

Spurgeon Sermons on Exodus

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Exodus 3:6 The Two Pivots

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I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Exodus 3:6.

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. --Hebrews 11:16.

YOU recollect, dear friends, that Paul is writing to the Hebrews concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he says, "God is not ashamed to be called their God." Then, when you turn back to our text in Exodus, you find that God was called their God at the burning bush; and, oftentimes, on other occasions, he is called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. We must not forget that, at the time when God appeared to Moses, in the desert, in the bush that burned, but was not consumed, the condition of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was very terrible. They were slaves to the Egyptians; they were an oppressed and downtrodden race; their male children were taken from them, and cast into the river. They were entirely in Pharaoh's hands. They were a degraded people, as all slaves gradually become; and they were unable, of themselves, to rise out of that degradation; yet, at that very time, God was not ashamed to be called their God. There, with Israel in bondage, Jehovah, whose name is the great I AM,--a name which makes all heaven bright with ineffable glory,--did not disdain to say to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." I do not wonder that the apostle should note it, as a remarkable thing, that he was not ashamed to be called their God.

I have been looking into this text very earnestly, and trying to find out exactly what was the meaning of the Holy Spirit in it; and I think I have discovered a due in two words which it contains; first, "Wherefore": "Wherefore God is not ashamed. to be called their God;"--and next, "for": "For he hath prepared for them a city." As a door hangs upon two hinges, so my golden text turns upon these two pivots, "wherefore" and "for."

I. I shall ask you to keep your Bibles open at the 11th of Hebrews, that you may see, first, "Wherefore" it is that God is not ashamed to be called the God of his people. Look at the 18th verse: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" and so on. "Wherefore God. is not ashamed to be called their God."

To begin with, ther., the Lord was not ashamed to be called his people's God because they had faith in him. You read here of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and then Paul says, "These all died in faith." If a man believes in God, trusts him,--believes that his promise is true, and that he will keep it,--believes that God's command is right, and therefore ought to be obeyed,--God is never ashamed to be called that man's God. He is not the God of unbelievers, for they act contrary to his will. They set up their own will in opposition to his; many of them even doubt his existence, they deny his power, they distrust his love; wherefore, he is not called their God; but when a man comes to trust God, and to accept his Word, from that moment God sees in that man the work of his grace, which is very precious in his eyes, and he is not ashamed to be called that man's God.

Notice that it is said, "These all died in faith," so that they did not believe in God for a little while, and then become unbelievers; but, throughout the whole of their lives, from the moment when they were called by God's grace, they continued to believe him, they trusted him till they came to their graves; so that this epitaph is written over the mausoleum where they all lie asleep, "These all died in faith." Ah! my beloved brother's and sisters, it is very easy to say, "I believe," and to get very enthusiastic over the notion that we have believed; but so to believe as to persevere to the end,--this is the faith which will save the soul. "He that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved." The faith that many waters cannot drown and the fiercest fires cannot burn,--the faith that plods on throughout a long and weary life,--the faith that labors on, doing whatever service God appoints it,--the faith that waits patiently, expecting the time when every promise of God shall be fulfilled to the letter when its hour has come,--that is the faith which, if it be in a man, makes him such a man that God is not ashamed to be called his God. I put it to every one of you, have 'you a faith that will

hold on and hold out,--not a faith that starts with a fine spurt, but a faith that runs from the starting-place to the goal? Some of you, I know, have believed in God these twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty years. Just before I came to this service, I stood by the bedside of a dear brother who is the nearest to Job of any man I ever saw, for he is covered from head to foot with sore blains; I might almost say, "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores;" and yet he is as happy as anyone among us, joyful and cheerful as he talks about the time when he shall be "with Christ, which is far better." Oh, that is the faith we want! "These all died in faith," "wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." He is not the God of apostates, for he hath said, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." If he has put his hand to the plough, and looks back, he is not worthy of the kingdom. It is the man who steadily, and perseveringly, resting in his God, and believing him against all that may be said by God's foes, holds on until he sees the King in his beauty in the land which is very far off. Of such a man it may be truly said that God is not ashamed to be called his God.

Now let us come back to the Scripture; we cannot do better than keep close to it, for our text is only to be understood by the context. Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. The locks of Scripture are only to be opened with the keys of Scripture; and there is no lock in the whole Bible, which God meant us to open, without a key to fit it somewhere in the Bible, and we are to search for it until we find it. Now read on in the 18th verse: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises." That is to say, the things that God promised to them, he did not give them in their mortal life, and they did not always expect that he would do so. They were a waiting people. God loves those who are like himself; I am not now speaking of his love of benevolence, for with that love he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, but I am speaking of the love of complacency, which makes him not ashamed to be called our God. In that sense, God loves those who are like himself, and God is a waiting God; he is never in a hurry. How wondrous is the leisure of the Eternal! When he is coming to help his people, he is quick indeed: "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." But, oftentimes, he waits and tarries till some men count it slackness; but he does not reckon time as we do. With God, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. So, being himself a waiting God, he loves a waiting people; he loves a man who can take the promise, and say, "I believe it; it may never be fulfilled to me in this life, but I do not want that it should be. I am perfectly willing that it should be fulfilled when God intends that it should be." Abraham saw Christ's day afar off, but he never saw Christ; yet he rejoiced in the promise of which he did not receive the fulfillment. Isaac did not see Christ, except in a vision of the things that were long afterwards to come to pass. Jacob did not hear that joyful sound, which--

**Kings and prophets waited for,
And sought, but never found.**

But they were perfectly willing to wait, and God was not ashamed to be called the God of such a waiting people. You remember Mr. Bunyan's description of the two children, Passion and Patience. Passion would have his best things now, and he had them; but he soon spoiled them, misused them, and abused them. But Patience would have his best things last; and, as Bunyan very prettily says, "There is nothing to come after the last." Therefore, when Patience got his best things, they lasted on for ever and for ever. God loves not the passion, but he loves the patience. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it;" and I would fain imitate him. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." The worldly man lives in the present; but that is a poor way of living, worthy only of the beasts that perish. Look on the sheep and bullocks in the pasture; what kind of life is theirs? They also live in the present. If they have grass enough for to-day, they are perfectly satisfied. The butcher's knife has no terrors for them; neither do they, in the cold of winter, look forward to the bright days of summer. They cannot look before them; and God loves not men who are like the beasts of the field, he is ashamed to be called their God. But he loves the man who gets to live in eternity, for God himself lives there. To God, there is no past, present, or future; he sees all at a single glance. And when a man comes to feel that he is not living simply in to-day which will so soon end, but that he is living in the eternity which will never end, when he is rejoicing in the covenant, "ordered, in all things, and sure," made from before the foundation of the world,--when a man feels that he is living in the future as well as the present, that his vast estates are on the other side of Jordan, that his chief joy is up there where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and that his own heart has gone up there where his treasure is, for "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," --when the affection is set, not upon things below, but upon things above,--that is the man whom God loves, because he has learned how to live in God's atmosphere, in God's own eternity. He has risen above the beggarly elements of time and space. He is not circumscribed by Almanacks, and days, and months, and years; his thoughts range right away from that glorious declaration, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," to those endless, dateless periods when still the everlasting love of God shall be the constant delight of his people.

I see, then, why it is written that "God, is not ashamed to be called their God," because they are content to live without having received the promises, but to keep on patiently waiting, with a holy, joyful confidence, till the hour of God's gracious purpose shall arrive, and the promise shall be fulfilled.

Now read on in the 18th verse, and see whether this description fits yourself, dear friend: "But having seen them afar off." So they were a far-seeing people. God, you know, sees everything; and he loves people who can see afar off. The gods of the heathen have eyes, but they see not; and the psalmist says, "They that make them are like unto them." So they that worship a blind god are a blind people; but they that worship a seeing God, are themselves made to see, for they are numbered with the pure in heart who shall see God. It is a grand thing when a man can see infinitely further than these poor eyes can carry, and far beyond the range of

the strongest telescope, when he can see beyond death,--and see beyond the judgment-seat, and see right into heaven, and there behold the Lamb leading his glorified flock to the living fountains of waters, and the saints, with tearless eyes, for ever bowing before the throne of God and the Lamb. God is not ashamed to be called. the God of the people who can do this. God is ashamed to be called the God of you blind people, whose eyes have never been opened; but when he opens your eyes, then he becomes your God, and he is not ashamed to be so called., for he it is that gives us this blessed power to see. Until spiritual sight is thus bestowed upon us, we are blind; but when God has given us sight, then he is not ashamed, to own us as his children, nor is he ashamed to own that he himself is our God.

I appeal to you whom I am now addressing, and ask whether you can see God's promises afar off? There are some who say, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Yes, it may be so with the poor birds that sing here; but, for my part, I am willing to wait till I can have the one in the bush, if it is in the bush that burned. with fire because God was there. You may have the bird in the hand, if you will. You will soon pluck off its feathers; it will speedily die in your hand, and there will come an end to it; but there are other birds which, as yet, we cannot reach, but which are really ours; and if we cannot at present grasp them, we are willing to wait God's time, because we can see that they will be in our hands in the future, we can already see them "afar off." Unhappy is the man who sees nothing but what he calls "the main chance," or who sees nothing but that which is within a few feet of him. Wretched indeed is he who lives only to get money, or to gain. honor,--whose whole life is spent in the pursuit of personal comfort, but who never had his eye opened enough to see the things eternal, and who never was able to set a value upon anything but what could be paid for with pounds, shillings, and pence. Beloved, have you seen the promises afar off? Has the Lord opened, your eyes to see eternal things? Then it is written concerning you also, "Wherefore God is not ashamed, to be called their God."

Now pass on to the next sentence, for every word is fruitful with meaning: "and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." They were people who rejoiced in things unseen. You will find that, in the Revised Version, the words "persuaded of them" are left out, and very properly so, for there is no doubt whatever that they were not in the original, but were added by somebody who wished to explain the meaning to us. The Greek is properly rendered, "but having seen them afar off, greeted them;" but I like, even better, the translation "embraced them." It means that, as for the things which are promised to us, if we are believers, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we have, from afar, seen those promised things, and we have welcomed them; or, to use our Authorized Version, we have "embraced them." We have pressed them to our bosom, we have hugged them to our heart, we have loved them in our very soul, we have rejoiced in them; they have filled our spiritual nature full of music, and all the bells of our being are ringing merry peals because of the blessed promises of our God.

Now, when a man is of that mind, God is not ashamed to be called his God. Let me, then, ask you, dear friend,--What is it that you are embracing? Is it some earthly thing? Does your heart love and cling to that which you can see, and touch, and. handle? Is that your chief delight? Then God is ashamed to be called your God, because you are an idolater; you are worshipping some created thing. But if you can say of Christ, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire," then God is not ashamed to be called your God. Remember what David said: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart;" for God is able to give to a man his desires when all his heart is delighting in his God; and God is not ashamed to be called his God. The Lord's love is not set upon merely material objects; the infinite heart of God loves truth, and righteousness, and purity, and everything that is holy and glorious. And if your heart does the same, God is not ashamed to be called your God; but if you do not love these things, you have neither part nor lot in God, but you are a stranger to him: and, though I speak this solemn truth in gentle language, I pray that it may drop like caustic upon your spirit, and burn its way into your very soul. What an awful thing it must be to be without God,--to have no part nor lot in him,--never to be able to say, "My God, my Father," but only to speak of him as a God,--an unknown God, another man's God, but no God to you! Nay it not be so with you, brethren! If you can say that you have seen the promises from afar, and have by faith embraced them, then God is not ashamed to be called your God.

Pass on to the next sentence: "and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They owned that they were not at home here. Abraham never built a house; Isaac never lived anywhere but in a tent; and though Jacob tried to dwell in a settled habitation, he got into trouble through it, and he was bound still to be a tent-dweller. The reason why they live in tents was because they wanted to show to all around them that they did not belong to that country. There were great cities with walls which, as men said, reached to heaven; but they did not go to dwell in those cities. You remember that Lot did, yet he was glad enough to get out again,—"saved, yet so as by fire;" but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob kept away from other men, for they were commanded to dwell alone, and not to be numbered among the nations. Nor were they; they kept themselves apart from other people as strangers and sojourners here below, so, for that very reason, God is not ashamed to be called their God. Remember how David says to the Lord, "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." That is a very singular expression: "a stranger saith thee;"--blessed be God, not "a stranger to thee;" but, "a stranger with thee." That is to say, God is a stranger here; it is his own world, and he made it; but when Christ, who is the Son of God, and the Creator of the world, came into it, "he came unto his own, and his own received him not;" and they soon made him feel that the only treatment which he would receive at their hands was this: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." There was no man, who ever lived, who was a truer man than was Christ the Lord; but there never was a man who was more unlike the rest of men. He was a homely man, a home-loving man, to the

last degree; yet he was never at home. This world was not his rest; he had nowhere even to lay his head; and what was true naturally, was also true spiritually. This world offered Christ no rest whatever. Now, dear friends, how is it with us? Do we belong to this world, or to the unseen? How do you feel about this matter? Do you feel at home here? I think that, often, we are compelled to cry, with the psalmist, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" We wish to do good to others as far as we can; we are men of peace, but when we speak, they are for war; and we realize the truth of our Lord's words, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." The more a man comes right straight out for God, the more opposition he is sure to meet with. He half-asleep, and nobody will say much against you; but wake up, and be active for God, and for his Christ, and you will soon discover that the seed of the serpent has the serpent's venom in it still, and it hates the seed of the woman as much as ever it did. It must be so; therefore always feel that you are only a stranger here, and that your business is to go through this world, as a traveler passes through a foreign country. He does not speak the language of the people, he does not follow their customs, he is not one of the citizens of the land; he is just a temporary dweller here below, and he is on his journey home. If that is the kind of man you are, God is not ashamed to be called your God; but he is not the God of the earthworms that only want to burrow down into the soil. He is not the God of those who build their nests, and say, "Here would we live for ever." He is not the God of the man who can say, "Give me a knife and fork, and plenty to eat and drink; give me suitable clothes to wear in the day, and a nice soft bed to sleep on at night; give me wealth, give me fame; that is all I want, and I will let heaven go to anyone who wants it." Jehovah is not the God of Esau, who sells his birthright for a mess of pottage; but he is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who have a heritage that they cannot see, and who count the land in which they dwell to be a place of strangers and of sojourners; and they think of themselves as only strangers and sojourners in it.

Now read on a little further: "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." The word translated "country" might, I think be better rendered. "fatherland." "They who say that they are strangers here declare plainly that they seek a fatherland." The word is sometimes translated "their own country." "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country." It is the same word here in the Greek. It signifies that they sought their own country,--their fatherland. Wherefore, God, who is the Father of all his people, and whose heaven is their fatherland, is not ashamed to be called their God. Now, dear friends, are you seeking a fatherland? I put the question to every hearer here,--Are you looking for a fatherland? Sir Walter Scott wrote,-

**Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?**

So said the patriot poet, and we have said it, too, for we are patriots; but yet I venture to say that this is not my home, this is not my fatherland.

**I'm but a stranger here;
Heaven is my home.**

My fatherland lies out of sight, beyond the everlasting hills, where God dwells, and where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. Now, the men who, by grace, have been brought to say this, "We are out of our own country, we are seeking a fatherland," these are the people of whom it is written, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

Paul goes on to say, "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." Brethren, this is another characteristic of believers, we have left the world as our home, and joy, and comfort, to seek a better country; but we may go back if we like. There is no compulsion to keep a man a Christian, but the compulsion of love. He who is enlisted in the army of Christ may desert if he pleases, but the blessed grace of God will hold us so that we shall do no such thing. We have plenty of opportunities to return. Oh, how many invite us to turn back! I know how they beckon some of you who have lately come out on the Lord's side. Sometimes it is a female voice that would charm you, and there is a great fascination about it, and you have to mind what you are doing lest you become unequally yoked together. Sometimes it is the voice of the world promising you wealth,--offering you a better situation, perhaps, if you will go back; but, like Noses, you esteem "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." You have plenty of opportunities to return. There are back entrances to Satan's Kingdom; he does not ask you to come in at the front door, he lets you sneak in again by the back gate. If you want to go into slavery again, there are many opportunities of returning; but if you are made by Christ to be, in this respect, like God, immutable, so that you say, "I cannot turn; I cannot change; I must be what Christ has made me; I must stand fast for truth and for holiness, and stand fast as long as I live, so help me, my God," --if you are able to talk like that, then God is not ashamed to be called your God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you can get back to the old country whenever you like. But they never will go back; the deep dividing river rolls between them and that land, even as, to-day, there rolls between some of us and the world the stream in which we have been buried with Christ, and, by God's grace, we shall never cross it again; and, because of that holy determination,

God is not ashamed to be called our God.

