

McGARVEY'S
SERMONS

A decorative floral ornament consisting of a central six-petaled flower with a horizontal line of dots passing through its center, positioned between the two lines of text.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

~~BX 7327~~

Chap. Copyright No.

Shelf. M2654

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



SERMONS

DELIVERED IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY,

JUNE—SEPTEMBER, 1893,

BY


J. W. MCGARVEY,

PROFESSOR OF SACRED HISTORY, COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE,
LEXINGTON, KY.



10818 Z!

LOUISVILLE, KY.

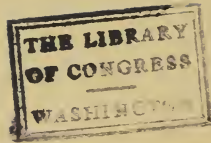
GUIDE PRINTING & PUBLISHING COMPANY.

1894.



BX7327

.M26S4



Copyrighted 1894, by
J. W. McGARVEY.

TO
"THE BROADWAY CHURCH,"
LEXINGTON, KY.,

In whose pulpit nearly all of these sermons were originally delivered; in whose service I have spent the most useful years of my life as a preacher, and among whose members I count many of my warmest friends, this volume is affectionately inscribed as a token of gratitude for many expressions of
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

PREFACE.

I have no partiality for volumes of sermons; for I have derived from them comparatively little benefit. In this I suppose myself to be different from many others; for with many good people such volumes appear to be favorites. They should certainly prove helpful to religious persons who are frequently denied the privilege of hearing the living preacher; and they serve as a homiletical aid to such young preachers as can study them without imitating them. I think that I should not have been moved to the preparation of the present volume, but for the deep regret which I have often experienced, in common with many thoughtful men, that some preachers whom we have known, and on whose lips we have hung almost entranced, have left behind them, when they departed this life, nothing but the faint remembrance of sermons which we should have been glad to read again and again, and which were worthy of being transmitted to many generations. If any of mine approach these in merit, or even if they possess the merit which partial friends have often ascribed to them, I have thought that they might prove useful to some after my voice shall no longer be heard.

Notwithstanding the considerations just mentioned, these sermons would probably have died with their author, but for the fact that I had occasion to deliver them where facilities for reporting them were at hand, and that the Guide Publishing Company thought so well of them before hearing them as to provide for their publi-

cation. It has not been my custom to write sermons, either before or after delivery; and only two in this volume were written by my own hand. With the exception of the one on Inspiration, the one on The Jerusalem Church and the one of Mocking God, they all appear as they came from the pen of the stenographer, verbal mistakes alone being corrected. If, then, the value of a printed sermon depends in part, as I think it does, on its retention of the style and manner of the speaker, these will possess this merit. Their imperfections of style will be as truthful as any other part of the representation which they will make; and if, on this account, they shall smell less of midnight oil, the reader may be compensated if they shall have some of the freshness of morning dew.

I must express my thanks to the Broadway Church, Louisville, Ky., in whose temporary service all of these sermons were delivered during the summer of the year 1893, for the many courtesies which made that summer's work most agreeable; to Miss Mattie C. Huber, the stenographer, for the faithful and cheerful execution of her responsible task; and to the GUIDE Publishing Company, whose promptness and accuracy in every business transaction I can not too highly commend.

THE AUTHOR.

LEXINGTON, KY., December, 1893.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

INSPIRATION 1-15

SERMON II.

SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT 16-27

SERMON III.

SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT: OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED . . 28-43

SERMON IV.

REDEMPTION IN CHRIST 44-55

SERMON V.

THE REMISSION OF SINS 56-68

SERMON VI.

CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS 69-81

SERMON VII.

FAITH 82-96

SERMON VIII.

REPENTANCE 97-108

SERMON IX.

BAPTISM 109-121

SERMON X.

CASES OF CONVERSION: THE EUNUCH 122-132

SERMON XI.

CASES OF CONVERSION: CORNELIUS 133-144

SERMON XII.

CASES OF CONVERSION: LYDIA 145-159

SERMON XIII.	
CASES OF CONVERSION: PAUL.....	160-171
SERMON XIV.	
CASES OF NON-CONVERSION: FELIX.....	172-186
SERMON XV.	
CASES OF NON-CONVERSION: AGRIPPA.....	187-201
SERMON XVI.	
GOD IS NOT MOCKED....	202-214
SERMON XVII.	
DIVINE PROVIDENCE: JOSEPH.....	215-231
SERMON XVIII.	
DIVINE PROVIDENCE: QUEEN ESTHER.....	232-246
SERMON XIX.	
THE JERUSALEM CHURCH.....	247-267
SERMON XX.	
CHURCH FINANCES.....	268-281
SERMON XXI.	
A CHURCH INSPECTED.....	282-296
SERMON XXII.	
THE RIVER JORDAN.....	297-314
SERMON XXIII.	
PRAYER: ITS EFFICACY.....	315-325
SERMON XXIV.	
BELIEVING A LIE.....	326-339

SERMON I.

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

ADDRESS DELIVERED MAY 28TH BEFORE THE Y. M. C. A.
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI.

There can be no Christian Association that is not founded on the Bible. Everything that is properly styled Christian owes its existence to the belief in the divine origin and authority of that book; for although there were Christians and a Christian church before the completion of the book, since it was completed all Christian faith depends upon it. No one is entitled to membership in such an association who does not espouse this belief; yet in a Young Men's Christian Association of our day it is scarcely possible that questionings in regard to the origin and authority of the Bible do not frequently arise. You who are members of the Association which I now have the honor of addressing, have doubtless heard it said that the earlier books of the Old Testament, instead of being such as our fathers have taught us to believe them, were written by J., and E., and D., and P., and R., of whom this is about all that we know. They were written so long after the events which they record, and by men with sources of information so unreliable, that we can depend upon the truth of very little that they say. Indeed, it is more than hinted that they did not hesitate to perpetrate pious frauds—a kind of fraud never perpetrated by a pious man—when these were necessary to any special

purpose which they had in view. As to the historical books of the New Testament, they also were written, you have been told, by men who lived at too late a day to be well informed, so that their writings must be carefully sifted before we can determine what in them is true and what is to be referred to misinformation, to myth, and to legend.

In opposition to all this you and I have been taught to regard the writer of every book entitled to a place in this sacred collection as having been controlled in the selection of his matter and guided in the composition of it by God's Holy Spirit. We have learned, in other words, to believe Paul when he says: "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God hath prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit. * * * Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual." (I. Cor. ii. 9-13).

These statements present the main issue between belief and unbelief as regards the books which we style, collectively, the word of God. From among the many lines of argumentation along which the discussion of this issue has taken its course, I have selected a single one for the subject of this address; and as the question is of vital importance to the existence of your Association, I am sure that I shall have your undivided attention while I attempt to discuss it.

Again and again, almost from time immemorial, it has been argued that if the Spirit of God had guided the sacred penmen after the manner affirmed by Paul, all the books would have been written in one style instead of being marked as they are by all the varieties of style and

diction which naturally distinguished their respective writers. To this it has been as often answered, that the infinite Spirit of God could as easily guide a number of writers along the course of their own respective styles and within the limits of their own previously acquired knowledge of words, as in any other way. This seems to be a satisfactory answer. But still it must be conceded that if the Spirit of God exercised any direction over the selection by these men of their words, their modes of expression, or the matter of their narrations, it is but natural to suppose that we may find traces of the fact in characteristics which the writings would not otherwise possess—characteristics by which they may be distinguished as inspired writings. I believe that such characteristics can be pointed out, and that, when properly considered, they furnish conclusive proof of the inspiration in question. I shall confine myself, for the sake of brevity and concentration, to the historical writings of the New Testament, and to their matter rather than their style.

We invite your attention, first of all, to a peculiarity of the historical writers of the New Testament, which has often elicited wondering comment, the unexampled impartiality with which they set forth the sins and follies of friends and foes alike. There is no attempt at concealment of their own sins; there is no toning down, no apology. They are described without hesitation, and with the same fullness of detail, as are the worst deeds of their enemies. The proposal of James and John to call down fire from heaven on an offending village, is as bluntly recorded as the murder of the innocents of Bethlehem by Herod; the dispute among the apostles as to who should be greatest, is as plainly set forth as the dissensions among the Pharisees concerning Jesus; and although, when the Gospels were written, Peter was the

most prominent and the most honored man in the whole church, they every one describe his cowardly denial of his Lord with as much fullness of detail as they do the dastardly betrayal by Judas. They offer no apologies for Peter; and they have no word of reproach for Judas. What writers since the world began, describing events in which their deepest feelings and their dearest interests were involved, have approached these writers in this particular? If they were guided by the impartial Spirit of God, this accounts for it; but who shall account for it on any other hypothesis?

In the second place, you can scarcely fail to have observed the imperturbable calmness with which they describe all events alike—the most wonderful as the most common-place, the most touching as the most indifferent. The most astounding miracles are described by them with no more manifestations of excitement in their manner than the most trivial everyday events. They betray no more feeling when they speak of the murder of John the Baptist, than when they speak of his voice crying in the wilderness. They are as calm and self-possessed when describing the agony in the garden and the overwhelming scenes of Calvary, as when they tell of Jesus passing through the fields on the Sabbath, or taking His seat at Jacob's well. They use no word of exultation when Jesus arose from the dead, or when He ascended on high; and their tones betray no trembling or tearfulness amid His outcries on the cross, no tenderness as His mangled form is quietly laid in the tomb. Yet these are the very men of whom it is said, that they were mourning and weeping when the first announcement of the resurrection broke upon their ears (Mark, xvi. 10). Who can account for this—for this elevation of these plain men above all the emotions which charac-

terize other men when writing of scenes in which their tenderest sympathies and dearest hopes are involved? The experience is superhuman. It is accounted for only when we know that they were restrained by the Spirit of Him,

“ Who sees with equal eye as God of all,
A hero perish or a sparrow fall ;
Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.”

In the third place we invite attention to the unexampled brevity of the New Testament narratives; and first, to their brevity as whole books. Never since time began were a set of writers burdened with a theme so momentous in their own estimation, or so momentous in reality. Never were writers so oppressed, when they thought of brevity, by the multitude of wondrous details before them, and the difficulty of determining what to insert and what to omit, when the eternal well-being of a world depended on what they should write. One of them shows how keenly he felt this sense of oppression, when he exclaims with startling hyperbole: “If they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written” (John, xxi. 25). What, then, could have induced these four evangelists, thus weighted down by the abundance of their materials, overwhelmed with a sense of the importance of their theme, and burning with a desire to vindicate the fame of their adored Master, to compress their accounts into *thirty-six pages each* of this little book which I hold in my hand? What, but some restraining and irresistible power, guided by superhuman judgment? As to the book of Acts, the argument is the same in kind, and perhaps greater in force; for this writer had to deal with the widespread and ever-varying

fortunes of the church through a period of thirty years, the most eventful and thrillingly interesting period of its whole history to the present day; and yet he condenses the story into nearly the same narrow limits.

When, secondly, we study this brevity with respect to the accounts given of single incidents, the wonder remains the same. Out of the many examples we select a few. Few scenes have ever been witnessed on earth of deeper interest from several points of view than that of the baptism of our Lord. There was the humble yet lofty mien of him who came to be baptized; the surprising demeanor of the great preacher as he confessed his unworthiness to baptize such a person; the solemn act of the baptism itself; the still deeper solemnity of the prayer on the river's bank; the startling voice which was heard from heaven—the voice of Jehovah—which had not thus broken the silence of the skies since it thundered from the summit of Mount Sinai; the graceful descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove; and the oracle, big with the fate of a lost world, in which God confessed his own beloved Son. What man with a writer's instinct could have stopped short of many pages in describing the scene so as to do it justice. But the sublime story is disposed of by the first Evangelist in twelve short lines, in six each by the second and third; and in a mere allusion quoted from the lips of another person by the fourth. Again, the one event which, above all others, these four writers felt themselves obliged to set forth with overwhelming proof, was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the event, as they confessed, on which their own pretensions and their eternal hopes depended; yet of the twelve appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, only two are mentioned by the first Evangelist, only three by the second, only three by the third, and only four by the fourth.

We wonder and wonder why every one did not give all the evidence and press it home upon the reader by many words of comment. In the book of Acts the same surprise confronts us. Never did a writer have a more prolific theme, or one on which he would be more delighted to dwell than that wild commingling of prayers and maledictions, lamentations and silent despair, which filled every street of Jerusalem, when Saul made havoc of the Church, entering into every house and dragging to prison both men and women, until the ten thousand saints were driven to the four winds, and the Church in Jerusalem, the only Church then in existence, was dispersed and apparently destroyed. A whole volume would scarcely have sufficed to describe all the harrowing scenes; and the writer to whom we owe what we know of it was a companion of the principal actor in it for many years; yet some irresistible constraining power shriveled his account of it into *four short lines!* Next to this event in the history of the young Church, with respect to those tragic elements in which historians love to revel, stands the death by martyrdom of James, the son of Zebedee. The death of Stephen was tragical and heartrending, but that of the Apostle James, about eight years later, was far more so, both because he was one of the original twelve on whose labors the future of the whole Church seemed to depend, and because it was a cold-blooded murder by a descendant of the tyrant who had butchered all the infants of Bethlehem in the vain effort to murder the Son of God. How you and I would love to know the exact motive of this murder! How we should be strengthened to know something of the brave or of the forgiving words which James uttered with his last breath—to know, in a word, how the first apostle who fell a martyr to his faith met the grim monster! And how it would have delighted any

Christian who knew the facts to tell them to his brethren, and hand them down to posterity! But this New Testament writer was allowed only a sentence of *seven words* in the Greek for the whole story, and they are represented by only *eleven* in our English version. Truly, if it were said of Jesus, "Never man spake like this man," we must say, never man wrote like these men; and the logical inference is that they wrote as he spoke under the restraining power of the Spirit of God.

But this argument from the brevity of the narratives is not seen in its full force until it is considered in connection with the omissions of remarkable events by which it was chiefly brought about. What sketch of a great man's career was ever written which told only of the last three years of his life, if the previous part were known to the writer? What biographer would consider himself at liberty to omit from even a brief sketch all that was known of the boyhood and early manhood of his hero? Yet two of these three Gospel writers, though they must have known the whole story, have not a word to say of the first thirty years of the life of Jesus; and the other two furnish us within that period nothing but a few glimpses of his unconscious infancy and a single adventure of his boyhood. Uninspired writers have not been content with this; for the Protevangelium, an apochryphal work of the second century, devotes twenty-five chapters to the period between the imaginary announcement of the birth of Mary and the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem, while another, styled the Gospel of the Infancy, has fifty chapters, drawn from a very feeble imagination, on the first twelve years of the life of Jesus. This may help us to imagine what our Gospels would have been had they come from the pens of uninspired men of the second century, as some rationalists have affirmed.

The synoptists omit from their narratives four intensely interesting visits of Jesus to Jerusalem; while John omits all of the Galilean ministry, except the single miracle of feeding the five thousand and a conversation which grew out of it. This last writer, the one who was so oppressed by a sense of the vastness of his material as to say that if all were written even the world itself would not contain the books, makes the most surprising omissions of them all. He skips in perfect silence one whole year between his fifth and sixth chapters, a half year between his sixth and seventh, and three months in the midst of his tenth. And what is more surprising still, though the events which he records cover from first to last a period of three and a half years, all of them up to the time of the public entry into Jerusalem, represent only about thirty separate days. Go through his Gospel, counting one by one the days on which its recorded events took place, and this is the number which you will count, although between the first and the last there were 1,270 days of the busy life which he is depicting. One day in forty supplies all that he makes us even partially acquainted with. I am told that in the cotton presses now used in the South men can place a common bale of cotton three or four feet square by five or six feet in length, which is already nearly as solid as wood, and compress it into the space of a cubic foot. Some such compressure of a mental kind must have acted upon the mind of John to bring his narrative within such limits.

The same restraining power was felt by the author of Acts, else how could he have omitted nearly all of the labors of ten of the apostles, and from the career of Paul, which occupies his chief attention, how could he have omitted many of its most thrilling incidents—those for example which are enumerated but not described in the

eleventh and twelfth chapters of Second Corinthians? And what mortal man, unconstrained by some high power, could have given us the account of the voyage from Cæsaræa to Rome, and left us without a word respecting Paul's trial before Nero? Compared with this trial those before Felix, Festus and Agrippa appear to us of minor importance; and its wondrous significance has so excited the imagination of a modern writer as to bring forth, in Farrar's graphic delineation of the Life of Paul, one of the finest specimens of word painting in the English language. Who persuaded Luke to leave it out?

Let us come to a different class of specifications. Who that was an eye witness of the splendid scene of the transfiguration, in which representatives from heaven, earth and hades came together, arrayed in divine glory, and conversed together for a time on the most momentous theme which ever till then had occupied the thoughts of men or angels, could have omitted it from an account of the career of Jesus? And who that has a heart to feel could have omitted the agonies of Gethsemane? Yet John, who witnessed both, and whose tenderness of feeling is beyond all question, says nothing of either. Again, who that saw the calling of Lazarus out of the tomb, with all the heart-breaking scenes which preceded and attended it, could have been persuaded by all the friends he had on earth to omit it from a narrative in which the divine power of Jesus was to be set forth; yet neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke has a word to say of it. Were these men made of wood that they could not feel? Did they have hearts of stone? Were their minds absolutely bereft of imagination? Were they totally unlike all the other men who have taken pen in hand? So they must have been if they were not overruled and constrained as to the matter of their narratives by that mysterious being whose

thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways. This alone can solve the amazing problem.

We now advance to another source of argument, the angelology of these writers; and under this head we shall have reference to the writers of the Old Testament as well as to those of the New. Among men of all nations and among all classes of writers, from the rudest to the most cultivated, there has been a fondness for depicting invisible beings; hence the demi-gods, fairies, genii, sylphs and satyrs of ancient and modern story. Nearly all of these are either grotesque, capricious, impure, or malicious. In contrast with them the angels of the whole Bible are holy, mighty, humble, compassionate, self-poised, and in every way worthy to be the messengers of Jehovah. These characteristics are everywhere maintained when angels appear in the sacred narratives. "Ever unlike men, they are always like themselves." Nothing like them ever originated in the brains of men. On no other pages, except when copied from these, can their likeness be found. They are beings who, though far different from ourselves, are objects to us mortals of profound admiration and tender affection. Though their forms are but dimly outlined, we see them; and though they are strangers to us, it is one of our most delightful thoughts that we shall yet dwell among them forever. They are so far above all the creations of human genius that human fancy has not permitted the divine picture to remain as it was, but even Christian poets and painters have persistently given them the form of woman. The Biblical delineation of these heavenly beings must be accounted for. It is found in the writings of shepherds, fishermen, herdsmen and publicans, composed in the early and dark ages of the world, and the writers all belonged to just one race of people, and that not the most imaginative.

Surely here is something supernatural; the divine inspiration of the writers can alone account for this—creation, I was about to say—but revelation is the word.

We invite attention next to the air of infallibility which the writers of both Testaments everywhere assume. Though they speak on some themes which have baffled the powers of all thinkers, such as the nature of God, his eternal purposes, his present will, angels, disembodied human spirits, the introduction of sin, the forgiveness and punishment of sin, the future of this earth, and the eternal destiny of us all; on all subjects and on all occasions they speak with a confidence which knows no hesitation, and which admits no possibility of a mistake. Was this the result of stupidity and of overweening self-consciousness? The fact that they are still the teachers of the world on these themes forbids the supposition. Was it the result of a profundity of learning never equaled, or of native powers of insight never approached by the genius of other men? Their positions in society and their want of favorable opportunities forbid this supposition, and our opponents themselves are quick to reject it. What then shall we claim as the cause of it? Grant their miraculous inspiration, and all is plain. There is no other rational hypothesis. They were the most arrogant of men, next to Jesus himself, in whom the characteristic of which we speak was pre-eminent, if they were not inspired.

Finally, we cite the inherent power of the New Testament writings to convince men of their own divine origin, and to move them to holy living. That they should possess such power was the expectation of the writers, one of whom expressly declares his purpose in writing to be, that his readers might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, they might

have life through His name. That there is inherent in them a self-evidencing power, is the testimony of a vast multitude who have been turned by it from unbelief to a triumphant faith; and their power to move in the direction of holy living, is attested by the whole host of the believers in every Christian age and country. I may be permitted to cite as an individual example of this, one of the most eminent men by whom the history of your own State of Missouri has been adorned. All of the older men in the audience remember Gen. A. W. Doniphan, a conspicuous officer in the Mexican war, an eminent lawyer, and for many years the leader of the Whig party in this State. Until he was about sixty years of age he was indifferent to all creeds, and he had never become a believer in Jesus Christ; but while in attendance on the circuit court away from home, he dropped into a church on the Lord's day to hear a sermon. As he stated afterward, in telling the story, there was nothing in the sermon to especially interest him, but he found his attention drawn to the manifest earnestness of the speaker, an earnestness and an air of sincerity which proved him to be a profound believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. As he reflected on this, the question came into his mind, if this plain man, with moderate intellectual powers, has found evidence to so thoroughly convince him of the claims of Jesus, may not the same evidence be within my reach also, and may I not be guilty of a serious neglect in not paying attention to it? The thought took possession of him, and he resolved, that on returning home he would take the New Testament in hand and examine it carefully, to see if it sets forth a case in favor of Jesus of Nazareth, which he as a lawyer, desiring to keep up his reputation as such, would undertake to defend in a court of justice. He did so; and he said that before he had gone through the

Gospel of Matthew he was forced to exclaim, "The case is a good one." Within a few weeks afterward he was baptized, and the remnant of his life was devoted to the service of God. He is but one of a countless host whose experiences have been in effect the same. How can this be accounted for? It is not true in the same way or to the same extent of any other book in the world. If the spirit of infinite wisdom is its responsible author, then it is easy to see that He who made the human soul and who, therefore, knows all of its secret springs, so guided the construction of this book as to adapt it to the soul for whose redemption it was intended, adapted it to the conviction and to the spiritual moulding of that soul: but who can suggest another cause of this wondrous fact? It is not in the nature of error, of superstition, or of falsehood, to work changes so beneficent in the characters of men; these are the product of truth alone; and herein is a final and conclusive evidence that the human authors of this sacred volume wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

I think that we may now draw the conclusion that, while the sacred writers preserve each his own native literary style, so that each may be clearly distinguished from every other, yet there are, belonging to them all, certain characteristics which set them off in a class by themselves, distinguishing their writings from those of all other men. They are characteristics which can be accounted for only by the fact that these books were written under the guidance and restraining power of the Spirit of God, acting directly upon their minds, and causing them to write as God himself willed that his book should be written. If this conclusion is correct, there is a good foundation on which to build a Christian Association of young men. Not only so, but there is broad and solid

ground on which to build the Church of the living God, an association of both young men and old, of every clime and kindred on the whole earth. I would advise the young men of this Association then to cling to their Bibles, and to so study the foundations on which the "Impregnable Rock of the Scripture" reposes, that no man shall be able to deceive them, but that they themselves may be teachers of others, and may do battle for the truth against every foe. If the "grand old man," who now bears the burden of State in the empire on which the sun never sets, has found time during the constant strain of a life of marvelous industry in other callings to make himself master of the Bible and of the evidences which support its claims, so that he dares to enter the field of debate with the ablest of its enemies, why should not some of you—why should not all of you—equip yourselves for upholding in your narrower sphere, against every antagonist whom you may meet, the book on which your Association depends for its existence, and on which you individually depend for that which you hold dearest and best? The intellectual training which is imparted to you in this well equipped seat of learning, supplemented by the spiritual culture for which you find opportunities both here and everywhere in our favored land, should make you heroes in the battle for truth and right; but remember that your most effective weapon will always be "the sword of the Spirit," which is the inspired word of God.

SERMON II.

SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT.

MORNING JUNE 11, 1893

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.”—(I. John, iii. 4.)

If there is a definition of sin in the Bible, we have it in the last clause of this verse: “Sin is the transgression of the law.” Of course, it means the transgression of God’s law. God’s law may be transgressed by thought, by feeling, by words, or by actions; for as we learn from other portions of the word of God, there are wicked thoughts, wicked feelings, wicked words, and wicked actions. This definition may not be exhaustive, but it is sufficient for our present purpose.

I wonder if any of us has ever realized what it is to commit sin. I believe that I would esteem above every other gift that could be bestowed upon me as a preacher, the power to adequately conceive what sin is, and to adequately set it before the people. A number of times in my ministrations, I have prepared sermons designed to set forth the enormity of sin; but I have every time felt that I made a failure. I found, I thought, two causes of the failure: first, a want of realization in my own soul of the enormity of it; and second, inability to gather up such words and such figures of speech, as would, with anything like adequacy, set it forth before my hearers. The pleasures of sin have blinded our eyes to its enormity. So I have come to the conclusion, after a great

deal of reflection, and a great deal of mental effort, that about the only correct gauge we have with which to measure the enormity or heinousness of sin, is the punishment that God has decreed against it. God is infinite in all His attributes; infinite in mercy, in love, in compassion; and when we find the punishment that such a God as that was constrained, by the justice that also characterizes him, to enact against sin, I think we shall be better able to form an idea of its enormity than we can from any other view of the matter. This is the reason why, in announcing the subject of the present discourse, I named it, "Sin and its Punishment."

It may be a question in the minds of some whether there is any punishment of sin, either in this world or the world to come. But there is one thing certain, that this world has been freighted, from its earliest history, with a vast burden of woe and pain and death. The journey of human life is strewn with tears; the whole earth on which we live has become dotted over with grave-yards. Death, preceded by incalculable pains of the body; the whole period of the life filled with interchanging smiles and tears; anguish of heart relieved by times of joy and happiness, have been our history. The word of God tells us that all this woe, pain, sin, sorrow and death, are the result of sin. It is a punishment that the infinite God, against whom we have sinned, has laid upon us in the present life. "By man, sin entered into the world," says the Apostle Paul, "and death by sin;" and all that train of evils which brings us down to the grave, is included. If a man deny the Bible doctrine on this subject of the source of all our woe, then call upon him to give an account of it—whence did it come? The fact that the Bible ascribes it to sin is no mean evidence that the Bible tells the truth; for it can

not be accounted for in any other conceivable way. So then, all of the pain and woe and misery and death that the human race has experienced since the days of Adam to the present time, are manifestations of God's wrath against sin, and of His estimate of the enormity of the act when a man deliberately violates the law of his Maker; and this, alone, ought to teach us a great horror for sin.

But the principal subject of the discourse is the punishment, if any, which is to be visited upon us on account of our sins in the future state. There can be no dispute about that which comes upon us now. Is there any punishment, suffering, misery, to be experienced in the future world on account of our sins? If reason were called upon to give an answer, without the aid of revelation, what would it be? I know of no way by which we could even approach a conjectural answer, except by judging of the future from what we know of the past. Go to the old man, who is trembling on the verge of the grave—has lived a long, eventful life—and ask him, Sir, judge of the future, if you are to have a future, by the past, and what can you expect it to be, the same God ruling over all? What would his answer be, unless it would be this—I have no reason to hope that it will be any better with me than it has been. On account of sin, I have suffered a great deal in this world. If the time ever comes that I shall be entirely free from sin, it may be that I shall be free from suffering; but, if my sins continue, I have no reason to doubt that my sorrow will continue in proportion. That would be the verdict of reason. But still, that would be a conjecture, and it could not furnish details as to the severity of the suffering that may be experienced hereafter, as to the nature of it, or as to the duration of it. All the details would be left

in the dark. So then, if our question is to be answered at all, it must be answered by revelation; for no man without divine aid can look into the future world and tell us what is there. No man who ever went into the future world has come back to reveal what he experienced there. Hence, we are dependent upon the revelation that God has given us of that world, for all that we can possibly know on this subject. To it then we turn, and the question we have before us, in order that it may be fully answered, divides itself into some four or five:—

First, Is there any punishment for the wicked after death?

Second, If there is, when does it begin?

Third, Is there a future, final and universal judgment, such as we have heard of?

Fourth, What is to follow in the way of punishment, if anything, after that universal judgment?

Fifth, and last, How long, if there is such punishment after the judgment day, will it continue?

I think, with these five questions answered, we will have the whole subject before us.

Is there then any punishment at all after death? Did you notice particularly some of the words which I read in our opening service from the 12th of Luke, where Jesus is addressing His own disciples, and says, "My friends, be not afraid of them who kill the body, but after that have nothing more that they can do." They can take your body and burn it and dismember it, but that does not hurt you. They have no more that they can do which inflicts any pain upon you. "But, I will forewarn you whom to fear. Fear Him, who after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." We will not attempt to say, as yet, what the meaning of that clause is—what is meant by being cast into hell. But, can

there be any mistake, my dear friends, when you read that passage, that there is something that God may do to a man after he is dead, called casting him into hell, which is worse than death? For the admonition is, do not be afraid of those who can kill you, and then can do nothing more: but, be afraid of Him, who after you are killed has power to cast into hell. Clearly, that is something worse than death, and which is to come after death. With this text alone our first question is answered, and answered by Him whose native home was that eternal world—Him who knew all things, and who had been appointed by the Father to be the Judge of the living and the dead; for He Himself hath said, “Henceforward, the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto his Son.” We are prepared then for the second question.

When does the suffering mentioned by our Lord in these few words begin?

From His own lips we will gather the answer. He once described, as you remember, the life, the death, and the future of two men; one, a rich man faring sumptuously every day, and clothed in purple and fine linen; the other, a beggar covered with sores, and brought and laid every day at the rich man’s gate to receive the crumbs that fell from his table—no companions but the dogs that licked his sores. He says that the beggar died and was carried by angels and placed in Abraham’s bosom. That is the death of a good man. He says that the rich man also died and was buried, and in hades he lifted up his eyes and saw Lazarus afar off in Abraham’s bosom, and begged, “Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” It began then with *him*, immediately after his death—just as soon as he died,

in hades. Hades, you know, is the place of departed spirits, where the spirits of men go when they leave the body, and where they remain until the resurrection. It is not an eternal state; it is temporary; it remains only till the final resurrection of all. There will be no hades after that, for there will be no more separation of the body and the soul. We learn then from this passage of Scripture, that the wicked, as soon as their spirits leave the body, enter into torment. That need not surprise us. When a wicked man, who knows his God, and knows his Savior, and knows his Bible, but has trampled them under his feet, when, in the possession of his mental powers he comes to the verge of the grave, he is miserable—he can not fail to be. How full of horror and self-reproach! If we had no Bible to tell us, what would be our conclusion in regard to that man? If his spirit is so racked with agony, and self-reproach, and misery, as he comes up to the moment of death, what is there to stop that pain and anguish and self-reproach when his soul has passed out of the body? That which the Savior tells is true, then, is that which we would naturally conclude must be true. But, as I said, this torment in hades, whatever it may be, is not eternal, for hades itself is to be destroyed. It is to come to an end when the soul is gathered out of that place and brought back into its body, raised from the dead. That will be the end of hades. This brings us then, to our third question.—

Is there, according to the word of God, beyond all uncertainties of interpretation, and all questions about the meaning of words, is there such a final judgment as we have heard and been taught to believe? Let me say that the word judgment is frequently used in the Bible, and on the lips of our Lord, with reference to matters that take place on this earth—for the decisions of the Divine mind

in regard to matters that are here transpiring; and from this fact, many people have imagined that this is the only meaning attached to the word. But the Apostle tells us in the 9th of Hebrews, that it is "appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment." In addition then to all the judgments of God that take place while men are living, there is a judgment *after* death, appointed to every man, which is just as universal and certain as death itself, if we can believe the plain and unmistakable language which I have just quoted. How long after death? We learn from the language of our Savior himself, that this final judgment is to take place after the resurrection from the dead. For, in familiar words, familiar to us all, He says, "The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it." "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it." The judgment then in which that generation shall arise is one in which the Queen of the South will come up; the people of Capernaum to whom Jesus spoke, will come up; the men of Ninevah will come up; and you and I will come up; for when *they* arise from the dead, according to the teachings of the Bible you and I will arise too. The same Lord has said, "The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth, they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation." In the third place, in regard to this judgment, we learn that it will be an universal one. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory and all nations shall be gathered before Him." (John, v. 28-29 and Mat. xxv. 31). Here is a uni-

versal gathering of angels and of men; and I presume under the word angels are included all the intelligent beings that God has created in all the worlds that occupy illimitable space. They are to assemble together with all the men that shall have been born up to the time that that judgment takes place. Oh! what a gathering that will be! When he comes in his glory thus, and all nations are gathered before Him, He will separate them, as a shepherd divides his sheep from his goats, placing the goats on his left hand, and the sheep on his right. I might quote other passages of Scripture, but brethren, God does not have to speak twice in order to tell the truth. Our Savior ought not to have to repeat anything twice, in order that you and I may believe what He says when he uses plain language. Our question is answered. There will be at the time of the universal resurrection of all the dead, both good and bad, an universal judgment, a final and everlasting judgment of every human being. The Apostle John was granted a vision of that awful scene. You will go to the World's Fair to see the great sights that will be presented there, but the vision that came before the eyes of John transcended it as far as the heavens are above the earth. He says, "I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat upon it, from whose face the heavens and earth fled away, because there was no room for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne, and the books were opened; and the dead were judged out of the things that are written in the books, according to their works. The sea gave up the dead that were in it; death and hades delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged, every one, according to his works." What a vision was that! The grandest sight that shall ever have been seen by mortal eyes until you and I, bye-and-bye, shall see in absolute

reality the things which John saw in a vision. It is that same final judgment that we have heard of since we were little children, and there is no doubt about its reality.

But now then, is there any punishment for sin after that? The men who died during all the long period of the world's history previous to that final resurrection, became miserable and went into misery, when they died. They have been brought up out of hades—soul and body re-united. They have been brought before the judgment seat, and now, what is the decision of the Judge? The same passage from which I last quoted declares that then shall the Judge say to them on His left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." That is after the judgment; that is the punishment which is to follow the judgment. Do you remember how that punishment is set forth in the Bible? Everlasting fire. A lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The most excruciating torture, I believe, that human flesh can experience, is to be burned with fire, and that represents this suffering after the judgment.

Again, turning the vision, and taking another view of this eternal punishment, the Saviour says: "They shall be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth." By outer darkness, I presume He means darkness outside of all light, far beyond the reach of the rays of the sun, the moon, or the stars; far beyond the reach of that light that shall shine in the city of the living God, going out from the throne of God in the eternal world. What is more horrible than to be forever in the dark, to have torment like that of fire burning you, and to hear no sound except the gnashing of teeth? Men gnash their teeth only when they are enraged against themselves, when they are tormented with anguish and

self-reproach. Such, then, is the answer to our fourth question.

Now, finally, how long will that punishment which comes after the judgment, and which is described in these horrid terms, endure? Christ stamps the word "eternal" upon it. He says, these shall go into eternal life; these into eternal punishment; and thus He measures the life of the one by the same word which measures the punishment of the other, the word eternal. There has been a great deal of disputation about the meaning of that word, because it is often applied by a figure of speech to things that do not exist forever; but in this passage there is no ambiguity. As sure as the life into which the saints are called is unending, eternal in the sense of never coming to an end, so sure is the punishment unending; for they are measured by the same word, *eternal* life, *eternal* punishment. I was once engaged in a discussion with a man who denied the reality of eternal punishment, and his proposition in the debate was this, that all men shall finally be eternally holy and happy. Or, rather, leaving out the word eternal, all men shall finally be holy and happy. I asked him in the beginning of that discussion to tell us how long we would remain holy and happy, if we became so—whether it would be two hours, or two years, or ten years, or just a few minutes—how long would it last; and he did not answer. I called on him again, and again, and again, every time he arose to speak, to tell us how long we could be holy and happy when we once became so—to give us some idea about it, some hope that it would last at least a little while. Not a word could I get from him on the subject. And the reason why he would not answer, as everybody saw, was that the very same word describes the life

that describes the punishment, and he would have to give up the position that he held. The word eternal sometimes is defined as meaning "*age lasting.*" And, as applied to this life, that would mean lasting as long as the age of a man from his birth to his death. Suppose that you understand it here to mean, that they shall go away into age-lasting punishment. How long would that be? How long, my dear friends, is an age after that time has come when no more human beings will ever be born, and no more will ever die—when all that exists, will exist world without end? How long is an age in that world, and what endurance is an age-lasting endurance? It certainly is endless. So, in whatever way you may look at the question, the punishment of the wicked after the day of judgment will endure as long as the life and blessedness of the righteous; and if we can believe the word of God, there is to be no end to either. Are you horrified at that thought? I think you certainly must be. Well, if you are, then how should you feel towards the sin which compels a God of love and mercy and infinite compassion to inflict such a punishment as that upon the sinner? What must sin be in the sight of the only being in this universe who is capable of appreciating it at its real enormity? And if sin be the horrible, the detestable thing that extorts from an infinite, merciful and gracious God such punishment as that, Oh! why should you and I be guilty of it? Why should mortal man ever gain his own consent to commit one single sin? And how amazing it is that men and women, who know of this, can consent to live in sin from day to day! Knowing that they have incurred this awful penalty; that if they were to die to-day, this would be their unending fate; how can they fail to reproach themselves for being sinners, and to fly away from it to

the only means of escape found in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Is there any one here this morning who has given his life thus far to this horrible crime against his own nature and against his God; who has been treasuring up for himself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? Oh! let me beg you to turn away from sin. Thanks be to His blessed name, however great the sins we have committed, however numerous they are, and however just the awful sentence that has been passed against us, there *is* a way of escape. There is peace in the blood of the Lamb. There is provided in divine mercy a way by which your souls can be cleansed from guilt, and you can escape eternal punishment. While we sing, I beg every one in the audience who has never done so, to come to Christ and be saved.

SERMON III.

SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT: OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

EVENING, JUNE 11, 1893.

I will read three verses from the 5th Chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians:—

“But of the times and of the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.” The apostle had been speaking of the second coming of the Lord and the resurrection of all the dead. “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.” I think this is a quotation of the Savior’s own words on the subject, and that this is the reason the brethren all knew it. “For when they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.” The prophets rebuked Israel of old for crying out peace, peace, when there was no peace; and one of the prophets declared, There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God. There is no doctrine of the Bible, having any conspicuity, that has not excited objections among men, and I presume there is no teaching of the Good Book which has called forth as many, and as vehement objections, as that which I endeavored to set before you in the morning discourse, the teaching concerning the future punishment of sin.

As I announced this morning, I propose to-night to discuss some of the leading objections which are commonly urged against that teaching. Many of these objections

are based upon passages of scripture: I will not enter into a discussion of these. I believe that I have examined every one of them after reading carefully the books written by men who deny the Bible teaching concerning future punishment, and I have not found a single one that did not carry with it a perversion of the text; and I will dispose of all that class of objections to-night, so far as you and I are concerned, by telling you, whenever you hear a passage of scripture quoted in disproof of the future and eternal punishment of the wicked, if you will turn to the passage and read a few verses before it, and a few after it, you will invariably find that the meaning of that passage has been mis-stated or mis-applied by the objector. Now you will do yourselves a service, and the truth a service, if you will follow that rule the rest of your life, when you hear discussions on this subject.

I prefer to-night to occupy our attention with objections which appear to have great force in them, and which are not so easily answered as those that are based upon "scrapping" the word of God; and first of all, it is claimed that such a doctrine as the future and everlasting punishment of sin is inconsistent with the goodness of God. That God is a good father, by which we mean that He is benevolent and kind and tender hearted towards all of his creatures, is a proposition not to be denied, but to be insisted upon and emphasized with all the powers that we can bring to bear for the purpose of impressing it upon the souls and the hearts of ungodly men. And if the teaching concerning the future punishment of the wicked which I set forth this morning, is God's teaching, it only shows that such is the unspeakable enormity of sin that it extorts from the most benevolent Father in this universe, precisely that kind of suffering and punishment; and it ought to heighten our conceptions of the

heniousness of sin, it seems to me, above everything else that we know about it.

But, is it inconsistent with the goodness of God to thus punish sin? I am very free to confess that if I had, as God has, almighty power and almighty wisdom, I can not for the life of me see that I would allow any human being to be plunged into a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, or to be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, even for one day or one hour. And, furthermore, I am free to confess that if I had the power to prevent it, I would not allow one single human being to ever shed a tear, to ever feel a pang of the body or the heart. I would never allow any more widows in this world, nor any more orphan children. I would not allow pestilence to walk abroad, nor death to waste. I would have no grave-yards in this world. It seems to me that I could not get my consent, with the view that I have and the feeling that I have of what is good and benevolent and kind, to allow any suffering at all among my fellowmen.

But what does all that prove in regard to God? It only proves that I would act differently from the way that God acts. It does not prove that God acts improperly or inconsistently. It only proves beyond all question of doubt that a human being invested with infinite power and wisdom, would manage this world very differently from the way that God manages it; for we know, the whole world knows, that if there is a benevolent, kind, and merciful God in Heaven, he *has* allowed all the suffering and pain and anguish that has made this world almost a charnel-house from the beginning to the present day, to go right on before his face. And all this, as was shown you this morning, is in consequence of man's sin against Him. He has done that. "He that is unjust in

that which is least," says the Saviour, "is unjust in that which is much;" and if the Almighty has had sufficient reasons to reconcile it with His infinite goodness and love, to allow the amount of suffering which has already taken place in the history of our race, to go on, who can say, who dares to say, that He may not be able to reconcile with His goodness and mercy and benevolence, that kind of pain and suffering on account of sin as long as the universe exists? I think we can very safely say, then, that there is nothing in that line of argumentation—that the facts in the case reverse the argument, rather than establish it.

In the next place, it has been very vehemently argued and insisted upon, that such punishment for sin would be unjust on the part of God, because the penalty would be far beyond the demerits of the sin for which it was inflicted. To inflict punishment such as is described in the Bible upon a human being, and that continuing without end, for the sins which he committed during the brief stay which he experienced here on earth, is out of all proportion, when viewed as a matter of justice. Justice demands that the penalty shall be proportioned to the crime. Well it does look that way; it undoubtedly does. No father would inflict that kind of punishment upon his son for any conceivable offense against the father, it is argued, and I believe that is true. I would hate to see the man that would. He would not be my friend. It would show not only a want of justice, but an audacious rebellion against all sense of the goodness and mercy and love, of which we have already spoken. But now then, whilst it does appear that way; and if I were the Judge I would not give that sentence; if I had the trial of the matter, I am sure that I would not allow that sentence to be passed; yet, who am I? Well, I am a sinner; and

who is to be the judge of the punishment that a sinner ought to get? The sinner himself? We do not argue that way in the affairs of the world, in our courts of justice, or in our family discipline. The little rebel who has risen up against his father's will stubbornly—is he ever set up to decide what punishment he deserves? The men who violate your laws in the city here every day, and take life in it, do you think they would be the proper men to put on your juries to try the crimes that they themselves have committed? Do you think it would be wise to select the law breakers as your law makers? You sometimes do that. You sometimes appoint men to make your laws in the city and in the State who are law-breakers continually, but you did not intend to do it, and you feel ashamed of yourselves because you have allowed them to get into those positions. What community that ever lived would, if a man were to be tried for murder, have a murderer on the bench, a jury made up of murderers, and the witnesses for the defense all murderers? Why, you know our laws do not allow a man that has ever killed another to sit on the jury in a murder trial. Our law-makers know better than that. And who, if he wished adequate laws for the punishment of gambling, would elect gamblers to the Legislature to pass the laws; or, if he were aiming to suppress theft and murder, would select a lot of thieves and murderers to make the laws and fix the penalties? Why, we are instinctively shocked at the idea of appointing men that are guilty of any particular sin or crime, either to make or to execute the laws in reference to it; and why? Because they necessarily have a strong bias in favor of the criminals, being themselves of the number. Well now, if that is true, who will select a sinner to decide the punishment that is just toward a sinner? Who will say that

the greatest minds among men, I care not how wise they may be in all other things, may pass judgment upon what Almighty God says shall be done with the sinner?

“No rogue e’er felt the halter draw
With good opinion of the law.”

And no rogue ever lived that would allow the halter to draw on rogues. Well, in honesty, my dear friends, as long as I am conscious that I am a sinner myself, I feel that honesty and candor and justice demand that I shall keep my mouth shut in regard to the demerit of sin and let my God settle that question for me. If it goes against me, I can not help it. He alone is the Judge. In order to have a fair and equitable decision as to what sin deserves, you must have it from some being who is totally separated from sin—who can stand off and look at it, and see it as it is. It may be that angels can do that; I do not know; but one thing is certain, God can, and He is the only being in this universe of whom we feel entirely certain that He can pass a dispassionate judgment upon the demerit of sin—the only being, therefore, competent to decide what shall be done with the impenitent sinner. We are, I think, bound as candid, as fair-minded and honest men, to say on this subject, “Lord, speak, Thy servant heareth.”

In the next place, it is claimed that such a punishment of sin is inconsistent with the *wisdom* of Almighty God, because it would involve the whole human creation that he has established in this world, in an awful failure. Why, it is claimed that if God had foreknown, before He made this race of ours, that such was going to be the result in regard to a very large portion of them, that surely He would have been too wise to have made the first human pair. And the argument goes on further to say, that if this doctrine of final punishment is

true, it will involve so vast a majority of the human race in eternal misery and wretchedness, that the saved will be but a very small portion of the whole, and thus the creation of man will prove to be a stupendous failure on the part of a God whom we supposed to be infinitely wise. Well that looks as if it might be so. All of these reasonings are extremely plausible; but let us look a little while at the facts in the case—some facts that are overlooked by the parties who argue thus.

Is it true that according to the teachings of the Bible, in their widest range, a vast majority of the human race are to be involved in everlasting punishment? I do not think it is. We are told by those who study the statistics of human life, that at least one-third of all the children that are born into this world die before they come to years of accountability. What becomes of them? They have committed no personal transgression, and whatever may be true with respect to hereditary depravity, certainly there is not one word said in the Bible about the eternal punishment of those who have not committed personal sins. Then, all that third that have been born up to the present time, are saved, and such will continue to be saved until the end of the world.

In the second place, although in all the ages past, close up to the time of Adam himself, a majority of the human race have lived in sin and died in sin, and, according to the teachings of Christ, can not go where He is, yet there has been a very large number redeemed by the blood of our Lord—a host so numerous that no man can count them. These are to be added to the one-third who die before personal transgressions have been committed.

In the next place, if we believe the prophecies contained in the Old Testament and the New, there is

coming a time in the history of men, when all the kingdoms of this earth shall be the kingdoms of God, and his Christ; when, if the world universally, to the last man and woman in it, will not be Christian, it will certainly approach that state of things; and when that time comes, if the world moves on increasing in population as it is increasing now, the number of living human beings on the earth will be manifold more than it ever has been in these preceding wicked ages, and it would require but a very few generations of the teeming population which will then fill the whole earth with the praises of God, to out-number all that have lived and died before. I do not believe God is going to allow this world to go on forever in the hands of the devil. And who can tell; who can tell, but what, of our fallen and unhappy race the number of those redeemed and saved and brought home into everlasting life, as the result of the working of that simple Gospel which we believe, shall be so vast that the number of the lost, great as it is, shall be insignificant in comparison?

Now then, what shall we say of the wisdom of God in this matter? Is it still insisted that an infinitely wise God would not allow the creation and history of a race that would involve the everlasting woe and despair of any? The answer is, that God *has* made us. He has taken the responsibility to do it, and the presumption is that in foreseeing the final result He saw that, notwithstanding the fact that some would be forever lost and doomed to eternal woe, the good accomplished for the race, and for other races in His universe, would infinitely surmount and overbalance the evil; and if this be true, it is a ground on which God might wisely and justly proceed as He did. I believe that God has good and infinitely wise reasons for every-

thing that He does, and I believe the day is coming when you and I will have information enough, will have mental capacity enough, to see that wisdom. I think we are yet like little children; and where is the little four-year-old boy or girl who is able to appreciate the wisdom of many things that the father does, or the justice of them? They will bye-and-bye; bye-and-bye they will thank you for that which makes them weep now. They will see your wisdom and goodness to them in that which makes them now rebel against you; and when they come to be fathers and mothers, they will practice the same thing which they once thought was very unwise and very unkind. We are all but little children compared with God. Ah! my friends, the difference between the capacity to understand what is right and wise and just, of a four-year-old child, and that of his cultivated father and mother, is insignificant compared with the difference between the ability of the wisest man that ever lived on this earth, to understand what is wise and just and good in the universal Ruler of men and angels, and that of God himself.

But then, there is still another objection to this Scripture doctrine, which I believe has more weight with the people; strikes with greater force every mind that hears it; and weighs more heavily upon every heart, than all of these others combined; and that is this: A man says, "If I should be so fortunate as to get to heaven, and know that my wife or my children are weltering in such a hell as the Bible describes, heaven would be a hell to me." I heard a man once say in a discussion I held with him, "I would have to be turned into a fiend before I could dwell in heaven and be happy, while my friends and my family were in hell;" and the man seemed to feel what he said, and the audience, when

he said it, seemed to sympathize with him—it thrilled that audience. Have you never felt the same feeling, and thought the same thought? Well, I answered the gentleman about thus: The time was, that the Lord Jesus, the Son of the living God, was here on earth, a man like us, with all the human sympathies and tender feelings that belonged to the tenderest of human hearts; and while He was here, He stood with the weeping women who had come out to comfort Mary and Martha, and Mary fell at His feet and said, “Oh, Master, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Jesus groaned within himself, and wept. Those were tears of sympathy. He was not weeping because Lazarus was dead, for He knew he was soon to arise from the dead. He had stayed away two days to let him die. It was all plain in His mind. The only way you can account for his tears, and the heaving of His breast, and the deep groans within Him, is by pure sympathy. He wept because they were so distressed; and moved by that, He went to the grave, and said, “Lazarus, come forth;” and he stood alive again. Those tears were all dried up. That is the way He felt, and when He stood on the Mount of Olives the last time He was approaching the City of the Great King, and looked down upon it, as it spread out like a map or a book in your hand before him; we are told that he wept again. And why? He says, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy

visitation." He wept over their misery, and wretchedness, and ruin, though they were yet thirty or forty years off. But Christ died, as we have to die. He went down into the ground, and arose again, and went up to Heaven; and now, every day He looks down upon thousands of Marys and Marthas weeping at their brothers' tombs; He looks down every day upon myriads of widows and orphans with their hearts crushed; and upon wretchedness, woe and pain, such that if you or I were placed where we could see it all at once, I do not believe we could live. But Jesus does not groan up in Heaven. Jesus does not shed any tears up there. Has He turned into a fiend since He left this world? To ask that question, is to answer it. We may not be able to explain how it is that this tender, compassionate, loving, weeping friend can now sit on the throne of God in Heaven and look down with infinite complacency upon that which once racked His soul with pain, and filled His eyes with tears, but that change has gone over Him, unquestionably it has, and if you and I follow Him, obedient to His will, and die and are buried, and are raised again, and taken up there to His own right hand, as He assures us we shall be, will He not enable us to look upon the same class of events with the same infinite composure and peace of mind? These men and this reasoning that I speak of, are to be answered just as Christ answered the Sadducees when they presented to Him the case of a woman who had been married to seven different men—legally married to them; and these seven men, brothers in the flesh. The Sadducees thought this a demonstration that there could not be a resurrection from the dead and a future state; and after stating the case, they said, "Master, whose wife shall she be of the seven?" If there shall be a resurrection of the dead, will there

not inevitably be cases of strife and conflict between brothers in the flesh? For how can men endure to share the affection of one woman between seven? It is impossible here on earth; they thought it would be impossible in heaven. Do you know what Jesus said to them? "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." Because the Scriptures teach the doctrine of a resurrection, that ought to be enough for you; and ye err, "not knowing the power of God;" for "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." All of those affections that grow out of the married state here on earth, will be gone; and how strange that is! The holiest and tenderest ties that bind human beings together are those between a true husband and a true wife. While we live here on earth these family ties are absolutely necessary to our welfare. When we go up there, they will be of no use to us, and hence they are gone. Just so, while I am living here on earth, the thought that one of my children may go to hell ought to make me pray morning, noon and night, and work and talk with them, and get them to come to Christ and to live for Christ and be saved; that is the reason that this feeling is in me. Have I a wife who is not a Christian? The fear of her being involved in the fate of the wicked ought to make me wretched every day until she comes to be saved; and if a woman has a husband who is living in sin, and exposed to the fate depicted in the Bible for those who die in sin, she ought not to let her head rest upon her pillow a single night in perfect ease, until that husband's soul is saved. But when it is all over, when the judgment has been passed through, when every human being's fate is settled forever, and these feelings can do no more good, then, like the other things just mentioned, they will pass away, and we will be like the angels.

