so; show me something better than the Bible, bring something that is sweeter, more ennobling, more dignifying, and more elevating to the mind than the truth of God, and I will give up the Bible. I want the best, I must have the best; and I have the best! What I, through grace believe, is the best, and what I feel is the best; therefore,

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

"Hold fast and repent." In the parlour, hold fast there; children are

looking at you, and listening to you. In the shop, do not give it up there. In the market, hold fast there; and in just those forms should you present it in other places, and on other occasions. And hold it fast in the house. Hold it fast in solitude, and hold it fast in society. Hold it fast in health and in sickness. Some things it may be proper and advisable to surrender under certain circumstances, but buy the truth at any price, and sell it at no price whatever.

Thirdly, *repentance* is referred to, for we are so prone to backsliding. Our dear Lord said, "Hold fast and repent," for you have given up certain points, or hold them very loosely. And what is repentance? Do you know the meaning of the word? Old writers, especially the Puritans, expressed themselves in a quaint and peculiar manner. One says, Repentance is the vomit of the soul. As sinners we drink down the poison of sin, and when repentance is given us, we vomit it up. When error is imbibed, poison is received. By repentance we vomit it up, so that to depart from the truth is to turn away from God; to repent, is to return; hence the Saviour says, as it were, You have backslidden with your hearts and with your feet, Now, I counsel you, remember how you have received and heard, hold fast according to your former experience, since what I first taught you was right, and it is proper that you should hold it fast. "Hold fast and repent;" this indicates a kind of remedy mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ: but our time is gone. May our God give us clear views of His truth, and clear views of ourselves, and if in anything we be otherwise minded than we ought to be, may the Lord reveal even this unto us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE REIGN OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT NORTH ROAD CHAPEL, BRENTFORD,
ON EASTER MONDAY MORNING, 6th APRIL, 1874.

“For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.”—1 Cor. xv. 25.

THE doctrine of the resurrection of the body is unspeakably important. I am not sorry that the Corinthian Church disagreed about it, though I am constantly praying that the Lord will heal the breaches of Zion, and give His people one heart and one way in relation to the great gospel of His grace; but I am rather glad that there was a contention about this doctrine; for, humanly speaking, had it not been so, we had never had this fifteenth chapter of the 1st of Corinthians. “Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Ah! error is old-fashioned, almost as old as truth, but not quite; error did not begin with time, and it shall be annihilated just before the end of time; for truth was first in the field; and will retain the field, and will be last in the field, as the Lord liveth. Are we not thankful for the marvellous revelation which this chapter contains concerning the resurrection of these bodies of ours; is there not something exceedingly cheering in the fact that they are purchased property; that they are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that the period is coming when they shall be as spiritual as the Spirit of God can cause them to be; and the time is coming when they shall be as thoroughly pervaded by the Spirit of God as our souls will be. We often lose sight of the fact that the Holy Ghost will have much to do in the resurrection of our bodies. “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” The Holy Ghost will, therefore, enter into the dust of every saint, and fill it in every part with life, and the body will be raised from the grave filled with the Holy Ghost; and the immortal eyes, (for the eyes which are now mortal will be immortal,) will be turned towards the reigning Saviour, the descending Head of the Church, and a transformation will follow; and immortality and spirituality, such as I cannot describe, will be the grand outcome of all. We shall see Him; we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, here dwells gloriously and comprehensively upon the resurrection of the body, and reasons in a manner which is almost peculiar to himself—for he was a wonderful logician, and his reasonings in this chapter are very masterly and comprehensive, and such as can never be successfully controverted. “If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” “And if Christ be not raised,.....ye are yet in your sins.” But he says, to sum it all up in a word

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or two, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept: for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." How disappointing this must be to hell! The very nature that was ruined is the nature that restores again; the very nature that brought in sin is the very nature that carries it out; and the very nature that brought in death is the nature that shall destroy death: "for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Thus the Apostle proceeded to reason, until He said, "But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming: then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet."

Let us look at the three branches into which our subject naturally divides itself. First, *the nature*; secondly, *the necessity*; and thirdly, *the results of the reign of Jesus Christ our Lord*. He must reign; how will He reign, and what is the nature of His reign? He *must* reign—then it seems that there is a necessity for it. He must reign, and what shall be the results? All enemies shall be put under His feet.

First, *the nature of the reign of King Immanuel*, our dear and blest Redeemer. I may say, by way of preface, that Christ's right to reign is a native right, a delegated right, an acquired right, and a universally acknowledged right. First, Christ's right to reign is a native right; for He is essentially over all God blessed for ever. But His right to reign is a delegated right. The Father, addressing His Son as man and mediator, said, "Yet have I set my King upon My holy hill of Zion;" so that the Lord Jesus Christ, in relation to His manhood, and in relation to His mediation, is the appointed and delegated King. A throne was, if I may so speak, erected for Him, and He was appointed by God to occupy it; but that throne, and its occupant relate to the covenant of eternal grace, and the salvation of sinners. Our Lord's right to reign is also an acquired right. If I may so illustrate it, yonder was His throne in the highest heavens, and upon that throne were His royal robes, and crown, and sceptre; down here, under a broken law, was Jesus Christ Himself, bearing the sins of His people in the depths of humiliation, as a sufferer under the curse of a broken law; and His business was to honour the law that He was under, to annihilate the sin that was upon Him; to expiate the guilt that He came to save His people from, and to bring into everlasting harmony all the attributes and perfections of God; and then, having done that, to go to His throne, and put His hand upon it, and say, "I have a right to sit here, and a right to reign over all for ever and ever." There were between Christ and His throne rivers of curses, there was an ocean of damnation, and all the fires of hell due to the Church of God, and Jesus Christ's way to His throne lay straight through all; and He did not in order to avoid the way go by a circuitous route to reach His throne. Had He done so, justice would have barred the gates of heaven against Him, and those royal robes and crown He had never worn on high; but He went straight to His throne, and bled His way thereto, and put out the fires of hell as He travelled on and expiated guilt, and at the very end of a broken

law the cross was set up, and the triumphant Conqueror hung there, till He said, "It is finished!" and died; and thus He acquired a right to sit upon that throne, and be King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the only Ruler of princes. It is a universally acknowledged right. Hell acknowledges it, and gnashes its teeth, whilst it does so, wishing there were something wrong in the reign and sovereignty of Jesus Christ on the throne; but though "clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne," and angels look with pleasure and delight, and proclaim the sovereignty of our Lord. And we with our poor little powers, pass on through troubles and trials, rejoicing in the fact that the Lord reigneth, and that He has a right to reign over all for ever and ever.

I notice that the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ is a *glorious demonstration of a glorious fact*. The fact which it demonstrates is, that salvation is a finished work. This just suits me. It seems to be the very best thing in connection with the government of God, that having resolved to save sinners, and people the heavens, he has done it effectually and completely, and in a God-like manner. I am so satisfied concerning the perfection of the work of Christ, and the necessity for that perfection, that I am quite prepared to say, that if a single stain of guilt had been left unremoved, or a single spot had been unwashed away, since God requires perfection in all that are saved, that spot would have been the cause of my ruin for ever and ever.

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

The reign of Christ is a glorious demonstration of this glorious fact. The question is this: Where is Christ? The answer is: In heaven, on the throne. Then the conclusion that necessarily follows is this:—If Christ, Immanuel, as a Saviour, is in heaven, and on the throne, the great business of salvation is finished, and God is honoured, and the Church is saved; for the enthronement of Immanuel is a conditional matter viewed in certain relations, and justice would not have consented to it, and equity and righteousness would never have put the crown upon His head, if He had not fulfilled the mediatorial conditions which were presented to Him by His Father. And therefore, dear friends, since Jesus Christ is on the throne, the fires of wrath are quenched, its vials are empty; for God poured them all upon the head and heart of His dear Son. The curses of a broken law are all spent, and hell is an impossibility. To send a sinner to hell for a debt which was paid by Jesus Christ, would be ungodlike, and such conduct would undeify Jehovah Himself. No, my friends, Christ is on the throne: the inference is this, —He has a right to be there, and that right is an acquired one. He has paid the debt, and fulfilled His engagements, and the conditions of His enthronement; and in the fulfilment of those conditions there are a ransomed church, a perfected bride, and harmonized perfections on the part of God; and there is a law in the ark of the covenant, and not on Mount Sinai, and covering the law is a lid called the mercy-seat, and on that lid is Jehovah Himself,—the mute and satisfied law constituting a part

of the very throne upon which He sits. Since Christ is on His throne, there is at Golgotha, once the place of a skull, where death and damnation raged and prevailed, a fountain opened, and that fountain diffuses a fragrance everywhere, penetrating heaven itself; and the sweet sacrifice of Jesus Christ has created a new atmosphere for heaven, and for God, and the sinner; not such an atmosphere as God and Adam met in, and conversed in, or as God and angels live in; but an atmosphere whose qualities are such as are required by a pardoning God, and sinners that deserve to go to hell, but are saved sovereignly with an everlasting salvation. O brethren, it will take us a whole eternity to explore or to contemplate these great mysteries! He is on His throne, and He wears the brightest crown, and not a crown is too bright for Him. If I had a hundred hearts, He should have them, if He would, and wash and save them all; and if my fears were ten thousand fold more numerous than they are, so deeply indebted to Him am I that every one of those fears should crown Him Lord of all. And therefore you see, in the coronation and enthronement of our dear Lord, that there is a fountain for sin, or He would not be on His throne; you see that there is a wardrobe full of the garments of salvation; were it not so, He would not be on His throne. The wardrobe is not empty, the robes are there, and they are made to fit sinners such as Magdalene and Saul, and you and me, and all the ransomed throng. Christ having done all that justice, and equity, and truth required Him to do.

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

And He is there, and must reign, “until He hath put all enemies under His feet.”

Notice next, that the reign of Jesus Christ is *an all-comprehending reign*. What is there in heaven that lies beyond the reach of His regal power, His royal and His reigning authority? There is not an angel there but whom He governs, and there is not a thought there but what He directs. There is not a thought here on the earth, but what he understands and over-rules; and bless His name! there are millions of thinkers, and millions of thoughts here, which are directed by Jesus Christ; but it would not be right to say, that there is not a thought on earth but what is directed by Him, for some of my thoughts are directed by sin and the devil; but in that world up there, where our Lord is enthroned in glory, every thought is directed by King Jesus. And what thinkers there are there! I love thought, especially when my mind is a little free, and when my thoughts fly out a little; and I love thinking, and I have sometimes peculiar ideas of the happiness of heaven, in relation to the activities of the mind. Heaven is a world of thought, a world of thinking minds, and every mind is baptized, immersed in divine light, and there is not a streak of error in the light of that glorious world. Above all those thinkers, above all those minds, there is another mind, and above all those shining crowns there is a brighter crown than all, and that is the mind of Christ, the thought of Christ, and the crown of the dear Redeemer. Oh, He governs every angel's thought, and the thought of every spirit that

is made perfect there, and every feeling and every motive in that glory world serves King Immanuel; and then He reigns in heaven over all the grace that is laid up for sinners on the earth. No parcel, if I may so speak, leaves heaven without the permission and knowledge of King Jesus; and we have grace in parts, a little yesterday, a little to-day, and a little to-morrow; a sermon here, and a sermon there—and all this grace comes from heaven—not a single stream but what proceeds from His throne, and not a single parcel but what comes by His authority; and if you could only look,—but we seize it as soon as it comes, and take time no to reflect: if you could only look at the comfort that Jesus sends you, you would see that it is stamped with His dear name, and has the authority of Heaven upon it. Angels stand before Him, and are ready to fulfil in the twinkling of an eye—Oh how they love Him!—His high commands. They fly at His nod; the look of His eye directs them; and whilst they are before the throne, His charms and beauties evermore allure them, and the angel that is sent to attend a crossing-sweeper all the day long, is as happy in his work as that one who stands before Immanuel's throne. They find their heaven in obeying the behests of King Jesus there. And then what shall we say about the Gospel? Where is it? Between the two covers of this book. Jesus Christ's name, influence, power, and authority, appear everywhere. Take the promise that was very sweet to your hearts twenty years ago, and come to it to-day, and read it, and analyze it, and try to apply it. Perhaps it yields no comfort now; and yet you say it was so applied to me twenty years ago, that I remember it well even now. I was so carried away that I thought of Paul's words, "Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell;" but now these words yield no comfort. What is the reason? Jesus reigns, and He must reign; and He reigns in, and by, and over the Word, and over every minister of the Word. I wish He reigned more experimentally in this poor heart of mine. A brother said to me last Friday, "You are not your own master, John." If I were, it would be such a fertile mind, and be so full of thought, and never be otherwise than at liberty in the pulpit. I would never be shut up, I would preach, oh yes I would! but the fact is, I am not a good judge of what is best for the people. If I had the reins for a quarter of an hour, I should do more mischief than a little. You are driving a trap through Fleet-street, and beside you sits you little son, and it requires all your attention to guide the horse amidst the hundreds of vehicles, and the child wants the reins—he could manage the matter, to be sure he could: but you know better than to put them into his hands, although you love him, and because you love him, you deny his request. No, Jesus reigns, and He says, No, my child, I will hold the reins, and the whip too. I will guide you with my counsel, and afterwards receive you to My glory. You are passing through ten thousand dangers to glory, and if you had the reins, you would run into the first one that comes. And what is it in connection with providence that He does not preside over? Oh bless His name, His Almighty arm is long enough to reach the circumference of Divine providence; His throne is its centre, and as he sits upon it, His omnipotence reaches the utmost limits of the circle, and

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

With regard to Zion, He reigns there ; and with regard to hell, yes, He has His bits in the jaws of the devil himself. I thank Him for revealing that fact. The devil is chained. "I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." King Jesus thus holds Satan with bit and bridle. I was thinking the other day in relation to the power of Satan, and the superior power of the Saviour, that without the reign of the Saviour we could not lie in our beds at night, and without the providential reign of Christ we could not walk with safety in the streets, nor in the beautiful country lanes here. There are latent forces enough in the world to burn it up in a few hours, but there is a very strong hand upon them, and that is the hand of Him about whose reign we are trying to speak this morning.

His reign is also an *all-fulfilling reign*. What is He fulfilling by His operations on the throne? "I wept much," said John, (Rev. v.) "because no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." And I beheld, and lo, instead of seeing a lion, I saw a lamb—for Jesus is a lion as to His reign over His enemies, and a lamb as to His sacrifice for the sins of His people. John says, "There stood a lamb as it had been slain, and he came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, and proceeded to open the seals thereof." Christ has that book of divine purposes and decrees before Him, and King Jesus on the throne opens its seals, and

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

All that, my dear friends, is the result of the fact that Jesus holds the reins, and as He moves a particular rein, an empire falls or rises, an emperor falls from his throne, or a beggar is raised from the dunghill. Then again, by His reign, He fulfils the demands of His own blood, for our Lord listens to Himself. The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel. And the blood of Christ demands at least two things ; first, everlasting honours to Him that shed it ; and secondly, eternal honours and everlasting crowns for you and me, and Jesus sits upon the throne to fulfil the demands of His own blood. But then again, our Lord has the Bible before Him, and I mean by that, that He keeps in view all the great facts of the Gospel, and all the precious promises of God ; and as He reigns, He is fulfilling the Bible, and making good the Word that He and His Father have spoken. God is not a man that He should lie, said the wizard Balaam. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" How does He make it good?" The Word that fell from His lips as a promise shall be made good by the operations of His hands, for what the rails are to the locomotive, that the purposes of God are to the operations of His power. The Lord's purposes are laid down right through eternity, and King Jesus is travelling on them. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." This is an object of the most unbounded

faith on the part of His people. He will be trusted, not traced; for He giveth no account of any of His doings. Lord, what will happen to-morrow? What is that to thee? follow thou Me. Lord, what shall this man do? What is that to thee? leave it to Me; I am on the throne; I am too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.

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

A few remarks on the remainder of the subject,—*the necessity for the reign of Christ*. “He *must* reign.” In the very nature of things, the providence and the grace of God must have a head, and the universe must have a head. God did not make the world, and leave it in a state of anarchy. The world is governed by natural laws. Who presides over them? and who made them? and what is behind the laws of nature? We are bound to declare that there is a vast amount of infidelity in connection with much of the teachings of natural science in these days. No God presiding over the world, or no God presiding over the laws that govern the world! A world without a God, a ship like this without a captain or a pilot, a work like this without an author! Supreme, prodigious infidelity! He must reign, to say nothing for a moment about His mediation, He must reign to govern the universe. He must reign to perpetuate His cause. If He vacated the throne, or left the operations of His omnipotent grace for an hour, the church of God would collapse and sink into ruin, for we are not self-supplying or self-sufficient, or self-supporting. Look at the cause of Christ, and see the necessity for His reign. Consider its weight. Who but an omnipotent being could sustain the weight of an interest like that of Christianity. The weight of popery is mighty; but it rests upon its own basis, and will crush its own foundation by-and-bye, and sink into everlasting ruin. Lord, hasten it in Thy time. But we have in relation to Christianity this fact. “On this Rock will I build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Look at the weight, then, of the interest of Christ; it requires an omnipotent King to sustain it. Look at the worth of it. Who can preserve so valuable an interest but an omnipotent reigning Monarch? Look at the connections in which it stands, and at its destination. The church is destined for the highest honours. She must, she will attain that position, and wear those honours as the grand result of the fact that Jesus reigns. He must reign and complete His own mediation. He died to save, and lives in heaven to convey the benefits of His own death. He died to pay the debts of His people, and lives in heaven to receive all whose debts He paid; and hence, if we were saved by His death, we shall be much more saved by His life. O my dear brethren, we have salvation from both the crowns of Jesus; salvation from the thorny crown, and salvation from the golden one. Yes, we have our hope of heaven from the fact that He was crowned with thorns, and we shall have the heaven we hope for from the fact that He is crowned with glory; salvation comes from the cross and throne.

Let us notice very briefly *the results of His reign*: “till He hath put all enemies under His feet.” Every saved sinner is in a certain sense brought

to His feet, but not put beneath them. They lie at His feet in the dust of self-abasement for pardon and forgiveness, and when they are pardoned and forgiven, they are put into His bosom ; for this is how He deals with His people ; He takes their sins in one hand, and their persons in the other, for He can separate the sinner from his sins, and casts the sin behind His back, and puts the sinner into His bosom. This is how He saves His people. But the enemies put beneath His feet, who are they ? The time is coming when popery shall be there. Made by hell, Rome shall be taken and destroyed. The nations of the Continent are shaking off its yoke to a considerable extent, but the monster of iniquity seems to be finding a refuge and a home in this beautiful and blessed country of ours. O that the Lord would open our rulers' eyes, and the eyes of the nation generally ! The locust army of Jesuits are finding an asylum and home here. Blessed be God, the system is doomed, and Antichrist shall be destroyed, and heaven and earth shall say, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen !" Where is she ? Underneath the feet of King Jesus. He must reign, till philosophy, mere intellectuality—so far as it opposes His truth—and everything that is worldly and sinful, are put beneath His feet.

Finally, there is death itself, and that was perhaps the leading idea of the Apostle; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Now, when our dear Lord put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, He did not annihilate death, but spoiled it and its power, and changed its nature, and altered its position ; He took the sting from it, and so changed it, that it is now the believer's road to heaven. King Jesus will demand all death's prey ; and then He will take possession of all the territories of death ; and when death has disgorged its prey, and its territories are in the hands of Jesus, then Christ will smite death, and hurl it beneath His feet, and the last enemy shall be destroyed ; and then shall come the end. And when worlds thus surround the throne of Jesus, and death and hell are overcome, and ransomed millions are entering everlasting perfection and glory, may you and I be there ; for

"How can we bear that piercing thought,
What if our names should be left out,
When Thou for them shalt call !"

May the Lord command a blessing on what we have said, for His own name's sake. Amen.

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SALVATION, ITS SUBJECTS AND ITS MEANS.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 5th JUNE, 1887.

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."—1 Corinthians i. 21.

EVERY true minister of the Gospel is called by grace, and he is also called to preach the glorious Gospel of the great God; and the call to preach the Gospel is a very important call of our God, and such a man is more or less deeply influenced by the Spirit and grace of God all the days of his life. The apostle was called to be a saint, he was called to preach the Word, he was called to fill the place of an apostle, and he was called to preach the Gospel unto Gentile sinners; he was therefore divinely influenced to go to the city of Corinth, and in that city he stood forth as one of the official servants of his Divine Master to preach the glorious Gospel of God's grace, though a very large amount of enmity against the Gospel, and against Paul himself, was expressed by the Corinthians.

Enmity is always expressed against God's grace, and no wonder, because it nullifies the supposed good works of the creature, exalts the dear Son of God, and ascribes all the honour and glory of our salvation to the sovereign mercy of Jehovah; and that system of Divine truth or of religion which makes nothing of the creature's good works in relation to merit or salvation, is sure to rouse enmity in the breast of the world against the Gospel of our God. Opposition was therefore encountered by the apostle in the city of Corinth, and that opposition was very strong, deep, and bitter; and it appears as if Paul contemplated leaving the place altogether: but the Lord appeared to him and said, "Fear not, Paul; they shall not set upon thee to do thee any harm: for I have much people in this city." The names of God's people are written in heaven, their persons are secretly united to the dear Son of God, and all the Lord's hidden ones must sooner or later be called by grace. Paul therefore remained in Corinth, and preached the Gospel of God's salvation; God applied it here and there, and plucked brands out of the burning, delivered His dear people from the world, and brought them together around His feet, with wet eyes and broken hearts, saying, "God be merciful to us, for we are sinners;" and in this Paul had a very

vivid and striking illustration of in the words of our text, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."

