

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AND OF ADOPTION.

A Sermon,

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”—Romans viii. 15, 16.

THESE two verses are full of the word “spirit,” and they are also full of spiritual truth. We have read in previous verses about the flesh and of the result that comes of minding it, namely, death. But now, in this verse, we get away from the flesh, and think only of the work of the Holy Spirit upon our spirits, and of the blessed privilege which comes of it—“that we should be called the sons of God.” We cannot enter into this except by the power of the Holy Spirit, for spiritual truth must be spiritually discerned: our eyes need God’s light, and our spirits need the Holy Spirit’s quickening. We breathe our prayer to the Great Spirit that he would make us feel the full meaning of his word.

I think that I see in the text the fourfold work of the Spirit: first, *the spirit of bondage*; secondly, *the spirit of adoption*; thirdly, *the spirit of prayer*,—here it is, “Whereby we cry.” And fourthly, *the spirit of witness*: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

I. Consider, first of all, THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE. *Much of the bondage in which we are plunged by our fallen nature is not the work of the Spirit of God at all.* Bondage under sin, bondage under the flesh, bondage to the fashions and customs of the world, bondage under the fear of man,—this is carnal bondage, the work of the flesh, and of sin, and of the devil. But there is a sense of bondage, to which, I think, the apostle here mainly alludes, which is of the Spirit of God. Before the Spirit of God within us becomes the Spirit of liberty, he is, first of all, the Spirit of bondage. The Spirit is not first a quickening Spirit to us, but a withering Spirit:—“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.” The divine Spirit wounds before he heals, he kills before he makes alive. We usually draw a distinction between law-work and gospel-work; but law-work is the work of the Spirit of God, and is so far a true gospel-work that it is a frequent preliminary to the joy and peace of the gospel. The law is the needle, which draws

after it the silken thread of blessing, and you cannot get the thread into the stuff without the needle: men do not receive the liberty wherewith Christ makes them free till, first of all, they have felt bondage within their own spirit driving them to cry for liberty to the great Emancipator, the Lord Jesus Christ. This sense or spirit of bondage works for our salvation by leading us to cry for mercy.

Let us notice that *there is a kind of bondage which is, in part at least, the work of the Spirit of God*, although it is often darkened, blackened, and made legal in a great measure by other agencies which do not aim at our benefit. That part of the bondage which I shall now describe is altogether the work of the Spirit of God. That is, first, *when men are brought into bondage through being convinced of sin*. This bondage is not the work of nature; certainly, never the work of the devil. It is not the work of human oratory, nor of human reason; it is the work of the Spirit of God; as it is written, "When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince the world of sin." It needs a miracle to make a man know that he is in very deed a sinner. He will not own it. He kicks against it. Even when he confesses the outward transgression, he does not know or feel the inward heinousness of his guilt, so as in his soul to be stunned, and confounded, and humbled, by the fact that he is a rebel against his God. Now, no man can ever know a Saviour without knowing himself a sinner: even as no man can value a physician while he is ignorant of the existence and evil of disease. By the killing sentence of the law we are bruised, and broken, and crushed to atoms, as to all comeliness and self-righteousness. This, I say, is the work of the Spirit of God; he worketh a necessary spirit of bondage within us by putting us under a sense of sin.

The Spirit of God is always the Spirit of truth, and therefore he only convinces men of that which is true: he puts them into no false, or fanciful, or needless bondage. "When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince the world of sin,"—because it is sinful. When the Spirit puts men into bondage because they are sinners, he only puts them into their right place. When he came to some of us by the law he made us feel what we were by nature; and what we felt and saw was the truth. He made us see things as they really were. Until he came, we put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness; but when the Spirit of truth was come, then sin appeared sin. Then we were in bondage, and it was no fancied slavery, but the very truth.