Angels are hovering around us. Do not think of that now as a nursery story. Angels are hovering over us. The Apostle says they are all sent forth to be ministering spirits to them that shall be the heirs of salvation. We do not hear their wings or see their forms, but they are here, and the other night when you were so unhappy and miserable, do you suppose that the angels who guarded your bed wept for you? We are told that they are happy beings. They are sympathetic beings, full of tenderest care and regard for all of us, and when they are started out on missions of mercy or love, they come on glad wings to minister to our wants; but there is something about those angels that keeps them happy notwithstanding the miseries of those for whom they are ministering. Oh! my brethren, Heaven has a balm for every wound; for every pain; for every sorrow. It cures every ill to which human hearts can be exposed, and by some strange power that the Almighty alone can exercise, or has wisdom to devise, your souls shall be free from care. In reality, this that I have just told you is a great deal the most incredible thing in the Bible. You come to me when I am getting old, and I have never—I can't recollect the day or the night of all my past life when I have not had some pain of the body, or some uneasiness, or uncertainty of the soul, some unpleasant remembrance and some timidity of apprehension—you come to me, when I am about finishing up such a life as that, and say, Old man, you will leave this world in a few days, and then you will go away to a place where you will never have the slightest unpleasant remembrance of anything that ever took place, and you will not forget anything either. Even your sins and your shameful deeds will not cause the slightest disturbance of your perfect peace of mind up there. Why, old man, you will never shed another

tear, nor feel like it. You will never experience in all your frame the slightest uneasiness, much less pain; and you will not think of anything, future, past or present, that will cause the slightest fear." You tell me that? If ten thousand men were to tell it to me, I could not believe it. Why, really, when I try to imagine myself in that condition I can not do it. It is beyond the utmost reach of my imagination; and why do I believe it? There is only one reason on earth why I can believe it, and ought to believe it, and that is, because God says it; that is all. It would be incredible, otherwise.

And why ought, why does anybody believe that part of the Bible? You do not have to argue with men and persuade and convince them by long continued effort, to make them believe that part of it. Why? Oh! that is an easy thing to believe. You can very easily believe God with respect to that which gratifies you; with respect to peaceful rest and joy and blessedness, in this world, or the world to come. But now, when God says that other about the fate of the wicked, why don't we believe that? Bob Ingersoll said in one of his lectures that the most infamous passage in the whole Bible is that in the 16th of Mark, which says, "He that believeth not, shall be damned;" and he says that Jesus of Nazareth, that good man, never could have said such a thing, although it did come from his lips after he had risen from the dead. And why does Bob think it such an infamous thing? Because he knows he is lost if that is true. And the reason it is hard for us to believe about the fate of the wicked in the eternal world, is because we are wicked; our friends are wicked, and we are wicked, and that is the only reason. But, brethren, it is time for us to make up our minds to take things as they are—and to take the Almighty God according to his word, and to deal with Him like honest men—

to deal with Him as creatures ought to deal with their Maker. We ought to say, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." As I said this morning, if I had the power to make men realize what sin is, there would not be many sinners left after I had preached to them a few times. Every one of them would quit it. But I can not do that. As I said, I can not realize, as I feel I ought to, the enormity of sin myself; and of course I can not make others feel it. If we could only realize what it is to sin against God, we would never sin another time. Measure it by the solemn facts set forth this morning, that when a man dies in his sins, he immediately goes into torment; that when he rises from the dead he will be sent into torment beyond the judgment, which is excruciating beyond all imagination, and is to endure it world without sin, and try to estimate it that way yourself.

And now, is there any sinner here to-night? Yes, the house is full of them. I pray you in God's name, and for the sake of your own souls, quit those sins, whether great or small. Humble yourselves before the feet of God every night, and plead with Him so that your sins may be forgiven. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant, of which I shall speak hereafter as a remedy for our sins, you know they can be forgiven; let your last breath on this earth be a prayer to forgive your last sin, and go into His presence with none charged against you.

Is there any one here to-night who is not a Christian, who has lived in sin up to this hour, and whose every single sin, great and small, is still before the eyes of God in the book that He keeps? Oh! I beg you to fly away from those sins now; to curse and stamp them under your feet, and hate them, and love the Lord who proposes now, after all that has been done, to forgive all, if you will come to Him in Jesus' name. You know the way.

I beg you, for the sake of your own soul; for the sake of the eternity of which we have spoken, to come and confess Christ now, that you may be among the redeemed, the blessed, and the happy, in the Great Day.

SERMON IV.

REDEMPTION IN CHRIST.

MORNING, JUNE 18, 1893.

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.”—(Eph. i. 7, 8).

I announced, last Lord’s day, that in continuation of the connected series of discourses, my subject this morning would be Redemption from Sin, in Christ Jesus.

As sins are acts performed in the past, they can not be undone. A man may as well attempt to snatch the sun out of the sky, as to undo a single act, good or bad, that he has ever done. And, inasmuch as suffering is the inevitable consequence of sin, it is a most serious question how it is possible for men ever to escape the penalty due to their sins. I presume that this is the most serious problem ever considered by the minds of created beings, and perhaps by the mind of God, if God stops to consider any question.

Men commit crimes against human law, and escape the punishment by outrunning the sheriff, by bribing the jury, by breaking jail; by a great variety of corrupt methods, which they employ. But there is no similar way of escaping the penalties that are assessed against our sins by God. We can not run away from Him. A part of that penalty is within our souls, and we can not run away from ourselves. We can not deceive anybody

in this matter, because the eye of Him against whom we have sinned searches us through and through. Death is a very swift messenger when he starts after us, and when God calls on the Great Day we shall all appear before Him in judgment. How then, can we escape that eternal penalty for our sins, which was the subject of the two discourses last Lord's day.

Some men give very flippant and shallow answers to these questions. Why, they say, God educates us out of sin; brings to bear moralizing and elevating influences upon us through the Gospel, by which we are educated into a better and higher life, and learn to live without sin. There is no doubt that the Gospel exercises a training and educating and elevating influence upon all who are subject to it. But, suppose it were true that it educates a man entirely out of his sins, so that he lives the rest of his life pure; what has become of those sins? They are there yet, written against him. What has become of the stains of guilt within his soul, caused by those sins? They are there. And what has become of the penalty that God has pronounced against sin? Yonder it is, still waiting for us. If a man has been a thief through ten or fifteen years of his life, and under good influence is educated out of stealing, when the grand jury gets evidence of some of those thefts, will they spare him because he has quit stealing? If a man has murdered two or three men, ten or fifteen years ago, but has now quit killing people, when the evidence of those murders come to light, will the laws of the land allow him to escape the penalty because he has not killed anybody recently? To ask these questions is to answer them, and to answer them in the affirmative would be a shock to the moral sensibilities of every human being. Well, how then must it be, in the infinite,

just, and righteous judgment of God? If a man is educated out of his sins, they are there still written against him, and there is the eternal penalty still awaiting him.

Other men answer this question flippantly, by saying, Well, God can forgive our sins unconditionally, just as a father forgives his children; just as the father of the prodigal son, when he saw the boy coming home, ran out to meet him, and did not want even to hear the speech he had to make, in which he confessed himself unfit to be called a son, and wanted to be a hired servant. He forgave him at once; and why can not God do the same without any conditions at all? A man asked me that once; and I responded, "Yes, the prodigal son's father did forgive him, but it created a disturbance and a strife in his own family. His own elder son could not see that it was right. He blamed his father for it to his face. That older son acted an ugly part, but who can say that he was censurable for thinking that the father had been too lenient to the boy who had wasted his substance in riotous living and in all kinds of iniquity, and over whose return he was now having a rejoicing in the house?" If God were to act thus, and have a large portion of His subjects rebelling against Him in the way that this older son rebelled against his father, what confusion there would be in His government.

One of the most serious things in any government is the question of pardon. How many times have you, who are older people in this audience, known the governor of our State to pardon a man out of the penitentiary, or to pardon a murderer condemned to the gallows, when you are satisfied it did good? Nearly always, when such a pardon is issued in our States, the people who are outside the circle of the immediate friends and acquaintances of the guilty man, feel that justice has been outraged—that an

act has been performed by the Executive tending to the encouragement of crime. And it is because of such things as this in the administration of our government, that mobs so often rise up to put to death the murderer, for fear he will not get justice if he goes into the hands of the law. Now we can not believe that the infinitely wise God, in governing this universe, would extend pardon to any sinner, be he man or angel, in such a way as would encourage any other portion of His creatures in sin. He could not do, from the very nature of His divine being, anything that would encourage others to commit sin. An indiscriminate pardon, then, of all sinners, or of any sinners, under such circumstances as would lead to an encouragement of other people to continue in sin, or of the pardoned man to renew his sin, would be no wise divine government of this universe. How then is the problem solved, of so extending mercy to men who deserve everlasting punishment on account of the enormity of their sins—of extending mercy in such a way, that while these men are relieved entirely from all of the consequences, no other man is encouraged to commit sin?

This is the grand problem of redemption. The Scriptures give a very different answer from those that I have been speaking of. It is said, "God so loved the world," sinful as it was, "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish," as he deserves to perish, "but should have everlasting life." And when that text says God gave His only Son for this purpose, it does not mean, He sent Him from heaven to earth merely, but, He gave Him up to die. That is the giving referred to. The same great thought is expressed in a somewhat different way in the text that I have read. "In Him we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our

sins." Right here is the key-note of the whole scheme of redemption from eternal ruin and destruction—the forgiveness of sins. This can be obtained, this text declares, in Christ. Through His blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. Let me say here, my dear brethren, that if you were to study a thousand years, you would not study out any way by which you could believe that God *could* release us from the penalty of our sins, except by forgiveness. If they are forgiven, we will not be punished. If they are unforgiven, there is no escape from the punishment. So that forgiveness is the one thing that sinners need. The Saviour Himself expressed the same great thought, when at the Lord's Supper He took the cup of wine, and said to them, "Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood, shed for many"—what for?—for what one thing was the blood of Christ shed? Just one: "for the remission of sins." In His blood, then, and through and by His blood shed—in other words, by His death—we are to obtain redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. The Apostle Paul says furthermore, carrying out the same line of thought, that God has set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, in order that he might be just in justifying him who has faith in Jesus, (Rom. iii. 25, 26), implying that God found no way to be just, and at the same time to justify the sinner, (and to justify the sinner means to allow him to escape the punishment of his sins), except by sending forth His Son to be a propitiatory sacrifice for those sins. You all know very well that this is the doctrine of the Bible. You can not have read in vain so far as this great truth is concerned.

But now, without expatiating upon these texts, the question arises in the human mind, and it has puzzled the brain of many a thoughtful man, How can this be

explained? On what principle is it that God, on account, or in consequence of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, may extend pardon to guilty sinners, when He could not have done it otherwise?

Some men have very shallow answers to this question. They say, Christ died as a martyr dies—showed Himself a true martyr to God and truth and right—and by this means, by the power of a noble example, He takes hold on the consciences of men and lifts them to a higher life. Well, there is an unspeakable power in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ; but suppose this were all; then, as I said awhile ago, what becomes of sins? There they stand; there they are, unforgiven. There they are as realities in the past. Unless there is forgiveness, there is punishment still awaiting us. This idea contradicts both the passages that I have quoted. In another place Paul says that Christ's death was for the redemption of those sins that were committed under the first covenant, (Heb. ix. 15); and this shows that His blood made an atonement for the sins of men that were committed thousands of years before He died. It was not because His death had an effect on those men to lift their minds and hearts up above sin. They lived and died without ever having heard of His death. It shows that the explanation of which we are speaking is totally inadequate—far short of the reality—and contrary to the statements of the Bible.

Another explanation has been given, and it has been accepted by thousands of devout and earnest men. It is this: That Christ, in His death, actually paid the penalty that was due to the sins of the whole world. The Universalist starts out with this proposition, and draws from it his conclusion that therefore all the world will be saved. Undoubtedly, Christ tasted death for every man. If

then, in tasting death for every man, He paid the penalty due to the sins of every man, a just God can not exact the penalty a second time, and therefore all men will escape. The Calvinist, the very opposite of the Universalian, says, Yes, the principle is true, but He paid the penalty only for the elect, and therefore God will not exact the penalty a second time from them. The elect will all be saved, because Christ suffered in their stead and paid the full penalty for their sins. Now, while these are two extremes, the one starting out to save the elect, and the other to save all men, and yet starting from the same assumption, it requires only a very little thought to see that they are both wrong. What is the penalty due to sin? As set forth in the texts quoted in the argument presented last Lord's day, it is everlasting punishment. Did Christ suffer everlasting punishment on the cross? Again, an essential element in the punishment due to sin, is remorse of conscience. Did Christ suffer remorse—torture within his conscience? We have only to ask these questions in order to have them answered, and to know that Christ did not suffer the penalty due to our sins, either in the nature of it, or in the duration of it. Furthermore, if this explanation were true, what would become of God's mercy, of which we read so much in the Bible? If a man owes me a debt, and a friend of his comes up and pays me the last cent of it, and I hand up his note, have I exhibited any mercy toward him? What becomes, if either of these doctrines be true, of the idea of forgiveness? If God laid the penalty of all the sins of the whole world upon Jesus Christ, and let men go because the penalty has been paid, has he forgiven any sins? No more than I could be said to forgive a debt because I yield up the note of the broken man when his friend has paid me the

last cent of it. Starting out, then, to show the mercy of God by showing that He saves all men, that doctrine takes all mercy out of the Bible, and out of God's dealings with the race. Or, if you take it that he saves by His mercy the elect, there is no salvation or mercy in it, because He exacted the very last amount of suffering due for their sins from Him who was the substitute. This explanation, then, can not satisfy, it seems to me, any man who looks at it without bias—with the fair judgment with which we look at other questions. It is not taught in the Bible.

What is, then, the explanation? Well, I don't know. I don't know. I don't believe any other man knows what the reasoning of God was on this subject, by which he felt compelled, according to His own infinite nature, to refuse to pardon a single sin except through the blood of His Son. I don't know. I don't know how many sermons I have heard, trying to explain it. I don't know how many pages—heavy pages—in many books, I have read, from some of the ablest men in the world, trying to set it forth; but I have never yet been able to see it; and if any of you have, I congratulate you.

God's thoughts are not as our thoughts on many things. His ways are far above our ways, as heaven above the earth, and we may not expect to understand the reasons in His mind for the wondrous works of His prudence and mercy. I think, on all such themes, we are prone to look at the subject from the wrong point of view. We try to get at God's ideas about it. It is enough for us to see the part which addresses itself to man. There are multitudes of things that God does in nature, and in the providence that He exercises over the world, the divine reasons for which it is utterly impossible for any human mind to penetrate; but it is not difficult, generally, when we look at these same inscrutable workings

and ways of providence, to see their effects, and to know by their effects that there is wisdom and prudence, as the apostle says in my text, behind them all.

Let us look then at the effect of God's setting forth before angels and men, this great scheme of redemption through the blood of His Son, and of his declaring that this is what enables Him to justify men in the forgiveness of their sins. Has it had the effect which pardon so often has in this world, of encouraging the subjects of law to commit sin? If so, then we would not be able to see in it any wisdom. But has it had such an effect? Do you know the effect that this wondrous work of God has had upon the minds of angels in Heaven? Why, it has inspired the sweetest song that they ever sang, instead of raising a feeling of rebellion. John heard that song, and he says, "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne; and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing." (Rev. vi. 11-14). That is the view which the angels take of it. When from those lofty heights you look down upon the effect which it has among men, and find the men who have accepted in their hearts with profoundest faith that their redemption is through the blood of Christ, they are the men who are farthest removed from sin of all that dwell upon the earth. It has not encouraged them to commit sin, or given them any feeling of license against God. And then, when you inquire, what is it, of all the things that have ever been said in the pulpit, or been read in the New Testament, which has had the greatest power to turn sinners away from their sins, and bring them to God, to holiness and to righteousness, you find that it is the

fact of redemption in the blood of Christ. The power of God to turn the hearts of men away from sin, and unto holiness, is embodied in that fact. The preaching of the Christ, says Paul, is to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling block; but to us that are saved, "the power of God and the wisdom of God." (I. Cor. i. 23-24). And yet, I suppose that Paul was no more able to look in and see how God's mind worked out the problem, than you or I; for he never told us. We see by its effects that it must be wise; that it is wise; that it is good, that it is the greatest display of the wisdom and mercy of the living God that the world has known anything about, or that angels have ever seen—and that is enough for you and me.

Let me say, my dear brethren and sisters, that this redemption in Christ, goes even further than I have yet intimated. It not only enables God, when we come to Christ in His appointed way, to forgive our sins, blotting out all the past, to take away the threatened penalty and grant unto us everlasting bliss and peace of mind; and, what is strangest of all, to take out of our hearts all remorse on account of the many sins we have committed; but it goes beyond that. For we are told that the whole creation travails and groans in pain, until this hour, and we ourselves, who have received the first fruits of the spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting, because there is something yet in the future that we have not obtained. What is that? "Waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of the body." (Rom. viii. 18-23). The body is to be redeemed as well as the soul, in Christ, and by His precious blood—by His death for us. The redemption of the body from the corruption of the grave. It is sown in corruption; it is to be raised in incorruption. It is sown a weak body; it is to be raised a strong body. (I. Cor. xv. 42-44). It is to be raised in the likeness of Him who

will descend from Heaven in glory; for when He comes, we shall be like Him, and we shall see Him as He is. (I. John, iii. 2). You and I do not know how much value there is in that. Sometimes we depreciate our bodies. Be careful how you do that, my dear friends. When God created Adam from the dust of the earth, He made him in some mysterious way in the image of God; and if Christ died to redeem our souls, he also died to redeem our bodies. Our souls will not live any longer in eternity than our raised and glorified bodies will. They will be united together never to be separated. I do not know anything in the Bible to teach me that God thinks any less of my body than he does of my soul. Brethren, take care of your bodies. They are the temples of the living God. Do not abuse them; do not use them for vile purposes. Preserve the health and strength of your body as long as you can, for God regards it as a precious thing; and when it is laid in the grave, although it shall become food for worms, not one particle of it shall ever be lost sight of by His divine eyes. It can not be lost, but will be raised again in glory on the Great Day; and then in a body that can never know any pain, shall dwell the soul that can no longer feel remorse on account of sin, or fear of anything in all eternity to come. The creation that is now travailing and groaning and waiting, will that day be seen in a revelation of God's power and wisdom more glorious than has ever been witnessed in this universe of which we form so small a part. This is the redemption that is in Christ.

And now, in conclusion, I want to ask one question, and impress it as deeply as I am able, upon every soul in this house.

If sin is of such a nature that God Himself, with all His infinite wisdom, and all His undying love toward our race, could find no way to redeem us from it, without the

shedding of the blood of his own dear Son, the heart's blood of Him who came down from Heaven to endure the ignominious death of the cross for this great end, what an awful thing sin must be! Just think of it. And let me ask you another question in connection with this. Was the evil consequence which God foresaw that sin would bring upon us, some little thing, like a scratch upon your hand? Was sin a mere peccadillo? Was it a mere mistake that could bring but little pain upon us? Would the Almighty send His own Son to suffer the agonies of the cross in order to redeem us from a little thing like that? Ah! my dear friends, it is only when we know what we endeavored to show you last Lord's day, the darkness, the gloom, the gnashing of teeth, the awful agonies of the eternal world to which sin is bearing us, that we can realize why it should cost such a price, and why God should be willing to pay such a price, to redeem us from it. Are you living in sin? Oh! tremble before your God; get down on your knees; lift up your hands and your heart, and plead with Him to have mercy on you; smite your breast, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Cast yourself into the arms of this Redeemer who is so ready and so anxious to redeem you—to blot out your transgressions, and to grant you everlasting life.

Is there a poor, guilty soul here this morning who does thus repent; who does thus tremble; who desires to leap into the arms of the Savior and escape eternal ruin and destruction? We beg you, in Jesus' name, while we sing this song—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."—

we beg you to come and cast yourselves into the deep flood of the Savior's dying love.

SERMON V.

THE REMISSION OF SINS.

EVENING JUNE 18, 1893.

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”—(Matt. xxvi. 28).

If the purpose of shedding the blood of Christ was to obtain the remission of sins for men, how important that blessing! There is only one thing that can stand between man and his God, only one thing that can keep a man out of heaven, and that is sin. There is only one way, as we attempted to show this morning, by which we can get rid of sin, and that is by the forgiveness of it. And consequently, he who dies with his sins forgiven, is admitted into heaven—its gates stand wide open to him. On the other hand, the Savior says to certain men, “Ye shall die in your sins, and where I go ye can not come.” To die in sin is to die with sins unforgiven. But the expression here used, is “the remission of sins.” What does this mean?

I believe that there are a great many people who have a serious misconception of what is meant by the remission of sins. They have come to identify remission of sins with a change of heart. They think that it is a change which takes place within the soul, in which the love of sin is taken away, and the love of God and of righteousness and truth, takes the place of it. Now, there is such a change as that in the heart of every one who becomes a Christian. The love of sin must be totally eradicated,

and the love of God must take its place. The desire, the great and earnest longing, for a holy life and full communion with God and everything that is good, must take possession of the soul when a man becomes a Christian. But let me say that this change takes place in repentance.

It is repentance that involves a change of our hearts, a turning away from sin, and a repudiation of it by the force and strength of our will—a longing after everything that is good and true in Christ and God. That is repentance. And you have read your New Testament to very little purpose, if you have not long ago learned that repentance precedes the remission of sins. We are told that John the Baptist came in the wilderness preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; or, the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins, as in the revised version. That shows that repentance precedes remission of sins. The Savior Himself says that repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in His name among all nations, and the Apostle Peter exhorted the people in the great discourse in the third of Acts, saying, "Repent and turn, that your sins may be blotted out." So, it is clear as day that this change called the remission of sins, does not take place in repentance, but follows it, and that the change of heart required in order that we may be saved, does take place when we repent. Nothing could make it plainer that it is a great mistake to suppose that remission of sins is an inward change of the soul of man.

The same word in the Greek is translated *remission* that is translated *forgiveness*. The two English words, remission, and forgiveness, are used interchangeably, and they mean the same thing. So then, if you are ever again in any confusion of thought about that

somewhat unusual expression, remission of sins, remember that it means precisely the same as forgiveness of sins.

Now forgiveness is one of those simple English words, the meaning of which is so obvious to every person that it is hard to give a definition of it. The definition would not make it any plainer. Everybody knows what it is to forgive, although we practice it so little. Everybody knows what forgiveness is. We extend it sometimes to one another—not as often as we should. That is remission. The only difference between the two words is, that in the word remission there is a figure of speech. Literally, to remit means to throw back, or throw away, and it is used simply because, when God forgives our sins, He is contemplated as throwing them away, tossing them clear off, outside of all subsequent thought or concern in regard to them.

There is another expression used in the Scripture for the same thought, which is also figurative. I quoted it awhile ago. "Repent and turn," says Peter, "that your sins may be *blotted out*." They are contemplated in that expression as having been written down in some book, of God's remembrance as it were, and God in forgiving them is figuratively represented as blotting out that writing. And blotting out with the ancients was a little more complete than it is, usually, with us. When we write something down with ink, and blot it out, there still remain some marks to indicate that once there was a writing there. If you write on a slate and rub it out, some marks are often left. The ancients used a wax tablet. You take one of our common slates and fill it with wax even with the frame, and you will have an ancient wax tablet. A sharp pointed instrument made the marks in the wax, and when they wished to blot it out, they turned

the flat end of the stylus and rubbed it over, and there was an absolute erasure of every mark that had been made. That is the figure, then, used by Peter for the forgiveness of sins—indicating that when God forgives sins, they are not only thrown away, as in the expression remission, but they are blotted out—the last trace of them being gone, and gone forever.

In perfect harmony with this last thought, another expression is used. One of the terms of the new covenant that God makes with Israel in these days under Christ, is this, “their sins and their iniquities, I will remember no more” (Heb. viii. 6-13). That is a very surprising, an astonishing statement. I do not know how God makes out to forget them. *We* can’t forget them: I don’t know how He does. I don’t know exactly what He means when He says, “their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more;” unless it means, I will never bring them up against you any more. They are gone. I have thrown them away; they are blotted out. Brethren, after having lived and groaned under sin, with a conscience that has ground us and tormented us for a long time, how blessed the relief—how unspeakably blissful the state, to know that they are blotted out—that they are thrown away—that they will never be brought up by the great God against us in all eternity—that in the day of judgment no mention will be made of them! That is the happy condition of the man who is redeemed by the blood of Christ, and has obtained the remission of sins.

And now, you have already seen from what I have said in explaining these expressions, not only that the change called remission of sins is not a change that takes place within us, but that it is an act of the mind of God with reference to us. He it is who forgives. He it is

who blots the record out of the book that He keeps. He it is that throws them away. It is He who will remember them no more forever. The whole process of the remission of sins, is an act in the mind of God with reference to us. It is not at all a change within us. The change that takes place within us must precede it. All the change necessary for our salvation from sin, as regards our own hearts and souls, must take place before He pronounces our freedom from sin. Thus then we dispose of the question as to what remission of sins is.

Now we raise another: How are we to know, beyond any doubt, so as to feel safe and settled in it, that our sins are forgiven? that we are redeemed and delivered and blessed in this unspeakably glorious and blissful way?

This is a very important question. Thousands and thousands of people live today, and have lived in ages past, serving God with all earnestness of soul, who have never in all their lives come to be satisfied on this question. They sing all through their Christian experience :

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

That is a very doleful life to live. Uncertain, unsettled, in regard to the most momentous question that can affect your souls for time or for eternity. I feel quite sure the Lord did not intend us to live on that low ground of doubt, and gloom, and hopelessness. I am sure that there must be a way by which we may know that our sins are forgiven, and may know when it is done.

But this question is answered very often by men in this fashion: I know the very hour and the very minute

when my sins were forgiven, for I felt it all through my soul, and all the world could not convince me to the contrary. You see there is a great disparity between the experiences of men. Some never get over their doubts, and some leap over them with one glorious bound, and shout "Halleluiah!" So, they know it by the way they feel. They felt it when it took place. They felt the sins rolled off. They felt light and joy coming in like a blaze from heaven, and they were full of bliss and glory and praise. They could not contain themselves without a shout. I wonder if that is true. I wonder if that is the way that we are to know that our sins are forgiven. If it is, what a vast multitude of people who never find it out!

Now one thing is certain about this—that every man, in his right senses, knows what takes place in his own soul. He knows it by the power we call consciousness, a power given to every rational being, by which he takes knowledge of every action or change that takes place within himself. So, if the forgiveness of sins is a change that takes place within the sinner, of course he knows it by feeling it. But we have just now seen that it is not any such thing; that it is an act of God, and that it takes place in heaven, not within the sinner's heart. Then he can not know it by what he feels. He can not know it by consciousness. Impossible that he should know it thus. The only way by which I can know whether my neighbor, whom I have offended, has forgiven me, is—how? By feeling he has forgiven me? You find a little child that has sneaked off into the corner, and sat down there, and has been crying and crying bitterly, until finally it wipes its tears, gets up and goes to play. You say, "My child, what were you crying about?" "Because I offended mother." "Well, why

did you quit? Why are you playing and cheerful now? Why did you wipe all your tears away?" "Because mother has forgiven me." "Well, how do you know?" "Why, I feel it right here." There is no child in Louisville that is as silly as that. She might say, "Because mamma came and kissed me;" or, "Because mamma spoke kindly to me;" or, "Because mamma said, 'My child, I am sorry I hurt your feelings; jump up and run and play.'" She might say, it was because mother said something that proved to her that she had forgiven her. But never, "Because I feel it here." Or, you go to the penitentiary where there are seven or eight hundred poor wretches confined on account of their crimes, and find a man, if you can, who thinks that the governor has pardoned him. "Well, my friend, I understand you believe you are pardoned." "Yes, I am sure I am pardoned." "How are you so sure?" "Why, I *feel* like I am pardoned." All the prisoners would laugh at him. They all know—everybody knows—that one can not tell that another person has forgiven him an offense by the way he feels. Well, then, how in the name of common sense can a man know that God has forgiven him, away up yonder in heaven, by the way he feels. That is a great mistake. I think I hear some one mentally saying, "Why, sir, do you pretend to deny this experience which good men so often have?" No. No doubt in the world they feel, or felt, precisely as they say. No doubt about that. There are too many good, honest, earnest people, who are constantly proclaiming such experiences as that, for any man of sense to doubt the reality of the feelings of which they speak. Of course they feel so.

Is it proof, though, that God forgave their sins at that time? It is no proof. Because God is up in heaven, and it is an act of His up there, and they can not know

it by the way they feel. But then, you want to know, is there any way to account for that feeling, except by claiming that it was the experience of the forgiveness of sins? Yes, a very natural, easy way to account for it. That little child of whom I spoke, went off and dropped down in a dark corner, and cried and cried until it cried its cry out, and naturally felt better; crying brought relief. Sorrow can't last always. Gloom and despondency can't last always. We would die under sorrow, if it did not waste itself, like water from a vessel when it is tapped. We could not live under it. The darkness, the gloom and the horror, that a widow experiences the night her husband dies—they would kill her if there was not a natural reaction of the soul bye-and-bye, by which the tears are dried up; and although she does not very soon become lively and cheerful, there comes a strange kind of calm over her troubled soul, which she does not know how to account for. It is the natural reaction of the human spirit, after being pressed down under a weight of woe. Now, if I have been taught that when I come to a full conviction about my sins, and am racked with agony in thinking of the hell to which I am going, and of the angry God who is stretching out His hand over my guilty head, and at length my feelings get calm, this change of feeling is proof that my sins are forgiven, I must at once be very happy. Believing this to be a proof that my sins were forgiven, has the same effect on me as if it were a reality.

Then again, there is such a thing as human beings working themselves up into a state of ecstasy. It is seen in heathen lands; it is seen among Mohammedans. It is seen all the world over; for where there is an extreme desire to get into a highly elated and ecstatic state, men and women, by a great exertion, can often

work themselves into it, especially when they have others round about them who urge them on. If they mistake everything that is calculated to help them through such a struggle and for divine help, believe that when they reach that state of ecstasy, this is a gleam of pardon from heaven, they can not restrain the shout of praise, the halleluiah, the "glory to God," which bursts from their lips. But all this is a natural working of the human soul. All this takes place within our own hearts. It is not that act of the Almighty in heaven in which He says, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." It is not that. It is on earth, and He is in heaven.

If a man is convinced that he is pardoned, he is just as happy as if he were, though wrongly convinced. A man up in the penitentiary was deceived. Some of the officers concluded they would play a joke on him: so they brought to him a pardon regularly made out on the blank form the Governor uses, with his name signed, and a fictitious appearance of the seal of state, and said: "Here, Tom, the Governor has pardoned you. Here's your pardon." The poor fellow believed it, and began to leap and dance and throw off his old striped clothes, and call for those he wore to prison; and looked to see the officer come who was to take him out. He was as happy as could be, until he waited long and nobody came, and he saw the crowd begin to titter at his expense; and then he sank. While he believed that the pardon was genuine, he was just as happy as if it had been. And so, any person, on reaching a certain state of feeling which he verily believes is proof of forgiveness of sins, would be as happy as heaven could make him, for a little while.

But how uncertain the foundation on which such convictions rest. What a common experience it is for those who have been thus led to think that they were pardoned,

to doubt and doubt for a time, and then, when there comes a glorious wave of feeling, to say, Oh! it is true, I was converted, and then, when a gloomy wave rolls over the soul—all doubt and gloom again. This is the unhappy experience of a vast multitude of the good people of this earth, all growing out of the mistaken idea that we can tell whether God has forgiven our sins or not by the way we feel.

How can we know? How can we settle this momentous question? I do not think there is any other way, except to get some word from God in regard to it; some sign, or some token, or some message direct from Heaven; something that God has said Himself that makes it plain. If I have offended my friend, and he extends his hand, and says "My dear brother, I want to make up this quarrel," then I know he has forgiven me—I experience no doubt or uncertainty about it.

I presume then that God has some way of communicating the fact of forgiveness to us, in plain, clear indications that it came from Him. A good many years ago, when they were first putting up telegraph wires—shortly after Morse extended the line from Washington to Baltimore—there was quite a prominent preacher in the vicinity where I lived, who admitted that we can not know that our sins are forgiven without some such communication on the subject, from God; but he said, "Brethren, God has a kind of a spiritual telegraph reaching from Heaven to earth, and touching every human soul; and when He forgives the sins of a man, He touches that spiritual wire at the other end, and it is immediately communicated to the heart of the penitent sinner." Well, that came very much nearer being an explanation in harmony with the facts in the case, than what I was talking about a while ago. But how about that spiritual tele-

graph? If it comes down from God, and I do not see it, nor hear the ticking of the instrument, all I know as to whether the message has been sent or not is what I feel. What evidence have I except my own feelings in the matter? The explanation is unsatisfactory; the illustration does not help out the case, because it leaves the sinner still to look into his own feelings to know whether or not God has forgiven him.

Now there is a way, and it is this—God has said, over and over again in his blessed written word, in the plainest possible language, what you and I shall do in order to forgiveness of our sins; what we shall think; what we shall feel; what we shall believe; what we shall do; and He pledges His own blessed word that when we do these He will forgive us. When a man knows these things, and complies with them to the very last point, he has God's pledged word that his sins are forgiven—the word of Him who can not lie. Here is something solid to build on, the pledged word of the living God. This makes it certain. The things He tells us to do, are things we can not be mistaken about. God says, when you do these you shall be forgiven. In this way we may have the highest evidence this universe affords that our sins are forgiven. We build on a rock, when we rest our convictions on such an assurance as this.

We might illustrate. Take the matter of executive pardon. The Governor says to the poor convict in the penitentiary, here is a pledge for you to sign of the kind of life that you will lead hereafter if I set you free. I leave it here on this table. The very moment you sign it I pardon you. When the man studies it all over, makes up his mind, takes his pen and signs the paper, what assurance has he of a pardon? He is just as certain of it, as that the word of the Governor is good. I give you a

check for one thousand dollars. I say to you, Go down to the bank now, endorse that check, and hand it to the cashier, and he will place it to your credit on his books, and you can draw on that bank for one thousand dollars. You go and do it, and when you walk out and shut the door, do you feel any certainty that you have one thousand dollars there that you can draw on? You feel just as certain of it, as you are certain of the honesty and solvency of that bank. You go away perfectly satisfied that you have one thousand dollars there, although you have not seen a cent of it. You have not handled a single dollar of it; yet it is there; it is yours. You do not doubt it. Just so in this case with God. When God says, Do so and so, and your sins, I will blot them out, every one of them, and remember them no more forever; when you have done those things, as sure as God tells the truth, you are pardoned. You are forgiven. You do not rest it upon any uncertain emotions of your own heart, the cause of which you can not always tell. You rest it on the solid rock of the promise of the living God.

Has God thus dealt with us? I will say in brief, what I expect to set forth fully and elaborately in subsequent discourses, that He has. He has said that he that believes in His dear Son with all his heart, repents sincerely of all his sins, and is buried with the Lord in baptism, shall be forgiven. Can you believe God? If you can, if you do, and go and do these three things—one with your mind; one with your heart; one with your body; when you have done them all you have to doubt the truthfulness of God before you can doubt that your sins are forgiven; and I have never in all my life, met a man who intelligently acted thus, that ever had a lingering doubt to the last day of his life that his sins were then and there forgiven.

Are there sinners in this house tonight with unforgiven sins? Oh! what a condition you are in. What a condition! You can't go to heaven with those sins. Where Christ and God are, you can not go. Die with the guilt of those sins upon your soul, and the penalty that God has attached is yours for eternity. You can not be happy while you live in sin. It has torments with it day after day, and the only easy moments you have in the world are when, by some strange infatuation, you forget that you are a sinner, and forget your God—forget death and eternity. You know this very well. Do you desire remission of those sins? Do you desire that they be blotted out of God's remembrance? Do you desire the stain of that guilt to be taken out of your heart? Do you desire heaven and the angels to smile upon you, instead of frowning? Do you desire a hope of immortality to cheer you on your way? Then come to Jesus according to those conditions by which He offers you that which He purchased with His own blood, free and complete and perfect and eternal forgiveness, and you will be happy. You will experience all that I have just now described, and more. Beyond all the conception you have ever formed will be the peace of mind, passing all understanding, which will take possession of your soul. We plead with you to come; do not delay; but, as you are now a sinner, and the Saviour is now before you, be saved by casting yourself upon his mercy to-night.

SERMON VI.

CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS.

MORNING JUNE 25, 1893.

Having read Matthew, xvi, 13-20, I now read in the second chapter of Acts of Apostles, verses 37 to 41:—

“Now when they heard this” (the preceding discourse by Peter) “they were pricked in their hearts.” (I suppose we have all felt that sensation, as if something sharp had been stuck into our hearts suddenly), “And said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying,” (this is the substance of it) “Save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received His word were baptized; and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls.”

When the conversation which I read to you from the 16th of Matthew occurred, the Saviour was nearly through with his Gallilean ministry. It lacked only a little over six months to the day of his crucifixion. He had not, while going about in Gallilee, told men who He was; but He had taught them in their synagogues, had preached the Gospel, had healed all manner of diseases and sickness among the people, and cast out demons; and had left every man to form his own judgment as to who He was. Now, when the people and the disciples had seen a full

representation by a multitude of examples of His marvelous power; had heard Him set forth in discourse all his teachings, and nearly all that He intended to say about the coming kingdom; He calls upon the disciples to tell Him, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" People, of course, would speak more freely their opinions of Jesus in the presence of the disciples, and in conversation with them, than they would in addressing Him. Hence, they had opportunities to hear the opinions of men of all classes, which Jesus Himself had not. "Who," then, He says to them, "do men say that I am?" The answer is a very significant one. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist" (that was Herod's opinion, amongst others), "raised from the dead. Some say that thou art Elijah; some, that thou art Jeremiah" (of course come back from the dead). "Some say that thou art one of the prophets;" and these last had not made up their minds which one. It seems then that these are all the opinions that these disciples had heard expressed about Jesus, and you will observe that they had not heard a single man say that this Jesus is nobody but a common man; not one had said that. And they had all come to conclusions, which, as is usual with unbelievers, were harder to believe than the truth itself. It seems to me that it was a great deal harder to believe that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead; or Elijah come back from heaven; or Jeremiah, who had been dead over six hundred years, alive again; or any of those old prophets; than to believe that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Then He put the question to them, "Who do you say that I am?" And by this question He wished to draw out from these disciples a free and full expression of the judgment that they had formed about Him, from all that

they had seen and heard. Peter, always the foremost to speak, but in this instance expressing the judgment of them all, because the question was put to them all, and not to him alone, says: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That is the judgment that we have formed. He blessed Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee." If you had listened to Herod, or to the priests, or the scribes, or the people, you never would have come to this conclusion; but "my Father in heaven hath revealed it." God had revealed it to Peter by what Jesus had said and done, Peter's mind being open to hear the silent voice of God which spoke through all these wondrous words and wondrous deeds.

Then Jesus painted a picture before the minds of these twelve disciples, a very striking picture. He represents Himself as about to build a Church that He compares to a great walled city with gates to it, and He paints Peter as the gate-keeper, and He is going to build that Church on a rock,—solid foundation that can not be undermined—and he depicts that before them. Then there is another city, with its walls and gates painted in dark colors, death pouring out of those gates to make war upon this first city; but he says it shall not prevail. He paints the picture in these words—"On this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it; and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." In that picture, notice, He makes Himself the builder of the City, and in the painting you will see Jesus standing on some high position, giving directions to all the workmen. He paints Peter standing by one of the gates, with a bunch of keys in his hands.

Then He paints a great ledge of rock, lying under the whole city. What does that rock symbolize? Some say it means Peter, but it would spoil the picture to say that. You would have to take Peter away from the gate and change him into the great ledge of rock, to make him the foundation. Others say it is Jesus Himself; but that also would spoil the picture he has drawn; you would have to take him down from the high wall as the chief architect, and change Him into the great rock, and stretch Him out under the walls. That is not the picture which Jesus painted. Leave Him where He is. Leave Peter where Jesus placed him; and hunt for something else to stand for that rock. What is it? Undoubtedly it is that which Peter had confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" for on that truth the Church *is* built; on that truth it stands to-day. If infidels could disprove the proposition that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," the whole Church would tumble into ruins the very moment they did so. As long as that fact remains true in the estimation of men, the Church stands on an impregnable rock, where, according to the assertion of Jesus, all the powers of hades can never prevail against it. This is the picture drawn, and this is the lesson taught; and from this lesson starts forward the great current of subsequent history in the labors of these apostles.

At the close of the conversation, however, a very remarkable restriction is laid upon them, that they should not tell any man that Jesus was the Christ, until He should be risen from the dead. When the apostles were sent out to preach under their first commission, they were not to preach Jesus; they were to announce that the Kingdom of God was at hand, but they were not to say a word about their Master; and now he tells them that not

even in private conversation, much less in public discourse, were they to tell any man that He was the Christ, until He should have risen from the dead. I think that must have appeared very strange to them.

About six or eight days afterward, He was on a high mountain, and in the darkness of the night, when the apostles had fallen asleep while He was praying, they were awakened by the sound of voices. There stood Jesus transfigured in glory; there stood Moses on one side and Elijah on the other in glory; and there came a bright cloud up against the side of the mountain, and out of that bright cloud, they heard the voice of the eternal God, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." Those men fell like dead men, overpowered by what they had seen and heard; but when they finally recovered, there was no one there but Jesus, and night had resumed her sway. This vision taught them an additional lesson. He is not Elijah; He is not one of the prophets; but He is so far above them, being the Christ, the Son of the living God, that hereafter we are to hear Him instead of them. Moses and the prophets are laid aside, and Jesus is the authority to whom we must hereafter bow. But strange to say, as they came down from the mountain the next morning, He said to them, "Tell no man of this vision, until after the Son of man is risen from the dead." Brethren, what a burning secret those three disciples had locked up in their bosoms the rest of the time of the life of Jesus; the greatest vision that their eyes had ever witnessed; the most impressive one that their hearts had ever felt; and they were told not to tell it; not to tell it to a brother disciple; not to tell it to their nearest friend. Keep it as a secret in your own bosoms. I wonder if they did. They were better at keeping secrets than some of us, if they did.

And if they did, what a struggle they had to make to keep from telling it. They followed Jesus for six months or more afterward, seeing wonderful things, and if they ever felt like telling any one that He was the Christ, they had to hold in. If they ever felt like telling anybody the glorious vision they had seen on the mountain, they must grit their teeth and hold their tongues. And I suspect they wondered how long that was to last. Until the Son of man is risen from the dead? They did not believe he was going to die, and of course, they did not believe He would rise from the dead. They thought He was talking in parables. What mystery and wonder were wrapt about their thoughts! But finally he did die. Their hearts sank within them. They wept and mourned, and when Mary came running to tell them He was risen, she found them weeping and mourning, and they would not believe it. But they saw Him themselves. They rejoiced to know that He meant just what He said when He said He was going to be put to death and to rise again on the third day; and here He is, alive again. They were glad to know that He was alive, but that was all they knew for a time, until finally, having met them on the mountain in Gallilee, He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth, is given to Me." What an amazing statement for a man whom the chief priests had taken and condemned, and whom Pilate had killed and laid in the grave. But they believed it. Having said this to show them that He had the right and authority to speak the words that came next, He says to them: "Now, do you go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." I wonder how those twelve poor men, feeling their weakness—I wonder how they thought and felt

when they were told to go and make disciples of all the nations of this earth. They were not to go yet, however, for He had locked their lips. He had said, do not tell any man that I am the Christ; do not tell that vision; and they must have special direction unlocking their lips before they begin their mighty task. So, on the very day of his ascension to heaven, he said to them again: "Go ye and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned;" but tarry here in Jerusalem until ye be clothed with power from on High; for not many days hence, the Holy Spirit shall come upon you; then shall ye testify of Me in Jerusalem, in Samaria, in Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. (Mark xvi. 16; Luke xxiv. 46-49; Acts i. 5-8). So, after they had gazed until He ascended up into heaven, and was seated on the right hand of God, they came back to Jerusalem, and were daily in the temple waiting—they did not know how long they had to wait—waiting for the coming of that Spirit which should open their lips to speak to the world in His name.

The day of Pentecost came; there they were as usual, seated in the court of the temple. Suddenly, a sound rumbled through the sky as if a great tornado were tearing the air, although it was probably perfectly still, and these men felt themselves moved inwardly by a new power. They saw flames like tongues from heaven, and under the power that came upon them, they began to speak to the multitude in the temple, addressing all in all the different languages represented by the nations there assembled. They were full of the Spirit, and the Spirit now moves them. The time when they can tell all they know about Jesus freely and fully to the world, has come. Jesus had been taken to His king-

dom in heaven. His kingdom has been set up there. And when they had praised God to the amazement of those people, in all their tongues—sitting there in their places—Peter arose. He has the keys of the kingdom of heaven now in his hand; he is now going to execute his high commission to open the gates, already established, and let in those who are entitled to enter, and for the first time in his life, he begins to tell men who Jesus is. He delivers a discourse, in which he shows them that the same Jesus whom they had taken with wicked hands, crucified and slain, God had raised from the dead. That, in accordance with God's own pre-determined will and foreknowledge, he had been delivered into their hands. He quotes from the prophets to prove this. He brings forward the testimony of himself and companions to the effect that He had been raised from the dead, and they had seen Him with their eyes, and handled Him with their hands. He goes farther, and shows that God had said to Him, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make all Thy foes Thy foot stool." He winds up his argument with the thrilling announcement, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ"—Lord of heaven and earth, and the Christ who was predicted by the prophets. This was Peter's first sermon—the first one ever delivered since the ascension of Jesus to heaven—the first one ever delivered since the blood of the covenant was shed on Calvary—the first discourse ever preached in the kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in which we live.

What was the effect of it? A vast portion of that countless host who stood within the range of Peter's voice, felt pricked in their heart—that sense of guilt which must overwhelm a man when he realizes that he is guilty of

murder—that he is guilty of the murder of the Son of the living God, the greatest crime that human beings ever committed. And there came a voice from three thousand of them all at once, crying out, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Do for what? Do to get rid of this pricking at our hearts. Do to get rid of our awful crime; do to get rid of our sins before God, and escape the wrath of God in the eternal day? That is what they meant. What is his answer? “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Oh! what an easy escape! How promptly, how quickly it enables them by doing this to escape from the fearful condition in which they are trembling and guilty! And then to assure them still further, “The promise is to you”—the promise of this remission of sins and gift of the Holy Spirit, “is to you,” not only to you, but “to your children, and to all that are afar off”—for they had been commanded to carry it to the whole creation. But Peter did not stop there. After the manner of modern preachers, knowing how hard it is to move men; knowing how often men are unwilling to do their duty when it is pointed out to them, he went on with many other words to testify and to exhort them, all of his exhortation being expressed in the text by the one sentence, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” This crooked generation is like a sinking ship; save yourselves from its fate. It is like a burning house; save yourselves from its fate by coming out and doing what I have told you. How different the result was from what we so often see in great assemblies of modern times. As many as received that word were baptized, and three thousand of them were added that very day. Peter had come in contact with three thousand men of tender consciences, strong wills, and decision

of character, who had only to know their duty, to do it without a moment's delay; and before the sun had set that evening, they were rejoicing in the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There the first Church was established—started on its career. There the kingdom of God was organized, and it was built on that same rock of which Jesus had spoken, belief that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter had opened the gates. It was he to whom Jesus had said, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven;" and what he said was ratified on the throne of God. It was the absolute, the eternal, the unchanging truth.

Now, let us see if we can gather from this brief story what conditions *we* have to comply with in order to receive the benefit of the redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, which is provided in the blood of Christ.

Remember, what Peter said was addressed not only to them, but to their descendants, and to "all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call to Him;" and that includes you and me. What conditions did they comply with? First of all, we see as plainly as if we heard them say it, that they believed what Peter preached; for they would not have been pricked in their heart, and cried out in anguish, "Brethren, what shall we do," if that story had passed idly into one ear and out of the other. They believed it profoundly. In the second place, they were told to repent; and when a man, standing before the bar of God, is called upon to repent, it means that he must repent of all his ungodliness. In the third place, they were told, and the apostle is very specific in this, "Let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus." These three things

they were to do. And then they were to receive, first, remission of sins; and second, the gift of the Holy Spirit; so that from that time on they might have that Spirit of God, of which the Apostle Paul says, that he who has not the Spirit is not His, but if we have the Spirit of God, then God will raise again our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us. Can there be any doubt about this? Can there be any doubt that when those men believed, repented, and were baptized that day, that every one of them received the remission of sins? that every one of them received the gift of the Holy Spirit? And if there is no doubt about this, if you and I do the same to-day, will we not receive the same blessings?

But let us notice before we conclude, that exhortation of Peter—"Save yourselves." There are two things in this little piece of history that come right in the face of a great deal of the preaching of the present day. The first is the question of those people, "Brethren, what shall we do?" How many preachers there are in the present day who would scoff at the idea of doing. Do? Why, you are mistaken; sinners are dead; they can not *do* anything. All the doing is to be on the part of God and the Holy Spirit; you have nothing to do; you can not do anything. And this idea has become so popular that it has gone into the song which expresses the sentiment, "Down with your deadly doing." Did Peter tell them they could do nothing? When they cried out, "What shall we do," he told them something to do. This shows that it is an awful mistake to suppose that the sinner has nothing to do, and can do nothing.

The other remark is this: "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." Where will you find the preachers of this day, who would exhort sinners to save themselves?

If Peter were to come into some modern congregations, and get up before ungodly men and use this exhortation, saying, "Save yourselves," what an awful heretic he would appear to be! That shows there is something wrong, either in Peter, the man who held the keys, the man who had power to open and to shut the gates, whose word was ratified in heaven—something wrong about his preaching, or something wrong about a good deal of modern preaching. There is a sense in which a man can no more save himself than he can make a world. He can not make an atonement for his sins by blood. That Jesus did for him. He can not forgive his own sins, and thus save himself. That is done for him by the Heavenly Father, through the blood of Christ. On the other hand, there is a sense in which, if a man does not save himself, he will never be saved. Who is it that is to believe? God can not believe for us. We do the believing. Who is it that is to repent? Neither God, nor angels, nor our godly parents, can repent for us. We must repent. Who is to be baptized? The living can not be baptized for the dead. No human being can be baptized for another. It is an individual—a personal duty to be baptized. So then, when Peter told those people to believe, to repent, and to be baptized, that they might receive the remission of sins, and then right after that, says, "Save yourselves," not a man in that audience was so stupid as not to see what he meant. If a man were out in the water by the side of a ship, struggling, you throw him a rope, and say, "Save yourself, sir;" he would know what you meant—that he must seize that rope and cling to it, to be pulled on board. And so, in being saved by the grace of God, we must seize the help that God holds out to us from heaven.

Now, are there any unsaved souls in this house this

morning? Are there any still under the wrath of God, because all their sins remain unforgiven? Christ has died for you, my dear friends. He has made it possible for God to be just in justifying you; but then, there are conditions laid down for you to comply with, in order that you may receive the benefit of that shed blood. Here they are: Do you believe that Christ is the Son of the living God? Are you penitent? Do you mourn over your sins? Are you willing to forsake them? Can you make up your mind to-day that you will, without further delay, forsake all sins, and come to God and serve him? If so, you have repented. Now, show that you have repented by doing what you have resolved to do. Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, rise from that watery burial with the assurance given by the promise of God that your sins are forgiven; then do as these people did, be steadfast from that day on, in the apostles' teaching, in the breaking of bread, in fellowship, in your prayers; and when your journey is ended, He whom you have served will receive you, and say to every one, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

SERMON VII.

FAITH.

EVENING JUNE 25, 1893.

The first verse of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews:

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

We all know very well that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is an essential condition of the salvation of those to whom the Gospel is preached. “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believeth not, shall be condemned.” It is important, then, that we know, without any uncertainty or obscurity about it, what faith is; otherwise, we may not know whether we have it or not. It is important, too, to know how we may obtain faith, if we have it not; and how to increase it, if we have it. It is also important for us to understand how faith contributes to our salvation, or we may mis-apply it.