I finish up my remarks upon the word "wherefore," which is very full of matter, by noticing how the apostle says, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." That is to say, instead of going back, we are pressing forward towards heavenly things. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "The Father seeketh such to worship him." That is, those who are spiritual, who are seeking after heavenly things with all their heart, these are they whom God loves, for God is spiritual; God is heavenly; and when he has made us spiritual, and made us pant after heavenly things, then he is not ashamed to be called our God.

I have put these points before you as briefly as I could, wishing every moment to be examining myself, and asking you to examine yourselves. Have you a life within you which makes you pant and pine after heavenly things? Whatever you have in this world, do you hold it with a loose hand? Do you feel that it is not your real riches,--it is not your true treasure? You know that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all rich men. God blessed them, and gave them a great increase to all that they had; but, still, they did not live simply to gather riches; they did not make them their chief delight. If you had asked them, they would have told you that they were inheritors of a mysterious covenant, by which God had bound himself to be their God, and the God of their seed; and in that covenant was included the promise that Christ himself should come out of their loins, and for him they waited, and he was the hope of their spirit. Now, dear friends, if that be the ease with you also, you can understand the meaning of my text, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

II. I must give but a few minutes to the second part of the text, yet; it wants a good deal of thought, for it says, "for he hath prepared for them a city." The second pivot-word is "for."

Now go back again to the text in Exodus, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Yet Paul says, "These all died;" and we know that our Lord said to the Sadducees, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Is he not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, seeing that they all died? No; because they are not dead, though they died, "for he hath prepared, for them a city." These men, though they lived, and died, and passed out of the world without having received the heritage, are not dead. There is the glory of the matter. When they lay a-dying, the devil might have come, and said to them, "Now, what have you got by your covenant with God? You left father, and mother, and everything that you had, and went and lived the separated life, and now you are dying out here; what have you got? Nothing but some little holes in the Cave of Machpelah, into which they will push your bodies; that is all that you have got." Oh, but the devil does not know; or if he does, he is a liar, for they gained everything by that life of faith, for they still live, and God has prepared for them a city. They have entered that city now. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are at the very head of the celestial company, for our Lord said, "Many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." And, by-and-by, Machpelah shall yield up her dead; and Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Jacob shall live again in the fullest sense, for their bodies as well as their souls shall live again; and Joseph's bones, which he would not suffer to lie in Egypt, --for he would not let the Egyptians have a scrap of him,--shall live; --and thus, in their flesh, shall they see God, and shall rejoice before him. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called the God of these people who all died in faith, because they are still living, and they shall continue to live for ever and ever.

Somebody may perhaps say that these people did not receive the promises. Well, they did not literally receive the fulfillment of them. They did not see Christ; they did not witness the descent of the Holy Ghost; they did not hear the gospel preached. They did not see those wonders that they looked for, so is not God ashamed. to be called the God of people who did not receive the promises after all? No, because "he hath prepared for them a city." They have received the promises now; and they shall receive them yet more and more. God will yet cause the believer's life to be all blessing. Do not be afraid of the consequences of trusting in Christ; you may have the rough side of the road here; but what we sang, just now, is quite true,--

Afflictions may press me, they cannot destroy,
One glimpse of his love turns them all into joy;
And the bitterest tears, if he smile but on them,
Like dew in the sunshine, grow diamond and gem.

Let doubt, then, and danger my progress oppose,
They only make heaven more sweet at the close:
Come joy or come sorrow, whate'er may befall,
An hour with my God will make up for them all.

If God gave to his children here gall and wormwood to drink,--ay, if they never had anything but aches and pains from the moment of their conversion till they died, yet they would have the best of the bargain, after all, for there is an eternity of bliss in the heaven which is prepared for them.

But, further, these people were a sort of gypsies, always moving about, and living in tents, different from everybody else. Yes, they were strangers among the people where they dwelt; and men often say of us now, that we cannot be content to go on as other people do. Those patriarchs were strangers, odd folk, peculiar people. Is not God ashamed to be called their God? No; because, now, they have gone where they are all right, for their manners and customs are exactly suitable to the place. A very dear old woman, whom I visited when she was dying, said to me, "One thing comforts me, sir, I do not think that God will ever send me

among the wicked, for I never could get on in their company. The best times I have ever had were when I could sit with a few of the Lord's people, and hear them talk about him; and though I could not always be sure that I was myself a Christian, yet I was very like them, and I was very happy when I was with them. I think I shall go to my own company, sir." Yes, dear soul, and so she did; and if we are strangers here, we are going to that company where we shall not be at all strangers. They will understand our language when once we get across the river into the King's own country. "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God," because they speak the language which he speaks, the language of his own courts; and he is not ashamed to say, "These are my people, and I own them before you all."

Notice, yet again, that these people were seekers and desirers all their lives: "They seek a country;" "they desire a better country." Is this a right state of heart for a Christian, --to be always seeking and always desiring? Well, brethren, that is the state in which I often am, and I wish still to keep in that condition,--always seeking, always desiring. whenever God gives me any spiritual blessing, I always seek some more; and if he gives me more, I seek for more still. And if he gives me my heart's desire, I pray him to enlarge my heart, that I may desire some greater boon. For, in spiritual things, we may be as covetous as ever we like; and we may say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And God is not ashamed to be called the God of those who are thus seeking and desiring, because he has laid up for them all that they seek, and he has prepared for them all that they desire. I should be ashamed to set a poor person desiring if I could not gratify the desire; I should be ashamed to set a man seeking if I knew that he could not get what he sought after; but because God has prepared a city for these seekers and desirers, he is not ashamed to be called their God. As I stood, this evening, by the bedside of the dear brother whom I mentioned to you, a little while ago, I could not help saying, "Here is a poor soul covered with boils and blains, but God is not ashamed to be called his God." And there may be a child of God who is very poor indeed, with hardly sufficient garments to cover him, but God is not ashamed to be called his God. Perhaps his own brother is ashamed to be called his brother; I have even known cases where men have been so wicked as to be ashamed of their own parents, because they were not so well off as themselves; but God is never ashamed of his poor people. Ay, and if God's people are persecuted, and ill-used, if they are covered with mud from head to foot, or if they are cast into prison, God is not ashamed to be called their God. In those days when God permitted his people to be fastened up to the cross, or when others were taken to the stake and burnt, and everybody hissed at them, and cast out their name as evil, and said that they wore the offscouring of all things; God was not ashamed to be called their God. I am almost ashamed to say what I am going to say; I really feel my very heart blush that I should have to say it. I have known some professors who have been ashamed to call God their God. Is it not strange that the glorious God of heaven and earth should call a worm his own, and take mean wretches such as we are, and say, "I am not ashamed to be called their God," and yet that some of these creatures should be so miserably cowardly that they are ashamed to be called the people of God? Oh, write his name on your foreheads! Never be ashamed of it. Ashamed of God? Ashamed of Jesus? Ashamed of the truth? Ashamed of righteousness? I do not wonder that there is such a text as this,--"The fearful" --that is the cowardly --"and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." If you really do love the Lord, come out, and show yourself on his side; and if he is not ashamed of you, and if your prayer be, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," own him as your Lord and Savior now. You who are not members of any Christian church,--you who have believed in Christ, or think you have, and yet have never confessed him,--you who are hiding like rats behind the wainscot, come out, and confess Christ. What are you at? How can you be soldiers of the cross, and followers of the Lamb, if you fear to own his cause, and blush to speak his name? Come out of your hiding-places! May God the Holy Spirit draw or drive you out at once! If anything could do it, surely, it should be such a blessed fact as this, that you are numbered amongst those of whom it is said that "God is not ashamed to be called their God."

God bless you, dear friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"--854, 847, 848

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Exodus 2:23-25, 3:9-10
ISRAEL'S CRY AND GOD'S ANSWER

NO. 2631

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 16TH, 1899,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

“And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them... Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” Exodus 2:23-25; and Exodus 3:9, 10.

GOD had chosen the children of Israel, and he had determined to make of them a great nation and a peculiar people, to whom he could communicate the law and the testimony, that they might keep the heavenly lamp burning until Christ should come. Jacob and his family had gone down into Egypt, and for a long time they and their descendants were very happy there. The land of Goshen was very fruitful, and the Israelites were greatly favored by the Egyptian king. The mass of them, therefore, had little thought of ever leaving that country; they resolved that they would settle there permanently. In fact, though God would not have it so, they became Egyptians as far as they could. They were a part of the Egyptian nation, they began to forget their separate origin; and, in all probability, if they had been left to themselves, they would have been melted and absorbed into the Egyptian race, and lost their identity as God's special people. They were content to be in Egypt, and they were quite willing to be Egyptianized. To a large degree, they began to adopt the superstitions, and idolatries, and iniquities of Egypt; and these things clung to them, in after years, to such a terrible extent that we can easily imagine that their heart must have turned aside very much towards the sins of Egypt. Yet, all the while, God was resolved to bring them out of that evil connection. They must be a separated people; they could not be Egyptians, nor yet live permanently like Egyptians, for Jehovah had chosen them for himself, and he meant to make an abiding difference between Israel and Egypt.

Now see the parallel. God still has a people whom he has chosen to be his own in a very peculiar sense, but they are at present mixed up with the world. They are in the world, and they are, at least in appearance, of the world; they are as fond of sin, and as much slaves to sin, as others are. They even love the world, and the things of it, and many of them are quite happy where they are, and have no wish whatever to become a part of the separated people, set apart unto the Lord. They would rather remain still in the world; but God will bring his redeemed out from the rest of mankind. He that bought them with blood will deliver them by power. Christ did not offer his atonement in vain, but “he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” God will yet call every one of his sons and daughters out of Egypt, even as he called his Firstborn; and he will bring his chosen out of the midst of the people among whom they are sojourning until the time appointed for their emancipation.

The first thing to be done with the Israelites was to cause them to be anxious to come out of Egypt, for it is not God's way to make men his servants, except so far as they willingly yield themselves to him. He never violates the human will, though he constantly and effectually influences it. Jehovah wants not slaves to grace his throne; and, therefore, God would not have the people dragged out of Egypt, or driven out in fetters, against their own glad consent. He must bring them out in such a way that they would be willing to come out, so that they would march forth with joy and delight, being thoroughly weary and sick of old Egypt, and therefore rejoicing to get away from it. How was this to be done? It was accomplished by a new king coming up, who knew not Joseph and his eminent services, and this Pharaoh began to be jealous of the people, fearing that, some day, when Egypt was at war, Israel might turn and side with the Egyptians' enemies. He looked upon the people, therefore, as being a great danger, and determined, if he could, to thin their ranks. Hence, he issued the barbarous edict to slay all the male children; and, to break their spirit effectually, he put them to hard labor in making bricks, and erecting vast structures, so that the treasure cities of Egypt and peradventure some of her huge pyramids were built by the unpaid labors of Israelitish slaves. The whip fell often and heavily upon their backs, for they were put under brutal taskmasters, who beat them most shamefully. They had no rest, they had to toil on and on and on, and scarcely had bread enough to eat to keep body and soul together. At last, the yoke of bondage became altogether intolerable; and then, as we have it in the first part of our text,

“The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.” I want to use this subject in showing to any here, who are in soultrouble, and do not understand why they have such sorrows and distress, that God is seeking to make them sick of the world, and sick of sin, and therefore he is putting them into a condition of spiritual bondage so that they may be willing to come out of Egypt; yea, that they may, by-and-by, with the utmost joy and gladness, leave the land of their captivity.

I. The first thing I have to speak about is, The Cry Of Misery;

“The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning.”

Notice, first, that they began to sigh, and to cry, because their time of prosperity had passed. The land of Goshen might still be very fruitful, but their taskmasters devoured their substance. The country might be fair to look upon, but they had no time to enjoy the prospect. They were worked well-nigh to death, and they could no longer find any rest in Egypt. All their prosperity and happiness had departed. Am I addressing any who were once very well content and satisfied to live as ordinary worldlings do? And has everything changed with you? Is there no joy now in what was once such a pleasure to you? Does it seem very dull and dreary if you go where you used to find so much merriment? Those haunts which were once the scene of your greatest delight,— are they now avoided by you because you cannot endure them? Do you feel that, now, you would gladly give up all those things which once you doted on? I am thankful to hear that it is so, for when God is about to give a man to drink of the cup of salvation, he often first puts his taste right by washing out his mouth with a draught of bitters to take away the flavour of the accursed sweets of sin. I always regard it as a good and hopeful sign when a man becomes tired of the world, altogether weary of its sins, and says, "I find no pleasure in them." This happens to some while they are still young, and their passions are strong,— while their substance is undiminished, while their health is vigorous,— while their friends are numerous. In the very middle of the day, their sense of enjoyment seems to go down. There is the honey, but it is no longer sweet. There is the wine cup, but it has no further fascination for them. Their joy has departed just when one would have thought that it would have been most abiding with them. Do I speak to any in this condition? If so, I think that I bring a message from the Lord to them.

But, next, the Israelites had not only lost their former prosperity, but they began to feel that they were in bondage. An Israelite in Egypt was at first a gentleman,— in fact, a nobleman,— for was he not related to the great prime minister, Joseph, who was second only to Pharaoh himself? Every Jew walked through Goshen as an aristocrat, for he was intimately connected with almost the highest in the realm. But now, all that was changed with them, and they felt that they were slaves, they were in bitter bondage; they must act and move at the will of others. There were hard laws and regulations made for them, and cruel taskmasters to put those laws in action. They must rise, not when they chose, but when they were bidden; and they might get to their beds only when they were allowed to do so at the slavedriver's will; and they felt that they could not bear it any longer. This was God's way of bringing them out of bondage, by first making them feel that they were in slavery. Have I any here who realize that they also are in slavery? Am I addressing a man who feels that he is in bondage to evil habits, which he cannot break off, although he wishes that he could, and counts himself degraded by the fact that he will, is present with him, but how to perform that which he would, he finds not, because he is a slave? His passions rule him, his companions control him, he dare not do what his conscience tells him is right, for there is a fear of somebody or other that makes him into a coward, and so into a slave. I am always glad when the fetters begin to gall. They who are content to be in bondage will never be freed; but when they feel that they cannot, and that they will not, any longer endure their captivity, then has the hour of freedom struck. It is an untold blessing when the grace of God makes a man feel that what was once a pleasure has now become a servitude, and what he formerly found to be liberty has now become utter slavery to him.