The Spirit of God also brought us farther into bondage when he *made us feel the assurance that punishment must follow upon sin*, when he made us know that God can by no means clear the guilty, and that he was not playing with us when he said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." We were made to feel the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might not trust in ourselves. At that time we trembled on the brink of fate. We wondered that we were not already in hell. We were so convinced of sin that it was a matter of astonishment to us that the sentence did not immediately take place upon us. We were speechless before God, as to excuse or justification. We could not offer anything by which we could turn away the edge of justice, though we saw it like a glittering sword stripped of the scabbard of almighty patience. Do you know what this means? I can hardly hope that you will prize the

atonement, or feel the sweetness of the expiation by blood, unless, first of all, you have felt that your soul's life was due to God on account of your transgressions. We must know a shutting-up under the sentence of the law, or we shall never rejoice in the liberty which comes to us by grace through the blood of the Lamb of God. Blessed be the Spirit of God for working in us this double sense of bondage, first making us know that we are guilty, and, secondly, making us feel that the justice of God must punish us for sin.

And then, further, the Spirit of God operates as a spirit of bondage upon the hearts of those whom God will save, by bringing them to *feel the utter impossibility of their hoping to clear themselves by the works of the law*. We heard this sentence thundered in our soul—"By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." We could not meet our God under the law: we looked up to Sinai's fiery summit, whereon the Lord revealed himself, and we felt that its crags were too steep for our tottering feet to climb. Even if the way were smooth, how could we dare to pass through the thick darkness, and hold communion with Jehovah, who is a consuming fire? The Spirit of God once for all weaned us from all thought of a righteousness of our own. We were clean divorced from the legal spirit, and compelled to abhor the very notion of justifying ourselves in the sight of a pure and holy God by our works, or feelings, or prayers. This was the work of the Spirit of God.

This result is always produced in every child of God, but not always by the same degree of bondage. Fetters of different weights are used in this prison-house, as wisdom and prudence appoint. The spirit of bondage comes not to all alike; for some find peace and life in a moment, and come to Calvary as soon as Sinai begins to thunder.

I have known this spirit of bondage come with great force to men who have been open transgressors. Others who have been kept by the preventing grace of God from the extremes of open sin have not felt so much of it; but men that have blasphemed God, broken the Sabbath, and violated every holy thing,—when they are brought before God under a sense of sin, have frequently had a hard time of it. See how Saul was three days blinded, and did neither eat nor drink. Read John Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," and notice the five years of his subjection to this spirit of bondage. It must in his case be noted that his bondage was far from being altogether the work of the Spirit, for much of it arose from his own unbelief. But still there was in the core and heart of it a work of the Spirit of God most wonderfully convincing him of sin. I should not wonder if some of my hearers, who may have gone far into outward transgression, are made to feel, when brought to spiritual life, great grief and humiliation under a sense of their sin.

Such bondage often happens to those who, as the old authors used to say, were "close sinners"—men who did not even know that they were sinners at all, but, in consequence of their morality and the strictness of their lives, had a high conceit of their own excellence in the sight of God. Certain of these people experience most fearful convictions of sin: as if God would say to each one, "I must rid thee of thy self-righteousness. I must cure thee of trusting in thy moral life; and therefore I will let thee see into the depths of thy depravity. I will

discover to thee thy sins against light and knowledge, thy sins against conscience, thy sins against the love of God. Thou shalt be brought into sore bondage; but that bondage shall heal thee of thy pride."

I have noticed one thing more, and that is, that those who are in after life to be greatly useful are often thus digged, and tilled, and dunged, in order that much fruit may be brought forth by them in after years. I have had to deal with as many troubled souls as any living man, and God has greatly used me for their deliverance; but this never could have happened, so far as I can judge, unless I had myself been the subject of a terrible law-work, convincing me not only of my actual sin, but of the source of that sin, namely, a deep and bottomless fountain of depravity in my own nature. When I have met with persons driven to despair, and almost ready to destroy themselves, I have said, "Yes, I understand all that: I have been in those sepulchral chambers, and can sympathize with those who are chilled by their damps. I know the heart of a stranger, for I also was a captive in Egypt, and worked at the brick-kilns." In such a case this bondage of spirit becomes a profitable preparation for after work. The sword that has to cut through coats of mail must be annealed in many fires; it must endure processes which a common blade escapes. Do not, therefore, all of you expect that the spirit of bondage will be seen in you to the same degree; for, after all, it is not the spirit of bondage which is to be desired for its own sake, but that which comes after it—the Spirit of liberty in Christ Jesus.