I propose, then, to discuss these three questions to-night, and to do it in the light of this masterly discussion of the subject of faith which I have read you in the first ten verses of this chapter. The whole chapter is devoted to the subject, but it is too long, contains too much matter, to be embraced in a single discourse.

The apostle begins by telling us what faith is, and then, just as if he were imitating some of our best lexicons of the modern times, he follows up the statement as to what faith is, by a long list of examples of it, so that

if any one should fail to get the idea from the description or definition, he would get it from the examples; at any rate, by use of the two together, he could not fail, if he used proper industry, to understand the subject. Unfortunately, however, for you and me, this first verse, which I think is properly called a definition of faith, though that is doubted by many scholars, is translated to us in words that are very obscure. I read in the outset from the revised version, and I last read from the King James version. The latter reads thus: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." What idea do you get from that language? We know very well what substance is. The substance of this desk is wood. The substance of a speech is the chief thought, or the principal thoughts, that run through it. So of a book. Now can you conceive that faith, in this sense—in either of these senses of the word substance—is the substance of things we hope for? No thought expressed in that. The substance of our hope of pardon, our hope of God's blessing, our hope of the resurrection of the dead, our hope of heaven, are very different things from faith. Is faith the evidence of things not seen? Faith is the evidence of some cause that leads to faith, for it could not have existed without that cause; and that may be some unseen thing; but surely, the apostle can not mean that. The things that are unseen concerning which we have faith—such things as God, angels, heaven, hell, the wondrous things of the past, the unspeakable things of the present spiritual world, and the world to come—now faith is not evidence of these things, but faith is the result of evidence which convinced us of them.

The revised version does not make the matter much better. It says, "Faith is assurance of things hoped

for." There is a clear idea in that, and I have no doubt it is true. And it says in addition, "It is a proving of things not seen." Now our faith does not prove anything about unseen matters. I do not see how it is possible that that can be a correct rendering. I have been puzzled a good deal in former years over this verse, and the proper rendering of it, and in searching about through various learned works for something that would be clear and satisfactory, I fell upon a translation of it in Robinson's great Lexicon of the Greek New Testament. Edward Robinson was probably the most learned philologist that the Presbyterian Church of the United States has ever produced, and he translates the verse, "Faith is confidence as to things hoped for; conviction as to things not seen." Now that is as clear as a bell. Faith is thus defined as having relation to two classes of objects: things hoped for, and things unseen. But the latter class includes the former. All the things that we hope for are unseen. That which you see and have in your presence is not an object of hope, but, whilst the things not seen include the things hoped for, faith contains different elements with reference to these two different classes of objects.

With reference to the things that are unseen—and that expression includes everything in the past, the present and the future, that is not an object of sight or knowledge—with reference to them, faith is conviction, and that means that when we have faith about them, we are convinced in regard to them. Now many of those things in the future that are unseen, are objects of hope; those in the past are not. We do not hope for what is past. And when this unseen thing on which faith rests is an object of hope, then that other element of faith comes in—confidence as to things hoped for. I think

that is very clear. I have always felt very thankful to that distinguished scholar for the clearest and best translation I have met of this verse.

With this statement of what faith is—and I think it includes all that there is in faith—I propose that we go on and look at the illustrations—a few of them—or the examples, and see how well they fit the definition, and thus get a clearer conception of it—one that will impress the memory more.

The first example that he presents is our faith in the fact that God created the worlds. “By faith we understand that the worlds were made by the word of God.” Well, there is an unseen and wondrous event away back in the past. Our belief in that is a conviction as to an unseen thing. It suits the latter part of the definition. But, as that unseen thing, the creation of the world by the word of God, is not an object of hope with us, the element of confidence as to things hoped for, does not enter into that example of faith.

The next example is the faith of Abel. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” In this the apostle does not say, as many seem to imagine, that Abel had a more excellent faith than Cain; he does not compare the two faiths at all; but that Abel offered unto God a more excellent *sacrifice* than Cain did. What was the object on which Abel’s faith rested, when he brought that sacrifice? He offered it to an invisible God, and there was conviction as to a being unseen. Then, he offered that victim with the hope of receiving a blessing from the hand of that invisible God, and his doing so shows that he had confidence in the object of his hope. And, don’t you see, it was not the mere conviction that moved him to make the offering; but it was the confident expectation of the

blessing that moved his heart and strengthened his hand.

The next example is that of Enoch. "By faith Enoch was translated, so that he was not found," when they hunted for him. Here our author, seeing that nothing is said in the history of Enoch in the Old Testament about his having any faith, feels the necessity of proving that he had; so he proceeds to say that "before his translation he had testimony that he was well pleasing to God; but without faith it is impossible to please God, seeing that if a man comes to God, he must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." In these words the apostle brings out the two elements of Enoch's faith. He believed that God is—the conviction of an unseen thing. He believed that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—confidence as to a hoped for reward. And, under that confidence, he walked with God and pleased Him.

Noah's faith is the next example. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet" (here he brings in the very terms of his definition, referring to the unseen flood yet in the future), "moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his family." Here was conviction as to an unseen disaster that was to sweep over the earth, threatening the life of every human being, and here was confidence in the hoped for deliverance of his own family under the promise that God had made; and this confidence nerves him to the tremendous undertaking of building the greatest vessel that ever floated on water. I do not know how they could build ships in those early days with such immense capacity. This one went on a voyage of twelve months without coming in sight of land, then stranded on the top of a mountain where it lay till all the water sank away, and still it did

not break up. In building it, Noah was moved by faith.

The next example is that of Abraham. Two incidents of his life are brought out to illustrate his faith. First, "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a country that he should afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went." Was not that a strange journey? He left his native land and kindred, and went off on a journey, he did not know how long, did not know how far, to receive a land for an inheritance; and he did not know where the land was. There was conviction as to an unseen and an unknown country, and a confident hope of possessing it. Moved by that confident expectation of having the land for an inheritance, he made the long journey of 1,300 miles from his native land, before he reached the spot where God said, "This is the land; it shall be thine for an inheritance for thy seed after thee." Another example is given in the fact that Abraham, by faith, lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promises, because he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The Sodomites had built a city. Melchizedek, the high priest of God, was living in the city of Salem, close by. The Shechemites and others round about, had cities; and His friends, the Hittites, were living in the City of Hebron. He was a man of great wealth, and he could have built a palace in which to live, but he chose to live in a tent all his life. He was seventy-five years old when he left his native land, and one-hundred and seventy-five when he died; and through a round hundred years, he lived in a tent, by faith, because yonder was the city he was looking for, that had foundations sure enough, whose builder and maker is God, and he was so well pleased and satisfied with that, that he did not want anything better than a tent to live in

here on earth. Sometimes I have thought that this was a greater evidence of Abraham's faith than offering Isaac on the altar. It was a long strain, that one hundred years living in a tent and looking for that distant city. Conviction as to that unseen city which God hath built; confident expectation that after a long, weary journey, his life over, he would live in it with his children after him—this was his faith. How clearly and beautifully then, the examples that the apostle gives, come up to and fill out every point in his definition, conviction as to things not seen, confidence as to things hoped for.

Now, what is the true object of faith? I endeavored to set that before the audience this morning. To mention it is enough for an audience like this. That great doctrine or fact on which the Church of Jesus Christ is built, the solid rock underlying it is this: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To you and me here is expressed an unseen fact; for Jesus is now up yonder in Heaven sitting on the right hand of God, the head of the Church, and head over all things for the Church, ruling all things in heaven and earth and under the earth, for the benefit of the Church, unseen, but glorious! Our faith is conviction in regard to that unseen being, and that wondrous sacrifice he made for us, and the past of his wondrous history. All unseen. At the same time, on Him rest all our hopes. Our confidence in Him, in the things that He has promised, the things we hope for, is the animating power of our life. Faith in Jesus Christ then, is conviction as to things not seen, confidence as to things hoped for.

It would be useless for me to go on further in trying to show what faith is. How is this faith begotten within a man? and then, after it is once begotten, how is it strengthened and deepened and enjoyed, until it becomes

an absorbing and controlling power? These same examples give us the answer to these questions.

First, our faith that the worlds were created by the word of God: whence did we obtain it? Not by reasoning about it; not by dreaming; not in answer to prayer: but we read, when we were little boys and girls, in chapter I, verse 1, of God's holy word, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We obtained it from God's word.

Whence did Abel obtain his conviction and confidence that led him to offer that lamb at the altar? We have very little information about that, but we know from the very nature of the case that he did not get it from any human source. It did not spring up from his own reasoning. No mortal man could have conceived from the results of his own ratiocination, that to slay a little innocent lamb and burn its flesh and sprinkle its blood, would procure a blessing upon him from the God of heaven. He must have obtained it from revelation. From some word that the Almighty had communicated in some way to his father, or his mother, or himself, or his brother, or the whole family together, which is left out of the short records of Genesis. He obtained it from the word of God, communicated to him in some way.

Pass on to the next, and how did Enoch obtain his conviction in regard to the unseen God, and his confident expectation that God would reward him if he served him? It must have come in the same way. The brief records in the first chapters of Genesis fail to tell us the details.

Pass on to the next one, when revelation is getting a little fuller, and how did Noah obtain his conviction that a flood was coming upon the world, and his hope of escape from it for himself and his family? If he had

reached that conviction by his own reason, it would have been a very daring and presumptuous thing for him to have said, "Oh, well, all the world will perish, but I and my family will be saved." He could not have reached this hope from the workings of his own mind. God said to him, "The end of all flesh is before me. I repent that I have made man; it grieves my heart. I will bring a flood upon the world, and destroy every living thing that hath the breath of life. But build thou an ark, put into it thyself and thy family, and two of every kind of the animals that have the breath of life, and save them." From the word of God he obtained the conviction and the confidence.

How did Abraham obtain his conviction about the land when he did not know where it was? God said to him, come into a land which I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation, I will give it to thee for an inheritance. From the word of God. And how did he obtain that idea, that conviction, that strong, life-controlling confidence about the city in the eternal world, whose builder and maker is God, in which he should live when he was done with this? Here again the records are silent as to who told him. But we know very well that no human being ever had this clear conception of the eternal world, except by revelation. So it must have come to Abraham by some revelation of God's word which is omitted in the hasty and brief record of the Book of Genesis. But then you say, can it be possible that our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is begotten in the same way? Well, just look into the workings of your own mind, and ask yourself how did it originate in your mind—the conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? And every one of you must answer, I obtained it from God's word. But for that word, I would not have it.

Go into the heathen nations of the earth, and no man has ever been found, or ever will be, who has this conviction in him, except from the word of God.

But then, how did we obtain our confidence in Him? That confident expectation of His blessing that brings us to Him in simple service and gratitude and love? How did we obtain that? Is the word of God able to create this feeling in the human soul? Well, it is very strange to me that such a question should ever be asked—whether the word of the Great God, the loving Father of heaven and earth, whose very nature is truth, can inspire us with confidence in His promises. Why, my friends, if God's word will not do it, what power is there in heaven or earth that you can conceive of, that could? We obtain it all, from the word of the Lord; and let me tell you, that the more you study that word, the more you know of it, the more of it you get laid away in your memory and embalmed in your heart, the stronger your faith will become—the better men of faith and women of faith you will be, to stand up against the storms of unbelief that rage around us in this wicked world. That is plain enough.

Now in conclusion, how does faith bring us these blessings, the salvation of our souls in deliverance from sin, and life everlasting?

It looks a little strange, perhaps, to ask this question; but it is a practical one. Does faith bring us all those great blessings by simply existing within us, or by what it leads us to do and feel? The examples answer this question also. Was it by faith alone that Abel received the blessing which his sacrifice brought to him? Would he have received that blessing, if he had believed with all his heart everything he did believe, and never offered his lamb? You must see, it was because by faith Able offered a sacrifice, and an excellent sacrifice, that he had testimony borne to him that he was righteous.

How did Enoch receive the blessing of translation through faith? By faith only existing in his soul? Why, the language is that Enoch "*walked*" with God. He was "*well pleasing*" to God. It is the way his faith made him walk, that resulted in his translation.

Passing on to Noah, how is it that by faith he built the ark? By faith only? No, he had to go and cut the trees down, let the wood season, and hire a great many carpenters and ship builders at great expense. He must have been a very rich man to be able to build that ark. There was a long period of years of constant labor and toil. It is by what his faith made him do, in the way of sacrifice of his money and of his time, his labor and his energy, that he saved his house.

And so with Abraham: not by believing God and sitting down at home and remaining there among his friends, and thinking that in some distant day God would work it out that the promised land would be an inheritance for his children. No; but when he was called, he obeyed and went, not knowing whither he was going, and traveled thirteen hundred miles to find out where the land was. It was by what it made him do. And so it was in regard to the blessing that came upon him for living in tents a hundred years, looking for the city whose builder and maker is God. That blessing came from the one hundred years of living with his wife Sarah, and his children, and his grandchildren, and all the three hundred and eighteen men servants, besides their women and children, in tents, in the rainy weather, in the hot weather, in the cold weather; in tents over one hundred years. His faith secured the blessing by what it made him do, and if he had not done what it prompted him to do, he would have failed.

Now about our faith. How is it going to bring us to

the forgiveness of our sins, to the salvation of our souls from all the sins of the past, and finally bring us through our journey to everlasting life? Not by causing us to offer a lamb as Abel did; not by causing us to build an ark as Noah did; not by causing us to go on a long distant journey to a far distant land, as did Abraham; nor even by causing us to live in tents as he did. How then? By causing us to act on the same principles as they did. Every one of these acted in harmony with the object of his faith. Abel, in harmony with the object of his faith, offered a bloody victim on the altar. Enoch, in harmony with his, walked with God. Noah, in harmony with his, built an ark; Abraham, in harmony with his, went on a distant journey. So, if our faith is to save us, our faith in Christ, it will be by causing us to act in harmony with that faith. Well, what is that? If He is Christ, the Son of the living God, ruling over heaven and earth, and we believe that, and act in harmony with it, we immediately surrender our souls and bodies and all that we have and are, to His divine guidance and control. Do we believe in Him as having laid down His life to redeem us from sin, and make it possible for God to forgive us? Do we believe that? Then, to act in harmony with that, is to love Him, and to show by every day's walk in life that we are grateful to our Redeemer. And thus our faith will cause us to live a life of love, of devotion, of service, to Him who is our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Friend. And if that faith dwells in any man's soul, and he is not living thus, he feels every day that there is an antagonism between his faith and his life. Every believer in this audience to-night, who has not commenced living such a life as that, feels that antagonism now; and it has given him great pain in days past. So then, not only are we to act in harmony with our faith, if we would receive

God's blessing, but that faith moves us to act that way. It impels us in that direction. When a man has to resist it and fight against it, he is not merely indifferent to his own best feelings, but he tramples them under his feet; and so he must continue to do, if he does not yield to the power of that faith and cast himself into the service of the Lord. I speak what you know by your inward experience.

I said awhile ago, that we do not have to do as the men of our text did, in carrying out our faith; and yet, we come very near it. We are not called upon to bring a lamb to the altar, and lay our hands upon its head, and shed its blood, and burn its flesh, but in the language of one of our beautiful hymns, if we would obtain the forgiveness of sins and the blessing of God, we are to come up and say:

“ By faith I lay my hand
On that dear head of thine;
While like a penitent I stand
And there confess my sin.”

And are we not to act, after having thus confessed that sin, as Enoch did—walk with God the remnant of our days? And, although God will not take us away in the body, for the body lies down in the grave, He sends angels to bear us into that strange land, and on that strange journey that we are to take. And are we not to act very much as Abraham did, when he was called? My brethren, you have started for a promised land. Do you know where it is? Can you point in the direction of it? You sometimes point up. But we all learn that this is a childish conception, when we have studied astronomy. Do you know where that country is, to which you are going? Do you know how far it is away? Oh! how true it is that when we were called, we obeyed and started out,

not knowing whither we were going—knowing only that God has said, “It is a goodly land, and I will give it to you.” How much like Abraham.

And then our faith is still fixed, as Abraham’s was, on that city. We are told more about it than he was. He learned that it had foundations, and it is revealed to us as having foundations of precious stones—all the beautiful gems of this earth are built together in the foundations of that city, to give us an idea of its glory. It has gates of pearl, and inside of it everything that we can conceive of that is grand and glorious and beautiful; and not a man to enter it who tells a lie, or loves a lie or any mean thing. No sin; no sorrow; no tears; no grave-yards in it. We are living here as Abraham did, not exactly in tents, but oh, how frail our dwellings are! How quickly the fire makes them vanish, and the earthquake! In a little while strangers will dwell in the house where you live, strange children will be playing about the door where your children played. Everything is transient, like the Arab’s tent that is moved every morning; but oh! we have our hearts fixed on the city which God has built, in the land that we know nothing of except what God has told us about it, and by faith in the unseen reality, and confidence as to the hoped for enjoyment of it, we are making our journey home.

But, to be more specific in regard to the start. As we endeavored to show this morning, when a man has this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is called upon to abandon a sinful life; to repudiate it out of the depth of his soul; to resolve that, by the strength of my will, helped by God to make it stronger, I will sin no more. That is repentance. Then, in imitation of that sad and gloomy and mournful hour, when He died, was buried and rose on the third morning, we are to be buried with

the Lord in baptism. And as He rose out of that grave to live a new and different life, so we arise from that watery burial to live a new life, to walk with God, living in tents with Abraham.

Is there a penitent soul here to-night who has never started on this heavenly journey? Has it no attractions for you? Will you not flee from the darkness, the gloom and the horror, that have shrouded your soul whenever you have thought of God and death and eternity, and seize the precious hope, the strong confiding hope of the man of faith, and the woman of faith? If it is in your heart to do this, we give you the opportunity and beg you to come.

SERMON VIII.

REPENTANCE.

MORNING JULY 2, 1893.

I will read in the seventeenth chapter of Acts of Apostles, two verses in Paul's celebrated speech on Mars' Hill, addressed to heathen philosophers:

"The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

The greatest obstacle to the salvation of men is the obstinacy of the human will. It is not very difficult, in this country particularly, to induce men to believe the Gospel—to plant faith within the soul. Indeed, we may say it is difficult in our blessed land for a man to be an unbeliever. Multitudes of men try to be, and fail; and some women do the same. And even when they think that they have succeeded in persuading themselves that there is no truth in the Gospel or in the Bible, often, when they come to face death, their unbelief vanishes, and they find themselves among the number who believe and tremble. Neither is it very difficult to persuade men to be baptized, when they become penitent believers. I have never yet met with a person, who was a genuine believer and sincerely penitent, that raised any question about being baptized. They are ready to go where they are led.

The difficulty is to induce them to *repent*. I have often, in my preaching experience, studied and prayed and reflected and read, to find some way by which I could have more power in inducing people to repent. I would rather have that power than all the other powers and gifts that could be bestowed upon me as a preacher. But we modern preachers need not be discouraged, I think, on account of our weakness here, because we find, on reading the Gospels, that our Saviour experienced the same difficulty. When He was bidding farewell, or about to bid farewell, to Gallilee, where the most of His mighty works were done, and upbraided the cities whose people had heard Him most, it was not because they did not believe; it was not because they refused to be baptized by John; but it was because they did not *repent*. With all the tremendous efforts that He had put forth to bring them to repentance, He had failed. Not surprising, then, that there should be found the same difficulty in the way of modern preachers. Seeing that it is difficult to bring men to repentance, and yet that without repentance there is no salvation for the human soul, how important a matter it is to know all about repentance that we can learn; to know, in the first place, what repentance is, so that we may not be mistaken about that; and to know, in the second place, how repentance is brought about. I propose to devote the time that I shall address you this morning to these two inquiries.

I think if I were to ask you individually, What is repentance, I would probably get, from the large majority, the answer that it is godly sorrow for sin. That would be a very imperfect definition. There is no repentance without sorrow for sin, and I presume to say that it is utterly impossible for any man to sorrow for them too deeply. But that is not the exact thing that in the

Bible is called repentance. We know this from a single statement, to go no further, of the Apostle Paul, when, addressing certain men in the Church of Corinth, he said: "Though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it, though I did regret; for I see that the epistle made you sorry after a godly sort; for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be regretted." He had awakened a very keen sorrow in their hearts. He pitied them when he learned how deeply distressed they were; but when he learned that this godly sorrow worked repentance, then he was glad that he had made them sorry; and this remark shows that repentance is a *result* of godly sorrow, not that sorrow itself. This fact being discovered, some scholars have concluded that repentance is reformation of life. But this is another mistake. Of course, every man who sincerely repents, reforms his life. But we learn from John the Baptist that reformation of life, instead of being repentance, is the *fruit* of repentance. He said to the people who came to be baptized by him, and were not sincere in the matter, being Pharisees and Sadducees, "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance;" and some of the people said, "Master, what shall we do then?" "Why, you that have two coats, give to him that hath none; you that have food, do likewise." Be liberal and kind. The publicans said, "Master, what shall we do?"—that is, to bring forth these fruits that you require. "Exact no more than is appointed you." They were in the habit of exacting more and putting the surplus in their pockets. Quit your wicked conduct. The soldiers say, "What shall we do?" "Do violence to no man, and be content with your wages." And thus in calling on them to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, he explained that he meant better conduct—a change, or reformation, in their lives.

So then, a change of life for the better is a result, or an effect, of repentance. It is not repentance itself. Repentance, then, is something that stands in between sorrow for sin and the change of the life in which sins are abandoned and a better course of conduct begun. Well, then, is it? Not to multiply words, you will agree with me when I state that it is a change of that stubborn will which is the seat of all rebellion and all sin against God. When a man is so thoroughly filled with sorrow and mourning and self-reproach on account of his sins that his will is subdued to the will of God, and he says, I will sin no more, I will hereafter submit to the will of my God, this results in a change of his life, and it is repentance—a change of will in regard to sin.

Now, how is this change of will to be brought about? It is so difficult of accomplishment that many have imagined it to be a product of the direct power of God acting within the soul. I have wondered how such persons could reconcile their theory with the fact that only a small number of us repent. Why does not God, if He employs His Almighty power to inspire the soul with repentance, exert that power upon all the wicked, and stop all sin at once? I am sure He would if that were His way of bringing men to repentance.

It was said by the apostles and their brethren assembled together at Jerusalem, that repentance is a gift of God; for when they heard of the turning of Cornelius and his family, and their baptism, they praised God and said, "Then hath God given to the Gentiles repentance unto life." In some proper sense of the word, then, it is true that repentance is a gift from God to the man who repents; and yet repentance is a duty that is enjoined upon men in the form of a command. "Repent," was the cry of John the Baptist, of Jesus, and of all the apostles.

It is something that the man himself must do. Now it is not easy always to explain how a thing may be a gift from God, and yet be something that we ourselves are to do; but this will be made clear as we proceed.

Let me press the inquiry, then, in the light of the word of God, How are men brought to repentance? How is that stubborn will broken down, so that a man who was once in rebellion against his God, is ready and willing to say, and does say, "Oh Lord, not my will, but Thine be done?" The Saviour, in trying to bring men to repentance, as you saw in the speech addressed to Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, which I read you at the beginning, pointed them to the judgment. He upbraided them for their want of repentance, and said: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes, but it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment than for you." And so he said to Capernaum. He appealed then to the terrors of the judgment in order to induce these men to repent. There was a preacher of repentance who lived a long time before the Saviour, and was led by the Spirit of God. When Jonah went into the great city of Nineveh to preach to them, and brought the whole city to repentance in sackcloth and ashes, what was the means by which he did it? "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The terrors of the just judgment of God upon them for their iniquity, he employed, and it had the desired effect. And when Paul stood here among these philosophers on Mars' Hill in Athens, and addressed to them this matchless speech in regard to the true and living God, he called on them to repent. He says, in the language which I read to you, "God hath now command-

ed men that they should all, everywhere, repent ;” and what motive did he lay before them to induce them to do it? “For he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.” If God is going to judge in righteousness, every unrighteous man will be condemned, and only those who are righteous will be saved.

Now then, if we will be guided by those who were moved by the Spirit of infinite wisdom in their efforts to bring men to repentance, even our Saviour included, one way to do it, is to tell them of the fearful consequences of continuing in sin. Is that calculated to have the effect? All we have to do in answer to this question is to look within our own souls. I would ask any impenitent sinner here this morning: Did you ever in your life sit down calmly and thoughtfully to consider the consequences of your sinful life—the consequences upon your conscience and your heart while you live; the terror that it will force upon you in the hour of death; the judgment, and all that is revealed in the Bible as to the fate of the impenitent sinner, without feeling that stubborn will of yours beginning to bend? I do not believe you ever did. I did not when I was living in sin, and I don't believe that any Christian here ever did. Well why didn't that will of yours bow completely down in subjection to the will of God when you indulged in these reflections? Oh! you shook them off. You got up and ran away. You closed the book. You resorted to something that would dissipate those thoughts. You shook off the power that God was exercising over your soul, and which would have brought you to repentance, if you had only continued to reflect a little longer. That is proof enough that there is power in this great motive to bring men to repentance, if only they can be induced to reflect upon it sufficiently.

Another source is pointed out by the Apostle Paul

when he rebuked certain men for treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, because they were despising the goodness of God; because they were despising the goodness and long suffering and forbearance of God, not knowing that the goodness of God leads men to repentance (Rom. ii, 4, 5.) Here is another motive to repentance, the goodness of God. Did ever a sinner who knows God, who is acquainted, in even a general way, with the revelations of the New Testament, sit down and reflect upon the kindness of the God who created him; upon all the tender mercies that God has showered upon him since his earliest recollection; upon the fact that God has provided a way for his salvation; that He is bidding him every day to turn away from his sins and come to peace and rest in Christ; that He is opening the gates of eternity, an eternity of glory and bliss and honor—did one ever thus reflect without despising himself for being a sinner? Without wishing that he were not a sinner, and resolving that he will abandon his sins? And why didn't you then and there repent? For the same reason as in the other case. If you were reading the Bible at the time, you shut it up and turned to a newspaper or something else. If it were a sermon to which you were listening that made you feel that way, you got away from the church as soon as you could into other associations. You resorted to means by which you could shake off from your soul the spell that God was working upon it; and that is the reason you did not repent. And if you continue to deal with the judgment of God, and with the goodness of God, in this way, the result will be that you will forever shake off their power, and you will find it easier and easier to do so as life goes on. You will go to perdition. You are pursuing the very course that is calculated to take you to hell.

The goodness of God on the one hand, and the awful judgment of God against impenitent sinners on the other hand—these are two mighty motives to bring men to repentance.

We are able now to see how repentance is a gift from God. How did you and I find out the awful consequences of sin? How did we learn about the goodness of God? The heathen, the uncircumcised heathen, in the days of the apostles, could not repent, because God had never yet sent to them the message of his hatred of sin and his goodness and mercy toward the sinner. But, in sending them the Gospel God gave them the power, and the opportunity, and the privilege of repenting, as he gives us our food by sending the sunshine and the shower.

Some people imagine that there ought to be, somehow or other, something from God, something in addition to all this: seeing that men resist this, that God ought to do something more. The rich man in hades thought so. When he found that there was no possible hope for himself, not even so much as one drop of water to cool his parched tongue, he said, Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my father's house. I have five brothers there; oh send him to warn them that they come not to this place of torment. Calmly the voice of the patriarch comes down to him: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." This man thought that this was not enough. No, Father Abraham, but if some one will go to them from the dead, they will repent. Let Lazarus go and tell them where I am, what I am suffering, what I have begged for and cannot obtain. They will not come to this place of torment when they hear that. That is what he thought. But the voice comes to him, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one should rise from the dead." That is, if Laza-

rus should go back into his body, stand as he once was, a living man, and tell those five brothers all that he knew of their departed brother, they would not repent. I am afraid there are some who even now do not believe this—who think that those men certainly would have repented if Lazarus had gone as requested. But I think that Abraham was right, or rather, that Jesus, who quotes these words, was right. Suppose Lazarus had gone back. How do you think his message would have been received by those brothers? What would he have to tell them? When I died, and your brother died, and angels carried me away off into Abraham's bosom, I saw your brother, and I heard him cry. He called to me to dip my finger tip in water to cool his tongue; for he said, "I am tormented in these flames." I could not go to him, so he asked me to come back and tell you not to come to that place of torment, but to change your lives. What do you suppose those brothers would have said? Well, Lazarus, who are you? You were nothing but a poor diseased beggar, companion for dogs, when you lived here; had no friends. Our brother was a rich man who fared sumptuously every day, and was clothed in purple and fine linen, and everybody was his friend. You tell us that our brother whom we loved so well, who was so good and tender and noble—that he is in the torments of hell? We don't believe a word of it. My brethren, you will not find many men to-day who are willing to believe that that good, nice, honorable fellow who died recently, is in hell. It is not considered polite to express the opinion that anybody has gone to hell. And who will believe that his brother is in hell? I suppose it would have been a vain mission on the part of Lazarus. So then, we are shut up to it, if a man does not repent under the power that God exerts upon him through the revelation he has made of his righteous

wrath against sin, the punishment with which he will visit it, there is no power in heaven, earth, or hell, that can bring him to repentance. He is to be a hopeless outcast forever.

I have heard the question raised among a certain class (I am glad it is a diminishing class) as to how long a man ought to repent before he is prepared for baptism, and for union with the church. That question betrays another mistake on the whole subject of repentance. How long must a man repent? It really means, how long must a man be sorry for his sins? The mistaken idea that sorrow for sin is repentance is involved in that question. Still it is a legitimate question, How long shall a man be sorry for his sins, and mourn over them, before he is ready to take the stand that he ought to take in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ? I do not know any way to answer this question except by facts brought to light in the Scriptures. Among all the persons whose conversions are recorded in the New Testament, there is only one who continued in sorrow and mourning before he was baptized as long as three days. That was the Apostle Paul. The Philippian jailor, who had been a great sinner and a heathen, was baptized the same hour in which he first heard the Gospel preached. You may take these two cases as the extremes. But then, when you come to look into that three days' mourning of Saul of Tarsus, you find that the reason why he continued so long in sorrow was because no one had yet come to tell him what to do. As soon as Ananias, sent by the Lord, come in and found him in that condition, he said: "Brother Saul, why dost thou tarry? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord:" and he obeyed at once. If Ananias had come two days earlier, would not his command and Saul's action have been the same?

How long shall a man sorrow for his sins before he repents? Why, the answer is, I think, just as long as he *has* to sorrow before he is willing to give up his sins; and that may be a long time, or a short time. It ought to be but a very short time. As soon as a man is convinced that he is a sinner against God, he ought that very hour to be sorry, and sorry enough to abandon his sins, and to resolve that he will never sin again, God helping him. Whenever you have gotten to the point that your will is subdued, you have sorrowed long enough; and when you have reached that point, you have sorrowed intensely enough. So that all of this conception of long continued sorrow and mourning and anguish, causing sleep to depart, causing troubled dreams to visit you in the night—all this results from the fact that the will is so stubborn that it takes hours and weeks of anguish to break it down—to make the guilty, stubborn rebel, willing to submit to his God. God takes no delight in the tears, in the pains, in the agonies of the human heart. He takes delight in quick and willing obedience; and all he wants any man to do is to come to him in willing obedience. “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest.” That is the sweet and heavenly invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think, my friends, that this city, and this State, and this country of ours, are the worst places on this broad earth from which to go to hell. Jesus said to those people around him, believers in God, and men who thought themselves religious, “It shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.” Why? Because, if that which has been done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have lived; and therefore the men of Sodom shall rise up in the day of judgment and condemn you, showing that you are worse than they and must be punished more severely. He said to another audience on

another occasion, "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, but a greater than Jonah is here." They repented under the preaching of a prophet. These men refused to repent under the preaching of the Son of God. They repented under the preaching of a prophet who ran away from his God and was caught and sent back. These men refused to repent under the Son of God who had never violated his Father's will. And oh! how much severer condemnation awaited them! How is it with you and me on this line of comparison? If we do not repent, we can be said to be impenitent under the preaching, not merely of the Son of God who never disobeyed his Father, but of that Son of God laid in the grave, alive from the dead, ascending up into heaven, sitting down on the right hand of God, and speaking from the eternal throne, saying, Repent that you may live. This voice rings in our ears from Lord's day to Lord's day, and all through the week. The silent voice of that closed Bible on the stand is ever ringing in our ears, and still we do not repent. If then, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom than for Capernaum in the day of judgment, oh, how will it fare with you and me if we die without repentance?

Will you die that way? You will if you live that way. Will you repent this morning? Will you say to the God who made you, to the Saviour who redeemed you and who invites you to come to him, Lord, I come; I yield. Thy goodness, thy mercy, thy love, have subdued my stubborn will; I will cast my sins behind me; I will live hereafter for my God and my Redeemer. If so, then you are a penitent sinner. Will you come with that penitence and cast yourself upon the Saviour's mercy who is ready to receive you? While we sing, we beg you in Jesus' name to come.

SERMON IX.

BAPTISM.

EVENING JULY 2, 1893.

Since it has been announced that my subject to-night would be Baptism, I think it highly probable that the question has arisen in the minds of some, Why another sermon on that old hacknied theme? Perhaps the objection has arisen that this subject has been discussed and debated for hundreds of years, and it has never yet been settled. Why then continue to disturb the minds of the people with it? This objection involves a serious mistake. The question, it is true, has not in one sense been settled, that is, all the people have not been brought to an agreement in regard to it; but in another and a very important sense, it has been settled thousands and thousands of times; that is, it has been settled in the minds of men and women who have to give an account to God in the great day, and they have acted according to the settlement of it in their own minds. And let me say to you who are here to-night, it is a necessity laid on you, you can not avoid it, that you shall also settle the question in your own mind and for your own soul. You can not go into any church on earth except that of the Quakers, without being baptized—that is, without submitting to an ordinance which the church *calls* baptism. And if you are ever to become a member of any church, with the exception of the one named, before you do so you are compelled to decide in your own mind what baptism is, and that

will be settling the question so far as you are concerned. If you answer me, No, sir, the question was settled for me by my parents when I was an infant, and they baptized me, even this does not enable you to escape the necessity of which I speak; for you are compelled to decide for yourself before God, whether you will be satisfied with that as *your* obedience to this divine command. So then, to come to some practical decision of this disputed theme, is a necessity laid upon every one of you, and you will all give an account thereof to God in the day of judgment. Don't be impatient then when a man proposes to discuss the subject in your presence. Don't be unwilling to hear him. Whatever may be the position he takes, whichever side of the controverted question he stands on, don't be unwilling to hear all that he says, and to hear it candidly, to weight it fairly, so that you may decide the question intelligently.

But a man says, "According to my understanding of this controversy, it requires some knowledge of the dead languages, and especially of the Greek, in order to render an intelligent decision as to what baptism is; and as I am no scholar, I think God will not hold me to an account if I should happen to decide it incorrectly." Well, that is a mistake. It is a mistake to suppose that it requires scholarship in any dead language to determine what baptism is. And I am inclined to believe—I do believe, that every man who has ordinary common sense can take his own English Testament, and learn from the careful study of it, what God requires of him in order that he may live a life well pleasing in the sight of his Maker. I do not think you will find a Protestant preacher in the United States who will call that proposition in question.

What then is a man to do who does not understand Greek, who is a plain English scholar, and no more? I

once heard (a good many years ago), a man of very plain common sense, with no scholarship, not even an accurate English education, make this remark: "If my mind were unsettled in regard to baptism, I would take this course:—I would take my own New Testament, and, beginning at the first chapter of Matthew, I would read it all the way through, watching for that word 'baptism'; and everywhere I found it, I would examine carefully the passage in which I found it, and learn all I could about it; and when I got through I would put all of this together, and I would make up my mind on the whole subject of baptism that way. Then I would feel sure that it was God teaching me, and that he would approve my decision." The remark struck me with great force, and I have from that day to this been of the opinion that it is the best way by which any man can proceed to settle this much controverted question. It does not involve a single word in any language but our own. It does not involve arguments and disputations on the subject from other men. It involves nothing but listening to the utterances of God's word as you have it in your own vernacular, forming your own conclusions, and then taking up your line of action. Now, if that is not safe, I don't know what is. You may imagine it a very big task to read the book through and through, but there is not much more reading matter in it than there is in to-day's Courier-Journal. I don't think there is as much. When I tell you that I propose to lead you through that kind of an examination of the subject to-night, don't think I am going to keep you here till midnight. To save us the time that would otherwise be involved, I have already gone through my little Testament, and turned down leaves and marked with my pencil the passages, so we will not have to hunt for them very much. I now propose that every one of

you who has a Bible in hand, or can find one in your pew, will join me in this plain, simple, child-like search for God's utterances on this important theme.

We will open at the beginning of the Book, but before beginning to read, let us have one other preparation of mind on the subject, which I think is necessary in order that we may reach the safest possible results; and that is this:—If you want to investigate any question without bias of mind, it is a good thing to throw out of your mind by an effort of the imagination, all you know or ever have heard about it, and come to the investigation as if the subject was absolutely a new one of which you had never heard a word in your life before. Come with your mind like a sheet of blank paper, ready for God to write on it whatever you find in His holy word. I propose, then, that before we begin reading we shall each one imagine that we have never heard the word “baptism” pronounced in our lives. We are not aware that there is such a word in existence; and when we come to it while reading we will not go to the dictionary, Greek or English, but we will pause upon it and see if the Book itself explains it to us; and if so, we will have God's definition of it.

Now we begin at the first chapter of Matthew, and after reading that long list of names, and that account of the birth of the Lord, and of his childhood, in the third chapter the writer introduces John the Baptist; and in verses five and six we read thus:—“Then went out unto him Jerusalem and all Judea, and the region round about the Jordan, and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.” Why, there is a word I never saw before; I never heard of it. I wonder what it means—that these people were *baptized* by that man in the river Jordan. I would like to know what it means, but I believe I will let the New Testament itself

explain it to me, if it will. I do not know what was done to those people by John, but can I learn anything about it in this passage? Yes, they were baptized in the river Jordan; that tells where it was done, and it tells it so plainly that there can be no mistake about it.

So let us read on and see if we can learn more. At the eleventh verse, the same John says to his audience, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I; whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Here is our strange word again, and this time John says "I baptize you with *water*." Well, there is another thing we learn about it—that water and not wine, or milk, or honey, or any other liquid, but *water*, is used in this ordinance.

We read on in the same chapter, and at the thirteenth verse we have these words: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" And Jesus said, "Suffer it now, John, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." "Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water." Well, we see what he did when he was through with the baptizing—he "went up straightway from the water." But that is all. It does not tell us what the baptizing was. As regards the act itself that is called baptizing, we are as much in the dark as we were before.

From this whole chapter we learn only this—that when John baptized, it was in the river Jordan; that he used (in some way, we don't know how) *water*; and that after Jesus was baptized he went up straightway from the water, showing that he had been down to it; but that is all we learn, so we read on.

Our curiosity is awakened now, and chapter after chapter, leaf after leaf we turn, and we do not find our word again in its literal sense, until we come to the last chapter of Matthew, eighteenth and nineteenth verses. "Jesus came to them and spake to them, saying, all authority hath been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?" Here is our strange word again, and what do we learn about it here? Why, that those men were to baptize in all the nations. It was to be a universal thing. And they were to baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Well, it is becoming interesting. "Baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit," is a very solemn thing, and it is to be universal as the nations of men. We wonder more than ever what it is.

We are through with Matthew now. We will begin in Mark. We may have to read the whole New Testament through before we get our question answered.

The fourth verse of the first chapter of Mark says: "John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins." Here is another place of baptizing. In Matthew we found that he baptized in the river Jordan. Here, we learn he baptized in the wilderness. That puzzles us a little, until we know the geography of Palestine—we remember that a portion of the river Jordan, near its mouth, runs along a barren wilderness on its western bank. This then, tells us in what part of the river Jordan John baptized. "And there went out to him," says the fifth verse, "all the country of Judea and all they of Jerusalem, and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." Yes, we were right; it is in the "river Jordan" and in the wilderness at the same time.

At the eighth verse, John says to the people, "I baptize you with water;" but we knew that before.

At the ninth verse: "It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized of John in the Jordan, and straightway coming up out of the water he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him." Well, we learned from Matthew that he went up *from* the water, and now it says in Mark that he came up *out of* the water. He had then been down in it. So Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan, and after he was baptized he went up out of the water. It looks as if the baptizing had been done in the water, but still we do not know what it was.

We read on. We go all the way through Mark to the last chapter (the sixteenth) before we learn anything more about it. The fifteenth and sixteenth verses read: "And he said to them: Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." Here is that same idea of its universality which we learned from Matthew; and here is an additional thought connected with it, that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; and this adds interest to our inquiry. Still, no light is thrown upon the act itself; so we must patiently go on with our reading.

In the third chapter of Luke we meet with our strange word again, third verse. Speaking of John, the text says: "He cometh to all the region round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins." It was not only where the Jordan ran through the wilderness then, but in "all the region round about the Jordan" that John preached; and here we also learn that he preached the "baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins." If it was a baptism of repentance, a baptism

which required a man to repent before he submitted to it, and unto the remission of sins, it must have been a matter of supreme importance. The subject grows upon us by the words used in connection with it, but no light comes yet as to what the particular act itself was. If we had started out, knowing the meaning of the word, we would not have had this trouble; but we want the New Testament itself to show us its meaning, so we read on.

We read through Luke and into John without additional light; but in the third chapter of John, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, we stumble on it once more. "After these things, Jesus came and his disciples unto the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them and baptized." So we find from this that not only did John baptize, and not only did Jesus command his disciples to go into all nations and baptize, but that Jesus himself baptized at one time. "And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salem, because there was much water there, and they came and were baptized." Well, we learned in Matthew, and also in Mark, that John used water in baptizing. Now we learn that when he left the Jordan, he went to Ænon near to Salem, because there was *much* water there; and this shows that he wanted "much water" with which to baptize. But this is a very vague expression. A pitcher-full is much compared with a glassful; a barrel-full is much compared with a pitcher-full; and a river is much compared with any of our vessels of water. So the text is extremely vague when it says "much water." We are learning very slowly as regards the act itself, but we must be patient when we are in search of the truth.

We read on through John without any further satisfaction, and into the book of Acts; and in the second chapter of that book and forty-first verse, we learn that "they

that received the words of Peter were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." In the thirty-eighth verse Peter says to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." And thus we learn that the apostles did as Jesus told them—went abroad to preach the gospel, and required men to be baptized. Peter, in telling them to be baptized says, "Be baptized unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." When we thus find that the gift of the Holy Spirit is connected with it, its importance grows upon us: still there is nothing here to tell us what baptism is.

We read on. We come to the eighth chapter of Acts. We find there that Philip is preaching the gospel in Samaria, and "when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Nothing to explain the act itself.

In the same chapter, farther on, Philip and the eunuch are riding in the chariot together, and Philip is preaching to the eunuch. At the thirty-sixth verse we read, "and as they went on their way, they came to a certain water." We have already learned that water was the element used. "And the eunuch said, Behold, here is water; what hindereth me to be baptized? and he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him; and when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away." We learn additional items from this. We learn that before the baptizing, the baptist and the candidate both went down into the water; that while they were down in the water, the baptizing was done; and that they then came up out of the water.

We have not found the answer to our question yet, but we are getting it hemmed in. John baptized in the river Jordan, and at Ænon where there was much water. Now we learn that in performing the act they went down into the water; it was done while they were down there, and then they came up out of the water; and this explains how Jesus came up out of the water when he was baptized: but what Philip did to the eunuch called baptism; what John did to Jesus called baptism—the question on which we started out, is not answered yet.

When we get into the ninth of Acts, we find that Saul of Tarsus was baptized; but nothing is said about it to indicate what the act was; and so in regard to Cornelius; so in regard to Lydia; so in regard to the Philippian jailor. The disciples are carrying out their commission to baptize men, but we find no words in these passages to indicate what the act was.

We read into Romans, the first epistle in the order in which they are printed. In the sixth chapter, third and fourth verses, we read these words: "Are you ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" Ah! there are two new thoughts. When men are baptized under Christ, they are baptized into Jesus Christ, and baptized into his death. The importance of the act still grows. The apostle proceeds: "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." What does the apostle say was done through baptism? "We were buried with him through baptism into death." Let us pause with that. We have learned before that the persons to be baptized and the man who baptized them went down into the water; the baptizing was done there; and done with the water; then they came up out of the

water. Now we learn, that in that baptism they were buried; and if water was the element, what conclusion can we reach than this, that they were buried in the water? That explains at last, what the act was. But if we had never heard of the matter before, we might exclaim, Bury a man in the water? and if you leave him there, he will drown. But he is not to be left there; for Jesus came up straightway out of the water. Philip and the eunuch came up out of the water. Well then, it was a temporary burial and not a permanent one, would be our conclusion. But not to allow anything to rest upon mere inferences, however logical, let us read a little farther and see if we can find any light on that particular point?

We read on, then, and when we come into the second chapter of the epistle to the Colossians and twelfth verse, we have this language. "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead." Jesus Christ was buried in the tomb and on the third morning he came up. "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye were raised with him," makes our burial in water a representation of his burial in the tomb, and our rising from the water, of his rising from the dead. This burial explains some of the things that we met with before. It explains why a river like the Jordan was used instead of some smaller water. It explains why much water was needed and found at Ænon—enough to bury men. It explains why, previous to the baptism, they went down into the water. They could not bury a man without doing so. It explains why, at the termination of it they always come up out of the water. We learn then, that baptism is an act in which a man is buried in water and raised again in imitation of the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is done by the command of the Lord Jesus Christ himself; the blessing which fol-

lows the act is the remission of our sins ; the act brings us into Christ, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ; and it is followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If this is all true, my friends, it is a most solemn, interesting and precious ordinance. We can not overestimate the value of it. We can not consent to speak of it as a mere external act. It is the most solemn and significant ordinance ever appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ, not excepting that in which we partake of his broken body and shed blood. Let my tongue be palsied, and my hand and arm drop from my shoulder blade, before I dare to speak lightly of it.

When I was in Palestine, if I could have found beyond all doubt the very sepulchre of Joseph, in which the Saviour was laid away, and where he lay so still until the resurrection morning, I would have prized the sight of it above all that I saw. I would have been glad to go in and stretch myself upon the same bare, rock floor, and to have some friend roll a stone to the mouth of it, that I might realize by imagination my Saviour's burial. We can not do that. We are not permitted to do it. But in this ordinance of baptism we are allowed to do the next thing to it. Laid down in a watery grave in obedience to his command, we allow the water to close above our heads, and then, as though we were dead we are lifted by the strong arm of a servant of God out of that cold grave, and we start to walk in a new life as he started to walk in a new one when he arose from the dead. It is a sacred and a blessed privilege.

When we consider this ordinance in the light of the passages that I have read, we not only see its connection with the burial and resurrection of our Lord, but we instinctively feel that it points us forward to our own death, burial and resurrection. Baptism stands midway in the

life of a man who submits to it, very much as one of those old-fashioned guide posts, which we used to see at the cross-roads, with finger boards pointing this way and that. It stands there with one arm pointing back to the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, and the other pointing forward to our own death, our own burial, and our own resurrection. And as it brings us into Christ, unto the forgiveness of our sins, it imparts to us the blessed hope that when we come to be laid in that grave, a strong arm will lift us out of it as we were lifted out of the burial in water.

Can there possibly arise in the heart of any human being, when these things are considered, any repugnance to the ordinance? Any feeling of disrespect toward it? Any other feeling than a most profound reverence for it, and for the God and Saviour who appointed it? I am sure there can not.

Is there any one here to-night who desires to submit to it? Oh! my dear friends, you can not be baptized unless you believe in Christ with all your heart. You can not be buried with the Lord in that holy and solemn way, unless you have repented of all your sins, have cast them behind you, and have stamped your feet upon the service of the devil. If you have done this; if this is the state of your heart to-night, then it is your privilege to be buried with your Lord in baptism. It is your privilege to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; to receive the forgiveness of all the sins of your past life; and to be enabled to walk in a new life—a life of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Does your heart pant for this? Do you hear the voice of Jesus calling you to-night? Do you aspire to that blessing to which he invites you? Then, I beg you to come out, confess the faith which you have in him, and give him your life.

SERMON X.

CASES OF CONVERSION: THE EUNUCH.

MORNING JULY 9, 1893.

I will read three verses in the eighth chapter of Acts, from the thirty-sixth to the thirty-ninth :

And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

A very large element, and an effective one, in modern revival preaching, consists in the recital of cases of conversion; and these are recited to the people for a double purpose: first, to show sinners by example, the way into the kingdom; and second, by the force of stirring and well selected examples, to stimulate sinners to the imitation of them. They have been found so effective that they make up a very large portion of the matter in the sermons of popular revivalists. Now the Lord knew, before men discovered it, the power there is in examples to make a matter plain, and also to stimulate men to action; and consequently he devoted one book in the New Testament to such recitals. The book of Acts is made up chiefly of accounts of the conversion of a great variety of persons in many different places. If you should take out of it everything that is closely connected with accounts of conversion, and of attempts at

conversion where there was a failure, you would have very little left in that book. We have then, in these days, two classes of examples of conversion, between which we may choose those that shall guide us. We have this class written down in the book of Acts; and we have this other class which transpire in our midst, before our eyes. In the present day the great majority of the people are guided chiefly by the latter, as they are so abundantly described by the preachers. For my own part I prefer to be guided by those that are written in the book of Acts; and for this choice I have two reasons. In the first place, all the conversions that took place in those early days occurred under the direction of inspired preachers; and consequently those early converts were not misled in anything that they did. Secondly, after a vast multitude—thousands upon thousands of such conversions had taken place—the Holy Spirit guided Luke to select a few of them for a permanent place in the Bible; so we may say that these cases of conversion have passed twice under the inspection of the Spirit of God.

It follows from these considerations that if I, in coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, imitate to perfection any one conversion that is recorded in the book of Acts, my conversion is genuine, and without any defect about it. On the other hand, if, in comparing my supposed conversion with these, I find any material difference between my experience and that of any one of these persons, then mine is, to that extent, defective and wrong. A man who supposes himself a convert to Christ, can test the matter by comparing the particulars of his conversion with the particulars of these; and a man who has not found out the way to Christ, can find out the way by examining these. They serve as infallible guides to those who have not yet started in the way of life.

After these preliminary remarks, intended to show you the importance of the inquiry I am about to institute, I propose to look carefully at the details of the conversion of which I have read to you—that of the Ethiopian nobleman who was baptized by Philip. These recitals of which I have spoken, so common in the present day, consist in telling the condition of the man before he was converted; then telling what he read, what he thought, what he felt, what was said to him, what was said by him and what he did, until the moment that he finds himself rejoicing in the forgiveness of his sins. Then the recital ends. These accounts in Acts furnish you the same material, and out of the one before us we will gather together and arrange these items according to the plan I have just laid out.

Let us inquire first, then, who this man was before his conversion. We are told in the text that he was the treasurer of Queen Candace. He appears certainly to have been a Jew, or a proselyte to the Jewish religion—most likely the former—a Jew who, like Daniel, or like Nehemiah, had attained to a very high position in a foreign land. This man had, by his integrity, industry and fidelity, raised himself from the position of a foreigner belonging to a despised race, to be the chief treasurer of the kingdom of Ethiopia. When he is introduced to us, he had just been up to Jerusalem to worship God. He had made a journey of more than a thousand miles on land in a chariot, traveling at the rate of three or four miles an hour, to go up to the city of the living God, to worship God there; and now he was returning home. As he rode along, he was reading. I see a great many persons reading on the railroad trains. If I am going to or from Louisville, they are reading the Courier-Journal; if I am going to or from Cincinnati, they are

reading the Enquirer, or the Commercial-Gazette. I very seldom see them reading anything else, except that now and then I see a lady with a paper-covered book in her hand. This man was traveling, riding along in his chariot over a rough road, and he held in his hand the book of Isaiah—reading that. The text not only tells us this, but it tells the very passage he was reading, and what he was thinking about. He had fallen upon the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, as now marked in our Bibles, and was reading that wonderful passage which begins, “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;” and he was reading it aloud. I suppose he had discovered what many others have, that if you read aloud you can keep your attention fixed on the subject better than by reading silently. He was aiming to learn all he could, and when he came to this passage he was puzzled about the meaning of it—“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter”—all monosyllables nearly, the most familiar words in the language, but the puzzle on his mind was, “Of whom does the prophet write this? of himself? or of some other man?” It is impossible for any man who has never heard the story of the Lord Jesus Christ as written in the four gospels, to read that passage thoughtfully and not have the same question arise in his mind. Now the fact that he did not know and could not decide about whom the prophet was writing, shows that he was not yet acquainted with the story of our suffering Saviour. This, then, was the man’s condition before his conversion.