The Israelites went further than that. They now felt that their burdens were too heavy to be borne. They had worked and toiled very hard, yet they had lived through the work; but now, they were made to serve with rigour, and their bondage was too heavy to be endured. They could not bear it; and it is just so spiritually. As long as a man can carry his sins, he will continue to carry them; and as long as a man can be content with the pleasures of this world, rest assured that he will revel in them. It is a blessed thing when sin becomes an awful load, so that it crushes a man, until he seems to sink utterly hopeless beneath it. It is well with him, for now he will welcome the Deliverer. He will be glad of pardon from him who alone can forgive sins; he will rejoice to accept the word of absolution from the lips of the great High Priest; and, therefore, although it is often a sore sorrow, it is also a very great mercy, to be made to feel the intolerable load and burden of sin. If I am speaking to any who are in such a condition, and I hope that I am, I congratulate them on what is yet to come to them. Oh! well do I remember when I was such a slave,— when, as I rose in the morning, I resolved to live better than I had previously done, yet, long before noon, I had made a worse mess of the day than ever. Then I thought that, perhaps, by increasing my prayers, or reading more of the Scriptures, I might get ease from my burden; but I found that, the more I prayed, and the more I read, the heavier my burden became. If I tried to forget my sorrow, and so to shake off my gloom, I found that it would not forget me, and I had to cry unto the Lord, with David, "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." I remember all that painful time so vividly that I can speak to some of you like an experienced friend who is well acquainted with the dark and stony road on which you are walking. I know all about your painful pathway of grief, and I long to help you to get over it quickly, and to come to a better and happier place. But this trial is God's way of fetching you out of Egypt. He is making the house of bondage too hot for you. He does not mean to let you stop there, so he is permitting all this to come upon you that you may cry unto him to deliver you. He will bring you forth, and you shall march out with joy and gladness, thankful and happy to do what now seems like a hardship, and like self-denial to you.

These Israelites also felt one thing more, namely, their powerlessness to escape out of Pharaoh's hand, and they thought that there was nobody to help them. When the young man of forty came forward, who had been educated in Pharaoh's court, and was reckoned to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and, when, like a true hero, he threw in his lot with the despised people, and smote one of their adversaries, he thought, perhaps, that it would be the signal for a general revolt, and that the banner of Israel would

wave defiantly in the face of Pharaoh, and that the people would boldly march to liberty; but they were too enslaved, they had been too long ground down and oppressed, to act like that; they had lost all spirit, and they did not hope ever to be free, they were a nation of hopeless slaves.

Am I speaking to any here who have lost all heart and hope,— who have come to this place of worship with a sort of feeble wish for salvation, but with no expectation of receiving it? Are you so shut up in the prison of sin that you cannot come forth? Are your chains clanking in your ears? Do you feel yourself to be in the low dark dungeon out of which you will never come alive? It is to you I have to say that I bless God that you are where you are. Self-despair is a blessed preparation for faith in Jesus. The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. Your extremity is God's opportunity. Now that you are helpless and hopeless, God will come to your rescue.

You notice that, in my text, there is a gradation, and such a gradation as some of us have felt in spiritual things. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage." "Ah! miserable wretch! Woe is me! Alas! Alas!" That is how they sighed when they were at their labor; that is how they sighed when they went home at night, or lay down among the pots by the kiln side; and that is how they sighed when they woke up in the morning. When a man-child was born, they sighed as they looked at him, for they knew that he must be killed. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage." And, then, as their misery grew, a sigh was not enough, "and they cried." Ah! I cannot imitate the expressive language of their grief. There were tears many and often, and there was the voice of grief which made itself audible in piercing cries. "O God, how long shall this bondage last?" They sat them down and begged for death, and sought it as if they were seeking for hidden treasure, for the life of a slave in Egypt was intolerable to them; and, often, the sigh and the cry were merged into a groan, for we read, "God heard their groaning,"

Is that how it has been going on with you, my brother? You used to sigh a good deal, sometimes; people noticed that you were very absent-minded, and that you seemed to have some sorrow upon your spirit which you could not express. Now you have gone further than that, for you have begun to cry, and in prayer to God you pour out your very soul. Perhaps,— and that is the worst plight of all,— you feel that you cannot pray; you do not seem to be able to offer what you regard as a real prayer. You can only weep;— ay, and perhaps you cannot even weep, and so you sigh and groan because you cannot pray. You are troubled because you cannot be troubled enough; and that is the worst kind of trouble that there is in the world, after all. There are none so brokenhearted as those that are brokenhearted because they are not brokenhearted. I have reminded you that the Israelites groaned, and that "God heard their groaning." Ah! from the very bottom of their heart, came up their groaning. It was no mere heaving of a sigh, it was no mere utterance of a cry; but all day long it was groaning, groaning, groaning, each breath seemed to be yet another sorrowful groan.

I hope that many of you will find the Savior before you know much about this terrible groaning; but it was not so with me. I became so full of groans that I understood what Job meant when he said, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life." It would be better never to live than to live for ever under conviction of sin, for the arrows of God. drink up the very fountains of our life, and pour fire into the blood, and make us feel as if a thousand deaths were preferable to living under an awful sense of God's wrath. Perhaps I am speaking to some who, even when they fall asleep, are startled by dreams concerning the day of judgment, the sound of the archangel's trumpet, and the setting up of the great white throne. And when they wake, and go out to their business, they make strange blunders, and all day long they are like men walking as in a dream.

Still, dear friends, if that is your experience, I am heartily glad of it, for it is to me a sign of better days coming. Looking down upon Egypt, the angels must have been glad when they heard the sighs and cries and groans of Israel. "Why," you ask, "how is that?" because the angels would say to themselves, "God's greatest difficulty is overcome; he wanted to incline these people to come out of Egypt; but now they long to come out, so they will be willing to accept the leader whom God will send to them, and with music and dancing they will come forth when Moses brings them out of the iron furnace and the house of bondage." Those of us who were, only a little while ago, in the house of bondage, rejoice that we have been set free from it; and we are praying that you who are still within it, and are beginning to feel what a horrible place it is, may not stop there long. Nay to-morrow's sun not see you there, but may you clean escape at once from that terrible captivity!

That, then, is the first head, a cry of misery.

II. The second is a very blessed one, The God Of Pity.

Let me read part of the text again: "They cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them."

Here, then, is the poor sinner's hope,— not at all in himself, but wholly in God. Note the gradations here with regard to God's pity for these people. First, "their cry came up unto God." When it rose up, sharp, and shrill, and intense, it burst through the gates of heaven, and "came up unto God." Not that he does not really hear everything, but, speaking after the manner of men, when it was a mere sigh, it did not reach him; but when it got to be a cry, and deepened into a groan, then it came up before him, and God himself

seemed to stop, and say, "What is that? It is the cry of the seed of Abraham in Egypt." Oh, poor soul; when your cry comes up from the depths of your very soul, then God will stop, and say, "What is that? It is the cry of a man in misery; it is the voice of a soul that is in bondage under sin." "Their cry came up unto God."

Notice, next, for it is a step further: "and God heard their groaning." Do you know what that means? There are some people who seem to hear things, but the sounds pass through their ears, and there the matter ends. But if you go to visit a sick woman, and you sit down, and she tells you all about her ailments, and about her poverty, she is cheered because you listen to her kindly, and because you are willing to hear her even if you cannot help her, and it does help her even to hear her tell her sad story. Well now, God heard Israel's crying and groaning; he heard them, not merely as men hear a sound, and take no notice of it, but he seemed to stand still, and listen to the sighs, and groans, and cries of his people. Sinner, tell God your misery even now, and he will hear your story. He is willing to listen, even to that sad and wretched tale of yours about your multiplied transgressions, your hardness of heart, your rejections of Christ, Tell him all, for he will hear it. Tell him what it is you want,— what large mercy,— what great forgiveness; just lay your whole case before him. Do not hesitate for a single moment; he will hear it, he will be attentive to the voice of your cry. Oh, what comfort there is for you in this truth if you can but grasp it! Dear fellow-Christians, pray that some poor sinners may grasp it even now; pray that they may lay hold upon the sweet thought that God is hearing the sighs and cries of the penitent souls in our midst.

God's pity went further than that, for we read, next, that having heard their groaning, "God remembered his covenant." I wish I knew how to preach upon that 24th verse: "God remembered his covenant." He looked on the children of Israel, and he did not remember their declensions,— their becoming practically Egyptians, their loving Egypt and Egypt's idols; but he remembered his friend Abraham, he remembered Isaac, he remembered Jacob whom he loved, and he remembered how he had promised to bless them, and to make them a blessing; and not because of any merit in the Israelites themselves, but for the sake of those whom he had loved and honored, and for the sake of the covenant which he had made with them, he said, "I will break the power of Pharaoh, and I will bless my people; I will bring them out of bondage, and set them at liberty." Sinner, if God were to look on you to all eternity, he could not see anything in you but what he is hound to punish; but when he looks on his dear Son whom he loves, and remembers how he lived, and loved, and bled, and died, and made atonement for the guilty; and when he remembers his covenant with his Well-beloved, he says, "I will bless these people whom I gave unto him by an everlasting covenant. I promised that he should see of the travail of his soul; and so he shall. I will break the power of sin, and I will set these captives free; to the praise of the glory of my grace, they shall be accepted in the Beloved." It is a great blessing that, although God cannot see any reason for mercy in us, he can see the best of all reasons for mercy in the covenant of his grace, and in his dear Son with whom he made it. "God remembered his covenant." Do not you forget it, dear friends, but think much upon the covenant ordered in all things and sure, and upon all the blessings that are to come to you through that covenant.

God did still more for his people: "And God looked upon the children of Israel." He had given them his ear; he had given them his memory; now he gives them his eyes. He stood still, and he looked upon them, in pity and in love; and it is further said, "And God had respect unto them." The margin renders it, "God knew them," which is the true meaning of the original. He looked upon a man, and he said, "That is one of my children." He looked upon another, and he said, "Yes; Egyptian though he be in dress, he is one of my Israelites." He looked upon others, and he said, "I know them. I know their sorrows, I know their sins, I know their weaknesses; and I will surely deliver them." Oh, that these lips could utter language in which I might fitly tell you how God looks upon you, my dear brokenhearted fellow-sinner,— how he looks upon you, my poor troubled friend, who cannot break loose from sin, but feel like a bull in a net, and cannot get free from it! I tell you that he is looking upon you in love and pity, and that he knows your condition, and is ready to help you. I will close my discourse by telling you what he has done to help you; and, oh! may he give you grace to lay hold of it, that you may End liberty this very hour!

III. The last point is, The Instrument Op Deliverance.

God's power was quite sufficient to bring the people of Israel out of bondage, but he chose to deliver them by means of human instrumentality. God works for men by men, so he raised up Moses, and it was through Moses that the children of Israel were delivered. Now, for you, dear captive, God has raised up a Prophet like unto Moses. One who is infinitely greater than Moses has come to deliver you.

First, remember that Jesus, the Savior of men, is a man like ourselves. This ought to encourage you to come to him. Full of grief, and broken down under a sense of sin, you dare not approach to an absolute God; it would not be right that you should attempt to come to him without a Mediator; but you may come to the one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, for he can fully sympathize with you, he is able to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for he himself, in the days of his flesh, was compassed with infirmity. Well did Dr. Watts sing,—

**Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort End;**

**The holy, just, and sacred
Three Are terrors to my mind.**

**But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.**

Jesus Christ is a man; therefore come boldly to him, even as Israel might come to Moses. But Jesus is clothed with divine authority and power, as Moses was; more than that, he is what Moses was not, and could not be, Jesus is actually Divine; Jesus is God. Oh, come, poor trembling sinner, and trust your case in his hands, because nothing ever fails that he undertakes! He can break the power of the Pharaoh of your sins, and set you free; ay, even now, he can bring you forth out of Egypt with the silver and gold of his abounding grace. Only trust him, and follow him, and be obedient to his commands, and all will be well with you.

This Moses, being a man, yet clothed with divine authority, gave himself up to the people entirely. He was such a lover of Israel that he lived entirely for the people, and once, you will remember, he even said, as he pleaded for them, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold! Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom it is our joy to preach, was really made a curse for us; he actually stood in the sinner's stead, and bore the penalty of the sinner's guilt. Therefore, oh, do trust him! Perhaps I may be the means of leading some poor sinner to end his delaying, and now to commit his spirit into the hand of the faithful Creator and Redeemer who died for him; and, dear friend, if you will but trust Jesus with yourself, you shall be saved at once. I hope you are willing to come out of Egypt; if you are, you may do so. Lo! Christ has broken all the power of sin, and he is willing now to set you free if you will but trust him, and give yourself up, once for all, entirely to his power.

Lastly, Moses did bring the people out, every one of them. He left not a little babe in Egypt; nay, not so much as a sheep or a goat remained there. He said, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." All that belonged to Israel went marching out when Moses led the way; and God's elect and Christ's redeemed shall all come out of the Egypt of sin. Pharaoh's power — the devil's power — cannot hold the very least of them in captivity; nay, not even a bone of one of God's children shall be left in the grasp of death and the devil. They shall die, and their bones shall be put into the sepulcher; but not the least atom of one of God's own chosen ones shall be left in the power of death. They shall come again from the hand of the enemy. Yet remember, O ye sinners, that I do not urge you to trust Christ as though he cringed at your feet, and could not have honor and glory if you did not welcome him as your Savior. If you will not come unto him, if you will turn your backs upon him, I shall only say of you, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of his sheep, as he said unto you." It is not for Christ's sake, but for your own sake, that I plead with you. Oh, that you would come unto him, and trust him! Weary of self, and weary of sin, and hopeless of self-salvation, come and lay yourselves at Jesus' feet, even at the feet of him whom God hath "exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" He hath laid help upon One who is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people; therefore, come and trust him even now, and you shall be saved. May God grant repentance and faith to this whole congregation, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**Exodus 7:12
The Power of Aaron's Rod**

NO. 521

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 26TH, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." — Exodus 7:12.

WE shall not attempt to discuss the question as to whether these magicians actually did turn their rods into serpents or no; it is probable that they, by dexterous sleight of hand, substituted living serpents for dry rods, and so deceived the eye of Pharaoh; on the other hand, it is possible that God was pleased to permit the devil to aid their enchantments, and so the old serpent produced a brood. Into that question, I say, I shall not enter. It is of no importance which opinion we may hold. Curious questions must this morning give way to important truths. I call your attention to the fact, that Aaron's rod proved its heaven-given superiority, and silenced all the boastings of Jannes and Jambres, by readily swallowing up all their rods. This incident is an instructive emblem of the sure victory of the divine handiwork over all the opposition of men. Whenever a divine thing is cast into the heart, or thrown upon the earth, it swallows up everything else, and though the devil may fashion a counterfeit, and produce swarms of opponents as sure as ever God is in the work, it will swallow up all its foes. "Aaron's rod swallowed up all their rods."

Without any preface, let me ask you, first of all, to observe this fact; when we have duly considered it, let us, in the second place, draw an inference from it; and then, in closing, let me endeavor to show some reasons why it is right that it should be so.

I. Let us turn aside to see this great sight — the divine triumphant over the diabolical: the spiritual subduing the natural — Aaron's Rod Swallowing All Its Rivals.

1. Let us take the case of the awakened sinner.

That man was, a few days ago, as worldly, as carnal, as stolid, as he well could be. If anyone should propose to make that man heavenly-minded, to lead him to set his affection upon things above, and not on things on the earth, the common observer would say, "Impossible! the man has no thought above what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed; his heart is buried in a grave of cares; he rises early; he sits up late; he eats the bread of carefulness; he is glued and cemented to the world — as in old Roman walls, the cement has become so strong, that the stone is no longer a separate piece, but has become a part of the wall itself — so this man is cemented to the world, he cannot be separated from it. You must break him in pieces with the hammer of death; you cannot separate him in any other way from the cares of life. Ah, but Aaron's rod shall swallow up this rod. The man listens to the Word; the truth comes with power into his soul; the Holy Ghost has entered him; and the next day, though he goes to his business, he finds no true contentment in it, for he pants after the living God. Though still he will buy and sell, and get gain, yet there is a craving within — an awful hunger — a thirst unquenchable — which above the din and clamor of the world's traffic, will be heard crying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Now, his spirit pleads its needs, and outstrips the body in the contest for his warmest love. He spurns the trifles of a day: he seeks the jewels of eternity. The grovelling swine which wallowed in worldliness is transformed into an eagle; the man who lived for this shadowing earth has now an eye for the upper spheres, and a wing to mount into celestial heights. Grace has won the day, and the worldling seeks the world to come.

