

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“HEREIN IS LOVE.”

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 19TH, 1896,

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”—1 John iv. 10.

ARE there not scenes and circumstances which now and then transpire before us that prompt an exclamation like that of the apostle, “Herein is love”? When we have seen the devotedness of a mother to her children, when we have marked the affection of friend for friend, and caught a glimpse in different human relationships of the kindness that exists in human hearts, we have said, “Herein is love!” Yesterday, these words seemed to rise up and float upon my tongue, although I did not use them, for they seemed to be consecrated to something higher than creature affection. I had the painful duty of attending the Abney Park Cemetery, to bury a beloved sister in Christ, one of the most useful women we had among us; and as I stood there to commit her body to the grave, I was pleased,—I cannot tell you how I was beyond measure pleased, on that dark foggy day, at that distance from town, to find nearly a hundred, mostly poor people, gathered there to show their respect to their friend, who had helped in many cases to feed them and clothe them, and in every instance had tried to point them to Christ. There were thousands of tears shed of the sincerest and most heavenly kind. Whilst conducting the service, I could not help feeling not only a sympathy with her bereaved husband, but with those who had been the objects of our sister's care,—men and women, who perhaps had given up a day's work, and walked long dreary miles in the unpropitious weather of yesterday, that they might come and mingle their tears together over the dust of one who, as a Christian woman, had served them well. I could not help thinking, and it suggested the text to me, “Herein is love!” Seeing what love had done, and seeing how love comes back in return, I said within myself, when love has learned its way into one bosom, it scatters its seed and fructifies

in the hearts of hundreds more. Love begets love; let it once begin, and none can tell its end.

But the words were too sacred for me to use, even at that solemn service, though they came up so suddenly to the surface of my mind. The apostle had consecrated them to another love, still higher, more profound, more perfect, and more celestial. I shall ask you to-night to look at and consider the wonder which the apostle discovered, and made him, with uplifted hands, exclaim, "Herein is love!"

The wonder, he tells us, which astonished him was not that we loved God; for suppose that all men had loved God, what wonder would there have been in it? God created us. We are wonderful specimens of his power and wisdom. The various devices for securing our comfort and maintaining us in life, the devices within the body and without the body, the way in which the whole world is made to be the servant of man, so that, as George Herbert says,—

"Man is one world, and hath another to attend him,"

these tokens of benevolence ought to have made all men love God. If every creature who sprang from the loins of Adam had lived a perfect life of obedience, and had continually revered the God who made him and supplied his needs, there would not have been anything so very remarkable in the fact, for God deserves the love of all his creatures. Making his sun to shine upon us, and giving us fruitful seasons, keeping us in life, and preserving us from going down into the pit, we ought to love him; and if we did, it would not be anything to excite astonishment.

And, beloved brethren, when the grace of God comes into the human heart, casts Satan out of it, and renders us capable of loving God, there is nothing very surprising in our loving him. I shall not ask you to think of the ordinary love which there is in common Christians. Indeed, the wonder about it is that it should be so ordinary, so little, so faint. It is a great wonder, to be spoken of with tears, that God should do so much for us, and that we should love him so little in return. Watts did well to pen those lines,—

"Dear Lord! and shall we ever lie
At this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to thee,
And thine to us so great?"

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
And that shall kindle ours."

But now, think of the truly earnest missionary; think of such men as Carey, or Moffat, or John Williams,—men who give up all the comforts of life, all the hopes of emolument, and go forth amongst a barbarous people, to suffer insult, perhaps to meet with death for Christ's sake. They brave the terrors of fever and pestilence; they pass through jungles; they dare tempestuous seas; no mountains are too high, no weathers are too stern to deter them. They force

their way into the centre of Africa, or high up amongst the Esquimaux, if they may but tell of the love of Jesus to dying men. It may seem very wonderful to us, but if you come to think of it, compared with what Christ has done for them, they may, and they usually do, sit down and confess that they have done nothing whereof to glory. They have done only what it was their duty to have done, and they all confess that they fall short of the service which Christ deserves. Though we might say, in a modified sense, “Herein is love,” yet, after all, it is but faintly spoken, for it is but comparatively true.