I think, my brethren, whenever the Heavenly Father looks down on a man engaged as this one was, He is delighted to see the sight. You go anywhere, and as you pass along keep your mind engaged in the study of God’s word, He loves to see you; you are very near to God’s hand stretched out to lay a blessing on you; and this

man was. Notice, he had been up to Jerusalem, where the apostles had been preaching some years, and in the midst of the land where churches had been established, but he was yet in darkness. He is going down into the darkness of heathenism, in his distant home, and if something is not done for him before he goes away, he may die without hearing the name of Jesus. When God saw him thus, He went deliberately to work to make a Christian of him; and we are able, by inspired guidance, to trace all the steps of the divine procedure which brought about his salvation. At the beginning of the narrative, we find that God's first act was to dispatch an angel from heaven to earth. We are not surprised at this; for we read that all the angels of God are ministering spirits for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But this angel did not, as you might have supposed, visit the man who was reading the Bible—did not appear to him or speak to him—though he was sent from heaven to bring about that man's conversion. The angel landed in Samaria, and stood in the presence of Philip, an inspired deacon, and said to him: "Philip, arise and go south into the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza." Then the angel disappeared, and I suppose he went away to work for the salvation of some other sinner. Philip, then, in obedience to the command, arose and went; and I have often wondered how the angel of the Lord adjusted the time for the movements of Philip and those of the chariot. Philip had a journey of two or three days, to get down into that road; the chariot, only a run of two or three hours; so, in reality, Philip started before the chariot did; but when he came into the road, there was the chariot right before him. The angel had made no mistake in his calculation. In this, we see the first thing that the Lord did for the eunuch.

Observe, now, that all that the angel told Philip to do, was to get into that road; and when he got into the road, there he would have stopped, I presume, and waited for some other command from the Lord; but just as he might have stopped, the Holy Spirit interposes and begins His part of the work of the man's conversion. He does not begin to work in the heart of the eunuch; He does not say anything to the eunuch; but, following up the action of the angel, the Holy Spirit speaks to Philip. He says: "Philip, go and join thyself to that chariot;" and, receiving this command, Philip ran, so as to overtake the chariot quickly. Now, we have an angel working at the command of God for the salvation of that man; we have the Holy Spirit; but the effect of all that the angel and the Spirit did was only to bring the preacher side by side with the man who is to be converted; so, if the angel's action, or the Spirit's, is to have any effect on him, it will be through the words which the preacher will speak when he gets there. Paul says, Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

When Philip got up to the chariot, the man was just then engaged in reading aloud the passage which is quoted in the text; for we are told that Philip *heard* him; and Philip introduced himself in rather an abrupt and singular way, by asking him, "Dost thou understand what thou readest?" If a man were to come up to you when you are reading and ask you that question, you might be offended. Why then did Philip introduce himself, or rather, the conversation, in that way? For a very good reason. He knew that if the man was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, he could not fail to know what that passage meant; but if not a believer, he could not understand it. Not an unbelieving Jew on earth to-day can explain that passage. Philip put that question

in order that he might know what kind of a man the Lord had sent him to ; if a believer, he would proceed to preach to him in one way ; if an unbeliever, he would preach to him in another and very different way. The man's answer revealed his position as that of an unbeliever : "How can I understand except some one shall guide me?" He speaks as if he had become impatient in his vain struggle with the passage. I do not know why he asked Philip to get up into the chariot with him, unless he thought, from the way Philip looked, or the tone of his voice, or both, that he understood it ; and so, anxious and willing to learn, he invites him to a seat, and with the book open before them both, they move slowly on their way. The eunuch inquires, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself? or of some other man?" The text tells us that Philip began at that same scripture, and preached to him Jesus ; and this was the answer to his question. It was not written about Isaiah himself, or any other man, but about Jesus, the Son of God. It could not have required a very great effort in argument or exegesis to enable that man to see that Philip was right. All required was to tell him the story of the birth, the life and the death of the Son of God. It has been related that Voltaire, the great French infidel, said if he could be convinced that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is genuine, he would concede that at least one prediction of the prophets was fulfilled. Philip had an easy task ; the eunuch could not fail to see of whom the prophet wrote.

A great many of the conversions in apostolic times were the conversions of single individuals, as in the present case. Philip went on with his conversational sermon until the chariot drove up to a stream, or to some pool of water, when the eunuch said, "Here is

water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Did you ever stop and ask yourself how he happened to ask that question? We are told that Philip preached Jesus to the man; but while he was preaching Jesus, the man found out that he had to be baptized, and asked the question, What hinders me? He did not wait for the preacher to urge him to this duty; but he first put the matter before the preacher as the desire of his heart. How did that come about? I have had people to say, "Brother McGarvey, I would like your preaching better if you would just preach Christ crucified, and not speak of baptism so often." Well, I like to gratify my friends, but I can't get along that way. When Philip was preaching Christ to the man, it seems that baptism was a part of the sermon. Indeed, it is impossible to preach Christ fully to a sinner and leave baptism out of the sermon. You have to mention baptism early in the story of Jesus; for he was baptized by John; and at the end of the story; for then he commanded the disciples to go and baptize men in every nation. You have to leave out both these chapters in the history of Christ if you leave out baptism. It is a mutilated gospel that leaves baptism out of the sermons addressed to sinners. So then the eunuch had heard all this while he was listening to Philip, and he intensely desires to be baptized—so intensely, that before Philip said a word of exhortation on the subject, "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" We are not told what Philip's answer was. It is true that in the King James version it is interpolated, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." But the true text simply says that he commanded his chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch. The writer really left out the answer, because he presumed his readers would know what it was,

by knowing the answer always given to the question. The answer interpolated is no doubt the one really given. While they were down in the water, Philip baptized him; then they came out, and the same Spirit that made Philip come and join the chariot, caught him away, and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Thus the brief story ends. The man has been brought to the forgiveness of his sins and he rejoices in the Lord.

I wish now to look at this case from another point of view. Suppose we meet the eunuch down the road—we are old acquaintances of his—and we say, Why, my friend, what has come over you—your face is radiant with joy? He answers, I have a right to rejoice. I have learned of the Redeemer, of the Messiah that was to come; and through Him who is the Redeemer of men I have obtained the forgiveness of my sins; this is what makes me so happy. Well, do tell us your experience. Certainly. Will he begin by telling about the angel that came down from heaven? No; for of this he knew nothing. Will he begin by telling what the Holy Spirit did, in directing Philip to come to the chariot? No; for he knew nothing of this. Well, where will he begin? He must begin by telling of his own reading of God's word—of coming to a passage which he could not understand, not knowing about whom it was written; and he may say, A man on foot came up to my chariot, while I was reading aloud, and asked if I understood what I was reading. He struck the nail on the head. It seems like a special providence that he came at the nick of time. He looked as if he knew, and I asked him how could I understand except some man should guide me. I invited him to a seat, and he explained the passage. As he did so, in that passage so dark, as dark as Egypt, I began to see a great light. I soon saw that the prophet spoke of

a glorious Redeemer dying for the sins of men. He went on to tell me what that Redeemer had said that men like myself should do. While the man was still speaking I said, What hinders me from being baptized? There was nothing in the way, so I was at once baptized, and I arose from that water with my sins forgiven, according to the promise of the Lord. For this reason I am happy to-day.

Now let me ask you who are servants of the Lord, does this experience agree with yours? I thank God that in all its essential points it agrees with mine. I am not sure that any divine power was exerted as in this case, to bring me and the preacher together; but I see no reason why it should not have been. Are there not some persons in this audience who had no thought a few days ago of being here this morning to hear me preach? How often you have been brought unexpectedly into meetings where you were deeply impressed! Every impression made on such occasions was anticipated by God, and how do you know but that angels were dispatched to earth to bring you and the preacher of those occasions together? If the eunuch had been told what that angel did, it would have surprised him. If there were to-day some inspired writer giving an account of your life and mine, you do not know how many angels he would have to speak of in the story. In God's providence He brings you face to face with the preacher of the gospel, and He does it for the purpose of your salvation.

One more question in regard to this interesting man. Why didn't he say: Philip, this is a new thing to me; I will be back here at the Passover next year, and if some of your kind will be in Jerusalem then, perhaps I will be able to decide about this new doctrine which you have brought to me. That is not the way a God-approved man acts. A God-approved man, when he sees a duty,

hesitates not, but does it at once. This man went right down into the water. He did not wait for Philip to urge him to go. This is the kind of prompt and decisive obedience which God likes. If you want to please your God and bless your own soul, remember that the very hour in which you learn what your duty is, is the hour in which to act it out. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Is there a sinner here who wants to have an experience like this man's? who wants to have this man as his model? Obey the Lord as promptly as he did, and you also may go on your way rejoicing.

It is written of Barton Stone, that in his early days he was traveling through Ohio preaching, and having preached in the forenoon, he mounted his horse to go to another appointment, when, as he rode along, a stranger fell in with him, and said: "Mr. Stone, I heard you preach this morning; here is a stream of water; I want to be baptized. What hinders me?" Stone had never understood this passage of Scripture before this; but he was reminded of it, and he instantly resolved to follow it; so he said: "If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart you may." He answered, "I do believe on Him with all my heart." "Dismount, then," said Stone. "and let us go down into the water." They did so, and when they came out of the stream they parted—never saw each other again. Did Stone do right? Did that man do right? If they did not, Philip and the eunuch did wrong. If you do the same, will you do right? You must, if you have the right Bible to guide you. Will you do it at once, and rejoice in the forgiveness of sins? or will you refuse and go on your way sad at heart from a guilty conscience? Come, I pray you, and come now.

SERMON XI.

CASES OF CONVERSION: CORNELIUS.

EVENING JULY 9TH, 1893.

Before the prayer I read a few verses in the beginning of the tenth chapter of Acts; I will now read the last few verses of the same chapter:

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word. And they of the circumcision who believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

In the two readings I have presented the beginning and the close of the account of another conversion. I propose to look at this example of conversion after the same plan with which we studied that of the eunuch this morning. First, I wish to observe the man himself, before his conversion; and secondly, to trace out what was done for him, and what was done by him, up to the time that he was rejoicing as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have here a very curious description, but an exceedingly interesting one, of what would be called, in our modern phraseology, an unconverted man. He was a soldier in an army generally composed of heathen,

blood-thirsty men. He was an officer ranking as the captain in our modern armies, commander of a hundred men; but we are told that he was "a devout man"—a very remarkable circumstance in an officer in a heathen army—and lest we might understand that he was a devout heathen, it is added that "he feared God with all his house." This last clause shows that he was not only a devout worshiper of the true God himself, but that he had brought up his whole family in the same religious habits. He was not one of those worshipers of the Lord who are so timid about their own religious sentiments that they make no effort to impress their faith upon the members of their families; for, "He feared God *with all his house.*" This expression, as we learn farther on, includes his servants; because it is said that he called to him "two of his devout servants." He was a man, then, of great religious zeal. He was not one of those worshipers of God, so common in the world, who forget their neighbors, or the wants and the needs of the poor, being satisfied with the idea that they have made their own peace with God, and who live the rest of their lives for themselves; but we are told in the next place, that "He gave much alms to the people." The people mentioned are the Jewish people. He was in authority over the Jewish people in the city of Cæsarea, and He gave much alms to them—a benevolent man. And this is not all; you will find many men in these days who are benevolent, very benevolent, but who have no religious character whatever. They have inherited a kind disposition, perhaps, from good, pious fathers and mothers; they have been brought up from their childhood to have pity for the poor and distressed. But in addition to all this we are told that this man "Prayed to God always"—he was a praying man. Let us put all these statements together and

see what kind of a character we have: A devout man who feared God with all his house, including his servants; who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God regularly, habitually. He is the man concerning whose conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ we are about to inquire, and perhaps you are ready to ask, What conversion did he need? What change did he need? This is a very legitimate inquiry. I hope you will keep your mind on it, until you see the answer coming out. What change, in order to become a Christian in the true sense of the word?

His character already puts to shame a great many of those who profess to be good Christians; but before we reach the answer to our question, I wish you would look at this case from another point of view. I know men, and I have met a great many, who are so good already, though out of the church, that they have no fears about the future. They will tell you how honest they are; how truthful they are; how prompt to pay every debt, and to discharge every obligation; that they try to be good husbands and fathers, good neighbors; and that they do their share in providing for the wants of the poor and needy in the community in which they live; and they say, "I can't see what there is for me to fear." And so they content themselves to live and die as they are. Now if there should be one of that class here to-night, male or female, I ask you to come up and let us take your portrait side by side with that of Cornelius, and see which presents the fairer appearance—which stands higher in the scale of excellence, according to a true estimate of humanity. He was a devout man; he gave much alms to the people; he feared God; and his whole family, including servants, did the same; and he prayed to God continually. If that man needed to

hear words by which he might be saved, don't you need something of the same kind? And, if that man did hear such words, wouldn't it be wise in you to listen to those same words, and to secure that same heavenly boon, the salvation of your soul?

After all that is said about his excellence of character, he had committed sins; he knew, when he ran over his past life, that he had committed many sins against his God; and he had never approached God in His appointed way, to secure the forgiveness of a single sin; for he did not know how; he was not acquainted with Christ. The very best man or woman in this city to-day, has many sins which need to be forgiven.

Let us look at this case, and see what this man really needed in order that he might stand complete in all the fullness of Christ, and as a disciple of the Lord be ready for death and eternity. According to his custom, he was praying at the third hour of the day, one of his regular hours of prayer—notice, not just before he went to bed, his eyes heavy with sleep; not at some leisure hour, but in the very middle of the afternoon he had an appointed hour of prayer which he did not neglect. As he was praying—we can see, and he could see afterward—God chose that very moment to begin to make up what he lacked of being a Christian. How similar to the case of this morning! While the eunuch was riding along in his chariot, reading the book of Isaiah, studying the prophet's words about the death of the Lord Jesus, which he could not understand, just at that moment God brings the preacher to the side of his chariot, to show him the way of salvation. Now this man was earnestly praying to the invisible God, and God had heard the prayers which he had put up before, and remembered his giving of alms; for God, my brethren, we are assured in the

Bible, never forgets one good thing we do, even if it is nothing more than giving a cup of water to one of his disciples. Just then an angel stands visible before Cornelius in his room. How beautiful! What delightful beings the angels are! One of them stands before Cornelius. He says, "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." Now when we hear the angel say this, we are thrown back to the question we raised awhile ago: If that man has led such a life, and this angel's message is true, what does he need more? Suppose that next Sunday morning a man should go into some church in Louisville and say to the preacher: I would like to apply for membership in your church to-day, and I am ready to tell my experience when the time comes. He is called up at the close of the sermon to tell his experience. He says: Brethren, I have been, for a considerable time back, a devout man; I believe, and I think my neighbors will tell you the same, that I have feared God; I have taught my family and servants the same thing; I have been, for years, punctual and prompt in giving alms to the poor around me; and I have been habitually given to prayer. Yesterday afternoon at three o'clock an angel appeared before me, and said to me: "Thy prayer is heard and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." Now brethren, that is my experience—will you receive me? What church is there that would not? And yet, this man was not yet a Christian; he lacked something yet that was to be supplied, for that angel did not stop with telling him that his prayers and his alms had gone up for a memorial before God, but he added, "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side, that you may hear words

from him." And Peter, when he was telling the story afterwards, expressed it in this way: "That you may hear words by which you and your house may be saved;" so he had yet to hear words by which he might be saved. That is very singular in appearance to our modern eyes, because we have not the scriptural conception of conversion altogether in our minds.

Cornelius was a very prompt man. I admire a man who does not dilly-dally about things—who goes right to work. It was now past the middle of the afternoon, but he called two of his devout servants and a devout soldier, and he told these three men all that the angel had said, and started them to Joppa. They could not get there that night, but they got there the next day about noon. From the state of the church, it would appear that those men would go on a hopeless errand; for up to this time, no uncircumcised person had ever been received into the church. The apostles had not yet been told that the old law had been set aside. They believed that in obedience to God's own law, they ought not to receive into the church an uncircumcised man; and Peter would have said, No, I can not come. Something had to be done to make him willing to come; so, while the men were on the way to Joppa, Peter went on the house-top to pray, and he became very hungry; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw, in a sheet let down from heaven, all manner of beasts and creeping things, while a voice from heaven said, "Arise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean;" but the voice commanded him, "What God hath cleansed, make thou not common." This was done three times; and while he was yet doubting what it should mean, the men who were sent from Cornelius reached the gate, and the Spirit

said unto him, "Behold, three men seek thee; go with them, nothing doubting." He went down and there were the three men. They had inquired for the house of Simon the tanner, and had found it. Peter received them, and the next day he went with them to Cæsarea. They got to the house of Cornelius about the same time of day that they had started for Joppa; and when Cornelius saw them coming, he went out and fell down at the feet of Peter, to do him homage as a messenger from God. But Peter, not knowing but that he meant to worship him, said, "Stand up; I myself, also, am a man."

While the three men were on their journey, Cornelius, knowing the time it would take to go to Joppa and come back, had invited to his house a large number of his kinsmen and friends. I don't suppose he invited any of his ungodly friends, but he picked his audience. Peter, on coming in, said: "You know that it is unlawful for me to go into the house of a man of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man unclean. With what intent did you send for me?" Cornelius stated the facts and then said: "We are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee by the Lord." What an audience! Assembled in the sight of God, ready to hear his message and ready to obey it! Oh, if I could have such an audience every time I come to Louisville, how many souls would be saved!

Then Peter opened his mouth and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him." Appropriate introduction. Then he went on to preach to his audience the word which God sent, preaching peace by Jesus Christ. "That

word," he says, "you know." They were not ignorant of it. They had lived there in Palestine. They had heard it over and over again in the last few years. Every hill and valley had rung with it. That word which began after the baptism which John preached, how that Jesus Christ went about doing good; how the Jews took him and slew him on a tree. But God raised him from the dead, and commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify of Him, that whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins—shall be saved. The defect in Cornelius and his friends was not that they had not heard of Jesus—that they had not heard the whole story of his birth, burial and resurrection. It was something else, and we must watch carefully till we discover it.

While Peter was still speaking, suddenly his auditors began to speak. The Holy Spirit came upon them as it had come on the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and they began to speak in other tongues, praising God. That was a surprise to Peter and the six Jews who had come with him from Joppa. When all had quieted down, he finished his sermon. He said to the six Jews, Who shall forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? There was no answer. Then he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord; and that is the end of the story. We can now see that there was just one thing added to that good man, so far as his intellect was concerned; there was added the information that it was his privilege, as well as that of the Jew, to become a member of the Church of God. And so far as his conduct was concerned, all that he was required to do, was to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I tell you, my good friends, there are many good people who need nothing more than to understand their privilege, and to be bap-

tized, in order to stand as they ought to stand. Cornelius is an example for such, and they should all have faith enough to follow in his footsteps.

Perhaps some one in this audience is ready to say to me, You are overlooking one very important matter. I thought men had to receive the Holy Spirit before they could be baptized; and there it is. The Holy Spirit fell upon them, and Peter said, Who shall the forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? Now let us look at that for a moment. They certainly did receive the Holy Spirit. Suppose you say then, I shall not be baptized before I receive the Holy Spirit as Cornelius did. See what you wait for. They received the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit; for they spoke in other tongues. Ought sinners to wait for that now? They will die waiting, if they do. No man, since miracles ceased, has received that gift of the Holy Spirit. We must remember that the miracles in these conversions are not for our imitation; but only that which is not miraculous. If I say that we shall be as Cornelius in receiving the Holy Spirit, why not say, Cornelius saw an angel before he was baptized, and therefore, I, too, must see an angel. That is plain enough. Angels do not appear visibly now. They appeared in those early days, to establish the fact that they are here and working among us; but their visible appearance is no longer needed. Furthermore, if you will look a little closely at this text, you will find why that miracle was wrought on Cornelius—that it was not for a change in him, but for the instruction of Peter and those Jews. We may learn what a thing is made for, by the use that is made of it. Suppose that to-morrow morning you get into the cab of a locomotive that is going out, and some one asks you, What is that handle for? and what is this

one for? You say you do not know; but you sit there until you see the engineer move this to the right and that to the left, and immediately the purpose of each is apparent in the effect upon the engine. So here you see the miraculous tongues, but you do not see their purpose. But wait until you see what use Peter makes of the miracle. He uses it to convince the Jews that an uncircumcised man should be dealt with as the circumcised; for, "In every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." After he went to Jerusalem, the brethren called him to account; but he said, Brethren, when I saw the Holy Spirit come upon them as it did on us in the beginning, what was I, that I should withstand God? And when the brethren heard that, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. This miraculous gift of the Spirit, then, was not intended to work a change in Cornelius and his friends, but to make it plain to everybody that the Gentiles had the privilege of entering the kingdom on the same terms with the Jew. It settled the question forever: and as no one has since denied this right of the Gentiles, no one else has to this day received the Holy Spirit as Cornelius did before baptism.

Cornelius had indirectly promised to be prompt in obeying the Lord, whenever he should learn what he had to do; and now he fulfills his pledge, and goes on his way rejoicing. He knows now that his sins are all blotted from God's remembrance, and they are the same as if they had never been. I would like to see that good man—well, I expect to see him, and have a good long talk with him. I will say, Well, Cornelius, we do not know anything about you after your baptism, and I would like to know how you got along. I think his answer will be,

I was a devout man before the apostle baptized me, but I was more devout afterwards. I taught my household; I gave alms to the people, before I became a member of Christ's church; I prayed to God regularly and constantly before; but I prayed with more love and more zeal, with deeper satisfaction to my soul, all the rest of my days. I hope that this will be his story, and I am sure it will be.

Now, if there is any one here to-night who doesn't feel conscious of being a very great sinner—and if you are not, you ought not pretend to be—what is it you need to do to be acceptable to God. The old idea that a man ought to feel himself to be the very worst sinner in the world before he can come to Christ, is wrong. If he persuades himself that he is the worst sinner when he is not, he is led into a blunder, a misconception of himself. A man ought to form as fair an estimate of himself as he can. We do not like to look on the dark side of ourselves. No man, looking into a mirror, likes to see the spots on the face that are not his beauty spots; and so in regard to our character. If there is one sin, and only one, that we have been guilty of, we must repent; we must repent of all of our sins, that by the efficacy of the blood of Christ, we may be saved. Now whether you have many sins, or few, they are the things to keep you out of heaven; nothing else can. All the enemies on earth can not keep you out of heaven; all the angels in heaven, if they should turn away from God, could not keep you out of heaven; but one sin, of which you have not repented, may. Lift up your souls, brethren, and call upon God for help. Pray to Him for strength that you may live purer and holier lives every day—so live that your last hours may be your best. If to live such a life is the desire of any penitent sinner here to-night, heaven has opened to you the way to enter upon it, and

made it very plain by these examples of conversion. Be prompt, as these men were, in your obedience to God, and go on your way like them, rejoicing in the forgiveness of your sins.

SERMON XII.

CASES OF CONVERSION: LYDIA.

MORNING JULY 16, 1893.

I now read a lesson in the sixteenth chapter of Acts of Apostles, beginning with the sixth verse, where the writer, in speaking of Paul and Silas, Luke and Timothy, who made up the apostle's company, says:

“They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the spirit of Jesus suffered them not; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the Gospel to them. Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony [that is, it was a settlement of Romans in the midst of the Greek population surrounding it]: and we were in this city tarrying certain days. And on the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spoke to the women who were come together. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, to give heed unto the things that were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

Thus I have read to you the inspired account of the conversion of Lydia and her household. This passage of Scripture has been brought freshly to the memory of all engaged in Sunday-school work, by having been the Sunday-school lesson a few Lord's days ago, and this is a special reason why I should make it the subject of discourse this morning. I should be very glad always if the passages of Scripture on which I discourse on the Lord's day, were fresh in the memories of the audience, because then they could be more interested in what is said; they could see more clearly the point in any truths presented; and they could decide more surely whether any erroneous positions are taken by the preacher.

In studying any case of conversion recorded in the New Testament, for the purpose of understanding fully the subject and method of conversion to Christ, I think it wise, as we have done in examining two preceding cases, to look carefully first at the person who is the subject of the change.

Let us see if we can form a clear and distinct idea of the woman here introduced, previous to the time that the apostles came into her presence. I think this will be well worth all our study, independent of the question of the process of conversion. I think you will find it true all through the Bible, that every woman introduced in Scripture story in any conspicuous way, is a remarkable one—remarkable for some striking virtues, or for some equally striking vices; and therefore well worthy of our consideration in studying human character. This woman, when she was introduced to us, was not at home. She was a woman of Thyatira, a city in Asia Minor, even now a town of some ten thousand inhabitants, mostly Turks and Arabs; and she is presented to us in the city

of Philippi, about three hundred miles away from her home, across land and sea. We find her a business woman, engaged in selling purple cloths. The purple dye was the most costly known to the ancients, and consequently it was never applied to cheap goods; only the most costly fabrics were dyed purple; consequently, to be arrayed in purple and fine linen, was to be rich; and the Emperor was sometimes referred to as the man who wore the purple. She was not then engaged in a cheap business that required no capital. If she was employing her own capital in purchasing and selling these goods, as is most probable (for the modern system of traveling salesmen had not been introduced), then she was a woman in comfortable circumstances, and yet dependent, apparently, upon her own womanly exertions for her livelihood, having no husband, brother, father or friend to depend upon, or, if she had, preferring to be independent. Now I have known a great many business women, and I have very frequently found that their business contact with the ungodly world, struggling and pushing, and working all manner of selfish schemes, each to get the best of another, has often robbed them of some of the more delicate traits of womanly character, and they are frequently worldly women with very little religious character or sentiment. I wonder if business relations in a heathen land had such an effect upon Lydia. We are told in the very brief account we have of her—brief, but extremely suggestive—that she worshiped God. Nobody in that city worshiped God, except as the result of Jewish education and training. All the rest were heathen. Lydia, then, was either a Jewess of Thyatira, or one of those devout women who, having attended the Jewish synagogue, had been made a convert to the Jewish faith. We are not able to determine by the

brief statement of the text, which of these is her true position, and I presume it makes no difference. She worshiped God.

At the time that we are introduced to her, it was the Sabbath day. Now in this heathen town of Philippi, and all over the world, the Sabbath day was unknown, except among the Jews and the proselytes of the Jewish religion. You find Lydia here, then, engaged in business; and in a line which was pursued, most probably, by many others in the city of Philippi. When the Sabbath day dawns shall she keep her shop open, in order to maintain competition with other dealers who know nothing of the Sabbath? Many a man who professes to be a Christian, in our cities and all over our land, in all the different lines of business, labors through the Lord's day like any other day, when it is customary for men in his line to do so, claiming that he is compelled to do it in self-defense. Lydia was not a woman of an india-rubber conscience. When the Sabbath day came, her house of business was closed; it remained closed all day long. There was no back door into that store; she and the women whom she had employed with her in the business, could not be found there. They had left home, and left the town, and gone outside of the city to spend the Sabbath. On the occasion mentioned in our text, they were out there at a place of prayer, spending the holy day on the bank of the stream which flows close by the walls of the city—doubtless under the shade of overhanging trees; and from the fact mentioned that Paul supposed there was a place of prayer out there, we have reason to believe that this had been the custom of that group of women for a considerable time past. Lydia, then, was a woman of business; she was a woman of fidelity to her God, whom the temptations and compe-

titions of trade could not seduce from the faithful observance of the law of her God; and that, too, when she was far away from home among strangers, where there was no Jew perhaps in all the city to carry back a report of her derelictions, had she been less faithful to the Lord than she was. Now I have known men and women who conduct themselves with great propriety, when they are at home where everybody knows them; but if you could put on that invisible coat which Jack the Giant Killer was said to wear sometimes, and follow them when they are far away in some great city, where they think nobody knows them, you might be astonished. Lydia would bear watching, although there was no one there to watch her, and to report to the elders of the synagogue in Thyatira any departure from strict propriety; and although there seems to have been no synagogue in Philippi, no men there to assemble together and conduct the usual services of the Sabbath, still, she and those women that were with her resorted to this place of prayer as faithfully as though the elders were there to conduct the service.

There is one remark made in connection with the conversion of Lydia which has attracted to it especial attention, and that is the statement that the Lord opened her heart. Have you ever raised the question, what was the defect in Lydia's heart which required the Lord to open it? I once put that question to a gentleman with whom I was conversing, and he said, "Why, of course, Lydia, like all other unregenerate persons, was totally depraved, and it required a direct divine influence upon her dead soul to awaken her so that she could hear the word of the Lord preached with profit." I had to tell him that he was not well acquainted with Lydia, and I pointed out to him the indications which we have just

given of the high and grand religious character of the woman, putting to shame many a Christian woman of the present day. Whatever may be true, then, of the doctrine of total hereditary depravity, if Lydia had ever been in that condition she had certainly well gotten over it at this time. Still, there was some defect about her heart, so that in order to bring about her full and complete establishment in Christ Jesus our Lord, her heart must be opened. Now to open the heart is a figurative mode of expression. The heart is compared to something that is closed up; something that is narrow, contracted; and it must be opened, or expanded with grander and nobler feelings. Have you in the congregation—I hope you have not—a member noted for penuriousness? Suppose some preacher were to address the audience in a very powerful and telling way in behalf of some charitable institution, and you see that brother, who usually puts only a nickel into the charity box, throw in a twenty dollar bill; you would say, He has opened his heart; or, That preacher has opened that brother's heart. You mean by opening the heart, that the heart which had been contracted and narrow has been filled with a grander, nobler sentiment than usual; and haven't you noticed, whenever some grand, heart-swelling sentiment gets possession of you—haven't you noticed your chest heave and expand, sometimes finding vent in overflowing tears! I think it likely that this physical sensation first suggested the figure of opening the heart.

Well, with this idea of what it means, and a little more knowledge of the relation which the Jews all sustained to the Christian faith, I do not think we can be at much loss to find what the trouble was with Lydia's heart. The Jews believed, and the proselytes were taught the same, that the Messiah who was promised, would be

nothing more than an earthly Jewish king. And as he would be a Jew, the Jews looked forward to his reign with national pride; they anticipated the day when to be a Jew would be the highest honor that a human being could boast; and so they were full of sensual, narrow, selfish, national feeling, when they thought of the Messiah who was to come. When an apostle would come before a congregation of such Jews and present the humble Jesus, point to His having established a kingdom not of earth, but one spiritual and eternal, it shocked them—fearfully shocked all of those ambitious feelings of the Jewish heart; hence Paul's saying that Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews. Now that was a defect in their hearts. Lydia had it; and Peter had it until he was brought to the house of Cornelius. That feeling had to be removed from Lydia, or she would reject the Gospel. When it gave way, she welcomed into her heart this crucified Messiah.

There is another question about the opening of Lydia's heart which is worthy of a moment's passing notice; that is, the effect of it. The remark, that the Lord opened Lydia's heart that she attended to the things spoken by Paul, is very commonly understood to mean that it enabled her to listen favorably to the Gospel which Paul preached; but that is a mistake. Our text reads differently. The first statement about her is that Lydia "heard us." That includes the fixing of her attention upon all that was said. The second statement is, "the Lord opened her heart." That was subsequent to her hearing. Then the third is, that she "gave heed to the things that were spoken by Paul." Now there were certain things appointed for every person like her to do, and she gave heed to those things. She believed what he preached. She repented of what-

ever sins she knew herself to be guilty of; and she was baptized; then the text says "*when* she was baptized, she entreated us to come into her house." The result of opening her heart was, that she gave practical attention to the duties prescribed for her, having heard already, before her heart was opened. There is the simple story of this good woman's conversion to Christ.

The question might be raised, What need had she of being changed at all? Would not she go to heaven if she died as she was? Perhaps she would, if Christ had not been crucified and ascended into heaven, and if the law had not gone forth that men should believe in Him and obey Him, in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting; but that had been the established law of heaven for quite a number of years, and it was necessary, if Lydia, under the Christian dispensation, should be saved, that she should hear of Christ, that she should believe in Him, and that she should come to Him as the mediator between God and men, to obtain the forgiveness of her sins. This she did at once—as soon as she heard the Gospel message.

But we are not yet done with the subject of the opening of Lydia's heart. The statement of the text is that the *Lord* opened it. And there has been a great deal of speculation as to how the Lord did it. Many people, as soon as they read a statement of that kind, imagine a direct exercise of God's power upon the heart, and I am sure if there is any case of conversion recorded in Acts of Apostles where we would expect God to proceed in that way, if he ever does, this case of Lydia is the one. For observe, while she was going out from Sabbath to Sabbath praying on the bank of that river, there was not a preacher of the Gospel on the continent of Europe in which she lived. There was not

one who was able to tell the story of Christ, within hundreds of miles of where she resided ; and if God ever does open the hearts of men and women whose prayers he is hearing, to bring them entirely into harmony with the divine will, without the preached word, we should expect it to be done in that instance. But it was not done. On the contrary, the text clearly reveals to us a deliberately laid out method that God pursued, in order to reach the heart of that woman, and we are now to trace it. It was a most interesting sight to God and angels to see that group of women every Sabbath day. No faithful, true-hearted men or women ever assembled to worship God, especially under trying circumstances, that it did not interest every intelligent being in the heavenly world. God heard those prayers, and he determined, to speak in the human style, he determined to answer them. He does not begin to work for the salvation of Lydia, as he did for the Ethiopian eunuch, by sending down an angel. He does not begin, as in the case of Cornelius, by sending her an angel and telling her where to send for a preacher ; but He begins this time by working on the preachers in a different way. Paul and Silas, Luke and Timothy, were at this time traveling together and preaching through the different districts of Asia Minor. Did you notice that geographical sketch that I read you in the beginning? These geographical sketches, when we come to them, are sometimes, like genealogical tables, regarded as very dry reading. But when you come to such a passage as that, let me suggest that you always raise the suspicion in your mind that it is dry because you do not see through it. Nearly always there are some most precious truths imbedded in those dull passages in the Scriptures. The preachers had finished their work in Phrygia and Gal-

atia, and they resolved that they would next go down and preach in the district then called Asia, of which Ephesus, where Paul afterward preached nearly three years, was the principal city. But the Spirit of Jesus, dwelling in these inspired men, said, No, don't go to Asia. Paul could not understand why this was. Then they consulted, and sought to go into Bithynia. Now Asia was off to the left; Bithynia off to the right. But the Spirit would not suffer them to go into Bithynia, so, as they had finished up all behind them, and were not allowed to go either to the left or to the right, they moved straight forward; and passing by the little district called Mysia—passing it by in the sense of not stopping there to preach—they struck Troas, on the shore of the Ægean sea. They had gone as far as they could without a ship. And if they take a ship, where, among all the seas, will they go? They were thoroughly non-plussed; and they wondered, no doubt, as you and I would wonder, why this mysterious over-ruling by the Spirit of God? But we can see it. God was hearing those prayers over on the bank of that stream, and he was working to get these preachers there. They went to bed that night puzzled, and in the night Paul has a vision. He seems to see, away across the sea, standing on the shore of Macedonia, a man beckoning to him and calling out, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Of course this was an impossibility, but we often see impossibilities in our dreams. The next morning Paul tells of his vision, and Luke says, we concluded that "God had called us to preach the Gospel to them;" that that was the reason we were not allowed to go to Asia, or Bithynia. The Lord wants us over there. So, says Luke, "Straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia."

The expression, "We sought to go," is well chosen

here; because they could not go down any day to the foot of First street, as you do, and get on a steamer bound up or down the river. Very seldom would there be a ship in that little town of Troas; and when there was, it would not usually be sailing to Macedonia, but to some one of the great cities, like Athens, or Corinth, or Ephesus. So, they "sought to go," and when they went down to the wharf, there was a ship. I suppose they called out, just as you and I would, "Where is this vessel bound?" "To Macedonia," is the answer. "Can we get passage on it?" "Yes." "When will she sail?" "To-day. Come on board, if you wish to go." And they went on board. The vessel weighs its anchor, is soon out in the open sea, and here comes another expression of the author which you must notice. The truth is, my dear friends, you are never safe in overlooking a single word when you are studying the Bible. That expression is, "We made a *straight* course to Samothrace." You can not make a straight course on a sailing vessel, unless you have a favorable wind; otherwise, you have to tack. The wind was blowing in the right direction. If you will read in the twentieth chapter, you will find that when they sailed back over that water, it took them *five days*. Now they ran it in *two days*, and that shows that the wind not only blew from a favorable quarter, but that it was blowing a stiff breeze. I imagine those faithful preachers, when in the open sea, and, seated under the over-hanging awning, were enjoying the cool breeze, having a conversation somewhat like this—What good luck we have had to-day. We found a vessel in the harbor; we found one that was sailing where we wished to go. We found that there was room on board for us to take passage; and now that we are out in the open sea, see how favorably the wind blows; see how the sails swell, and how the good

vessel plows through the water. We will soon be there. What good luck! Was there any luck about it? Oh! we can see so plainly, and Luke saw it afterward, that the hand which holds the winds and guides the mariner over the sea, the hand which had guided that vessel into the port of Troas, was guiding it now, to bear those preachers onward in answer to the prayers of those women. God had been hearing those prayers, and was preparing to answer them. He was working for the opening of Lydia's heart. They landed on the shore of Macedonia. They looked around. Nothing here but a little village, Neapolis — *new city*. They learn that about ten miles in the interior is the famous city of Philippi, rendered famous by the great battle which decided the fate of the Roman Empire. They immediately determine to begin their work in that city. The Lord does not over-rule them any longer now, but leaves them to find their own way. They are in that city certain days, and on the Sabbath, they supposed that there was a place of prayer by the bank of the River Gangas, which flows by. I do not know why they supposed it, unless it was from something they heard on the street about some women going out there every seventh day. They guessed that these were Jewish women, with a place of prayer out there; and as this was a heathen city, given up on the Sabbath day to heathen practices, as soon as they heard this, you might know which way they went. A stranger comes to Louisville to spend a night. There is a prayer-meeting over in that church; there is a theatre over here. To which will he go? That depends on who he is. Paul and Silas, as soon as they heard there was a prayer-meeting, did not hesitate. When they arrived, they sat down by those women. Oh! the simplicity of those apostles! Paul did not put up a temporary pulpit; he did not hunt around

for means of giving dignity to the meeting. They all sat down on the green grass, or the bare ground, and I have wondered why the women did not get up and leave when those strangers came and sat down by them. I think it must have been because they could see in the faces of these men, that they were not the kind of men to be afraid of. They allowed them to sit down and begin to talk; and what a talk it was! No formal sermon, but a plain conversational deliverance to these pious and godly women, of the wondrous news of a glorified Redeemer, who had been slain and buried, but was now sitting on the throne of heaven, ruling over heaven and earth for the church. Now then, when it is all through, when Lydia and those women accept the truth, and are baptized then and there without delay, showing how willing they were to walk in the way of the Lord, Luke looks back over the journey, the long, weary labor, the doubt and the uncertainty, and he sees it all explained. The Lord was hearing the prayers of these women, and in all of these strange movements He was simply reaching out toward the heart of Lydia and the others, that He might open their hearts to receive and obey the Lord. Is not that wonderful? That arm which moves the universe, is moved often by the prayers of very humble creatures; while heaven and earth and men are moved about under the guiding hand of God, to answer those prayers.

I wonder if God ever does anything like this for you and me. It is the word of the Lord that conveys to our hearts the mind and power and will of heaven; but how did it happen that that particular preacher preached to us? How did he happen to be there, and how did I happen to be there, when my heart was opened? Oh, my friends, if you had an inspired writer, his mind

enlightened by Him who sees all things, you might have as strange a story written about yourselves as was recorded about Lydia. I imagine that wherever in the broad earth there is a poor struggling soul, wrapt in darkness and struggling for light, sacrificing self in order to please God, God has an eye on that person; He hears those prayers, and He will over-rule and over-turn and direct, until the truth shall, some way or other, reach that soul.

Now, to test this matter, this question I have just propounded—have you ever felt in your heart something like an opening sensation, while you have listened to the earnest presentation of the Gospel? Or, when in the silent, quiet hour, you have read in your New Testament some of the teachings of Jesus, some of the earnest, burning words of those faithful apostles, have you not felt a sensation within like the expansion of your heart? Your heart has been closed through sin. It must be opened, by removing the power of sin which draws it together in selfishness and worldliness, and by putting within it the expanding love of God and humanity, if you shall be saved. Have you ever felt that God was working with you as He worked on Lydia? And why did not you attend to the things that were told you to do, as Lydia did? Why have you postponed and neglected your duty? Ah, when you felt your heart beginning to open, you exerted all the strength of your will to close it. You resisted the living God; and hence you are now where you were then; and not until you cease thus to close up the heart that God would open, is there any chance for your soul's salvation. Will you cease that effort now? Do you feel any way drawn toward Christ and toward God this morning? Are there nobler, grander sentiments in your soul, and your heart opening to

receive the Redeemer? I beg you in Jesus' name to hesitate no longer, but let your heart fly wide open, and take in all the precious love of God and Christ. Obey him with a true heart in full assurance of faith, while you have the opportunity.

SERMON XIII.

CASES OF CONVERSION: PAUL.

EVENING JULY 16, 1893.

I have read you Paul's account of his own conversion, as he gave it to that mob. I will now read from the First Epistle to Timothy some remarks that he made about it a great many years afterward, when addressing one of his brethren. Verses twelve to seventeen of the first chapter of First Timothy:

"I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service;" (of course, he would not appoint a man to his service if he did not consider him faithful) "though I was before a blasphemer, and a prosecutor, and injurious:" (I am inclined to think that a man who has been very wicked before becoming a christian, if he undergoes a thorough change, must be more thankful to God than if he had been a moral man). "Howbeit, I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief, and the Grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (Implying that if it had been done knowingly, there would have been no mercy for him). "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" (that is the great purpose) "of whom, I am chief:" (He did not feel, I suppose, that he was the chief of sinners when writing this; but that he was when Christ saved him). "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy," (that is, here is another reason why he obtained mercy) "that in me, as chief" (that is a chief sinner) "might Jesus Christ show forth all his long suffering, for an example to them who should hereafter believe on him unto eternal

life." (That no man might despair of salvation seeing that chief sinner had been saved. Here he breaks out in one of those grand bursts of thanksgiving with which he sometimes interrupts his train of argument). "Now unto the King eternal, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

I have gone over the details of three of the cases of conversion which are recorded in the book of Acts to indicate how God turns sinners to Christ; to indicate how the sinner himself turns to the Lord and obtains salvation; and to-night I add a fourth, that of the great Apostle Paul. The record of his conversion is not all given in one place. A part of it is found in the ninth chapter of Acts, a very brief account. Another account given by himself, mentioning some of the details which had been omitted in the ninth chapter, is found in the twenty-second chapter, which I read to you in the beginning. And still another account given by himself to King Agrippa, furnishing some details omitted in both of the others, is found in the twenty-sixth chapter of Acts. When we put all of these together, we have all that we know on the subject, and we should use them all when we are endeavoring to form a conception of the event as it really transpired. Pursuing the same method as in the other instances, let us look a moment at this man just previous to the time that he was turned to the Lord. He himself declares in the passage just read that he had been a persecutor, a blasphemer, injurious; the very chief of the sinners of his day. All this is confirmed by the previous accounts; for Luke's description of him when he started from Jerusalem to Damascus is that he was yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Jesus. He had already given his consent to the murder of Stephen. He had gone, at the head of a body of armed men, all through Jerusalem, seizing and dragging to prison both men and women,

because they were following Christ; and he says to King Agrippa, "I punished them often in all the synagogues, and I strove to make them blaspheme." "When they were put to death, I gave my vote against them;" "and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." When he had scattered the church in Jerusalem, until there were no more meetings there; no more preaching there; and he verily believed that he had killed the first church; not contented with this, hearing that there were some of these scattered disciples at work in Damascus, one hundred and fifty miles from Jerusalem, he obtains authority from the chief priests to go down there and seize and drag back to Jerusalem every one of them for punishment. He is on that journey at the time he is turned to the Lord.

We are beginning to wonder what will be done, what *can* be done, to turn into an humble disciple of Jesus Christ, such a man as that. In the case of the eunuch, you recollect that God sent out an angel to the preacher Philip, telling him to go down into a certain road, and he thus led the preacher to the sinner. In the case of Cornelius, an angel was sent to tell him to send for the Apostle Peter at Joppa, to hear words by which he might be saved. In the case of Lydia, preachers traveling on another continent were turned this way and that, and led forward until they came to the bank of the river on the Sabbath day, where Lydia and the women of her household were praying: but what shall be done for this man? Send a preacher to him? The preachers are the very men that he is after. It would have been a very dangerous thing for a preacher to meet him in the road, if Saul knew him to be a preacher. He would immediately have clapped chains around his arms. What shall be done, then? In this instance, no angel is sent from

heaven; no preacher is sent to him from earth; but the Lord Jesus Christ himself comes down from heaven, and in a light, as Paul himself says afterward, that was brighter than the sun at noon. You never saw such a light. No man but Paul ever saw a light so dazzling. The light that was brighter than the sun shone around him. They all fell to the ground like dead men, as the guards did when the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb of Jesus. Only one of the company heard his name called, and that was Saul. I do not know whether the voice was very loud or not, but it arrested him. "Saul, Saul; why persecutest thou me?" Was it Stephen speaking to him? Was it some one of those other preachers who had been put to death in Jerusalem by him, re-appearing to speak to him? Who could it be? "Who art thou, Lord?" is the natural question that broke from the lips of Paul. Although prostrated by the amazing sight, he was not frightened out of his wits; he knew what he was about. He was a bold man, not afraid of anything on earth. "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." It is very difficult for us—I think it is impossible for any living man, now to realize what a revelation this was to Saul. The men who believed that the Jesus whom the Jews had crucified was the risen and glorified Son of God, and were honoring him as such, he was putting to death. He thought every man ought to die who propagated that belief. And now, here appears before my eyes, in a light that shines from heaven above the brightness of this noon-day sun, a glorified being, who says to me, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." What shall I do? What shall I think? Is there any possible escape from the truth and reality of what I hear? None. It did not take him a thousandth part of a second to see that there was no

way of escape from the fact. Here he is, alive, speaking to me; just come down from heaven! I have been wrong. He is the Christ; he *is* the glorified Son of God; I have been wickedly fighting against my King and my Redeemer. When this conviction came upon him, how did he act? What more had he to say? Just one word more: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" That is all.

The Lord had some more words to speak to him. He said: "To this end, have I appeared unto thee," [Instead of sending an angel, or sending a preacher, I have appeared myself for this purpose] "to appoint thee a minister and a witness, both of the things wherein thou hast seen me and of the other things wherein I will appear to thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me." Well now, what a wonderful thing it was, to take this persecutor and blasphemer and injurious man, and to lay out plans of work like this for him the rest of his days, before he had the slightest faith in the Lord! Paul afterward had it revealed to him that God had had that purpose concerning him from the day he was born—that from the very day of his birth God had intended to make out of him the great apostle of the Gentiles (Gal. i. 15, 16). He had that purpose, and this is the way he brings it about. God intended it because He knew what would be developed in that child when it was born. He knew what the man would be. He knew the time would come when that great and mighty soul would receive the truth and love it, and would be willing to labor and suffer for it as no other man has

ever labored and suffered. He laid out His plans accordingly.

What was the answer to the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Was it left unanswered? There are some preachers so ignorant in these days, that they are constantly exhorting sinners to go to the Lord and ask him what to do to be saved; urging them to pray the Lord, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Saul was excusable for putting that question, because he had had no good chance to learn; but every sinner who has ever heard the answer that was given to Paul, ought to know that that answer is the one for himself. What was the answer? "Arise, and go to Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things that are appointed for thee to do." He told him what he was going to do with him in his future life, but as for his immediate duty, in order that he might obtain forgiveness of the awful sins of which he was guilty, Go there, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.

There is another great lesson taught right here. Suppose that a man is directed to go to the Lord, and pray, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and the Lord should actually appear and answer him; what would the answer be? Would he tell him what to do? No. Would he not say, Arise, go to Damascus with Saul of Tarsus; learn what he was told to do, and do the same thing? Arise and go to some man who has been taught how to direct sinners, ask him what to do, and then do it. So Saul arose, and being led by the hand of some of his companions, he went into the city.

Now I wish to pause awhile before I go further with the story, and ask, how much progress has this wicked man made toward becoming a Christian? Does he believe in Christ now? Yes, he does—with a faith that

never wavered from that moment to the end of his life. Why, my brethren, it seems to me Paul could have said, as he afterwards did say, "I *know* whom I have trusted." I saw him; I heard him. It was more nearly a matter of absolute knowledge with Paul, than a matter of belief. Oh! how strong his faith in Christ from that moment on!

Well, has he repented of his sins? For three days and nights, he neither eats nor drinks; not a morsel of food or a drop of water passes through his lips. That was a terrible fast. Under favorable circumstances going without food and drink for so long a time would be very exhausting; but he was praying all that time, and in a great agony of guilt, weighing him down and almost crushing the life out of him. What a terrible experience it was! And how could it be otherwise, when he remembered the blood of innocent men and women which he had shed—guilty of the blood of Stephen, and that of many others—guilty of the sorrow and pain which he had caused to so many households by driving men and women away from home to escape his clutches, and by seizing others and dragging them to prison, and scourging them to make them blaspheme the name of Jesus! No man ever had more reason for agony of soul, and no man, therefore, ever more bitterly repented than Paul repented in those three days. There can not be any doubt about his faith, or about his repentance. He himself said afterward, if we accept the common version of a remark in the Epistle to the Romans, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;" and a great many persons have supposed him to teach that the very moment a man believes, he is justified by faith and has peace with God; but Paul was a believer for three days and three nights, and instead of being justified as yet, he was in an agony of guilt and condemnation, and had

no peace with God. Consequently, if you interpret that language in the light of his own experience, you see at once that the conception of it that I have just given, is a mistaken one. Now let us proceed with the story.

During those three days, the Lord Jesus, looking down, allowed him to continue in his agony. I suppose he thought the man deserved it. I suppose he thought it would be good for his soul to writhe in that agony for three days and nights; but at the end of that time, he appeared to a Christian in the city by the name of Ananias, and told him to go to Saul. He would find him in a certain house, and find him praying. Ananias knew how to direct such a man to peace and rest in the Lord, so he went to the house. One of the very men whom Saul had come up there to seize, and put in chains, and carry back to Jerusalem, and who was afraid to go when the Lord first told him to go, goes in and finds him there prostrated, worn out, pale and nervous, still in agony, still in prayer. He says, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus who appeared to thee by the way, has sent me to thee that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." He laid his hands on him and said, "Receive thy sight." Something like scales dropped off his eyes, and he could see. Then Ananias goes on: "The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." He arose, was baptized, and then they put some food before him, and he ate and was strengthened. His agony is over; he has received his sight; his sins are forgiven; he is filled with the Spirit of God; he is a Christian now; and this is the simple story of his conversion.

Now let us go back over the story a little, and ask ourselves, first of all, what was it that convinced him of the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ? It was the preaching of Philip that convinced the eunuch; it was the preaching of Peter that convinced Cornelius; it was the preaching of Paul that had the same effect on Lydia. What was it that convinced Paul? It was preaching, still, only now the preacher is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. That is the only difference. I, this glorified being whom you see, am the Jesus whom you are persecuting.

Well, in all these other cases, there was some form of miraculous evidence going along with the preached word, to prove the truth of it; and there is like evidence in this. If Saul had heard that voice coming out of the sky, but had seen no miraculous light, no evidence that it came actually from heaven, he would have regarded it as a mystery that he could not understand; but he could not have been convinced by it that Jesus is the Christ. But that word from the lips of Jesus was accompanied by that miraculous light, and the visible miracle proved that the voice came from heaven. This caused him to believe, and when he believed, his faith was that which threw him into the agony of repentance. Then, when he heard the word, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name," he does not stop to raise any questions. This thing of raising questions about the ordinances of the Lord—why is it necessary to be baptized? Is it absolutely essential to be baptized? Are our sins certainly washed away when we are baptized?—the time to raise such questions as these had not come yet. This was a time of simple faith. Men believed and accepted what the messengers of God said, just as they said it. That is faith. The very moment he heard the

command, he arose from his prostrate position and was baptized. Now he is satisfied. His agony is gone; he eats the food he had refused for three days and nights; and what is more, he goes straightway to the synagogue, as soon as the Sabbath comes, and stands up there to preach in the name of Jesus, to the amazement of the unbelieving Jews. They exclaimed, This man came here to take to Jerusalem them who believe in the name, and behold, he preaches the faith that he came to destroy! He "confounded the Jews that dwelt in Damascus," proving by the testimony of his eyesight, and the testimony of his blindness, and all these other events, that Jesus is the Christ. The statement that he "confounded" them, means that he shut them up so that they could not think of what more to say in opposition to his preaching.