It may be that the man is immersed in pleasure. He is at this theater and at that. In all gay society he bears the palm. You shall find him at every horse-race and fighting ring; ah, and worse still, you may track him to dens of licentiousness, and learn that he is diving deeper than others in the turbid streams of vice. What power can make this gay sinner become a saint? As well ask over a mouldering grave, "Can these dry bones live?" How shall he find joy in the praise of God, or interest in waiting upon the worship of the Most High? "Absurd!" cries Unbelief, while Worldliness shouts, "Ridiculous!" The man is too far gone for regeneration! He is married to pleasure, and he wears the ring upon his finger! Ay, but Aaron's rod can swallow up this rod. For we have seen such a man loathe the very joys he loved, till there was a charm in the music of sin — no mirth in the society of folly. He fled away to hide himself; he sought seclusion that he might weep alone. Where now the sweetness of your bowls and the melody of your viols? Where now the charms of the earth's harlotry? Where now the giddy delights of chambering and wantonness? They are gone, for Aaron's rod has swallowed up these rods of the magicians, and the mad sinner is sitting yonder — a penitent at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. His companions follow him, with many weighty reasons, as they seem to think, they invite his return; they conjure him not to make a fool of himself, by joining those melancholy fanatics; they point out the faults of many professors; they remark that hypocrisies are common; they describe the inconsistencies of good men; and they say, "What! will you throw away the joviality of youth, the bloom and flush of life, to be united with a miserable band of enthusiasts and deceivers like these?" Then they insinuate cunning doubts; they thrust into the man's way certain strange things, of which he had never heard before, which startle him like thunder-claps, and almost drive him from his purpose. If God's grace be in him, the world's best magicians may throw down all their rods: and every rod may be as cunning and as poisonous as a serpent, but Aaron's rod will swallow up their rods. The sweet attractions of the cross will woo and win the man's heart. The blessed arguments, fetched from the bleeding wounds of Jesus, will answer all the blandishments of Madam Wanton and the reasonings of her sister Madam Bubble. Everything shall be set aside, when true religion comes in. The man shall have a longing so intense, that he cannot stay it, nor can he stay himself from obedience to it — a longing atter pardon by blood, and salvation by grace.

Oh, have you not seen the trembling penitent, when under conviction of sin, apparently oblivious to everything else? How changed the man! The furrows of that brow prophesy a harvest of hope. Tears, those jewels of repentance, bedeck his eyes. He is dressed in the sackcloth and ashes, which are the court robes of those blessed mourners who shall be comforted. For a season even righteous joys yield him no solace; the comforts of his household, and the enjoyments of the fireside, fail to reach his case. There is no balm in Gilead for him, heaven alone can supply him a fit physician. His cry has become, "These can never satisfy; give me Christ, or else I die." You have marked the stag when it is let down for a royal hunt. Away it flies. The dogs are behind it. It flies over flowery meads, but it does not pause to snuff the fragrance of the gale. It dashes along the wood, but it waits not for shelter beneath you umbrageous oak! It scatters the sparkling waters of the brook, but it scarce has time to bathe its limbs. Onward, up the hill, the scenery is grand; but that wild eye, starting from its head, is solaced by no sight of beauty. The birds are singing sweetly in yonder copse, but those startled ears are not comforted. The bay of the dog is all the noble victim hears; the wrath of the hunter is all it dreads; on — on — on it flies, panting for life. Such is the soul hunted by the dogs of conscience. Such is the awakened spirit, when the wrath of God is let loose upon it. No comforts can charm it; no joys can delight it. It flies on — on — on — resting never until it finds a shelter and deliverance in the clefts of the Rock of Ages. It is in vain that Satan tries to attract it from the one master-thought;

the divine life must and will have its course. As some lofty mountain casts its shadow all along the valley, so a sense of condemnation throws its dark influence over the whole life; then follows a longing for mercy, which, like a swollen torrent, bears all before it. To use another illustration: the man has found the pearl of great price, and for joy thereof, he parts with all to buy it. No matter how dear the old ancestral homestead, it must be sold; the favourite horse; the faithful dog — all must go. He will sell his dearest joys and his most prized luxuries of sin, that he may buy this priceless, peerless pearl. Aaron's rod swallows up all other rods, and serpents too.

2. Beloved, the same fact, with equal distinctness, is to be observed in the individual when he becomes a believer in Jesus Christ; his faith destroys all other confidences.

Once that man could trust in his self-righteousness. He was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing. He was honest. Who could say that he ever fraudulently failed in business, or robbed a creditor? For integrity, he boasted that none could say him nay. He was, moreover, kind and charitable; amiable in his deportment, and tender in heart towards the poor. He trusted that if any man went to heaven by his merits, he should. But where is that rod now? Lo, Aaron's rod has swallowed it up. For now that man can say with the apostle Paul, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The man once could rely upon ceremonies. Was he not sprinkled in infancy in the customary manner? Was he not confirmed afterwards by episcopal hands? Did he not receive the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper? What more was wanted? He was regular at his Church, or punctual at his chapel. He paid the contribution expected of him, and perhaps a little more. He had family prayers, and went through a private form at his bedside. What more did he want? But Aaron's rod swallows this up, too, for all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. This is the cry of the man now — "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." My hearers, you are no Christians unless your faith in Christ has devoured every other confidence; unless you can say,

**"On Christ, the solid rock I stand!
All other ground is sinking sand."**

It is not to trust Christ and to trust self; to rely on Jesus somewhat, and then upon our prayers and our works to some degree. Jesus ONLY! must be your watchword. Christ will never have a partner. He trod the wine-press alone, and he will save you alone. He stretched his hands to the cross, and none but he could bear the burden of sin: nor will he divide the work of salvation, lest at the last he should have to divide the crown. The rod of the one only High Priest must swallow up all other rods.

My dear friends, what multitudes of foes has our faith had to meet with; but how it has swallowed them all up. There were our old sins. The devil threw them down before us, and they turned to serpents. What bosts of them! What multitudes! How they hiss in the air! How they intertwist their many coils. How horrible are their deadly poison-fangs, the gaping jaws, their forked tongues! Ah, but the cross of Jesus, like the rod of Amram's son, destroys them all. Faith in Christ makes short work of all our sins, for it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Then the devil stirs up another generation of vipers, and shows us our inbred corruptions, our neglects of duty, our slackness in prayer, our unbeliefs, our backslidings, our wanderings of heart; and sometimes you and I get so tormented by these reptiles, that we grow alarmed, and are half inclined to flee. Do not run, brother, but throw down Aaron's rod, and it will swallow up all these serpents, even though they were poisonous as the cobra, fierce as the rattlesnake, or huge as the python. You shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." The battle is the Lord's, and he will deliver them into your hands. The old enemy will throw down another host of serpents in the form of worldly trials, diabolical suggestions, temptations to blasphemy, ill-thoughts of God, hard thoughts of his providence, rash thoughts of his promises, and such like, till you will be almost distracted. You will wonder how you can meet such a host as this. Remember to stand fast, and throw down Aaron's rod — your simple trust and faith in Jesus Christ — and it must and shall swallow up all these rods. There is not one doubt which the craft of hell can insinuate — there is not one difficulty which the infernal wisdom of Diabolus can suggest — but simple faith in Christ can disarm, tread under foot, and utterly destroy.

On a certain railroad there is a viaduct, the arches are of considerable height, wooden centres of course were used for the building of these arches, and they remain there till this day, because there is some suspicion that if the wooden centres were knocked out, the brick arches might not be strong enough and might come tumbling in. Now, there are some professors whose faith is of that kind, it is supported by wooden centres of human persuasion, reasoning, or excitement, which they cannot afford to lose. But the Christian man can say, that if by providence all the earthly props of his confidence should fail; if feelings, graces and excitements were all gone, still the cross alone is an all sufficient dependence, and faith could bear the most terrible strain which earth or hell could put upon it. I would to God we were more and more possessed of that faith which leans on God and God alone; for remember that the faith which is supported by anything except the word and promise of God, is no faith at all. It is a bastard faith which has the cross for a buttress, but finds its foundation elsewhere; the cross must be the foundation, corner-stone, and buttress too. None but

Jesus! none but Jesus! We need to have a faith which can endure every form of trial, and that as long as life lasts. One day last week, when I was preaching, it came on to rain, a gentleman asked why the largest chapel in the neighborhood could not be used for the occasion? The reply was, "Why, the galleries are not safe." I thought, what was the good of galleries into which they were afraid to let the people. Pull them down and get fresh ones. So there are some people who have a faith like that good-for-nothing gallery; it is not safe; it will not sustain a crowd of afflictions and temptations, difficulties and troubles; it would all come down with a crash in the day of trial, and great would be the fall of it. Brethren, if you have such a faith as I have described, prey God to take it away; it is worthless and dangerous; for remember, in the hour of death, if it cannot stand the tramp of the eternal feet, it will give way, and your everlasting ruin will be the result. Have a faith which is built upon God, which will bear whatever comes. But mind you mix not therewith wood, hay, stubble, of your own gathering. Let Aaron's rod swallow up all other rods. Let your faith in Christ overturn every refuge of lies.

3. The same fact is very manifest after faith in all who truly love the Savior. It will be found, I am sure, that every true lover of Jesus has an all-consuming love — coals of juniper, which have a most vehement flame. They who love Christ aright, love no one in comparison with him. The husband is dear; the father is cherished; the children are precious; but after all, Jesus Christ is better than all kindreds. We can look upon all and say, "Yes, it were a bitter pang to lose you, but we would sooner lose you all ten times over, than once lose our Savior;" for, oh! if we lose him, we have lost all, even if all else remained; but if all be gone, and we still keep our Savior, we have all in him. The Christian as he loves nothing in comparison, so he loves nothing in contradiction to Christ. Whatever comes between him and his Savior, the true lover of Jesus abhors and rejects in a moment. He holds no deliberation or debate about the matter. He counts that vile, which, precious in itself, becomes evil through interposing between him and his Lord.

**"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be" —**

Though it be a golden idol; though it be myself; whatever that idol be —

**"Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.**

The Christian's love to Christ is of such a kind, that he would forego honor and think it honor to be dishonored for Christ. Persecution's flame cannot, by any means, consume bands of union which unite his soul and his Lord. Through fire and through water this love can march; for "many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." That is not true love to Jesus, which governs only one part of the man out of twenty. It must be all the passions bound into one. This is the reason why our apostle does not say, "Set your affections on things above;" but "Set your affection on things above." Tie up the affections in one bundle. There are not to be a host of them; they are to be made into one. Bind them into a bundle of camphire and then offer them to your Best Beloved. Oh, if I pretend to love Christ, and have other lovers, too — he careth not for such a heart as mine, it must be an undivided heart. "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty," said Hosea; "Unite my heart to fear thy name," cried the Psalmist, and let each of us pray so too. "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Let that be without any sort of reserve. Let the giving up of ourselves to Christ and the taking of Christ to ourselves be done heartily and earnestly, with all the powers of the soul.

This love to Christ reminds me of the fire which fell of old upon Elijah's sacrifice: there stood the altar made of twelve rough stones; on it lay the bullock and the wood: and over all the prophet had poured water, until it saturated the bullock and stood in the trenches. But when the fire came down from heaven, it devoured not only the wood and the sacrifice, but the very stones of the altar, and licked up the water from the trenches. So when this heavenly fire of love comes down upon our hearts in very deed and truth, it not only burns the sacrifice and the wood — our own true intentions and our renewed heart — but the stones, the very flesh that seemed as dull and cold as a stone — ay, and those old corruptions which seemed to quench the fire of grace like water, this love licks the whole up, and the whole man goes up to heaven, a living sacrifice unto God. "My heart and my flesh," said the Psalmist, "cry out for the living God." I used to wonder however he made his flesh to do it, for the flesh lusteth against the spirit; but there are times when Aaron's rod does swallow up all other rods, and even the heart and the flesh cry out for the living God. Our love to Jesus should be like the love of David to Jonathan, and of Jonathan to David; as Jonathan was ready to take off both his sword and his bow, and his girdle, and give them to David, so should we make no reserve, our selfishness being swallowed up, giving to Jesus all that we are, and all that we have evermore.

I have heard of one good man who carried out to the letter this love to Christ. He was rich, he prospered much in business. A very sincere friend who might take great liberties, called upon him and said, "My dear brother, you are so prosperous, that I am afraid lest your heart should depart from God." The other replied, "No, my brother, I thank you for the warning, but I am not in that danger, for I enjoy God in everything." Years went on: riches took to themselves wings and fled away. The rich man was brought to the depths of poverty; he even knew what it was to want bread. The same friend came to see him, and he said, "My dear brother, you remember what I said to you in your prosperity; now, I am afraid lest in your adversity you should grow unbelieving, and so dishonor your Lord." But the other said, "Dear brother, I thank you for your warning as I said before, but I am not in danger, for before I enjoyed God in

everything, and now I enjoy everything in God." Oh, this is a sweet way of living, when our love to Christ is such that we find Christ in everything. We see the marks of his pierced hands on our daily bread, and see the blood mark upon the garments which we wear. It is good, too, when suffering and wanting times shall come, to find we are rich because we have Christ, and can sing.

**"Thee, at all times, will I bless;
Having thee, I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with thee?"**

4. Brethren, you will notice this in the man who makes his delight in the Lord Jesus. He who makes his delight in Christ after a true sort, will discover that this delight swallows up all other delights. There is none equal to this. The Christian man enjoys himself as others do. He is not denied the sweets of this life any more than another man. But to him all these things are brown bread. He has eaten manna, his mouth has tasted angels' food; and he feels that the choicest mirth and delight his soul can know in all the bounties of God's rich providence, are mere ashes compared with what he finds in Christ. His delight in Christ is of such a kind that nothing can stop it. In disease he still rejoices in his God, who makes his bed in his sickness. When he comes to die, that last of foes cannot interrupt the music of his soul. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," he hath said; and he carries out his vow. He has little to delight in besides; but he has more delights than those who have all the world. Though he were rich as Solomon, and had singing men and singing women, and gardens and houses, and chariots, and all manner of delights, he would not be so contented as he is with Christ, and with his Christ alone. I speak experimentally, I who am but a babe in Christ, even I, know that there is such joy to be found in Jesus, such rapture, such ecstasy — what shall I say? — such heaven to be found in his dear name and in communion with him, that if I could have but five minutes of my Lord's company, I would sooner have it than a whole year of the society of princes rolling in wealth and exalted in fame. One glance of his eyes outshines the sun. The beauties of his face are fairer than all flowers. There is no such fragrance as in the breath of his mouth. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine."

5. Yet more is it so in a man who is devoted to God's service. The service of God swallows up everything else when the man is truly God's servant. When a man gets fully possessed with an enthusiastic love for Jesus, and there is no other love worth a moment's care, difficulties to him become only things to be surmounted, dangers become honors, sacrifices pleasures, sufferings delights, weariness rest. Life he looks upon but as a loan, and gives it back to Jesus Christ with interest. Look in the olden times how the martyrs despised death. Aaron's rod swallowed up the terrors of fire, and stake, and rack, and dungeon. Poverty, nakedness, peril, sword, the love of Christ made short work of these. In later days, in the Reformer's times, to meet the score of the multitude and the wrath of princes, was a thing of every-day. They laughed at all sufferings for the love of Jesus. To-day some of our missionary brethren prove the same fact. Williams staining Eromanga with his blood; Knibb spending a weary life in the midst of his swarthy brethren; Moffat at this hour cut off from intercourse with those whom he holds dear, pressing on still in the work of saving the Bechuana and the Bushman — these men, and men like them of whom the world is not worthy, prove that the love of Jesus will swallow up everything else. I hope there are some in this Church in whom the service of Christ has become the main object of their lives. If you stand up and preach in the street, and you are mocked at, Aaron's rod will swallow up all the ribaldry of scoffers; you can bear all that and rejoice in it. If you go home and find persecutors there, you can patiently endure their cruel mockery. Aaron's rod will swallow up that rod very speedily. Perhaps you have to lose customers by closing your shop on the Sabbath; perhaps friends forsake you because of your godly walk; perhaps adversaries gather round you, and say spiteful things of you because Jesus is yours. Aaron's rod will swallow up that rod. I would to God there were more Christians, however, in whom all their business cares and their worldly pursuits were subjugated and subservient to their devotion to their Master. For he is not a Christian of any standing who lives for anything but to extend the name of Christ, and to spread his kingdom among the sons of men.