Now we must limit our attention for a few minutes to our text this evening; and may the Lord the Holy Spirit drop some heavenly unction upon our hearts, that the preacher may be at liberty, and that the hearers may sit at the feet of the blest Redeemer of our souls.

I should like, in the first place, to direct your attention to *the salvation indicated*. "It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." I need not bespeak your patience on this occasion; I would speak a little louder if I could: perhaps, if I made an effort, I might speak a little louder, but then I do not think it would be quite safe for me to do so. I hope, therefore, that I shall be calm and collected, for I feel thankful that the Lord has permitted me to occupy the pulpit to-day, and I would not take undue or improper advantage of His loving-kindness and tender mercy. Now, our theme for a few minutes is the great salvation of our God. Are we saints? I do not know a more important question than that. Are we saints, or sinners? There can be no question whatever about the fact that as sinners, we are lost and ruined, and are by nature the children of wrath, even as others; but are we saved sinners? Have we the witness in ourselves? Has the good work of grace been begun in our hearts? Has the Holy Spirit marked us for heaven, and for God, and for eternity? Are we in possession of the one thing needful? Have we been fitted and prepared for the inheritance of the saints in light? Our hair is becoming grey, or has already become so. Years are multiplying upon us, and very shortly we must go into other scenes, and into other company. There is another world, God is there; and the majesty of His face fills that world with a glory which we cannot describe, and which we could not bear here. Are we in a condition of meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; in other words, Are we among those who believe, and whom God has therefore saved? But salvation does not begin with our conversion, or our regeneration. "You are so fond of going beyond the commencement of the believer's experience." I always like to preach the root of religion, "the root of the matter." I always like to go back, if I can, to the great source. My salvation did not begin when my experience began. My salvation did not commence when my eyes were first opened. I trust—not to go back into eternity,—I trust that we were saved on the cross; and if so, we were saved before we believed, and we were brought to believe because we were saved—only there is this difference between the two aspects or branches of salvation,—on the cross we were saved by Christ, and when we believed we were saved by the Holy Spirit. On the cross we were saved by blood;

when, however, we believed, we were saved by power. On the cross, with the dear Redeemer, we satisfied the law, we satisfied justice in our Lord meeting the requirements of God's law; we received the wrath of God,—do not misunderstand me—we received the wrath, the righteous wrath of God, in the person of our Substitute and Surety; and when our dear Lord voluntarily bowed His head in death, and said, “It is finished,” His breastplate was upon His heart, His heavenly Father saw all the names of the church of God there, and Heaven itself regarded the great business of Calvary as having for ever completed the legal deliverance and salvation of countless millions of men and women; and because we were so saved on the cross, in the fulness of time, we were saved in our hearts; the salvation of the dear Son of God reached us, took hold of us, entered into our hearts and minds, and we became experimentally saved sinners in the sight of God.

But let me be practical and experimental. Those who are saved sinners are first of all convinced of sin. I have a certain case in my mind which has been in my recollection ever since I heard of it, and which I think I shall remember as long as I live, of one who, having made a profession of religion for a considerable time, departed from the faith, and declared that he knew nothing, or never was convinced of sin. Now, my dear friends, if you and I have never been convinced of sin, we are not among those believers whom the Lord has saved; for depend upon it this is the first step, this is the first thing conscience feels. The eyes are opened, light Divine is poured into the understanding, and the real state of things is brought to knowledge, and the person so saved is convinced of sin; so that if all the world came and brought all the arguments they possibly could to bear upon the subject, for the purpose of reasoning him out of the fact that he was a sinner they would all fail; for the Holy Ghost convinces of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. How solemn a thing it is to be a sinner! How gloomy and deeply solemn a thing it is to know that I am a sinner! But if I do not know, if I am not convinced that I am a sinner, salvation will never ease my heart, will never satisfy my soul, will never give me any joy. The man who is rich has not his happiness increased by receiving a £5 note, or a £500 note from an individual. The man who is poor and needy, and who has nothing, the poor soul that is sinking for want of something, is the soul that appreciates help; and the lost man is the only man that can deeply value the salvation of our God. You would never value the Cross or enter in any measure into the deep sorrows and sufferings of our Lord, unless you were convinced of sin. When my soul first felt the bitterness and weight of sin, and realized somewhat of the consequences thereof, and I was directed by the Spirit to my suffering Lord on Calvary; it was

then, and not till then, that I had a vivid and striking, and heart-influencing view of the terrible nature of sin, and of the awful character of guilt and transgression. He is saving them that believe. But this is only one branch, and therefore let us pass on, as time is going.

Not only is a sinner convinced of sin, but he is brought into the presence of God, there to confess that fact, with feelings such as he never before possessed ; and he does so, not in public merely, but in private ; and this fact is taught us by Eternal Truth Himself. "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican ;" and after a description of the Pharisee's prayer, we have that of the publican. The publican stood afar off, he left room for a Mediator between himself and God. He was so black and so contemptible in his own estimation that he was afraid to draw near, but smote upon his breast—the pain was there, the agony was there, the weight was there, the bitterness was there—in his soul were all the horrors of a deep realization of guilt experienced—and he prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner !" The prayer is short, every word is weighty, it indicates God's method of saving sinners, and the fact that the sinner is brought to acquiesce in it. God saves by mercy, and the sinner wants the mercy that saves. God has revealed His mercy, and the convinced sinner makes use of that revelation, and pleads it before God. "God be merciful to me a sinner !" He cannot hide his sins, he cannot cloak them, or conceal them in the presence of God, and he has no desire to do so. You may commit a fault, and a variety of circumstances may induce you to try to conceal it from your fellow-creatures ; but the convinced sinner has not the slightest idea, or wish, or desire to conceal and cover his sins from God's all-seeing eye. He comes, not to boast in his shame, but comes just as he is, because he is sinking, sinking, sinking into hell, into despair, into darkness, and there is only one hope set before him in the Gospel ; and impelled by a power which he cannot resist, he comes into the presence of the God who has touched him once, and convinced him of sin, and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner !"

A third point here is,—that all the sinner's enmity is gone, it has fled ; he can fight against God no more, he can curse His name no longer, he can deride no more the people of God, and contemptuously treat the Lord's-day ; and whatever may be said about the Day of Rest, about its being a legal institution, and the rest of it, my experience goes in this direction, that the people of God love it, and they cannot help doing so. I love it, it is the day of rest. My soul has been more blessed on the Lord's-day than tongue can describe. I do not care whether it be a legal institution, or an evangelical institution, whether it be perpetuated by the opinions of men or otherwise ; it is a blessed day, a day of rest. My

Lord honoured it ; it was on this day that He left the tomb, on this day that He appeared in the midst of His disciples, and said, "Peace be unto you ;" it was on the seventh—the Sabbath-day again that He appeared to them, and repeated the blessing ; it was on the Sabbath-day that the Holy Ghost was communicated. The convinced sinner's enmity is gone, and there he lies, like the conquered Saul of Tarsus, the chains have been torn away—the chains with which hell fastened him—the bonds that held him in the devil's service have been removed, and Saul lies naked and without enmity beneath the eye of His conquering Lord, and prescribes nothing, expresses no wish with regard to his own personal feelings, except this one, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" Where was his sword ? It was gone. Where was the armour with which the devil had armed him ? It was all gone. He was stripped, ready to be anything or nothing, ready to go anywhere or everywhere in connection with the cause, honour and glory of his suffering Lord. Convinced of sin—that is a branch of salvation ; a prayerful confession of it is a second branch of it ; and the destruction of the natural enmity of the human heart is a third branch of salvation. Saul the sinner, convinced of sin, confessing it before God, having lost all his enmity against God, is prepared for the conquering and all-sanctifying reign of grace. Grace leads him to the throne, grace takes the sceptre, grace having conquered the will, takes full and everlasting possession of it. We are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves ; it is the gift of God. Now we are not under the law, but under grace ; not under sin—sin is in us, but we are not in sin, but in the kingdom of God's dear Son. These saved ones are all living. They do not all of them possess the same measure of life, but they are all living ones. They have all been liberated, they have all been enlightened, they have all been brought to know God, and to know Him in some measure for themselves. "The world by wisdom knew not God, and it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." I should like to dwell a little longer on this point, but circumstances forbid.

Now secondly, *who are saved ?* I have been trying to speak on the experimental aspect of salvation. Who are saved ? "Them that believe." It pleased God to save them that believe. "Why, faith, sir, is the cause of salvation." No it is not ; we are not saved until we believe, not experimentally so ; but mediatorially and federally we are saved before we believe, and we are brought to believe because we are saved secretly in the Lord with an everlasting salvation—"save them that believe." "Yes, but I have no joy." The text does not say that he will save them that are joyful, but "them that believe." I have many doubts and fears. The existence of doubt and fear is, according to my view of things, compatible

with the existence of faith. A measure of faith, and a measure of fear—a measure of faith, and a measure of unbelief, may be found in the same mind—nay, a measure of each must be found there in order to verify the Bible; for if it were all faith, and no unbelief, there would be no conflict, and there would therefore be no victory. If it were all hope, and no fear, there would be no opposition, and no warfare within; but there is a warfare within, there is a conflict, there are two opposite powers and principles, and “water and fire maintain the fight,” and will do so “until the weaker dies.” Look at dear old Bunyan—his views of truth will remain right and scriptural down to the end of time: in the Interpreter’s house, the good man says, the Pilgrim was led to observe the fire, and one poured water upon it, and the more water he poured upon the fire, the brighter, and fiercer, and stronger it became, and he could not understand it; and the Interpreter took him elsewhere, and showed him the secret of it. Yes, the devil may pour water on my faith, the Holy Ghost will cast oil upon it, and if faith is a fire, it will continue to burn, notwithstanding all the water that the devil may throw upon it. “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” “Them that believe;” but what is belief? It is taking God at His word. Well, it is so; but historical believers,—men and women who have a mere historical faith—take God at His word. There is a something mysterious in faith. What is faith? I take faith to be a very comprehensive word, and a very comprehensive blessing. If there is faith, there will be love; for faith works by love, and faith can never spring up in the heart of an unbeliever. And if there is faith there will be hope, and hope springs out of faith. I cannot possibly hope for that in the existence of which I do not believe. Oh, faith is a marvellous grace! The Lord saves them that believe. Faith, what is it? It is the soul coming to Jesus. Where is He? He is everywhere. I do not mean so. He is in heaven. Yes, but I do not mean that exactly. Where is He? The Hope set before us in the Gospel. The Son of God revealed in the Word. I see His face, I hear His voice, I am attracted by His beauties. Do not tell me there is no Christ, I have seen Him. Do not tell me there is no Immanuel, I have spoken to Him, walked with Him. “Ah! you are a very peculiar man.” The Lord has redeemed unto Himself a peculiar people, and religion makes us peculiar. Moses “endured as seeing Him who is invisible,” whom, “having not seen, we love; and in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” “Do you mean to say, sir, that faith is as confident as sense?” I do. “Do you mean to say that faith is as confident as sight? Do you mean, therefore, to say that you as deeply and confidently believe that there is a Jesus Christ as if you had actually seen His person?” I do. I do as confidently

believe that there is such a God-man, such a Saviour as Jesus Christ, as though I had been in heaven and seen Him. Well, you may take the consequences of your faith, I will risk it all ; and yet there will be no risk. I am quite willing to take the consequences of my faith. My faith has brought my mind to this unseen but very real Saviour ; and what then ? I have built my hope upon Him. I have ventured my everlasting all upon Him. I must venture it upon something. I have a soul, a weighty creature ; it is a precious soul, and I must rest it somewhere. I cannot rest it upon an angel, nor upon any creature, nor upon anything of my own. I must have a foundation underneath me, and that is my unseen—as to my mortal eye,—my unseen, but real and loving Saviour.

“I know His courts, I’ll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.”

And if at last I should be disappointed, and discover that my religion was an empty affair ; then, I had almost said, I will bless God notwithstanding ; for I am a thousand times happier with my delusion than the atheist with his supposed facts. Faith, then, is coming to Christ, and belief is leaning upon Him, and remaining there after we have reached Him. Tried and afflicted, unhappy, wretched, and cast down ; but still my soul is there, my hopes are there, my expectations are from Him. Then I am a saved sinner ! He has designed, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.

Thirdly, *the means of salvation*, “by the foolishness of preaching.” You will be good enough to excuse brevity, as we have another service after this ; and yet I would venture to speak two or three words more, on the means of this salvation—“the foolishness of preaching.” First, the matter we preach is foolish in the estimation of the world. “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.” “Why, those men and women are expecting eternal life through Him that died on the tree under the curse, who could not save Himself ; they are depending upon the works of another, and they say they are going to heaven with a character which they themselves had no hand in forming. They are resting their all upon a being who could not help Himself, and concerning whom it was said, ‘He saved others, Himself He cannot save.’” Yes, on that tree that rose on Calvary, that Golgotha, that place of a skull, a wondrous work was to be seen, and all our eternal life and salvation come rushing down from the heart of God through that apparently helpless sufferer ; but though He was bruised, by His wounds we are healed. Jehovah was there, behind it all. There was a marvellous salvation, and the clouds having cleared away, and the mists having lifted, we see behind, and in the suffering

Son of God, not foolishness, but the wisdom and the power of God.

The foolishness of preaching—the manner in which this salvation is made known—by preaching. “Why, sir, we live in a Christian country, and that constitutes us Christians; we are the children of Christian parents, and that makes us Christians. There are the sacraments, and they have that influence; and if we were baptized in our infancy, or even when we became adults, and sit at the table of the Lord, that would pass for Christianity.” Then the sacraments, and not Jesus, are our saviours! No, we do not preach a Christian country merely, nor the sacraments. God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” The whole of God is in Him; we have seen Him, and felt the sweetness of His influence and power. By the foolishness of preaching God is saving them that believe.

I might dwell upon the preachers themselves; not polished, not learned, not mighty, not noble, not men of influence; still they were taught of God the Holy Ghost, and they carried grand treasures of knowledge everywhere. They were not authorised to fight, with carnal weapons, but they were commanded and authorised to go into all the world and proclaim how great Christ was and is, how great He was when He died, and how great He is now; and as they do so, the Lord drops the word here and there, and yonder, and up rises the saint on the right hand, and on the left. May we hear the cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” “Lord save me!” in this place, in this manner, if it be His will, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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CHOSEN IN HIM.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 11th JULY, 1886.

"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."—Eph. i. 4.

THE reign and operations of God's grace are very deep and mysterious. Paul had been a bitter enemy : he burned with hatred to the things of God ; he persecuted His people, and did his best to destroy the cause of the Redeemer. Why did not the Lord at an earlier period of his life quench the enmity of his heart ? Why did He permit him to go so far ? God giveth no account of any of His matters ; what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Our God is so righteous, and true, and holy that He can do nothing wrong ; therefore let us be dumb before the throne of the great Eternal. Nevertheless, the grace of God though deep and mysterious, is marvellously rich and enriching to the heart that receives it. Paul, whilst Saul the Pharisee, was poor, and knew it not ; neither did he realize that he was wretched and empty. The riches of Divine grace, however, were poured into his heart ; his eyes were filled with tears ; he approached as a contrite sinner to the mercy-seat, and prayed for pardon, and delivering favour, and friendship ; and hence the Lord said to Ananias, "Go thy way into the street that is called Straight, and enquire at a certain house for one Saul of Tarsus ; for, behold, he prayeth !" He had seen his Lord on the throne, he had heard His voice, and received His words, and the Lord Himself had said to him, "Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." He was led into the city, and it appears that he continued in prayer until Ananias went to him ; therefore the Lord said, "Behold, he prayeth !" Ananias appeared ; the message of Heaven was spoken, and deliverance reached the heart of Saul of Tarsus, and he leapt into the sweet enjoyment of that liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free. But I remember that the Lord said to Ananias, "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings, and to the children of Israel." No heart is too hard for almighty grace ; no sinner is too distant for the mercy of heaven ; no ungodly man or woman is too far gone for the Lord to save. The heart may be hard, but when the Holy Spirit uses the hammer of Divine truth, the blows are effectual ; and when He brings His fire into contact with the heart it is sure to be melted. Transforming grace entered the spirit of Saul of Tarsus, and he became as it were another man, and hence he knew by sweet experience the meaning of the words which he wrote, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold all things are become

new." Thus the Lord was pleased to form Saul for Himself, and then to speak to him as a chosen vessel, and to fill him from His own fulness, and thus Paul knew the meaning of those words also, "That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Having been called by grace, he became a persecuted and deeply hated man. His way home to the kingdom of glory was steep and rough ; but as to divine things the apostle Paul was very highly favoured.

The writer of this letter to the church of God at Ephesus was a great-minded man : he was a great Christian, he was a strong believer, his faith was deeply rooted in his heart, his hope ascended very high, and his fellowship and communion with God were deep and soul-enriching. Having said, " Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God ; to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus ;" and I wish my hearers would never cease to bear in mind that these letters of the apostle Paul and others were directed to certain characters, and that whatever is stated in this epistle was addressed first to the saints which were at Ephesus, and then to all the faithful in Christ Jesus, he proceeded : " Grace be to you, and peace, from God^{our} Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ ;" and then he plunges as it were into the great depths of Divine love, and grace, and mercy. " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Under the Old Testament dispensation it used to be, " Blessed be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ;" and blessed be their descendants, the children of Israel, the national people of God. But that dispensation is past and gone, and everything now is beautifully spiritual and simple ; and the God that we worship, love, and adore is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us turn our eyes within for a moment, and try to look at our own hearts. Ask yourself the question, In what relation does Christ stand to me ? In what relation do I stand to Jesus Christ ? He is Christ, for He is the Anointed One ; another of His names is Jesus, for He is the anointed Saviour ; another of His names is the Lord, for He is Governor ; He is Lord and Ruler of all. But let me introduce this little word, " our." " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." One may see thousands of sovereigns in a bank, and yet be absolutely penniless ; and a person may hear and write and read very much about the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet have no interest in Him, and therefore can you introduce this little word " our ?" " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." If He is your Jesus, He is your Christ ; and if He is your Jesus Christ, He is your Lord, and therefore you may say, " Our Lord Jesus Christ." What had the apostle to say concerning the God and Father of Christ ? " Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ." What has God done ? He has blessed. Blessed whom ? Blessed us. And are the persons to be limited ? Yes, you are to look again at the first verse. " To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Who hath blessed us. With what ? With blessings. Is every gift a mercy, a blessing ? Every one. Does nothing but blessing come from the hand of our Father upon our hearts, if we are children ? No curse can ever descend from His throne, upon the objects of His

eternal love. He has blessed us, and that with blessings. What sort of blessings? With spiritual blessings. With how many of them? Who hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings. Where? In heavenly places. In whom? In Christ Jesus. By what rule was this done? My text answers the question: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

The portion I have been led to select as my text this morning is one from which I am not aware that I have ever preached a sermon: and I almost wonder at this; for it is a sweet, a blessed portion, full of Gospel marrow and fatness. It is the wine on the lees, well refined. I am not going to be critical or controversial: critical preaching I do not care for, and controversial preaching you have heard very frequently, lies beyond me, and I do not care for it at all. I shall make a few plain conversational observations on this very interesting, though brief and comprehensive portion of Divine truth. Our subject is—*God's choice of His people*; and as I have four or five points to bring before you, I will mention them as I proceed.

In the first place, God's choice of His people was *sovereign*. He has sovereignly chosen His people to eternal life and salvation. What do we mean when we say that God is a Sovereign? Why, that He does just as He pleases. And what do we mean when we say that His choice of His people is a sovereign choice? That He chose them according to the good pleasure of His will; that is the meaning of Divine sovereignty. And our God is the only absolute Sovereign, and the only Being that can say, "I will work, and who shall let or hinder?" He does as He pleases in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Therefore our God is a sovereign, and His mercy is sovereign mercy; His grace is unmerited favour, and His love and all its operations are Divinely and unalterably sovereign. God, first of all, has a people; He chose them for Himself before the foundation of the world, and He will retain possession of them for ever. He has a people. He might not have had a people, but He did as He pleased. He did not need them, and therefore the fact that there is a people that belong to our God is owing to His sovereign pleasure. Our salvation originated in His will, and His love flows from His will. I have heard people say that they cannot tell why God loved them. The answer is obvious enough; He loved His people because He would love them. "Without bottom, brim, or shore," is this deep ocean of everlasting love. Some of you have servants, and you need them, and could not carry on your affairs nor transact your business without them. You are not independent of others. God needed no angels to sing His praises, or to glorify Him, and He needed no saved men and women to surround His throne in heaven. There was no necessity pressing Him, no power out of Himself influencing Him. Seated upon His throne, and living alone, He resolved in Himself that He would have a church, that it should consist of an innumerable multitude of members, and that they should be redeemed by blood, regenerated by the Spirit, carried through various scenes of suffering and pain, and pleasure and joy, achieve a victory in Immanuel's name

over death, and enter into the regions of everlasting bliss, there to see His face as their Father for ever and ever. All this rich mercy, all this amazing grace, to what is it traceable? Will you trace it to anything in yourselves? to anything external to God Himself? Oh, He found the motive in His own bosom. The reason for resolving to have a family He found in His own heart, and decided in Himself to save this great multitude of sinful creatures with an everlasting salvation. All this was and is simple and pure sovereignty. When we reach heaven, our feelings will be then expressed by the verse :

“Dissolved by His goodness we fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy we’ve found.”

Why go so far back? My text takes me a long way back into the past, before the foundation of the world. Why attempt to soar so high and to dwell upon the sovereignty of God? Because it has pleased Him to manifest and express His sovereignty in this great, grand, mysterious, and adorable manner, by closing hell for ever against millions, and by opening heaven for the glorification of millions; and the glory of the whole of this must redound to His great name. We say, then, in the first place, that God’s choice of His people was a sovereign choice; there was no pressure upon Him, except what He was pleased to put upon Himself, the pressure of His own will and of His own love.