Now this is the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Suppose that you, or some other sinner, is a great blasphemer and injurious to the cause of Christ. If such a man is brought to the conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, repents of that sin, and all the sins of his life, and then, upon being told to arise and be baptized, he does it; can't that man eat food with joyfulness and gladness of heart too, and go to work in the vineyard of the Lord, and try to turn sinners to the Saviour? Is not he a Christian too? Surely, if the Apostle Paul became a true disciple, was a genuine convert to the Lord, the man who walks in the same way, though he may be brought to faith in an entirely different manner, as the eunuch, and Cornelius, and Lydia were; yet if he has the faith, the repentance, and the obedience, he is a Christian as surely as they.

I do not suppose I address any one to-night who ever

had such feelings toward Christ and toward the apostles and the disciples, as Saul had, but, my dear friends, you know this—all you that have never come to Christ—you know you are sinners. You know that you belong to that same great class who are without God, without Christ, without hope in this world; and the only hope is in Christ Jesus—faith in him; abandonment of sin from the heart; humble obedience to him; walking in His ways. Are you willing to live and die in that class? There are yet two great classes into which Christianity divides the world—the sinner saved, and the sinner unsaved—those who will be on the right hand in the judgment, and those who will be on the left hand. Without stopping now to raise any question about the awful fate of those on the left, are you willing to be one of them? I do not believe you are. I do not believe there is a man in this city, or a woman, who is willing to deliberately make that choice. You have promised yourself that you will not be, though you are now. You have promised yourself that you will change, though you have not changed. You have said, The time is coming when I will take the right stand and be with the people of God; but the time has not come. Perhaps it has come and passed—the time that you once thought you would—and you have put it off to another day. That day has also come and passed, and if you continue thus you will find yourself suddenly in the face of death, when it is too late. You will need in that hour all the comfort that the Christian faith can give, to enable you to die; and it is a bad hour in which to seek for that faith and to cry for that comfort. Why not, then, come to-night? You never saw a day or a night more suitable for obeying the Lord, than this blessed Sunday evening. You never will. Then, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I ask you, I invite you, I urge you, if you believe these things, while

we rise and sing the song of invitation which declares,
 " Just as I am, without one plea,
 But that thy blood was shed for me,
 And that thou bidst me come to thee,
 Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I come,"
I beg you to come and make your peace with God.

SERMON XIV.

CASES OF NON-CONVERSION: FELIX.

MORNING JULY 23, 1893.

The twenty-fourth chapter of Acts of Apostles, and twenty-fifth verse:

“Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.”

In four preceding discourses, I have endeavored to trace the inspired accounts of the conversion to Christ of four different persons, widely separated from one another in space and character. The first, as those will remember who have been here, was the Jewish treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia, whose home was far to the south, in Africa. The second was a subordinate officer in the Roman army, located at the time in Caesarea in Palestine. The third, a pious business woman in Philippi of Macedonia, on another continent—that of Europe; and the fourth, Saul of Tarsus, the fiery persecutor of the Church in Jerusalem. We endeavored to show the working of God’s plans and devices—if we may so speak of Him—by which he brought about the conversion of these four persons.

We now have before us a man in regard to whom we are safe in saying, that God laid plans of the same kind, and brought to bear the same kind of influences for his salvation; but that the whole resulted in a failure. The man was left in his unregenerated state, and so passed on to eternity.

I propose to trace the history of this case after the same method which we followed in the others, and we will try to discover why it is that the same divine influences, the same workings of divine providence and grace, that saved the other four, failed to save him.

Let us first then consider the man as he was before the Gospel was brought to him. Felix, before he was appointed Governor of Judea, was a slave; he was one of the household slaves of Agrippina, the mother of Claudius, then the reigning Emperor. Whether he was born in slavery or had been reduced to it in later years, we are not able to say; for the accounts that are given of him by early writers are very brief. But you can see at once that a slave in a heathen court, where his mistress was a heathen woman, where all his associates were heathen, and where all the vices that have ever been known round about a throne were ripe and rank, had very little chance to cultivate a good character. He became a favorite of Claudius Caesar, the son of his mistress, who, when he became Emperor, elevated Felix immediately from the position of household slave to be the head of one of the provinces of the empire, and that province inhabited by the ancient people of God. What a strange position for such a man to occupy!

He had been in his province but a short time, when by some accident he fell into company with Drusilla, the young and very beautiful wife of Aziz, the king of Emesa. The latter ruled with the title of king over a very insignificant little kingdom, which lies out between Palestine and the desert. This Drusilla belonged to the Herod family. She was the oldest child of that Herod who beheaded the Apostle James, shut up Peter in prison intending to kill him, murdered the soldiers from whom Peter escaped, and then died by the hand of an angel

shortly afterwards. She was an elder sister of King Agrippa, of whom I will speak to you to-night. Bad blood. Having seen this woman, and become enamored of her, Felix went deliberately to work, by means of a sorcerer whom he made his go-between, to entice her from her lawful husband. She, being filled with the passions that characterized all the Herods, love of power and love of gold, was persuaded to abandon her humble husband, though he bore the title of a king, for the higher and more lucrative position of wife of a Roman procurator. This transaction alone would tell us what kind of a man Felix was. It reveals a great deal of his private character.

Like all the Romans, he was fond of military display and prowess. Consequently, as we learn from Josephus, with a small army at his command he succeeded in driving out from the mountains of Judea, some bands of robbers who had infested the land for several generations. In the meantime, we are told by Tacitus, one of the fairest minded of all the Roman historians, that Felix, "with all manner of severity and lust, exercised the authority of a king with the spirit of a slave." In those few words, this great writer attempts to depict the character of his administration of the government; and we find that the story in our text sustains this judgment of the historian; for it was for the purpose of extorting money from Paul, that he held him in prison for two whole years after he had become perfectly satisfied that Paul was innocent of any crime, and ought to be set at liberty.

This, now, is the character whose attempted conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to consider. A great contrast to that good Ethiopian eunuch, who, as he rode along the public highway, was reading the word of God.

A great contrast to that Roman soldier, who was a devout man, who feared God with all his house, and prayed to God always. A great contrast to Lydia, who, when the Sabbath day dawned in a heathen city, left her place of business and spent the day on the river bank outside the city, with other women, in prayer. And, even a great contrast with Saul of Tarsus, who, though a bloody persecutor of the Church of God, was able to declare afterwards, when he could not be suspected of an uncandid statement, that he did it in all good conscience, and verily thought that his duty to God required it. Here is a man now, in contrast to all these, who is thoroughly corrupt in his private life, and thoroughly corrupt in his administration of the government that has been entrusted to him. Very little hope of the salvation of such a man under any ordinary circumstances. Will this man ever go to church? Those who are in the highest positions of authority in this world, are not often church-going people. I have seen it stated, that, although Mr. Spurgeon was for a long period of time the greatest preacher in all the realms over which Queen Victoria rules, she never heard him; and that none of her household ever went inside of his tabernacle. Kings and queens, and the great men of this earth, often choose some man to come and preach to them, some man who will be altogether pleasing and acceptable. They very seldom go where any of their sins might become the topic of discourse. Of course, then, this heathen Felix, with all the corruptions and abominations in which he lives, may never be expected to go where he will hear an apostle or evangelist preach the Gospel. Will not some of them dare to go to him then? Not at all likely. Who would feel called upon to go and force himself into the presence of such a man as that, to present to him the Gospel of righteousness

and peace and everlasting life? He would be afraid of being driven from the door. How poor the opportunity then for such a man as Felix to have what we would ordinarily call a fair chance for his salvation. But God was determined to leave even him without excuse. The Saviour said to the apostles before He died, "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings and councils for my name's sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles." It was a part of the divine purpose and plan to allow those faithful men of God to be brought before such rulers, in order that they might have an opportunity to present to them the story of Christ, which otherwise they would never hear. And there is just as much reason for saying that God went to work by a plan and purpose in the case of this man, as to save either of the four of whom I have spoken. He did not send an angel to him, telling him to call for a preacher, as in the case of Cornelius; he did not send an angel to the preacher telling him to go to the man who was to hear the Gospel. Neither did the Lord appear himself, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus. But, very much as in the case of Lydia, God guided in a strange and mysterious way, the footsteps of the great Apostle Paul, until he was brought face to face with this ungodly man. While Felix was at Caesarea, managing the affairs of the government and indulging his lusts, the apostle was in Jerusalem. Some old enemies, seeing him in the temple, raised an outcry against him and stirred up the violent passions of a mob, who seized him and dragged him out through the gate, intending to put him to death. Paul was near his end, when the uproar attracted the attention of the chief captain in the castle overlooking the temple court, who, rushing down with a body of Roman soldiers, rescued him, crying out, "What has this man done?" The mob,

like many other mobs, did not know. Some cried one thing and some cried another; so the Roman officer was uncertain what might be the charge against him. He orders the soldiers to rush him up into the castle. The mob rush to try to take him from the soldiers, but he is thrown across the shoulders of two of the strongest, and up the stairs they go. They are about to enter the door, which would be closed on him he knew not how long, when Paul says to the chief captain, "Wilt thou not permit me to speak to the people?" At that request, he was allowed to address the mob. The Roman officer stood listening to that speech, hoping that in the course of it he would find out what charge was laid against the prisoner; but to his amazement, the prisoner delivers a sermon intended to convince and convert the crowd, instead of trying to vindicate himself; and the officer does not learn what he is charged with. When the sermon is ended, he orders the centurion to take him inside the castle, tie him down to the whipping post, and scourge him until he confesses the crime with which he is charged. Oh! how our spirits revolt against such a procedure as that! But it was very common in the Roman Empire.

As they were strapping him down to the whipping post, he calmly said to the centurion, "Is it lawful for thee to scourge a Roman citizen?" Immediately the straps were dropped. The centurion hurries into the inner room where the chief captain is, and says, "Take heed what thou doest to this man. He is a Roman." The captain says to Paul, "Art thou a Roman?" "I am." "For a large sum of money," he says, "I obtained this freedom." "But I was born free." Those who were about to scourge him left, and the centurion was alarmed and frightened now, because he had come so near scourging a Roman

citizen. But he has the man in his hands. He does not know with what he is charged. He does not know what to do with him. There never was a poor man more completely nonplussed than Lysias was. In order to determine the matter, he ordered the Jewish Sanhedrin the next day to come together; he takes the prisoner down under a guard; puts him in the prisoners' dock; demands now an investigation in his presence, so that by the proceedings he may determine whether to keep the man a prisoner or not. The proceedings end in a row—a terrible row between the Sadducees and Pharisees that Paul stirred up on purpose to prevent them from doing him injustice. He orders the soldiers to take the man back to the castle. Now, what can he do?

The next day a nephew of Paul, who happened to be in the city, finds admission to the prisoner and tells him that forty men of the Jews have bound themselves under a great curse that they will neither eat nor drink until they have killed him. They have requested the chief captain Lysias to send thee down again to-morrow, that they may inquire more particularly about thee, and they are lying in wait to kill thee. Their plan was, to lie on some cross street until the soldiers marched along, then make a rush from both sides, and kill him before the soldiers would know what was going on. They could do it very easily. Paul's life is in peril again. He calls the centurion and says, "Take this young man to the chief captain; he has something to tell him." He told the chief captain the story. He said, "Now, young man, you go back and do not say a word to anybody about what you have told me." Then he calls two centurions, saying, "Get ready two hundred spear-men, two hundred common soldiers and seventy horsemen, by the third hour of the night. Take this man and bear him off to

Caesarea to Felix the governor." It was done. He wrote a letter to Felix, telling him about his prisoner, and all he could say about the charges laid against him was, "I do not find him accused of any such thing as I supposed—nothing that is worthy of death or bonds." He explains why he had sent him. Felix reads the letter; looks at his prisoner; sends back orders for the Jews to come down and accuse him; and orders him to be kept under guard. Now the preacher and the sinner are pretty close together; and this is the way the preacher has been sent by the providence of God, so that he may have an opportunity, which otherwise, in all probability, he would never have had, to preach the Gospel to Felix.

His accusers come down, and there is a trial of the case. Felix learns from the trial little except the same thing that Lysias had learned, that there was nothing even charged against Paul to justify imprisonment or death. Then his duty was to set him free. But if he had done that, Paul would never have had an opportunity to preach to Felix—he would have gone off preaching somewhere else. Why didn't he set him free? The fact that he did not is explained by a single remark made by Paul in the course of his defense. In order to explain how he happened to be in Jerusalem at that time, he said to Felix, "After many years" (that is, of absence,) "I came up to Jerusalem to bring alms and offerings to my people." That caught the ear of Felix. This man came from distant lands up to Jerusalem to bring alms for a nation; to bring money enough to feed the poor people of the country. He must have some way of getting money in large quantities. I must have some of it. If he could raise money that way to feed a nation when they were in distress, how easy it will be for him to raise a large sum to get himself out of prison so that he can

go on with his preaching. I will keep him until I get a good fat fee to release him. Now here is the purpose fully set forth, of the man upon whom the power of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be brought to bear, and we shall see the result.

After some days Felix ordered Paul into the presence of himself and Drusilla, that he might hear him concerning the faith in Christ. I wonder what he cared for the faith in Christ. I don't suppose he cared much; but all the land of Judea was ringing with the question about the faith in Christ; many other lands were ringing with it; and Felix was a man who wanted to know what was going on in the world. How many men in our own time, in our own community, who do not care a snap of your finger about the faith in Christ, but if some very noted preacher of it comes to town, they will condescend to go out and hear him. They want to hear that man. They have some little curiosity to know what it is that is producing all this commotion, and attracting the attention of the people all over the country. And I suppose, from my knowledge of human nature, that it was some such thought as that that caused Felix to send for Paul. Paul comes. His audience is made up of those two persons. Think again, now, what kind of persons they were. Paul has, of course, the choice of his subject. He is to preach on the faith in Christ, but he can take any part of the whole range of the faith that he thinks best, as the particular theme of his discourse. And what topic does he take? The sermon is not reported like some other of Paul's sermons. I wish it had been. Perhaps it is a foolish wish. But the heads of the sermons are reported, and, like many modern sermons it had three heads. The first was righteousness; the second, temperance—self-control being the more accurate rendering; the third, the

judgment to come. Preach on righteousness to such a man and such a woman! Preach on self-control! Preach on the judgment to come! Who would have thought it, except the bold Apostle to the Gentiles? What modern preacher would have selected a subject which Felix must have regarded as a personal reflection, and which Drusilla might have regarded as an insult to a lady. Somehow or other those ancient apostles and preachers, and those old prophets of Judea of whom we read in the Old Testament, always addressed themselves to their audiences. They never stood up before one audience and began to speak of the sins and the crimes and the follies of somebody the other side of the river. If they spoke of sins, it was the sins of the persons they were addressing. If they spoke of the eternal judgment, it was to make those whom they were addressing realize the terrors of it.

When Paul spoke of righteousness, there was a contrast between that which he set forth and everything that characterized the life of both of his auditors. When he spoke of self-control, he condemned them at every word; and when, having thus exhibited these two lines of thought, he carried them forward to the day when God will judge all men in righteousness, condemning the wicked and saving only those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, what a fearful picture that was! Some preachers in our day do not believe in preaching the judgment. They are afraid, apparently, that they will scare somebody into the kingdom of heaven. But there are some men who will never get there unless they are badly scared. A bold, daring, wicked man, trampling God's laws under his feet day after day, and moving on in defiance of earth and heaven in his wicked course, can be checked by nothing except the terrors of the

judgment. Make him realize that which is awaiting him; then he may pause to hear you. He may begin to think then that there is some value in the mercy and the grace of the gospel of the Son of God.

What was the effect of this sermon on Felix? You would naturally suppose that the effect would be to throw him into a rage. That is the effect it has on some men to point out their sins, and press down hard and severely and earnestly upon them. You would expect he would order Paul back to his prison in a fearful fit of anger and resentment. No; he does not do that. It is said, to the supreme credit of Felix, and the most creditable thing ever said about him, that while Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix was terrified. And well he might be. When his guilty soul ran back over the course of his life, away back to his boyhood, and the ghosts of all the awful crimes of his career stood up with glaring eyes before him, and he thought of the eternal judgment that was coming, and of a righteous God condemning him to the fate he deserved, he would have been made of iron if he had not been terrified. I tell you, my friends, there is not a wicked man on this earth who would not be terrified, if he were made by some circumstance to face his sins and the eternal judgment. It is because they hate to be terrified, that they do not think about such things. It is because they do not like to be terrified, that they are not well pleased when the preacher presses such themes upon them. But it must be done, or they will go on to perdition without the warning which God desires that they should have.

He was terrified. How strikingly like the condition of the people who heard Peter's first sermon on Pentecost. He bore down on their souls and their consciences

by his story of the Lord Jesus Christ, until he reached the point where he said, "God hath made that same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ;" and such was the effect upon their consciences that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were terrified. Felix was brought to the very point and state of feeling that the three thousand were brought to, who were saved on the day of Pentecost. God put no difference between him and them. He did all for Felix that he had done for them, but there the lines of the two parted.

They cried out, "What shall we do?" Peter told them what to do, and they did it. When Felix was terrified, instead of crying out, Oh, Paul, what shall I do? he summoned up sufficient nerve to command his voice, perhaps with a calm tone, and perhaps with a kindly expression in it, "Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me." That meant, Paul, I see the direction to which your speech would carry me. I see the course that it would have me take, but it is not convenient to do it to-day. And was not that true? When he thought of this guilty woman by his side, whom he had seduced away from her husband, and that to go in the way Paul would have him, would be to leave her behind—to cast her off—it was not a very convenient thing to do. It was exceedingly *inconvenient* to get rid of her. And how often it is to-day, that men, in pursuing a wicked course, have gotten themselves tied up in alliances and forms of iniquity that they do not feel able to break when their consciences tell them they ought to serve the Lord. And all of those other wicked habits; how inconvenient to break them all off at once. Paul, wait for a convenient season.

9. 11. 1881

Did you ever pause, you have heard this text commented on hundreds of times—it is a favorite with preachers, always has been and always will be—did you ever pause to ask yourself what a convenient season is? Why, of course, it is a season when you can do a thing just as easily as not. When a friend asks you to do something, if convenient, you answer: “Oh, yes; it is entirely convenient. No trouble at all.” That is what is meant by a convenient season. Well, do you suppose a convenient season ever comes to a wicked, bad man, convenient season to repent? It never does. He has to put himself to a great inconvenience when he makes the change. Do you believe that a convenient season to turn away from wickedness to serving the Lord, ought to come? I don’t. I think if a man has trampled God’s laws under his feet, and defied heaven and the rights of his fellow men, and shown himself a wicked, abandoned wretch, I think that he ought to have to go through some fearful agony in coming back to the right faith. He deserves it. He ought not to expect to get out of it just as easily as sitting down when you are tired. “Perfectly convenient to do it.” I do not believe God will ever allow a man of that kind to have a convenient season to repent. He will always find, if he repents at all, that he must do it at a sacrifice—with struggle and pain and trouble.

But, “I will wait for a convenient season.” Did the convenient season ever come to Felix? Week after week, month after month, year after year, till two years were gone, Paul lingered in that prison, when he ought to have been a free man preaching the Gospel and saving hundreds and thousands; but the convenient season did not come. Felix sent for him and conversed with him again and again, but it was inconvenient to repent. He wanted

some money from him that he might let him go free. And Paul could have gotten the money, could have paid his way out, if he had thought it right to do so. Oh! brethren, how gladly hundreds of thousands of Christian men would have given the last dollar they had to get Paul out so he could go on preaching. But Paul despised a bribe-taker, and he was not willing to be a bribe-giver. Rather lie in prison until the Lord's time came for him to be freed, than to be a bribe-giver. It never came. After two years, Felix left the province because accusations had been brought against him at Rome. He was disgraced and banished to what was then called Gaul—now France—and there he died, and the convenient season never came. Once face to face with the apostle; heard him preach until terrified; but because it was not convenient to turn to the Lord, he would not do it and he went to hell. Oh, how many have done the same from that day to this! I will venture to say there are very few men living in sin here in your town, who have not some day or other heard the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and been terrified. They have done precisely the same thing that Felix did, and are on the way with him to perdition.

I once fell in with a lady on my way to church, of whom I inquired if she was a Christian. She said, "No." She said, "A good many years ago I was attending a meeting, and was so impressed by the preaching that I resolved at the morning service to obey the Gospel that evening. I started to church with the full intention of confessing the Saviour, but something was said on the way that turned my thoughts in another direction, and from that day to this, though I have gone to church regularly, I have never felt the slightest inclination to obey the Lord." My dear friends, you do not know

what you are doing, when you are tampering with God's commands; with your consciences roused and stirred at times; with your own better nature; and putting off for a convenient season that will never come, the salvation of your immortal soul. Will you follow Felix's example this morning? Or, will you rather pursue the course of the Apostle Paul? When he met the truth on the way to Damascus and heard the voice of the Lord, it was an extremely inconvenient season for him to stop his mad career of persecution, and turn round, and become a persecuted preacher of the Gospel which he had hated; but he did not hesitate. He at once surrendered to the Lord. That is the way for a sinner to do.

Now, if there is any soul here this morning, who has been, or is now, terrified by the thought of the day of judgment, and can gain your own consent to bend your stubborn will, come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and confess His name before heaven and earth, we give you the opportunity while we sing the hymn announced.

SERMON XV.

CASES OF NON-CONVERSION: AGRIPPA.

EVENING JULY 23, 1893.

The twenty-ninth verse of the twenty-sixth chapter of Acts:

“And Paul said, I would to God that whether with little or with much, not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am; except these bonds.”

I presume that one human soul is intrinsically as valuable as another. All are alike capable of infinite growth and development in the kingdom of God, or of everlasting sorrow and despair. And yet, there are some human souls concerning whom we Christians feel very little anxiety. There are two classes for whom we seldom think of praying when we are on our knees praying for the salvation of men. One of these classes is composed of a certain number of men and women whom we know, who have gone in and out before us many years as faithful servants of God, adorning the confession which they have made. In regard to these we feel perfect assurance that in the great day of accounts they will pass in through the pearly gates. We have not the slightest solicitude or anxiety in regard to their salvation, because we feel as if it were already fixed.

The other class is composed of another very large section of every community—men and women who never darken the door of a church—who are engaged in the frivolities and the enormities of an abandoned life when the

people of God are assembled for His worship. The reason we are not concerned about them is because they appear to be so far away from the kingdom of God that their fate is assured—we have no hope of ever seeing them change their attitude toward the Church.

While it is true that our anxiety and our prayers seldom reach out to either of these classes, the most intense anxiety on the part of truly earnest and faithful servants of God is centered on a third class; that class is composed of men and women, boys and girls, who are standing very close to the dividing line between the Church and the world—some on this side, some on that—whose fate for eternity seems to be hanging in even balances. Is not that your experience?

Now we might perhaps be inclined to suspect ourselves of not having exactly the right feeling in regard to these three classes, were it not for the fact revealed to us by the blessed Lord that the angels in heaven have a very similar feeling, if not identically the same. For the Lord tells us that there is more joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repents—one of those close to the line who comes over—than over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance. It is certainly a most delightful object for those bright angels to look down upon, ninety-nine men and women in this world who are proof against all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, who need no repentance; but there is more joy among them when they see one sinner repent. The same kind of feeling that we have animates them.

I think I discover, too, in the apostle Paul, on the occasion of which I have read you to-night, a similar feeling. There were two men in the audience which he addressed on that occasion, who constituted the principal figures in his own eye, and in the eyes of all the gay and

gorgeous assembly who were seated there listening to his words. These were Festus, the Roman procurator, the successor of Felix, the Felix of whom I spoke to you this morning, and by his side young King Agrippa. Paul had already formed some degree of familiarity with Festus. Festus was a politician—a politician in the Roman empire, and whatever may be said about the corruption that is common in American politics, I presume it is modest in comparison with the corruption of Roman politics in the time of Nero. He had attained, by his political devices, to the high position of the procurator of the province of Judea.

He became acquainted with Paul in about this way: he found, when he came into the province and looked around on the state of affairs, a prisoner by the name of Paul, left there by Felix in bonds. He went up to Jerusalem naturally to look around on the state of affairs in that great city, though Caesarea was the political capital, and while he was there the chief priests and the scribes gathered around him and requested him to give a sentence of death against the man Paul. He was surprised at such a request as that, and he answered these men by saying, "It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver a man up to die until he has had his accusers face to face and been permitted to defend himself." So he commanded the chief men of them to come down to Caesarea, and promised that he would hear the utmost of the matter. They came, and the prisoner Paul was brought out for the first time in the presence of this new procurator. The chief priests and scribes, by their attorney, stood up once more, and accused him in the same manner as before Felix. He listened to all they had to say. He heard Paul's defense. And then, in order to gratify the Jews, he proposed to Paul, "Wilt thou go with me up to Jerusalem, and there

be judged of this matter?" Paul, knowing full well that just two years before forty men in Jerusalem had sworn and bound themselves under a great curse neither to eat nor drink until they had killed him, and, supposing that these men were quite hungry and thirsty by this time, did not want to go to Jerusalem. So he said, "I stand before Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged"—(that is, Here in Caesarea, the political capital of the country, is where the court ought to be held); "to the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou, also, very well knowest. If I have done anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of these things be true, no man shall deliver me into their hands. I appeal to Caesar." This was his right, as a Roman citizen; and it meant that the proceedings in this court must stop immediately, and that he himself and his accusers and the witnesses should be sent, at the expense of the Roman government, to Rome; the whole of the case should be transferred to an imperial court, the Emperor himself being the presiding officer of that court. "Thou hast appealed to Caesar, to Caesar thou shalt go." It was no light matter to appeal to Caesar and have to be sent one or two thousand miles away from home, to remain in prison until it suited the Emperor to hear the case. "Thou hast appealed to Caesar, to Caesar thou shalt go." All that was lacking now to start him on the journey was a suitable vessel landing at Caesarea and destined for Rome.

So, while Festus was waiting for such a ship to touch at the port of Caesarea, King Agrippa, the other figure in that audience of whom I spoke a while ago, comes down to Caesarea to make a formal complimentary visit to Festus. He brings with him his beautiful sister Bernice, younger than himself, and of course younger than Drusilla, who was now living in adulterous intercourse with

Felix, and had been banished with him afar off into a distant land.

When a prince or an officer of high rank in those Asiatic countries visits another, there is a great deal of ceremony, with feasting, processions, everything that can make the visiting company feel happy; so Festus has on his hands now the task of providing splendid entertainments day after day for his royal visitors. He was conversing with Agrippa privately on one of those days, and he says; "Agrippa, there is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, asking for sentence against him, to whom I answered that it is not the custom of the Romans to give up any man before the accused has the accusers face to face, and has had opportunity to make his defense. When his accusers stood up they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed, but had certain questions about their own demon-worship" (for that is the right rendering of the word rendered religion in our version), "and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

I want you to notice for a moment or two what light this speech throws upon Festus, and the state of his mind. Here is a man occupying a very high position in the Roman empire. He is probably acquainted with every question that could be propounded in regard to Roman history, or politics, or war. Jesus Christ has been preached in this empire for more than twenty years. Churches in his name have been established all over it, and in Rome itself a powerful Church had been built up; yet, when this man hears of the dispute between Paul and the Jews about Jesus, he speaks of it as a controversy about "one Jesus" who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive; and it seems as if this was the first

time the poor wretched heathen had ever heard the name of Jesus. He knew so little of either Judaism or Christianity that he thought the difference a mere question of demon-worship. How do you account for this amazing ignorance? There are some men in the world with whom the affairs of State are so important that they can never give any attention to religion; there are others who have so much property to look after that they have no time to consider the interests of their souls; there are some who have to labor so hard to make their bread that they can find no time to read the Bible and inform themselves about Christ. There are others who have just as much on their hands in all these departments as these have, yet they become proficient in the knowledge of the truth. There are members of Congress and members of the British Parliament to-day who would not recognize the Lord's prayer if they heard it, yet that "grand old man of England," as the people are so fond of calling him, who has had more of the affairs of state in hand for the last forty years than any of them, is so well posted in the knowledge of the Bible and of Christ that he dares to enter into combat with the mightiest infidels of Europe or America; and he has held his own with them. Felix belonged to the class who had not had time to think about religion, or to learn that there was such a being as Jesus being preached all over that empire. O, how far off he is from the kingdom of God! And Paul knew this full well.

When Festus made these remarks to Agrippa they fell upon the ears of a totally different character. Who is he? The great-grand-son of the Herod who slaughtered the babes of Bethlehem in the vain effort to kill Jesus in his cradle. The great-nephew of the Herod who murdered John the Baptist, and before whom Jesus was mocked

and arrayed in a purple robe. Son of the Herod mentioned in the twelfth of Acts, who murdered the apostle James, and attempted to murder Peter, and who died a miserable death a few days afterward in Caesarea, where Paul was now a prisoner and Agrippa a royal guest. Agrippa was a youth seventeen years old when Herod died that miserable death. He is now a young man of thirty, with the title of King.

When Festus spoke as he did about "one Jesus," I think that Agrippa must have laughed in his sleeve at the poor man's ignorance. How familiar that name was to him! All his life long he had heard Jesus and the Church and the apostles spoken about, but he had heard all from the lips of men who cursed that name, and whose hands were stained with the blood of the friends of Jesus. What a surprise it is, then, that Agrippa immediately said to Festus, "I could wish to hear the man myself"—that one of that bloody, persecuting family has come to the point of desiring to hear an apostle preach! If a man had predicted it ten years before, he would have been set down as a false prophet or a fool. "To-morrow thou shalt hear him," says Festus. So, one more day's entertainment is now provided for; and on the next day, we are told, Festus, and King Agrippa, and Bernice, and the chief captains, and the chief men of Caesarea came together into the audience room of the palace, with great pomp—Festus in his purple robes, King Agrippa with his crown, the beautiful Bernice in all her royal apparel, and the military officers arrayed in their uniforms. Never did the poor apostle stand before so gorgeous an assembly before, and perhaps never afterward. When all were seated, an officer was sent for the prisoner.

I have tried often to imagine how Paul felt, and what he thought when that officer came into his presence and

said to him, "Paul, King Agrippa has sent for thee, to hear thee concerning the faith in Christ." If the messenger had said, King Agrippa has sent for thee, Paul, that he may send you headless into eternity after James and the others that he and his fathers have murdered, Paul would not have been surprised. But, he has sent that he might hear thee. If Paul had heard a clap of thunder out of a clear sky, it could not have been more astonishing to him. What! shall I be permitted to speak in the name of my crucified Master to a Herod? Shall I have a Herod with open ears and open heart listening to the Gospel of Christ? O, is there a possibility of my reaching the heart of a Herod with the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and winning him to my Saviour? It seems to me that such must have been the thoughts of Paul; and with what a swelling heart he went into that assembly! I am not at all surprised that the sermon he delivered there is generally regarded by scholars as the greatest sermon that he ever preached in his life. He is led in. Festus arises.

"King Agrippa, and all men who are here present with us, ye behold this man concerning whom all the multitude of the Jews have plead with me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he ought not to live any longer. But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and, as he himself appealed to the Emperor, I determined to send him; of whom I have no certain thing to write to my Lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, King Agrippa, that, after examination, I may have somewhat to write; for it seems to me unreasonable in sending a prisoner, not withall to signify the charges against him."

Such is the predicament the poor ignoramus was in. I have a prisoner to be sent two thousand miles to Rome

to be tried, and I can not tell to save my life what charges are laid against him! I do not understand the case well enough, and I want some help; and especially that of King Agrippa, because he is an expert in the Jewish faith, and he can help me out of the difficulty by telling me what to write. Having delivered himself thus, he sat down.

Now Agrippa, assuming the position of the moderator of the meeting, if we should so speak, says to Paul, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." As much as to say, Go a-head now, and say what you please. This gave Paul a free and open sea in which to set his sails, and to direct his course.

Did you ever notice exactly how he began his discourse?

"I think myself happy, King Agrippa, that I am to make my defence before *thee* this day touching all the things whereof I am accused by the Jews." And O how happy he did feel to be permitted to speak to a Herod about these things, "especially," he said, "because I know thee to be expert in all questions and customs that are among the Jews." That was just as much as to say, I do not expect to find you so dull and stupid as that man, sitting by you—I can't make him understand anything at all. Well, Agrippa must have been pleased with these the first words he had ever heard from an apostle. By expressing his gratification at being allowed to speak of these matters before him, Paul partly bridged over the gulf between them, and the two were coming a little closer together, don't you see? But now, how will Paul manage to open the message of the gospel to such a man!

"My manner of life then from my youth up, which was from the beginning among mine own nation, and at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; having knowledge of me from the first, if they be willing to testify, how that after

the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand *here* to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain;" and then, looking around upon the heathen assembly who did not believe as he and Agrippa did, he demands, "Why is it judged incredible with you, if God should raise the dead?" The King and I believe in that doctrine. Why did he tell Agrippa that he was a Pharisee, and always had been, believing in the great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? I think it was because Agrippa was a Pharisee, believing in the same doctrine, and Paul wants to get close to him. He threw that remark out as a silken cord to wrap around the king, and draw him into sympathy with himself. You and I, King Agrippa, stand together against this audience.

His next remark, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," is the first time he speaks of Jesus. "And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." Why did he tell Agrippa about all of that wickedness? Was it not intended to make Agrippa think within himself, Well, that man was once with us? He was once on the side of my father and my uncle, and my grand-father. He persecuted those people as bitterly and as bloodily as my family did. Such reflections were unavoidable: and by exciting them, Paul threw another cord of sympathy to draw the king a little closer to himself. He is going to win that young

king to Christ if he can. That is what he is aiming at. Did he not also intend to raise another question in Agrippa's mind? If that man once stood where my father did, and uncle and grand-father, what on earth could have changed him? What could have caused him to turn about and become the great propagator and defender of the faith in Christ that I know him to be?

Paul's next remark was intended to answer this question, just as if he had heard Agrippa speak it out. He thinks he knows what is in the king's mind, and he answers the question. "Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet; for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee: delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." And did not the king's heart say, Well, Paul, if that is true, you ought not to be disobedient to it. If you saw that, and heard that, then our family have been mistaken, just as you

were. If this actually occurred, as you relate it, you had good cause for changing, and I wonder if we ought not to change too.

Paul uttered but a few more words when he was interrupted. Festus was sitting there, listening to this speech, and wondering. Not a single ray of light had it caused to penetrate his darkened understanding. He could not see through it at all. So, excited beyond power to control himself, he cries out, "Paul, thou art mad: thy much learning doth turn thee to madness." Now brethren, what a strange thing that an intelligent and educated man like Festus, should have listened to such a speech and thought it the raving of a madman. This accounts for the fact that all this speech thus far was addressed to Agrippa, and not a word intended for Festus. Paul saw there was no use in trying to do anything with him. Agrippa was the man. The only answer that Paul gave to Festus was this: "I am not mad, most excellent Festus" (he addressed him "most excellent" not because he was so, but because this was the customary form of address to men of high rank), "but I speak forth words of truth and soberness." He turns right back to Agrippa: "For the king knoweth of these things: unto whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been done in a corner." Don't think, Festus, because you are ignorant of it, that it was done in a corner. The king knows all about it. And well did Agrippa know about it; only he had heard of it from the wrong side.

I do not know what it was certainly that caused Paul just at this moment to change the line of thought, and make a personal, direct appeal to Agrippa. I think it must have been something he saw working in his face,

A watchful and thoughtful preacher, with self-control, will never make a direct appeal to a particular person in his audience, unless he sees evidence that the person is ripe for it. I think Paul felt, 'Now I have my man almost in my arms, and one more effort will bring him. He says, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?"' Then he saw the answer in the king's face. "I know that thou believest." This makes it uncomfortable to the king. He is impelled to speak. This personal appeal to him brings forth the expression, "Paul, with but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian." Do you think you can make me a Christian with just this one short speech? He saw through Paul's design. He arose and wrapped his robes about him, and started for the door. Bernice followed him. Festus followed, and all that gorgeous company, one by one, filed out through the door, and left Paul alone with the soldier who guarded him. I think Paul's heart sank within him when he was thus left alone in that hall. If he had been acquainted with our modern songs, this might have come to him:

"I feel like one who treads alone
 Some banquet hall deserted.
 Whose lights are fled, whose garlands dead,
 And all but me departed."

Preachers often have such feelings after earnestly pleading with a congregation of dying men. The preacher sees the tears in some one's eyes, the heaving of the chest, and that deep earnestness of feeling which makes him sure there are some who are going to come to Christ to-night; but when the last amen is pronounced, they march away and leave him disappointed. O, what a sad moment for Paul, when, after having the young Herod almost in his arms, he loses him, and is led back to his lonely prison.

And now, here is another man on whom the Gospel

failed. O, what tremendous power was brought to bear upon his soul! How strange the providence that had first brought this preacher to Felix, and terrified him; then kept him there till Festus came, and till Agrippa came—that caused him to stand before all three, and bring to bear upon them the same Gospel power which had saved so many other souls, but which fails to save them!

When they got outside that audience chamber, they began to speak to one another. I do not suppose they felt like talking at first. The people began to say to one another, "That man has not done anything worthy of death or of bonds." What brought them to that conclusion? They had had nothing before their minds to convince them of it except what the apostle said; but there was an air of honesty and earnestness and truthfulness in the words that fell from his lips, and the pulsations of a true heart behind them. They are strangers to him, but they are satisfied that he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Agrippa was the last man to speak. After all the others had expressed themselves, he said, "Festus, this man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar;" and this is in the lips of a Herod! It was as much as to say, Father did wrong in killing such men. Our family have been wrong on this question. We ought not to have murdered them. We ought not to have imprisoned them. That man ought to be set at liberty this day, if he had not appealed to Caesar, which makes it necessary to send him to Caesar. That near, my dear friends, did the Gospel come to saving Agrippa. You saw this morning how near it came to saving Felix, when it terrified him. All that he needed was to give way to that terror and throw himself upon the mercy of God.

Both of these men went down to perdition. Both of them died without God and without hope. Is there any one of you here to-night that has been terrified by the judgment scene in connection with your sins? Is there any one here to-night that has been brought as near to the kingdom of God as this young king was, so that you have felt kindly and friendly to it, and have stopped there? Oh! let me beg you in Jesus' name not to stop where they stopped. If Agrippa, when he heard that sermon, had risen to his feet and cast his crown in the dust, and taken Paul by the hand, and said, Paul, you are right; our family have been wrong; you are right; I will confess Jesus and stand by you the remnant of my days, what an honor he would have reflected back over his own ancestry, and with what a name, honored and praised and revered and loved by countless generations, he would have come down to posterity. How differently he would have passed into the eternal world. Oh sinner, take warning, and come now to the arms of mercy which are open to receive you.

SERMON XVI.

GOD IS NOT MOCKED.

EVENING JULY 30, 1893.

The seventh verse of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

This admonition is given by the Apostle in immediate connection with the subject of contributions to the work of the Lord. He has just said to the brethren, “Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” And he says just below, in the same connection, “As we have opportunity let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.” So, when he says in this connection, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,” his special aim is to enforce the duty of liberality to the cause of Christ, and to the wants of the poor; but you will observe that, whilst that is his especial object, he draws the conclusion that such is our duty toward those who teach, and toward the poor, from the universal law governing our whole life here—that what we sow, that shall we also reap. This he lays down as the universal law of God’s government over us, and when he says, “Be not deceived” about this, “God is not mocked,” he means to inform us that, if we should think that we can sow one thing and reap another we would be

thinking that we had the power to mock God—that is, to defy him by overriding his plans and arrangements. Men are very apt to think they can do that. They do so many things by means of their perseverance and determination that they are very apt to conclude they can do anything they choose, whether it pleases God or not; that they can go on trampling God's laws under their feet as long as they choose, and still come out well. Paul knew very well that men were prone to deceive themselves into such an idea as this, and hence he says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that *shall* he also reap."

Having made this statement, he goes on to another—a broad universal statement, growing out of the same great fact: "He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption"; and, on the other hand, "he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." This is God's fixed and unalterable law; and the man who thinks otherwise is deceived, and imagines that he can mock God.

What does the Apostle mean by sowing and reaping, in this latter portion of the text?—"he that soweth to the flesh" and "he that soweth to the spirit"—what is meant by that? A man does not literally sow to his flesh, does not literally sow to his spirit, consequently, the word "sow" here is used figuratively. But what does a man do when he is literally sowing? You have all seen men at it, and the kind of sowing in those days was not with a drill machine, but the old style of sowing—broadcast with the hand, the only sowing that was known in Asia, and that is known there yet. Have you noticed that man going across the field sowing? He puts his hand into the bag that is swung over his shoulder, gathers up a handful of seed, and scatters it to the right, to

the left, and in front, and as he moves on he keeps scattering it at every step, and leaves a broad swath of it stretching out behind him. Now the Apostle contemplates every man that lives as doing something which he compares to that sowing. Every step he takes, he is scattering something to the right, to the left, and in front, and leaving it scattered all along the road behind him. What is it? He has especial reference here to a man's money. Well, there are some people who sow money—a young spendthrift, for instance, who has plenty of it. But all of us sow a good deal of it; it gets away; slips through our fingers some way, and is scattered all along the road that we travel. But money is not all that we sow. Every word that drops out of our mouths falls round about us, makes an impression, and is left behind us; and every deed, every act of our lives—indeed our life is made up of moments that have been compared to grains of gold that we are scattering along our pathway from the cradle to the grave. I presume, then, this sowing which the Apostle speaks of includes all that we do that has any moral character in it—our whole course of life. We are sowing, sowing, constantly sowing, and will be till we lie down in the grave.

But what is meant by sowing to the flesh? I do not suppose the Apostle means merely giving money and time and energy to feeding the physical man, and furnishing it with clothing and drink; in other words, I think the word "flesh" is used figuratively, as it so often is in the Scriptures, for the baser part of our nature—our passions and appetites. To sow to the flesh, then, means to devote our time, our energies, our words, our money, and all that we are scattering along our path, to the gratification of earthly and sensual desires.

Now the man that sows thus the Apostle says shall

reap. There is a reaping coming for that man just as certain as there is for the man who sows wheat or oats or any other grain; and as he sows, he shall reap.

What is it that the man shall reap who sows to the flesh? It is a very awful word—corruption! corruption! You know what corruption is—corruption of the flesh. The most hideous thing on this earth to a human being is the body of a man when it has gone to corruption. If it is the body of the dearest friend we have on earth, we desire, in the language of Abraham, to bury it out of our sight. He said of his beloved Sarah, “Give me a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

Well, I think that this word, too, is used figuratively. The good man goes to physical corruption when he dies, as surely as the bad man does. When the Apostle says, “He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption,” what corruption does he mean? I think he applies the word “corruption” to the condition of the soul—a figurative application of it. But brethren, if a corrupted, decayed, putrefied, rotten body is a thing to be abhorred, what must be a putrefied, rotten, corrupted soul? I wish we could realize it. He that sows the actions and thoughts and money and energies of his life to the flesh, shall reap as his harvest a corrupted soul, is the teaching of this passage. If men could be made to believe this, they would sow to the flesh no longer; we would every one quit our sowing to the flesh. But why don't we believe it when it is in God's word? Well, we are deceived; we think that we can mock God. We think that we can go on in spite of God and sow to the flesh all our days, and some way or other escape that eternal corruption. That is what men think. If you could only make these wicked men who are sowing to the flesh every day—some of them most desperately engaged in it—realize that the harvest

of a corrupt soul will be their harvest by and by, every one of them would stop it. But they are deceived; they think they can mock God. When that hard sinner thinks over the question, What will become of me? he says, "Well, I have been in a good many tight places, and I have gotten through; I may get into a tight place yet with God, possibly, but I think there is some way for a man to get through, and I am going to trust to my chances;" and so he goes on. He thinks that as he has gotten around men, and circumvented and outwitted them, and gotten out of every scrape thus far, when he comes to get into an entanglement with God he can slip around Him some way or other; thinks he can mock God. Paul says he can not do it. "God is not mocked."

There is one story (or rather a piece of true history) related in the book of Kings, (I Kings,) which always appeared to me, since I first came to think of it, as if it were written for the very purpose of illustrating this great doctrine of the Apostle. You know he tells us, respecting a great many things written in the Old Testament, that they happened for examples, and that they were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world have come. I think this must be one of them.

It is a story connected with the history of Ahab, that wickedest of all the kings who had reigned over the ten tribes down to his day. You recollect that he wanted the vineyard of Naboth, which lay adjoining his palace grounds, and by which, if he had it, he could extend those grounds and make them so much more beautiful and delightful as a summer residence; for Jezreel, where he then resided, was the seat of his summer palace. The breezes from the Mediterranean sweep across a level plain, and pass through Jezreel away to the mountains of Gilead, and then come back, blowing alternately east and west, and giving great relief in the hot season.

Being disposed to act honestly about it at first, he proposed to Naboth to buy his vineyard. "I will give thee the worth of it in money, or I will give thee a better vineyard." Nothing could be fairer than that. But Naboth had been born and reared on that little piece of land. His father before him, and *his* father before *him*, and away back to the time of Joshua, when the land was first parcelled out, had lived there, and when he thought of parting with it, his love for the old ancestral home took fresh possession of his soul, and although it was the king, he said, "God forbid that I should let you have the inheritance of my fathers." No money could buy it. And I love Naboth because he so loved the old home. I always have a great deal of respect for a man who, when he gets able, goes back to where his forefathers lived, and buys the old place, and fixes it up. I have been made to feel a great deal more respect for old Fred Douglass lately, that now he has money, he has gone up in Maryland and bought the old farm that his old master lived on when he was a little boy, and is going to spend there the remnant of his days.

Ahab was one of those men who, like a spoiled child, can never be satisfied if they do not get what they want. So he went home and dropped down on the bed, and turned his face toward the wall, and would not eat. I would not be surprised if we have farmers in Kentucky who desire to buy a certain piece of ground from a neighbor and can not get it, and are just as childish as Ahab. Jezebel comes in, and wants to know what is the matter. He tells her. She says, Get up and wash your face and eat. You shall have that vineyard. So she sends word to the rulers of the city, to proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high before the people, and bring in two men of Belial who will swear against him that he had blasphemed

God and the king, and then to take him out and stone him to death. Suppose that you had been one of those magistrates, what would you have done? You would not have obeyed the order? Then you would have died; for Jezebel would kill any man if he disobeyed her. She thought no more of cutting off the head of a man than that of a chicken. So those men concluded that rather than die for disobedience to the queen, they would execute her commands on Naboth, and they did it. When they sent word that it was done, she went to the king and told him, "Now go up and take possession of the vineyard; for all those that were in your way are dead." Ahab obeyed. He was one of those gentlemen who obey their wives. They mounted their horses, had some of the chief officers of the court with them, and rode into the vineyard; and I suppose they were talking about what improvements would be made; where a nice summer-house should be built; where the flower-bed should be; and where the gravel walk should be; and young Athaliah, Ahab's daughter, then about fourteen—what a nice time she and her companions would have in these delightful grounds! While this was going on, they turned toward the gate, and there was Elijah the prophet walking in. This scared Ahab. When he drew up within speaking distance, he said to Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" "I have found thee. And thus saith the Lord God before whom I stand, Dogs shall lick thy blood, even thine, O king, where they licked the blood of Naboth." He turned on his heel and went away. Ahab was so scared that it nearly made him sick.

A few years went on and Ahab got over his scare. A great many wicked men reach a point in life when they are desperately scared. They do better for awhile, and people begin to think they are going to reform and be

good; but they get over it. Ahab got over it. Not many years after this, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, proposed and brought about a marriage between his son, the young prince Jehoram, and Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. Jehoshaphat came up to visit Ahab, and while he was there Ahab spoke to him about the king of Syria having taken possession of Ramoth-gilead, a city on the other side of the Jordan, and belonging to Ahab's kingdom; and he said to Jehoshaphat, "Wilt thou go over with me to Ramoth-gilead and fight against the Syrians, and take our city from them?" Jehoshaphat says, "My army is as thine, and I am as thou, and I will go;" but he says, Let us enquire of the Lord, whether we will prosper if we go. Well, Ahab calls in four hundred prophets, and puts the question to them in public, while the two kings are sitting on thrones near the gate of the city, "Shall we go up to Ramoth-gilead? And will the Lord prosper us?" And every one of the four hundred prophets said, Yes. Of course, when a man as wicked as Ahab is on the throne, and wants a lot of prophets around him to suit him, and has plenty of money to give to them, he can always have as many of that kind as he wants. Ahab had four hundred, all claiming to be prophets of the Lord. One man, Zedekiah, fixed up some horns, and put them on himself, and went pushing around, and said, "with these shall the king of Israel push the king of Syria, and prevail against him." But Jehoshaphat, a very good man in his way, a worshiper of God, was suspicious of all these prophets, and he said to Ahab, Is there not yet here another prophet of God, whom we may enquire of about this matter? Ahab says, Yes, there is another, one Micaiah, but I hate him because he always prophesies evil. Nevertheless, says Jehoshaphat, send for him. An officer was imme-

diately sent for Micaiah. That officer knew which side of his bread was buttered, and he thought he knew just exactly what kind of advice to give to the prophet; so as they were walking along to where the kings were sitting he said to the prophet, "Micaiah, all the prophets have prophesied good for the king. Now do you prophesy good." Micaiah answered him, "As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, the word that God shall put in my mouth, will I give to the king." Micaiah was not a man with an india-rubber conscience. When he is brought in, Ahab says: "Micaiah, shall we go up to Ramoth-gilead, and will the Lord prosper us if we go?" Micaiah says, "Go; the Lord shall prosper thee." But somehow or other, I suppose it was from the tone in which he spoke, Ahab took him to mean the very opposite of what he had said, so he said, "How many times shall I exhort thee not to tell me any lies in the name of the Lord?" Micaiah then opened his mouth again and said: "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, high and lifted up, and all the angels round about him. And the Lord said, Who shall go forth for me and persuade Ahab to go up to Ramoth-gilead and fall there? And one spirit said, I will go. The Lord said to that spirit, By what wilt thou persuade him? The spirit answered, I will go down and be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets, and I will persuade him to go up to Ramoth-gilead and fall there." Of course, all the crowd understood that Micaiah was making a parable here, or an allegory, and he meant by it that these prophets were all lying, every one of them, and that as sure as Ahab went up to Ramoth-gilead he would fall. Ahab understood it that way. So he said to the officer, "Take that man into the city and put him in prison, and feed him on the bread of affliction and the water of affliction, until I come again in peace."

As the officer led Micaiah away, he looked back at the king and said, "If thou dost return in peace, then the Lord has not spoken by me." Ahab knew just as well as he knew his name that Micaiah had spoken a prediction which he had received from God, and he knew as well as Micaiah did, that those other prophets were lying. But, did he go to Ramoth-gilead? Yes, he went. Did he think he could mock God? I suppose he did. He determined to try it, at any rate. So, when the two armies were about to go into battle, he said to King Jehoshaphat, You go into battle with your royal robes on, and I will go in in disguise. What did he do that for? It may be that somebody who has a special spite against me as a king will try to kill me, and that this is what Micaiah was counting on, and God was counting on, when they said I would fall in this battle. I will go in in disguise, and I will make it a point to keep in a safe place, and to go through the battle without being killed. He was determined not to be killed in that battle.