Brethren, we are waiting for the time in which my text shall have a more splendid significance than I can give it just now. In every neighborhood wherever Christ's truth is preached, like Aaron's rod, it swallows up all the serpents of sin. Find out the darkest alley in London, take Jesus Christ there, and Aaron's rod shall swallow up their rods of ignorance, vice, and ungodliness. Go to popish countries, spread the Bible, let the name of Jesus Christ be proclaimed, and there is no lie of the Pope which the cross cannot overcome. Go you to the heathen land, where Juggernaut sits in bloody contentment on his throne, or to the islands of the South Sea, or to Afric's wondrous plains; wherever you go, cast down Aaron's rod, and whatever the form of superstition or error, it shall swallow all up. Wait yet a little while, when from eastern coast to western, one song shall be heard, the Hallelujah to the Lord; when Jesu's name shall be exalted, and every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord; then admiring angels looking from the battlements of heaven, or flying down and mingling with the sons of earth, shall rejoice to see that Jannes and Jambres, who withstood Moses, were not more totally defeated than the foes of Christ shall be when Aaron's rod shall swallow up their rods, and the chorus shall be heard, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

II. We Now Draw An Inference.

If it be so, that wherever true religion — the finger of God — comes into a man, it becomes a consuming passion, till the zeal of

God's house eats the man up. Then there are many persons who profess religion, who cannot have found the right thing. I will picture you one or two of them. There are some who sit and listen to the gospel, and who somewhat delight in its doctrines. They feel an attachment to the truth, and find some degree of comfort in it. But the one thing they think of is how they shall scrape together money; how they shall, by some means or other, fill their exchequer. As for God's house, though it has many claims, it is looked upon as a nuisance when it once entrenches upon their pocket. They give — well, what per cent do they give of their incomes? So small is the fraction that we will not waste our time in calculating it. I dare say they give as much as their religion is worth. We have heard of one who said that his religion did not cost him above a quarter of a dollar a year; and somebody said he thought it was very dear at that price. I dare say most people are pretty good judges of what their religion is worth, and their payment for its support may be taken as a fair estimate. Those who are mean, screwing, miserly, and miserable in the cause of Christ, whose only expenditure is upon self, and whose main object is gain, what can we say of them? Why, that they look upon religion as some great farmers do upon their little off-hand farms. They think it is well to have a little religion; they can turn to it for amusement sometimes, just to ease them a little of their cares; besides, it may be very well, after having had all in this world, to try to get something in the next. They are not honest people; serving the devil all their lives, the devil has a sort of deferred interest in them, and will no doubt see to his claims; but, instead of doing justice, they want to cheat him at the last. No doubt, in the end, they will have their due. There are many of these in our Churches, with whom we can find no fault in other respects. They are moral and decent in all ways; they can pray very nicely in prayer meetings, yet they never dream of consecrating their secular employments unto God. Aaron's rod, in their case, has never swallowed up their rods.

I heard of a minister, who, having need to have a chapel built, told the collector to call upon a certain person. The collector said, "Oh! he will not give anything; he never gives anything." "Well," said the minister, "if he gives as he prays, I should think he would give all he has!" So the collector called. "Well," the gentleman replied, "really he had so many calls — -." You know all the fibs which are customary on such occasions. He would give nothing. So the collector said, "Sir, our minister said, if you were to give as you pray, he thought you would give a large amount." Well, that touched his conscience. "Our minister said, he thought when you prayed, you would give yourself away." There are many who say that, who are a long way from meaning to carry it practically out. But give me the man who, with all worldly discretion, feels that it is as much his business to get money for God, as it is mine to preach for God. He sells his calicoes, his joints of meat, his earthenware, or his groceries, for Christ, as truly as I come upon this platform to speak for Christ. He sanctifies his ordinary calling to the cause of Christ, and makes himself the Lord's servant in everything, saying, "Here, Lord, I give myself to thee; it is all that I can do." I am afraid the inference I am to draw from what I have already said, is, that those who love the world, have a religion they had better get rid of.

There are other persons who profess to be Christians, but who spend all the week round without ever brushing against their religion. They expect it to call upon them as the postman does, at regular hours; it may knock them up on Sunday morning, but it must mind it does not intrude upon the Monday. What are the books they read? Those yellow volumes of one shilling or two shilling trash, which abound at the railway book-stalls? What is their talk about? Well, anything you like, except what it should be. What do they do during the week? Oh, they do twenty things. But what do they attempt for Christ? Do for Christ, sir! With what surprise they look at you, when you put the question. What did they do all the week? Well, let us see; beginning with Monday and going on to Saturday — hear it all — and what is its sum total? As far as the Church or the world is concerned, these people might just as well have been in bed and asleep all the time; they do nothing whatever; they have a name to fire, and practically they are dead. If a young man joins a rifle corps, there he is; he stands in the rank; he learns his practice and drill; and tries to get a prize by hitting the target. But when a man joins the Christian Church, where is he? I do not know where he is. You may find his name seven hundred and something in the attendance book. He is there, but what is he? You find him at chapel on Sunday, but where is he, and what is he doing for the cause of Christ during the week? The smallest scrap of paper would be too large to record his deeds of faith. He thinks he adorns his profession; but what kind of adornment it is, or who ever sees that adornment, I cannot tell. I believe that the man who does not make his religion his first and last thought, who does not subject all his actions, his eating and drinking too, to the cause of Christ, has not the work of God in his soul. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The man who has not consecrated the lapstone — who has not dedicated the counter to God — who has not made the desk and the pen holiness unto the Lord, has yet to learn what the Christian religion is. It is not a uniform to be worn one day and cast away the next; it ought to be a part of the woof and warp of your being; it ought to run in your blood, penetrate the marrow of your bones, work in the arms, gaze from the eyes, and speak from the tongue. O to be baptized, saturated, immersed in the Spirit of God, and so, wherever we go, to say to men who put our Lord at the bottom of the scale, "For us to live is Christ;" only such, I say, will ever be able to add, "For me to die is gain."

I hope this may come home to some of you; and if it do, may it produce from this day forth a more thorough love to Jesus — a more practical way of showing a more entire devotedness to that great cause which is either an awful imposition, or else deserves to have our whole heart, our whole spirit, soul and body devoted to it.

III. Now, I will close, by trying to Give Some Reasons Why I Put The Service Of God So Prominent, And Think That Aaron's Rod Ought To Swallow Up All Other Rods.

What does the great gospel revelation discover to us? Does it not show us an awful danger, and one only way of escape from it? Yonder is the place where the wrath of God burns without abatement, where souls suffer pangs indescribable. "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." Horrors, past imagination, are revealed to us by the words of Jesus, when he speaks of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that never shall be quenched. If we could once, but for an instant, have an idea of the wrath to come; if but for a moment the scathing lightnings of God could flash before our vision; if we could taste, but for an instant, the bitterness of that cup of trembling, the dregs whereof the wicked earth must drink, I am sure we should feel that the religion which teaches us how to escape from it must be worthy of a man's most solemn consideration, and we should give to it all the strength of our mind. To escape from hell — O sirs! if you do but manage this, though you die in a garret, you will have done well. Oh! if you have but escaped from the wrath to come, you will have been wise; though you have lived as paupers here, wiser far than he who has piled — like the tower of Babel — wealth on wealth, only to find his way to despair at last.

Does not our religion also reveal to us the joyous reward of another world? It opens to us yonder pearly gates, and bids us gaze on angels and glorified spirits. It tells us of celestial glories, of immortality; the crown of life, which fadeth not away. It brings to our ear the melody of heavenly harps, and bids our eyes look upon the splendours of the Son of God upon the throne. Heaven — if there be a heaven, and we by calling ourselves Christians accept it as truth — should it not be the first and last thought, the Alpha and Omega of man's existence, to seek and find it — so that we may not be shut out like the foolish virgins, but may enter with the wise into the marriage supper? By hell, and by heaven, therefore, I do entreat you, let Aaron's rod swallow up all other rods; and let love and faith in Jesus be the master passion of your soul.

Moreover, do we not learn in our holy faith of a love unexampled? Where was their love such as that which brought the Prince of Glory down to the gates of death, and made him pass the portals amid shame and scoffing? Oh, matchless love which draws the Prince of Life down to the shades of death, takes the crown from his lofty brow, removes his purple robe from his shoulders, loosens his glittering girdle, and strips his fingers of their golden rings, then wraps him in clay, clothes him in rags, houses him nowhere, gives him no place to lay his head, makes him eat the bread of penury, and drink the water of affliction. Shall such a love as this have half our hearts? Shall it have a cold love in return? Shall Jesus sit at the bottom of the table? Shall we stow him away in some back chamber of the heart? Shall we treat him to cold meats, to dogs' meat? God forbid. Let us make him King of kings within our hearts, as he is to-day King of kings in the highest heavens. If Christ be anything, he must be everything. If he deserve not to be everything, he deserves to be less than nothing.

But, my brethren, does not the grace of God create in us a new and noble nature? And if new and noble, should it not predominate? He is accursed who lets his body rule his mind, who lets his eating and drinking chain the immortal spirit. And he is equally accursed who shall let his mind rule his new-born spirit. No, let that nature which feeds on Christ, which breathes Christ, and which ascends to Christ, as flame ascends up to the central source of fire — the sun — let that nature always have its full liberty. Let it be ruling in us. Though the law in our members strive against it, yet let it rule and reign: like the rod of Aaron, let it swallow up all other rods. And since, dear brethren, God has been pleased to ennoble us by giving us the high dignity of being his children, shall we make our being a son of man a greater thing than being a son of God? Shall men, as they look at me, say of me first, "He is a tradesman?" O let me live so that the first thing they may say, shall be — "He is a Christian!"

I heard of one, speaking of a certain earnest man's religion, as riding his hobby. I knew that the person who so spoke of him knew nothing about the secret. For this is a steed which you may ride all day and all night long. It is a very Pegasus which will bear you up to heaven, and carry you aloft up to the starry spheres. Never dismount, Christian; but having been once set upon Christ's own beast, continue to ride thereon till he brings you safely home. Whatever others may be with their religion. Let yours be of a sort which you cannot lay aside; you must hold it, you must speak about it.

The Brahmins and the Hindoos practice caste. A Hindoo one day asked our missionaries whether they had caste in England. The missionary replied, No; that all men might eat and drink together. The Brahmin said this was very disorderly and even immoral. But the missionary said, "Well, but upon your great feast day — for instance, the great feast of Juggernaut — the Sudra eats with the Brahmin." "Oh," says he, "that is because we are in the presence of our God." "So," said the missionary, "that is the reason why we have no caste in England, because we are always in the presence of our God." I would that we thought of this; and being always in the presence of our God, live every day as the idolater does some days; as the Romanist does now and then. Talk of holy-days! why, every-day ought to thee a holy-day. Speak of keeping the Sabbath holy! every-day should be kept holy. Only the Sabbath day is a day of rest unto us more than the others. Write upon the bells of the horses, "Holiness Unto The Lord;" and let the pots in your own house be like the bowls before the altar.

I shall not say any more upon this subject, only praying that the Lord may give to this Church a larger number of consecrated men and women, and asking of you, for I make a point of it, to remember that this must always be a labor of love, if it is to be acceptable. No man ever does anything for the Lord acceptably which he would rather not do: no man ever gives to the Lord acceptably that which he would rather withhold. The service of Christ is perfect freedom: to serve him day and night is to enjoy perpetual liberty. Only

you try it, dear brother. You that are low in your grace, and weak in your faith, doubting and unbelieving, do more for Christ; make your consecration more perfect, and your light shall come forth as brightness, and the glory of your soul as a lamp that burneth.

May the Lord now add his blessing. Amen.

Exodus 12:3-4 Too Little For the Lamb

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“They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their father, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.”-Exodus 12:3, 4.

The paschal lamb was not killed in order to be looked at only, but to be eaten; and our Lord Jesus Christ has not been slain merely that we may hear about him and talk about him, and think about him, but that we may feed upon him. Everything that has to do with Christ's work is of real, practical, vital consequence to believers. He is to be the food for our souls. Faith is to receive him; love is to embrace him; hope is to rejoice in him.

The lamb of the Passover was not to be eaten in part, some of it to be left, and some of it to be divided at the feast; but the whole lamb was to be eaten. And, in like manner, the whole of Christ is to be spiritually received by us, whether he is made of God unto us wisdom, or righteous, or sanctification, or redemption. All that he is, and all that he does should be received by us with own and grateful heart. There must not be any picking and choosing among the good things of Christ but all must be alike accepted. We are all sinners, and we all need a Savior, and we need the whole of that Savior.

So, too, as the whole of the paschal lamb was to be eaten, I think I may say that all the power to save, which is in Christ is meant be exercised. He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, and that uttermost power of his was not intended to lie idle. He is able to save those who are at the very ends of the earth; and that power to save the outcasts and the offscourings was not intended to be left unused. It is our business to stir up the divine strength, and to pray the Lord to come and save even the vilest of the vile, and great multitudes of them.

Further, the whole of the lamb was meant to be eaten at once; none of it was to be kept till the morning. As with the manna, there was to be no laying of it up in store for future use. They were to eat it there and then; and it will be well if the members of Christ's Church will always look to the present using of Christ and of all that is in him. I think we may lawfully delight ourselves in the anticipation of those happier days of his millennial glory which are yet to dawn upon this sin-cursed earth; but, as a matter of fact, we had better concern ourselves principally with the needs of the present age, — with the soul-hunger of those among whom we live, — the dire necessities of those who are perishing for lack of the knowledge of Christ. Christ is meant for present use. Whatever he may do a thousand years hence, it is of more concern to us to see what he can do to-day. The principal business of the Christian is to proclaim Christ today, with this as part of the proclamation, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Even now is he mighty to save, mighty now by his blood to deliver his people from the avenging angel, and by his flesh to be the continual food of their souls; and we are to see to it that we do not so project ourselves into a future age as to be negligent of the present use of the ever-present Savior who is with us always, even to the end of the age.

The paschal lamb was meant to be eaten, to be all eaten, and to be all eaten there and then; and Christ is meant to be used, meant to be altogether used, and to be used just now. May each believer here be impressed with these thoughts!

I. Now, coming to our text, it appears to me that It Reminds Us Of A Primary Privilege. The third verse speaks of that privilege in so many words: “They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house.”

The place for all true religion to begin is at home. Wherever charity ought or ought not to begin, certainly true religion must begin at home. It should be a cause of great joy to us if we have Jesus Christ as our own, according to the paschal ordinance: “They shall take to them every man a lamb.” Are you, dear friend, searching your heart to know whether you have to do with Christ personally, in your own individuality? It will be a fatal delusion if you fancy that you will get into heaven as people sometimes get into this

Tabernacle, — by being carried along by the force of the numbers who are pressing to get in. You must come to Christ personally, by personal repentance and personal faith, and there must be a personal feeding upon him if he is to be of any service to you. It is idle to talk about the neighbor who is next unto you until, first of all, you have seen to it that you yourself are a partaker of the Lord Jesus Christ. I put the question now from the depths of my soul to my own heart, "Preacher, hast thou the blood sprinkled on the lintel and on the side-posts of thy house? Hast thou fed upon Christ?" And when I have answered that question for myself, I would beseech each one of you to answer it too. I am not asking about your parentage, or about your church-membership, or about the pious relations whom you have in your house; but about yourself. How is it with you, brethren and sisters? Even old professors have need to ask the question, for an old imposture may long be kept up, it may be preserved throughout life, I fear; and perhaps nothing will pull the mask off some men's eyes until the skeleton hand of death reveals the terrible truth to them. It is an unspeakable mercy that the Lamb of God is provided for our Passover, and that, for the very worst of us, for those of us who are most conscious that we deserve to perish, there is still the precious gospel message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." May it be a fact, known to us beyond all question by the witness of the Holy Spirit within us, that Jesus Christ has been slain for us, and fed upon by us!