As we have read Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, or some other history of the saints, and conned the story of their confessing Christ before the Inquisitors, singing joyful hymns when their bones were out of joint upon the rack, or standing boldly up upon the blazing faggots while their flesh was being consumed, still testifying to the preciousness of Christ, have we not said, “Herein is love”? Well might we say so as we contrasted our love with theirs; but after all, if you will but think a minute, it is a little thing for a man to be willing to burn to death for one who saved him from everlasting burning. ’Tis sharp work, but it is soon over, and the reward makes up for it all, while grace sustains the sufferer under the fiery trial. There is nothing, even in the love of martyrs, worthy of praise when compared with the exceeding love of Christ. These are stars; let them hide their heads in the presence of the Sun. These are all sweet flowers; yet compare them not with the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, whose fragrance fills both earth and heaven. Those whose spiritual senses are qualified to judge forget all else while they stand entranced before this one gathering up of everything that is lovely, and cry, “Herein is love!”

Oh! this love of Christ; it is beyond all degree, standard, or compass. In comparison with it, other love, high and noble as that other love may be, dwindles into insignificance. Then let me ask you now, somewhat more in detail, to think of the love of God in Christ Jesus towards us, as the text sets it forth.

I. The love of God is LOVE TO THOSE WHO DO NOT LOVE HIM. “Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” When God loves those who love him, it seems to be according to the law of nature; but when he loves those who do not love him, this must be above even all laws,—it is according, certainly, to the extraordinary rule of grace, and grace alone. There was not a man on earth who loved God. There was none that did good,—no, not one; and yet the Lord fixed the eye of his electing love upon sinners in whom there was no thought of loving him. No more love to God is there in an unrenewed heart than there is of life within a piece of granite. No more of love to God is there within the soul that is unsaved than there is of fire within the depths of the ocean’s waves; and here forsooth is the wonder, that when we had no love to God, he should have loved us. This is a mild way of expressing it, for instead of loving God, my brethren, you and I withheld from him the poorest tribute of homage. We were careless, indifferent. Days and weeks passed over our heads in which we hardly thought of God. If there had not been any God, it would not have made much difference to us as to our thoughts, and habits, and

conversation. God was not in all our thoughts; and, perhaps, if somebody could have informed us that God was dead, we should have thought it a fine piece of news, for then we could live as we liked, and need not be under any fear of being judged by him. Instead of loving God, though now we rejoice that he loves us, we rebelled against him. Which of his laws have we not broken? We cannot put our finger upon one command without being compelled to acknowledge that we have violated its claims, or come short of its demands.

I do not want to dilate upon a general doctrine to-night, I rather want to press home to the conscience of every man here that God loves him. You know very well that God did not love you because you loved him, for there was not—you will confess it painfully,—anything like love to God in you, but much, very much, that sprang from natural enmity and aversion to him. Why, then, did he love you? Men do not generally love those who hate them, those who spite them, those who give them ill names; and yet God loved us! Why, there are some of the Lord's people that God loved who, before conversion, used to curse him to his face! The Sabbath-day was the day they took for sensual pleasure. They were drunkards; they were unclean; they were everything that is vile; and yet he loved them! Oh, the wonder of this! When they were reeking in the kennels of sin,—when there was no sin too black and too vile for them to commit,—God loved them. Oh, never dream that he began to love you when you began to love him! Oh, no! but it was because he loved you hard and fast, when you were revelling in your sin, that his love put its arms around you, lifted you out of your sin, and made you what you are. Oh, but this is good tidings to some of you! Perhaps you are still, as all God's people once were, living in sin. You hardly know why you have strayed in here, but perhaps, while you sit and listen, you may hear that God has loved you. Oh, that it may come to be true, that you may prove to be one of his chosen people, whom he loves even though in sin, and whom he will love till you come out of sin, and turn to Christ and get pardon for it! Pray, dear Christian people, pray that it may be so. God hears prayer. Put up the prayer silently now,—“Lord, attract some of thy chosen people to Christ to-night; let some who never thought of him, but were bent on sinning rather than of being brought to God, see Jesus, and find salvation through him.” “Herein is love;” God loved the unlovely, the hateful, the vile, the depraved, and loved them though they loved not him.