There was a very curious thing going on in the Syrian army just at the same time, just before that battle. Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, had a personal dislike for Ahab. So he called the thirty commanders of the different divisions of his army into a council of war, and gave them this command—"In this battle, fight not against any man except the king of Israel;" so when that battle was joined, there were thirty men on the opposite side commanded to hunt out and kill the king of Israel, and not to fight anybody else until they killed him. Now, if Ben-Hadad had known what Micaiah had prophesied, and what Elijah had prophesied, about the fate of Ahab, and was anxious that God's prophesies should be true, he could not have done

anything, to save his life, better calculated to help God out, than this command to the thirty captains. Those thirty captains saw the crest of a king and made a rush for him; but he made some kind of an outcry, I suppose calling his men to rally around him, and they discovered that it was Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, so they stopped and turned away, because the king had told them not to fight anybody but Ahab. And when the battle was over, and they were called before their king, and he said, "Did you kill Ahab?" what do you suppose was their answer? I judge they would have to say, O, king, we obeyed thy command. We hunted around and looked for a king, and when we found one, we made a rush for him, but it was the wrong king; we pushed into the thickest of the fight, but if Ahab was in the army, we could not find him. So we failed. What did that show? That God did not want the help of those thirty men. But did Ahab escape? No. A soldier in the Syrian army drew his bow, and let fly the arrow without taking aim at anybody in particular, and that very arrow passed between the joints of the armor of Ahab, and passed through his body as he stood in his chariot. He bravely stood his ground until the battle was over, saying to the charioteer, Bear me up; hold me up; so that his men might not see him fall and be panic-stricken. But when the battle was over, and his men, returning, came near the palace, just opposite the vineyard of Naboth, where there was a pool of water, they took his body out and washed the blood out of the chariot, and the dogs ate it where they had eaten the blood of Naboth. And thus it was proved that God could not be mocked. He could guide an arrow that was shot without aim, and He did not need the help of the thirty warriors of the enemy's forces. He did not

need Ahab's royal crest upon his head to guide that arrow to the right man. "God is not mocked." When He says a thing shall be done, it will be done.

Now, then, it was in view of such facts as these, of which Paul's mind was full in the experiences and history of the past, as well as full of the enlightening Spirit of the living God, that he said to men who are sowing to the flesh and think there is some way to escape the reaping of eternal corruption, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." It will come; sure as the throne of God shall stand, his decrees will stand fast. Do not deceive yourselves into the idea that you can circumvent and outwit the Almighty. Is there any man here to-night who has been sowing to the flesh? Just as sure as the past has been what it has, the future will be what is here declared, unless there is an end to that sowing.

Thanks be to God that through the provision of the gospel of the grace of God, and through it alone, a man who has been sowing to the flesh a certain period of his life may escape reaping corruption by the mercy and love of God, who forgives the past and delivers us from it; but this deliverance can be obtained only by ceasing to do wrong, learning to do well, and casting yourselves in good time upon the mercy of your God. Will you do that, and will you do it to-night? That is the question to which all I have said has brought me, and has brought you; and it is the only thing that gives meaning and value to the facts which I have laid before you.

There is another thing in this passage for us to thank God for. While it is true and unalterable that he who sows to the flesh shall reap corruption, it is equally true that he who sows to the spirit shall reap life eternal. God is not mocked on either side. All the demons in hell, and all the wicked men on earth, and all the angels in heaven,

if they should undertake the ruin of a man, could not prevent one who has sown to the spirit from reaping life eternal. So, are you sowing to the spirit? Go on rejoicing every day, and hope with a sure hope for everlasting life at the end of your time and your labor. Are you sowing to the flesh? Turn right about, and begin this very night sowing to the spirit, devoting your time, your money, your energies, your all, to the cultivation of your spiritual nature, so that eternal life may be the harvest you shall reap.

SERMON XVII.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE: JOSEPH.

MORNING AUGUST 20, 1893.

I will read verses four to eight in the forty-fifth chapter of Genesis:

“I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years in the which there shall neither be sowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.”

The story of Joseph is one of those undying narratives which have been of deepest interest to all readers for more than three thousand years, and will be to the end of time. It is interesting to children, to simple-minded people who understand it the least; and it is still more interesting to profound scholars, who understand it the best. It occupies a larger space in the Old Testament than any other personal narrative, except that of Abraham; and have you never wondered why this simple story was allowed so much space? Whether there was any design in it beyond that of entertaining and interesting the reader, as a novel or a fine poem entertains and interests us? And have you never, in studying the story, wondered why Joseph, after he became Governor over Egypt and had command of his

own time, spent the whole seven years of plenty and two years of famine without going to see his father, who lived only two hundred miles away over a smooth road? And finally, has not the question occurred to you, Why did God select to be the heads of ten of the twelve tribes of His own people, ten men who were so cruel, so inhuman as to take their seventeen year old brother and sell him into bondage in a foreign land? The task that I have undertaken in the discourse this morning, will be to give, as well as I can, an answer to these three questions, and in doing so, to point out a striking example of the providence of God.

In regard to the design of allowing this story to occupy so much space, I think I may safely say that there is nothing recorded in this Holy Book, which has no higher purpose than to entertain and interest the reader. There is always in the divine mind something beyond and higher than that. If you will read a little further back in the book of Genesis, you will find that on a certain occasion, God, after having promised Abraham again and again that he should have offspring who would inherit the land of Canaan as their possession, commanded him one day to slaughter some animals and lay them in two rows. He did so, and seeing that the birds of prey were gathering to devour them, he stood guard and drove them away until night came, and they went to roost. Then he also fell asleep, and "a horror of great darkness" fell upon him. I suppose it was a terrible nightmare. He then heard the voice of God saying to him, "Thy seed shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they shall be afflicted four hundred years. After that, I will judge the nation by whom they shall be afflicted, and bring them out, and bring them into this land, and give it to them as an inherit-

ance." From these solemn words, Abraham now knows that it is to be four hundred years, and more, before his people will inherit this promised land, and that they shall pass, in the meantime, through four hundred years of bondage and fearful affliction; but that then the good word of the Lord will be fulfilled. It gave him a totally different view of those promises, from that which he had entertained before.

We learn by the subsequent history, what Abraham never did learn, that the foreign land in which his people were to be bondmen, was Egypt; and that a removal of his posterity to that land was necessary to the fulfillment of Jehovah's words. He lived and died, however, in Canaan. His son Isaac lived one hundred and eighty years, and died and left his children, his servants and his flocks and herds, still in Canaan. Jacob, although he had spent forty years in Paddan-Aram, still lived in Canaan with his twelve sons and his flocks and herds; and up to the very hour when his sons came back from Egypt the second time, and said, "Joseph is alive, and is governor over all Egypt," and he saw a long line of wagons coming up and bringing the warm invitation of Pharaoh and Joseph to hasten down and make their home in Egypt—up to that hour he had never entertained the idea of migrating to Egypt. He as little thought of it as we do of migrating to the moon. What then was it that brought about, after so many years, that migration of the descendants of Abraham into Egypt, and led to the four hundred years of bondage? You are ready to answer, that the immediate cause of it was the fact that Joseph, the son of Jacob, was now governor over all Egypt, and wanted his father and his brothers to be with him. That is true. But, how had Joseph happened to be governor over all the

land of Egypt? You say, the immediate cause of it was, that when he predicted the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine, he proposed to the king that a man be selected to go out and gather up grain during the years of plenty, to save the people from starving in the years of famine; and that Pharaoh had the good sense to accept the proposal, and to appoint Joseph governor. But then, how is it that Joseph predicted that famine? You say it was the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream; and so it was. But how did he happen to interpret that dream? You say, because all the magicians of Egypt had been called on to interpret it, and had failed. They not only could not see the real meaning of it, but they did not venture a supposition as to what it meant. A dream in which a man saw fat cows coming up out of a river! The idea of cows coming up out of a river! And then, other cows, lean cows, coming up out of the same river, and devouring these fat cows, and looking just as lean and thin as they were before! Why, that went outside of all the rules for interpreting dreams that the dream interpreters of that age had invented; and they could not give the remotest suggestion as to what it meant. The failure of the magicians then, was one necessary cause of Joseph being called on to interpret the dream. And then, how did Joseph happen to be called on? If that butler had not forgotten his promise to Joseph, made two years before, to speak to the king and have Joseph released out of an imprisonment which was unjust, Joseph would have been released most likely, and might have been anywhere else by this time than in the land of Egypt. The forgetfulness of the butler, who forgot his friend when it was well with himself, was a necessary link in the chain. He says, when all the magicians had failed, "I remember

now my fault;" and he told the king about a young Hebrew whom he met in prison, who interpreted his dream and the baker's, and both came to pass; "Me he restored to my office, and the chief baker he hanged." The king immediately sent for Joseph. But how did he happen to interpret the dreams of the butler and the baker? That depended upon their having the dreams, and upon their having those dreams in the prison, and upon Joseph being the man who had charge of the prisoners, and who, coming in and finding the two great officers of the king looking very sad, asked what was the matter. But how did Joseph happen to have the control of the prisoners, so as to have access to these officers? Why, that depended upon the fact that he had behaved himself so well in prison as to win the confidence of the keeper of the jail, and had been promoted, until the management of the whole prison was placed in his hands. Well, how did Joseph happen to be in prison? Why, you will say that the wife of Potiphar made a false accusation against him. But have you not wondered why Potiphar did not kill him? An average Kentuckian would have done it *instantly*. I think it depended upon the fact that Potiphar knew his wife well and knew Joseph well, and had about as much confidence in Joseph's denial as in her accusation. And how did it happen that she had a chance to bring such accusations against Joseph? Why, because Joseph had won the confidence of his master as a young slave, till he had made him supreme director of everything inside of his house. He had access to every apartment, and provided for his master's table, so that the text tells us there was nothing inside of his house that Potiphar knew of, except the food on his table. It was this that gave the opportunity to the bad woman. But then I ask further, How

did Joseph happen to be there a house-boy in the house of Potiphar? Well, he bought him. He wanted a house-boy, and went down to the slave market, and found him there and bought him. How did he happen to be in the slave market? Because his brothers sold him. But suppose he had never been sold into Egypt! Would he ever have interpreted dreams? Would he ever have been governor of Egypt? Would he ever have sent for his father and brothers to come down there? But how did he happen to be sold as a slave? If those traders had been fifteen minutes later passing along, Reuben would have taken the boy up and let him loose, and he would have gone back to his father. Everything depended on that. But how did he happen to be in that pit from which Reuben was going to deliver him? You say they saw him coming from home to where they were grazing their flocks, and they remembered those dreams. They said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, let us slay him and cast him into one of the pits." Then they would see what would become of his dreams. Dissuaded by Reuben from killing him outright, they put him in a pit to die. It was their jealousy that caused them to put him into the pit. But then, how is it that those dreams had excited their jealousy to such a pitch? I do not suppose that they would, if they had not already been jealous because of the coat of many colors. Now we have traced these causes back from one to the other, back, back, back, till we have reached the source of all in the partiality of the old father in giving the coat of many colors. And brethren, let me say here by way of digression, that the history of many a family trouble, with its trials and alienations and distresses, running sometimes through generations, is traceable to jealousy springing from parental partiality. But now, every one

of these causes that I have mentioned stands like a link in the long chain by which God, having determined that these Hebrews should dwell in Egypt for four hundred years, after predicting it two hundred years before, draws them down where He wants them to be.

And what are the links in this chain? Some of them are desperately wicked deeds; some of them are good deeds. The fidelity of Joseph; sold to be a slave, but evidently saying within himself, As I have to be the slave of this man, I will be the best slave he has. I will be the most faithful one. I will win his confidence. I will do my duty like a man. And thus he rises. And then the same kind of fidelity when he is cast into prison. As I have to be in prison, I will be the best prisoner in this jail. I will do what I ought to do here in the fear of my God. Thus he rises to the top again; illustrating the fact, and I wish I had young men in abundance to speak this to—that a young man who has true character, unfaltering fidelity, and some degree of energy and ability, can not be kept down in this world. You may put him down, but he will rise again. You may put him down again and again; but he will come up. A young man like that, is like a cork; you may press it under the water, but it will soon pop up again. Oh that the young men of our country had such integrity, such power to resist temptation, such resolution and perseverance, as this Jewish youth had.

So then, this long story is told as an illustration of the providence of God, by which He can bring about His purposes without the intervention of miraculous power except here and there; for in all this long chain of causes God touched the links only twice, directly: once, when He gave power to Joseph to interpret the dreams of the butler and the baker, and once when He gave him power

to interpret the dream of Pharaoh. Just those two instances in which the finger of God touched the chain; all the rest were the most natural things in the world, and they brought about God's design just as effectively as though He had wrought one great miracle to translate Jacob and his children through the air, and plant them on the soil of Egypt. The man who studies the story of Joseph and does not see this in it, has failed to see one of its great purposes. And what is true in bringing about this result in the family of Jacob, may be true—I venture to say, it is true—in regard to every family of any importance in this world; and it extends down to the modes by which God overrules our own acts, both good and bad, and those of our friends, and brings us out at the end of our lives shaped and molded as he desires we shall be.

Now let us look for a moment at the second question. Why did Joseph not go and see his father and his brothers during the nine years in which he could have gone almost any day? I think that when we reach the answer we will see another and perhaps a more valuable illustration of the providence of God. In order to understand the motives which actuate men under given circumstances, we must put ourselves in their places and judge of them by the way that we would ourselves feel and act; for human nature is the same the wide world over, and in all the different nations of men. Suppose then, that you were a boy of seventeen. Your brothers have all been away from home, sixty or seventy miles, with the flocks, until your father has become anxious about them, and sends you up to see how they do. You go, as Joseph did, but you fail to find them. While you search you meet a stranger who tells you they are gone to Dothan, fourteen or fifteen miles farther away. With

this news Joseph continued his journey, and how his heart leaped at last to see his brothers again! How glad a welcome he expected from them, and inquiries about home, and father, and all. But when he came up, he saw a scowl upon every face. Instead of welcoming, they seized him, and with rough hands stripped the coat from his back, dragged him to the mouth of a dry cistern, and let him down in it. "Now we will see what will become of his dreams."

How did the boy then feel? I have thought that perhaps he said to himself, My brothers are only trying to scare me. They are just playing a cruel joke on me, and don't mean to leave me here to perish. But perhaps he had begun to think they were in earnest, when he heard footsteps above, and voices. He sees one of their faces looking down, and a rope to draw him up, and he thinks the cruel joke is over. But when he is drawn up and sees those strangers there, and hears words about the sale of the boy, and his hands are tied behind him, and he is delivered into their hands, and they start off with him, what would you have thought or felt then? If the thought had come into his mind that it was another joke, he might have watched as the merchants passed down the road, on every rising piece of ground he might have looked back to see if his brothers were coming to buy him back again, and to get through with this terrible joke; but when the whole day's journey was passed, and they went into camp at night, and the same the next day, no brothers have overtaken him, what must have been his feelings? When he thought, I am a slave, and I am being carried away into a foreign land to spend the rest of my life as a slave, never to see father and home again, who can imagine his feelings? So he was brought down into Egypt and sold.

But it seems to me that Joseph must have had one thought to bear him up, at least for a time. My father loves me. He loves me more than he does all my brothers. He is a rich man. When he hears that I have been sold into Egypt, he will send one hundred men, if need be, to hunt me up; he will load them with money to buy me back. I trust in my father for deliverance yet. But he is sold into the house of Pharaoh, and years pass by. He is cruelly cast into prison, and years pass by, until thirteen long years of darkness and gloom and sorrow and pain have gone, and he has never heard of his father sending for him. He could have done it. It would have been easy to do. And now, how does he feel toward his brothers and toward his father? Would you have wanted to see those brothers again? And when he found his father had never sent for him, knowing, perhaps, how penurious and avaricious his father had been in his younger days, may he not have said, The old avaricious spirit of my father has come back on him in his declining years, and he loves his money more than he loves his boy? And when that feeling took possession of him, did he want to see his father any more? Or any of them? Could he bear the thought of ever seeing those brothers again? And could he at last bear the thought of seeing that father who had allowed him to perish, as it were, without stretching out a hand to help him? The way he did feel is seen in one little circumstance. When he was married and had his first-born son placed before him, he named him Manasseh, *forgetfulness*, "Because," he says, "God has enabled me to forget my father's house." The remembrance of home and brothers and father had been a source of constant pain to him; he never could think of them without agony of heart; but now, thank God, I have forgotten them. Oh, brethren,

what a terrible experience a boy must have before he feels a sense of relief and gladness that he has been enabled to forget all about his father and his brothers in his early home! That is the way Joseph felt when Manasseh was born. And would not you have felt so, too?

Everything was going on more pleasantly than he thought it ever could, with him—riches, honor, wife, children; everything that could delight the heart of a wise and good man—when suddenly, one day his steward comes in and tells him that there are ten foreigners who desire to buy some grain. He had a rule that all foreigners must be brought before him before they were allowed to buy grain. Bring them in. They were brought in, and behold, there are his brothers! There are his brothers! And as they approach, they bow down before him. Of course, they could not recognize him, dressed in the Egyptian style—governor of Egypt. Even if he had looked like Joseph, it would only have been a strange thing with them to say, He resembles our brother Joseph. There they are. It was a surprising sight to him and a painful one. He instantly determines to treat them in such a way that they will never come back to Egypt again. He says, “Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.” “No,” they say, “we are come to buy food; we are all the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. We are twelve brothers. The youngest is with our father, and one is not.”

That remark about the youngest awakened a new thought in Joseph. Oh how it brought back the sad hour when his own mother, dying on the way that they were journeying, left that little Benjamin, his only full brother, in the hands of the weeping father! And

how it reminded him, that when he was sold Benjamin was a little lad at home. He is my own mother's child. Instantly he resolves that Benjamin shall be here with him in Egypt, and that these others shall be scared away, so that they will never come back again; so he says, "Send one of you, and let him bring your brother, that your words may be proved, or else by the life of Pharaoh ye are spies." He cast them all into prison; but on the third day he went to them and said: "I fear God; if ye be true men let one of you be bound in prison, and let the others go and carry food for your houses; and bring your youngest brother to me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die." When he said that, they began to confess to one another their belief about the providential cause of this distress, when Reuben made a speech that brought a revelation to Joseph. He said to his brethren, "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear. Therefore, behold his blood is required." Joseph learns for the first time that Reuben had befriended him, and this so touched his heart that he turned aside to weep. He passes by Reuben and takes the *next* to the oldest for the prisoner.

He now gave the directions to his steward to sell them the grain; and why did he order the money to be tied up in the mouth of every man's sack? They were once so mean and avaricious that they sold me for fifteen petty pieces of silver. I will put their silver in the mouths of their sacks, and I will see if they are as dishonest as they were then. If they are, I will never hear of that money again. Not many merchants in these days, if you go in and buy ten dollars' worth of goods, will wrap the ten dollars in the bundle to see if it will come back. I will see, thought Joseph, if they are honest.

Time went on—a good deal more than Joseph expected, on account of the unwillingness of Jacob to let Benjamin make the journey. But finally the news is brought that these ten Canaanites have returned. They are brought once more into his presence, and there is Benjamin. They still call him the “little one” and “the lad;” just as I have had mothers to introduce me to “the baby,” and the baby would be a strapping fellow six feet high. There he is. “Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke?” He waits not for an answer, but exclaims, “God be gracious unto thee, my son.” He slips away into another room to weep. How near he is now to carrying out his plan—to having that dear brother, who had never harmed him, to enjoy his honors and riches and glory, and get rid of the others. He has them to dine in his house. That scared them. To dine with the governor! They could not conceive what it meant. Joseph knew. He had his plan formed. He wanted them there to give them a chance to steal something out of the dining-room. They enjoyed the dinner. They had never seen before so rich a table. He says to the steward, “Fill the men’s sacks with food; put every man’s money in his sack’s mouth, and put my silver cup in the sack’s mouth of the youngest.” It was done, and at daylight next morning they were on their journey home. They were not far on the way when the steward overtook them, with the demand, “Why have ye rewarded evil for good? Is it not this in which my Lord drinketh, and wherewith he divineth? Ye have done evil in so doing.” They answered, “God forbid that thy servants should do such a thing. Search, and if it be found with any one of us, let him die, and the rest of us will be your bondmen.” “No,” says the steward, “he with whom it is found shall be my bondman, and ye shall

be blameless." He begins his search with Reuben's sack. It is not there. Then one by one he takes down the sacks of the others, until he reaches Benjamin's. There is the cup! They all rend their clothes; and when the steward starts back with Benjamin, they follow him. They are frightened almost to death, but the steward can not get rid of them. Joseph was on the lookout for the steward and Benjamin. Yonder they come, but behind them are all the ten. What shall now be done? They come in and fall down before him once more, and say, "We are thy bondmen. God has found out our iniquity." "No," he says, "the man in whose hand the cup is found shall be my bondman; but as for you, get you up in peace to your father."

Joseph thought that his plan was a success. They will be glad to go in peace. I will soon have it all right with Benjamin. They will hereafter send somebody else to buy their grain. But Judah arose, drew near, and begged the privilege of speaking a word. He recites the incidents of their first visit, and speaks of the difficulty with which they had induced their father to let Benjamin come. He quotes from his father these words: "Ye know that my wife bore me two sons; one of them went out from me, and I said surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since. If ye take this one also from me and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." He closes with the proposal, "Let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren." Here was a revelation to Joseph—two of them. First, I have been blaming my old father for these twenty-two years because he did not send down into Egypt and hunt me up, and buy me out, and take me home; and now I see I have been blaming him un-

justly, for he thought I was dead—that some wild beast had torn me in pieces. O what self-reproach, and what a revival of love for his old father! And here, again, I have been trying to drive these brothers away from me, as unworthy of any countenance on my part, or even an acquaintance with them; but what a change has come over them! The very men that once sold me for fifteen paltry pieces of silver, are now willing to be slaves themselves, rather than see their youngest brother made a slave, even when he appears to be guilty of stealing. What a change! Immediately all of his old affection for them takes possession of him, and with these two revelations flashing upon him, it is not surprising that he broke out into loud weeping. He weeps, and falls upon his brothers' necks. He says, "I am Joseph." A thought flashes through his mind, never conceived before, and he says, "Be not grieved, or angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither." He sees now God's hand all through this strange, sad experience, and using a Hebraism, he says, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God; God did send me before to preserve life." When he was a bondman in Potiphar's house, he did not see God's hand in the matter. When he was a prisoner there in the prison, he did not see God's hand. I suppose he thought that it was all of the devil; but now that he has gotten to the end of the vista and looks back, he sees it is God who has done it. He sees in part what we saw in the first part of this discourse. O, my friends, many times when you shall have passed through deep waters that almost overwhelm you, and shall have felt alienated from all the friends you had on earth, thinking that they had deserted you, wait a little longer, and you will look up and say it was God; it was the working of grand, glorious, and blessed purposes that he had in his mind concerning you.

The last question we can dispose of now very quickly, because it has been almost entirely anticipated. Why did God select ten men to be the heads of ten tribes of his chosen people, who were so base as to sell their brother? O, my brethren, it was not the ten who sold their brother that God selected, but the ten who were willing to be slaves instead of their brother. These are the ten that he chose. If you and I shall get to heaven, why will God admit us there? Not because of what we once were, but because of what He shall have made out of us by His dealings with us. He had his mind on the outcome, and not on the beginning. If you and I had to be judged by what we were at one time, there would be no hope for us. I am glad to know that my chances for the approval of the Almighty are based on what I hope to be, and not on what I am. Thank God for that!

And they were worthy. Not many men who, when the youngest brother of the family was clearly guilty of stealing, and was about to be made a slave, would say, "Let me be the slave, and let him go home to his father?" Not many. And what had brought about the wondrous change which they had undergone? Ah, here we have the other illustration of God's providential government to which I have alluded. When these men held up the bloody coat before their father, and said, "This we have found: know now whether it is thy son's coat or not," they entered into an experience of which they had not dreamed. There they stood, guilty and helpless before their grief-stricken father, knowing that Joseph was not dead, as he supposed, but not able to tell him so because the truth would be still more distressing than the fiction. What father would not rather a thousand times over that one of his sons should be dead, than that one of them should be kidnapped and sold into foreign bondage by the

others? If their father's grief was inconsolable, their own remorse was intolerable. For twenty-two long years they writhed under it, and there is no wonder that then they should prefer foreign bondage themselves rather than to witness a renewal of their father's anguish. The same chain of providence which brought them unexpectedly into Egypt, had fitted them for the high honors which were yet to crown their names.

Is there a poor sinner here to-day, whom God has disciplined, whether less or more severely than he did these men, and brought you to repentance? If so, the kind Redeemer whom you rejected, and sold, as it were, to strangers, stands ready to forgive you more completely and perfectly than Joseph forgave his brethren. He has found out your iniquity; he knows it all; but he died that he might be able to forgive you. Come in his appointed way; come guilty and trembling, as Joseph's brothers came, and you will find his everlasting arms around you.

SERMON XVIII.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE: QUEEN ESTHER.

EVENING AUGUST 20, 1893.

[The fourth chapter of Esther was read before the prayer.]

I read now, once more, the last message sent by Mordecai to Esther :

“Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shalt be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

If the house of Jacob was about to perish with hunger when the providence of God in the career of Joseph, as we pointed out this morning, came to their relief, and by that singular and long chain of providence, God saved them from perishing, the descendants of the same family were in still more imminent peril at the time of which I have read. Ahasuerus, as he is called here, is the same king who is called Xerxes by the Greeks. His name, as spelled in the ancient Persian letters, is a long row of consonants—about eight or ten consonants strung together, utterly unpronounceable by an English tongue. The Greeks, in making a staggering effort to spell it in their language, got it Xerxes, and the Hebrew got it Ahasuerus; and one is about as near the real Persian name as the other. He is the king, you recollect, who led into Europe

the largest army that ever marched to battle; and it is supposed that the events in the career of Esther transpired after his return from that great expedition. His kingdom extended over one hundred and twenty provinces, including the whole of Asia that was then known, reaching out to the vicinity of modern China; and within that dominion at that time lived all the Jews, every one of them. A man by the name of Haman, as you well remember, had become so great a favorite with the king that he not only made him his prime minister, elevating him above all his princes, but issued a decree that every subject of his realm should do obeisance by bending the knee when Haman should pass by. There was a venerable Jew, doubtless a man of wealth and power and distinction, by the name of Mordecai, who sat at the King's gate—this expression indicating that he was one of the attendants about the royal palace, something of a courtier. For some reason, unexplained, Mordecai refused to bow the knee, or to do any act of obeisance to Haman. I do not know why, unless it was that he knew the man, and being a proud, self-reliant man, he preferred to risk the king's displeasure, and any penalty that might be laid upon him, rather than bow the knee to a hypocrite and a scoundrel. I don't know whether he did right or not, but somehow or other I honor a man of such iron nerve as that. Haman had not noticed the fact, so full was his eye of all the crowd that were bowing around him as he passed along, until some one called his attention to it, and told him that Mordecai was a Jew. As soon as he learned the fact, and learned that Mordecai was a Jew, we are told that he dismissed the idea of taking vengeance on one man, and resolved that he would have every Jew on earth put to death for that insult. I have known men, when a negro would insult them, to wish every negro on earth

in the grave; or, if enraged by an Irishman, they curse all the Irish in the world; or, if it was a Jew, they would wish like Haman that all the Jews were dead. I hardly think that any one of these men, if the power were put in their hands to carry out such a wish, would really execute it. Not so with Haman. His spirit of revenge, his pride, his arrogance, were so enormous that he actually determined that for the insult of this one Jew he would kill every Jew, man, woman, and child, that breathed the breath of life in the whole earth. If Mordecai knew beforehand that he was a man of that spirit, I think he did right not to bend the knee to him. So, going in to the King, he says: "O King, there is a people in thy realm, scattered throughout all of thy provinces, who despise thy laws, and it is not good for thy kingdom that they should live. Now, send forth a decree which, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians can not be reversed, that they shall all be put to death, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the King's treasury to execute this business." The King said, "Here is my ring; take it; issue the decree." Those Persian kings did not stop to consider human life. The only question was, What is the interest of my dominion; of my reign; of my authority over this portion of the earth which I control? The decree was issued. Scribes were called in; it was written out in all the different languages of the one hundred and twenty provinces. Posts were sent in great haste. Lots were cast to see what day the decree should be executed, and it fell on the 13th day of the twelfth month. Just eleven months now, and every Jew on earth will be slain. These letters commanded the kings and the rulers in every place where there were Jews to rise and murder them on that day—old men and young, little children and women, and not to spare one. What an awful thing that was!

When Mordecai heard of the decree, he knew that Haman was determined on its execution. He knew very well, and every Jew throughout the realm knew, that by that strange article in the constitution of the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, a decree once sent forth by the king, with his seal appended, could not be reversed or repealed. I do not know why they adopted such a law, unless it was, that the men who devised it supposed that if they made that a law, the King would be extremely careful what kind of decrees he sent out; he would consider every one maturely; he would call in the wisest counsellors always before he issued a decree, and then, when it was sent out, he would feel absolutely certain that it was wise; there would be no vacillation—passing laws one day and repealing them the next. A good deal of good sense in it after all. All the nation of the Jews knew that they were in his power; they felt that their time had almost come—eleven months more and there would not be a child of Abraham left on this earth. Suppose that the decree had been executed, then all the promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have been brought to nothing; all the prophecies thus far uttered in regard to the future history of that people, and of our Saviour, and of Christian religion, would have fallen to the ground. God's solemn assurance concerning Israel made to Jeremiah more than once, "though I make a full end of all nations, I will never make a full end of thee," would have been falsified. Never, in the whole history of the Jewish race, were they brought into so fearful a crisis as at this hour.

Now, I wish to trace—as I did this morning by the facts in the career of Joseph—I wish to trace the causes, one after another, linked in like the links of a chain, by which this awful calamity was averted. I have not the

benefit of a statement made in connection with the history recited this morning, the statement of Joseph to his brethren, "It was not you that sent me to Egypt, but it was God," because the name of God is not found in the book of Esther (the only book in all the Bible which does not contain the name of God), so we shall be compelled to grope our way to-night through these facts, and see if we can find God in them, though he be not named, just as, in the facts of history transpiring to-day, and in the facts of our own individual lives, we are often compelled, if we would find God at all, to search for him without inspired guidance, and see where his hand has been stretched out.

How, then, was this fearful, and to the mind of every Jew in that day (except, perhaps, that of Mordecai alone) this inevitable fate averted? He had faith, as his message to Esther shows, that it might be. You have seen the first step that was taken. The queen, dearly beloved by the King, was a Jewess, and had been a little orphan girl—neither father nor mother—taken care of by an old man, who was her cousin. Mordecai sends word to her, "Go in unto the King, and plead with him for the life of thy people." But what could be her plea? Since the decree had been passed and sent out over the earth, and can not be reversed, what can be her plea? Mordecai did not know. I do not know that she could divine what she would say, if she went in; and then that strange law of the King that no person should be allowed to go into the inner court where he sat upon his throne, uncalled for, at the risk of being instantly killed by the guards that stood near, unless the King should see fit to hold out toward him the golden sceptre! "The King has not called me into his presence." I do not suppose that she had not seen the King, but she meant into his presence in the royal court. "He has not called me into his presence for thirty

days, and how can I go?" "Who knows," says Mordecai, in his answer, "but what thou art raised up to the kingdom for such a time as this?" In looking around and searching, by the keenest judgment that he had as to the possibilities of a deliverance of the people, he could not see a gleam of hope except in that young girl. He could scarcely see it there. Who knows but what it may be so? And when he insisted, what a noble answer that was which she sent back to him: "Go and gather all the Jews in the city together, and tell them, every one of them, to fast day and night three days, and I and my maidens will fast at the same time, and then I will go in unto the King." She did not say what she would say to him. "I will go in unto the King, and if I perish, I perish." O brethren, that was a noble resolve for a young girl who had been an orphan child and raised up suddenly to the highest position that a woman could occupy, thus to throw her life, as it were, upon the possibility of doing something to rescue her people. She went. How could she expect, going in after three days' fast, although she put on her royal appural, that even the beauty of her person would attract the King? Would she not be pale and thin and haggard? But I presume that the risk she was running, the very risk she took when she went there, imparted a fresh glow to her cheeks, and that her solemn and almost divine self-sacrifice for the good of others, must have added a new luster to her eyes; and when she stood before the King in all that splendid beauty, and dressed in the most becoming style, at once the golden sceptre was held out. She steps up till she touches it with her hand. "What is thy request and petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to the half of the kingdom." O how her heart fluttered at those words! And, what was her answer? Why did not she

say at once, "O King, I want you to save my people?" I suppose she was afraid to say that, for fear he would say no. She says, "My request and my petition, O King, if I have found favor in thy sight, is that thou and Haman wilt come to the banquet which I have prepared for you this day." Now the King knew very well she was not going to risk her life to come in and ask for that. But he says, "I will come." He called Haman, and they went. They ate the rich viands she had prepared, and drank the wine, and when the banquet was about over, he says: "Queen Esther, what is thy petition and thy request? It shall be granted if it be half the kingdom;" and still she did not tell him what she wanted. She was afraid to speak it out. Did you never go with the intention of putting a very important question, and when the moment came, you got choked on it, and you concluded to put it off and try it again? And perhaps it was several times before you got it out. So she says: "My request, O King, if I have found favor in thy sight, is this, that thou and Haman wilt come again to-morrow for a banquet that I will prepare for thee." He says, "We will come." He knew perfectly well that she had not yet said what she wanted, and he could not divine what it was.

When Haman left the palace, he hastened home. But as he hastened along, he saw Mordecai, and Mordecai did not bow to him. He called in his friends and his wife, and told them all about his riches, and his greatness, and the multitude of his children, and said: "Queen Esther made a banquet to-day, and she invited no man in all the kingdom except me to come in with the King to dine, but all of this is nothing to me so long as that man Mordecai sits by the King's gate and will not do me obeisance." What a poor miserable wretch, to allow a thing like that to make him miserable, when

he had everything else on earth that he wanted. Well, there are some men just that way, precisely that way. There is just one speck in their horizon that does not look to suit them, and they make themselves miserable over that, and all they have else, though it fill their hearts' desires, can not make them contented. Well, says Zeresh, his wife, If that is all, command a gallows to be made here this night seventy-five feet high, and go in the morning early and get the King to let you hang Mordecai on it; that will be the end of him. She was a wise woman. Well, I will do that. Doubtless he had his carpenters working all night putting up the gallows. While this scene was taking place in the palace (for I have no doubt it was a splendid palace, that of the prime minister), a very different one was taking place in the palace of the King. He could not sleep that night; restless, tossing about; and he got up to read until he would get sleepy. He called for the chronicles of his kingdom, and had one of his clerks to bring the book in which the important records of his reign had been written down day after day, and to read in it. As he read, he came to an account of two of his chamberlains, who had laid a plot to assassinate him, when Mordecai had discovered it and revealed it to him. He said, "What honor has been bestowed upon Mordecai for that?" "No honor at all, O King." He felt ashamed of himself. It was daylight now; he heard a footstep in the court. "Who is in the court?" "Haman." "Tell him to come in." Haman had come for permission to hang Mordecai. He comes in. "Haman, what shall be done to the man whom the King delights to honor?" Haman instantly says to himself, "That means me; for who is it the King delights to honor unless it be I?" He did not think long until he said, "Let this be done. Let the royal apparel

that the King is used to wear be brought out, and the King's horse, and the crown he wears on his head, and command one of thy noblest princes to put the royal apparel and the crown on him, and put him on the horse, and lead him through the streets of the city, and proclaim as he leads him along, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delights to honor." Well, Haman, you get out the apparel and the crown and the horse, and take Mordecai the Jew, and put him on that horse, and lead him through the streets, and proclaim, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the King delights to honor." There was no alternative. Haman had to do it. And when he got through leading the horse around, he went home with his head covered, bowed down, the most wretched man in the city. He called his friends and his wife together again, and told them all about it, and his wife showed her good sense again. She said, "Haman, if that is a Jew before whom you have begun to fall, you will go down." She knew the history of those Jews. She had heard, I suppose, about Daniel, whose enemies went into the lions' den. She had heard, perhaps, about the fiery furnace. "If that is a Jew before whom you have begun to fall, you will go down." There is no hope for you.

Just at this time the messenger comes to hurry him off to the banquet that Esther had prepared, and he went with the King. They sat down to eat and drink; got through. "Queen Esther," says the King, "what is thy petition and thy request?" The time had now come when she felt that she must tell it. Whether the answer be yes, or no, it must come. She says, "O King, if I have found favor in thy sight, my petition and my request is that my life shall be given to me, and the life of my people; for we are sold to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. If we had been sold, O King, to be bondmen and

bondwomen, I would not have opened my mouth. But how can we perish, and who can recompense the King for the loss, when all of us shall be slain?" The King arose in a great passion, and demanded, "Who is he, and where is he that has done this thing?" "The man who has done it, O King, is that wicked Haman." A thunder storm is now brewing in the heart of the King. He does not want to do anything hasty or rash. He leaps up and walks out into the garden; walks around trying to cool his senses, so stunned was he with this revelation. He remembers that Haman had entrapped him into signing that decree, and Haman, he sees clearly, is the author of it. He comes back and sees Haman down on the rich rug on which the queen was seated, kneeling at her feet, and he made a remark that caused the guards to rush forward and seize him, and cover his head. Harbonah, one of those guards, who did not love Haman any too well, says: "O King, he has raised a gallows fifty cubits high in the court of his house to hang Mordecai." "Hang him on it." And it was done. What a fearful outcome to the arrogance and pride and ambition of an ungodly, cruel man. It sometimes happens in this world. A man had not better act thus, if there is a God reigning in heaven, and if there are any true men here on earth.

But Haman is out of the way now. What was the next step? Mordecai is sent for. The King's ring is put into his hand. He is elevated to the vacant office. But what can he do to save his people from the effects of a decree that can not be altered? The King himself has no power to reverse it. What can he do? Once more he appeals to Esther, Go in before the King once more and ask him that something may be done to avert this awful calamity. At the risk of her life, she went again. Again the golden sceptre is held out. She asks the King

that some measure may be adopted to save her people. He pulls off his ring and hands it to Mordecai and says, "Do as you can," but he did not know what could be done. Mordecai was to act. So he drew up a decree, and signed it with the King's seal, and the name of the King's council, and sent it with all possible haste to every province, ordering that on the 13th day of the twelfth month the Jews shall all arm themselves and stand up and defend themselves against every man who shall attack them, and put to death every man who shall seek to slay them. The decree went out. Of course, when this new decree came, every man in office was immediately afraid of the Jews. The people became their friends, and when the day came, every man that attempted to kill a Jew was killed himself, and there was a great deliverance.

Now, what is there in all this to show the providence of God? Let us see if we can find it. The decree that Mordecai sent out was what averted the effects of the first decree, and saved the nation. How did he happen to send out that decree? Because the King extended the sceptre to Esther the second time. If he had not done that, the decree would not have been issued. And how did Mordecai happen to be the man who had the wisdom and the intelligence to devise the plan and execute it? Having saved the King's life and been highly honored by him, when Haman was slain Mordecai was put in his place. All thus far depended upon the circumstance of the King deciding to make Mordecai the successor of Haman. But on what did the fact that Mordecai was alive at that moment, so as to be made Prime Minister, depend? It depended upon the fact that Haman got into the court that morning when he went to have Mordecai hung, just after the clerk had been reading about Mordecai saving the King's life. If he had gotten in ten minutes sooner,

the clerk would not have read that far, and the King would have said, Yes, go on and hang him; for, having decreed the death of all the Jews in the world, it would have only been hanging one of them a little in advance of the others. Haman got in just a little too late; and how did that happen? Can you tell? You call it an accident, perhaps; but how did it happen that the King that night heard the story read about Mordecai saving his life? Why, he could not sleep. Well why couldn't he sleep? I don't know. It may have been because he ate too much supper. It may have been because he had too much care on his mind about his government. May be he had the head-ache. There are forty things you can think of that might have kept him from sleeping. But was it accidental, when all those tremendous consequences were hanging upon it? How did it happen, in the next place, that the King had not recollected Mordecai when the good deed was done which saved his life? You might ask how it happened that the chief butler forgot about Joseph. We can not tell. Your wife says, "Husband, did you do so and so?" "No, I forget it." "What made you forget it?" "I don't know; I just forgot it." He can not tell why. Does God know? I suspect he does. I would not be surprised if he has some hand in it sometimes. Well then, let us trace the causes a little farther back. How did it happen that there was a young Jewess at that time queen of all the realm, who, by her influence with the King, and the charms of her beauty, and the ingenuity with which she managed the case, brought down the wrath of the King upon Haman? How did that happen? You all remember that part of the story. The King made a great feast, and while he was full of wine, sent word to Vashti, his wife, to come out and show what a beauty she was. She said, "No." It

was immodest for a woman of high rank to be seen unveiled in the presence of strange men. It was considered immodest and unladylike. I will not do it. Seven counsellors were called on to know what should be done with her, and they decided to banish her from the throne and the palace. How I honor that woman, heathen woman though she was. Rather be banished from the position of queen and driven out in disgrace, than sacrifice her ladylike modesty, even at the command of her drunken husband. O what a contrast to many ladies of high position in Christian lands, who sacrifice their modesty every day at the demand of fashion. She would not do it. After a while the King began to get sorry. He loved that beautiful woman. There never was a man who acted the fool and got separated from his wife that did not regret it afterward. But those wise counsellors were afraid of the effect of restoring the queen, so they advised him to send out a decree that the whole nation should be searched over for the most beautiful women to be found, and they should be brought to the King for him to take his choice, thinking he would find one more beautiful than Vashti. Old Mordecai knew he could not live many years more, and then what would become of Esther, a lone child? He knew she was beautiful. No doubt, in Mordecai's eyes, she was the most charming child that ever walked the earth. I will try to get her the place. So he sent her in, and she pleased the King above all others, and he loved her from the moment he saw her; and in this way that little orphan girl had become the queen of all the realm. If Vashti had not been as true to herself as she was, and had maintained her place, there would have been no chance for Mordecai to send Esther to the King. If the charms of this girl had not won the heart of the King when she was brought before him, she would

never have been queen; so that all the facts that serve as links in this chain, delivering the Jews from the terrible decree sent out by Haman, depended, at last, upon the fidelity of Vashti to her sense of womanly modesty. And then it depended upon the beauty and attractiveness of the young Jewess, and upon her being willing to risk her life. And all those other circumstances, good and bad, interlocking, made a chain by which the final result was brought about, and the nation saved. Did God have anything to do with it? What do you say?

A few days ago I stood in the great fair at Chicago, before a weaving machine—a wonder. There were coming out beneath the shuttles bands of silk about as wide as my hand, and perhaps a foot long, four or five coming out at one time at different parts of the loom, woven with the most beautiful figures in divers colors. One of them was “Home, Sweet Home,” the words woven by that machine, and above the words was the music. There was woven at the top a beautiful cottage, trees in the yard, bee-gums, and children at play, and down below the words and music, a lone man sat, with his face resting on his hand, thinking about that distant home. All coming out of that machine. The shuttles were flying, threads were twisting and dodging about, the machine was rattling, and no human hand on it, yet there the song, the pictures, the music, were coming out. Did they come out by accident? By an accidental combination of circumstances? I could not, to save my life, tell how it was done, but I saw a pattern hanging up at one side with many holes through it, and I was told that that pattern was ruling the work of that intricate machinery, and leading to that result. I was bound to believe it. Now you could make me believe that this beautiful piece of work came out of the loom by accident, and without any man

directing and planning it, just as easily as you can make me believe that this chain of circumstances, of facts, bringing about, in accordance with God's faithful promises, the deliverance of his people, was accomplished without him. God was there, my brethren. And just as little can I believe that all those intricate circumstances in my life and yours, which shape and mould and direct and guide us, which take us when we are crude and wicked men, and mould and shape us and grow us up until we are ripe and ready to be gathered into the eternal harvest—that all this is human, or all blind force, or accident, and that there is no hand of God in it.

In the story of Joseph, God's hand is pointed out, so that we can see how his providence wrought out his purpose. The story of Esther follows without even the name of God, and we are left, with the training imparted by the former story, to find God for ourselves in this. When we have found Him, we are prepared to find Him in our own lives.

My friends, God is dealing with you to-day, to-night. You can not see his hand; you may not, as in this story, hear his name; but he is here. Will you believe it? Will you act in harmony with it? Will you give yourself up to His divine guidance? Will you follow Him? If it is in your heart to do so, begin to-night. Do not delay. O, to have the hand of God to lead you! What hand can lead so safely? What eye can choose and direct your future path so well? May God help you to come and walk in the path which leadeth to everlasting life and peace.

SERMON XIX.

THE JERUSALEM CHURCH.

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” (Acts. iv, 32.)

In the beginning of our race God made one perfect man and one perfect woman. They were perfect physically, mentally and spiritually; for God made them in his own image, and when they were made he looked upon them and said they were “very good.” But in process of time our first parents fell from their high estate, and ever since then it has been the aim of every right minded man to struggle back to the innocence and purity of Eden. In like manner, when the fullness of time had come, God made a perfect church, or one as near perfect as could be made out of fallen human beings. The church also fell; and ever since it has been the aim of all who have rightly understood the revelation which God has given us, to get back to the characteristics of the Jerusalem church. The time has been when few among Protestants could be found to deny this; but in recent years it has been called into serious question by men of repute all the way from Oxford University to our western prairies. I think it well therefore to reinvestigate the grounds of the old opinion, and see whether we and our fathers have been mistaken.

When we consider the fact that the Jerusalem church was under the direction, during the whole of its brief career, of inspired men, one or more of whom seems to have been continuously present in the administration of its af-

fairs, this alone would seem to guarantee the absolute correctness of all its proceedings, at least in the estimation of all who continue to believe in the miraculous inspiration of the twelve apostles. But such are the present conceptions of inspiration held by many who still call themselves Christians, that with them this is no longer a guarantee against much that is now said to be unwise for the time that then was, and incongruous with the needs of our own generation. It may be admitted in advance of special examination, that the Jerusalem church did not pass through all the experiences which congregations have since encountered, and that therefore it had no possible opportunity to set us an example for such experiences; and yet it may still be for us a perfect model to the extent of the experiences through which it was called to pass. Beyond this it would of course be idle to think of it as a model church. Let us inquire then, what its experiences were, and let us see whether it set us an example in them that is worthy of all imitation, and incapable of improvement.

It may be well to glance in the first place, at the material of which this church was composed when it first came into existence. The nucleus of one hundred and twenty members, we remember, had been called by our Lord in person from among the sheep that he called his own, who knew his voice, and followed him as the true shepherd; and when, on the great Pentecost, the gospel of a risen Christ was first proclaimed, among the many thousands of devout Jews who heard it three thousand were found to acknowledge their faith, to repent, and to be baptized forthwith. These three thousand were men of tender consciences and decision of character, who needed only to know their duty in order to do it at once. There was no parleying, no hesitation; but before the sun

had gone down on the day that they first heard the gospel preached, they were baptized into Christ. They were the pick and flower of that whole generation of jews, the ripest fruits of the good tree planted by Moses and nourished by the prophets of Israel. Having such material to begin with, we should expect to see the inspired apostles mould them into a model church; and we are not surprised at the statement with which their history as a church begins, that they "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers;" and here, in these four items, we find them a model for all subsequent imitation. To continue steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, is still the highest attainment of a church of God, as respects its advance in knowledge of the things which pertain to life and godliness; and to continue steadfastly in the fellowship of the apostles, is to have continuous fellowship with God and Christ and all the saints in light. To be steadfast in the breaking of bread and in the prayers, all the prayers that are appointed or authorized, is almost a certain assurance of a life in other respects well pleasing in the sight of God.

Such a church is certain to experience a rapid growth in numbers; for its high qualities will inevitably draw to it the true-hearted in the community about it. This church did grow with marvelous rapidity. It soon numbered five thousand men, besides women and children; and if the latter classes maintained anything like the ratio they do in modern times, the whole number must have been at least ten thousand. It was at this stage of its progress that the remark is made which I have taken for my text. The multitude of these ten thousand believers were of one heart and one soul. We talk much these days about Christian union. We can't talk too

much about it. We are solicitous, as believers have not been for ages past, for the fulfillment of our Saviour's prayer in behalf of the union of all that believe in him. Have we forgotten that this prayer was at one time fulfilled to the very letter? Here, in this first church, was a mass of men, women and children, of whom the inspired writer says, that they were all of one heart and soul, so completely so, that not one of them counted anything which he possessed as his own. It was all *ours* not *mine*. Not one was allowed to lack anything needful, though it required the sale of houses and lands on the part of some to supply the wants of others. Was there anything short of perfection in that union? Is that church not in respect to unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the model for us all? Can we have any higher aspiration, than to struggle back toward the unity of the Jerusalem church?

Let me say, that we have here not only a perfect model of Christian union, but also the Lord's own method of working toward the universal unity of the people of God. God began by bringing into existence one church perfectly united in itself and in Him, and then went on to originate others that were called on to imitate this. Had they done so, there would have been universal unity as far as the faith in Christ extended. So now, if we would bring about unity once more, we must begin by having at least one perfectly united congregation. Do you know such a congregation? Would you not travel many miles to see a church of even a few hundred members, of whom it could be truly said that they are all of one heart and soul, and that not one of them says that anything he has is his own? But until we have some such churches as that, how can we possibly have Christian union? If we could to-day bring into union all the con-

gregations in the United States without a material change of each within itself, we should not have the unity for which our Saviour prayed. It would be a jumbling together of many incongruous elements.

Some of us are obviously looking in the wrong direction for a restoration of the unity which once existed. We must look backward to the church that was, and not forward to some imaginary church of the future, for the model of union, and the union must begin in the individual congregation. When you get one congregation united in the Lord, you have made the right start, the start which the Lord himself made. Then get another and another into the same condition, and you will have them united with one another as fast as they become united within themselves in the Lord. The man then, who is doing the most to-day for the final union of all God's people, is not the man who is making the most noise about it, and getting up the biggest conventions to consider the subject, but the man who is doing the most to establish the unity of the Spirit in the midst of some single congregation, and thus reproducing the model church of old. Why can not the church which I am now addressing be the one to first set an example in this direction? Here is your model. See that you work according to it.

But perfect as this union was, it was a union of imperfect human beings, still bearing marks of the fall; and there was constant danger of its disruption. The time came when its disruption was averted only by consummate wisdom, and a manifestation of generosity such as claims our unbounded admiration. While the vast majority of the members were Hebrews, that is, home born Jews, many of them were Hellenists, or Jews born abroad. Between these two classes, everywhere except in

this model church, there was some alienation and jealousy; and finally, within the church itself there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, that the widows of the former were neglected in the daily ministration. What a fine opportunity for a general quarrel—for the Hebrews to say, “It is no such thing;” and for the Hellenists to retort, “We know it is.” And as the apostles themselves had been the almoners, what an opportunity for some of them to fall back upon their dignity, and complain that their honesty or fairness had been called in question. Did anything of this kind occur? If it had we should not be able to hold up the Jerusalem church as a model. It would have been too much like our churches of the present day. You know what occurred—that the apostles called the whole multitude together—a vast assembly in Solomon’s portico no doubt, and proposed that seven men full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom be selected and set apart to look after the daily distribution, so that the apostles might give all their time to the ministry of the word and prayer. We are told, that “the saying pleased the whole multitude.” Every one of them was glad to see a way of avoiding dissension, and healing the breach before it was formed. The people selected the men; and if you will look over the list of names, you will see that there is not a Hebrew name among them—no Joseph, no Judah, no Simeon, no Benjamin, no Isaac, no Abraham. All are Greek names, full-blooded. They are Phillip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas; and one of them, Nicolas, was not a Jew by blood at all, but a proselyte whose home had been in the Greek city of Antioch. What does this mean? It means, that the Hebrews, though greatly in the majority, selected all the men from the minority, from the very party in which had arisen the murmur-

ing; and thus, to the great surprise no doubt of that party, they smothered the murmuring under a deluge of generosity. O brethren, what a model we have here! How easy it would be for every church, when murmuring from a minority is first heard, to drown it out at once and forever, if we only had the heart to imitate the model church. God help us to think of this hereafter.