“Chosen us in Him.” How may we know it? That is what we want you to dwell upon. Well, I have tried to settle a few things concerning the fact; now I will tell you how you may know—and I think the ground I take is unmistakable—I will tell you how you may know whether you were chosen before the foundation of the world. God’s choice of His people is made manifest in regeneration and effectual calling. *Eternal election is expressed in the new birth*, and if you feel that you cannot soar so high as God’s sovereignty in choosing His people, as beyond your reach, and going over your heads, here is a matter for your hearts. Has the new birth taken place? “Ye must be born again.” Have you been called by God’s grace? Have you been translated out of one kingdom into another, out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Have you received the truth in the love of it? Then go to Paul’s other letter, his Epistle to the Thessalonians, and read thus: “Knowing brethren beloved your election of God.” How did he know it? Our Gospel came to you not in word only, but in deed and in truth, in spirit and in truth. Has the Gospel reached you? Has it entered your heart? Do you love it? Is it holy meat and drink to you? Do you feel it is the richest treasure God ever deposited in a human heart? Are you among those who feel that although there is so much here that is dear to you, and you hope to retain it, you would rather lose all that you prize in an earthly sense, than lose the grace of God which He has deposited in your heart? If this is your feeling, you are a new creature, the new birth has taken place, and you have been called by grace. Now trace it up to its great source and spring, and read the description of it in my text this morning, “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.” Keep on the bank, look at the river

of Divine love and grace; it is deep, it is clear, it is cool, it is refreshing it flows silently, and very blessedly. Keep on the banks of the river. Where shall I start from? From the point where regeneration took place with you, from the point where you were called by grace. Start from that point, and keep on the banks, and you will soon reach the cross where Immanuel died, and there you will see the meritorious cause of your salvation. Not the moving cause, but the meritorious cause of it. Go past the cross, go past the suffering person of the Son of God, go back to the foundation of the world, do not stop there, go beyond, and as some good old writer says, "Put your head into eternity," and there you will see what my text asserts, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." I said I would not be controversial, I have not been so: I said I would not be critical, and I have made no critical remarks upon this solemn portion of Divine truth. Brethren, we are debtors.

Let me just add one more remark to this which I have already made, and that is this, that God's act in choosing His people is an *irreversible* one. His choice of His people will stand for ever and ever. I love the words of Job, "He is in one mind, and none can turn Him, and whatsoever His soul desireth, even that He doeth." All who shall fill heaven, He looked at in the person and character of His best beloved, His first beloved Son; and having resolved that they should be His people for ever, He rested in His love. God's act of choosing His people gives Him infinite satisfaction and delight. Will you read the chapter again at your leisure, for if you do so you will find Paul referring again and again to the "good pleasure of His will." Jehovah was deeply delighted in uniting His people to His Son; and deeply delighted with the prospect, if I may so speak, of having them in heaven with Himself, and deeply delighted with the contemplation of that marvellous eternity in the future, when the ransomed millions will all unite in crowning the Saviour Lord of all. God's choice of His people is sovereign.

Then, secondly, the text represents His choice of His people as a *personal* choice, or as a choice of persons. He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. Our persons, body and soul—the whole man. "This is the will of Him that sent me, that of all that He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." "Oh, my precious soul, sir, that is what I think about!" And so does God think about it, and He has always thought about it. My poor frail body, it is but dust and ashes. God thinks about that also, and that was not passed by, forgotten, or omitted when God chose you to eternal life in His Son. He chose the whole of your persons, and though you are going to the grave, and your now animated dust will be dissolved and mingle with its original dust, it will never cease to be the chosen property of your God. Let us bear to the grave the bodies of our friends respectfully, and thankfully, and prayerfully, and let us have some corresponding feeling when we say over their grave, "In sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection to everlasting life." The person was chosen, the person was redeemed, and therefore the body is to go to heaven. This body of Hazelton's,—oh, I hope I am included in the

number—this poor body of Hazelton's, though it be consumed by worms and utterly disappear,—this body, I trust, was loved with an everlasting love, and is destined to fill a place, to fill a throne, to occupy a seat in the presence of the God of heaven for ever. But I want to say that some people—not to forget my promise that I would not be controversial—want to explain this mystery away, and they do what they can for this purpose by saying that God chose His people because He foreknew they would believe, he foresaw that they would obey, and He knew from all eternity that they would become holy, and therefore He chose them to eternal life. If so, God's choice of His people was not a choice of persons, but of principles. He chose your faith, your hope, your holiness, or chose you on account of His foresight and foreknowledge of those excellencies. Then what about the influence that moved Him; according to this view that was in His people in their foreseen hope, and faith, and holiness. O let such doctrines as that perish. I speak plainly, and this is the day when plainness of speech should be used. Let all such doctrines as that perish. God did not choose me on account of my foreseen faith. I have faith because He chose me. He did not base this act of Divine grace upon my obedience. I was chosen to obedience, and not because it was foreknown that I should become obedient. Let God be true, and every man a liar. Let God have the whole of the honour of every branch of our salvation. Do not stand before Him in order that any measure of your shadow may fall upon and darken His throne. Stand aside, and let His throne appear in all its brightness and glory. It was "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Then, thirdly, this was done in *a certain order*. Look at the text again, "According as He hath chosen us in Him," that is in Christ. This was the order of the Divine decrees. *In Him*, and nowhere else beside. In the Lord Jesus Christ; it seems to me that He could not choose His people out of or apart from His dear Son; it seems to me that He could not save them apart from Him, nor love them considered as sinners apart from the person of His dear Son, and we are to consider them as fallen and sinful creatures. He could not choose you in your sins, nor under the law, nor on account of your obedience. If He made choice of you at all, a choice that was intended to be irreversible, that choice must have taken place in the person of His well-beloved Son. Well, what is Christ, how is Christ considered here? As the Head of grace, as the Head of the church, as the Head of the covenant. It is important that the people should be where all the grace was deposited. All was in Christ, and the people were chosen there to receive it. He is the great Head of the church and the great Head of the covenant of Divine grace. Now let us illustrate it by adverting for a minute to Adam. Adam was the natural and federal head of the world: the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is the Head of all the church. Now, mark me. Adam, the Head of the world, represented the world, the world was in him, all its teeming millions, seminally or otherwise, and God blessed all the world with all worldly blessings in their head; made him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the air; He blessed all the world with temporal and earthly blessings in their

earthly head, and so long as the head stood the world retained its blessings. He was a fallible head, and when he fell, all men were ruined. Now Christ is the Head of the church, and the Father hath blessed the church with all spiritual—not earthly merely—with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. The first head was fallible, and the vessel was wrecked, and all were lost. The second Head is our infallible Christ. This vessel can never be wrecked on the stormy sea of time. It will appear until time shall end, no part can ever give way; no passenger, no one of the number can ever be lost; not a single spiritual blessing can ever be conveyed in vain. The Father has put all things in His Son. Happy is the man and the woman whose hope this Saviour is. "Hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." Hence He is said to be not only the Head of the covenant, but the covenant itself. "I will give Him for a covenant of the people." Now you know a covenant is an agreement or compact between two or more parties. "Yes, God is one party, and man is the other party." Now it is not so. Christ is not the Head of the covenant of grace in that way. The Father is one party, and the God-man Mediator, our Head and Elder Brother is the other party; and Christ promised and vowed for all that were in Him. The Father promised all spiritual blessings conditionally, but the condition was this: That His dear Son should hold Himself responsible for everything, and Christ stepped forward and engaged to answer for all, and to hold himself responsible for the whole family, and so the covenant of peace was between them both. The Father looks to Christ for the fulfilment of the covenant and I look at the same glorious Person for the fulfilment of all my hopes. Christ has promised and vowed for me, and hence He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. That is the order.

Fourthly, this was an *early* act, "before the foundation of the world." There was a time, then, when the world did not exist; and therefore it is sheer infidelity to talk about eternal matter. The world was created, and built, and framed by our God, but before its foundation He chose His people to eternal life and salvation. Time commenced when God began to work—not when He decreed, but when He began to execute His decrees and to fulfil His purpose. He had arranged everything concerning the church, and then He proceeded to draw the plan of the world, and made the world accordingly, but all was settled as to His church and people before its foundation. Go beyond creation, and you get into the infinite depths of eternity. Oh I love the thought that when God lived alone, with not an angel to sing His praise, His thoughts concerning you and me were thoughts of peace and not of evil. He rested in His love, He delighted in His people, He saw them in the future. Indeed, there is no past or future with our God; but we are obliged, however, to use language like this, for we are finite creatures. He saw them all in the glorious person of His Son, and threw around them the arms of His everlasting love, and embraced them with infinite pleasure and delight.

The *design* of all this. "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." It seems, then, that these high doctrines as they are called do not lead to licentiousness or impurity. Chosen in Him thus early, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

My dear friends, all your holiness, whether you have little or much, comes from eternal election, and your holiness—let me drop a comforting word here—whether it be little or much, if it be only a drop, proves that you are a chosen one. If you have a drop of holiness, that holiness came from the fact that God loves you with an everlasting love. Had it not been so, no drop of holiness would have ever reached your soul or mine. “That we should be without blame.” Our actual transgressions in Adam were vile and black—we shall be without blame. Our imperfections now are numerous, embarrassing and distressing. We shall be without blame in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, His blood and righteousness.

What are the remarks that might be made as to this? Why, that the world was made for the church, not the church for the world. All saved in God’s decree before the world was made. God having saved His people decretively, proceeded at once to erect a platform upon which to execute His mind and will, and purpose and decree. Time is a parenthesis, a kind of island that God has called up in the midst of the boundless, shoreless ocean of eternity; and on this little island of time God is executing His purposes, and preparing His people for heaven; and by-and-bye, when all His work is done, He will speak again and the island of time will sink and be swallowed up in the ocean of eternity. Eternity is behind us and before us; here is a parenthesis, something thrown in which God will delete, which will disappear, and all be vast eternity again. Paul’s language is very comfortable, “All things are yours; for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” Now observe the gradation here, God chose the Son to be Head and Mediator, then He chose His people in His Son; that constituted the people of God Christ’s people; “Ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. And what follows? All things are yours. May some of them be named? Things present, things to come, life and death, all are yours; for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” The world is ours, it was made for us; Christ is ours, we are in Him; He was given to us, and we were given to Him. May you and I realize somewhat of the blessedness of these grand realities under the government and reign of the Spirit of God, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE RIGHTEOUS REMEMBERED FOR EVER.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, 27th NOVEMBER, 1873.

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“The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”—Psalm cxii. 6.  
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IF I mistake not, my subject this evening relates to the justification of a sinner, that high and blessed act of God which may be compared to one of the streams which emanate from the river of eternal love. How very blessed is the first clause of this verse! “Surely he shall not be moved for ever.” A good man is very frequently and deeply moved; so moved that he is often filled with wonder, consternation and astonishment; but *surely*—and I beseech you, my dear hearers, to lay all the stress you can upon God’s “surely,” for this is God’s word, and His “surely” always means much. The believer may be moved to-day as he was yesterday, and as perhaps he will be to-morrow; but Heaven has said, “Surely he shall not be moved for ever. The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”

Let us look, in the first place, at *the character*; and then, secondly, at *the fact* stated in relation to this character; and then thirdly and lastly, should we have time, we will draw one or two *inferences* from the glorious truth asserted in relation to this interesting character.

In the first place we have to notice *the character* indicated in the text: “*the righteous*,” who shall be in everlasting remembrance. And there are such persons as righteous persons; there is such a character on the earth as a righteous man. The assertion is sometimes made, “There is none that doeth good, no, not one.” “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.” And then God proceeded to say, “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” And yet Scripture does not contradict itself, for the Word of God is always perfectly and divinely consistent; therefore we must ever remember the two great grounds upon which mankind stands. We must consider the position in which man lies, in which Adam his father left him, and the position into which the Lord Jesus Christ has saved him, and keeps him. If we contemplate man as a fallen creature, and look at the sons and daughters of Adam in the position in which their father left them, we see that Adam carried us a long way from God, and we ourselves were perfectly satisfied with the distance from Him at which we lived, for our first father carried us down to the very threshold of hell, and left us, lost and ruined, and under the curse of a broken law; and Jesus Christ has brought us back again; and therefore we have to contemplate the two Adams, the two heads, the two great roots, the two great trees.

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If we look at Adam as the root, and at the many branches that grow from that root, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." But when we look at Christ as the second head, the second root, I find over that tree the words, "Thy people also shall be all righteous." They are all right there, as they are all wrong where Adam left them. We have to speak for a few minutes on this character, the righteous; and this subject renders it necessary that I should set forth the obedience and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having stood here so many years, I really feel at times very considerably embarrassed and at a loss, because I know, as a minister of the Gospel, that a preacher should not always dwell on one doctrine; and yet we have not many subjects to bring before the people, for the doctrines of Divine Grace are, comparatively speaking, few, although they are neither small nor insignificant: but they are certainly not numerous. Twelve, fourteen, or perhaps twenty great facts constitute the articles of the faith that is so dear to us. What, therefore, shall we say on this great subject that I have not already said? Well, I will make this passing observation. The people of God are righteous in three respects. They are righteous mediatorially, and they are righteous vitally, and they are righteous practically; and of course I might add to this, that they are righteous, and shall be so eternally.

Now the people of God are righteous *mediatorially*. The obedient life and sacrificial death of the great Righteousness of God are imputed, transferred, put upon every object of God's everlasting love, and every sinner dressed in the obedience of Jesus, is all that, in the sight of God, which the obedience of Jesus Christ can constitute him; so that if there is perfection in the obedience of Christ, and that obedience is mine, if there is infinite value in that obedience, and that obedience is mine, if eternal duration is inseparable from the obedience of Christ, and that obedience is mine, then I am as perfect, complete, just and righteous—I would speak with all reverence—as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is; I do not mean internally, or vitally, or experimentally, but I mean in God's account; I mean as before God's throne, and as beneath His eye; for God does not see me as I see myself, or look at me as I look at myself; God ever regards me, if I am His dear child, through the perfecting and purifying medium of the mediation of His dear Son. In the second place, a righteous man is *vitally* or experimentally right. I do not mean by that that he is satisfied with his own internal righteousness, or with the work of grace that is going on within, or with the depth and extent of that work. But there are times, blessed be God, when he is satisfied as to its nature, qualities and properties, and with the fact that he is a child of God. As long as he is here, he will be looking within and saying,

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

And that utterance is a righteous utterance, and is the effect of the righteous operations in the heart of the righteous Spirit of the righteous God. It is all right together—the utterance is right, the principle which that utterance gives expression to is right, and the Author of that principle is right, and the grand result of all will be perfect

inherent internal righteousness ; so that the child of God is right by imputation and by impartation. And then the child of God is right *practically*, not perfectly or satisfactorily ; for there is no perfection in the flesh, and no perfect living or walking while in the flesh ; but a man is in God's sight what he earnestly and heartily desires to be ; a man is in God's sight, and in God's account, what his heart intreats the God of heaven to cause him to be. "O Lord, I would be holy." Then you are holy. "O Lord, I would love Thee." Then you do love Him ; and God regards you as one that loves His dear and blessed name. With such intense desires, and such a fervent love as this, you cannot live in sin ; you cannot roll it as a sweet morsel under your tongue, or feel at home in the world ; ungodliness and worldliness are not your elements, you would live soberly and righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. Well, this is practical righteousness, and those who are righteous in these respects shall be in everlasting remembrance.

I want, however, to call your attention to-night to two or three points in a somewhat different direction. Looking at this righteous character, made so by God Himself, several things must be regarded as inseparable from it. In the first place, we have the idea of a *standard*, and I do not wish to separate that idea from the character in the text. A righteous man is right or righteous, according to some law or rule, there must be some standard. We know what man is, and what we are ourselves. We are very prone to accommodate, if I may so speak, the standard of righteousness to our own condition and capabilities, and prejudices ; but, dear friends, and I beg your attention to this point, for it involves your salvation and dignity, and glory ; you are righteous by an infallible standard, and according to an eternal and infallible rule. There is no mistake about this, there can be no defect as to the righteousness of the character of that man who is God's workmanship. God does not apply one standard to one individual, and another to another. All must—I hope I shall not be misunderstood—in this respect, be of one and the same height ; all must be perfectly upright ; all must be of full weight and divinely straight, according to the inflexible line of God's eternal truth, and it is the believer's mercy that he is right, according to every law. I do not mind what rule you apply to the character of a child of God. Look at the moral law. Well, you say, that is the only standard of right or wrong. That is one, and on certain premises that is the only one. I ask how the child of God stands in relation to the moral law ? Will his character bear comparison with, and bear the light, the majesty and glory of God's moral law ? If the obedience of Christ was a divine obedience to the moral law, and that obedience is put upon the sinner, then the sinner is all right, according to that standard. Well, take the sinner that is justified and righteous to the Gospel,—and the Gospel is not less perfect than the law ; there is more in the Gospel than can be found in the law, intentionally so on the part of God. The law involves and embraces, and contains the Gospel ; the Gospel, however, contains more than can be found in the law. There is no mercy in the law, there is plenty in the Gospel. There is no pardon in the law, there is plenty in the gospel. Take the sinner to the law, and that

is perfectly straight and right, and he is all right. Can you go higher than this? As high as ever you like with this righteous man. Yes, we are going above the law if possible, and above the Gospel; we will go to the great Lawgiver, we will go to the great Author of the Gospel, Jesus Christ, and consider the Christian in relation to his Author, Christ. And how does he stand in relation to Christ? He is like Him; "as He is, so are we in this world." We are members of His flesh, of His body, and of His bones; and a man is not human flesh in one part of his body, and the flesh of birds, or beasts, or fishes in another part. And the mystical body of Jesus Christ is one nature, one flesh, animated by one Spirit; and if the Head is perfect, the members are perfect also. Here, then, we have the child of God as a righteous character, agreeing, and in harmony with all the laws of God. Dear brethren, you are safe, if you are not happy; for if you have the grace of God in your hearts, and the principle of godly fear in your minds: you are as safe as Abraham in heaven is safe; as safe as Gabriel before the throne of God; he wears the righteousness which God gave him when he created him, and that righteousness is perfectly satisfactory to God. But you and I wear a better robe than Gabriel ever wore, and you and I are righteous, in a sense, in which he never was righteous. The righteousness of Gabriel is angelic righteousness, and is perhaps a moral righteousness; it is a creature righteousness; but the righteousness which constitutes you what you are, is emphatically said to be the righteousness of God. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Then we notice, in the second place, if the first idea be scriptural, that this character must be capable of a *very high position*. If he agrees with God's holy law and blessed Gospel, and if he is in perfect harmony with the perfect Christ of God, and with God Himself, he must occupy a marvellous position. Well, you will see he does, and the position is inseparable from righteousness. We ask, where will the ungodly and the sinner flee? Where are the ungodly there said to be? In the arms of the wicked one, far from God by wicked works, and their position is very variously described by the Word of God. Where is the righteous man? Listen:—"For they are without fault before the throne of God." That is where they are. Yes, and he that is all right, must stand before the throne of God; and more than that, he that has been made righteous by God may sit down before it. It is a great thing to see God's throne at a distance, and to pray for grace to enable us to draw near; but a greater thing to have grace, enabling us to approach, and a greater thing still to have grace that enables us to look with calmness into the face of infinite Majesty; but the greatest of all blessings is to have that measure of grace that enables the soul to sit down and rest in the presence of the everlasting God. I think I may say that those who enter Her Majesty's presence stand before her, even those who occupy a high official position; the premier himself, when he enters into her presence, does not sit down, but stands and receives what are commonly called her commands. It would be considered, I suppose, an insult to royalty, even for the prime minister himself to sit down in the Queen's presence when officially attending her. But here

are worms of dust, covered in the beautiful, blessed, and permanent obedience of the Son of God ; they are permitted to come into the presence of the Monarch of the universe, and stand boldly in that presence, to sit down at His feet, and hear the words that proceed from His mouth, and find rest unto their souls. Good David said, when God disclosed to him a little of His will concerning himself and his family, "This is not the manner of man, O God." Man would not have thought of treating me so. No, this is the manner of our God, the method which He adopts in relation to those wretches who deserved eternal perdition, and darkness, and hell. Well, they are before the throne, without spot ; and they are there because they are thus pure, and their spotlessness is owing to their interest in the doing and dying of the spotless Son of God. There are lines of condemnation beyond which the church of God are carried ; every righteous man stands beyond the line of condemnation, and the line that separates condemnation from justification is the line of a Saviour's precious blood, which is to be seen all round the throne of God ; and within that line, and within the covenant bow, stand all the justified people of God. The curse cannot fall upon them, condemnation cannot reach them ; for it cannot flow over the lines of a Saviour's blood. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Dear Christian friends, we may go as far as our little minds are capable of going in contemplating this glorious truth. I know it is said in various places that we may express ourselves too strongly in relation to the privilege of justification. The namby-pamby stuff—forgive me for using such a word in a sermon—which we hear in relation to justification does stir me up from the very bottom of my heart. Surely, in having to do with the deeds and triumphs of incarnate God, we have to do with that which is infinitely rich and infinitely high. "Oh, we are said to be righteous, and God deals with us as if we were righteous!" My Christian friends, repudiate such trash, put it all away from you. Heaven has said—and there are no religious fictions in connection with salvation—"Thy people shall be all righteous;" and as if to sink for ever all quibbling on this point, the Holy Ghost has wondrously said, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called,"—not only He, but—"This is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." Believe in a salvation that saves, and in a justification that sets you for ever right, and in perfection by the Son of God that makes you eternally perfect. I repudiate a half-way salvation, it is the bane of the churches in the day in which we live. Strong consolation our God has given to us, and one of the streams of consolation flows in connection with this doctrine.