II. Another part of the wonder lies in this, THAT THIS LOVE SHOULD COME FROM SUCH AN ONE AS GOD IS. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that *he* loved us.” What does God want in loving us? You never saw a fly on the dome of St. Paul's; it would have been too small an object for you to see when walking round the Cathedral. Now, a fly on the dome of St. Paul's is a monstrous being, a marvellous individual, compared with you crawling about this world. Why, it bears a much larger proportion to St. Paul's than you do to this globe! What an insignificant little creature you are! Supposing you could love that fly,—it would seem a strange thing; or that an angel could love that

fly,—'twere stranger still. But that God should love us, is much more a wonder. Lift up your eyes now to the heavens, and count the stars. Listen to the astronomer, as he tells you that those little specks of light are mighty worlds, some of them infinitely superior to this world of ours, and that there are millions upon millions of such worlds glittering in the sky, and that perhaps all these millions that we can see are only like one little corner, one little sand-hill of the worlds that God has made, while throughout boundless space there may be long leagues of worlds, if I may use the expression, innumerable as the sands that belt the shore around the great and mighty deep. Now, one man in a world—how little! But one man in myriads of worlds, one man in the universe—how insignificant! And herein is love, that God should love so insignificant a creature. For what is God, compared with the worlds, their number, and their probable extent of space? God is infinitely greater than all the ideas we suggest by such comparisons. God himself is greater than all space. No conception of greatness that ever crossed a mind of the most enlarged faculties can enable us to apprehend the grandeur of God as he really is. Yet this great and glorious Being, who filleth all things, and sustaineth all things by the word of his power, condescends to rivet upon us—not his pity, mark you, not his thoughts, but the very love of his soul, which is the essence of himself, for he is love. "Herein is love!" An insignificant creature, vile, and filthy, and polluted, loved by the august Creator, and loved with all the infinite affection of Jehovah's heart. Stand still and wonder. You cannot fathom this depth, you cannot scale this height, for imagination's utmost stretch dies away at the effort.

III. And is it not a point of wonder THAT THIS LOVE SHOULD BE UNSOUGHT? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, *and sent his Son.*" We never sent to him; he sent to us. Suppose that, after we had all sinned, we had fallen on our knees, and cried importunately, "Oh, Father, forgive us!" Suppose that day after day we had been, with many piteous tears and cries, supplicating and entreating forgiveness of God. It would be great love then that he should devise a way of pardoning us. But no; it was the very reverse. God sent an ambassador of peace to us; we sent no embassy to him. Man turned his back on God, and went farther and farther from him, and never thought of turning his face toward his best Friend. It is not man that turns beggar to God for salvation; it is, if I may dare to say it, as though the Eternal God himself did beg of his creatures to be saved. Jesus Christ has not come into the world to be sought for, but to seek that which is lost. It all begins with him. Unsought, unbidden by the object of his compassion, Jesus came into the world. Now, I wonder if it may come true to-night that some here shall be found of God, after whom they have never sought? Such things have happened. When John Williams was converted,—I think you know the story,—there had been an agreement made to go out with a little party of youths to commit sin,—very foul sin, too,—and they sent John Williams into Whitefield's Tabernacle to look at the clock, and the clock happened to be over the door, so that young Williams was obliged to go a little way up the aisle to see it. There