Then, the next part of this primary privilege is that we should have Christ for our whole family. Those was to be a paschal lamb for all the members of the Israelitish family: "a lamb for a house." They were all to share in the blessings which that lamb brought. Oh, privileged beyond compare is that man who has a partner in life who, with himself, rejoices in Christ and who sees all his children following in his steps, equally rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And happier still is he if all his servants are in the some blessed condition. How is it with you, brethren and sisters? Have you this blessing? I know that some of you have. Your house ought to be a little heaven, for you have a church in your house. Keep the bells always ringing "Holiness unto the Lord," and let your hearts be so many harps from which there shall constantly pour forth floods of music to the praise of him who has so highly favored you.

Perhaps your children are as yet only little ones, and you are looking forward with the hope that the Lamb of God may yet be available for your whole household. In what way can you promote this? There are rules given you in Scripture. You cannot convert your children; to regenerate them is altogether beyond your power. It is a divine work, and must be done by the Holy Spirit. But you have that ancient exhortation, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." For the most part, the training of children does affect their manhood and womanhood. There are some who seem as if we could not train them; they are like wild vines that will not be trained, and their after life reveals the force of the wilfulness; which resisted the training which parents would gladly have given them. Unhappy are we if we have such children, and how sincerely we ought to sympathize with any who are in such a sad case; but how happy ought we to be if our children take kindly to the training which, by the grace of God, we seek to give them, so that they are like vines fastened up upon the walls of our houses, and do not to tear themselves away from the fastenings which are for their support and safety. May they bring forth fruit to, God's glory, and to our own comfort in years to come!

We must, however, add something to our training to make it effectual. There must be constant prayer where training appears to fail, for we can pray even for those of our children who are past the age in which we can exercise the influence of training upon them. I do not think that we shall long plead for our sons and daughters without seeing a prayer-hearing God stretching out his hand to save them; or if we do, we must look upon the delay as a further trial of our faith, and we must intensify our prayer until it becomes an agony, and in that agony we lay hold upon the covenant angel, and cry, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me and my seed also." So choice a gift as this may be reserved for something more earnest than the prayer to which we have yet attained; and when the Lord shall have flung us upon our faces, — shall have brought us to self-despair, — shall have made us see, in the rebellious character of our children, a picture of our own rebelliousness, — and made us see, in our own agony, a reflection of the agony of the heart of Jesus over our wanderings, then, perhaps he will speedily listen to us, and our children shall, with us, be sheltered beneath the blood of the Lamb.

With both the training and the prayer we should take care that we mingle much gracious teaching. Our children should not be left ignorant concerning the things that make for their peace. I have been surprised to find how many young people appear to know little or nothing about Holy Scripture; yet most if not all of them had been to a Sunday-school. It is singular how quickly children will forget what they learn; and that which is merely learned by rote, and has not been taught affectionately, it very readily brushed off from the memory. I think that a boy very seldom forgets the teaching which has been moistened with a mother's tears. There is, somehow, a wonderful power about a mother's voice, when she talks to her children about Jesus and his love, which stamps itself upon the heart, and the heart is a far better place for the custody of truth than ever the brain can become. We may forget what we only learn with the head; but we shall not forget what we learn with the heart. Therefore, Christian parents, teach your children thus; let them, from their youth, know the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise, unto salvation; let them be early acquainted with the precious things of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But, above all things, my brethren and sisters, if we would have our household feeding upon Christ we must set them a godly example. I have known families, — I think I know some now, — where the training is certainly severe enough, perhaps too much so, and where the teaching is as clear as it is cold, but where the example set before the children is not good. Now, if you pray in one

way with your lips, and in another way with your lives, your lives will win the day, and your children will rather be like what you are than what you ask for them to be. It is a great pity when men, who seem good at the prayer-meeting, are really bad at home, — when those, who show much kindness to their Christian friends, seem to have given away all their honey to comparative strangers outside the walls of their own house, but have no sweetness left for their own children. Let us, - dear friend, endeavor always to set such an example as it will be safe for our sons and daughters to follow; and then I think there, will very rarely to found any instance where training, teaching, prayer, and a good example have gone together, where the blessing of God has failed to come. God grant to you, brethren and sisters, at any rate, the grace to attend carefully to all these matters; and then if, peradventure, you should prove to be the father of an Ishmael, or the mother of an Ishmael, you will not have to say, "I kept the vineyards of others, but mine own vineyard have I not kept;" but you will feel that you did use such means as were within your reach, even though the blessing of God did not come to your children. I pray, beloved, that it may to the privilege of every one of you to have the Lamb of God for your whole household, and that each member of your family, from the youngest to the oldest, may joyfully partake of all the benefits of the common sacrifice which is provided for all the chosen.

That will suffice for our first point, which is, that the test reminds us of a primary privilege.

II. Now, secondly, The Text Is Silent About A Certain Contingency Which Would Seem To Have Been Possible.

You observe that it speaks about what was to, be done when the household was not large enough to eat the lamb, but it says nothing about what was to occur if the lamb was not sufficiently large to feed the household. Oftentimes, we can learn much from the silence of Scripture. We know that it is so in the case of Melchizedek; since his parentage is not mentioned, the silence is significant. And so, here, the silence concerning such a contingency as the insufficiency of the paschal lamb for the household is, I think, meant to teach us an important lesson. It is probable that the lamb was, literally speaking, never too little for the household for this reason, that the Jews say that the Passover was not intended to be eaten with a view to feasting, but that frequently only a small portion was eaten. There were, doubtless, large families, but there was sufficient for each one to have a small portion of the lamb; just as we do not come to the Lord's supper merely to eat and drink, but we come there for a religious observance, and a single portion of bread and a sip of wine suffice us. There may have been as many as twenty persons in one house who would partake of the lamb, and, in our Lord's case, we know that, at the last supper, he sat down to the Passover with the twelve, making thirteen with himself; but the contingency is not supposed that there should be an insufficient provision in the lamb for the proper observance of the feast.

And now, using the type spiritually, let us rest assured that, it never can happen that there should not be enough of Jesus Christ to feed all our families. "Well," says one father, "we are a very numerous household; our children need a very large table, and when they all sit down together, they make a tribe equal to that of good old Jacob." Yes, and no doubt some of those Jewish families were as large as that, yet they all fed upon the paschal lamb; and there is enough in Christ for all your family, and there would be enough even if it consisted of five and twenty persons, or even of five and twenty thousand. If any of them perished, it would not be because Christ was not sufficient for them, but because they had not received him, had not believed on him. Do not let the number in your household restrain your praying or working for them, and rest not until, by God's good grace, the whole of them shall know and trust in Jesus.

"But," says another, "our family is more peculiar than that, for we are a family of sinners." It happens, sometimes, that a man, who in former times, was a very great offender, is converted, but he is like a speckled bird to all the rest of his family. His brother is a drunkard, his sister is godless, his father and mother despise religion; and as he looks round upon them, he can only wonder how it was that sovereign grace should ever have selected one out of such a family as his. He does not remember any one of his relations who ever made a profession of religion. They have been "the devil's own" as far back as he can trace. Well, beloved friends, if it is so with any of your families, do not hesitate, for a single moment, in your prayers or in your efforts for them, under such a wicked, dishonoring notion as that, perhaps, your family is too bad for Christ to save, their sins too many for his blood to wash away, and their necessities too great for him to relieve. That cannot be. You have an all-sufficient Savior to talk of, to rely upon, and to bring before them. Go to him in prayer for all your family, beseeching that all the members of your ungodly family may yet participate in the blessings procured by the Lamb of God. I do not know anything in the Bible that ought to check our prayers for our whole households. The doctrine of election may suggest to some ignorant persons the idea that they cannot pray for all; but let us always remember that the doctrine of election which is a most blessed truth, — is never used in Scripture as a damper to our prayers. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men," meaning all ranks and conditions of men and all sorts of men. We are not told concerning anybody that we may not pray for him, with the one exception that, if we knew a man to have committed the unpardonable sin, — which we do not and cannot know, — it is written, "I do not say that he shall pray for it." But, in any other case, we may pray hopefully, and I know of nothing in the Scriptures that should hinder earnest effort for the salvation of our whole households. Never ought we to look any child of ours in the face, and feel, "Well, I never will speak to that child about Christ, it would be useless; he cannot be saved. It would be antagonistic to the whole current of Sacred Scripture for us to imbibe any such notion as that, so may we never imbibe it! Neither do

I know of anything in Scripture that should lead us to give up hope concerning any who belong to a household in which some have already been saved. If Christ has saved me, I gather from that fact this inference, that he can save anybody. I have never doubted the possibility of the salvation of anybody since Jesus Christ saved me, for I feel that he went about as far as he could go then, and all other sinners must come within the reach of his merciful power. So plead on, work on, train on, teach on, and do not relax your efforts, or suffer your hopes to be damped, till the whole household shall have been brought to feed upon Jesus Christ; for, rest assured that, at the King's banquet of mercy, there was never a failure of viands yet. Behold how the tables groan with the weight of the oxen and the fatlings for the great gospel supper; and the wine and milk are poured out with unstinted hand. There shall be enough to satisfy the hunger and thirst of all who shall ever come to that table as long as time shall last; and if, as indeed it shall yet be, thousands and tens of thousands and millions should come flocking to the house of bread, there will always be found enough and to spare for all who come.

III. But now, thirdly, I come to the very heart of the text, where it mentions, in so many words, A Probability For Which It Provides: " if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls."

Brethren, that which was a possibility in Egypt is not only common but universal with us. My household and my father's household, — "we can rejoice to know that they feed upon the Lamb of God; but our households alone are much too little for the Lamb. If I know that I and my sons are saved, I cannot feel that we alone would be sufficient to reward our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the travail of his soul. You, my friend, said that you had a large family; but you could not call your sons and daughters together, and say, "My dear children, now that I see you saved, I feel that Christ is quite sufficiently rewarded for all that he has done." Oh, no! It is a very great proof of his grace and mercy that he has saved your children, yet you look upon it almost as a little thing in comparison with what his infinite sacrifice must have bought, and his work and death must deserve as their crown.

Our household is also too little to sing the praises of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Suppose that, in us and in our children, all the attributes of Jesus Christ should be revealed in a very remarkable degree. That will be something for which to praise him throughout eternity; but, dear friends, merely to have those attributes revealed in father, and mother, and five or six children or grandchildren, will not suffice; we want Christ to be revealed in thousands, and tens of thousands, and unnumbered millions of saved souls. Our household is indeed too little to sing the praises of this blessed Lamb, and we do well often to cry, —

**"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"**

We long to hear ten thousand times ten thousand tongues singing

"Worthy the Lamb."

Our household is also too little to do all the work that is to be done for Jesus, in proclaiming him as the Lamb of God. It would be a great mercy if God gave us the privilege of having many sons who all preached the gospel, and many daughters who were all eminent in the church as teachers, deacons, missionaries, and the like.

It would be a great privilege to have a whole family all diligently employed in tire service of the Savior; but if a man had twenty sons, and they were all preachers, would he say, "There are quite enough now to do Christ's work"? Oh, dear no; our household is too little for the Lamb in all the senses that I have mentioned; we want more to feed upon Jesus, more to praise Jesus, and more to proclaim Jesus.

There are some brethren, who meet in a little building, in an out-of-the-way street, who seem to feel that their household is quite big enough. The new Jerusalem, according to them, was intended to comprise some little, miserable hamlet, bounded on the North and East by a ditch of strict communion, and on the South and West by a rampart of Hyper-Calvinistic doctrine; but I like to think of Jesus Christ's kingdom as very widely extended, his throne as high and lifted up, and the loyal subjects over whom he reigns as an enormous, multitude, whom no man can number, who shall be given to him as the reward of the travail of his soul. This Tabernacle church, numbering five thousand souls, is much too little for the Lamb. If we could have the Agricultural Hall crowded, and all there should say that they were converted, and if they all were really converted, it would still be too little for the Lamb. And if we had the Agricultural Hall multiplied twenty times over, and all of them full of saved souls, it would still be too little for the Lamb; and if all in England, and Scotland, and America, and France, and in every country where Christ is preached, were converted, it would still be too little for the Lamb; and if we were to have all the inhabitants of Europe and Asia brought to Jesus, I should still say that it was too little for the Lamb; and if we could add all in Africa and Australasia, as long as there was an island of the sea in which the people were not converted to Christ our hearts would still cry, "The household is too little for the Lamb!"

**"Ah! reign wherever man is found,
Our Spouse, beloved and divine!
Then are we rich, and we abound,**

When every human heart is thine;”

but not till then, — till over the whole earth the knowledge of the Lord shall be spread as the waters cover the sea; until then, we shall still feel that the household is too little for the Lamb.

What was the Israelite to do to meet the contingency of the household being too little for the lamb? The provision was, “Let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls;” and the Christian man, whose household is certainly too little for the Lamb of God, is to call in his neighbor to share the blessing with him. Brother, if you and all your household are saved, call your neighbor to the great gospel feast. I do not mean merely the person who lives next door to you; for, in London, it often happens that there is nobody further off than the person who lives next door to us; but your neighbor may be the person sitting next you in the pew, or the man who works at the next bench to yours in the shop, or someone with whom you meet in trade or in the order of God’s providence. Any one of those people may be the neighbor to join with you in feeding upon the lamb God has put him in your way for some reason or other; and, certainly, not, that you may be an injury to him. It must be that, at least, you may endeavor to be of service to him. We are all more or less dependent upon one another. One of the obligations of near neighborhood should be that we should seek our neighbour’s good, even as the commandment says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;” and although that relates to all mankind, it must refer in a very eminent and emphatic sense to the man who is literally our neighbor.

Look, then, after the man who is near to you; and if you do this, you will not have so far to go as if you looked after anybody else. God is a God of economy, so he did not say to the Israelite, “You are to bring into your house, to make up your company at the Passover, the man who lives at the furthest end of Goshen;” but he saved his people as much trouble as possible by saying that the man “and his neighbor next unto his house” were to unite in the celebration. You, who live in the South of London, are not commanded to go and tramp six or seven miles in order to find someone in the North of London to whom you may be useful; but you are first to look after those who live in the street in which you yourself live, or with whom, you come into connection in your daily life. There is a very good regulation concerning the clearance of snow, — that each householder shall clear the pavement in front of his own house, if that rule could always be carried out, London would be cleaner than it is now after a fall of snow. Let us all try to act like that with regard to the moral and spiritual snow that lies on the pavement opposite to us. All who live in London will soon be evangelized if each Christian man seeks to win for Christ “his neighbor next unto his house;” and then if that neighbor seeks to win his next-door neighbor, and that one his neighbor, and so on. It will not only be a saving of effort, but it will be an orderly regulation by which it will be guaranteed that the truth shall be brought to the notice of all who need it.

Besides, your neighbor is the person who is most likely to be, influenced by you. A total stranger would need more time to introduce himself, but your neighbor already knows something of you; and if he sees that you are a consistent Christian that will materially assist you in delivering your message to him. If you are living as you ought to live, your neighbor knows something about the effect which the gospel has had upon your life. For you to speak to him, therefore, will be most fitting, for you are the man who can give the living example as well as the spoken word.