Thirdly, *power*. We have noticed in the first place the standard of righteousness, and then the position which the righteous necessarily occupy, and now we notice their powers ; for to be have been made all right by God is to possess very important powers. What are they ? The righteous man is powerful in every way. Strong in every way in the law. Is there an unspeakable force in moral power that belongs permanently to the righteous man ? The man that is legally right that has not violated the law, that can show an unblushing face anywhere and everywhere has

strength. The Christian is legally strong : he has violated the law, but he has that upon his spirit and upon his person which answers all the requirements of God, and concerning which God Himself says, Christ has magnified the law, and made it honourable. He has, then, moral, legal, and spiritual power. How does this power of a righteous man operate? Well, he has power with God. If I were apprehended in the morning, on suspicion of having committed a murder, I should not be afraid, if it had not been committed by myself; at any rate there would be no grounds for me to fear to appear before the magistrate. Therefore a righteous man has power to appear before the great Judge of all. He is not wrong. Oh what a mercy! I spoke loudly, but I spoke solemnly. He is not wrong. All his breaches of the law are gone, he is God's own workmanship. God has given him a character, and for ever established it, and acquitted him, and then invited him into His presence; and he has power and confidence to enter into the presence of God, and stand before Him. And the power of a righteous man is great with the devil. Oh let me know for myself that I am justified by the imputation of the Saviour's righteousness, and I can meet all hell. There is nothing that gives me power with the devil like this knowledge; when I can say, True, I am a sinner; true, if God dealt with me according to my iniquities I should sink into eternal darkness; all I have committed I confess; but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, has cleansed me from all sin. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Fourthly, such a person must have *rights and property*. His rights must be very extensive, and his property very valuable. What are the rights of the righteous man, and what is his property? Well, the Bible tells us, "All things are yours." What for? On what ground? Why so? "For ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." There is not a gracious covenant name of your God which is not open to you, and everyone of God's covenant names is a chamber, and your justifying God says, Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, they are all open and they are revealed, and were set open for you, and you have a right to enter. "Come, My people; enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower;"—not *as* one—the righteous runneth into it. Yes, they have a right; they know they may; they are driven by necessity; they know that God is their God; they run to Him just as a child pursued by danger runs towards its parent, so the righteous runneth into this strong tower, and is for ever safe. The promises, they are all his; the comforts and consolations of God are all the property of the righteous. Just establish if you can the fact that you are righteous by the mediation of Jesus Christ, and all that is in this book is yours. All that is good, that is gracious; all that is in Christ, and all that is in heaven is yours.

The last thought is, of course, to complete the whole, *the destination* of this character. Where must he go to? Is there any necessity? Yes. It is absolutely necessary that he should go to heaven; for that world is

the proper level, the true home of every man and woman who has been saved equitably and honourably by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now just two or three thoughts on the second particular, namely, *the fact asserted* in relation to this character. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." Curtailing the remarks which I meant to make, I will just mention three points. He shall be had in everlasting remembrance on the earth, and in heaven, and in hell. He is had in everlasting remembrance on the *earth*. Take the word "everlasting" in a limited sense here, because I mean by this that the righteous will be remembered on the earth as long as the world stands. How so? This first position applies chiefly to Old Testament saints, to those who have gone before; whose names are written in this book of life, which we have here, for you know it is said the Lord's people are written among the living in Jerusalem. Well, that must mean that their portraits, their characters, their experience are set forth here. Here we have the living in Jerusalem described, and if God's description of His own dear people tallies and agrees with your experience, your name is written here too, you are written among the living in Jerusalem. Then such persons are said to be written in the Lamb's book of life in heaven. Well, we have here in this wonderful revelation the lives, the history, the deeds, and acquisitions of many righteous men and women, and they will be in everlasting remembrance. Righteous Abel—that name will never be lost. Enoch, who walked with God. Noah, that righteous man, we shall never cease to talk about him as long as we are here; and the next generation will talk about him, and following generations will remember Noah and the deluge. Then come Abraham, the friend of God, and good old Jacob, and David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel; and then comes righteous Mary, concerning whom the Saviour said, Do not trouble the woman, Judas, she has performed a good deed upon my person. Therefore the thief on the cross, unrighteous enough at first, but made righteous by the dying Redeemer, and righteous Saul of Tarsus shall be had in everlasting remembrance. Why, you go to the sick room, and I have been there rather often of late, and have a little conversation with our afflicted brethren and sisters, and very instructive and confirming to one's faith you frequently find these interviews. And thus the righteous dead, the righteous departed, the righteous glorified are thankfully remembered by us. "Oh, sir," says one, "I have been thinking very blessedly of the trial of Abraham's faith, and of the experience of Jacob, and David, and of other of the cloud of witnesses." Ah, the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. Abel, and Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and other Old and New Testament worthies, have formed the subject of more writings than all the host of monarchs the world has ever had. The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance in *heaven*. The Father will never forget them, and the Son will never forget them, and the Spirit will never forget them, and the angels will never forget them. The righteous were remembered when God made all His appointments, for they were then the objects of His love. And what was the advent of Christ but Heaven's remembrance of the objects of Divine love. And what do you think is going on in heaven

now? Why, He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. You cannot be forgotten whilst Christ is thought of, and you cannot be forgotten whilst Christ makes intercession, showing the breastplate of love, with your names indelibly engraven upon it. Everlastingly remembered in heaven. But I said they shall be had in everlasting remembrance in *hell*, and did I not speak scripturally? How is that? The remembrance will ever be a bitter and penal one, and when God shall have chained the devil, and hurled him into eternal punishment and despair, he will remember his temptations, accusations, and suggestions, and his perplexing, distressing, and defiling influences; and the remembrance will be tormenting to him for ever. The righteous will also be remembered there by their persecutors, for there are persecutors there, men and women who have cruelly, and in the most dreadful manner shown their hatred of the dear people of God. Oh, they will carry their memories with them into hell. Sinner, there are no bad memories in hell; and the memory of the righteous in the souls of the condemned will be a bitter thing; and therefore the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance in hell itself. Lazarus lay full of sores, and Dives fared sumptuously every day. Lazarus died and went to heaven, and Dives died and went to hell; and he remembered Lazarus. I think we may learn as much as that. Dives remembered that he had treated him with a kind of negative contempt. Will the negative kind of contempt of the world for the child of God torment in hell? Just listen to the Saviour's words, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Remembered to the end of time in this world, and remembered everlastingly in heaven and in hell. May the Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, 23rd APRIL, 1874.

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."—Ecclesiastes ix. 7.

OUR beloved Lord has told us that it is life eternal to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent; and this has ever been the experience of God's people. The apostle Paul tells us that he counted all things but loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." You observe that he, as it were, heaps words upon words; for his heart was full. He once thought very much of his Pharisaism, but that he had cast away. The apostle was also a very learned and gifted man; but he attributed no particular importance to that fact; for he says, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." You see he takes up all the names of our dear Lord. "Christ," the anointed,— "Jesus," the Saviour,— "Lord," the Governor. And that is not all; He is *my* Jesus, *my* Lord, *my* Ruler. And thus the knowledge which the Apostle possessed was an excellent one. It had a very excellent influence upon his mind, and was inseparably connected with everything that is excellent in God and in heaven. The excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is a personal blessing which can never be lost, and it is inseparably connected with salvation. The Holy Ghost has bound Himself as one of the persons in the adorable Trinity to lead every elect vessel of mercy to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give to every ransomed mind a saving knowledge of the Son of God; and when the Lord is thus known, the world appears in its true character, and the person so taught is able to form a somewhat correct estimate of all things out of Christ. A worldly man does not see the world as it is, or know its character, nor does he stand in a proper position for viewing it. I have no idea that anything short of a real knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ can mortify sin, or crucify us to the world, or the world unto us. A man may shut himself up in a monastery, or seclude himself from society, or impose a multitude of duties upon himself, and live in wretchedness, sorrow, and misery all his life, and yet sin may be rampant and triumphant in his mind, and the world may occupy the whole of his heart, although he seems to be shut out from it; and therefore the Holy Ghost leads the soul to Jesus Christ, and gives every saint of God some saving knowledge of the beauties, excellencies, charms, and attractions of the Son of God.

Solomon was a good man, and had been made wise unto salvation, although there were a great many bad things connected with his life ; and when he was advanced in years he penned this important Book of Ecclesiastes. He had tried almost, if not quite, everything in the world. He had gone so far with his experiments, that he said, "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" I have had palaces, and these have been filled with servants ; and I have had silver and gold in great abundance, and gardens filled with all kinds of plants and flowers ; and in those gardens I have had magnificent fountains of water continually springing ; I have had music and dancing ; and I have studied madness, and folly, and wisdom ; I have gone with my experiments as far as it is possible for a creature to go in relation to the world, and now I sit down to pen the result of my experience. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher ; all is vanity!" and so Solomon went about the world, if I may so speak, with a multitude of jars ; he gathered all that he could, and put some worldly matter into this jar, and some into that one, and some into another, and took them to his palace, and placed all these vessels on a shelf, and labelled everyone, and that which had gold in it was labelled "Vanity ;" and that which had pleasures in it was labelled "Vanity ;" and that which had long life in it was labelled "Vanity ;" and those which had palaces and gardens and fountains and musical instruments in them, were all labelled "Vanity ;" so that Solomon was ultimately completely and blessedly taught by the Lord, and so was drawn from everything that was terrestrial and worldly, and brought to sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to experience something of the blessedness declared in my text, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart ; for God now accepteth thy works ;"—the only ground on which he might be merry ; the only connection in which he might be joyful.

In looking at these words, we will glance at two things ; first, the text contains holy and heavenly *comfort* ; and secondly, very necessary and important *counsel*. The great comfort is thus expressed, "God now accepteth thy works ;" and the counsel which the royal writer founded upon that comfort is this,—“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.”

In the first place, a few thoughts on the comfort indicated in the text : "God now accepteth thy works." We are to speak to-night, then, a little about the works, and the good works too, of a child of God ; for of course the works here which God is declared to accept, are those which in various portions of the word are said to be good. Others cannot be accepted. The question is this—what is it that constitutes a person's works acceptable to God ? Now certainly that is the door that opens into the temple of eternal truth. "God now accepteth thy works ;" and therefore there must be something connected with them which constitutes them acceptable to a holy and heart-searching God—and what is it ? We are told generally they are good works, and God accepts them because they are good. Ah ! but let us put things together as God has been pleased to reveal them, and to connect them in the covenant of His grace and mercy.

The first thing that is necessary to constitute a work good in relation

to the government of God, is *the character of the worker*; and here I would say that I wish all Christendom saw and believed this one great fact, that God accepts a person before he accepts that person's work. Now if that were believed, should we not have a theological revolution? Why, this order of things is inverted, and we are told that if a man will do good works, then God will accept the man himself—that is turning the Gospel upside down, and beginning, so to speak, where God ends. A person's works eventually become good, because God accepts and approves of the person himself. And scriptures in confirmation of this are very abundant. God had respect unto Noah, and then to his offering. God had respect unto Abel, and then to his sacrifice. And may I not apply it to the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in relation to God the Father? for He may be taken as our example in connection with this fact—was not Christ's person accepted by God before His works were accepted? and were not His works accepted by God, because His person was perfect and acceptable in the sight of God? And therefore God first puts a person into a peculiar position; and if you enquire what that position is, I say he puts such a one into His own heart, He writes his name in the Book of Life, He unites him with the person of His dear Son, and such a one is said to be approved in Christ; and then the works of that individual are said to be good, and acceptable to and accepted by God. This is how we have learned Christ, and how we love to hear Him preached, and to hear set forth the great doctrine of divine acceptance of the person before the offering, and the offering acceptable because the person is so. God is first in this great matter; He united the sinner to His dear Son, and eventually the works of the one so united become spiritual works, and so acceptable to God. But that is not all: I have been dwelling on the doctrinal aspect of the subject. I quote another portion of divine truth, uttered by our Lord, "Make the tree good, and his fruit good." Now the order of things in the day in which we live, is this—you may and you ought to look for grapes on thistles, and for figs on thorns. The unregenerate and the dead are exhorted to bear fruits of righteousness, and told that they will be condemned because they do not bear such fruit. Make the man a Christian, and then he will bear good fruit; make the man a saint, and then he will bear fruits of holiness. Let the brier become a fir-tree, and the bramble a myrtle-tree, and then it will bear corresponding foliage, and fruit acceptable to God Himself. I may be thought very high in doctrine, but I do not hesitate to say that God does not require of an unregenerate sinner, as such, those fruits which He looks for in a regenerate man or woman. He does not require saving faith or spirituality of mind in that man whom He has never quickened into spiritual life; and therefore in order that there may be good works, and such as He can accept; He breathes life into the mind, imparts spiritual powers to the heart, plants a good tree in good soil, and expects to gather figs from the fig-tree, and grapes from the vine; He never asks of the bramble and the thorn figs or grapes, or any fruit of the kind; and therefore the tree is made good, the character is changed, the heart is regenerated, the mind is transformed, and the individual is rendered capable, through the reign and influence of divine grace, of producing that which God demands.

God calls for a certain thing of a certain mind, and the mind on which He calls, He transforms by His grace, and good works flow naturally and spontaneously. Just as it is natural for an apple-tree to produce apples, and for a plum-tree plums; so the spiritual mind produces, not so much as it could wish, not sufficient to satisfy itself; but it brings forth fruits of righteousness which are acceptable to the Eternal God. From this it appears that that which is necessary to constitute a work good and acceptable in the sight of God is, first the person's interest in God's love, secondly, union to the Lord Jesus Christ, approved in Him; and thirdly, the indwelling Spirit of God, the operations of divine grace upon the heart.

Those so favoured do a great many bad things, and some things which they may think to be good when they are not so, and are unaccepted by the Lord. God does not accept all our works, or thoughts, or feelings, and we do not accept them ourselves. You loathe yourselves, and that loathing is one of the works God accepts. I hate, much that works in my poor heart; I cannot accept it, I turn from it, would tear it away and be holy for ever, if I could. God does not accept those abominations, but He does accept that hearty rejection of them on your part and on mine. Those works are acceptable to God, however few they may be, and however many their shortcomings may be, which flow from a renewed mind, and are in harmony with God's holy word. The Christian's course of obedience must be regulated by the word of divine truth, or otherwise God, who accepts him, may meet him with, "Who hath required this at your hand?" Elijah's works were accepted when he slew the four hundred prophets of Baal, and stood and thundered among the thousands of Israel the will of the everlasting God; but when the mighty prophet became faint, and fled from the woman Jezebel, then God met him in the Mount of God, and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Those works which are acceptable to God are produced by union to Christ, and are regulated by the word of God Himself. It is my desire, though I come very short of it, to do everything in the name of the Lord. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Do you contribute to the cause of God? What is the object of the gift or the motive that leads you to present it? Is it grudged? It is not accepted then by God. Is it given for the Lord's sake, for the sake of His church? Is it given because you owe a debt of gratitude to the everlasting God, and feel—

"Here, Lord, I give myself to Thee,
'Tis all that I can do."

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."

Then, in the second place, *what place do the works of a believer hold in the estimation and government of God?* He accepts them. But what place do they occupy. Not that of a payment or a price. Some say, we do good works to atone for our sins, and pacify God. That is not the place our poor little tiny works occupy in the government of God. What is there in such works as yours and mine to atone for sin? that very idea vitiates them. You offer it as a payment.—God will not have it.

You offer it as a price,—God will reject it. You offer it as a something to influence the Divine mind,—God will not accept it. No, there is only one peace maker, one great influence that can render God propitious. What, then, is the place occupied by good works ? There are two courts, my friends, in connection with God's government, and the sinner saved by grace goes into both of them. There is the Court of Divine Justice, and there everything is as exact as justice itself. There the good works of a sinner cannot be put into the scale, for

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

In the Court of Justice I stand, poor, wretched, miserable, and undone ; and like Joshua, when he was covered with filthy garments before the angel, I am dumb. Joshua did not open his mouth ; the devil did, and accused him, and the angel pleaded for him ; but we do not find that the accused spoke a word ; Joshua stood by, in filthy garments ; and in the Court of Justice our lips are closed, and we have not a word to say but this :

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

“ All Thy children shall be taught of the Lord.” Having been brought to that point, there is someone else who appears in the Court of Justice. Jesus is an advocate, and appears in the presence of God for us ; He brings near His righteousness and presents His blood, and that blood has a voice, and that speaks ; and then in the Court of Justice the Judge says, “ Loose him, and let him go.” Now we have done with that Court ; the debt is paid, we are at liberty ; life is spared, punishment is now impossible ; and we enter the Court of Sovereign Grace, where there is the mercy-seat, and God on His throne, and we approach the mercy-seat with

“ A debtor to mercy alone, of covenant mercy I'll sing ;”

and

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

Lord, I bring no price, but I bring a few thanks ; I bring no payment, but I bring gratitude ; I bring my poor little heart, and if I had a thousand hearts I would bring them all and give them all to Thee ; for,

“ Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of hell.”

In the Court of Sovereign Grace, God accepts the penitent ; but in the Court of Justice He condemns to hell ; but Jesus takes our place and obeys for us there, and the Holy Ghost leads us into this other Court, where we bow as debtors to rich, free, and sovereign grace. What, then, is the position occupied by good works, in the estimation and government of God. Why, He sees in the adoring mind, the swimming eye, the holy gratitude, the results of His own sovereign love in the heart. What does He see in the Court of Sovereign Grace and Salvation ? An offerer with a thank offering in his hands, and a secret thankfulness in his heart,

and He sees in that gratitude the fruit of His own Spirit, the result of His own love ; and though the flower is a very imperfect one, God waters it, and watches it and will not have it plucked, at least, not by any hand but His own ; and though it is a little one, and he that offers it is ashamed because it is so small, and its fragrance so unsatisfactory ; yet inasmuch as it is a living flower, it is dear to God and precious in His sight ; and we may say, that if this is our experience, the text is applicable to us. But our works are so few, and little, and short. A straight line is a straight line, whether it be a foot long, or a mile long ; and that which is spiritual in its nature is so, whether it be compared to an infant a day old, or to an aged saint. A rose is a rose, whether it be tiny or large, and if there is a grateful will, a thankful wish, and a pleasingly unhappy feeling—if you will allow me to use the word—in the heart, because gratitude is so little, and love so cold, those feelings are acceptable to God ; yes, it is not the quantity but the quality. “Go thy way, for God now accepteth thy works.”

What does God's acceptance of our works involve ? A great many things, and among others, a decided difference between the Christian and the world ; for he whose works are accepted by God, differs in a wonderful and visible manner from the world ; and then, he whose works are thus accepted, is a very incomprehensible being to the world. “Oh, how strange you are ! You seem to be a moping, melancholy creature ; you have no spirit, no heart for pleasure. If I did not know you well, I should feel it impossible to believe what you say, when you talk about your joy. I cannot understand your pleasure, it is a mystery ; it seems to me that you are deluded.” Now if our works are accepted by God, that will be the opinion which the world will form of us. Should our conduct be otherwise, if we are favourable to the world, and in harmony with it, finding our pleasure there, God does not accept that, I am sure. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” The best position that you ever occupied, was taken when your sins were pardoned, and you saw ten thousand beauties in the Saviour's face ; and the world, for the first time, appeared to you like a great bubble ; for surely it is a bubble that will burst under a touch of the finger, and, strictly speaking, contrasted with Christ and eternity, the world is a great empty nothing ; but if we are accepted by God, and God accepts our works, there will be a conflict within, and that conflict is accepted by God. “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” We fight our way to heaven, the road is one of conflicts and wounds, earthquakes and heartquakes. And as there is a devil, and the world, and vileness in the heart, is it not a mercy to be in conflict, and not in sympathy with them ? Be thankful you are in conflict with iniquity and corruption, and with hell, and with all that torments and disturbs. “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart ; for God now accepteth thy works.” What works are accepted ? Repentance—Is that a work ? Christ is exalted to give it, and He accepts that which He gives. Faith—is that a work ? Well, we read of the work of faith,

and that is the work of faith. I do not know how better to define it, than by saying that it is to fetch all from Christ, and carry all to Him. Faith fetches all for time and for eternity out of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read of the labour of love, and the work of faith, and the patience of hope, and the exercise of the grace of repentance in the heart. What else? Well, we read of inward groans and falling tears, and we read of thoughts: "A book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." Are thoughts among the works that God accepts? They are so far accepted that He writes them in the book of His remembrance.

And are there any *evidences of divine acceptance*, and if so, what are they? Well, I mention a very satisfactory one. Have we not sometimes been favoured very blessedly with the presence of the Lord when we have been at work—I mean at work in connection with salvation, say on one's knees? Prayer is a work, and I am sure it is a good one. It is an evidence of His acceptance of the act. He would not be there if He did not approve it. He would not lift the light of His countenance upon the kneeling soul, if He did not accept the prayerful spirit. The feelings of the heart in the presence of the Lord, are evidence of Divine acceptance. Now let us take a look at the bright side of the question. Has His blessing ever followed what we have done? Take for instance the Christian ministry, and here may I allude to myself for a moment? I can say that I am anxious to lift the Lord Jesus Christ high, and to speak well of His name, and to present Him scripturally to my fellow men. I am anxious to preach the Gospel, and to benefit my fellow-men and my fellow Christians; I cannot do this as I would, but I am bound to believe that during my twenty-three years' experience here, and a good many years' experience in the ministry elsewhere—God has accepted my works; for sinners have been called, and saints comforted, and the church blessed; and if I had been wrong, I do not believe the blessing of God would have followed my poor labours. The same observations will apply to the labour of the deacons. A plan was formed and carried out, and the result was success. God's blessing followed, we say. The same may be said concerning churches and private individuals also. Yes, Christian friends, there are evidences of Divine acceptance of our works from time to time. But to take lower ground, have the hearts of God's people been made glad at any time? Have you taken a cup of cold water to a saint in circumstances of privation, and poverty, and deep sorrow? Was it a consolation to that tried child of God? When you had left his room, though you may not know it—he blessed God from the depths of his spirit, for putting it into your heart to pay the visit, and to do what you did for him on that occasion. And if our poor little visits and expressions of love evoke from the heart warm gratitude to God, does it not show that there is communication between God and myself, and those whom we have been favoured to help. It is all acceptable, from first to last. And then you see, my dear friends, that nothing connected with grace is lost, not even the works which it produces; for God receives and accepts them. The tear that is shed is put into His bottle, and the thought that is in the mind is written in His book, and the groan that is never uttered He knows

and accepts; and thus nothing is lost in connection with the grace of God.