was a crowd, and something that was being said by the preacher caught his ear, and he stood and listened. His companions outside began to be vexed with him for keeping them so long, but he kept them longer still, and the deed of darkness that was to have been done that night was never done, for God had found out John Williams, who had never sought after him. I do not say this to encourage any of you to put off seeking the Lord, for the command is, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near:" but still, here is the mercy. It is written, "I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." The grace of God sometimes comes in like a sheriff's officer, takes a man by the collar, and says to him, "You must turn to-night." Jesus Christ sometimes comes to men as he did to Zaccheus, who was up in the sycamore tree; he says, "Come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." It is not, "If you will," but "I must; I must; it must be so." So, O Lord, make a "must" of it to-night! Oh, make a "must" of it to many here, that thou must abide in their house; then they must give up their sins, and they must turn unto thee! But herein is love, the wonderful love of God in condescending thus, not only to wait for us, but to wait upon us, and come to us with his effectual grace, and save us. Though I speak but feebly on these points, I hope that your hearts will not beat feebly. I trust the children of God will be praising and magnifying the Lord, as they say to themselves, "That is just how he dealt with me; that is precisely how he showed his favour to me. 'Herein is love.'"

IV. How, too, may THE THOUGHTFULNESS OF DIVINE LOVE raise our admiration. "Not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now observe the consideration and counsel this implies. We had sinned against God's law, but his law was not an arbitrary despotism; it was the embodiment of a constitution equitably and benevolently adapted for the government of the universe. It was framed in such wisdom that obedience involved happiness, and violation entailed misery. And punishment for breaking God's laws was not in any respect irrelative or unconnected with the harmony of reciprocal interests. Not to punish the guilty were to exact the penalty of suffering from the innocent. Think what an injury and injustice would be inflicted upon all the honest men in London if the thieves were never punished for their roguery. It would be making the innocent suffer if you allowed the guilty to escape. God, therefore, not out of arbitrary choice, but from very necessity of rightness, must punish us for having done wrong. How was this to be avoided? His mighty love suggested the plan. Had it not done so, a parliament of angels could not have devised a scheme. The assembled senate of all the intellects that God had ever made could not have sketched a plan by which the eternal laws of right and wrong should stand unshaken, and God's honour should be untarnished, and yet he should be able to forgive us. But God's love thought out a plan, a wondrous plan, by which Jesus came to be a Substitute, to stand in our place, that we might go free. But I will not pause over the design, because there is the open manifestation of that kindness and love for us now to look at.

V. "Herein is love,"—SELF-DENYING LOVE, AMAZING LOVE, UN-EXAMPLED LOVE,—language fails me; I know no words by which to set forth the excellence of this love. 'Tis love divine, love beyond degree: God "*sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" It was necessary that this only-begotten Son of the Father should suffer in the flesh, that he should be delivered up into the hands of sinners, cruelly ill-treated, spit upon, nailed to a tree, and put to death. Who among us would give up his son? Dear, unspeakably dear to us are the children of our loins. Well, we might give them up for our country in the day of battle; we might say, "For our hearths and for our homes let the young men go," but 'twere hard, as many a widowed mother has known when she has read the list of the killed in battle, and seen that her brave boy has fallen. The blood-stained drapery of war has had but little glory in her eyes henceforth. But who among us would think of giving up his son to die for his enemy, for one who never did him a service, but treated him ungratefully, repulsed a thousand overtures of tenderness, and went on perversely hardening his neck? No man could do it. Ah! then think what manner of love it is that God's only-begotten Son should be willing to die, that the Holy One should be willing to become a man, willing to take our sins upon him, willing to suffer for those sins, willing to endure the bloody sweat, willing to bare his shoulders to the lictor's scourge, willing to give up himself, body and soul, to the pangs of such a death as was never known before or since. "Herein is love!" If ever I have coveted powers of speech such as God has committed to some men, powers of thrilling the soul and moving the heart, I covet them to-night, for how can I speak of the wondrous tragedy of the cross? How can I set forth the death-throes of my blessed Lord and Master?