Above all, he is the person whom you are specially bidden to seek. We are to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; but there is a special obligation upon us to preach that gospel to the one who is nearest to us. Dear brethren and sisters, do you always attend to this matter? Do you talk of Jesus Christ to those who live near you, or with whom you are brought into contact? Some Sundays ago, at the East London Tabernacle, Mr. Archibald Brown spoke to his people about this duty, and then he stopped, and said, “Now we will put into practice what I have been urging upon you; will every Christian in the Tabernacle speak to the person who is next to him?” And everybody in the building was spoken to, there and then, about Christ. It was a good plan, and it resulted in the conversion of a great number of persons, while there were many others who were brought under conviction of sin, and who will, it is hoped, be led to the Savior through that striking personal appeal. I will not stop my sermon, and ask you to do that; but I will ask you to do it every time you come together into this place, and as often as you have a proper opportunity of doing it in your daily calling. Be wise and prudent as to the time when you make your appeal. Religion is not to be rammed down people’s throats; but watch for a suitable opportunity of speaking for Christ and that opportunity will come to you sooner or later. You may do harm if you do not take care to speak at the right time. The wise mien tells us that “to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;” so watch for the occasion of bearing testimony to Christ and then, feeling that your household is too little for the Lamb of God, try to introduce him to others.

I fancy I hear somebody say, “Ah, but they only brought in Israelites to feed on the paschal lamb; they did not call in the Egyptians.” Quite so, nor will you, so you need not be frightened about that matter. None but God’s elect ones will spiritually feed upon Christ. Some people seem to be afraid lest we should be the means of saving some of the non-elect, but that is a fear which never troubles either my head or my heart; for I know that, with all the effort and preaching in the world, we shall never bring more to Christ than Christ has had given to him by his Father. You will never fall into that trouble. Our Savior has bidden us preach the gospel to every creature; he has not said, “Preach it only to the elect;” and though that might seem to be the most logical thing for us to do, yet, since he has not been pleased to stamp the elect in their foreheads, or to put any distinctive mark upon them, it would be an impossible task for us to perform; whereas, when we preach the gospel to every creature, the gospel makes its own division, and

Christ's sheep hear his voice, and follow him. It is unnecessary to stop the ears of other sheep, or to try to prevent your voice from travelling where other sheep are found; but only the true sheep of Christ will recognize his voice in the gospel message, or be obedient to it. Therefore, let not your zeal be repressed by any doctrinal views, however sound; for, depend upon it, sound doctrine is never inconsistent with obedience to the command to preach the gospel to every creature. Sound precept and sound doctrine must agree.

IV. The last thing upon which I have to speak is not in my text, yet The Whole Subject Suggests Thoughts Upon Neighborly Fellowship In The Gospel.

Here is a man, whose household is too little for the lamb, and he has called in his next-door neighbor to share the feast with him. "Come in, friend," says he, "I have a wife and two children, and our household is too little for the lamb. You have a wife and one child; come in, and we will keep the Passover together."

I know what the result of that invitation would be. First, there would be sweet fellowship. They would feed upon the same lamb; and, in doing so, they would come to know each other as they had never done before. They would talk together most gratefully concerning the divine plan of sacrifice by which they were being saved while Egypt was being destroyed. They would talk to each other about that remarkable day when there was darkness over all the land of Egypt except in the houses of the Israelites, for they had light in their dwellings. They would talk about those flies and frogs that came up in swarms over the land, and how the mighty arm of Jehovah had been outstretched on their behalf. I think that the members of both families would be all the happier after meeting under one roof, and feeding together upon the paschal lamb. It would be a pleasant time for all of them; and I can assure you that, if you are the means of bringing any souls to Jesus Christ, you will find that those whom you bring to him, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are the very best companions you have ever had. You will talk together very sweetly of all that the Lord has done for you, and you will thus warm each other's hearts. Like two firebrands, that might only have smouldered alone, you will burn and blaze when you are put together.

Then, after the feast was over, there would be pleasant relations established between those two families. Surely, after they had been together that night, sheltering under the same sprinkled blood, feasting on the same paschal lamb, partaking of the same bitter herbs, and each one standing with his loins girt and with his staff in his hand, the members of those families would never be at enmity against one another. They must always have felt that they were very near akin to one another; and it is a still more blessed kinship that is established and cemented at the cross of Christ. Where we love each other for Christ's sake, and love Christ as we see him revealed in one another, such love as that will outlast our earthly life, and will reach on into eternity, and be sweet even in heaven.

I should say, dear friends, that both those families would have very pleasant memories of that Passover; and out of those memories would grow future communion. The master of one household, when he met the other, years afterwards, in the wilderness, would say to him, "Do you remember, Jacob, coming to my house on the Passover night?" "Yes, Ephraim," the other would reply, "I remember it well; your family was too little for the lamb, so we joined together for the feast." One would ask, "Will you ever forget that night?" "No," the other would say, "it was very solemn, but it was very sweet, and I think I liked it all the better because it was in your house." And the first one would say, "And I am sure that I enjoyed it all the more because I had you to come in and share it with me."

So those memories, you see, would beget now communion and they would be ready to help each other, and to cheer each other in the future. They would often make interchanges of experience; and interchange of experience is like profitable bracing, it enriches all concerned. They that fear the Lord, when they speak often one to another concerning him, are sure to be mutually helpful to one another; and I think that this bringing in of others to increase the family for the observance of the Passover would be certain to lay the foundation of much mutual intercourse and much mutual benefit in the future. And, surely, brothers and sisters, in proportion as, by the grace of God, we labor successfully to bring others to Christ and so Christ's family is increased, we shall be anticipating the joy of heaven. It will never be said there that the household is too little for the Lamb. When Christ comes in all his glory, and all his redeemed ones come with him, — when he gathers all who have been redeemed with his precious blood about him at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and he himself drinks the wine new in the kingdom of his Father, it will not be said then that the household is too little for the Lamb, for the whole spiritual household of Israel shall then be gathered together; the complete company redeemed by blood shall muster at that one "general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven," and Christ shall then "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Until that glorious gathering shall take place, brothers and sisters, keep on inviting others to the Lamb of God; and as for you, who have never yet trusted in the blood of Jesus, or tasted of his grace, may the Lord, in his infinite mercy, bring you to him this very hour, and then this shall be the beginning of months unto you; you will reckon your true life as dating from this hour. The Lord grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Both Sides of the Shield

NO. 2233

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“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidm. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.” — Exodus 17:8, 9.

IN trying to understand the truth of God we are in great danger of being one-sided. One man catches at part of a truth, and says, “That is it, and that is the whole of it.” Another man lays hold of another side of truth, and he says, “This is the whole of it;” and straightaway there arises a contention between them. They are like the men who quarrelled as to the material of which a certain shield was made. One of them said that it was a golden shield; the other was equally sure that it was a silver one: whereas it so happened that it was gold on one side and silver on the other. So they fiercely wrangled when they might very well have been agreed if they had known a little more. Most truths have two sides, and it is well to try to see both of them. Nearly every doctrine in the Word of God is balanced by some other doctrine, and many of the differences amongst the people of God have arisen from the undue stress which has been laid on one aspect of truth, while the other side has been altogether neglected. This danger very frequently besets us. For instance, some see the sovereignty of God, and are so carried away with that sublime truth, that they deny the responsibility of man; they thus both wrest the doctrine they do know, and fight against the doctrine they do not know. Others can see the universality of the gospel invitation, and with large hearts can urge all men to turn unto God and live; but they have never seen the speciality of this redemptive work of Christ, and so fail to understand the eternal purpose of God to save his chosen people. Running away with half a truth, they are like men that go through the wilderness wearing only one shoe, and they get lame of one foot, and that makes them limp all over. It does not matter which foot it is that is lame; the man is a cripple if either foot is thus afflicted.

It is essential for us to hold our minds ready to receive whatever the Holy Ghost teaches, and frequently to accept truths which we cannot harmonize. I have long ago given up all attempts to reconcile what God has revealed in one part of the Bible with what he has made known in another part. If I find in God's Word doctrines which appear to me to be at variance with the teaching in other passages, I say to myself, “God knows where these things harmonize, and if he had wanted me to know it, he would have told me. As he has not told me, why should I worry myself about the matter? I am not going to speculate and theorize as to where these truths meet; nor will I cast a bridge of gossamer across the deep gulf which I fancy I see, and then trust myself to a thread that cannot bear my weight.” “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.” One said to me, the other day, concerning two great doctrines, “How do you make these two agree?” I answered by first asking another question, “How do I make two things agree that never fell out? There is no need for me to attempt anything of the kind. These two truths are perfectly reconcilable; and as they come from God's mouth, it would be as difficult for you to show that they do not agree as it is for me to show that they do agree.” God does not say “Yea” and “Nay.” The Lord does not blow hot and cold. If he reveals two doctrines which apparently contradict each other, yet are they both true, since both are spoken by the God who cannot lie; and if I cannot see how they can be both true, it comforts me to think that I am not asked to see it; I am expected to believe it, and God's grace gives me the faith to do even that. In fact, I rather like a difficulty, for then there is an opportunity for the exercise of faith. It is glorious, when one is sailing, to come right up under the lee of a great rock, and to be compelled to say, “Well, I cannot proceed any further this way.” What then? Why, just let your anchor down, and make a harbour of the rock, and lie there at rest while stormy winds do blow. That is what you should do with difficult doctrines; make a quiet haven of the mysterious truth, and let it shelter you in time of doubt or despondency. When the storm is passed, you will find that there are other ways for you to go where it is perfectly plain sailing. Seeing that the revelation is divine, there must be mysteries which mortals cannot understand at present. Let us comfort ourselves with our Savior's words, “What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.” Some day the way will be made plain before us; and meanwhile, our attitude should be that of trustful children, who believe implicitly whatever their loving father tells them, whether they comprehend it or not.

In the present discourse, I am going to take up two sets of truths which are rather varied, and yet are very practical withal. My range of thought will be extensive, but I will not wander from the incident before us. There are four things which have been suggested to my mind while meditating upon this text and its surroundings, each of which may be viewed from two standpoints. First, in this assault of Amalek on the people of God, we see persecution in its double aspect; secondly, in the rod of Moses we behold instrumentality in its double relation; thirdly, in the battle we observe prudence in its double activity; and lastly, in the leaders of the people we are reminded of Christ in his double capacity as he pleads for us yonder and fights for us here.

I. First, let us look at Persecution In Its Double Aspect.

On the one hand, notice that this attack upon Israel was Amalek's great sin, on account of which the nation was doomed to be extirpated. Because of this, God said, "I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." But, on the other hand, this assault was the result of Israel's sin, for it is significantly put after the strife of Massah and Meribah, "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." The point is this: persecution may come to you from evil men, distinctly from them, and it may be their wicked free will which makes them assail you; and yet, at the same time, it may be your sin which lies at the bottom of it, and because you have erred they have been permitted, and even appointed, to bring trouble upon you. Let us think of these two things.

Notice well that assaults upon us may arise from the sins of others. It is right that we should recognize this, lest in the dark day we should become unduly discouraged. Persecution often arises because we come into conflict with wicked men, but God will judge our adversaries; he will remember his covenant with his people, and deliver us from the hand of all our enemies.

These Amalekites attacked Israel, and greatly sinned in so doing, for they were the first that made war against God's people. He who had so graciously chosen and kept them, who with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm had brought them through the Red Sea, had espoused their cause; and his word, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," had been a kind of shield to Israel in her earliest days. Though Abraham and others had, at times, gone forth to battle, nobody had fought with Israel since she had become a nation, and by mighty signs and wonders had been delivered from the hand of Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt. But Amalek first among the nations dared to assail the chosen people of God; and hence a stern doom was decreed against him. He had heard what great things God had done for his people, and yet he presumed to fight against them, and in so doing impiously lifted up his hand against Jehovah himself. He became the leader in this particular form of evil, and thus assumed a fearful responsibility, and assured to himself a terrible judgment.

But the impiety was still worse; for Amalek went out of his way to attack Israel. The people had not come into his territory; they were a good way off it, and were passing quietly by; but we read, "Then came Amalek." His envy was stirred up so much that he came away from his own region to fight with Israel without any provocation. Amalek was a descendant of Esau, and the hate of Esau towards Jacob so burned in the breast of Amalek towards Israel, that he came a long journey in order that he might at once, without proclaiming war, fall suddenly upon the hosts of Israel. Because the attack was thus wanton, he had to suffer the stern judgment of God. Let not wicked men imagine that, because God is in heaven and they are upon the earth, they can with impunity oppose his people. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Woe be to the man who wantonly attacks the saints of the Most High God! Be not disquieted, O child of God, if this is thy case! "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

Moreover, Amalek in this act went forth to fight against God himself. It was not with Israel alone that he warred; he battled also with Jehovah, the God of Israel. In the words of the sixteenth verse, as some translate them, Amalek had laid his hands upon the throne of God, therefore God laid his own hand upon the throne, and swore by his throne that he would uproot Amalek from among the nations. It was because the opposition to the Israelites was distinctly on account of God himself that therefore Amalek had to be cut off. Dear brothers and sisters, you and I may be assailed by wicked men, and we may distinctly trace the whole of it to their malice, and to their enmity against God himself; but though that may be all true, yet we must not therefore be ourselves malicious towards them. Neither must we be proud, as though we were innocent, and they along were guilty. Wicked men nailed our Savior to the cross, but his prayer for them was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Dearly beloved, if the ungodly hate you, and persecute you, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." When you are persecuted for righteousness' sake, the Lord takes notice of it. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" was the word which came from the excellent glory to him who journeyed to Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." When he persecuted them, he was really persecuting their Master. Be not, then, troubled if men revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for Christ's sake; but rather "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Leave the issue with the Lord; the battle is his, and he will, in his own time and way, overthrow all his and your adversaries.

Let us now turn our thoughts to the other aspect of this subject. The guilt of ungodly men in persecuting God's people is not inconsistent with my next statement, that assaults upon us may also arise from our own sins. We may have brought the evil upon ourselves; and we had better look to it that there be not a sin of our own that lies at the root of what we suffer, for it was so with these people. When they had chided with Moses, and murmured against God, "Then came Amalek."

Israel had been quarrelling with God. Do you wonder, then, that other people quarrelled with them? You may often read your sin in its punishment; and, if you had prophetic eye enough, you might see your chastening in your offense. Many a time our severity to others is the reason for God's apparent severity with us. If we have withheld from the poor, we need not wonder if God withholds from us; and if we have been slow to forgive, we need not marvel if we do not soon get a sense of forgiveness for ourselves. We often urge people to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. Let me reverently say another thing — do unto God as

you would that God should do unto you; for “with the froward God will show himself froward.” That ink with which we wrote the ill word, God will use in the writing down of our sentence. It was so in this case; Israel quarrelled with God, and now Amalek quarrels with Israel.

They put a question about God, “Is the Lord among us, or not?” — a horrible question, since it involved a doubt as to the veracity of Moses, and as to the reality of all the great wonders which were wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness. But, because they questioned God, God makes it a serious question between them and Amalek — a question which, for a while, seemed to be answered favourably, for Israel prevailed. But soon it was answered unfavourably, for Amalek prevailed. The conflicting hosts sway to and fro on the battle-field, first victors, then vanquished; again conquering, then once more conquered. How will the terrible struggle end? No wonder that God puts the issue in question, when they had put him in question. If you question God, he will soon leave you to question yourselves. I do not wonder that men say, “Have I any faith?” when they begin to doubt the very inspiration of Scripture. What is the good of having any faith when there is nothing left for you to believe? You may well fear to build upon that Scripture whose very foundations you have undermined. If we make God a question, God will make our safety a question, and we shall have a stern fight for it.

Moreover, we find that Israel had uttered threats against Moses, so that he said, “They be almost ready to stone me.” Now, if they would stone the man of God, is it at all wonderful that the men of the world were ready to kill them? If you go against Moses, God will send Amalek against you, for remember that God does chasten his people. Though he forgives, he chastens; and he chastens all the more because he forgives. He condemns us in our consciences, that he may not condemn us at the judgment-seat. He afflicts us here, that we may not be destroyed with the world at the end. Now is the day of the believer’s chastisement for his benefit. By-and-by will be the time of the unbeliever’s punishment, which shall bring him no benefit, but shall be the just reward of his evil deeds. Child of God, do you wish to receive chastisement? You have only to go into sin, and you may rest assured that you will not escape the rod. If you are a bastard, you may, perhaps, sin and prosper; but if you are a true-born child of God, you cannot sin without smarting for it.