Our text reminds us that *the result of this spirit of bondage in the soul is fear*:—"The spirit of bondage to fear." There are five sorts of fears, and it is well always to distinguish between them.

There is the natural fear which the creature has of its Creator, because of its own insignificance and its Maker's greatness. From that we shall never be altogether delivered; for with holy awe we shall bow before the divine majesty, even when we come to be perfect in glory.

Secondly, there is a carnal fear: that is, the fear of man. May God deliver us from it! May we never cease from duty because we dread the eye of man! Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die? From this cowardice God's Spirit delivers believers.

The next fear is a servile fear—the fear of a slave towards his master, lest he should be beaten when he has offended. That is a fear which should rightly dwell in every unregenerate heart. Until the slave is turned into a child he ought to feel that fear which is suitable to his position. By means of this fear the awakened soul is driven and drawn to Christ, and learns the perfect love which casts it out.

If servile fear be not cast out it leads to a fourth fear, namely, a diabolical fear; for we read of devils, that they "believe and tremble." This is the fear of a malefactor towards the executioner, such a fear as possesses souls that are shut out for ever from the light of God's countenance.

But, fifthly, there is a filial fear which is never cast out of the mind. This is to be cultivated. This is "the fear of the Lord" which is "the beginning of wisdom." This is a precious gift of grace: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord." This makes the saints fearful of offending, lest they should grieve infinite love; it causes them to walk before the

Lord with the fear of a loving child who would not in anything displease his parent.

When the spirit of bondage is at work upon the heart, there is much of the fourth form of fear, namely, servile fear; and I tell you that it is the Spirit of truth which brings this to us, because we are in a condition which demands it: we are slaves until Christ sets us free, and, being still under the law, servile fear is our most natural and proper feeling. Would you have the bondsman rejoice in a liberty which he does not possess? Is he not the more likely to be free if he loathes his slavery? I wish that every man here, who is not a child of God, would become possessed with servile fear, and tremble before the Most High.

Now, mark that *while this fear lasts it is intended to work us toward God*. I have already touched upon that. This bondage, which causes fear, breaks us off from self-righteousness; it makes us value the righteousness of Christ, and it also puts an end to certain sins. Many a man, because he is afraid of the consequences, leaves off this and that which would have ruined him; and, so far, the fear is useful to him; and, in after life, the sense of the terror which fear wrought in his soul, will keep him nearer to his Lord. How can he return to that evil thing which aforesaid filled his soul with bitterness and grief?

But now I want to notice that *in due time we outgrow this bondage, and never receive it again*, for "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." There comes a time when the Spirit of truth no longer causes bondage. Why not? Because we are not slaves any longer, and therefore there is no bondage for us. Because we are no longer guilty, having been cleared in the court of God, and therefore no sin should press upon our spirit. Because we are made to be the children of God; and God forbid that God's children should tremble like slaves. No, we have not received the spirit of bondage again, for the Spirit of God has not brought it to us again; and though the devil tries to bring it we do not "receive" his goods; and though sometimes the world thinks that we ought to feel it, we are not of the world, and we will not "receive" the world's spirit. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus; we are not under the law, but under grace; and therefore we are free from our former bondage. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." I know some Christians, or persons who call themselves so, who often come under this spirit of bondage. They erroneously say, "If I have sinned I have ceased to be a child of God." That is the spirit of bondage with a vengeance. If a servant disobeys he will be sent adrift; but you cannot discharge your child. My son is my son for ever; who denies that? Sonship is a settled fact, and never can be altered under any possible circumstances. If I am a child of God, who shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord? Some perform all religious actions from a principle of fear; and they abstain from this and that iniquity because of fear. A child of God does not desire to be thus driven or held back. He works not for reward; he toils not in order to gain salvation. He is saved; and because God has "worked in him to will and to do of his own good pleasure," therefore he works out the salvation which God has already worked in. Blessed is the man who knows that he is no longer a servant, but has become an heir of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.