The counsel. "Go thy way."—Some think that this is as if the Lord just reproved the murmuring soul—do not be complaining and hanging thy head. Others take it as an expression of approval, "Go thy way," for it is a right way; be not stationary, for God accepts thy works, and He accepts thee. The bread and the wine are ours, not only as gifts of Providence, but on the ground of heirship. "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Take it socially as referring to temporal things; eat thy bread with joy, do not be immoderately careful about to-morrow. My income is small, and my health is weak, and what shall I do for to-morrow if I lay out all this to-day, and so on. It is proper to be provident and careful; but there is a point even in that respect beyond which the child of God should not go. Live joyfully, cheerfully, and carefully upon the provision God has made for you to-day, and since He accepts thy works, and provides for thee to-day, expect a supply to-morrow. But take this provision spiritually as the doctrines of the Gospel, the promises of God's love. Go thy way into his house, and take thy seat at His table, there eat thy bread and drink thy wine; the flesh and blood of Him who has made thee acceptable. God's liberality—it is bread and wine, not bread and water. Bread and water is prisoners' fare; it is the fare of poverty. God accepts thy works. You are not poor, at least not spiritually, so the bread and wine of the kingdom of God are yours. Bread and water—and this is perhaps the leading idea—is the miser's fare; he hoards up his money, and starves himself, living on bread and water; do not play the miser; enjoy what God gives you spiritually, and with holy feeling, eat your bread; and drink your wine with joy and with gladness. Finally, bread and water is a kind of fasting fare; if one fasts, I suppose he should not either eat or drink, but just by way of helping poor Nature a little, persons are sometimes said to fast when they take nothing but bread and water. Do not fast, says the prophet; it is a feast, and should be a feast all thy life long. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." Amen.

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THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS, THE JOY OF THE CHURCH.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 6th JULY, 1884.

"And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy unto all the brethren."—Acts xv. 3.

IN connection with the text which I have read this morning, we are informed that Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem, in consequence of a vexatious question which had arisen in the church in the city of Antioch. The devil is ever busy, and a false Gospel is always introduced wherever God is pleased to send the true Gospel of His grace. If God will have a true church, the devil will have a false one; and if God will have ministers of the truth to preach His word, the devil will sometimes transform himself into an angel of light, and become a preacher too; for the devil can preach, and does so whenever he is permitted. Well, Satan got into the church of Christ at Antioch, through a number of Pharisees who said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." And this spirit is still in existence, it originated very early, and ever mixes up law and gospel, duty and faith, and works and faith. This occurrence, we are told, caused no small dissension and disputation, and the church "determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question;" and being brought on their way by the church—I suppose the meaning of this is, that the church at Antioch furnished them with means,—they passed through Phenice and Samaria. They had to do so in travelling from Antioch to Jerusalem; but in going through these two places, they would visit the Christian churches which existed in them both. You remember that our Lord preached the word in Samaria, and the woman at the well of Samaria was in all probability at this time a member of the church in this place. A number of men followed the woman at the well, and they believed and said, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves;" and therefore we have reason to suppose that a considerable church had been formed in the city of Samaria. And then with regard to Phenice, history informs us that Christian churches existed in that place until the sixth or seventh century. Well, at this period of time those churches were comparatively pure, and Paul and Barnabas passed through, "declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy unto all the brethren."

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Having thus arrived at the text, let us make some observations on a few important points which appear to me to arise out of it. *In the first place, the conversion of sinners is a matter of joy on Christ's account.* They caused great joy unto all the brethren by declaring the conversion of the Gentiles. And what was it that led them to rejoice in the fact that Gentile sinners had been called by grace and saved with an everlasting salvation? They rejoiced, I say, in the first place, on Christ's account. We must have Christ everywhere in the church, everywhere in the Christian ministry, and in the ordinances of His house; for He is "all and in all." That organization is not a Christian church, if Christ is not there; and that sermon is not a gospel sermon if Jesus is not in it; and that heart is not a Christian heart, whatever its pretensions and profession may be, if Christ has not been formed there, the hope of eternal glory. The disciples at Phenice and Samaria rejoiced at the conversion of the Gentiles, on the Saviour's account. There is something to our minds as Christians and saved sinners exceedingly sweet in the fact that our dear Lord is in heaven; that He is seated as the Lamb in the midst of the throne; that He is at the Father's right hand, at the right hand of majesty and power; and that there are unceasingly flowing from His glorious person and His boundless resources, streams of Divine grace and mercy for poor, lost, and ruined sinners here. Try to realize the fact that there is never a moment but grace is descending from the Lord; for He has thousands of saints down here, as well as millions of happy glorified spirits before His throne; and every glorified mind there would cease to be happy, if influences failed to emanate from their Lord. Every saint down here would cease to be a saint, if grace Divine ceased to flow from our great and glorious Emanuel; and as for the work of conversion, whether it takes place in the Sabbath-school, or in the ordinary congregation, or whilst one is reading the word, or owing to a letter one has received,—the hearts of sinners would never be savingly affected or influenced, if grace did not descend from the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven; and, therefore, when a sinner is smitten, and falls before God beneath the blow—for this is how we must be saved, salvation does not consist in gliding into a public profession of religion,—the church praises God. When the sinner falls beneath the hand, and at the feet of Him that smote him, and this becomes known to ministers and deacons and members of a Christian church, there is joy, and there are expressions of thankfulness to the God of heaven and earth on Christ's own account. The conversion of a sinner is an evidence of the reign of Christ, and of the operations of Jesus; it is an evidence of the indwelling Spirit of God, and of the fact that something out of Christ has fallen upon the heart of that individual who is in the dust of self-abasement before the Lord. Oh I wish prayerfully, deeply, and with all my heart, that this great matter in connection with the religion of heaven, were insisted upon earnestly and strenuously by every man who professes to preach the gospel of God's grace. Religion is something more than notion, something must be known and felt; and as the Lord liveth—and I have said those words with some solemn feeling—you have nothing in your hearts for heaven, or for God, unless Christ, from His own inexhaust-

ible fulness and resources, has communicated a drop of grace to your minds; for this, and this only, is the religion of heaven. This, and this only, constitutes a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. "God be merciful to me a sinner," the penitent who never prayed before, is heard to say. All the saints of God rejoice for Christ's sake: another victory won, another captive rescued, and the prey taken out of the hands of the mighty. The influence of Christ's death is again felt, and owing to the pleading and intercession of the Saviour, the Holy Ghost has fallen from heaven once more, upon another poor, lost and ruined one; so that in that saved sinner we see another added to the family, another gem, another pearl, another jewel for the crown of Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Christ sees, in such a person, of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. Is it not said in the fifty-third of Isaiah, "He shall His seed"? He sees them before they are made manifest as His seed. He knows them before they know Him; but He shall see them born, He shall see them brought up, He shall see them educated and trained; He shall see them living in His service with pleasure, and satisfaction, and delight. He shall see them persevering in a course of holiness, He shall see them with the world under their feet, He shall see them finally with the devil himself under their feet; for "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." He shall see them conquer death, and pass victoriously through it; and He shall see them all arrive in that glory world, which God has prepared for His dear people. And is not this matter for joy? They declared to the saints at Phenice and Samaria, the conversion of the Gentiles, and they thereby caused great joy to the brethren in those places. Every conversion says, The Saviour lives. Every regeneration that takes place says, The Saviour reigns. Every poor soul that is rescued from the devil by an unseen, mysterious and powerful hand, proclaims the fact that Christ is a conqueror, that His conquests are progressing, and that He did not die in vain. Our dear Lord did not shed His blood fruitlessly, any more than He pleads and prays in heaven in vain. He shall see the purchase of His blood. He has rights which He will claim and maintain, and "He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him." On Christ's account, therefore, the Lord's people rejoice when the cause of God and truth is extended.

And then, in the second place, *they rejoice on account of the converts themselves*. Now let us tarry here. What is it that grace Divine does for the poor soul? It quickens it, and conveys a new life into it. I do not speak without thought, when I say, principles as holy in their nature as God, and as enduring as eternity, become rooted in the heart of the man who becomes a saved sinner. But may not these principles perish? May not the man or the woman who becomes a convert and is brought to the Lord Jesus Christ, sink into hell? If so, my dear friends, I do not think we should rejoice before we get to heaven. But Paul and Barnabas gave an account of the work of God in the conversion of sinners, and the saints in Phenice and Samaria, believing in the final perseverance of the saints, proceeded to rejoice at once. Had there been any uncertainty about their future heaven, their joy would have been premature, and

have ended in nothing. But "He which hath begun the good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;" and the good people of Samaria and Phenice very confidently believed that these Gentiles that had been approaching the Saviour, would be held fast by Him for ever and ever. Therefore they rejoiced on account of the converts themselves. Grace quickens the heart, and its possessor is a new creature: for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." And the grace that comes into the heart of a sinner liberates him; and liberty is an unspeakable blessing, whether it be spiritual, political, religious, or social. Every sinner is by nature held fast by a power from which he has no desire and indeed cannot release himself; it is a fact that the world is in the arms of the wicked one, and there is only one Being in existence that can liberate them, or take them out of those arms, and that person is our great Lord. He does it by His Spirit. "Deliver to Me that captive, and let that prisoner go free." Satan is carrying the world down to hell, and the world lies calmly and comfortably in his hands. They love their tyrannical lord, and they love the reign of sin, and will not realize the awful nature of their condition until they reach the place where hope never cometh, unless grace divine should open their eyes, and bring them to see themselves as sinners. The dear Redeemer meets the devil, and He says concerning Saul of Tarsus, "He is Mine, I have redeemed him;" and Paul is as a firebrand plucked from the burning. He says, concerning Magdalene, "She is Mine: I have loved her with an everlasting love, and have engaged to take her to heaven, deliver her up," and Magdalene is snatched from the tyrant's hand. How wonderful was the operation of grace which took place in the heart of the thief! I can imagine that Satan felt sure of him, and also that there was but a step between him and hell, but at the eleventh hour the hand of Christ was stretched out, the thief was snatched as a brand from the burning; and angels rejoiced, and so did the suffering Saviour. A dead sinner made alive, a captive set for ever free. Now, what is to be done with him? Why, the grace that has made him alive and unbound him, exalts and dignifies him. It does not leave him in a state of degradation and disgrace. He is now honoured by being made a child of God openly; he is taken into a state of nearness to his heavenly Father, and he falls before his ransoming and liberating Lord, with—

"Pause, my soul, adore and wonder,
Ask, oh why such love to me?
Grace has put me in the number
Of the Saviour's family."

Surely devils see in that person a new creature, angels see in that character a new creature. A transformation, marvellous and wonderful indeed, has taken place; he has a new heart, he is a new man in a new position, and when these facts are set forth, the people of God rejoice.

Sinners saved by grace are elevated and enriched; and how sweet it is to realize the blessedness of the words, "Things present, or things to come, all are your's; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The people of God are thus immensely and immeasurably rich. God has

simplified matters wonderfully, having committed all things into the hand of His Son, and then He has given His Son, so that we have all things in Christ, and for Christ's sake. And the grace that fills the soul and liberates and dignifies it, ties it fast. The poet says:—

“Impossible, a humble child,
That loves Thee with a flame so high,
Should ever from Thy face exiled,
Beyond the pity of Thine eye.
Impossible! for Thine own hands,
Have tied my heart so fast to Thee,
And in Thy book the promise stands,
That where Thou art Thy friends shall be.”

And every such person possesses a meetness for the inheritance of the kingdom of God, and it is no small mercy to have been fitted for heaven, prepared for a better world than this. Why, if I possess the grace of God, I possess a meetness for the inheritance that is up there; and if I should fall down suddenly, and die in the streets, no matter as far as I am concerned. It might shock my family, and friends, for there is something exceedingly solemn in sudden death; but, “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” If I possess God's grace, if Jesus is in my heart, I am in sympathy with heaven, my soul has been tied to the God of heaven, and I should die in the everlasting arms, and be safe, although I fell in the streets, and became immediately surrounded by a crowd, none of whom might know me. Oh how sweet it is to possess a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light!

I have sometimes thought that God's dear people have the best of it in all respects, and under all circumstances. Why, he that is saved by God, is saved from this present evil world, and it is impossible for me to say how much degradation, disgrace, and misery, physical and social, the grace of God has saved me from. I know of certain individuals who are steeped in sin, taking a delight in it, gradually ruining themselves, blasting their character, and blighting all the pleasures of those that are near and dear to them; and they delight in it, and persist in such a course, rolling sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue. Oh to be brought out of that vile condition, and to hate it! Why, my dear friends, this not only constitutes a meetness for heaven, it gives dignity, a kind of present glory, to the child of God. I see a drunkard staggering in the street, and feel that I have not a stone to throw at him. I might say concerning him, There goes Hazelton, but for the grace of God. I see another individual whose means were ample, and he might have been socially happy and comfortable, but brought through sin into wretchedness, and poverty, and ruin; and I say again, There goes Hazelton, but for the grace of God. Oh, the disciples had abundant cause to be glad, when Paul and Barnabas told them that the Lord had saved Gentile sinners. We owe perhaps our health and strength, to the fact that we are saved. We owe our friends to the fact that we are interested in the Lord. And if we have a coat to wear, and some comforts at home, look at them all in connection with the goodness and the grace of the Lord.

Had it not been for grace, you might have been in degradation and disgrace, a burden to yourself, and to those that love you, a burden to society, and a pest to the world. Oh, how great is the salvation of our God! and so Paul says in his Epistle to Titus, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that..... we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." This present world is an evil one, morally considered; but there is a worse world than this; and the grace that saves from hell, saves from this present evil world, and it gives its possessor a meetness for a better place. Thus thinking of the converts themselves "caused great joy unto all the brethren."

Then in the third place, *they rejoiced on their own account*; and if you and I have proper and scriptural feelings in relation to this matter, we shall rejoice in the salvation of our fellow-men. I know I can do nothing efficiently towards saving sinners. I am like the apostle Paul and his brethren in this respect, I am nothing. And yet, having sown the seed of the kingdom, we should look to see it grow. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear;" and there are not many letters I receive more consoling, cheering, and helpful, than those which tell me that I have been made useful to my fellow-creatures. It does my heart good to receive a letter informing me that at such a place, and such a time, having taken such a text, the word of God was divinely blessed, received into the heart, the eyes were opened, and the sensibly guilty sinner felt himself in the presence of his Maker. I do not think a minister of the gospel, who has been called to preach the word, and whose heart is in the right place, will regard this department of his work with indifference. That man would be indeed foolish who never looked for results from his operations. In all common and ordinary matters results are expected, and by God's people they are prayed for: and I am looking for results; and if you are in sympathy with me, and you are, as a church and congregation, well then, I may say, *we* are looking for results; and we have been cheered and helped at our church-meetings, when friends have come forward and told us how God met with them, and saved them, and the workings of their minds passing under the law, and then the workings of their minds under the Gospel, and how God laid His hand upon them and drew them from under the dominion of sin. They felt that sin held fast their minds; how they longed for forgiveness, how they drank in the pardoning love of their God, when the precious blood of Jesus was first applied to their souls! You have looked at one another, and at that brother or sister as the case may be, and rejoiced, and that on your own account, as well as on theirs; for the love you felt was brotherly, and emanated from the love shed abroad in your own hearts. You knew what there was before that friend, because it was a portion of your own experience which was related. The honey which you have tasted, and the liberty you have enjoyed, it gives you pleasure to know that others have partaken of and been introduced into. The religion of heaven is diffusive, the child of God does not care to shut himself up within himself, to draw a circle, to step into it, and to resolve that he will never leave it. Oh no,

going to heaven myself, and occasionally happy on the road, I am so glad when another friend is brought in, and comes to me and asks the way to Zion with his face thitherward. They caused great joy to the brethren when they related what great things the Lord had done for the Gentiles. That good brother, who has just been called by grace, we shall meet in heaven, and the prospect is cheering and does us good. Ah! he does not yet know that he is going to heaven, but you and I know he is. We rejoice in his sorrow, we see him weeping, and he tells us a tale of suffering, and we rejoice. We thank God because his sorrow will lead to joy, and his suffering end in the possession of the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

And fourthly, *they rejoiced on account of the devil*; for is he not a tyrant, and is it not a matter of joy when he is defeated, and his works destroyed? If England were invaded, and an army came into this London of ours, or near to it, and bombarded it, and knocked half of it down, and threatened to destroy the country, would it not be matter of joy and pleasure to hear that some friendly power had appeared upon the scene, and opposed that foe and destroyed it? It would give all London joy, even though half of it had been blown down. It would give all England pleasure, and excite feelings of gratitude in the heart of every Englishman and English-woman. Hell is opposed to God and to God's church, and would overturn it if it could; but Zion's bulwarks are divine, and her foundation is a rock. But hell holds fast the souls of all men by nature. Have you heard of young friend So-and-so? Yes. Well, they tell me that he has become converted. He went to such a place, and heard a sermon, the Lord met with him, and applied the word, and he is altogether another creature. I am glad of it, for Christ's sake, for his own sake, for my sake, and for the devil's sake. Jesus has brought to Himself another of His brethren, taken him out of the tyrant's hand, defeated the foe, and destroyed the works of the devil. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." My time is nearly gone, and therefore I will hasten to the close.

It affords joy *on account of the word of God*. The conversion of sinners is the fulfilment of the word. My word "shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it:" and as God Himself lives to fulfil His own promise, when you hear a guilty sinner in all sincerity pour out of his heart the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," rejoice in that fact as a fulfilment of the word of the eternal God. Now there is a vital power in the word of God, it strikes; a converting power, it changes; a conforming power, it makes the child of God like God Himself, it makes the Christian like Christ Himself. And what a transformation is this, the ungodly converted into a godly being; the vile, black, polluted sinner becomes like the lovely Christ of God, in character, in nature, in holiness, and in purity. Although sin is in his nature, and depravity, there is purity in his heart and he is longing for absolute deliverance from all defilement and sin. The word of God is fulfilled, and we rejoice.

Then in the next place, look at the subject in connection with the

consummation of all things. I rejoice that Christ is at work, that the Holy Ghost is at work, that angels are at work, and that *God's great plan is being carried forward towards the consummation of all things.* The vine is spreading, the family of heaven is increasing, new births are taking place, there is a new-born babe there, a spiritual youth yonder, a young man up there, and a father or a mother in Israel sitting at the threshold of heaven, and whilst the old saint sits there new births take place here, and the intelligence is taken to that old saint near to glory. He says, "Bless God for that; I have prayed for that youth, I believed that the Lord would hear my prayer and save his soul, I feel as if I should die all the happier now I know that friend has been called by grace. Paul and Barnabas caused great joy to the brethren when they narrated the dealings of the Lord with the Gentiles in connection with their labour.

What does all this imply? Father, Son, and Holy Ghost rejoice; Angels rejoice; ministers rejoice, and saints rejoice—we all rejoice together. The Holy Spirit

"takes delight to view
The holy soul He forms anew."

Jesus is glad when He sees His seed, and the Father rejoices with all His heart to embrace the son. He sees the new-born child, and the Spirit bringing him to Christ: Christ receives him with delight, and brings him to His Father; God the Father receives him into His arms, and puts him into His bosom, and there is joy in the Trinity, there is joy among the angels, and joy down here. Paul and Barnabas who were of those who were said to be turning the world upside down, went to Phenice and Samaria, and declared how wonderfully God was working, and a number of Spirit-taught believers said, God be praised. On what I have said may the Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE CITY OF GOD: ITS PEACE AND PROSPERITY.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 20th NOVEMBER, 1887.

"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."—Ps. cxxii. 7.

THE God of heaven and earth has been sovereignly pleased to become a gracious and merciful God. As God, He is the only proper object of the worship of His creatures, and as a gracious and saving God, He is the only object of the spiritual worship of spiritual men and women. God, however, will be worshipped in His own way. He was worshipped so under the patriarchal dispensation, and under the ceremonial dispensation, and He is being worshipped in His own way by spiritual men and women under the Gospel dispensation. As for the future, we desire to leave that in the hands of our gracious God, who will be worshipped in heaven for ever by all His ransomed people in His own way, and according to the good pleasure of His will. Our views of heaven are necessarily imperfect, and in some respects unsatisfactory. We do not quite know how the saints in glory worship their glorious God, but we are taught to believe that the eyes of their souls are steadily and perpetually fixed upon the great object of spiritual worship, and that all the glorified before the throne are engaged in singing the praises of God. We have some faint idea of what it is for souls to sing, but of course there can be no vocal music before the throne of God, when souls, and souls, only are worshippers there. I do not know whether there will be vocal music or not when our bodies are raised, and we are seated before God and the Lamb; perhaps these tongues of ours will for ever sing: but before the resurrection takes place our souls will be found in the presence of God, and we shall be there as worshippers. Our worship will be spiritual and heavenly, whatever its forms may be.