I said at the outset that this church was made as near perfect as it could be with human materials. This implies that exceptions would be found in the case of individuals. So, in the course of time one of its greatest virtues became a source of temptation and sin to two weak members. One day, while Peter was presiding at some meeting, a brother named Ananias walked forward, and laid at his feet a bag of silver which contained, he said, the price of a piece of land which he and his wife had sold for the benefit of the poor. If the disciples at that age had been as demonstrative and irreverent in the Lord's house as are some of our modern assemblies, I think there would have been general and very hearty clapping of hands at this deed. What then was the consternation of the brethren, when they saw a frown on Peter's brow, and heard from him these blistering words: "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain thine own? And after it was sold was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." While they listen and gaze, Ananias falls to the floor, and the cry is raised, He is dead. Peter calls out some young men from the audience, and tells them to wrap his clothing around him, take him out, and bury him at once. He was buried before he was cold. By com-

mon consent, or more probably through an intimation from Peter, no one ran to tell his wife. The meeting went on for about three hours. And what a solemn meeting it must have been! The wife of the dead man at last walks in, and Peter calls her forward. "Sapphira, tell me whether ye sold the land for so much." "Yes, for so much." "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them who have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out." She also falls dead. The same young men take her up, carry her out, and bury her by the side of her husband. What awful work this was; and how quickly done! No tears, no prayers, no delay. Nothing but solemnity and awe like that of the judgment day. And whose work was it? Not that of Peter; for he seems not to have known that Ananias was to fall dead; and although he knew that Sapphira would, he expressed no will of his own in the matter. It was the work of the great Head of the church, who thus exercised discipline in His church, so as to show those to whom it would afterward be entrusted, the promptness with which crying sins must be rebuked if the church would please Him. This is a divine intimation on the subject of discipline. Shall we learn the lesson, or shall we continue, as so many churches have long been doing, to keep the ungodly in the church, under the vain delusion that we are exercising forbearance and mercy which heaven will approve, or under the idle impression that we have a better hope of saving a wicked man in the church, than if we cast him out. I think that God knows more than we do about how to save wicked men; and He through His apostle has used these solemn words: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received from us."

Perhaps some of you are ready to say: Such discipline as that would never do, for it would scare everybody away from the church, and you would never have any more additions. Well, it was *intended* to scare somebody away from the church, and I suppose it did. I will venture, that if any of the liars or hypocrites in Jerusalem had any thought of joining the church soon, it kept them away. They would conclude that such a church was not a healthy place for men of their stripe. But if there were any yet outside the church who were in dead earnest about trying to get to heaven, and felt the need of good company on the way, it must have had a very different effect on them. They now knew that this church was a body in which liars and hypocrites could not be tolerated, and this is the very kind of a church which they intended to join if they ever joined any.

It would seem at first glance, that the reputation of the church would suffer prodigiously when it became known that it had two such members as Ananias and Sapphira—that its enemies would wink their eyes, and say, Ah yes, this new fangled religion looked very fair at first; those people were wonderfully kind to the poor; but see now what hypocrites and pretenders they are, doing all this in appearance only. How many others are there who have kept back part of the price when they pretended to be giving all? Such would undoubtedly have been the result, if Ananias and Sapphira had been kept in the church, as they certainly would have been if the model of many modern churches had been followed. But the real result was far different. Did it drive everybody away from the church? I hope you have not forgotten what the text of Acts says on this point. We read, just as we might expect, that “Great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that

heard these things ;” but we also read, that “believers were *the more* added to the church, *multitudes* both of men and women.” So it will ever be. Let us lay aside then our compromises with sin, and boldly follow the model church in keeping a high wall and a deep ditch between the church and the world, while we open the gates to those who are in earnest when they start for heaven.

We have thus far seen that the Jerusalem church is a model in the high qualities of unity, liberality, generosity, and strictness of discipline; and when a church stands high in these, it can not well have a low rank in anything else that is good. Nevertheless, this church has been charged with some grievous faults, and to these we shall now pay attention. It has been said that it was an anti-missionary church; that it confined its evangelization to the city of Jerusalem, unmindful of the great outlying world, and that it became necessary for God to smite it with the besom of apparent destruction, and scatter its members to the four winds, in order to send it out on its world-wide mission of preaching the gospel to the whole creation. But let us see how this is. It is true that the apostles did remain in Jerusalem until the church was dispersed under the persecution that arose about Stephen, and not only so, but that they stood their ground, and would not be driven away when all their brethren had fled. But why was this? It was in obedience to the express command of the Lord. He had told them to begin at Jerusalem, and it was their duty to remain there until they received some intimation from Him, either oral or providential, that they should enter the next field of labor. They had received no such intimation. On the contrary, up to the very time that Stephen was stoned, every intimation of Providence was in favor of a further stay. How can a conscientious preacher de-

termine when he ought to leave one place and go to another? He can judge only by the degree of success attending his labor where he is, compared with that which he may reasonably anticipate elsewhere. Suppose, for illustration, that a preacher were holding a series of meetings in this church, with crowded audiences, and scores of persons confessing Christ every day; what would you think if he were to suddenly close his meeting and go up among the river hills, and commence one in some country schoolhouse? You would say that he was throwing away his opportunities, and sacrificing the interest of many souls. Precisely thus would it have been with the apostles and the other laborers in Jerusalem, if they had left the city before they did. Up to that very day their success in winning souls had continued to be greater than they could hope for in any other city or country under the sun, greater indeed than they ever afterward achieved in the wide world. Read the statements in the first six chapters of Acts, and see that after Pentecost the accessions to the ranks of the believers steadily increased until the very day in which Stephen was arraigned. The very last statement of the text before the account of his persecution begins, is this: "The word of God increased; and the number of disciples in Jerusalem *multiplied exceedingly*; and a great company of the *priests* were obedient to the faith." It appeared as if the whole city would soon be brought to Christ if the work should only be pressed a little longer. Was this a time to leave Jerusalem, and go to Samaria, or to the dark regions of the heathen world? Preposterous! and preposterous is the thought of him, who, with more zeal than knowledge in regard to foreign missions, creeps up in his ignorance, and whines out a complaint that the church in Jerusalem is anti-missionary! No, brethren,

the real spirit of that church in regard to the evangelization of the world, was seen both in staying and in leaving. And when they did leave their homes, though they had lost their all because of their zeal for Christ, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. Never was there a church which burned with a more consuming zeal for the conversion of the world, or labored more wisely in that very direction even while they still remained within the Holy City. It is not ignorance of the facts, so much as want of reflection upon them, which has given rise to this charge.

Another serious charge against this church is based upon their failure for a time to evangelize the uncircumcised. They are charged with being so narrow in their charity, and so bigoted in their Jewish exclusiveness, as to think that salvation was for the Jews alone. Their blind conservatism, we are told, was so extreme, that although they had been commanded by the Lord to go into the whole world, and make disciples of all nations, they were doggedly determined to confine their ministrations to the seed of Abraham.

I wonder if they thus *were* narrow and mean. The man who says they were ought to be very sure of it before he makes the charge, lest he be found bringing a railing accusation against the Holy Spirit by whom these men were guided. Let us see what were the facts in the case.

We are to remember that through a period of thirteen hundred years the written word of God had forbidden that any uncircumcised man be admitted to the ordinances of religion, and loyalty to God demanded that until this restriction was expressly rescinded by Him who appointed it, his people must continue to maintain it. The same law, however, admitted to all the privileges of the

Jewish religion, all Gentiles who would submit to circumcision. How natural then, that the Jewish disciples, until they were otherwise informed, should conclude that while men of all nations were to be baptized into Christ, their circumcision was to precede their baptism. They were not indifferent to the salvation of the Gentiles, as is evident from the fact that Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, had not only been baptized, but had been chosen as one of the deacons of this very church in Jerusalem. Yes, the very church which is charged with this narrowness, had selected a Gentile to a high office.

Again, when Peter had been informed by a direct revelation from heaven that Gentiles even without circumcision were proper subjects of baptism, and had baptized Cornelius and his friends, the Jerusalem brethren, not yet informed as to the ground of his action, called him to account for it; but you will remember, that as soon as Peter recited to them the facts, they held their peace, and, instead of manifesting the reluctance which bigotry would have prompted, they "*glorified God*, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." They were happy to learn that they were at liberty to bring the believing Gentile into their fellowship just as he was. The question was settled, and settled forever. It was never raised again by even the most ignorant and bigoted member of the Jerusalem church.

I am not forgetting that there arose in this church afterward a question whether the Gentiles who were brought into the church without circumcision, should not be circumcised afterward, as a condition of their final salvation. But who was it that raised this question? The text of Acts says (xv. 5), that they were "*Pharisees* who believed;" and Paul more particularly describes them by saying that they were "*false brethren* privily

brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (Gal. ii. 4). This shows that false brethren might gain access to this church, and that false teaching might be announced in it; but what was done by the church as a church? The whole multitude was called together; the truth on the subject was propounded by the apostles who were present; the false teaching was silenced; and the whole church united in a formal written declaration of the truth and repudiation of the error. Here again this church presents itself as a model, in maintaining the truth, and nipping in the bud the expression of erroneous and injurious teaching. This teaching would have broken the unity of the church if it had been allowed to run its course.

But the Apostle Peter, we are reminded, also faltered once, under the pressure of Jewish exclusiveness. So he did on a single point, that of eating at the tables of the Gentile brethren. But this was only a temporary aberration of Peter, similar in nature, though not in degree of turpitude, to his temporary fall when he denied his Lord. Under Paul's rebuke he was restored to right action, and he afterward warmly endorsed the epistles of Paul in which this whole subject of the relations between Jews and Gentiles is fully set forth, including the very epistle in which Paul speaks of Peter's sin and the rebuke which Peter received (II Peter iii, 15, 16). This transaction shows, that while a very eminent member of the Jerusalem church was weak enough to give way for a time under the influence of some of the false brethren whom he had once assisted in silencing, he quickly recovered; and this reminds us of a remark which I made in the beginning, that this first church was as near perfect as the human material out of which it was made would permit. It could not be more perfect than this.

In the last notice which the Scriptures give us of the Jerusalem church, this same subject of circumcision is brought forward, but the character of the church itself still stands without a shadow of reproach. James, the Lord's brother, and the appointed elders, are now at the head of its affairs, and Paul comes to the city at the time of a great festival. Unbelieving Jews, Paul's bitter enemies, had propagated the falsehood, that he had taught the Jews who were among the Gentiles not to circumcise their children, or to observe the Jewish customs; and danger of a riot was anticipated if they should see Paul about the temple. What was done to prevent such a calamity? James and the elders, reaffirming the decision which the church had announced years ago, that none of these Jewish customs should be required of Gentiles (xxi. 25); advise Paul for the sake of showing by action that these reports were false, to unite with four brethren in the services connected with the Nazarite vow, a service which, with the knowledge then possessed by the brethren, was considered perfectly compatible with the Christian faith. It was done; and although the device failed to conciliate Paul's enemies, it shows that to the very last the brethren in Jerusalem, and also Paul when he was with them, were studious to preserve the good will of all men, that they might gain some to Christ; and that they employed every innocent device to win even their bitterest enemies to the Lord. In this the Jerusalem church proved itself to possess in an admirable degree the spirit of its adorable Head, and to be a model for all churches in circumstances analagous.

Finally, this church is a splendid model, throughout its brief history, of steadfastness in the faith under the severest trials. I say, its brief history, because, from its beginning until its final dispersion, it existed only about

thirty-four years. It was founded A. D., 34, and it was dispersed by the opening of the war with the Romans, A. D. 68. There were doubtless yet remaining to the last some members who had been baptized on the ever memorable Pentecost when it sprang into being. During this short period it passed through five persecutions. In the first Peter and John were the victims. They were standing in Solomon's portico in the presence of a vast concourse of people, when armed guards from the Sanhedrim pushed their way through the crowd, seized the two apostles, and dragged them like criminals to the guard-house. The next day, after an exciting trial, they were dismissed with strict injunction accompanied by direful threats, not to preach or teach any more in the name of Jesus. Did the brethren speak of arming their five thousand men, and, under the protection of God, bidding defiance to their foes? Not a word of it. These thousands remained perfectly quiet, and the two, when they were released, went straight to where the others were, and told all that had happened to them. One said, Let us pray. They all dropped to their knees, and this prayer went up to heaven: "O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David didst say:

Why did the Gentiles rage,
And the peoples imagine vain things?
The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
And the rulers were gathered together,
Against the Lord and against his Anointed:

for of a truth in this city against thy Holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass. And now,

Lord, look upon their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of thy Holy Servant Jesus." The place was shaken, to show that the prayer was heard. They arose from their knees, went up to the temple, and spoke the word of God with boldness. In all this there was no thought of violence, no threatening except by the enemy; but there was earnest prayer, and an indomitable determination to keep right on. Can we have a better model than this?

In the next persecution all of the apostles were arrested, and were confined for the night in the common prison used for thieves and cut-throats. They were tried again, as Peter and John had been, but they were not released until they had each been tied to the whipping post and received forty stripes less one on the naked back. And here comes the most incredible statement to me in the whole New Testament. It is the statement that when the apostles were thus publicly and shamefully whipped, they went away "*rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus." What power restrained their passions, and what kept quiet the thousands of brave men, their brethren, hundreds of whom would rather have died than to see that sight? Ah, this is the model church. These apostles and their adherents are unconsciously setting a model for coming generations, a model of Christian patience and fortitude in imitation of their Master.

The next blow of the enemy was enough to try the faith of the strongest. Stephen is stoned by the chief priests and elders. Devout men with great lamentations take up his mangled body and bury it; but before their lamentations have died on the air, armed men are

moving through the streets arresting every believer who can be found, both men and women, and the prisons are being crowded with them. The word for flight is given, and every gate of Jerusalem is crowded for a time with fleeing disciples, until the whole Jerusalem church is scattered to the winds. No more preaching now. No more gatherings in Solomon's portico. Jerusalem has lost ten thousand of its people, and the enemies of the cross rejoice over the final destruction of the church. We shall hear no more now, they say as they greet one another, of the hated name of Jesus. But did the Jerusalem church die? It had never been more alive than it was that day; and not many years had passed, when it was back in its old place again, with its chief persecutor now its boldest preacher. O, brethren, the church which God has placed before us as a model could not be killed by persecution.

The next persecution was planned and executed by a Herod. It was not aimed at the rank and file of the church, but at the apostles themselves. Herod seems to have said to the chief priests, you don't know how to kill off this abominable sect. You must strike it on the head. I will show how the thing can be done. So he seizes and coolly beheads the apostle James, the oldest, I suppose, of the twelve. The unbelievers applaud. He seizes Peter next, not now to scourge him and let him go, but to send him headless to the grave after his brother James. It was the Passover feast, and he must not be executed till the feast is over. I will keep him in prison, says Herod, till the close of the feast. But the priests and elders had tried that once with all the apostles, and I think some of them must have said, You can't keep those men in prison, Herod. We tried it once, and they got out without opening the door or disturbing the guards.

I will show you; so Herod chained him to two soldiers, and placed him and them in the inner prison. He set two guards between the three and the outer door. This door was a heavy one of iron; and another body of soldiers was stationed in front of it. No thief or murderer was ever more securely imprisoned. But on the appointed morning, though the soldiers were all found at their posts, and the iron door securely locked and bolted, the prisoner gone. The guards who stood in front were called up. "Why did you let that man pass out of the prison?" "No man, O king, passed through the door last night. We watched all night without sleeping." The man who kept the key was called up. "Who unlocked that door last night?" "No one, O king, I had the key, and I was not there." The guards between the prisoner and the door: "Why did you let that man pass by you last night?" "No man, O king, passed by us. We paced our beat all night, the light was burning, and no man passed by us." The men to whom he was chained; "How did that man loosen the chains which fastened him to your arms?" "We can not tell, O king. All we know is, that when we went to sleep he was there, and when we awoke he was gone." "We told you so," chimed in the chief priests. Now Herod knew just as well as he knew his own name, that here was a great miracle; but he cruelly ordered every one of the sixteen innocent soldiers to be put to death. No wonder that soon afterward he was himself smitten by an angel, and followed his victims into eternity. I don't see how the angel kept his hands off from him at the time of the massacre. But what was this model church doing all the time that its leader was in prison? It is a short story but it speaks volumes. "*Prayer was made earnestly by the Church unto God for him.*" They were not praying for his es-

cape, as appears from the fact that when he did escape they would not at first believe it. They had no hope of this. They expected him to go as James had gone; and they prayed, I think, that he might be enabled to die as Stephen had died, as James had doubtless died, without faltering as he had once faltered in the presence of the priests and elders. What a noble example for the persecuted of every later generation! and what an ocean of noble blood that has since been shed in battle, would have been saved, if the believers had always followed their model!

Of the fifth and last persecution we know but little, and that little comes to us through the writings of an unbeliever. Its chief incident was the murder, under the order of the chief priest, of James the Lord's brother, as related by Josephus. The time was between the death of Festus and the arrival in Judea of his successor. We can be sure that others suffered as well as James; and we may judge how the battle-scarred veterans of this model church endured the trial, by what we know of their conduct in the past.

Finally, the time came for this church to close its career. It had set an example in everything that we know of it for the churches of all time to come; it had fulfilled its mission on earth, and so, like thousands of churches in later times, it must pass away. The rebellious and unbelieving Jews had in the madness of despair provoked a war with the invincible power of Rome, and the armies which had conquered the world were defied by a handful of fanatics. As the Roman legions begin to surround the Holy City, the disciples, in obedience to the command of their Lord uttered before his death, made a hasty flight, and the church of Jerusalem was no more. All of its enemies had not been able to

kill it, but it died, as it had lived, in obedience to its Lord. It died as the sun dies at set of day, when it sinks amid a bank of clouds, and fills all the heavens with glory. O what a church was that! God grant that the like of it may yet be seen again, and that multiplied thousands like it may spread over the whole earth, so that the Head of the church, when He returns to reckon with us all, may find the model church reproduced in every congregation of his people.

SERMON XX.

CHURCH FINANCES.

MORNING JULY 30, 1893.

Second Corinthians, eighth chapter, twelfth verse:

“For, if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not.”

The financial part of a Church's work is very difficult of management. This is the experience of all religious bodies; and it was the experience of the Church in the beginning. The very first sin and scandal within the Church in Jerusalem was connected with its financial matters—the sin of Ananias and Sapphira; and the apostle Paul devotes a very considerable amount of space in his epistles to the regulation of the same matter in the congregations that he planted. So, then, this difficulty is not a new one, and it is not peculiar to any particular congregation, or any particular body of believers, or any particular country.

Failure to manage the finances of a church successfully has in more instances than one, yes, more than a thousand, been the cause of the complete downfall and ruin of a congregation of the Lord. When a few persons have to carry the whole burden, they grow weary of it bye and bye, just as in a team, if one or two of the horses are balky, finally the whole team becomes so—they can not be relied upon to pull an ordinary load. Men and horses are very much alike. And whenever the free and willing givers in a congregation grow weary and give it up,

then the congregation dies. The schemes that men have devised by which to overcome this difficulty are numberless. This is the origin of all church fairs and entertainments. Many of them are of questionable morality. They are sometimes carried to such an extent that in some of our States churches have been indicted by the grand jury for gambling in their church fairs. I have known of a horse race to be gotten up to raise church money. I am glad to say it was not a Protestant Church. Among earnest Christians this has produced a great reaction, and there are a great many now who are opposed to any good kind of measure for raising money for religious or benevolent purposes, except the single one of drawing it from your purse and giving it direct. I think that is going to an opposite extreme. I do not think there can be any impropriety in a few Christians who desire to raise a sum of money for any religious or benevolent purpose, resorting to any means of raising it that is enlightening, elevating, purifying, and beneficial to the community, provided they always keep within the limits of what is thus beneficial. I do not think any reason can be given why they should be forbidden to do this, and yet the Church as a Church, of course, is not a business institution, except so far as its own internal business is concerned. It should not undertake, as a congregation, any enterprise outside of this.

I do not think that this question of church finances (and by that I now mean not the raising of money for religious and benevolent purposes in general, but for the current expenses of the Church), can ever be settled so as to secure correct management until the brethren and sisters come to understand and appreciate the *principles* that are to govern us in the matter, as laid down in the Word of God. When the principles are once correctly under-

stood, the application of them will not be very difficult. Hence, I first call your attention to some of the principles that are laid down to govern us in the whole matter of our contributions to the treasury of the Lord.

The first that I will mention is a very radical one—it goes to the very root of the matter. It was presented by our Saviour in connection with the parable of the unjust steward, by which parable he represents all the disciples of the Lord as stewards of God in regard to the things which they possess; and he lays down this principle: “If ye have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?” He regards all the property that we have in this world as belonging to God, and regards us as God’s stewards, employed to manage for Him that much for a limited time. It is none of it our own; and now, if you are not faithful in that which is thus another’s, put temporarily into your hand, who will give you that which shall be your own? That which is given us to keep forever is our own; that which is given us to keep for a certain indefinite time is another’s. What He gives to us here is His. We are stewards. What He will give to us hereafter will be ours forever—He calls it our own. Now, who will give you that which is your own, if you are not faithful in that which is another’s?

Paul continues the same thought when he says: “Brethren, ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price.” You know what that price is, the blood of the Son of God. Put these two thoughts together now. What we have in the way of property is not our own; we hold it as stewards. We, ourselves, are not our own; we have been bought, and we belong to God. The brethren in the first Church—the Jerusalem Church—were taught these two great lessons, and, consequently, we read in the

fourth chapter of Acts that there was not one of them that counted anything which he possessed as his own, but that they had all things common. Suppose, now, that in any congregation on earth these two great principles were fixed in the minds and hearts of the brethren: I do not belong to myself, I am God's; my property is not mine, it is the Lord's. Don't you suppose there would be reproduced in that congregation the liberality of the first Church? They would all say, as a consequence of those two great principles, The things that I possess are not mine. And consequently they would come, as the first Church did, and lay down at the feet of the dispensers of the bounty of the Church all that should be needed for any good purpose.

Another principle is laid down by the Apostle Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, the sixteenth chapter, when he says that we are to give according as the Lord has prospered us. That, now, is the measure of the giving from day to day, and from year to year. It will vary in amount—as we are prospered more, we give more; as we are prospered less we give less. That is the great regulating principle, then, by which a man is to determine from time to time, as he goes on through the struggle of life, what he should give—according as you are prospered by the Lord. And that principle, like the other, is one that is self-evidently correct. If I am to give to the Lord of that which he has entrusted to my hands for the time being, it follows, as a necessary conclusion, that the amount I am to give is proportioned to the amount which He gives me.

Another is this, We are to give readily and freely, according to our ability, as laid down in the text that I read you: "If there is first a readiness, it is acceptable, according as a man hath, and not according as he hath

not." Now, our ability is measured not always by the exact amount of money we have in our hands, or in the bank, or invested in our business; because, in order to measure our ability, we must take into consideration both what we have and the other demands that are laid upon us. Our ability is measured then, and we give to the Lord's cause and the Lord's treasury according to that which duty requires us to give in other directions, as well as according to the actual amount that God bestows upon us. A man has certain obligations to discharge to his family, to the State, to his neighbors, and to the poor around him; and then, after these obligations are discharged, there is a certain proportion that he must give to the treasury of the Church of God to be dispensed for the salvation of men.

Another principle that the apostle lays down, of great importance, is that there shall be *equality* in giving. He insists, in this chapter, that he is not willing for one to be oppressed and another to be eased—for one congregation or community to be oppressed and another to be eased. But there shall be equality; and this is another of those self-evident principles. I do not suppose there is a club (social club) in your city or any other city, with which it is not a principle so obvious that it is never called in question, that each man in the club shall pay his equal proportion of the expenses. Why, if a fishing or hunting party is made up, or a pleasure excursion is undertaken, every man that goes in expects, as a matter of course, that he shall pay his equal portion of the expenses; and no man would be regarded as a gentleman who would hesitate about it, because it is one of those self-evident moral principles that all human beings acknowledge at once, without dispute or hesitation. There is to be equality, then, in giving in the Church; and equality here means

just what has been stated in those previous principles—that every man shall give according to his ability, and according as the Lord has prospered him.

Still another principle of great importance is laid down by the apostle in another chapter, where he says, “The Lord loveth a *cheerful* giver.” Cheerfulness must grace all the giving done by Christians, in order that it may be acceptable to the Lord. The Lord does not love a grudging giver. I think it ought to be a rule with the deacons of a church that if a man gives and growls about it when he does it, give it back to him. Don’t let him bring upon himself the displeasure of the Lord by giving grudgingly to the Lord’s treasury. Hand it back to him, and say, Now, brother, keep this money until you can find yourself in the frame to give it more cheerfully; for that is what the Lord requires. Some men take advantage of this, and say, I could not give so much and do it cheerfully. Well, then, don’t give it. But remember, my brother, that the Lord is displeased with you because you can not do it cheerfully. You must not think you escape God and God’s judgment because you can not do the thing cheerfully. The very fact that you can not do it cheerfully is against you.

With these principles to govern us, I do not think it will be very difficult for us to decide what is the best way to secure from the members of a congregation that portion of their funds which is necessary to carry on the work of the Church. I am guarded in saying *that portion* of what they have, because I do not think it can ever occur in this country (it certainly can very seldom occur) that all the giving to be done by the members of a congregation is that which is necessary for its own regular and current expenses. Of course, that must be met. But what man is there that is willing to be contented with that? What

man who loves the Lord, and desires to do some good in the world, is willing, while giving what he ought for his own congregation, to never give a cent for the broad, outlying world that is perishing in sin for the want of aid from those who have the knowledge of the truth? The home demand can not bound the liberality and the benevolence of any man or woman who has a heart to feel for the suffering and dying nations of the world. A man can not be contented to give to the treasury of his own congregation what is necessary to keep it up, and refuse to give to the suffering poor in the city. Our benevolence must reach out beyond the narrow circle of our own congregation's wants. Still, it is within this narrow circle of which I speak that the great difficulty lies in managing the finances of the Church.

One of the principles of which I have spoken deserves our very special attention here, while all the others that I have laid down must not be lost sight of, and that is the principle of equality.

By equality is evidently meant this: the rich man and the poor man are expected to give to the purposes of the congregation equally in proportion to their ability. I do not think I could have any respect for myself if I had to carry about in my soul the humiliating conviction that I was giving less in proportion to my ability to keep up the Church than the other members. I could have no self-respect; I do not think any man could. Well, how is that proportion to be determined? How am I to be sure that I am doing that? If I am left to determine it myself alone, I am very apt to underestimate it. The selfishness that belongs to our nature prompts a man to overestimate the relative amount of what he gives. At the same time it always prompts him to overestimate that which his neighbor *ought* to give. A man has to be

very level-headed and very level-hearted not to do both of these things. If we could get rid, absolutely rid, of all the selfishness that belongs to our nature, we would not be liable to this misjudgment; but we can't very well do that. I hope we will be able to do it by the time we get to heaven. I think I have known a few persons that had gotten rid of selfishness, at least so far as practical exhibitions were concerned, or very nearly rid of it, before they got to heaven. I hope that we are all growing in that respect, for if we are not, we are not growing in anything that is good; but still we all have some selfishness left. So, then, if every man is to be the sole judge in the Church of the relative amount that he ought to give, some of us will certainly give less than we ought.

How then, can we settle the matter? Why, it is perfectly obvious and plain that it ought to be left to somebody that is disinterested, who can judge of the question without being biased by selfishness—somebody who can look at me and at that brother, standing off separate from us, and make a fair, disinterested estimate of the relative ability of each. I think that is perfectly plain. Well, now, it so happens that God has the appointment ordered in his Church of certain officers whose business it is to look after the finances of the Church—those whom we call the deacons; that is their official duty.

If, then, they have been appointed for that purpose, if that is the official duty of that class of men in the Church, I should like to know where we can find anybody in the whole Church so likely to decide the relative amount that you and I and all of us should give. When a church elects deacons, if the members know what they are about, they select out of their number men whom they consider specially qualified for this very business. They are supposed, by their knowledge of all the members, by their

business experience, and by their ability to find out what they do not yet know, to be better acquainted with the actual ability of the members than anybody else, or any other set of men of the same number in the same church; and as for you and me, they are disinterested, not interested judges, as we are; so I think that God's plan and the plan of common sense (which is always in harmony with the plan of God) suggest that we should leave it to them. Well, I am very glad so to do, so far as I am concerned. I should hate, when all things are revealed before God, to find myself put down as a short-comer on the subject of giving; to be set down among the meaner set of Christians, the narrow hearted set. I think I would be ashamed of myself through all eternity, if I should discover that that is my place. I do not want to be in that class; and I am afraid that if I were left all my life long as a church member to decide every year for myself what my equal part of the expenses of the church is—I am afraid I might fall short. I do not like to trust myself too much on that point. So I am very glad to be relieved of it; for in our church at Lexington, ever since it was first organized, we have left that matter to the deacons. These brethren, who have been selected for the purpose, tell me how much I ought to give; and when they do so, I feel quite certain that when I give that, I have not given too much. I feel sure I have not given too much, because the judgment of seven or ten or fourteen men is far better, far surer and more certain, as to what I should give, than my own judgment. And then, if I ever have a little doubt on the question of their assessing me too much, I know it can not be much too much; and if in giving to the Lord I happen to give a few dollars over, I know very well that it is safe. I have not hurt myself any. He will take good care of it,

and He is sure to keep a good account of it. If I have given it cheerfully, it will rebound to me beyond all calculation. I am perfectly safe. I am not very likely to be set down as one of the mean or close or stingy men, when I give freely and cheerfully all that they say is my share; and if they assess me a little too high, why that is still a great blessing to me, because it places me where I want to be, among the more liberal givers. The wisest and best then of all the methods that can be devised, is to leave the question of the amount of giving to these men purposely set apart to take care of money matters. Just say, Brethren, I don't know how rich the others are. I do not know how much they are able to do. You know better than I do. I am a little selfish when it comes to deciding my own amount; tell me what you think it ought to be, and here it is. That is the principle.

Just here let me remark, that I find men all over the country in the churches, who think that they are not responsible to anybody except God, as to their giving;—Nobody's business but mine and my God's. I wonder if those men could give a reason why a man should be held accountable by the authorities of the Church for all the other sins he is guilty of, or may be guilty of, and not be held accountable for this particular sin. When I read through the New Testament, I find that the sin of covetousness or stinginess, is more frequently held up to condemnation by the Lord Jesus and the apostles, and dealt with in severer and more terrific terms, than any other sin in the whole category. Indeed, a covetous man is more unlike Christ than any other wicked man in the world. A drunkard who gets drunk every day may, and often does, have a good deal of the kindness and good heartedness that ought to belong to every Christian. And a man who in a passion gets mad and murders

another, may sometimes be a good kind of a man ; but if a man is covetous, stingy, penurious, miserly, he is further away from Christ, who gave up everything in heaven and came down to this earth and gave up everything that ordinary mortals consider desirable while here, and gave up his life, for the benefit of others, while this poor wretch wants everything for himself, and is not ready to give anything for others. I verily believe that the covetous man is the most wicked of men in God's sight. He is called an idolator. Paul says, "No covetous man shall inherit the kingdom of God." Men of my acquaintance have lived and died in the Church, whom I knew, and all the neighborhood knew, whom whole counties knew to be covetous men. I had ten thousand times rather die the death of a drunkard, than to die the death of such a man as that; I would have more hope that God might forgive me and save me at last. Consequently, the Apostle Paul commands the brethren to withdraw from and put away from them every covetous man. He says "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat." "Put away the wicked man from among you." How many covetous men are put away in obedience to this apostolic command? The Church has greatly sinned in not dealing with them as it ought. The time is coming when we shall deal with them more faithfully.

If this teaching is true, there must be some way of deciding who is covetous. If the Church is commanded to put covetous men away, it must have some way of determining who they are. The elders of the Church must decide the question. How are they to decide it? I will tell you. If a man is doggedly unwilling, and persistently

and determinedly refuses, to give to the treasury of the Church of which he is a member, I will not say the exact amount, but at least some where in the neighborhood of what the disinterested of the deacons of the Church say he ought to give, that man is just as certainly a covetous man, as he lives. I feel quite certain that this is a just decision, because if he were not a covetous man and thought they were requiring too much of him, he would say, I think that is too much, but I do not want to be set down on the side of the covetous, and therefore I give it and I give it cheerfully. But, if he loves his money more than he loves his God, more than he loves the Church, and more than he loves his good name as a Christian, he refuses, and that proves what he is. O let us follow that precept of Paul, brief but full of power, "Flee covetousness;" and this means, run away from it as you would from a serpent in your path—from a lion or any wild beast you might meet in your journey.

I am afraid that we preachers are not as faithful as we ought to be in dealing with this subject in the pulpit. I have myself tried to be, and consequently I have never yet lived and labored regularly for a congregation that was not a liberal one. I remember an incident told me by an aged brother when I was a young preacher, which often comes to me in this connection. There was a man about to die, the richest man in the congregation. He sent for his preacher. When he came, he said, "I want you to read and pray with me; I think I am going to die." The preacher sat down, and not recalling at once any particular passage to read, opened the book at random. His eye fell on this—"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven." He

said to himself, I will not read that to the dying man; he will think I am hitting at his great failing. So he gave the leaves a flirt at random to another place, and the first passage his eye fell on, was the story of the man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, but who, when he died and was in hades, lifted up his eyes in torment. He would not read that. Then he flirted the leaves towards the back of the book, and the first passage was this: "But they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition." The preacher's conscience began to hurt him now. He felt as if the Lord was dealing with him. He said to himself, may be it is the intention of the Lord that I should read these very passages. So he read this last passage; he turned back to the story of the rich man and read that; he turned back to the passage in the sermon on the Mount and read that; and when he got through, the dying man looked up at him and said; "Why haven't you called my attention in your sermons to these passages? You know, and I know, that they strike the very sin of my life, and you have been unfaithful to me." Oh! how did that preacher feel? I do not want to be involved in any thing of that sort. I want to be faithful to men. And, brethren, bad as the preacher felt, how did the poor rich man feel? I beg you, my dear brethren and sisters, to flee covetousness. Hate it. Put it away from you, and resolve that with the help of God you will cultivate a liberal spirit, free and liberal giving. If the Lord loves a cheerful giver, O then place yourselves in the position where the Lord will love you. If the Lord loves you, he will take care of you. If the Lord loves you, no matter how much you give He will not let you suffer for it. He will feed you; He will clothe

you ; He will bless your soul as well as your body ; and He will redeem you from death and destruction. Let us all act upon these true and self-evident principles, and may God help this congregation, and all others to get along more prosperously and smoothly in this respect in days to come. Let us remember what Christ has given to us, and be always ready to give freely to Him.

SERMON XXI

A CHURCH INSPECTED.

MORNING AUGUST 27, 1893.

“Fear not; I am the first and the last and the living one. I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of hades. Write therefore, the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter.”

I have read from verses 17-19 of the first chapter of Revelation.

We learn from Irenæus, a noted Christian writer, who was born near the beginning of the second century and lived to the end of it, that the Book of Revelation was written in the year 96 of our era; and as the Apostle John was very nearly of the same age with our Lord, he must have been about ninety-six years of age at the time. The circumstances under which it was written were very impressive. As he states in a previous verse, he had been a companion of the churches of Asia in tribulation and the patience of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he was now in the Isle of Patmos for the testimony of the Lord and the word of Jesus. This evidently means that he had been banished to this island as part of a persecution which had been visited upon these seven Churches, and perhaps others. It was a lonely, rocky island; one without soil to invite the agriculturist, and consequently almost uninhabited, lying in what we call the Archipelago, about twenty miles from the Asiatic shore. It was a very sad cir-

cumstance that a man of his age was thus banished from his friends, from his brethren, from the churches in which he had been laboring. When the Lord's day rolled around in that rocky island, he could not go to Church. There was no assembly of the saints in which he could enjoy their fellowship in the worship of God. There was no Lord's table spread, where he could commune with the Lord in the elements of his dying love. I suppose that John had never passed a Lord's day since great Pentecost, sixty years ago, without breaking the loaf with his brethren; without meeting them to sound the praise of God and engage in holy worship; but now he has to forego all these pleasures and enjoyments. Still, we learn from the statement of the text, that on the Lord's day he was in the Spirit, just as we would expect. Though alone, so far as all earthly fellowship was concerned, he was in full communion with the Spirit of God.

Did you ever spend a Lord's day—a rainy or a stormy day, shut up alone, with nothing to read? What a day for reminiscences! What a day for a man to run back and live over all the scenes of the past which are worth remembering, and even those you would like to forget! And do you not suppose that this old man's memory was at work that lonely day? I can not think otherwise. And when he looked back, how varied the pathway of his long life. He could remember very well that morning, long ago, when he was fishing with his brother James, and his father, and the hired servants, and the new Light that had sprung up in Galilee came by and said, "Follow me." He left all and followed. How well he could remember when he, and his brother James, and Peter, were waked up on the mountain top in the night to see the glorious transfiguration of the son of God, to see Moses and Elijah in glory, and to hear them talking about the

coming death of Jesus. And when he sat down to the Lord's table to break the loaf, it was not with him as it is with you and me, the recalling of something he had read about, but the recalling of that which he had witnessed with his own eyes, when, alone of all the male disciples, he stood before the cross and witnessed the agony of his dying Saviour. How well he could remember the day when he and Peter went up into the temple, and, while Peter was delivering his second great sermon, the two were seized by rude soldiers and dragged away to prison; the day, when, a little later, all of the twelve were seized and dragged away to prison, and released with a whipping of thirty-nine lashes on the naked back. And then his brother James, his older brother, how well he remembered the time, fifty years ago, when the cruel tyrant Herod had beheaded him. And then Peter, side by side with whom he had fought so many battles of the Lord—Peter had now been nearly thirty years in the other world. Paul had been gone the same length of time. Indeed, it seems to have been the death of Paul, who had planted all these churches in the western part of the world, that caused John, about thirty years previous to this occasion, to come out west, and make his home at Ephesus, where he might give apostolic oversight to the churches that had been deprived of their apostle. His own city of Jerusalem had now been a ruin for twenty-six years, and his nation had been scattered to the winds. When John thought of all these things, if he had been familiar with our hymn book, it seems to me that one stanza at least would have occurred to his mind.

“ Many friends were gathered round me
In the bright days of the past,
But the grave has closed above them,
And I linger here, the last.”

This would have made him sad, unless there had come to him this brighter thought, I can not linger here much longer, I will soon be with Jesus and my old companions.

I do not think it possible, that in the midst of such reminiscences as these, John could have failed to think of another incident—of that morning, when, after fishing with six others all night and catching nothing, the Lord appeared on the shore and called them. He called them to a breakfast of broiled fish and bread, and doubtless they enjoyed it as only hungry and tired men can. When they got through, a most interesting conversation followed. When He started away, Peter, you remember, followed; and Jesus said to him, “When thou wast young, thou didst gird thyself, and wentest whithersoever thou wouldst,”—a strong, independent, brave man—“but when thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch out thy hands and others shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldst not;” signifying by what death Peter should glorify the Lord, a death with his hands stretched out on the cross. Peter turned and saw John coming. He says, “Lord, what shall this man do?” They were two very devoted friends, Peter and John. “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” From this remark, the report went out that John was never to die; that he was to live on till the second and final coming of the Lord. But John, who writes this, is careful to add, he did not say that that disciple should not die, but, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” Well, now, while John is spending this lonely Lord’s day here on the rocky island, perhaps on the sea shore, looking out over the waves breaking at his feet, must he not have asked himself for perhaps the thousandth time, What did the Lord mean? “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”

I have tarried till all the others have gone ; almost another life time has passed away since the last of them died, and what does the Lord mean ? We can imagine that he was dwelling on that very question when he heard a voice behind him, which he compares in one breath to the sound of a trumpet, and in another to the sound of many waters, the great waves of the sea breaking on the rocky shore. He turned to see, and there stood a glorious being, unlike anything that ever walked this earth ; so glorious that John fell like a dead man at his feet. He had seen many a wondrous sight, but this was the most overwhelming that he had ever seen. And yet, while his eyes were still open, he saw that this being, glorious and wondrous as he was, looked like the Son of man. There was still a resemblance to his Master, though so greatly changed. Brethren, it seems to me that this contains a **hint to us**. When He comes, and we meet him, we shall be like him, we shall see him as he is ; but I think our old friends will say of every one of us, That looks like him. We can still be recognized.

Falling like a dead man, John lay there until the strange being laid his right hand on him, and said, "Fear not ; I am the first, and the last, and the living one ; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of hades." Then he *knew* it was the Son of man ; and he knew that he had tarried until the Lord had come again. The Lord had been away from earth for sixty years or more, but he had come back again. John did not know at the moment what he had come back for, but he soon learns. Jesus says to him, "Write," get your writing material and "Write the things which thou hast seen ; the things that are, and the things that shall be." Write it in a book, and send what you write to those seven churches. He has

come down then, after being in heaven on his great white throne for sixty years, to dictate some letters to seven churches, to reveal through John to these churches, and through them to all the churches, some things that are yet to be. He has come to add to the revelations that had been closed up, another chapter—an appendix.

The Lord proceeds first to explain the seven golden candlesticks in the midst of which he was standing when John beheld him, and the seven stars that were clustered about his right hand. He says, these seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches.* Brethren, why did the Lord select a golden candlestick to represent a church? The church is planted in every community to give light, as the candlestick holds up the light for all in the apartment; and in the eye and mind of the great Head of the Church, one of His congregations here on earth must not be represented by a tin candlestick, or one of pewter, or one of brass, or one of silver. It must be represented by pure gold. O my brethren, that shows the Lord's estimate of a church that bears his name, and honors it; pure gold—nothing less can be a fair symbol of a church of the living God. You do not know how bright and beautiful a thing, in the eyes of heaven, a faithful church is. You find fault with it sometimes. Be careful.

And he says, "The seven stars in my right hand are"—as it is translated in our version—"the angels of the seven churches." The Greek word commonly translated angel, is so rendered correctly when it refers to one of the heavenly beings; but when it refers to an earthly being, as it often does, the correct rendering of it is messenger. When John sent messengers to Jesus from his prison, they are called by the same Greek word translated angels, called messengers because they were hu-

man beings; and when the Saviour, going toward Jerusalem, sent messengers before his face to prepare lodging for Him and His twelve disciples, the same word is there rendered messengers, because they were men. We are to determine whether angel or messenger should be the word in English by ascertaining whom it represents. I do not learn from any other portion of the Scripture anything about an angel of a church; that is, a heavenly messenger for a church; but the churches did often send human messengers, one of their own number or more than one, and I think there is an excellent reason to suppose that these seven churches sent messengers to John at this time. Now, think of it. Here is the old Apostle, ninety odd years of age, who was looked up to as a spiritual father by all the living church at that time, because he was the only one of the twelve apostles yet alive, and he was most tenderly beloved by all. When he wrote his epistles, he called all the brethren and sisters his little children—even the oldest. He is banished from their midst on that island out there, which you can see in a clear day if you stand upon a high hill on the main shore. Do you suppose they went right on with their daily routine of business, and their weekly church meetings, and never made any inquiry about the old man, as to whether he was sick or well, alive or dead; whether he had the necessary comforts of life? I suppose it likely that I address some fathers and mothers here to-day, if not, I do some brothers and sisters, who remember the time when there was a boy up yonder on Johnson's Island in Lake Erie, or one in Camp Chase, at Chicago. Did you want to know something about him? Did you want to find out from week to week whether he was sick or well; alive or dead? Did you try to communicate with him when armed guards stood around his camp to keep you from

getting something to him, and getting a message back from him? Well now, if these churches let that old Apostle remain out there without trying to communicate with him; without sending somebody out in a boat, or in some way, to see how the old man was, to carry some comforts to him, and to get a message from him, they would not have deserved the name of Christians. I am sure they sent. In a calm day, when the waters are smooth—I sailed six days on the Adriatic Sea with scarcely a ripple on the surface the whole time—it would be easy for a strong man to row out there and get the news, and a brave man would take the risk of a sudden storm. And whom would the churches send as a messenger to the old Apostle? Would they pick out some giddy headed, thoughtless youth? Some careless and indifferent member of the church? I suppose not. I suppose they would select some mature, strong, brave member, who would be a congenial companion for the Apostle when he got there, who could enter into full sympathy with him, and who would remember well the blessed words that he would send back to them. In other words, they would send some choice spirit of the church. And so I am sure they did.

And now the Lord says, "These seven stars are the messengers of these seven churches;" and this gives us some idea how Christ regards those true, strong, brave, faithful men in the church. Paul's estimate was placed upon them when he said of certain brethren concerning whom he speaks in Second Corinthians, "If any man inquires of these brethren, tell them that they are the messengers of the churches, and *the glory of Christ.*" Think now of three men who are messengers of the churches being the glory of Christ. That is what Paul styled them. And Jesus depicts them as bright stars, so

bright that they shone in the day time, clustered about His right hand, which holds them up. Brethren, that is Christ's estimate of those men in a church, to whom the brethren and sisters look as leaders, on whom they lay responsibility when some important mission is to be executed; the choice spirits of the church of God. They are bright stars in the eyes of the great Head of the Church, and His own almighty right hand upholds them. Do not speak lightly of such men. Raise your hat in their presence; honor them and love them. O what would the church be if all men of that class were taken out of it? What would become of the rest of us? Here then the Saviour reveals to this old Apostle a fact which might be expressed in these words: Though I have been up yonder in Heaven seated on the throne, all the angels worshipping me, and all the worlds under my control, I at the same time have been walking about among my churches, the golden candlesticks, and I have had my right hand held out all the time to hold up the brave, true men that have contended for my name and my honor in the midst of an accusing world.

Now He says "Write." I wish I had time to call your attention to all seven of the letters that He now dictates. We shall speak of only one.

"To the angel—to the messenger—of the Church of Ephesus, write." There has been a great deal of discussion about how the inspired penmen were directed by the Holy Spirit in writing. There can not be any discussion about these epistles. They are really the epistles of the Lord Jesus Himself—the only documents He ever wrote. And He wrote them just in the same way that Paul wrote the epistles to the Romans. Paul spoke, and Tertius the scribe wrote down the words as they fell from his lips. Now Jesus speaks, and John with pen in hand, writes

down the words as they fall from His lips. And when that letter was written, and carried by that good man to Ephesus, it was a letter from the Lord Jesus Christ to the church at Ephesus. When he returned, of course the brethren and sisters gathered around and asked him how the Apostle was. How is the good old father John? Is he alive? Is he well? And these questions were answered. But then the man held up the precious document—it could all be written on a piece of paper as large as my hand—He says, “Here is a letter that the Lord Jesus has dictated, and John has written, and given it to me to bring home; and it is a letter addressed to our church.” What an interesting document to the members of that congregation. If this church here on Broadway should receive a letter known to have been written by the Lord Jesus Christ, and addressed to this church, with what trembling anxiety we should all wish to read it!

When the next Lord’s day rolled around—or perhaps they did not wait till Lord’s day—the news had buzzed around all through the city that this letter had been received, and when the hour of meeting came, I judge that no member of that church was absent that day. They were all present with breathless anxiety. The good man stands up at the appointed hour to read the letter to them. It begins thus: “These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand; and that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” This of course needed explanation, and the reader had to stop and explain it, as it was explained to John. “I know thy works, and thy toil and patience.” And that made the minds of the brethren run back upon all the works they had done, upon all the toil they had passed through as a church, and all the patience that they had shown in bearing up under the ills and disappointments of life.

And the Lord says, I know that. I was watching; I was not far off, out of reach, or out of sympathy with you. And he means too, that he approved of it. That was cheering.

“And I know that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them who called themselves apostles, and are not, and didst find them false.” Here is an allusion to what must have been a terrible crisis in the history of that church. It seems from the words employed, that there had come among them men who claimed to be apostles. They must have been venerable men. They must have had the appearance of wise and good men, to set up such a claim. I suppose that they did not claim to be some of the original twelve—such a claim would be too preposterous—but of the class like Barnabas and Silas, who were called Apostles in a secondary sense. Such men had come among them, and of course when they first came, everybody was glad to see them. Everybody was glad to hear them speak, and pray; glad to sit at their feet and learn from them. But bye-and-bye there arose suspicions in the minds of some, as to whether they were not impostors; and don't you know that the first man who whispered that suspicion was met with *sh—sh?* Don't whisper anything against such good men as these. But the suspicion arose again, here and there, and the watchful elders whom Paul had told to watch against just such persons, began to feel sure that these men were not what they pretended to be, and they took the necessary steps for their exposure. They are exposed and found to be false, and cast out of the church. No church ever passed through such a scene as that without some of the members feeling, Perhaps we did wrong. Perhaps we were too severe with them. But now, after a good long time had passed, the Lord Jesus, who knew

their works, their toil, and their patience, applauds them. He applauds them because they could not bear evil men, and had tried those men, and found them false. In other words, he applauds that church for the strict discipline which it had maintained. They did not tolerate in their membership, wicked men. No matter what the plausible appearance of their lives and professions was, they were detected in their falsehood, exposed and cast out. And for that the Lord applauds them. Brethren, I am afraid that there are a good many churches in our day, who, if they should receive a letter from the Lord Jesus, would not hear such applause as that. Let us remember that the Lord is still inspecting His churches.

The reader goes on, and I think that before he read the next sentence, the good man must have paused and taken a long breath; for, here it is: "But, I have this against thee." And what is it? "That thou didst leave thy first love." When those words, "first love"—fell upon their ears, what a quickening of memory! How quickly they carried the mind of every member back to that blessed hour, when, first having confessed the Saviour and turned away from sin, and been buried in baptism, and risen to walk in the new life, the love that filled the soul passed all understanding, and made everything on earth appear in a new light,—when the love of God, and the love of men, overflowed with tears of gratitude and thanksgiving. "Thou hast left thy first love."

"Where is the blessedness I knew
 When first I saw the Lord?
 Where is the soul refreshing view
 Of Jesus and his Word?
 What peaceful hours I once enjoyed—
 How sweet their memory still;
 But they have left an aching void
 The world can never fill."

That is the sad wail of a soul which has left its first love. It was enough in the way of reproach; the remedy follows next. There must be a remedy for that departure. The remedy is, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." O brethren, that is the way to get back to the first love. That is the divine recipe. If you have fallen, remember the fair heights to which you had attained, repent, and then go to *doing those first works*. How did you act when that first love had complete sway in your soul? Go back to reading the Bible the way you did then. Go back to praying the way you did then. Go back to the regularity of attending church that characterized you then. Go back to the freedom and the gladness with which you gave to the Lord and to the poor. Go back to doing just the way you did when your heart was filled with the love of God, and then you will have that love again. That is the way to recover it—the only way. "Do the first works," says Jesus, "or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." There will be one church less in Asia. And this shows us that if a church leaves its first love, and does not return to it, it will not very long continue to be a church. It will die. Love is the life of a Christian; it is the life of a church; love to God and love to man.

After these heart-searching sentences, there comes another of a different tone, calculated to revive the spirits which had sunk under the withering rebuke just administered. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." Well, that is rather singular language to come from the Lord Jesus. Commending the brethren and sisters for *hating* something, and saying that he hates it too. We know very little about those Nicolaitanes, but the earliest Greek writers

give us the idea that they did some things which were calculated to encourage lasciviousness and immorality, under some kind of specious, false pretence that as our natural passions are given us by the Creator, it can not be sinful to gratify them. Now these brethren hated all that. They were so elevated in their ideas of Christian morality, that anything which had a tendency to break down the restraints upon our passions, and give a loose rein to them, they *hated*, and the Lord hated it. There are some things tolerated in our day, my brethren, of this class. There are some exhibitions on the stage; there are some things in society which have this tendency; and instead of being encouraged and indulged in by the disciples of the Lord, we ought to hate them. Ruinous, terrible fruits they are bringing forth in the lives and characters of young people. We are not to hate any man, but we are to hate the things that undermine and ruin the characters of men and women. The brethren in Ephesus felt better when they heard this.

Finally, the brief epistle closes: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," and this revealed to them that what was here said to Ephesus, was intended for all the other churches; intended for our churches. We are to gather the same lesson. And now, to animate the brethren, cheer them, lead them on to other victories, and other work yet lying before them, this touching epistle closes with these words: "To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." I will not restore him to the lost Eden which Adam and Eve enjoyed; I will not allow him to go back and eat of that tree of life which might cause them to live forever in this wicked world, but "I will give him to eat of the tree of life which is in the *paradise of God*," in God's garden of delight; in the

paradise where God lives. The tree of life that is there, enables him who eats of it to live forevermore in the presence of his Maker, where all is peace and joy and blessedness. This is the inducement to the man who will overcome. Overcome the devil in his temptations; overcome the world in its wicked influences; overcome his own flesh in its tendency to drag him down. Rise above all these, trample all evil beneath his feet, and win a glorious victory in the name of God. "I," says Jesus on the throne of heaven, "will give that man the privilege of eating of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

O, my brethren, is that inducement enough for you? Is that incentive enough to keep us toiling and laboring, and bearing with patience, and doing our best to please Him who has called us to life and joy? If it is, then act, and take courage; never be dismayed; never murmur; never grow low-spirited amidst the toils and struggles and pains and disappointments of this life; for every one of these is leading you a little nearer to the day when you will eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

SERMON XXII.