Instead of attempting what I must certainly fail to accomplish, I do but ask you to let your mental vision look for a minute at the spectacle itself. He who is the Lord of glory is mocked by rough soldiers. They spit into his face; they pluck his hair; they call him king, and they bow with mimic homage before him. He is scourged, and the scourging is no child's play. He is made to carry his cross upon his shoulders through the streets of Jerusalem. He is brought to a rising knoll outside the city gates,—the Old Bailey, the Tyburn of Jerusalem. He is thrown upon his back; the iron is driven through his hands and feet; he is lifted up; the cross is fixed into its place with a jar to dislocate his bones. He cries, "I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint!" He suffers fever through the irritation of the nerves of the hands and feet, till his mouth is dried up like an oven, and his tongue cleaves to his jaws. He cries, "I thirst!" and they give him vinegar mingled with gall. Meanwhile, his soul is in tortures such as no man has ever felt. His spirit, lashed by a hurricane of divine wrath, is like a sea when it boils as a pot, seething and tossing to and fro. Oh, the unknown depths of Jesu's griefs!—and all this for his enemies; for us who loved him not; for us who never asked it at his hands; for us who refused to have it; for us who, when we are brought to accept the mercy, do not understand it; for us who, even when we somewhat understand it, do not feel anything like a corresponding gratitude; for us who, even if we feel the gratitude,

do not show it, but go our way and forget it; for us who are utterly unworthy of anything like such affection! "Herein is love!" Oh, stand and wonder! I can do no more than ask you to wonder with me; and God grant that our wondering may end in something reciprocal by way of love to him, and something practical by means of love put into action!

VI. With this question I shall conclude, WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE EFFECT OF LOOKING UPON THIS GREAT WONDER?

As the apostle tells us in the next verse: "Beloved, if God so loved us, *we ought also to love one another.*" Christian, by the love which God has manifested to you, you are bound to love your fellow-Christians. You are to love them though they have many infirmities. You have some yourself; and if you cannot love one because he has a crusty temper, perhaps he may reply that he cannot love you because you have a lethargic spirit. Jesus loved you with all your infirmities; then love your infirm brethren. You tell me you cannot love because you have been offended by such a brother; but you also offended Christ. What! shall Christ forgive you all your myriad offences, and you not forgive your brother? What was it, after all? "Well, he did not treat me respectfully." Ah! that is it,—a poor worm wants to be treated respectfully! "But he spoke disparagingly of me; and there is a sister here,—she may be a Christian woman, but she said a very unkind thing of me." Well, yes; but what does it matter? I have often thought, when people have spoken ill of me, and they have been very, very false in it, perhaps, if they had known me better, they might have found something true to say, and so I must be like we sometimes say of a boy when he is beaten and does not deserve it, "Well, he did deserve it, some time or other, for something else." Rather than get angry, smile over the offence. Who are we, that we should expect everybody to honour us when nobody honoured our Lord? Oh, let us be ready at once to forgive even to seventy times seven. A beautiful spirit worthy of a Christian was that of a man who found his horse in the pound one day, and the farmer who put it in said, "I found your horse in my field, and I put it in the pound; and if ever I catch it there again, I'll put it in again." "Well," replied the other, "I found six of your cows in my farm-yard the other night eating my hay; I just drove them out, and put them into your farm-yard; I didn't pound them; and if ever I catch them in my yard again, I'll do the same." "Ah!" the farmer said, "you are a better man than I am;" and forthwith he went and paid the fees, and let his neighbour's horse out of the pound, ashamed of himself. Such a generosity of disposition becomes you, especially to your brother-Christians. If God has such wonderful love to us, do let us love those who offend us, and show bowels of compassion towards the Lord's poor people. It is easy to be courteous to those who are better off than ourselves, and show deference to those that wear respectable attire; but the thing is to love the Lord's people who are poor,—ay, and to love them all the more tenderly for their poverty, for they have in some respects more of the image of Christ than we have. Christ was poor, and so are they. And let us cleave close to God's persecuted ones. Some people always run away from a man as soon as anybody flings a handful of dirt at him;

but if God so loved us when we were sinners, we ought to love our fellow-Christians when they are under a cloud. Are they persecuted for righteousness' sake? Then every brave spirit ought to say, "I am for that man,—I am for that man." I was pleased with the remark of a brother I met, the other day. Alluding to the love he felt for his minister, he said, "The first reason why I came to hear him and love him was that I saw him abused in all the newspapers, and I said, 'There is something good in that man, I am sure of it, and as he is the weaker one, and all are against him, I am on his side till I find something against him.'" Oh, take care to rally round the persecuted Christian! Whenever the child of God is evil spoken of, say, "My place shall be at his side; I will share in such an honour as that, that I may share in the honour which awaits the saints hereafter."