II. This brings us to our second head, which is, THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION. I should require a week to preach properly upon that blessed theme. Instead of preaching upon it, I will give you hints.

Will you kindly notice that the apostle said, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage"? If he had kept strictly to language he would have added, "But ye have received the Spirit of"—what? Why of "*liberty*." That is the opposite of bondage. Ay, but our apostle is not to be hampered by the rigid rules of composition. He has inserted a far greater word:—"Ye have received the Spirit of *adoption*." This leads me to observe that, from this mode of putting it, it is clear that the Spirit of adoption is in the highest sense the spirit of liberty. If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed. If ye yourselves become sons through that blessed Son, oh, the freeness of your spirits! Your soul has nothing now to fear; you need not dread the wrath of God, for he has sworn, "I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." The believer feels the love of God shed abroad within him, and therefore he exercises a liberty to draw nigh to God, such as he never had before. He has access with boldness: he learns to speak with God as a child speaks to a father. See what a blessed thing is this Spirit of liberty, this Spirit of *adoption*.

Now, the apostle said, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." What is the opposite of that? He should have added—should he not?—"but ye have received the Spirit of liberty by which ye have *confidence*." He has not in so many words expressed himself thus, but he has said all that and a great deal more by saying, "Whereby we cry, Abba, Father." This is the highest form of confidence that can be thought of,—that a child of God should be able, even when he is forced to cry, to cry nothing less than, "Abba, Father." At his lowest, when he is full of sorrow and grief, even in his cryings and lamentings, he sticks to "Abba, Father." This is a joyous confidence indeed! Oh, that God may give it to you, dearly beloved, to the very full!

Thus it is clear that the Spirit of adoption is a spirit of liberty, and a spirit of confidence. As a child is sure that its father will love him, feed him, clothe him, teach him, and do all that is good for him, so are we sure that "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;" but he will make all things to "work together for good to them that love God."

The spirit of bondage made us fear, but the Spirit of adoption gives us *full assurance*. That fear which distrusts God—that fear which doubts whether he will remain a loving and merciful God—that fear which makes us think that all his love will come to an end—that is gone, for we cry, "Abba, Father," and that cry is the death of doubting and fearing. We sing to brave music, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."

The Spirit of adoption, moreover, is a spirit of *gratitude*. Oh, that ever the Lord should put *me* among the children! Why should he do this? He did not want for children that he should adopt *me*. The First-born alone was enough to fill the Father's heart throughout eternity. And yet the Lord puts *us* among the children. Blessed be his

name for ever and ever ! “ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! ”

The Spirit of adoption is a spirit of *child-likeness*. It is pretty, though sometimes sad, to see how children imitate their parents. How much the little man is like his father ! Have you not noticed it ? Do you not like to see it, too ? You know you do. Ay, and when God gives the Spirit of adoption, there begins in us, poor fallen creatures as we are, some little likeness to himself ; and that will grow to his perfect image. We cannot become God ; but we have the privilege and the power to become the sons of God. “ Even to as many as believe on his name ” does Jesus give this privilege ; and therefore we grow up into him in all things, who is our Head, and at the same time the pattern and mirror of what all the children of God are to be.

Thus, dear friends, let us see with great joy that we have not received again the spirit of bondage. We shall not receive it any more. The Spirit of God will never come to us in that form again, for now we have been washed in the blood, we have been taken away from being heirs of wrath even as others, we have been placed in the family of the Most High, and we feel the Spirit of adoption within us, whereby we cry, “ Abba, Father.”

III. Just two or three words only upon the next spirit, which is, THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER. Whenever the Spirit of adoption enters into a man it sets him praying. He cannot help it. He does not wish to help it.

“ Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air ;
His watchword at the gates of death :
He enters heaven with prayer.”