THE RIVER JORDAN.

EVENING AUGUST 27, 1893.

I now read a few verses in the third chapter of Matthew. I will read the first six verses, then pass on to the thirteenth, and thence read to the seventeenth.

“And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Now John himself had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. * * Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffereth him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The river Jordan is the most famous river on the earth. It does not owe its fame, like our own Mississippi, to its great length, or to the rich commerce that flows upon its bosom; for the whole distance from the source to the

mouth of the Jordan in an air line, is only about one hundred miles, and no boat for commercial purposes ever floated upon its waters. It does not owe its fame, like the Nile, to the fact that its overflow every year makes fertile a land which would otherwise be a desert; for the waters of the Jordan have never been utilized for irrigating purposes. Neither does it owe its fame, like the Tiber or the Seine or the Thames, to the fact that some great city like Rome or Paris or London has stood on its banks; for no city, not even a village, was ever built on the banks of the Jordan—nothing, indeed, except the temporary hut of the ferryman, which may be washed away in the spring, and rebuilt when the flood is over.

To what, then, does this most famous of all the rivers on the face of the globe owe its fame? To three considerations: first, to its peculiar physical characteristics; second, to the historic events that are connected with it; and third, to an association of thought connected with it in the minds of believers.

My discourse will consist in tracing out the way in which it has derived its fame from these three sources, and connecting with this some reflections which I hope will be profitable to us.

And first, the peculiarities of the Jordan as a river. All the other rivers of the world rise in some elevated region, flow on by gradual descent until they reach the level of the ocean, and there come to rest. The Jordan is unlike all other rivers in this particular. Its principal source is an enormous spring of icy cold water which bursts up from the ground, being supplied by the melting snows of Mount Hermon, and flows off a large stream. That spring is a few hundred feet above the level of the sea. The waters issuing from it, and from two other large springs supplied by the snows from the

same mountain, unite together a few miles south of this central source, and form a little lake, called in the Bible "the waters of Merom," but by the present inhabitants "Lake Huleh," a lake three miles wide and four miles long, not very deep. The surface of that lake lies on a level with the Mediterranean sea, thirty miles to the west. The Jordan starts out at the southern end of this lake, and runs south ten miles and a half, when it enters into the lake of Galilee. In running those ten and a half miles, it has sunk six hundred and eighty feet, so that the surface of the lake of Galilee, so precious in the memory of all who have read the life of our Saviour, lies six hundred and eighty feet below the level of the ocean. Out of the southern end of that lake, which is twelve miles long, the river starts again toward the south, winding in its course like the coils of a serpent, and, after traversing an air line of sixty-five miles, enters into the northern end of the Dead Sea. Now it has sunk down, down, until, when its water comes to rest on the surface of that sea, it is thirteen hundred feet below the ocean's level; so that, unlike all the other rivers of the earth, though it rises somewhat above the ocean's level, nearly the whole of its course is below that, and it sinks down until it fills a deep chasm called the Dead Sea, which is the lowest lying water on the face of the globe. The whole of its course, from the lake of Galilee to the Dead Sea, is through a valley varying in width from four to fourteen miles, and hemmed in on either side by mountains that rise from fifteen hundred to three thousand feet, so that that valley of the Jordan is the lowest land on the face of the globe, the Jordan is the lowest river, the Dead Sea the lowest water. It would appear to a man standing on the mountain ridge on either side and looking across that deep, narrow chasm, as though at some early period the

crust of the earth had been rent asunder and the gap only partially filled up, drawing into it this stream which forms the three bodies of water of which I have spoken. The Dead Sea, as you have heard ever since you were children at school, has no outlet, and you can see at once that if it had any connection with the great body of seas and oceans, it would be an inlet. If, as Chinese Gordon proposed a few years ago, a canal were cut so that the waters of the Mediterranean Sea might pour in, they would swell the surface of the Dead Sea thirteen hundred feet up the sides of the mountains on either side; they would rise above the valley of the Jordan proportionately; the river Jordan would disappear; the Dead Sea and the Lake of Galilee would disappear; and in the place of these a long body of sea water would divide western from eastern Palestine. These characteristics distinguish the Jordan from all the other rivers of the earth, and make its formation a profound study to the geologist—one that has never yet been explained in attempting to trace back the history of this old world.

But the events that have transpired in connection with the history of the Jordan, have done much more than this to give it its fame, for the facts which I have recited to you were not known until recent times; indeed, the first man who ever passed from the lake of Galilee along the river to the Dead Sea, took the levels of both, sounded the depths of the latter, and obtained these figures, was a Lieutenant of our own American Navy (Lieutenant Lynch), who was permitted by our Government, just after the close of the Mexican war, to take ten seamen and two boats, one of iron and one of copper, and make this exploration. He transported his boats to the Lake of Galilee, launched them upon that water, descended the river in them, and made the learned world acquainted with these facts.

Let us turn, now, to the second source, and look at the events which have made this river so famous. When Moses had led the children of Israel through the forty years of their wanderings in the desert, he brought them down, a short time before his death, into the deep valley of the Jordan, just above the entrance of the river into the northern end of the Dead Sea. There the valley is fourteen miles wide—seven miles between the river on the west and the mountains that rise up toward Jerusalem, and seven miles from the river to the mountains on the east, which rise up to the elevated pasture lands of Moab. Marching down from those heights, he pitched his camp in what is called in the Bible the Plain of Moab. It is a plain about seven miles wide from east to west, as we have said, and about eight miles in length from north to south. Four or five streams, supplied by springs in the ravines of those mountains, flow across this plain and empty into the Jordan. There, on that plain seven by eight miles, and well supplied with water, was the last encampment of the twelve tribes before the death of Moses; and while they were still encamped there, the Word of the Lord came to Moses, saying, “Go thou up upon Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, and view the land. And there thou shalt die, for thou shalt not go over with the people of Israel to possess that land, because thou didst sin against me at the waters of Meribah.” When Moses received that command he could look up from where he stood to the summit of Nebo, in the southeast, appearing from the view below to be the tallest mountain in the Moab range. I camped in that valley from Saturday forenoon till Monday forenoon. There stood Mt. Nebo towering above us, with Pisgah, one of three knobs in which the summit terminates. The tall form of Moses was soon seen passing through the camp toward the mount-

ain; and when he stood on the top of Pisgah, and looked out over the promised land, he was visible, like a speck against the sky, to the whole of that camp. He could also look down on every tent of those three millions of people, for whom he had suffered so much, and for whom, in their days of sin and wickedness, he had offered to sacrifice his life. It was a solemn moment, and O what a strange experience, after taking that last view of the promised land, to fold his arms and lie down upon the mountain top, and, without a pain, breath out his soul into the arms of his God! And God buried him. If there was a funeral procession, it was a procession of angels. A worthy death for that most magnanimous man.

Thirty days were spent in mourning for Moses, and then the command came to Joshua, "Command the children of Israel to prepare food; for in three days ye shall pass over this Jordan," Now, if a message out of the heavens, sent down by a cohort of angels, should reach the people of Louisville some day, commanding the whole host of them to arise on the third morning and march in solid phalanx across the Ohio river, it would not be one whit more startling than that command was to Joshua and the twelve tribes; for did you notice the statement of the text, "The Jordan was overflowing all its banks," which it does through harvest. In order to understand how the river appeared when it was thus out of its banks, let me state that the valley fourteen miles wide, lies about seventy-five feet higher than the bed of the river. As you walk across the valley toward the river, you come to a bluff, not very steep usually—in some places too steep for a horse to go down, in others a gradual slope—and you look down seventy-five feet into a river bottom, from a half mile to a mile wide. Now a river which falls as rapidly as the Jordan (falling nearly

seven hundred feet in sixty miles) has a rapid current when it is low; but when it is so swollen that it leaves its crooked channel, and its waters rush in a direct line toward their resting place, we can see at once with what a terrific force it plunges along. And as that valley is full of small trees and underbrush, thick and rank of growth, you can see that, as the water would be tearing its way over the brush and the tree tops, it would be a fearful sight to look at, and to think of marching across it would appear preposterous. I would rather undertake to get across the calm Ohio; and yet these people were commanded to rise the third morning and march across that river, and the priests were commanded to take the ark and march before them. I wonder how many people in Louisville would try to go across under such a command! But the Israelites obeyed—on the third morning every tent was struck for an early march. The people were assembled in long lines up and down the river, and by what soldiers would call a flank movement, they advanced, the priests keeping two thousand cubits ahead; and we are told that when the priests went down the steep and their feet dipped in the brim of the river, the water moved away as they advanced; it was cut off on the right, and ran out toward the sea, and the river was empty. It was no easy task even then to get down the steep slope; to struggle through the wet brush and the mud, and climb down into the channel of the river. Perhaps they had to use some of their axes and shovels and spades; and then they must climb up the ascent on the other side before sunset that evening. But, hard as the labor was, before the sun had gone down, in the simple style of our book, "All the people had passed clean over the Jordan." The priests were standing in the middle of the channel all this time, and when they came up, the mighty river resumed its course.

Do you believe that? I recollect that when our war was going on, a little creek there in Virginia swelled, and stopped the movements of McClelland's one hundred thousand men when he was about to take Richmond; I remember again and again that those mighty armies that were struggling in Virginia for the mastery were impeded by a night's rain making those little streams impassable to them; and it is true that not all the armies, nor the millions of soldiers in all the armies of Europe, if they were here on the banks of this Ohio river, could cut it off or get rid of its water so as to walk across on dry ground. Consequently, when some men read of an event like this, they shake their heads—that is too big a miracle to be credible! And why? If there is a God who created the heaven and the earth, who now rules over them, and who does his own pleasure among the armies and nations of men, and among the stars and the planets, surely there is a power sufficient for this; and the only question is whether there was an occasion or a reason to justify the Almighty God in thus stretching out His arm. He declared to Joshua, "This day I will begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." He is going to do something to prove that. He said to Israel, "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you." Now how could that be? How can God show to a people, beyond all possibility of doubt, that He is among them? The answer you are ready to give is this: Only by doing something that none but God can do. If something had been done that might be accounted for by the forces of nature, men would have believed that the forces of nature did it. If something had been done that could be accomplished by the ingenuity of men or of angels, they might have thought that men or angels did it; but if something is done that none but the Almighty God can do, then men know that

the living God is among them of a truth; and this is what was done. There was an occasion, then, for it, and it was the only thing, or something like it, that could be done to demonstrate the great truth which they were made to believe.

And then, another thing: have you never raised the question as you were studying this passage, Why didn't the Canaanites assemble an army on the bank of the river and dispute the passage of it—fight them back as they were struggling through? There is a very good reason: they knew very well that the Jordan would be overflowing its banks all through the time of harvest, and the harvest was on, and they were busy getting in their grain. We will go, every one, now, and gather all of our grain, and put it away; then, the early summer work being over, every man that can bear a weapon will go down to the bank of the Jordan, and before it will be possible for them to cross the river, we will be there to meet them. I suppose that was the policy of the kings of Canaan; so they went on contentedly with the harvest. But when they looked down from the hill-tops that day and saw that mighty host coming up out of the river in long lines of dark and white, and saw them pitch their tents on this side, and knew that the river was still swollen, another design that God had comes into view. In the language of Rahab, "there was no longer any spirit" in the Canaanites. Their souls sank within them. They, too, saw that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was among that people, and they never did recover from the effects of the fright which it gave them. This made Joshua's victories far easier than they otherwise could have been. This, now, is the first of that series of events (only some of which I am going to recite to you) which have made the Jordan the famous river that it is.

The people were settled in the land of Canaan, every man with his piece of land as an inheritance to his children through all generations; and is it not wonderful that a people who had been thus guided through the wilderness, led across the Red Sea, across the Jordan, planted, by the help of God, in a land that was not their own, and made rich and prosperous in it, could ever forget that God and cease to worship him? But, strange as it is, the time came when they turned away from him. Ahab was king of Israel. He married a heathen woman, who was a devotee of a false worship. He made the great mistake of his life, as many another man has done since, in the wife that he married; and a great many more women have made the mistake of their lives in the husbands they have married. He brought to the throne of God's people a heathen queen, and she brought with her the prophets of her false religion, and set up a temple; and that false God was worshipped in the capital of the Jewish nation. That was an aristocratic government; and it was then just as it is now—a very large portion of the people put on and put off their religion the way they do the fashions. When the queen was a Baal worshiper of course all the ladies of the court had to be; and when the queen and the ladies of the court were Baal worshipers, all the women in every little city and town throughout the land who wished to be in the style became Baal worshipers; and when all the women that wanted to be in the style became Baal worshipers, all their husbands, and all their sons, and all their daughters became Baal worshipers. Why not? "Better be out of the world than out of the fashion." And so Baal worship became the worship of the land. There were some old-fashioned prophets who did their best to stop that change of things; they cried out against it with all their might, but when

it came to confronting Jezebel, she overpowered them. She murdered some of them, and many others went and hid in caves, and had their friends bring them bread and water to keep them from starving. There was only one man left at last, who was standing up in that nation and crying out with unterrified voice against this abomination. That was the prophet Elijah, and he at last was compelled to flee for his life, away off to the rocky fastnesses of Mt. Horeb. He is hidden in a cave, when God calls and says to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He answers, "O Lord, the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant; they have digged down thine altars, and slain thy prophets, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life to take it away." Now this was a man who would not give up; he would not yield to the wrong when all the world, so far as he knew, had gone over on the other side. He staid to fight the battle of the Lord as long as there was any possibility of accomplishing anything, and only when it was to save his own life did he flee to that cave in the mountain. Now God wanted the world to know what he thinks of a man like that; a man who would stand up for the truth against the whole world, when he had to stand alone. So, when the proper time came, Elijah, with his younger prophet and servant, Elisha, was at Gilgal. He says, "Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." And Elisha says, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee"; and he followed him to Bethel. When they got up to Bethel, "Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." "As the Lord God liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee"; and he followed him to Jericho. This brought them down into the Jordan valley, just seven miles from the river. There some young prophets came to Elisha,

and said, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" "Yes, I know it; hold your peace;" and here comes out the secret reason why he would not stay behind. So Elijah says, "Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee;" and he followed him to the Jordan. Fifty stout young men of Jericho also followed the two prophets as far as the bluff, and saw them go down to the river. When they reached the river, the very section of it which emptied itself to let Joshua's army through, Elijah draws his mantle from his shoulders and smites the river, and it opens. Once more that river opens in obedience to its Maker. The two prophets pass through and come up in Joshua's old camp, and under the shadow of Mt. Nebo; and as they walked across the plain, a whirlwind comes tearing along, and when the circle of it strikes the two prophets, Elijah is in a chariot of fire, and drawn by horses of fire, and they go whirling round and round, up and up, until he disappears like a speck in the sky. The younger prophet exclaims, "My father, my father; the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" And when he looked down, he saw that mantle which had opened the water. He took it up, and drew it across his own shoulders, and went back. When he came to the river, he drew it from about him, and said, "Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?" He again walked through. He comes to where the fifty prophets are, who have been seeing all this. They say, "Let us go and seek thy Master; peradventure the Spirit of Jehovah shall cast him on some mountain or into some valley." "Don't go." They begged that they might go. Finally he says, "Go;" and those fifty men went (for they could see where he had dropped, if he had dropped at all), and they searched

three days in those mountains to find the body of Elijah. When they returned Elisha said, "Did I not say to you, 'Go not.'" They had not dreamed up to that time, that the body of a man might be taken to another world. They believed in the departure to God of the spirits of those who die, but now they have learned that God has a place somewhere, far away beyond the sight of men, where both the body and the soul may dwell with Him. And thus God declared to that generation and to this, and to all the generations to come, that when there is a man on this earth so true and brave and strong that he is willing to stand for God and for righteousness against the whole world in arms and never flinch, that man is too precious in the eyes of God for death to seize the body and worms to devour it. O, that we had more men like Elijah! The world is suffering and dying for brave men, strong men, true men, who will never flinch though pressed by every foe.

The last prophet who spoke in the Old Testament, and whose words were written down, closes the long line of prophetic utterances with these words: "Behold, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come, I will send you the prophet Elijah, and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The Jews believed that he meant the real Elijah who had gone to heaven; that he was coming back again; but as we learn from the New Testament, that prophetic utterance had reference to another, called Elijah because within him was the Spirit and the power of Elijah; and when that second Elijah (John the Baptist) came and began his mighty work, he began on the bank of the river Jordan, in the wilderness—and that word wilderness marks the last seven or eight miles of the river's course.

And so the surface of that same section of the river that had opened for Joshua's army, that had opened itself for the prophets, is broken by those whom John baptized. He preached there, and the people came flocking out of the cities in vast multitudes to hear his preaching. We have men in our day who preach to vast audiences—Spurgeon, for many years, to five thousand people every Lord's day in his tabernacle in London; Beecher, in his great church in Brooklyn, and others; and where do these men preach who have multitudes hanging on their lips? They preach in the great cities where the people live close about them. Not so with John. He went to the banks of the Jordan, began his preaching in the wilderness, and emptied the cities. No preacher that ever preached has produced such an effect as that. When I was there, I was glad to get away as soon as I satisfied my curiosity, to escape the pest of gnats, flies, and mosquitoes, and the intense heat; for down in that deep valley, with the mountains on either side to shut off the breeze, the summer's heat is suffocating. Right there in that kind of a place this great preacher gathered throngs out of every city in the land; and there they stayed day after day, night after night, month after month, the great multitudes hanging on the lips of the great preacher. Nothing like it has ever been known in the history of this world.

While this excitement and interest were at their height, one day the listening throng saw a young man of unpretending appearance walk straight through the crowd and stand before the great preacher. To their amazement the great preacher shrinks in that young man's presence. "I have need to be baptized of thee. Comest thou to me?" With a calm voice the young man, who has no tear of penitence in his eye, no

tremor in his voice, no confession of sins, says to the preacher, "Suffer it now, John. For thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Then, with a trembling hand, the great preacher leads this young man down into the water, lowers him beneath the wave, and lifts him up again. He walks out. He kneels down upon upon the shore, and lifts his eyes and his hands toward heaven in prayer. While the people gaze and wonder, they hear a sound in the sky. They look up. There comes down, with the movements of a dove, white and beautiful, the Spirit of the great God. It rests upon the young man's head, and enters into him; and the sound they heard was the voice of the eternal God, breaking the silence of the heavens that had not been broken since that day of Mt. Sinai. The voice proclaims, "This is my Son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased." And thus, on the banks of that same river, where it had opened for Joshua's army, where it had opened for the prophets, there under the shadow of Mt. Nebo, the heavens were opened, and the great God makes known to the listening world that the son of Mary is His Son, and introduces in a grand and wondrous way the world's Redeemer. This was the last and the crowning glory of the river Jordan. And are not these enough to make it the famous river that it is?

But now we pass on, and will treat more briefly, by far, the last source of this wondrous river's fame. It is the association which connects it in the minds of Christians with that which is very dear and precious to every Christian heart, when we sing that good old song,

" On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye;
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie."

Here is a mingling of the ideal and the real which is very strange; but the ideal is caught by every man that sings it, round the whole earth. The rude negro who sings it, and the cultivated poet who sings it, all alike, rich and poor, high and low, catch the one grand association of thought that it contains. Every man imagines himself standing on the literal Jordan, and at the same time he instinctively feels himself standing on the brink of that dark river separating us from the heavenly land. Every man, when he hears that song, looks over to the hills of the earthly Canaan, and at the same time is gazing upon the blooming fields of the everlasting paradise of God. And why this association? Because, when Israel had wandered and wandered, until now they were within full view of the land of promise, they must yet cross that dark and swollen river, before they can enter into it. And if they had gone into that river just as they were, with none but their own strength, they would have been washed away, every one of them, down into the Red Sea, and the nation would have perished. Just so, when you and I shall have wandered, no matter how long, we finally come to that which is properly called a deep, dark river, a turbid stream that we must cross. If we plunge into it in our own unaided power, we sink to rise no more. The bottomless pit receives us. The Israelites were able to cross that river because God himself was in their midst, and standing by Joshua their leader; and you and I will be able to cross this one, and stand on the eternal shores, if only God and Christ are with us when we make the plunge. We often have a false conception about death, to our own injury, and to the disturbance of our thoughts; we think of it, perhaps, as a plunge into some dark, cold, chilly stream, as it is represented in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*—we sink down and touch bot-

tom, and spring up, and in the darkness we struggle and pant until, after a long and fearful effort, our feet begin to touch bottom toward the other shore. I do not believe that. I believe that all the pain you and I will suffer will be on this side of death, this side of the river. I believe it will be with you and me (if God be with us there) as it was with the Israelites—that the very moment our feet begin to dip in the brim of death, death will vanish, and we are over there at once—you will cross it as soon as you touch it. There is no long, dark, terrible struggle. When you touch death it is gone forever, the light of the glorious land shines that moment upon your soul, and the glories of the eternal world are in your eye. I believe that. And what a blessed thing it is.

But let me repeat, in conclusion, that if you would have death thus to vanish when you touch it, you must have your Joshua leading you; you must have God in your midst of a truth, and there with you. He alone can make death vanish, and if you will have Him there then, you must follow Him through the wilderness. You must follow that cloudy pillar by day, that pillar of fire by night; and that pillar is the word of God. Or, to drop the figure, if you would have Jesus your Redeemer by your side when you come to the last hour, you must have him by your side on the journey. How did he go? He first went down to that literal Jordan, and there, as we have seen, he was baptized by John, though he had no sins to wash away. Follow Him there. When He arose from that watery burial, He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, because God was with Him. When He died, God was with Him, although for a time He thought He was not, and said, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” But that was only for a moment, for the next breath He breathed was in the

utterance of the words, "Father, receive my spirit." The awful agony of a moment was over; He knew that his Father was with Him. Let us, then, follow Him down to the literal Jordan, obeying His holy command in that ordinance—arise, and go about as He did doing good, healing all that are oppressed of the devil, so far as it is in our power, and then when our feet just dip into the brim of the river, He will be with us; the cold river will be out of sight, and we shall find our way over to the saints on the farther shore.

Is that the desire of any penitent soul here to-night? Of any one who has never yet begun to follow Jesus? O, my dear friend, what an end of life that will be! What a glorious life to lead that ends in that! Will you not come to-night and start on the way? We will sing the song, now, to which I have alluded, and if your heart is won to the love of Christ, and you desire to serve Him, come right now without any further delay, and make known your heavenly purposes.

SERMON XXIII.

PRAYER: ITS EFFICACY.

“The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.”—JAMES, v. 16.

I think there is no subject of revelation on which there is more skepticism than on that of prayer. This skepticism is not due to little being said on the subject in the Bible; neither does it arise from any ambiguity in the Scripture statements. You will all bear witness, if you have read the Bible much, that there is no duty or privilege more frequently emphasized in the Bible than this; and that no assurance is more solemnly given than that God is a prayer-hearing God, answering the prayers of His people. This skepticism grows out of our own short-sightedness. We look around and think of the laws of nature, and remember that God does not work miracles in this day, and we don't see how He can alter things to suit our wishes and petitions. We are told He is an unchanging God; how can He then answer prayer? Thus we set limits to God's ability to act without doing miracles. God can bring about certain things by miracles, and it seems but reasonable to suppose that He can do some things without a miracle. Prof. Tyndall, who is one of the most scientific men of our day,* made himself famous a few years ago by proposing a practical test, as he said, of the efficacy of prayer. He proposed to select two wards of a certain large hospital, with patients afflicted alike in each, and that for the patients in

* He died at an advanced age about six months after the delivery of this sermon.

one ward a large number of devout and earnest Christians should be asked to pray, while for those in the other no prayers should be made. In the course of a few months they would see which side had the larger number of convalescent patients. I suppose he thought this a very profound and satisfactory proposal; but when I saw it published in the papers, it struck me this way: Here he wants the people to pray for a certain portion of the sick, those on one side of the hospital, and to wickedly neglect to pray for the others. Of course such prayers would not be answered. A man prays for one and deliberately neglects to pray for others—that is a wicked prayer. Who could expect an answer?

Now if James tells the truth, “the supplication of a righteous man avails much.” What he says is, that it “avails *much*.” He does not say that it avails to the full extent that the petitioner wishes it to avail; he does not affirm that it will always accomplish precisely what is asked for by the petitioner; but he affirms that “it *avails much*.” It may be in this way, it may be in that way, but, in some way, it avails much.

A man fires a rifle, taking aim, very careful, deliberate aim, and misses the mark; does that bullet accomplish nothing? Is there no force in it? In a great battle, the immense cannonading which begins the fight does little execution; most of it is vain so far as striking the mark is concerned; most of it is vain so far as killing the enemy is concerned; would you say, then, that there is no power in it? Would you say it avails nothing? Every one of those cannon balls does something. If it does nothing but split open the air, and plough up the earth, it does something. It is a tremendous force. So, if the Bible teaches the truth, every prayer that goes out of a good man’s heart, goes somewhere and hits something.

It is a power in this world. It has force and power, even if it misses the mark at which it is aimed; and no man is wise enough to track it and see what it does. The bullet goes out of sight through the woods. Sometimes it strikes an animal out of sight and kills it, sometimes, a man. A prayer goes out of the heart of a good man into the world; you don't know what it accomplishes; you can not follow its flight and see what is its effect; but you can believe that it avails much. When He to whom prayer is offered tells you that it is heard and that it avails much, can't you believe that? His eye can trace it when ours can not. So this matter of the force of prayer is, in the main, like everything else; sometimes, like the artillery fired in a great battle, or like a rifle shot, it strikes the mark and there is visible proof of its efficacy; and at other times it misses the mark, but strikes something else.

When the Apostle had laid down this great rule, had stated that the prayer of a good man avails much, he brought up as proof an instance in which it struck the mark in the very center. When we think of prayer answered in ancient times, we are apt to think that it was answered by miracles. This was often the case, but not always. If James had cited in proof a prayer answered by a miracle, we could say, That will not answer for our day. If that were his only proof, we would have to depend on his word without the example. He therefore goes back to past times, and selects a prayer the answer to which was no miracle at all. He says, "Elijah was a man of like passions with us" (being a prophet did not lift him above being a man, a man of passions just like ours, though, of course, his passions were held in restraint), "and he prayed fervently that it might not rain" (there are a great many prayers of that

kind among the farmers in our own day), "and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months." Did you ever inquire why Elijah offered the prayer that it might not rain? Not because it was raining too much; not because the river was overflowing; or the farmers wanted time to work—there was no such occasion for it. Why did he pray that it might not rain? It was a grand conception of his. The whole nation, under Ahab as king, and under the leadership of Jezebel, had deserted the living God, and so far as Elijah knew or believed, there was no man in all Israel but himself who worshiped the true God. The whole nation had drifted into idolatry.

The nation had not fallen into this base and false heathenism without the prayers and entreaties of many good men against it; but one by one the good men had been driven away, or died, so that he stood alone with all around him full of iniquity. Did he give up? Brethren, when a man has the right faith in God; when he knows he has God's truth; and when he is not a coward, that man is not going to give up; but he will have the spirit of Paul, who said, "Let God be true and every man a liar." That was the way with Elijah. What could be done? It entered the mind of Elijah, that if he could only have the power granted from God to hold back the rain for a year; and if necessary, another year; and if necessary, another year; and if necessary, another year; he would compel the people to see that Baal was no God; for all their prayers to Baal would not bring rain. He would compel them to see that Jehovah was the only God. So he prayed God for that power. That was an original conception; it was a grand conception, to ask God for such power, and for such a purpose.

When Elijah found (by some token, we don't know

what), that God had answered his prayer, he went boldly into the presence of Ahab, and cried out, "As the Lord God liveth, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Then he went away and hid himself. He knew that when the king and his people began to be pinched with hunger, if they could find him, they would catch him and try to choke out of him the word which would bring the rain. He went, as God told him, and hid himself by the brook Cherith, where ravens brought him food to eat. He stayed there until the brook ran dry, and then, seeing he could no longer get water there, for the ravens could not bring that in their claws, God told him to leave that place and go to a city called Zarephath. When he drew near to that place, he saw a woman come out of the gate and begin picking up sticks; and he said to her, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water, that I may drink." When she started to get it, he called again and said, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread." At this the woman turned back and said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the barrel and a little oil in the cruse; and I am gathering sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." "Fear not," Elijah said, "Go and do what thou hast said; but make me a little cake first, and bring it to me, and afterward make for thee and thy son. For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail till the day that God sendeth rain on the earth." She went and did as he told her. I wonder how many women in Louisville would do this—go and get the last morsel of meal and oil, and give it to the prophet, when she and her little boy were at the point of starvation. That woman did it, and it was because God

knew that she had it in her heart to do so, that He sent Elijah to her rather than to any one else. I presume He looked down from heaven and saw only that one woman who had such faith in Him.

How wonderful it was that she could keep the prophet hid. When the starving people found that she always had something to eat, they doubtless came to rob her; but she could say, See, here is my barrel, I emptied it this morning. Here is my cruse with no oil in it; turn it up and see. Thus she kept her secret, yet when the time came for the evening meal, there was a fresh supply. The prophet, in the meantime, was safely hid in the loft, and he stayed there till the three years and a half of famine had passed away.

Now brethren, what made that long drought? You are ready, perhaps, to say that it was a miracle. If it should stay dry three months in Kentucky, would that be a miracle? No. A whole year; is that a miracle? No. Another year? No. How long would it have to remain dry to turn a natural drought into a miracle? It was not a miracle, it was from natural causes. The rain cloud did not come up from the sea in the right direction for the wind to carry it over Palestine. The long continuance did not make it a miracle. Elijah *prayed* that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth until the prayer was changed.

At the end of three years and a half, God commanded the prophet to go and show himself to the king. I don't know whether Elijah had yet reached the conclusion that the prayer had answered its purpose, but he went and met the king, and said to him, "Gather together all the people on the top of Mt. Carmel." The king now obeys the prophet, and the people come together, and the four hundred prophets of Baal come with them. When they

had all assembled, Elijah appeared in their midst and cried with a loud voice, so he could be heard by all the assembly, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if Jehovah is God, follow him; if Baal is God, follow him." Not a man said a word. Why was this? Were they not convinced which was the true God? Had they not prayed to their God for three years for rain, and did they not know it was Elijah's God who held it back? It was because they were cowards. They were afraid. If they said, "Jehovah is God," there stood Ahab, and there was Jezebel, and there were the four hundred prophets of Baal; and if they said, "Baal is God," there was that old prophet, and he would not let it rain. So through cowardice they held their peace on both sides.

But Elijah would not be outdone; if the control of the rain had not satisfied them, he would try them with fire. "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Jehovah: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. They could say amen to that in advance without being afraid.

The trial was made. After the prophets of Baal had yelled and screamed for half a day, and cut themselves with knives, that the flowing blood might swell their excitement, it was clear that Baal could send no fire. Then Elijah prayed. His prayer was brief and simple, but fervent and pointed. He said: "O Jehovah, the God of

Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." The fire came down from heaven. It consumed the offering, the wood, the very stones of the altar. The people fell on their faces and cried out, "Jehovah is God." Then the prophets of Baal were killed, in compliance with the law of Moses, and in punishment of their hellish hypocrisy.

Elijah had now accomplished the purpose of his first prayer; that is, he had brought the people back to the God whom they had deserted. What a grand conception that was, and how great the good resulting from that prayer! Having brought the people back to God, he did not wish the drought to continue, so he went up to the top of Mt. Carmel and prayed again. He sat upon the ground, drew up his knees, clasped his hands around them, bowed his head between them, and prayed. He said to his servant, "Go up now; look toward the sea." When you climb to the highest point of that part of the mountain, you can look down upon a long line of the coast reaching southward toward Caesarea, with the wide expanse of water stretching away till it meets the sky in the dim distance. The servant came back and said he saw nothing. "Go again seven times." He went: and when he returned the seventh time, he said, "Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man's hand." Then Elijah sent word to the king to hasten away lest the rain should detain him. In a little while the heavens grew black with clouds, there was a great rain, and the earth yielded her fruits once more.

How did the rain come? If it had come without the

cloud, that would have been a miracle. If it had come from over the desert, that would have been a miracle. How *did* it come? The clouds came up from the sea, as every rain cloud does. The wind blew it eastward, and when it came in contact with cooler volumes of air, its vapor was condensed, and the rain fell. It came just as any other rain comes. It came in answer to prayer. It is not only true, then, that in a general way the fervent prayer of a good man avails much, but that sometimes it accomplishes the very thing for which it went forth out of the mind and heart. There are many thoughtful, observant Christians, prayerful men, who have seen things transpire so precisely in accordance with their prayers, that you can not convince them that their prayers are not answered. This ought to make us believe that every prayer rightly offered has been answered in some way, though in what way we may not be able to tell.

I want you now to notice a little more particularly some other matters in this text. James does not say that every prayer is answered. It is unfortunately true that many foolish prayers are offered up to God, many formal prayers are offered; many, because they do not start from the heart, never rise higher than the ceiling. Notice that Elijah prayed "fervently," and that it is the *fervent* prayer which availeth much—one that is warm, that is earnest, that comes out of the center of the heart. No other kind of prayer has the promise. Again, it is not the prayer of every *man* that avails much. "The supplication of a *righteous* man." You all realize that this is just as it should be. If you were sick, and thought you were going to die, and wanted the comfort of prayer at your bedside, would you send for some wicked neighbor, who sometimes prays when scared? Would you send for

some member of the church who barely keeps his place in it? You would not think of any such person. If you wanted some one to pray by your bedside, you would send for the very best man or woman you could reach, and you would not have any other, for you could have no confidence in the prayers of any but the righteous. That is the kind James speaks of. "The supplication of a *righteous* man avails much." That kind of a man is God's friend. That is the kind of a man God loves.

If God was a God who did not hear our prayers, or care anything about our prayers, He might as well be made of ice. He is a *living* God; a God who has friends, and loves His friends; and this is the reason that He will do something for them when they cry to Him. Don't think of God as mere abstraction, or as a being who keeps Himself beyond the sky; but think of Him as one who lives with you, who is round about you, who lays His hand under your head when you lie down to rest. So in praying, pray with the confidence of little children. One of the bitterest cries I ever heard of, came from one of the great historians of England, when he said, "I would give all I am and all I ever hope to be, for one hour of my childhood's faith, when I looked up at the sky and called it heaven." He had lost the simple faith of his early days, and could not get it back again. We are to believe that God is with us, that His eyes are upon us, and that He hears the prayers of His saints. Pray in the morning; pray at the noontide; pray when you lie down to sleep. There are some beautiful things even in false religions. In Mohammedan countries, when the morning begins to dawn there comes a scream from the minarets calling the people to prayer. When this cry is heard, all are expected to arise from sleep and pray. Then, when the sun begins to peep over the horizon, there

is heard again the call from the minaret, and every one is expected to pray again. Again at noon, again as the sun begins to dip behind the horizon, and again at dark. In old times these prayers were kept up; but unfortunately, while the cry is still heard, there is little attention paid to it, just as, in our country, the bells ring on Sunday morning calling people to prayer, and ring unheeded. Pray often; pray earnestly; and in order that your prayer may amount to anything, be righteous men and women. Walk humbly before God, and truly with the people, and your prayers will be heard.

SERMON XXIV.

BELIEVING A LIE.

MORNING SEPTEMBER 3, 1893.

In 2 Thessalonians, second chapter, tenth to twelfth verses, the apostle speaks of "Them that are perishing, because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

It is quite a popular idea that it makes very little if any difference in religious matters, what a man believes, so he is sincere in regard to it, and faithfully lives according to his belief; but while men thus think in regard to religion, no man has the same thought in regard to any other human interest. For instance, a man believes in the soundness and good management of a bank, when it is about to break: does any one think that the sincerity of his belief, backed up by large deposits and the purchase of large blocks of the stock, will make safe his investment? Does not everybody know that the more sincerely a man believes in such a bank, the worse it is for him? The hand of a young lady is sought by a designing man in whom she has the most unlimited confidence: will the sincerity of her faith in him prevent the life-long misery which he is sure to inflict if she marries him? The more sincerely she believes in him, the worse it is for her. The same is true of false beliefs in every

department of human life and interest. The same is true in matters of State, of science, and of war. False theories of government work evil continually; false theories in science are clogs in the way of knowledge; and the belief of a lie has caused the defeat of many a brave army and the sinking of many a gallant ship. Strange, then, if it is not so in matters pertaining to the soul. Strange if the belief of an error in religion is just as well as belief of the truth.

Paul was very far from entertaining this opinion. In the passage before us, he represents certain persons as perishing because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. He says, that "for his cause," that is, because they receive not the love of the truth, "God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie." He can not mean that God causes them to believe a lie by any direct exertion of His power; for He never interferes in that way for the injury of any human being; but that in the workings of His providence He allows those who do not love the truth to be worked upon by error, so that they shall believe a lie. And the result of this he declares to be, "that they all might be judged who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." He uses the word judged here, as in many other places, in the sense of being judged adversely, or being condemned. The result, then, of believing a lie, in the case under consideration, is not salvation, but condemnation; and that condemnation will be eternal, unless in the tender mercy of God it be forgiven before death intervenes. Notice, too, that he connects this belief of a lie with a failure to love the truth, and with taking pleasure in unrighteousness. It is but a natural consequence that the belief of a lie is injurious in some way; and especially that it leads away from the love of the truth, and from the paths

of right doing. Belief of the truth alone leads to love of the truth, and to the practice of righteousness which truth always demands.

Our Lord taught in person the same doctrine on this subject that is here taught by Paul. He said of the Pharisees, "They are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch." According to this, the blind guide will not escape falling into the ditch because he is blind; on the contrary, his blindness is the very cause of his falling in. So with the blind man who is guided by him. We know that this is literally true of the physically blind, and the Lord's purpose here is to teach that as it is with the physically blind, so it is with the mentally and spiritually blind. By the ditch into which they fall is meant the evil consequences into which misguidance naturally leads men in spiritual matters.

There is an incident in Old Testament history which I think must have been brought about, so far as God directed it, for the very purpose of illustrating this great lesson to us, as well as for teaching it to the generation in which it occurred. It is the incident of the young prophet from Judah, who was sent to rebuke the image-worship set up at Bethel by Jeroboam. Having established himself as king of the ten tribes after their revolt against Rehoboam, son of Solomon, he soon concluded that if his subjects should continue going to Jerusalem to worship, as the law required, and especially if they continued to attend the annual festivals, where all the twelve tribes were accustomed to meet in religious fellowship, they would eventually grow discontented with their divided state, and would kill him and return to their old allegiance under the house of David. To avoid this disaster, he made two calves of gold, set one up at Bethel, and the other at Dan, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to

go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." He was the first king of whom we read who set up a religion of his own to support the throne; but he has had a multitude of followers; for this is the real purpose of every State religion down to the present day. He also appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in imitation of the Feast of Tabernacles, which was held in Jerusalem on the same day of the seventh month; and on the first day of that feast he went up to his new altar to burn incense for the first time.

God was of course beholding these proceedings, and He sent a prophet out of Judah, who arrived in Bethel just in time to witness this first burning of incense. He made his way through the great crowd, close up to the king, who stood before the altar, and cried out, "O altar, altar, thus saith Jehovah: Behold, a child shall be born in Judah, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he sacrifice the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall they burn upon thee." And he gave a sign that these words should be fulfilled, saying, "Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out." The altar was immediately rent asunder, and the ashes, including the incense, I suppose, was spilt upon the ground. The king in great wrath put forth his hand, and exclaimed to those about him, "Lay hold on him." But the moment he uttered the words he felt a stiffening of his arm, and realized that he could not draw it back to his body. The bystanders saw this, and not one of them dared to lay hands on the prophet. The king's tune changes. He says to the man of God, "Intreat now the favor of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored". The prophet did so, and the hand was restored as suddenly

as it had been stiffened. The prophet is now a wonderful man in the eyes of the king. Wrath is turned into admiration, and he says, "Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward." What a surprise to the poor prophet! Invited to dine, and to receive a reward, yes, a royal dinner and a royal reward, where he had reason to expect only hatred and threats! How glad he would have been to go! What a feast he would have enjoyed, what a reward he would have received, and what honor he would have had in the eyes of the people! But he answered, "If thou wilt give me half thy house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread or drink water in this place: for so was it charged me by the word of God." He turned on his heel, and started home by a different road.

Now here is a man to be admired. He was so courageous that in obedience to the command of God he defied the power of the king; he was so free from ambition as to resist the flattering invitation of the king; and he was so unselfish as not to be influenced by the king's money. He was proof against fear of danger, against flattery, against avarice. And the way in which he resisted the temptations of flattery and avarice, is the more remarkable from the consideration that he certainly could not have seen a reason why he should not eat and drink there if he was hungry. Moreover, if he had been disposed to resort to pleas of expediency, he might have thought that the unexpected invitation of the king should be accepted as a step in the direction of gaining his good will and thereby winning him back to God. But with the plain command of God before him, he made no parly with expediency. Implicit and unquestioning obedience was evidently his rule of life. A man with such a rule may be a hero. A man without it never leaves the world better than he finds it.

In this same city of Bethel, almost under the shadow of Jeroboam's golden calf, we are told that there dwelt another prophet, an old one. He, of course, was opposed to this false worship; but he had consulted expediency, and had kept his mouth shut. One of his own sons had been in the crowd which assembled to witness the inauguration of the new altar; for the children *will* go to see the sights, especially if their fathers do not sternly restrain them. The son ran home when the young prophet had disappeared, and told his father all that had been said and done. Though too cowardly to act such a part himself, the old man was instantly fired with admiration for his daring fellow-prophet, and he felt that he must have him in his house to break bread with him: so he ordered his son to saddle the ass, and he hurried off to bring the prophet back. He found him dismounted, and sitting under the shade of an oak. Hurrying up to him, he said, "Come home with me and eat bread." The young man answered him as he had answered the king about eating and drinking in the place. But the old man was so eager to have him come that he made up a lie, and said to him, "I also am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake to me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water." This lie prevailed. The man who was proof against danger, against flattery, against avarice, was overcome by the plausibility of a lie. Notice, now, that it is not a *bad* man, but a brave and good man, who is thus overcome. Even such a man is not free from danger at this point. Many a man just as brave and true in many particulars, has been led to his own undoing by the belief of a lie.

No doubt the old man's table was spread with the best the house afforded, and the two were enjoying themselves

to the utmost when the Spirit of God came upon the old prophet and forced from his lips this solemn sentence: "Thus saith Jehovah: Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient to the mouth of Jehovah, and hast not kept the command which Jehovah thy God commanded thee, but hast come back, and eaten and drunk in this place, thy carcass shall not come to the sepulchre of thy fathers." The joyful feast ended in gloom. The young man departed with a sense of guilt weighing him down; and he wondered, no doubt, what mysterious fate was involved in the words which had come from the Lord. He was not long in finding out; for he had gone but a short distance toward home when he saw a lion rushing upon him. He sees the glare of the lion's eyes, he feels the powerful claws as they drag him to the ground; the horrid mouth of the beast is opened upon him, he feels the crushing in of his ribs, and then he feels and sees no more. What do you suppose was uppermost in his mind as his life was being crushed out of him? Was it the thought of the lion, or was it the thought of his sin? O brethren, what can be the thought of danger or pain when we are dying, compared with the thought that we are dying in sin? God grant that no one of us shall have such an experience.

The same day there came into the city from that road some men who said that they saw the strange sight of a lion standing by the side of a dead man, whom he had slain but had not eaten, and the man's ass standing by unharmed. The old prophet knew what it meant. He ordered out his ass once more, hastened down the road, found it as the men had said, brought the carcass home with him, and buried it in his own sepulchre. When the sad work was done, he said to his sons, "When I am dead, bury me in the sepulchre where the man of God is

buried; lay my bones by the side of his bones." This was a poor atonement for the ruin which his lie had wrought, but it was the best that he could do.

You can now see very plainly that this incident happened for a type, as Paul said of many other Old Testament incidents, and that it was written for our admonition. It was written to warn us against the belief of a lie. The fate of the young prophet cries out like the blast of a trumpet to startle us from our fancied security, and makes us look around to see if we, too, are in any such peril. Perhaps you are ready to say that the sin of the old prophet in this case was greater than that of the young one; and you think it strange that the less guilty was the one who perished. Well, there was an abundance of texts and incidents to show the sin of lying, and the evil consequences which must follow it; and nobody, either then or now, needed any particular instruction about the sin of the old prophet; but the world needed a lesson on the subject of believing a lie; so the young prophet was slain to teach this lesson, while the old man was left to God's ordinary method of dealing with liars. No doubt he got his deserts sooner or later. I think you will all agree with me that this very singular piece of inspired history confirms most strikingly, and illustrates most aptly the teaching of Paul and of Jesus on the subject of believing a lie—of being guided by blind guides.

Shall we think, then, that every man who believes a lie in regard to God's will shall perish? I think not. If a blind man is guided by another blind man along a smooth road, where there is no ditch, I don't think either of them will fall into a ditch. It is only when there is a ditch in the way that they will fall into it. So, if this young prophet had been told to do almost any thing else

than what he was told to do, we have no reason to think it would have been fatal. If, for example, the old prophet had said, An angel sent me to tell you to get from under this tree and run for your life, and not to stop until you get home, the young man would have been scared, and would have run himself out of breath; but the lion would not have killed him. In like manner, I can imagine a man believing some lies in religion, which, though they may injure him some, and I suppose there are very few that would not, might yet fall far short of proving fatal to him. I think that the doctrine of election as taught in the old creeds is false in the extreme; but I think that many a man has believed it all his life, and then gone to heaven when he died. What, then, is the distinction? It is to be traced out by remembering that there is only one thing that can keep men out of heaven, or keep them estranged from God in this life. That one thing is sin. Nothing else does or can stand between God and any man. If the belief of a lie, then, leads a man to commit sin, it will prove fatal unless that sin shall be forgiven. It was thus with the young prophet. The lie which he believed led him to disobey God. His disobedience was the immediate cause, while the belief of a lie was only the remote cause of his death.

In view of the solemn lesson now before us, taught both in the Old Testament and in the New, it becomes a question of transcendent importance, How shall we be sure that we are not believing lies; that we are not being led by blind guides? This last-named figure of speech may help us to an answer. If I am a blind man myself, I should have more sense than to let another blind man guide me. He may guide me a little way and not lead me into a ditch; but when I start to follow his guidance, I can not know but that the second step I take will be a sudden plunge

into a ditch from which I can not get out. I must, then, take pains to let no one guide me but those who can see. But how can I determine who among all those proposing to guide me in religious matters are the men who can see—who are not blind men? I answer, there is one set of men, and only one, whom we can trust implicitly. We know that they are not blind: I mean the Lord Jesus and his apostles. We have their written instructions on the way of life, and they are not so voluminous or so obscure as to be unintelligible in regard to what is sinful. We may be in doubt, as we study them, over many questions of history and of exegesis, but rarely can we be in the least suspense, if we have a willing heart, as to what is sinful. Having found this, we ought to be able, and we shall be, to prevent any man from leading us into such error as shall cause us to commit sin—sin of omission or sin of commission.

I suppose, that in the actual experiences of life, we seldom encounter a severer trial than did the young prophet of whom we have said so much. The lie which deceived him was told by a prophet, and told as coming from God through an angel. It would seem at first glance, that he could scarcely have failed to believe it; that he could scarcely be blamed for believing it. His respect for the prophetic order to which he himself belonged, and his confidence in the veracity of the holy angels, seemed to require him to believe the story. Why, then, was he censured for believing it? The answer is at hand. He knew that a prophet told him to eat and drink in Bethel; he knew that if the prophet told the truth, an angel had commanded him to do so; but he also knew, beyond a doubt, that God Himself had told him not to eat and drink in that place. His obvious duty, then, was to answer the old prophet according to

this knowledge. He should have said to him, I suppose that you are a prophet, as you claim to be; it is possible, as you say, that an angel has sent you with this message; all this may be, or it may not be; but one thing is absolutely certain, and that is, that God has commanded me not to eat or drink in your city, and I will obey Him, even if all the prophets on earth and all the angels in heaven, were to countermand His order. Such a determination to obey God at all hazards, would have saved him from sin, and from an untimely death. It is just such faith as this that is enjoined in the New Testament. Paul says, in one of his outbursts of eloquence, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." And again he says, to some to whom he had preached the gospel: "Though we, or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema." He says this, and lest any man might think he had gone too far, or was speaking at random, he immediately repeats it. He was speaking of men who were perverting the gospel, and were thus making it a different gospel. They of course claimed to be preaching the true gospel, and this was the lie that they were propagating. This warning is found in the first chapter of the epistle to the Galatians, and farther on in the same epistle we find that some of the Galatians had believed the lie, and that in consequence, they had become alienated from Paul; they had come to regard him as an enemy; and they were desiring to go back under the law, where Christ would profit them nothing. They knew very well what Paul had taught on the subject, but, deceived by blind guides who had come among them, they were knowingly departing from Paul's teaching. These blind guides did not die without leaving a progeny behind them. Ever since their day, and even in ours, there have been teachers who

knew more than Paul did, who could criticise Paul and tell wherein he made mistakes in his teaching, or taught things not adapted to a more enlightened age. Some of the breed, both male and female, are still alive, and you will do well to steer clear of them if you would guide your own barque in safety. All sorts of doctrines are being taught by all sorts of men and women; and it becomes a man who wishes ever to please God, to keep his head level, and his eye fixed on the plain teachings of the Lord and the apostles, if he would not believe a lie and be condemned.

In the next place, let me say that there is one lie which has been propagated wherever the gospel has been preached, and more industriously, perhaps, than any other. It has also proved more fatal, at least in Christian lands, than any other lie that I can think of. It is the lie constantly palmed off on sinners, "There is time enough yet." It comes from the father of lies; it bids a man to neglect his surrender to Christ, to continue in sin, and to flatter himself that in so doing he is neither doing himself injury at present, nor endangering his eternal welfare. Under this fatal delusion, men and women are dying by the thousands without God and without hope. Have any of you been victims of it? I doubt not that you have. I beg you now to cast aside this fateful falsehood, and take into your mind the unquestionable fact, that if you are to prepare your sinful soul for dwelling with God and angels, you have not a moment to lose. You know this very well, when you stop to think. It is only in your unthoughtful moments that you believe, or try to believe, the lie.

It is in the *neglect* of duty, rather than in overt acts of sin, that the belief of this lie, and of some others, shows its most baneful effects. How many there are,

among even those who have made a surrender to the Lord, who still neglect important duties from day to day, under the delusion that it is a small matter to do this for a while, and that there is time enough yet in which to become punctilious servants of the Lord! And then, there are certain views entertained and propagated among believers themselves, the inevitable effect of which, if not their intended effect, is to breed a neglect of our duties. There are theories, for instance, in regard to the first act of consecration required of a penitent sinner, the ordinance of baptism, which have this effect. We are told, again and again, that baptism is nothing but an external ordinance which can not be a matter of great importance in a spiritual religion; and that, therefore, it may be neglected, or changed in form, without peril. If we insist upon its strict observance, we are called ritualists or something else that is supposed to be a reproach to us; and if we exhort men, as Peter did, to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, we are charged with teaching salvation by water. Now the whole effect of this teaching, or rather this railing, is to discourage the observance of that solemn ordinance of which even under John's administration of it, our Lord himself said: "The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, not being baptized by him." The belief of any lie leading men to neglect this ordinance, is the more likely to be fatal from this fact that the forgiveness of all our past sins is connected with it; and, if, in the neglect of it, we are saved at all, it will be because, for reasons which God has not revealed to us, he shall both forgive these sins in the absence of one of the conditions which he has prescribed, and also forgive the neglect of that condition. Who is willing to risk his soul on an uncertainty like that? I trust that none of you who hear me to-day will think of

it for a moment. I beg of you to cast aside the fatal delusion that there is time enough for you to surrender to the authority of your Lord, and any delusion which may have been palmed off upon you in regard to the importance of prompt obedience in that ordinance which stands between you and the forgiveness of your many sins. Let not a day pass over your heads till, with a penitent soul, you are buried with Christ in baptism, and shall have risen to walk with him in a new life.



1227
11

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 566 825 5