I have tried to speak to some here who are not converted, and to put a few very comforting thoughts before them. If they go home and seek the Lord, he will be found of them; ay, and if they trust Jesus Christ at once, they shall be saved. A young lady was reading a newspaper, and her mother said, "Have you done with it?" She said, "Yes, I have done with it; I was only looking at it to see the death of Jane——. Poor girl, she used to be a Sunday-school teacher with me." Well, she said she had done with it, but you may depend upon it she had not, for the fact that one was dead who had been her companion had not done with her; it would speak to her, and impress her, and if she shook it off, the responsibility would not have done with her. You have heard a sermon to-night, and you may think, "Now I have done with it." Well, it may be so, but it has not done with you. You will be called to account for every truth it contains, for every reminder to your conscience, and every affectionate invitation that reaches your heart. Very few sermons, alas! ever are *done*. The most of them are listened to and forgotten, but if they were all done,—that is, if their counsels and admonitions were carried into effect,—what a blessing it would be! No, you have not done with it, and this text has not done with you. I think—nay, I seem to know—that there are some who never will have done with this text, neither in this life nor in the life to come, for the text is saying to you to-night, "Though you love not God now, yet you shall love him, for he has loved you, loved you with an everlasting love," and the thought of this text will entice you to go and seek Jesus to see if it be so; and when you find it so, you will say to your children, "There is no text in the Bible more beautiful to me than that one, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us;'" and you may tell to your children's children that on such an evening that text seemed to get into your soul, and to be set a-ringing there like the old bell on the Inchcape Rock,—the higher the storm, the louder it rang; and you shall hear it ring, ring, ring till it rings you to Christ, and rings you into heaven, and then in heaven it will make sweet music in your ears, and you will say even there, "Herein is love, not that I loved God, but that he loved me, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for my sins."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XXIII.

I hope we all know this Psalm by heart; may we also know it by heart-experience! It is a sweet pastoral song just suited to our Sabbath evening worship. There is here no din of arms, no noise of war; but there is a delicious hush, only broken by the gentle tinkling of the sheep-bell. God give us that sweet rest to-night!

Verse 1. *The LORD is my shepherd;*

All true rest begins with Jesus, as all the comfort of the sheep is provided for them by their shepherd.

"The Lord is my shepherd." Is it so? Canst thou look up, poor defenceless sheep, and say, "The Lord is my shepherd"? Then comes the blessed inference:—

1. *I shall not want.*

I do not want, I cannot want; I never shall want with such a Shepherd as I have. He will provide for me; nay, more, God himself is my provision. All I need I have, for "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." I cannot provide for myself, but I shall not want. Famine may come, and others who have no God to go to, may pine and perish; but in the worst season I shall not want, for "The Lord is my shepherd."

2. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:*

I am so weak that I even need God's help to enable me to lie down; but "He maketh me to lie down." Yes, the rest of the soul is so hard to attain that nobody ever does reach it except by the power of God. He who made the heavens must make us to lie down if we are really to rest. What delightful rest it is when we lie down in his pastures, which are always green! Did you ever find them dry? Our Shepherd makes us not only to feed, but so to feed that we lie down in the midst of the pastures. There is more than we can eat, so the Lord makes a couch of it for us: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:"

2. *He leadeth me beside the still waters.*

There is, first, contemplation: "He maketh me to lie down." Then there is activity: "He leadeth me." There is also progress, and there is provision for our advance on the heavenly way: "He leadeth me."