And this praying of the true believer who has the Spirit of adoption is very *earnest* praying, for it takes the form of crying. He does not *say*, “ Abba, Father.” Anybody can say those words. But he *cries*, “ Abba, Father.” Nobody can *cry*, “ Abba, Father,” but by the Holy Ghost. When those two words, “ Abba, Father,” are set to the music of a child’s cry, there is more power in them than in all the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero. They are such heavenly sounds as only the twice-born, the true aristocracy of God, can ever utter, “ Abba, Father : ” they even move the heart of the Eternal.

But it is also very *natural* praying : for a child to say, “ Father,” is according to the fitness of things. It is not necessary to send your boys to a Board School to teach them to do that. They cry “ Father,” soon and often. So, when we are born again, “ Our Father, which art in heaven,” is a prayer that is never forced upon us : it rises up naturally within the new-born nature ; and because we are born again we cry, “ Abba, Father.” When we have lost our Father for awhile, we cry after him in the dark. When he takes the rod to us we cry ; but we cry no otherwise than this—“ Abba, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”

It seems to me to be not only an earnest cry and a natural cry, but a very *appealing* cry. It touches your heart when your child says, “ Don’t hurt me, father. Dear father, by your love to me, forgive me.” True prayer pleads the fatherhood of God—“ My father, my father, I am no

stranger; I am no foe, I am thy own dear and well-beloved child. Therefore, like as a father pitieth his children, have thou pity upon me." The Lord never turns a deaf ear to such pleadings. He says, "I do earnestly remember him still," and in love he checks his hand.

And what a *familiar* word it is—"Abba, Father"! They say that slaves were never allowed to call their masters "abba." That was a word for free-born children only: no man can speak with God as God's children may. I have heard critics say sometimes of our prayers, "How familiar that man is with God"; and one adds, "I do not like such boldness." No, you slaves; of course, you cannot speak with God as a child can; and it would not be right that you should! It befits you to fear, and crouch, and, like miserable sinners, to keep yourselves a long way off from God. Distance is the slave's place; only the child may draw near. But if you are children, then you may say, "Lord, thou hast had mercy upon me, miserable sinner as I was; and thou hast cleansed me, and I am thine; therefore deal with me according to the riches of thy grace. My soul delighteth herself in thee, for thou art my God, and my exceeding joy." Who but a true-born child of God can understand that word—"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he will give thee the desires of thine heart."

I do not know any more *delightful* expression towards God than to say to him, "Abba, Father." It is as much as to say—"My heart knows that thou art my Father. I am as sure of it as that I am the child of my earthly father; and I am more sure that thou wouldst deal tenderly with me than that my father would." Paul hints at this when he reminds us that our fathers, verily, chastened us after their own pleasure, but the Lord always chastens us for our profit. The heavenly Father's heart is never angry so as to smite in wrath; but in pity, and gentleness, and tenderness, he afflicts his sons and daughters. "Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." See what a blessed state this is to be brought into, to be made children of God, and then in our prayers to be praying, not like serfs and servants, but as children who cry, "Abba, Father."

IV. Now, the last thing is, THE SPIRIT OF WITNESS:—"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

There are two witnesses to the adoption of every child of God. Two is a legal number: in the mouth of two witnesses the whole shall be established. The first witness is *the man's own spirit*. His spirit says, "Yes, yes, yes, I am a child of God. I feel those drawings towards God; I feel that delight in him; I feel that love to him; I feel that wish to obey him, which I never could have felt if I were not his child. Moreover, God's own word declares, 'To as many as received him'—that is Christ—'to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;' now, I have received Christ, and I do believe on his name: therefore, I have the evidence of God's written word that I am one of the sons of God. I have the right, the permission, the authority, to be one of the sons of God. That is the witness of my spirit: I believe, and therefore I am a child."

Now comes in *the witness of the Holy Spirit*. Nobody can question his veracity; but how does the Spirit of God witness to our sonship?

First, he witnesses it, as I have already said, *through the word of*

which he is the Author. The word contained in Scripture is quite enough for us if we have a saving faith. We accept it and believe it. The Spirit of God thus witnesses through the Word, and that is the surest medium. "We have a more sure word of testimony," said Peter. That is a wonderful declaration of the apostle. Peter had spoken about seeing Christ transfigured on the holy mount. Was not that sure? Yes, it was, but he, in effect, says,—We have a more sure word of testimony than all the sights that we have seen, whereunto we do well if we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.