Under the ceremonial dispensation the worship of God was sometimes very peculiar as to its rules and forms. The males of the children of Israel were required to appear three times a year, before the Lord in Jerusalem, and never to come before Him empty. It must have been a wonderful sight; those that lived on the borders of the land started first, and they sang as they travelled; as they passed through villages and towns, their praise increased and multiplied; and onward they went, going

"from strength to strength, until every one of them in Zion appeared before God." This was the case from the north, and south, and east, and west, and from every point between those four quarters; the whole country was astir, the women and children were left at home, and God had undertaken to preserve and protect them, and also the land, during the absence of the men. Thus, as they travelled towards Jerusalem they sang, and some of their psalms are recorded in the Word, and are called "Songs of Degrees," and one of them opens thus, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." They entered a village and enquired of the men, Are you ready? We are on the way to Jerusalem, "Let us go into the house of the Lord;" and the inhabitants severally responded. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." They were waiting for the company, and when the first ranks of the travellers appeared, the people in the place which they were about to pass through were glad to join them on their pilgrim way. "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up;" that is, the tribes of Israel. One company united in Jerusalem or the temple. So the church of God is one church, one family, one vast body, one great and glorious army; but that body is in some respects exceedingly diversified. There are some that are tried, others that are tempted, others that have never been led into liberty, others that are rejoicing in God their Saviour; there are some who are young in years, others who are more advanced in life and experience; then there are old believers. "Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Taking this view of the Psalm, and also of the other Psalms connected with it, we have a very interesting illustration of the manner in which God was worshipped under the ceremonial dispensation; and among other words on behalf of Jerusalem, the place and city of worship, was this, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."

Now, if the Lord be pleased to give me strength for a few minutes, I will do the best I can in directing your attention to some matters suggested by this interesting portion of the Word. In the first place, I should like to say a few words upon *the city itself*—Jerusalem. I suppose our brother who gives out the hymns, thought that I was about to preach on the church of God; for he gave out, immediately after I had read and prayed, that very beautiful and comprehensive hymn upon this subject. By the city here, literally, understand Jerusalem; but mystically and spiritually understand the church of God as described in the chapter I read at the commencement of the service. (Isaiah xxvi.) "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." While I was trying to meditate upon this portion of the word, I had some pleasing thoughts upon the condition of the church of God in this world. A city, divine and heavenly; a city of peace, and a city more or less prosperous in this

stormy world. And only one city, and that the city of God ; and concerning its condition your prayer and mine is, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." Now we are told that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and in the midst of this wicked world, so to speak, there stands this glorious city, which will ever remain unlike the world. The world cannot change its own character, and the church cannot change its character, and there will be an everlasting difference between the two. There is nothing like this city of God in the world, and its contents, or its privileges and blessings are peculiar to itself. All round the city, hence the walls, are wickedness and slavery, misery and uncleanness, war and woe, devils and various forms of death and danger. Think for just a moment,—forgive me for adverting to it,—of what is about to take place in the course of this day; of the disorder and confusion in our streets. How strange are the motives and tastes of the people ! and yet in the midst of all that commotion there is a city, the church of the living God, a body of men and women that belong to heaven; they are interested in the Saviour, and by the will of God there is a measure of peace and prosperity there. The waves of persecution and hatred roll against the walls, and the devil is looking on and attempting to enter. Within are hundreds and thousands of saints; men and women who have been born again, and separated from the world, breathing this petition before the God of heaven and earth, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."

Now the people of God are social creatures, and the grace of God was never intended to destroy the social feeling in our nature; and therefore when a company of people have been called by grace divine they seek each other's society, they love one another for the Lord's sake, and are banded together upon the principles of eternal truth; and as they travel on towards heaven, others, and yet others say, "We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." The people of God, though living in the world are not of it; they are finding their way though the storms and vicissitudes, trials and troubles of life. Our God has made a beautiful and very important provision for His people. There is a city of peace in this world of war; there is a city of purity in this world of sin; there is a home here for the dear people of God, and hence we sometimes sing with holy feeling:

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

When grace enters the heart of a sinner it renews his mind, changes his tastes, and awakens a thousand new desires in his soul, and he wants kindred minds. How odious in the estimation of a grace-saved child of God are the ways and customs of the world ! Oh my friend, you could not very well have a deeper or darker hell, than that of being bound hand and foot, the whole of your persons, all the days of your life with

the ungodly and the abominable. Grace saves the soul from this present evil world, and brings the saved mind into connection with kindred spirits, and such are found only in the city of the living God.

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

It is a mercy to belong to the church. I do not mean, to have our names enrolled in the church-book merely, that too is a favour, but that is not all. I mean it is a mercy to be one with God’s people; to be one with them as God’s people; to see as they see; to feel as they feel; to walk where they walk; to work as they work; to lean upon that upon which they are leaning; to live upon that upon which they are living; to drink of the stream which they drink of from day by day; and to be able to say, “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

This city is *walled*, and is thus a well protected city: “Peace be within thy walls.” Now with what are the churches walled? Let me give you a few views of the walls. In the first place, God says, “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her, a wall of fire round about her, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” We know what a brick wall, a garden wall, and other kinds of walls are, but we do not know anything, literally or naturally so, about a wall of fire. Here, however, round about the church of God we have a fiery wall. And what is it? It is God Himself with the fire of His grace, of His holiness, of His mercy, and His power, and that must be a daring foe who would attempt to place a ladder against this wall which is round about the church, separating it from the world; and yet we are told in the day in which we live, that there ought to be no separating wall between the two, that there ought to be no fences around the church of God. No, without are enemies, and within are the citizens of Zion, the children of the living God. God is a wall of fire round about His people, to consume the enemy, to burn up all their plans; to visit them, year by year, and day by day, with bitter disappointment, and a fire to warm and purify the city itself. And our God is not ashamed of His city on the earth; for a city generally speaking is more or less visible from a distance; but if a city could be supposed to exist having a wall of fire, it would be a most conspicuous object, and be visible for miles, and more conspicuous, if possible, in the night than in the day. Jehovah Himself is, as to His perfections and attributes, a wall of fire round about the city of Jerusalem. And again, “we have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” Not Acts of Parliament, nor military power; for the city of God requires no such protection as the material sword and worldly policy. Let the church of God stand where God has placed her. Let her be what God has made her: let her ever be satisfied with the protection which God has established for her. Let her not cringe beneath any earthly or temporal power; for “salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” And the foundation of these

walls is deep, and the superstructure is exceedingly high, for it is God's salvation. And powerful enemies can never enter, though they come against the walls to beat them down. All hell has been aiming at them and beating against them ever since they were erected, but the walls still stand. The bulwarks are where and what they were.

"O let my soul in Zion dwell;
Nor fear the wrath of Rome or hell."

And then again, the perfections of our God, together with His providence, protect His Zion, the city of Jehovah. How sweet is the thought that all God's attributes, and all God's providence, even a special providence, are round about the church. Brethren, we have indeed a strong city. Let me just ask the question here, On which side of the walls are we? Are we inside or outside? Are we where all the peace is, or are we where there is no peace at all? For depend upon it, it is a truth, whether it be believed in or not, that there is peace nowhere but in the church of God. Sometimes the peace of churches is broken; but whether that be so or not, there is no peace to the wicked. There is no peace in the world. Go to the theatre. Peace is not to be found there. Pleasure for a few hours is perhaps enjoyed, as people express themselves; but no solid peace can ever be found there, for it exists not outside the walls that surround the city of the living God. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." Thus Zion is a walled city, and its walls are the perfections of God, His Divine providence, His precious promises, and the perpetual operations of His hand.

Now let me pass away from this, to notice in the second place, *the privileges mentioned*: peace and prosperity. These are two great blessings, and every spiritual member of the church of God, is praying, I am sure, for these favours. Now I am not to preach at this time, peace by the cross of Jesus Christ, or not that exclusively. I want just to remind you of the several things that are essential to peace. In the first place, there must be righteousness: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Nations sometimes come to an agreement between themselves, in connection with which peace is made, and apparently established; but often-times peace between nations is made upon false principles, or upon no principles at all. And if national and political righteousness are ignored, there cannot be security against war, or satisfactory assurance that it will not break out. Righteousness is the only foundation upon which peace can rest; the only root out of which it can grow. Let a church that has been divided come to an agreement, one yielding a little here, and another a little there; one giving up a doctrine here, and another giving up one there: soon such a peace will be disturbed and destroyed—a patched up peace is never lasting.

Now the peace of Jerusalem for which we pray, is founded on eternal

righteousness. That is not however, the principal idea ; and therefore notice, secondly, that liberty is essential to peace. The city of Jerusalem might be paved with gold, its gates might be pearl, and its walls jasper, and the city wondrously rich, and its beauty and glory great ; but if the inhabitants be slaves, the excellence and value of the city itself can never give peace to their hearts. *Freedom* is dear to men ; and if there were not liberty in the city of Jerusalem, there would be no peace. God would be terrible ; His worship under such circumstances would be bondage, and spiritual things would yield no pleasure. But to know not only that I am in Jerusalem, a citizen, but to know that I am free, that there is no legal bar between myself and God ; that I am free to go up into the palace, and to kneel, and even sit before the mighty Monarch, free to open my lips before Him ; free to ask Him for a loaf of bread for to-day, and for the pardon of all my sins at the same time, is a privilege indeed.

But that is not all, for *safety* is also essential to peace. There may be righteousness and liberty, but the person that is free may not be in safety. Many who are free, are in an insecure position, and although their cause is a righteous one, they have not peace, because everything shakes round about them. But it is not so here. The people are a righteous people, and a liberated people, for God has set them free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." And they are also safe ; for "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth, even for ever."

But that is not all. These excellencies are not sufficient to constitute a perfect peace. There must also be *plenty* ; for there may be safety, and yet want may exist. The free may not have bread enough to eat, or water, to drink, or raiment to wear ; and if that be so, there can be no peace. But the people of God are blessed with an everlasting plenty. All the fulness of God is theirs. "For all things are your's ; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Health, too, is necessary to peace. Those who are free and safe may be sick. The child of God, therefore, is blessed with that description of health that is peculiar to himself. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick ; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

That is not all. In order to obtain blessed heavenly peace, there must be the *communion of saints*. The city may be full of citizens, all of them free, every one of them rich, all of them healthy and strong ; and yet they may be comparative strangers to one another,—no communion between saint and saint, between one believer and another. Oh how sweet to meet together as saints, and unitedly and unanimously to take our seats at our heavenly Father's table in the royal palace, and to look upon all that is upon it, and to say to one another, It is all ours, it is provided for us. The poor man and the rich man are one here, all the fulness of grace is in Zion, and the poor come with the rich and commune together, in all the fulness of the grace of God.

That is not all ; another excellency must be added, in order to the perfection of this peace; and that is, *a cloudless prospect*. The idea of losing it all by and bye, the possibility of it would disturb our hearts, and render peace impossible ; but our prospect is blessed. “ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Thus the peace is a heavenly and brotherly one; not a political peace, not an earthly peace, not the peace of servants, but the peace which prevails in a family, between brethren and sisters in the Lord.”

The second excellency is, “ prosperity within thy palaces :” prosperity of soul; prosperity as to numbers; prosperity as to the preaching and progress of the Word. There may be large numbers in a church, the congregation may be great, and yet there may not be any soul prosperity. What I want now more than ever, if possible, is soul prosperity. What I am looking and praying for is that my soul may prosper, and if I have little or no knowledge in that direction, I cannot set forth soul prosperity before you. Well I think of the Psalmist’s words elsewhere, “ Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” What am I doing ? Sometimes I pray—do I prosper in prayer ? Sometimes I am cold, and my prayers are so—at other times my heart is warm—my soul is all alive : I soar; I mount on high, and I enter into the sweet meaning of the very wonderful words, “ Concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me.” I cannot use that word command in connection with prayer very frequently; but God says, “ Command ye Me.” Sometimes, therefore, I can say with Jacob, “ and Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.” Have we prospered in prayer ? Have we ever received anything from our heavenly Father in answer thereto ? If we have ever received an answer from heaven, we know something of soul prosperity.

Let me say a word more upon prosperity as to the exercise of our graces. May the Lord be pleased to bless you with a growing faith ; for your hearts will not prosper unless your faith is vigorous and strong. I would say a word to the young. Do not defile your minds with much of the general literature of the day. There is so much evil printed and published, that the young are ensnared everywhere. Many publications seem to take a pleasure in introducing matters which are exceedingly doubtful, and in connection with things which are free from mystery it is their desire to mystify them, so as to bring doubt into the minds of their readers. Come to the Bible ; read the word upon the knee of prayer, if you would have your souls prosper with regard to faith ; and my prayer is, as we have it in the text, “ Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.” And then there is rising hope, which goes beyond the clouds, enters into a better world, and expects the crown that God has promised. Then there is love in the soul ; the heart is warm therewith. Sometimes it breaks forth into a beautiful and glorious flame. There is a noise outside the walls, and we do not hear it; war and confusion outside, but we are not affected by them. The heart is warm, and filled with love, earnestness, and zeal.

Self-conquest is connected with soul prosperity. Oh, one says in the church, "I will, aye! that I will!" and the "I" there is a very tall one, and "I will" is spoken in a very forcible manner. Now in soul-prosperity self is conquered. It is not, I will this, and I will that, and I will the other; self is lost before Christ, and in nearness to Him, and in sweet fellowship and communion with Him. Lord, I am willing to be anything or nothing; I am willing to do what Thou wilt. O for grace to enable all the members of the church, and of the churches, to overcome themselves! I must leave the subject, although I had other points to mention, but time forbids. May the Lord command, His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

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SALVATION.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,

AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 6th DECEMBER, 1885.

"He saved others; Himself He cannot save."—Matt. xxvii. 42.

WE are assured by Jehovah the Spirit, that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." What he has been in the past, that He is now, and will be unto all eternity. He will never change His name, His intercession, His position, His love to His dear people; or any of His thoughts, or any part of His character, in relation to them and their salvation: hence He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Before the world was made, the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ was contemplated by the Trinity, and rested in before the Child was born, and before the Son of God was actually given. Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ: he saw it, and was glad. Enoch walked and talked with the dear Redeemer. Abel believed in the glorious Son of God, and the faith of Old Testament saints, was as to its nature and properties, like the faith of New Testament ones. The Church of God is divided, so to speak, into two branches; but they constitute but one church. Old Testament believers laid their hands on that dear head of Christ, and New Testament believers are resting upon the same glorious Person, and finished sacrifice of the Son of God. Therefore, Christ says His beloved is but one. However far one saint may be from another, as to time; however much one saint may differ from another, as to external circumstances; and whatever variation may exist between the experience of one saint and another, the church of God is but one family, one mind, one body, of which Christ is the root, and the everlasting Father, and the great and glorious Head.

"The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make;
All join in Christ, their living Head,
And of His grace partake."

The world changes, but our Jesus remains the same; one generation passes away, and another comes; but His years are throughout all generations. Ministers of the Gospel are raised up, and qualified for their important work; they are sent to their respective spheres of labour, and

more or less blessed therein. Eventually they become grey, and are called away to their eternal rest : but the great High Priest of our profession remains the same; and “ this God is our God for ever and ever ; He will be our Guide even unto death.”

The portion of divine truth which I have read to-night, is a very solemn and interesting one. The words were not spoken by God, or by a child of God ; they were not uttered, so to speak, by the devil himself, though he prompted and influenced the minds of the speakers. My text is the utterance of wicked men—the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, as they surrounded the mysterious cross of the Christ of God. We are told that some of them that passed by, wagged their heads, all of them more or less scoffed at the marvellous Sufferer, and among other things that were said,—and there is many a truth spoken unintentionally—were the words, “ He saved others ; Himself He cannot save.” I might divide the subject into two heads. Here is first, a very important concession : “ He saved others.” And secondly, here are words of derision : “ Himself He cannot save.” I shall not, however, cast my thoughts into that form to-night, but will call your attention to a few facts in connection with matters which are suggested by the text.

In the first place, let us tarry a few moments and try to glance at *salvation itself*. “ He saved others.” And what is salvation ? It is one of the weightiest and most important words in the Bible. I rather think that next in importance and weight to the name of Christ Jesus, and to the offices He bears, is this mysterious and glorious word. “ Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” To be lost, is a very solemn state to be in—lost as to ourselves, and as to the power of all creatures, even that of angels ; so lost that we can never recover ourselves, and must remain in darkness and condemnation for ever and ever, if God should not condescend to find us. What is salvation ? It is the very opposite of being lost ; it is the darling work of God ; the most honourable and glorious scheme of Jehovah ; it is all the fulness of God. There is much of God in nature, and much of Him in providence, and in His moral government ; but the whole of God does not appear anywhere but in eternal salvation and everlasting life. Salvation is a *barrier* between guilty sinners and eternal damnation, between lost sinners and an everlasting hell. I am going to make no critical or far-fetched remarks upon hell ; I do not like to preach upon the theme, but I must revert to it now and then. Where is hell ? Where the wrath of God burns for ever ; where all God’s enemies must live and suffer for ever and ever. But there is heaven. Here are guilty sinners, lost and ruined, fitted for destruction by the fall, and by their own actual transgressions : between them and an everlasting hell we find a barrier, and that barrier is the suffering Christ of God, and the curse of God rolls against the cross, and it stops there. The wrath of God rolled against the suffering Son of God, and it stopped there ; the indignation of Jehovah rolled against the cross, and against the Saviour, and He met all, and bore all,

and exhausted all, and rose from the dead, and then said to His discip'les, The glorious work is done ; proclaim the good news. "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." What is this barrier composed of? Love, blood, and power. Love lies at the foundation, blood comes from love divine, and power divine to save the sinner comes from love and precious blood. Had there been no eternal love, there had been no blood in time; and had there been neither love nor blood, there would have been no gracious power to arrest the sinner, and bring him into the presence of God. God, however, says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." And what is the evidence of that fact? Let Paul speak—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." And what follows blood, but the power of the Spirit: the operations of the Holy Ghost; the grace of God communicated to the heart, so that we have in salvation, all the Father's love, all the worth and dignity of the suffering Son of God, and all the omnipotent power and grace of God the Holy Spirit; and love, blood, and power come between my sinful soul, and the hell, which, as a guilty sinner, I deserve. I cannot soar so high as some professors of religion, yet I do trust I am a believer in the dear and blest Redeemer; and if I am a real child of God, I cannot go to hell, because no saved sinner can ever pass through this grand barrier, and there is no wrath for those thus protected by the blood of the Lamb; that poor sinner, who, by faith, is clinging to the Saviour's precious and glorious name is eternally safe. What is it that makes this barrier so strong? It is the salvation of the Son of God. What is it that makes it so special, and peculiar, and precious? It is the great fact that He saved sinners by dying for them; by suffering for them; by being overwhelmed for them in the wrath of God. It is the fact that the withering curse of God's holy law fell in all its heat and power upon His suffering soul; this is salvation, my dear friends. I want to be the means of comforting some of you, if I can; and if you, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, could go to hell, it would have to be through the blood of the Lamb. "We are going to heaven that way, sir." I know it. We cannot go to hell that way. Christ is the way to God, and not to the devil. The blood of Christ is the way to heaven, and not to hell. You that are clinging to the precious person of God's dear Son, can never be forced through the wounds and sufferings of incarnate God, into eternal darkness and punishment.

"Salvation! oh the joyful sound!

'Tis pleasure to our ears;

A sovereign balm for every wound,

A cordial for our fears."

Then again, Salvation—and I am trying to take a new view of the subject—is represented as *a mountain*. "He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." How blessed is all this! He shall find himself exalted, and he shall dwell there permanently.

“Praise the mount—O fix me on it,—
Mount of God’s unchanging love.”

Salvation is a high mountain. The swamp of condemnation and ruin is below. The world lies there in sin and iniquity. You have been uplifted by the hand of God, and set upon a rock, or fixed upon the mount of eternal love and salvation, and God says, “Ye shall dwell on high.” How high is salvation? It is infinitely higher than the very best that belongs to this world. Salvation goes beyond the clouds, and mists, and fogs, and darkness, of this poor dying world. “He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks,” and then it is said, since he that dwells on high, and in a rock, might be starved to death, or die for the want of water, “Bread shall be given him:” he shall not toil for it, but shall receive it as the gift of grace; bread, the necessary of life, as much as he needs to carry him through this life, into a better one; and since it cannot be supposed, naturally considered, that there is water at such a height, this blessing shall also be sure. And how is he employed there? “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” From this exalted position, thou shalt also “behold the land that is very far off.” And what else? “Thine heart shall meditate terror.” Where? Down there at the bottom of the mountain. The terrors which enveloped the dear Son of God, to whom we owe our salvation and our life; we meditate the terrors of our suffering Lord, and wonder that He died for us, and adore the grace that sweetly took us in and saved us in Christ, with an everlasting salvation.

“High beyond imagination,
Is the love of God to man;
Far too deep for human reason,
Fathom that it never can.”

How does Jesus save? By substitution and communication, and by application. In the day in which we live, education is progressing on the right hand and on the left, and the people are wonderfully advanced in knowledge. It is said by many, that the age is too enlightened to believe in the doctrine of substitution. We are told that our forefathers, and especially the puritans, used to believe it; but it is not to be received now. Many years ago, it was altogether exploded, and men have left it behind. Such, I am sorry to say, is the teaching in many places. But God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are His ways as our ways. If the substitution of Jesus Christ was ever required to save a sinner, it is required to save sinners to-day; for He is “the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever;” and if Christ ever took the place of one sinner, and died in his room and stead, He took the place, and died in the stead of all the millions of sinners, who shall live with Himself in heaven for ever. Set Him forth, say many, as a perfect example of patience in suffering. He died to set us an example, and He died for our good. He did so—He died to set us an example of patience in suffering, and meekness, and He

died for our good. But He died *for* us ; He died in our stead ; He died in order that we might never die. All that was due to you and me of a penal character, fell upon the dear Son of God ; and if eternal death was due to us, that eternal death fell upon the dying Christ, and He abolished death by dying for us. Hold fast that truth, that Jesus is the sinner's substitute.