He leadeth me beside the waters of quietness; not by the rushing torrents of excitement, nor by the place of noisy strife. "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets."

"He leadeth me beside the still waters." Not, he drives, or drags; but he himself leads, going first to show the way. It is for me to follow, happily to follow, where "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

3. *He restoreth my soul:*

He can do it at once. He restoreth now. He is a restoring God. "He restoreth my soul." He brings my wandering spirit back when I forsake his ways; and having done that, he leads me, even more carefully than before, for a second time we have the psalmist's declaration, "He leadeth me."

3, 4. *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:*

Though death's shadow hovers all around me, and damps my spirit, though I feel as though I must die, and cannot bear up under present trial any longer, "Yea, though I walk," for I do walk, I will not quicken my pace, I will not be in a flurry, I will not run for it. Though death itself shall overshadow me, I will keep up my walk with God. Though I

walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." There is none, therefore I will not fear any. We often feel more afraid through our fear itself than through any real cause for fear. Some people seem to be ever on the lookout for fear where there is none. Do not you see any, nor let any enter your heart; say with the psalmist, "I will fear no evil:"—

4. *For thou art with me;*

Should a sheep fear when the shepherd is with it? What cause has it to fear if that Shepherd is omniscient, omnipotent, and full of tenderness?

4. *Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

Thy rule and thy correction: thy rod, with which I sometimes am made to smart; thy staff, with which I am supported. These are my comforts; why should I fear?

Are you drinking in all this precious truth, dear friends? Are you feeling it in your soul's deepest experience? This Psalm is very good to read, but it is far better to write out from your own experience. Make it a song of your own; not merely a song in the Book, but a song for yourselves.

5. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:*

There is a fight going on, and there are enemies all around. You do not generally have tables set in the hour of battle; but God keeps his people so calm amid the bewildering cry, so confident of victory, that even in the presence of their enemies a table is spread with all the state of a royal banquet. "Thou preparest a table." There is a cloth on the table, there are the ornaments on it, and there are all the accompaniments of a feast: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." They may look on if they like; they may grin, they may wish they could devour, but they cannot sit down at the table, and they cannot prevent me from sitting down at it. Let them blow their trumpets, let them fire their guns: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." It is the very acme of security and repose that is here described. I know of no expression, not even that of lying down in green pastures, that is more full of restfulness than this: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

5. *Thou anointest my head with oil;*

At some feasts, they poured perfumed unguents on the heads of the guests, so God will leave out nothing that is for the joy and comfort of his people. "Thou anointest my head with oil." You shall have delicacies as well as necessaries; you shall have joy as well as safety; you shall be prepared for service as well as preserved from destruction.

5. *My cup runneth over.*

I have not only what I wish, but I have more; not only all I can hold, but something to spare: "My cup runneth over." If this is the case with your cup, dear friend, let it run over in thankful joy; and if you have more of this world's substance than you need, ask the poor and needy to come and catch that which flows over.

6. *Surely—*

This is another of the psalmist's inferences, and a very sure one. He does not say, "Peradventure," but, "Surely"—

6. *Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:*

Here is a prince of the blood royal of heaven attended by two body guards,—goodness and mercy,—which keep close behind him. These are the grooms that ride on the horses of salvation: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." "Goodness"—to provide for me; "mercy"—to blot out my sin. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me,"—not only

now and then, but, "all the days of my life." When I get grey-headed and feeble, and have to lean heavily upon my staff, these twin angels shall be close behind to bear me up, and bear me through.

6. *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

Even while I am here in this world, I will be—

"No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home,"

dwelling with God; and by-and-by, in the fullest sense, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

I always compare this Psalm to a lark. It begins on the ground among the sheep, but up it goes till you may hear its blessed notes echoing among the stars: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." It has its nest in the grass of the green pastures; but it flies up like the strains of sweetest music rising even to the skies: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." God grant that this may be the portion of every one of us, for his great name's sake! Amen.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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