Next, the Spirit of God *bears witness by his work in us*. He works in us that which proves us to be the children of God; and what is that?

The first thing is that he works in us great love to God. None love God but those that are born of him. There is no true love to God in Christ Jesus except in those that have been begotten again by God's own Spirit, so that our love to God is the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God.

Furthermore, he works in us a veneration for God. We fear before him with a childlike reverence: everything that has to do with God becomes sacred to us when he communes with us. Ay, if he only met us in a dream we should say, "How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God, and it is the very gate of heaven." The place of his feet is glorious in our eyes. The meanest of his chosen are honourable in our esteem. This holy awe of believers is a proof of their being God's children. If he be their Father they will reverence him, for we know that when we had fathers of our flesh, they corrected us, and we gave them reverence, for it was due to them. Shall we not be in subjection to the Father of our spirits? That subjection is the surest evidence that we are indeed the sons of God.

In addition to this, the Spirit of God works in us a holy confidence. By his grace we feel in days of trouble that we can rest in God. When we cannot see our way we go on joyfully without seeing. What is the good of seeing with our own eyes when the eyes of the Lord are running to and fro in the earth to show himself strong in the behalf of all them that trust in him? Our faith feels a joy in believing seeming contradictions, a delight in accepting apparent impossibilities. We have a belief in God's veracity so sure and steadfast that if all the angels in heaven were to deny the truth of God we would laugh them to scorn. *He must be true*, and we know it: every word of his book is as certainly true to us as if we had seen the thing with our own eyes—ay, and truer still, for eyes deceive, and mislead, but God never can. Wherever there is this blessed child-like trust, there is the Spirit's witness that we are the children of God.

And then, again, when the Spirit of God works in us sanctification, that becomes a further witness of our sonship. When he makes us hate sin, when he makes us love everything that is pure and good, when he helps us to conquer ourselves, when he leads us to love our fellow-men, when he fashions us like to Christ, this is the witness of the Spirit with our spirit that we are the children of God. Oh, to have more and more of it!

Besides which, I believe that there is a voice unheard of the outward ear, which drops in silence on the spirit of man, and lets him know that

he has, indeed, passed from death unto life. This also is the seal of the Spirit to the truth of our adoption.

Now let us begin at the beginning, and bless him that ever he made us feel the bondage of sin. Let us bless him that he made us fear and tremble, and fly to Jesus. Let us bless him that he has brought us into the adoption of children. Let us bless him that he helps us to cry "Abba, Father"; and, lastly, let us bless him that to-night he bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Dear friend, dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, all the privileges of an heir of God are thine. If thou dost not believe in Christ, the Spirit of God will never bear witness to a lie, and tell thee that thou art saved when thou art not. If thou art not saved and not yet a believer in Jesus, I tell thee that thou art like a blank document to which the Spirit of God will never set his hand and seal, for he is never so unwise as to sign a blank. If thou hast believed, thou art a child of God, and the Spirit of God sets his seal to thy adoption. Go in peace, and rejoice in the Lord for ever.

Nor fret, nor doubt, nor suffer slavish fear :
 Thy spirit is released, thy path is clear.
 Let praise fill up thy day, and evermore
 Live thou to love, to copy, and adore.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans viii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—728, 647, 660.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

TO MY BELOVED READERS,—In putting together these three sermons, wherewith to commence the thirtieth yearly volume, I have felt deep gratitude to God for all his past goodness in connection with these discourses. Still, my more prominent thought has been a longing for more grace for years to come, and for this I entreat your loving prayers in increased power. Many are the kindnesses which I have received at your hands; add to them this much more: pray for the preacher, spread the sermons among your friends, and bless the Lord whenever you derive the least benefit from them. By these three helps these sermons will be continued not only in publication but in usefulness. The times are dark: every star is precious.

Wishing you A HAPPY NEW YEAR,

I am, yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Menton, Dec. 29.

P.S.—Please read what I have to say in *The Sword and the Trowel*.