“ My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.”

A spiritual Jew having committed a transgression, when he brought his victim to the priest, laid his hands upon its head, and confessed his sin and guilt in that manner ; then the victim was slain, and the offerer saw in the slaughter of the victim that which he himself had deserved. He saw in the victim his own substitute, and felt that it typified that dear Lamb of God who would come in due time and take his place, and die in his room and stead. “ He saved others ; Himself He cannot save.” And then our dear Lord saves by communicating it, for religion is something more than notion ; something must be known and felt. The great atonement of the Saviour is received. I know some talk about the difference between the atonement and reconciliation, but we are such sinners that we have no time to attend to all those minute niceties in connection with our religion. “ Not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” Let the Scriptures be received, let God be true ; we have received the atonement—then there was an atonement to receive. Yes, we did not go after it, and take possession of it ourselves. No, it was brought to us ; and how did God deal with us ? He communicated it unto us, dropping it into our hearts ; and what was the result ? “ We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Fill any vessel with water, the top of it being open, and take something heavier than the water and drop it in, and it will force the water out and make way for itself, and remain. The Holy Spirit brings the atonement to a heart full of guilt ; to a soul full of sin, and drops it into such a heart and soul, and it forces out the guilt, and the sorrow, and the pain, and the sense of condemnation ; there is cleansing, there is peace, and there is “ joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Salvation is the result of application, and therefore the blood of Christ is said to be “ the blood of sprinkling.” Where is it sprinkled ? It is sprinkled in heaven, and upon the sinner's conscience, and upon the book also : I mean the covenant of grace : “ for when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you ;” and “ he sprinkled both the book and all the people.” The book was the covenant that God had then entered into with the people, and thus He ratified that covenant. And so the precious blood of Jesus has satisfied Divine justice, and pleased Jehovah well ; and now it is applied by the Spirit to sinners' consciences ; as the Saviour says, “ If I wash thee not,

thou hast no part with Me." And how does Christ wash poor sinners? By His Spirit now. In what does He wash them? In the fountain of His own blood. He does not say, If I teach thee not, or, if I enlighten thee not, or, if I lead thee not. It is a fact that He teaches, enlightens, and leads; but the stress is laid upon the purity; "If I *wash* thee not, thou hast no part with Me." It comes to this, therefore, my dear friends, that the cross of Christ is the meeting-place of God and the sinner. And what a meeting it is, is it not? We know what it is to meet the devil, and we know what it is to meet enemies, and difficulties, and dangers. We know what it is to meet sin, and to conflict with it. Do we know what it is to meet God? To meet God where he is well pleased; to meet Him on Calvary, under the shadow of the Cross, under the influence of a bleeding, crucified, and dying Immanuel. Oh, what is the result when God and the sinner thus meet together? There is absolutely no moral difference between them. God's enmity is gone. "God's enmity! what is that?" His law-enmity, that is gone; and the sinner's sinful and moral enmity is gone. God embraces the sinner, the sinner embraces Jehovah, and God and man are agreed. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" How can they be agreed, except the sinner be saved; and how can the sinner be saved, except the Saviour save him; and if the Saviour has saved my soul, I shall sooner or later meet God, as my Father, and my eternal portion, under the shadow of the cross. And we meet under the cross to part no more. God and Adam used to meet together in Eden; but they parted company, and a terrible distance was found immediately between them; a separation had taken place. But when God meets the sinner under the cross of Calvary, parting will never again occur. God is our God for ever and ever, and Jesus Christ is ours for ever and ever.

Now, in the second place, the text states *a fact*, notwithstanding the words fell from unclean lips. "*He saved others; Himself He cannot save.*" I do not know how many there were in heaven when our dear Lord was nailed to the accursed tree. Abel was there, and Enoch and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Joseph were there. The dear old prophet Isaiah, and the weeping prophet Jeremiah were there. Elijah was there in his body, and Enoch was there in his; and I believe that Moses was there in his body. Well, all Old Testament saints were there, through and by Jesus. On what ground? By what authority? That of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Did all go that way? Every one of them? How many were there in heaven? I do not know; but all of them owe their eternal salvation and glorification to the dear Lamb of God. He saved them all: "*He saved others; Himself He cannot save.*" And He has been saving sinners ever since, and it is a glorious truth that He was saving sinners there and then with an everlasting salvation. Every groan and every tear, every pang, every sting, and every sorrow that He experienced, contributed to the eternal salvation of countless millions of sinners. He was paying the debts of those who had been saved,—

paying the debts of that thief that was at His right hand,—paying the debts of some of the people that wagged their heads. Some of his detractors, we have reason to believe, were called by grace on the day of Pentecost ; and the Saviour was praying for them when they derided Him. “ Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.” He was saving sinners then, notwithstanding that they said, “ He cannot save Himself.” He was paying the debt, gradually paying it, and God was gradually receiving it. Justice was progressively smiting Him, blow after blow ; and wound after wound, sorrow after sorrow, fell upon Him. He continued, however, to pour out His worth, to pour out His merit, and to pour out the power of His person, and God continued to receive it, until He had poured out the whole of His soul unto death ; and then He said, “ It is finished ;” it is done ! the debt is paid ; the people are saved ; Justice is satisfied, heaven is opened ; and “ He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.” Oh, has He saved you and me ? Are we interested in this great and glorious work ?

In the short space of time remaining, let me notice, in the third place, one or two facts as to *what salvation by Jesus Christ involves*. “ Himself He cannot save.” Was that a fact ? No, and yes. It was a fact in one respect, and in another it was untrue. In what respect was it untrue that He could not save Himself ? If we reduce the matter to a question of omnipotence, He could have drawn out every nail in a moment, and have descended from the cross in the twinkling of an eye, for although He hung on the accursed tree, all nature hung at that moment on Him, and He was then upholding all things by the word of His power, and all the joys of heaven—if there was joy in heaven at that solemn moment of darkness—were produced by Him. Therefore, if you reduce the matter to a question of naked power, it was not a fact that He could not have saved Himself. But then we are not permitted, thank God ! to reduce salvation, or any branch of it, to a question of bare omnipotence. Our Lord was a Mediator, and is Mediator between God and man, and as such He could not save Himself ; for He had pledged His word, His honour was involved. The consequences of sparing Himself would have been terrible and dreadful indeed. He could not have saved Himself without violating His word ; breaking the covenant of grace, and losing the whole church. All depended upon His sufferings and death, and if He had come down from the cross without paying the debt, and saving His people, His word would have been broken, and His honour dimmed. Yet He did save Himself—by saving others He saved Himself ; and that is how that portion of Divine truth should read. “ Behold thy King cometh unto thee ; He is just, and having salvation.” The learned tell us that in the original it reads, “ He is just, and saving Himself.” He saved Himself by saving others—in what respect ? He saved His honour, He saved His name, He saved His glory. He said He would die, and accept all the consequences of His mediatorial engagements, and He did accept those consequences, and died according to His

own oath, and promise, and signature. Therefore He saved others, and saved Himself also.

“ This gospel bears my spirit up ;
 A faithful and unchanging God
 Lays the foundation of my hope,
 In oaths, and promises, and blood.”

Had time permitted, I meant to have drawn a few inferences from the subject ; but upon what I have said may the Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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GOSPEL TEACHING; ITS SUBJECT, METHOD, AND OBJECT.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 12th FEBRUARY, 1882.
(THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.)

"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."—Col. i. 28.

MUCH is said about apostolic succession—a vain tradition indeed; but a succession of ministers, qualified by the Holy Ghost, has arisen, and God has employed them ever since the days of Paul, and they have for eighteen hundred years been preaching the everlasting gospel. The unsearchable riches of Christ, upon which Paul dwelt, were those riches of the dear Redeemer which related to the salvation of sinners, and with which he himself had been so deeply and substantially enriched. But what was wonderful to the Jews, and in some respects to himself also, was the fact that he was authorised to carry the unsearchable riches of Christ into the Gentile world. For hundreds of years the true knowledge of God had been limited to one little kingdom, and members of the church of God had been found nowhere but in the land of Canaan, and round about that land. But as the Gentile world had been opened by Christ, the apostle Paul was constituted the apostle of the Gentiles; and "Unto me, (he says,) who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Accordingly he preached the word at Philippi, Ephesus, Athens, and elsewhere. Very early it appears a flourishing church was formed in the city of Colosse; and if its members comprehended this epistle, they were a divinely and deeply instructed church and congregation: for we have some of the greatest themes in this first chapter, and in this letter some of the most glorious themes that can be found anywhere in the Word of God. Here we have the deep things of God, the unsearchable riches of Christ indeed. The Apostle says, "I am made a minister of the gospel." I suffer, but I "rejoice in my sufferings;" and there are afflictions remaining for the church of God, and I "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the church." And thus the apostle adverts to the great mystery of withholding the light from the Gentile world for hundreds of years, and the greater mystery, if possible, of communicating to Gentile sinners the light of life and salvation. "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man."

Now, in looking for a few minutes at our subject to-night, we shall consider the three branches into which it naturally divides itself. *The subject, the method, and the object* of the apostle's ministry. The subject, "Whom we preach;" the method, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom;" the object or design, "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

A few thoughts in the first place on *the subject of the apostle's ministry*. Paul was not singular in relation to this great theme; for Christ said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." He did not give them half-a dozen Gospels, or two; He gave them one only; and the twelve, and indeed all gospel ministers and teachers are to take the same word, the same gospel, the same revelation the same statutes and laws of heaven, wherever they go; and like Paul determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. How the disciples understood their Master's charge is very evident to every thoughtful reader of the word; for Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to the people, and entering the great man's chariot, from the prophet Isaiah, he preached Christ to him; and wherever the apostle opened his mouth officially, whatever congregation he might be surrounded by, he had one theme only, but that the grandest in the universe,—the person, the character, the worth, and the work of his dear Lord. Oh what a difference there was between Paul the apostle and Saul the Pharisee! Saul the Pharisee put his foot down with fury on the name of Christ; but Paul the apostle lifted Him up upon the pole of the everlasting gospel, and preached Him with all his spiritual power. I would say, as a preliminary observation, that the apostle preached Christ on the cross. Let us begin there too; the apostle preached Christ on the cross, shedding His blood; bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; the centre of Divine vengeance; the object of the terrible curse of a righteous and holy God. He preached the person of Jesus on the cross, as enveloped in all the flames of hell, and of Jehovah's wrath, and in all those terrible manifestations of Divine indignation which must have descended upon you and me, had they not fallen there. And therefore Paul preached Christ in the first place on the cross. And then He preached Him on His throne. For we do not preach a dead, though we preach a dying, Christ. The dear Redeemer was dead only a short time; death held Him for a very limited period; sufficiently long, however, to enable the Lord of life and glory to disarm him of all his terrors and to constitute him His own servant. No, we preach not a dead Christ, but a living one. As He said to John, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." I am glad of it! be it so, Amen. He stepped from the cross into the grave, and from the grave to the surface of the earth, and from the earth to the mountain, and from Olivet to the steps of His own mediatorial throne, and the steps of that throne He ascended authoritatively, and with confidence and joy, and took His seat at His Father's right hand as having a conscious right to do so. And the Father put the many crowns upon His mediatorial head; so that whilst Paul preached Christ with a thorny crown, he preached

Him with a glory crown also; and whilst he preached Him on the cross, he preached Him on the throne: whilst he preached Him in all His terrible sufferings, he preached Him in His glory in the upper and better and brighter world, of which He is the everlasting all. Paul preached Him also in the church; for it is not enough quite for us to know that He died, and that He lives and reigns; we need Him here, we cannot live without Him here; and bless His name! He said before He went away and left us, "Lo, I am with you alway; even unto the end of the world." And, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them;" and most people add, but they have to go elsewhere for the words, "and that to bless them." Well, of course if He is where His twos and threes are gathered, He is there for the purpose of blessing them. Oh, how condescending is this risen Lord! How unsearchably great are the riches of His grace, inasmuch as He is not above coming where there are two or three poor sinners met together to pray, to sing a few hymns of praise, to read the word, to exchange thoughts upon a portion of it, and to call upon His name. Mr. So-and-so, who is a very important personage in the neighbourhood, would on no account be seen there; and Mrs. So-and-so, would be ashamed to be seen there, and Professor So-and-so would not think of going, the place is so old-fashioned, and the congregation so poor, and small, and they command no influence whatever, and therefore they can never think of going. Well, we do not want them, especially if we have the presence of the Lord. The apostle preached the great Sufferer on the tree, the great Conqueror on the throne, and the great elder Brother among His people. And then the apostle preached Christ in the heart, and hence, in the preceding verse, the words, "Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Oh it is well to preach Christ in the Father, and the Father in the Son; well to preach Christ on the cross, and the cross in Christ; and well to preach Him on the throne; and as He comes into places like this, and smaller than this. But oh, the honour of having Him within! Oh, the blessedness of having Him formed in the heart the hope of eternal glory. However came it about? It required God to do it—God, the eternal Spirit. For it is His covenant and official work to conform the saints to Jesus, and to make them like their Lord. It is not that we carry a brand on our forehead, or a name on our hands, not that we dress, as believers, differently from other persons,—although, perhaps, in some instances that might be advisable,—all that would go for nothing, but it is Christ in the heart that is the great necessity. "When I am dead," said Queen Mary, if you look, you will find 'Calais' engraven upon my heart." If you could see into the believer's heart, you would view a strange work going on there. The loveliest image in all the universe formed there, even Christ the hope of eternal glory; whom we preach.

Now, let us try to come a little closer to the subject, and notice in the first place, that this was the apostle's theme, because it was, and is, and ever will be *essential to salvation*. I want to lay as great stress on the word *essential* as possible; I do not use it otherwise than advisedly; it is essential to salvation, therefore there can be no salvation without it; and hence the apostle emphatically said "Whom we preach." Now, this

involved the sweeping of the premises as with a besom of destruction; the removal of everything in connection with salvation, but Christ and Him crucified; for there is only one Name, one Being, one Person. And that one name is Immanuel's, and that one Being "God with us;" and that one work, the great work of salvation. Paul then took the besom of destruction wherever he went, whether it was Athens, Philippi, Thessalonica, or Colosse; and if there were human saviours on the premises, or anything that was supposed to possess salvation, he swept all away, and brought his great Lord Jesus Christ, and set Him before the people, and left Christ and the people together; for God, if I may so speak, to treat according to the good pleasure of His will. "Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." There is salvation; it is God's only method, and I magnify my office; woe is me, if I preach not the gospel, and I cannot preach anything else. I have made room, so far as official power goes, for my great Master, and my glorious Lord. Here He is—verily, there is salvation in no other,—and he left his Christ and the Ephesians face to face. And the Ephesians shouted,—Paul could not help that,—“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” But some of them believed—Paul expected it would be so—and were eternally safe. Nevertheless, he cleared the ground of all creature saviours, and brought out this great theme, this glorious Person, and that was all he could do officially and ministerially. And that is all I can do, and that is all any teacher of the Gospel can do. Bring out Christ and set Him before the people. Only do not cloak Him, conceal no part of His face, no letter of His name, no member of His body, no attribute of His character. Conceal nothing; bring out the whole of Him, let us place Him before our fellow men and leave our hearers and Christ together, for has He not said, My word shall not return void: and it will return to Him, for His words are not air. Our words are air, frequently, but the words of God are not so; they are seed, they are germ words, if I may so speak. Just as when you sow seed in the garden, or in the field, and it prospers, it does not return to you void; some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred-fold; and so our heavenly Father has said, “My word shall not return void.” Oh it will go to heaven full weight; “it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Oh there is no more certain work under the heavens than that of preaching the Gospel, only I and my brethren in the ministry have not half faith enough. We are not making experiments with God's words, when we preach; for the great Monarch of the universe, whose word is firmer than the heavens and the earth, has given the promise. Therefore, Paul brought out Christ, dwelt upon that theme, and left the subject evermore with the people, for God to bless. It was all he could do; as much as that he was bound to do; and had he not always done that he would have gone to bed at night a miserable man, and having a consciousness that he had withheld a part of the price, he would have had sleepless nights and thorns in his poor heart. Now we say this theme is essential to salvation. Let us look at it in two or three relations. First, in relation to God the Father. He saves no sinners without His Son. He cannot save

without blood, without righteousness, without a perfect atonement for sin, without an honoured and magnified law. He cannot save without blended and harmonized perfections, without that sacrifice of sweet smelling savour, which appeared on Calvary, and the savour of which went up to the heavens of our God and filled them with everlasting sweetness. When that fragrance reached heaven, and surrounded the throne of God, God said, I smell a sweet savour of rest, and the great business of salvation was settled, and the Holy Ghost came down into Paul's heart, and said, Go, and tell the people about it, and away Paul ran with his one theme.

And then again, this theme is essential when we look at it in relation to sinful man. What can suit my case as a guilty sinner, and afford me ground to stand upon, as a fallen being? Where can I go to be cleansed and purified? I am naked, or otherwise clothed with rags. How can I lose my rags, how can my nakedness be covered? You send me to philosophy, to science, to good works, to the theatre, to learning; but all in vain, for I cannot get rest out of Jesus Christ. I cannot have peace, satisfaction, or salvation, without Him. Then look at the theme in relation to the devil. We often hear, "Come to Jesus. Believe in His name. It is only to believe." And what tantalising work that is, when it is known that the poor thing addressed is tied hand and foot together to an iron post, and cannot leave it. Oh you preachers of religion, can you go and break the bonds, melt the chains, and set the poor fellow free, so that he will come? No! no! the devil's hand is a strong one, and he holds all against all,—against all comers save one, and that is Christ, the stronger than he. The power of the devil is that of a jailor, for we are all condemned and are prisoners, and he holds us fast, and he will not let us go. And the power of Satan is that of a prince, it is that of a tyrant, he is called the god of this world. Go, my friend, and take a guilty sinner, loving sin, out of the hands of Satan, rescue him from death and condemnation, change his mind, breathe a new spirit into his heart, transform his soul, change his character, reverse the operation of his mind—do that if you can; but no creature can do it. Look at it in relation to sin. Oh what a defiling thing it is, How deep into our consciences guilt pierces, what a mighty burden it is. Oh, it breaks the back, or causes its bearer to bow down greatly before God; and if not removed, the burden is so heavy, that it will sink the sinner into eternal wrath and woe. We preach Christ crucified; for the precious blood of the atonement of our Lord Jesus, is brought by the Spirit between the sinner and his sins, between the guilty and the guilt that lies upon his conscience. I would not illustrate the subject by literalising it too much, but this glorious atonement comes between the conscience and guilt, and raises the mighty load from the tender bleeding crushed conscience, and carries it for ever away. We preach Christ crucified, for the theme is essential in relation to the salvation of men from sin. I might go on to speak of the world, and of death. What can tranquillise the mind when death is approaching, and its coldness is literally felt, and an influence from another world actually falls upon the mind, and when nature is at its very worst, in its greatest depths of weakness and infirmity? What can carry it in hope and confidence into scenes beyond the grave? Yet there lies a dying saint; he never was

calmer in his life, his hope and confidence are in another world ; his flesh was never so weak before,—he is passing away, and in the deepest darkness, as far as nature is concerned, that he ever entered, and yet he obtains the victory over death, but it is through the blood of the Lamb. “Whom I preach.”

Paul preached Christ only,—*exclusive* of all other themes. Ceremonies : —“Ye observe days and months, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.” “Touch not, taste not, handle not—which all are to perish with the using,—after the commandments and doctrines of men.” Do not touch them,—no salvation or sanctifying power in them—they are all swallowed up by Christ, and in Him, and now, instead of introducing a multitude of ceremonies, we introduce the great Antitype, the great Truth. We preach Christ, to the exclusion of the ceremonial law. Works! Most hearers open their eyes when a minister, called a Calvinist, says anything in the pulpit about works, and it is said to be a critical subject. Well, did Paul preach works? Yes, and No. He did not preach works in any degree, nor at any time, nor in any place, as constituting a part of the sinner’s salvation. Works, as the ground of salvation are useless, needless, injurious : altogether useless, because as our brother said this afternoon, they are not right ; and if they are not full weight, and perfectly straight works of perfect righteousness, they are useless. Paul would not have anything useless when preaching salvation. Then secondly, they are needless ; no room for them. Christ has done it all Himself, and the sinner’s good works, even if he had any, are not required on that ground. They are injurious, therefore Paul would not preach them ; injurious because they are sinful ; not only because after having done all, we are unprofitable servants, but because all our work is soiled, and the best performances of our hands must be washed and cleansed by Christ. Creatures? No. Angels? He did not preach them, except it was just to observe that they “are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” The Virgin Mary? I do not know what he would say were he on the earth now, and saw the fulfilment of his own prediction in his Epistle to the Thessalonians ; the mystery of iniquity doth already work, the son of perdition will appear. However, the Virgin Mary was no more to the Apostle Paul than any other saint ; and as for saints, Paul did not preach them. It remained not for Paul, nor for any of the Apostles, to introduce any human mediators. Paul says, taking the broom and sweeping them all away, “There is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” Had he not done this, had he joined something or someone to Jesus, he would thereby have impeached the wisdom of God, for Christ is the wisdom of God ; he would have insulted Christ and deceived souls, and wounded saints. To join anything to the person of Christ in preaching the Gospel, is to have a patch-work robe of righteousness, and patches, generally speaking, are exceedingly coarse, common, dirty, and poor ; a patch-work robe, a robe composed partly of Christ’s great works, and partly of my own, will not do ; why, Christ’s work is without seam even, for a seam means the bringing of several parts together and uniting them, whereas the Lord began the great work of weaving the

robe when He came, and went on continuously with it. There was no stopping, no interval whatever, He went on night and day weaving the robe, until it was completely finished; and now Paul says, "I will bring that out, and no other." To preach any other being in connection with Christ, is to sow other seed, and said the Lord to Moses, "That shall not be." To preach any other subject, or any other persons in connection with Christ, is to dim the fine gold. But no, Christ is sufficient, let Him stand alone; Paul loved Him, and preached Him successfully. I do not believe God will ever bless any other theme; some convert, but this, by the Holy Spirit, regenerates. Other themes may draw hundreds and thousands, but this attracts the hungry and the thirsty soul, the poor and the needy. Let us, however, just make a hurried observation or two on the remainder of the subject.