“Did I meet no trials here, No chastisement by the way, Might I not, with reason, fear I should prove a castaway? Bastards may escape the rod, Sunk in earthly vain delight; But the true-born child of God Must not, would not if he might.”

So, there is our first point. We may sometimes justly charge our afflictions upon the ill intent of ungodly men; and yet, at the same time, we may have to charge them also upon ourselves. It may be equally true that we have procured them by our own slips and stumblings in the ways of the Lord, as that evil men have wickedly raised their hand against us. So, when attacks are made upon us, let us be more careful to search our own hearts, and examine our own lives, than to condemn the faults of other men. To their God they will have to render their own account.

II. In the second place, let us think of Instrumentality In Its Double Relation.

Here, again, another contrast is to be found in the text and its connection. If you will notice, in the fifth verse, God says to Moses, “Take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river;” but when Moses talks about the rod, in the ninth verse, which forms our text, he says, “To morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.” In both verses it is the same rod which is spoken of. God calls it the rod of Moses; Moses calls it the rod of God; and both these expressions are true. I want you to recollect that. The first is true: it is the rod of Moses; that is the human side, and in this connection it is sometimes called the rod of Moses, and sometimes the rod of Aaron. But the divine side is just as noticeable, and then it is called the rod of God. With reference to the instrumentality which God is pleased to use, we must thus remember its twofold nature, and look on both sides of the shield.

One side is that God calls it the rod of Moses, and so honors him. Wherever there is an opportunity of doing honor to the faith of his own servants, God is never slow to use it. He is a King who delights to give glory to his warriors when they behave themselves bravely in the heat of battle. It gives him pleasure to knight them on the field, and let them know that they have done well. At the end he will say to those who have been valiant for his cause, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Even here he gives his chosen a foretaste of that full approval which will make their heaven complete. God is not afraid of spoiling his people by saying a good word about them. You remember the story of the man who had a good wife, and one said to him, “Why, she is worth her weight in gold.” “Yes,” he said, “she is worth a Gibraltar rock in gold, but I never tell her that. You know that it is necessary to maintain discipline, and, if I were to tell her how much I really value her, she would not know herself.” Well, now, that is wrong. It does people good to be told how highly we value them. There is many a Christian man and woman who would do better if now and then someone would speak a kindly word to them, and let them know that they had done well. God himself gives us an example of this, for he here puts honor on his servant, by saying to Moses, “Thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.” Moses was the instrument whom God used against Pharaoh; and though his rod was in itself only a common stick, yet it was he who used the rod, and it was really that rod with which he smote the river. God actually did use him; and it is not God’s way to use a man, and then say nothing about it. God ascribes to Moses what Moses really did. We must never despise the instrumentality which God uses. The

tendency of our nature is to run to the other extreme, and to rest in instrumentality. We often need to remember that word, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." But in trying to avoid that rock, we must not run on the other, and slight all instrumentality. God will have his servants esteemed; and, if he puts honor upon them, we cannot be wrong if he also honor them.

Moreover, it really was the rod of Moses, and would not so well have fitted any other hand. God does not put into a position of influence a man unfit for the post. Even Moses did not work wonders with the rod until he had renounced the riches of Egypt, and borne the burden of life in the wilderness. There was a fitness in the fact of the rod being in the hand of such a man. He had no rod when, in his fleshly energy, he slew the Egyptian whom he found oppressing the Hebrew slave. Had it then been in his hand, what sad havoc he might have made! But now he used it as God directed. In fact, the rod was the symbol of his authority, and that authority was not bestowed upon him until he was qualified to exercise it. Thus, in a very real sense, it was the rod of Moses. In addition to this, it was the faith of Moses which gave power to his rod; he himself was the conductor of the divine energy. Had the rod been wielded by another man, self-appointed, and lacking the confidence which Moses had come to possess in God, it would have been simply a powerless stick; but because of his authority, and because of his faith, it was meet to call it "the rod of Moses." When a man is evidently used of God, let us be quick to recognize the special qualities which render him worthy to be used, and let us esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. Thus we see that God calls the almond branch, which did such wonders in Egypt and at the Red Sea, the rod of Moses.

On the other hand, Moses calls it the rod of God, and so honors God. He whom God uses gives God the praise, for God is ever the source of our strength; and if any work is done that is worth the doing, unto him must be ascribed all the glory. It was not in his own might that Moses turned the waters of the Nile into blood, and caused the fish to die. It was not by any power inherent in himself that he made the dust of Egypt to live, and become a terrible plague to the people. It was not by any human magic that Moses divided the Red Sea, and made a way for the ransomed nation to march through its depths. No one knew better than he that the instrument that branded the breast of the Red Sea, and left a dry mark where it fell, was the rod of God, not man's. It is he alone that doeth great wonders, and unto his name be all the praise. "Non nobis, Domine," must ever be our psalm of adoration unto Jehovah; "Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory."

Let us learn, from these words of Moses, that instrumentality is not to be decried or despised, for God uses it; but the instrument must never be allowed to usurp the place of God, for it must be always remembered that it is God who uses it. The axe must not exalt itself against him that heweth therewith; but, when there are trees to be felled, it would be folly to throw the axe away. The net must not be made a god that we may sacrifice to it; but it would be idle to go fishing without a net. Use your agencies and your instrumentalities to the very fullest extent, and then know that it is God that worketh in you, and God that worketh by you, if anything is accomplished that is worthy of record.

Thus I have given you two sorts of things in which it is easy enough to blunder if you shut one of your eyes, or if you only look at them in one light: first, the persecution of God's people; and, secondly, the instrumentality used in God's service.

III. And now, for a third thing. Behold, in this incident, Prudence In Its Double Activity. You have that in the text.

Moses said unto Joshua, "Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek." To which Joshua might have replied, "Yes, I will gladly do that, and you will go too, Moses, and fight, will you not?" No, no, he will not. "To morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." You see, as Oliver Cromwell would have put it, prudence trusts in God, and keeps its powder dry. Prudence prays with Moses, while it fights with Joshua. In like manner, in the activities of our holy faith, we must learn to balance work and worship, prayer for victory and conflict with the enemy.

In the case before us, we see that the means are not neglected. Moses did not call all the people to pray when it was time for fighting. He prayed, but at the same time he set the battle in array. This is true wisdom, for "faith without works is dead." We cannot expect to have souls saved if we pray and never preach. We cannot expect to have our children saved if we only pray for them night and morning, and never speak to them about eternal matters, and do not instruct them in the things of God. The means must not be neglected.

Observe how Moses prepared to fight the Amalekites. He said to Joshua, "Choose us out men." He did not lose sight of the necessity of having the fittest warriors, because his trust was in God. If someone, seeing only one side of the question, had come to him, and said, "The battle is the Lord's, why do you want to pick the men? Will not one man do as well as another?" Moses would probably have replied, "These Amalekites are mighty warriors. Take chosen men — men that are able-bodied, men that are expert in war, the choicest men you can find, and go to war with Amalek. We shall need our best men to overcome such a foe. Choose us out men." This is a rule without an exception when you go to work for Christ, bring forth the best of everything that you have, your best thought, your best knowledge, your best ability. Let the church always see to it that she tries to get the best men she can to fight the battles of the Lord. It is a mistake to suppose that anybody will do for Christian work. Christ may use whom he wills, even the weakest things, and the things that are despised; but as for us, we must always look to that which is most adapted to the work, most

suitable for it, ever hearkening to the words of Moses to Joshua, "Choose us out men."

The leader was also chosen — "Moses said unto Joshua." He did not pick up the first youth that he met, and say to him, "Go and fight these Amalekites," but he took the man whom God had fitted for the post of leader in the war, even Joshua, and said to him, "Go out, fight with Amalek." It is well for us, in carrying on the work and warfare for God, to rally round those whom God has qualified to be leaders. Means are not to be neglected, nor may God's work be done in a slovenly style. Choose you out men, and let the leader of them be a choice man, the man of God's choice.

The time for the battle was also chosen. "To morrow I will stand on the top of the hill." Why not to night, Moses? These Amalekites have just been falling upon you. Why not fight them at once? Well, because the people were not ready; it would take a little time to get the fighting men in order. To morrow was quite soon enough. Besides, Moses felt by instinct that he would fight these children of the wilderness best when he could see them; not by night, when they knew the way better than he did, but by daylight. To those of you who earnestly desire to serve God, I would say — Do not be in too great a hurry, lest your indiscreet zeal should bring disaster upon you. "He that believeth shall not make haste." Choose the best time. Serve God wisely. Go about the work as if all depended upon you, and then trust in God, knowing that all depends upon him. Use the same foresight, the same judgment, the same care that you would use if it were solely your own work; and then, when you have done that, fall back upon God, feeling that all your care and all your foresight will be in vain unless he stretches forth his hand to help, and to ensure success.

Note, again, that the battle was most real. Moses did not say, "Choose you out men, and go and drive Amalek away like a flock of sheep." No; but "Go out, fight with Amalek." Believe me, brethren, we make a great mistake if we think that this world is to be conquered for Christ without mighty efforts. Some talk as if the expenditure of few pounds, and the going forth of a few men will end the whole war. It will do nothing of the sort. If nations are to be subdued to Christ, his church must exert all her power. All her power without him is nothing; but if he chooses to use her power, he will have the whole of it brought into use before he gives the blessing. "Choose us our men, and go out, fight with Amalek." When the battle began, it was no child's play; it was a hand-to-hand conflict, a struggle for life or death; and the end of it was that "Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword;" not merely by praying, but "with the edge of the sword." Moses on the hill-top is doing his part by holding up the rod; but you must have Joshua down below with the sharp edge of the sword, or else Amalek will laugh at the prayers of Moses. I should like to have this rule written on every man's mind, that, if he is to serve God, and get a blessing from God, he must have both the prayer of Moses and the sword of Joshua.

But, on the other hand, in this battle, reliance on God is not neglected. Moses ascends the hill holding up his banner, and that banner is the rod of God. The staff on which God's servant had been accustomed to lean, God had blessed, and made it to be a scepter, the sign of the royal presence, and a wonder-working thing in the land. Moses holds this up. The banner is the rod of God, and the banner-bearer is the chosen servant of God. Everything on Israel's side is of God; Moses and Joshua are ordained of God, and the rod chosen of Moses is at the same time the rod of God. This is held up where all the people can see it, and every warrior, as he turns his eye, can behold that rod of God, which had wrought such wonders before, still held aloft above the conflicting armies. When Moses' hands are heavy, the symbol of God's presence need not be lowered; for Aaron and Hur are at hand to hold up his arms. Israel is continually reminded of the interest of God in the battle against Amalek. The rod in the hand of Moses seems to say "God is fighting for you. God's servant is holding up the appointed standard." Undoubtedly that assurance must have largely aided them to go through the battle with a brave heart. The meaning of it would be clear: "Fight, but trust. War with Amalek with the edge of the sword, but prevail over Amalek by prevailing with God in prayer."

Unfortunately, in our work for God, we generally fall into one of two blunders. Either we get a lot of machinery, and think that we shall accomplish everything by that; or else we are like some whom I have known, who have confided so much in prayer that they have done nothing but pray. Prayer is a downright mockery if it does not lead us into the practical use of means likely to promote the ends for which we pray. I have known friends take medicine when they have been ill, and never pray about their sickness. There are some others who pray about their sickness, but never take the proper medicine. They are both wrong. You must have Joshua, and you must have Moses, too, in the time of trial. Go before God with your sickness; but if there be an appointed means that has been made useful to others, use it, for God will bless you by the use of means. Try to see two sides of a thing. Do not trust exclusively to either one or the other. It is a very heinous fault to trust the means without God; but, though it is a much smaller fault to trust in God, and not use the means, yet still it is a fault. Practical prudence will lead you to do both. It gives to Joshua his sword, that he may make it red with the blood of the enemy; and it gives to Moses his rod, that he may go with it up to the top of the hill, and hold it up there in the sight of the people, that all may know that the battle is the Lord's, and that he will deliver the enemy into their hands. God make you wise in these things, and enable you to use both the rod of God and the sword of man!

IV. I have to speak of one other truth, and then I have done. Behold here, in a wondrous type, Christ In His Twofold Capacity. Christ is represented to us here as Moses on the hill pleading, and as Joshua in the valley fighting.

Learn, first, that Christ is pleading for us. He is not here: he is risen, and he has ascended to the right hand of God, even the Father,

and there he is making intercession for his people. It is because he intercedes for us that we win the victory. Cannot your faith's eye see him now, on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in his hand, with all power given to him in heaven and in earth, pleading with authority before the great throne of Jehovah? Here is the secret of our strength. He never fails; he never needs to sit down upon a stone; nor does he need any to stay up his hands because they grow weary. No, blessed be his name, he pleads and prevails from generation to generation, and will continue to do so until he shall descend from heaven a second time to complete the victory of his people! In his mediation is our confidence.

But, then, do not forget that he is also warring for us. He is here, though I have just said that he is not here; in one sense he is gone, and in another sense he remains. On the very eve of his departure, he said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And his promise is for ever true, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." So, though he has gone into the glory, he is yet here in a spiritual sense by the Holy Ghost, he is his lieutenant, who takes the kingdom, and presides over it, and works in it on behalf of King Jesus. He is that "other Comforter" whom the Lord Jesus promised to send to his disciples; and so, though Christ has ascended, that blessed Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, has taken his place, and, by the Holy Ghost, Christ is still here. We need not pray for the Holy Ghost to be poured out. He never will be poured out again, since he was once poured out at Pentecost, and is still here. You may very properly ask to be baptized into the Holy Ghost if you desire to know his power to the full; and you may go down into his influences till you are immersed therein; but how can we ask that the Spirit should again be poured out, when he has not gone back to heaven? He came down once, and here he stays. "He shall abide with you for ever." This is the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and in him Christ is always with us, our greater Joshua, fighting for the people whom he will one day lead into the promised land, the heavenly Canaan.

I think that I see our Joshua now, sword in hand, chasing our adversaries; and I turn my eye upwards, and see our Moses, rod in hand, pleading for his people. Let us see him in both capacities, and thank God that Christ is all — not one type of the law, but all the types — not one of the ceremonials, but all the ceremonials, and all the shadows melting into one great substance. Glory be to his name! Believe in Christ in heaven, and trust him with your prayers. Believe in Christ on earth, range yourself on his side, and rest assured that no foe will be able to stand against him. He is on the battle-field to day; and in the thickest of the fray, when his own people are driven back, and his adversaries begin to rejoice, friends and foes alike shall yet prove the power of his almighty arm. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

**"Fight for thyself, O Jesus, fight,
The travail of thy soul regain."**

So, you see that, though two things may look contradictory, they are often both really true, and are both different sides of one shield. Try, then, always to see both sides of every truth revealed in the Scriptures. Divine truths often resemble tramcars, which travel upon two lines of iron, and yet the two lines make but one tramway. The lines are parallel, and do not touch each other. How could the car travel if they did? This is the truth of God; it is but one truth, but it has two sides which run parallel to each other. Do not try to join them, nor take them up, and make them cross each other; but travel along them till you come to the great terminus above.

God bless you, if you are his people! If not, all is wrong. Oh, may you now trust the living Christ! He is here, ready to hear your cry for mercy; he is there in glory, ready to plead your cause. He waits to be gracious to sinners here below; he waits ill heaven till his enemies shall be made his footstool. May you bow before the silver scepter of his mercy, that you may not be broken in pieces by the iron rod of his justice; and may the Lord be with you all! Amen.

PORCION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Exodus 17.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 686, 665, 664.

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