The method of the Apostle's ministry:—"Warning every man, and teaching every man." Had it been all warning, as is the case with the preaching of some people, he would have frightened them all, and then left them. No, it was warning, and then teaching them in all wisdom. Warning them of danger? Oh yes, and it is the minister's business to warn people of it. There is danger, friend, where you stand. There is danger on the road in which you are walking. The end of that way, as God liveth, is death. Warning every man,—the sinner. Warning every man,—the saint needs warning too sometimes. Warning every man,—you are an hypocrite, an empty-hearted professor of religion. Your hope is that of the spider's web, and the hope of the hypocrite shall perish, and his candle shall be put out in obscure darkness. "Warning every man, and teaching every man." Having told the sinner where he is, what the nature of his way is, what hangs over him? the curse of God; what is under him? eternal hell; shall I leave him? No, no, come sit down, I have another word to say. Teaching every man the way of salvation, the way of life, the way of peace, the way of pardon. In all wisdom—in all Divine wisdom, which is the gospel of God. Sell no part whatever of it, bring out the whole. What! election, sir? Yes, to be sure, in its proper place. And all the high doctrines of grace? I do not know a low one. All the doctrines of grace are high. They are like God Himself, and they represent Him, and no part of the price is to be kept back, and nothing is to be concealed. Paul said, when he left Ephesus:—You know very well that I have declared unto you the whole counsel of God, I told you of Sinai and its thunders, and how its hill will roll upon you, if grace prevent not; and then I took you ministerially to Zion, and taught you the way of life and salvation. Now I must leave you. "Warning every man, and teaching every man in all Divine wisdom," and in all official wisdom, distinguishing characters, the righteous and the wicked, and when I have a curse to pronounce, to take care I do not pronounce it on the righteous, but on the wicked; and when I have a blessing to pronounce from God, to take care I do not put it upon the head of the wicked, instead of the righteous. Oh no, come all ye that hunger and thirst, come to the waters; he that hath no money, come ye, buy wine and milk. It is for the hungry, the thirsty, the poor, the moneyless, and the penniless. This takes in spirit also, for the minister

of the gospel may be wise as to the difference between spirit and spirit. There are three spirits I will name, that a minister will describe. There is a sinful spirit, a legal spirit, and a filial spirit. The sinful spirit I have mentioned; but there is a legal spirit, and not a few professors of religion possess it, and perhaps some of the children of God are under a legal influence. Warning every man, when I see that it is my business to warn even the child of God against the influence of this spirit. And then there is a filial spirit. The difference between justification and sanctification is to be taught. Justification is complete, sanctification is incomplete. The difference between being in Christ, and Christ being in me. In all wisdom: I am in Christ, that is my completeness: Christ is formed in my heart the hope of glory. This great business is not yet finished. Therefore I am perfect in Him; I am imperfect in myself. Oh, it is important that the right food should be set before the right person; that the bread of heaven, the family-fare of God's dear people, should be placed on the table for the saints of God.

The object of His ministry. "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;"—doctrinally and experimentally so, to warn, teach, and show them the way of salvation, and how sinners are constituted perfect, and then point them to the Saviour. I have sometimes visited my friends on their dying beds, and when I have been sweetly and deeply persuaded of the genuineness of their religion, the clearness of their views, and the solidity of their comfort, I have commended them for the last time to God in prayer; and though I have been loth to lose them, sorry for their departure, I have felt a holy serenity and comfort in the fact that I could present them perfect in Christ Jesus. By-and-bye, I shall die; I hope I shall die well, and that, should my faculties be good, and my thoughts clear, and should I be able to advert to my official position on my dying bed, I hope I shall then and there for the last time be able to say,—Master, I have declared unto them the whole counsel of God, and, so far as I know, I have shown them what constitutes justification, and how sinners are saved. Take the church and congregation, I present everyone that knows thee perfect in Christ Jesus, for so I trust I may do when heart and flesh are failing. The Lord command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE LIGHT OF THE LAMB.

A Sermon

PREACHED BY MR. HAZELTON,
AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, 6th NOVEMBER, 1881.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."—Rev. xxi. 23.

It is said concerning the church of God, "Glorious things are spoken of thee." It is a mercy that our God has a city which is his own in a gracious way, and in which he reigns and will reign for ever. He has always had such a city based upon the Rock of Ages: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" and that surely is one of the many glorious things that are spoken of Zion. Time is the certain expositor of unfulfilled prophecies and promises. History tells us what the city of God has been, and the promises of God inform us what this city shall be in the future. When those marvellous changes shall take place which are predicted, and what instrumentality may be employed to bring them to pass, I do not know. Those who are wise never become prophets and interpreters of unfulfilled prophecies. I know that there are many thoughtful and inquiring readers of the Word of God, who put Bible facts together in a very skilful manner, and bring a multitude of figures which are given by the Holy Ghost in the Word, and make their calculations as they think satisfactorily; and then, like a certain celebrated minister who recently departed to a better world, they come forward and tell us that the last day will take place in such a year, and they have ascertained so much concerning the purposes of God that they go into details and particulars as to what circumstances will usher in this solemn event. I really think, my dear friends, the hand of Satan is very much in all this. Religion is a personal affair, and, whatever arises in connection with our pilgrimage to divert our minds from this great reality, and from our own personal godliness and interest in eternal things, is more or less deeply injurious to us; and that is one reason why the millennium does not trouble my mind. I can say, like a good old minister in the county of Suffolk, "If Jesus Christ should come and live here a thousand years before the end of the world, I shall be very glad to see Him and to live with Him;" for the Lamb of God is the light of the city. I do not know whether he will so come, but one thing I know, the last day is coming; "for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with
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the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Now, my friends, these are future matters which have been revealed. There are secret things which belong to God exclusively; but this is not one of them. God has been pleased to reveal Himself in relation to the end of time and of the world, and the consummation of His own grace, the perfection of His own purposes, and the eternal happiness of His own dear people. I feel, if you will forgive me for adverting to myself, that as I get on in life and gradually advance towards the grave, the promises of God, the precious doctrines of divine grace and all those glorious realities which, if I may coin a word, are understandable, are of vital importance to myself and to my own personal experience. Nevertheless, glorious things are spoken of Zion, the city of God, in heaven and on the earth, glorious things have been spoken of her by the devil, as through the mouth of Balaam and others, and all those glorious things will be verified and fulfilled by God. Very beautiful are the words in the 33rd chapter of Isaiah, concerning Zion. "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken: but there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." The children of Israel were despised, and especially the people that dwelt in the city of Jerusalem; because, notwithstanding that they were as a nation the favoured of Heaven, they had no mighty river flowing through their land; or if Jordan might be considered a wonderful river, it did not flow through or near the city of Jerusalem. To be sure there was a little stream or brook that passed through the city; but the surrounding nations considered it nothing, and taunted God's people because they had not a great river. Babylon could boast of its grand Euphrates, as London of its Thames; but the children of Israel triumphantly said, in this Jerusalem which shall never be taken down, the Lord will be to us what he has never been to you, "a place of broad rivers and streams," or as the word should have been rendered "*in* place of broad rivers and streams." Those nations which have noble rivers flowing throwing their capitals are liable to be attacked by the navies of the enemy; but here no galley with oars shall be found, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King; He will save us."

Glorious things are spoken of the church in the book out of which I have taken my text. It is represented as a city, and this city is also represented as the bride, the Lamb's wife. Now, earlier in this book we have a view of the Lamb's wife. There she appears as a woman clothed with the sun and a crown of twelve stars on her head. We follow her until she is driven into the wilderness, pursued by the great dragon, who cast a flood of waters out of his mouth to drown her; and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood, and so it helped the woman;

and there was given her a place in the wilderness, where she was sustained for a period. This woman is not to be lost sight of as we read the Revelation. One army after another appears, one course of troubles after another arises, various bitter persecutions prevail; the woman was hunted everywhere in the wilderness, and hated by all on the face of the earth. Still she was not destroyed, through tried and tempted. Well, after ages had passed away, and army after army had been replenished and tried, and king after king arisen, and the Pope himself had made his appearance, and Popery had raged for ages,—then this woman reappears, emerging from the sea of trial, or from the wilderness in which she was, not as wounded and distressed, or in an ignoble or disgraceful condition. No, for an angel said to John, “I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb’s wife;” for, although rivers of blood had been shed, and Apollyon, and the old dragon, and the locust enemies had all swarmed around her, she was still in existence; for the Lamb, her husband, had manifested and displayed his keeping and preserving power over her. And John looked, and instead of a woman, he saw a city, which he very copiously describes in this chapter. It has “the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” The vision must have been a very marvellous one; for John was taken up to a high mountain, and he saw the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. Try to realize, as far as it is possible, somewhat of that scene. The heavens were opened: a vast city, larger than any that was ever built on the face of the earth, descends from God out of heaven, and the whole of it was so transparent that every stone in its twelve foundations is visible, for every foundation was transparent. John saw it, and saw through it; and here he gives a description of it. It had twelve gates, three on each side, and at every gate stood an angel. And then, describing the general glory of the whole he says, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Now, as well as I could, after these words occurred to my mind, I tried to limit my attention to the last clause of the verse. “And the Lamb is the light thereof;” and in looking at our text, we will, as the Lord may enable, notice the two branches into which it divides itself. *The character indicated the Lamb; the fact asserted, the Lamb is the light of this city.*

In the first place, let us look at *the character represented* in the text—Jesus Christ, the Lamb. Notice one or two points in relation to *the person of the Lamb*. Jesus Christ is the light of the city; not the natural sun, for that emits natural light only, and natural light reveals natural and material objects only, and we are not to materialize anything here. The natural sun can never reveal the religion of heaven, however clearly it may shine, whatever floods of light it may pour down upon us. Natural light is very pleasant for the eye to behold, but it reveals no objects that are spiritual; and, therefore, the light of the sun and of the moon, which were and are natural lights, were not needed by that city. A superior and brighter light than the light of nature ever

was shines upon it and in it for ever and ever. A great deal is thought of material things in connection with the church of God. Dearly beloved friends, everything here is spiritual; I beseech you not to carnalise anything in connection with the covenant of grace or the church of God. The Lamb is the light of this city, and when the sun and moon are mentioned as giving light to it; it is, the Lamb becomes the sun, and, perhaps, the word of divine truth, the moon; and, therefore, the Lamb is the only light of the city and church of the living God. Not symbolical light. There was a peculiar light that attended the children of Israel forty years in the wilderness, in the form of a cloudy pillar by day and a fiery pillar by night; and Jewish writers tell us that such was the brightness of the cloud every day that the children of Israel did not need the light of the natural sun, and such was the light emitted by the fiery pillar every night, that the moon was not absolutely necessary, and, therefore, God, the God of Israel, was the light of the children of Israel by day and by night. But that was a symbolical light—it represented, in a figurative way, the dear Person of whom we are trying to speak this morning. Then there was a symbolical light on the tabernacle, and subsequently in the temple, called the divine Shekinah, which was a bright, luminous cloud dwelling between the cherubims on the mercy-seat. That lighted up the holy place; for there were no windows there, because, “The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness,” and God is not beholden to the sun for light; and, therefore, for the holiest places windows were not required and were not made. Everything was, apart from the Shekinah, thick darkness in that chamber. That Shekinah, however, was a symbol of the Lamb, and it is to that fact the church refers when she says, “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.” And then, again, we have certain lights in the church of Christ now, which may be called emblematical lights. There is the light of preaching, that will not be required up there; there is the light of the ordinances of God’s house, that light will not be required in heaven. The light, however, which comes to us through preaching, and, through ordinances, emanates from the Lamb of God, and those ordinances which do not throw a divine light upon the Church of God are not God’s ordinances at all. Just as the natural sun shines through a window that is clean and transparent, and fills the room with light, so the Lamb is on the other side of the windows of ordinances, and throws His light through those ordinances into His city or upon His church and people on the earth. There is, therefore, that medium between Christ and His people here; but the whole shall be removed, and ordinances will for ever cease, and the Lamb only, personally considered, will be the light of heaven. “The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Now, there are other lights floating about in the world, and I am very sorry to say that they may be seen too where they ought not to appear, in the church of God. We have no objection to scientific matters,

provided they be kept in their proper places ; but, say some, the Word of God cannot be explained without scientific discoveries. The Lamb of God is the light of the Word. Let men of science go on discovering, digging, and boring until the end of time, and let them turn the world upside down, and inside out, and bring to light natural secrets the existence even of which is not yet dreamed of, and let those natural secrets be exceedingly bright and wonderful ; they will all go for nothing in connection with spirituality and eternal things. Not natural, or scientific or symbolical or ministerial or artificial light ; for they need not the light of a candle there, nor of a lamp ; for the Lamb, and the Lamb only, is the light thereof. And why is the Redeemer represented here as a Lamb, rather than as a lion ? for our dear Lord is both, and hence in the fifth chapter of this book we read that John saw “ in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book,” and a loud voice was heard saying, “ Who is worthy to open the Book, and to loose the seals thereof ? ” And no man in heaven nor in earth was found, and John wept. And one of the elders said, “ Weep not : behold *the Lion* of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.” And John beheld, not a lion, “ but a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God.” And why ? Had He not been a Lamb, and performed the part and filled the position of a Lamb, He had never been a Lion. The lamb-like character and condition of the Saviour relates to His priesthood, His sufferings, and His meritorious salvation of His dear people from death ; and, having fulfilled His priestly work, and, as a Lamb, put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, He ascended to heaven, and is sitting upon the Throne, where He appears as a Lion to execute judgment, to claim His own, to exercise His rights, to visit His enemies with judgment and destruction. He is a Lion with the book of God’s purposes before Him. But why is He spoken of in connection with light as a Lamb ? Because the light that emanates from the Lamb of God is for redeemed sinners. Had not sin been committed, a Lamb had never been needed ; the very presence of a Lamb implies the existence of sin. “ Where is the lamb for a burnt offering ? ” “ God will provide himself a lamb.” Then comes Jesus as the Lamb of God, and what does that imply ? Why, that God has been insulted, that sin has been committed and guilt contracted, that man has become a fallen wretch, and that a sacrifice for sin is necessary. Jesus was “ brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” The sins of His dear people were made to meet on Him. They all melted away on His majestic and glorious person and character, and when He had put them all away by His sacrifice—He ascended to heaven, where he shines on the ransomed for ever and ever as their perfected Saviour. The question has been asked, Shall we think of sin when we are in heaven ? My friends, we shall think of everything when we are before the throne of God, the thought of which will tend to exalt the Saviour, to humble us before Him, and to fill us with adoring grati-

tude ; for we shall sing, “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.” Through the scars of our once-crucified Saviour floods of pleasurable light will for ever flow upon our dancing souls. We shall become immersed in the light of the Lamb as we are now immersed in the light of the sun of nature, when that sun breaks out and pours his beams upon our hemisphere ; when we enter into glory the Lamb will be seen in the midst of the throne, and we shall enter into that glory, and be for ever immersed in His light.

Let us notice *the Lamb's position* : “The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” I do not know that I can give you a better Scripture for illustrating this than that which you have in the description of the angelic host that came from heaven to announce the Saviour's birth ! Wonderful sight ! “The glory of the Lord shone round about them.” That glory must have been at night, for the sun was below the horizon ; it was a vast flood of supernatural light, brilliant, splendid, and glorious, which streamed from heaven and accompanied the angels, and enveloped and surrounded the shepherds. So shall the church of God be immersed in His glory for ever and ever, and the Lamb will moderate, modify, and act as the medium of that glory for ever and ever. Where is the Lamb ? What position does he occupy ? He is in the city, in that part of it which is in heaven. He has acquired a right to enter the city, to give it His own name, to claim it, and to ascend the throne that stands in the centre of it. He has a right to claim the worship and the adoration of every citizen, and to open His heart and His countenance, and flood the city here with His grace, and the city hereafter with His glory. The crown He wears He acquired the right to wear. The sceptre He sways He bought for Himself :—

“His cross, His cradle, and His crown,
Are big with glories yet unknown.”

O ! He deserves to be called the King and the Light of the city. He is—

“Worthy to sit enthroned above !
Worthy of all our praise and love !
Worthy for ever there to reign !
Worthy the Lamb that once was slain !”

Bless His name ! the marks upon His person will indicate for ever the fact that He loved us and that He died for us.

His character is spotless. There are spots in the natural sun ; but on the sun of righteousness there are none—all is eternally clear. Oh, the light is peculiar to Jesus and His bride. Adam did not want such a light, and angels would never have had it, had not guilty man been saved by God. And the light is so mysterious to angels that they desire to look into it. Every act of his hand, every word of his mouth, and every office and every name He bears throw light upon something. Does He fulfil a promise ? He casts a light upon scenes and circumstances which

previously been perplexing and distressing. Does he perform wondrous things, deep and mysterious, in providence? Well, perhaps they are dark for a time, and buried so deep that the creature cannot understand His reasons for His conduct. Wait awhile, fall on the knee of prayer, frequently watch the operations of His wonder-working hand, for

“God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

Every stream of influence that emanates from His person fulfils some deep design, and therefore the Lamb by His person, position and character is the light of the city.

Just a word in the second place on the *fact asserted*. The Lamb *only* is the light thereof. There is a sufficiency in Him for all saving purposes and there will be sufficient in Him for all the requirements of all the glorified millions in heaven so that should we be all eye we shall find enough in Christ to satisfy us for ever—should we be all ear, we shall find enough in His voice to fill us with heaven for ever; should we be all intellect, we shall find mysteries and knowledge enough in the person of Christ to satisfy and fill us for ever. If He is mine, all is mine. If He is not mine, nothing valuable or imperishable is mine. Where He is, there is light; where He is not, there is darkness. The presence of the Lamb makes my day, His absence creates, so to speak, my night. If He shines upon me, hell cannot darken my mind; and if He withholds His influence, and withdraws the light of His countenance, ten thousand suns cannot cause it to be day. It is only necessary to be circumcised, said the people in Galatia; “I would they were even cut-off which trouble you,” said the Apostle. The Lamb is all in all. Say some, it is necessary that people should keep the law, and do this, and that, and the other—something here and something there. The Lamb is the great embodiment of all. Then this light is *sufficient* for all saving purposes, and you need not, my dear friends, as you well know, go elsewhere for light. To a guilty sinner knowing, feeling and mourning over the fact and longing for deliverance, the thing is divinely simple. Here is light sufficient and love sufficient also for all saving purposes; for in this infinitely important matter, educational, moral and scientific light all fail. The generations who went to heaven safely and gloriously—were all illuminated by the Holy Spirit revealing to them that the Lamb is the only and sufficient light: but according to modern thought as it is called—our spiritual forefathers were wonderfully out of Bible secrets, and wide of the mark, and yet somehow or other illiterate as many of them were, they knew the light and had to do with the Lamb—and were godly people spiritual characters, shining as lights in the world, and they triumphed over the devil and death at last, and into heaven an abundant entrance was ministered unto them. They knew the Lamb though they did not know much beside. “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” This light is *true*, “hence the darkness is past and the true light now shineth,” because the Lamb went into the darkness and swallowed it all up. And this

light is true in this respect also ; when Jesus shines upon a soul, that soul is revealed exactly as it is. If He shines upon things He reveals them exactly as they are, nothing distorted or reduced, or magnified. If He shines upon events He reveals them as they are and if therefore you are taught of Him and have been enlightened by Him, your feelings and your thoughts and your conclusions so far as the Lamb shines upon you are correct and true, Jesus never produces an improper feeling or calls into existence a questionable state of mind. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." That guarantees the perfection of their character and their saving reception of divine truth, thus the Lamb is the true light. It is an *experimental* light ; the light that comes from the sun is irresistible and if ten thousand worlds of lovers of darkness hated the rising of the sun, their hatred would be in vain. The light is also *silent* in its operations ; it reveals beauties or deformities as they exist. There is a beautiful garden yonder, its hedges are faultless, its walks and paths are perfect, its plants and flowers are lovely ; but all is invisible if it is night, and though you walk in the path very close to most charming scenes, you cannot see any. Our dear Redeemer reveals existing facts in their deformity, or in their beauty, and He enters the heart silently. The operations of light are carried on without noise. We are as dependent upon light for our life, as we are perhaps upon air—at all events light is essential to life ; and the light of the Lamb is essential to the spiritual life. It enters the heart, works wonderfully there, comes without observation, and produces a change for God and for eternity. Lastly it is an *eternal* light. "The Lamb is the light thereof." Here we have nights, for clouds come between the face of our dear Lord and our souls. Sometimes He seems to hide His face and then it is dark ; but there is no night there, no clouds there, no tears, no fears, no devils there. The Lamb crowds out of existence all evil, and brings into being and operation all excellency and all that is beautiful. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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