

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHOICE FOOD FOR PILGRIMS TO CANAAN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

‘And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.’—
Exodus xxxiii. 14.

MAY the inexpressibly precious promises of our text be fulfilled to every one of you throughout the whole of your lives. What could heart desire, or mind conceive beyond the heaped-up blessedness of my text? God’s presence and God’s rest—a ring of finest gold set with the choicest pearl. The benedictions are worthy of God himself, and such as only his boundless love could have uttered. Think them over, and use them as food for your souls; with them you may well be content even if the preacher’s lips should be as a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. You do not need any sermon: only let the Holy Spirit speak these words with power, as coming directly from the great Father’s lips to you, and your inmost soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

“Enough, my gracious Lord,
Let faith triumphant cry;
My heart can on this promise live,
Can on this promise die.”

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

It is instructive to remember that a very short time before this promise was given, the Israelites had greatly grieved their God by setting up an image of gold, before which they prostrated themselves, saying, “These be thy gods, O Israel.” They had seen the greatness and glory of God at the Red Sea, and during their journey in the wilderness up to that time, and yet they were so besotted, that they bowed in worship before the image of an ox which eateth grass. We do not marvel that the living God was angry, but we are filled with astonishment that, after such wanton provocation, he should, nevertheless, turn away his wrath from them and say to them—for the promise was not to Moses only, but to them as a people—“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Will God, then, go with sinners, with those who have provoked him so grossly, with those who have sinned against light and knowledge in so shameful a manner? Will he put away the iniquity of

great offenders, and speak comfortably unto them? Yes, he will, for he is slow to wrath, and bears with our ill manners for many a day. Here is his own word: "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off" (Isa. xlvi. 9). O my brethren and sisters, what a consolation it is to us, while labouring under a sense of sin, that the Lord is able to put away sin so that we shall not die; and he will come and walk with us and dwell in the midst of us, notwithstanding all our former wickednesses. You know what a righteous God he is, and how jealous he is, especially of those he loves; and yet, for all that, though he be a consuming fire, yet, so gracious is he that, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin, he will return unto his people still, and yet again speak comfortably unto them. There is a secret, however, which must never be forgotten—namely, that Moses had made mightily prevalent intercession for the people, crying with many tears, "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." He had gone up into the fiery mount, even up into the eternal presence; and there he had in will—though it was not accepted in deed—offered himself as a sacrifice for the nation in that memorable sentence, "If not, blot my name out of the book which thou hast written." Though the Lord could not accept the substitution of Moses, yet he remembered a greater one: he remembered one that was then to him as much present as if it had already taken place, for he seeth the end from the beginning, and the sacrifice of Christ was always present in the mind of God, before whom his Son Jesus is "the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world." If then we carefully search to the bottom of things we shall find that it was by virtue of the Mediator that this promise was given to Israel, and God thus spake to Moses and the people. Atonement had been made, intercession had been offered, and hence the Lord's presence was guaranteed and rest was promised. This is the only ground upon which God can dwell with you and with me and give us rest: an Advocate, one of a thousand, has stood in the gap, presented his life for our life, obtained favour of the Lord, and turned away indignation by the power of his intercession. God in Christ Jesus has come down to dwell with sinful men; and that presence will never be removed from us, for he saith, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you." He invites himself into our company; he offers to sup with us. Do not our hearts cry, "Come, Lord, manifest thyself to us, we pray thee, and let the promise which has been read in our ears be now fulfilled in our hearts by the power of thy Spirit":—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest"?

It may be that I am addressing some who are about leaving this congregation for other assemblies at a distance; and, if so, I hope I may be the bearer of seasonable comforts. I have spoken to some just now whose faces we may not perhaps see again, who are going far away, to their great sorrow, and to our intense regret. I saw the tear when they bade good-bye to us, and to the house they have loved so well. Go in peace, and God be with you, my beloved. What more can I say? You are going to leave your native land: whether you shall ever return

to it again is written in the decree of providence, but is all unknown to you. Little need you mind, for we are all exiles, and are journeying towards the dear fatherland, where we shall be at home for ever. Others, it may be, are now making a very important change in life: shifting their habitation, or looking out for another occupation altogether. Many of us here who are serving the Lord are going forward to fresh work, planning new service for the Lord. At such a time this word will be peculiarly precious to all in a changing state, if the Holy Spirit will lay it home to their hearts: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Come, then, ye who bid farewell to old England's shores, ye who move to a strange family, ye who in any sense remove your tents and advance toward the unknown land—come, I say, and listen to these gentle accents, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

We will think of the subject in this way:—First, *what are the benefits of this presence?* Secondly, to be practical, *what are the demands of this presence if we come to enjoy it?* And then, thirdly, *what is the choice blessing which is appended to this presence*—"I will give thee rest"?

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE WHICH IS HERE PROMISED? "My presence shall go with thee."

The first is manifest in the chapter. It is *the acknowledgment of the people as being peculiarly the Lord's*. Notice, Moses puts it thus, "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." This clearly shows that the presence of God with his people is God's way of acknowledging them, and saying to all mankind and to themselves, "These are my people, and I am their God." Now, my dear fellow-believer, what clearer acknowledgment of you by God can you conceive of than that God should be present with you? I think you cannot ask a surer, better seal than this; and if you have it not I cannot see what can be a token of peace to you at all. Is God never with you? Are you never conscious of his presence? Let me ask you to judge your case as if it were mine:—can I be a sheep in his fold if the shepherd never comes to me? Can I be a child of the family if I have never had my heart warmed with my Father's love, and have never heard my Father's voice speaking comfortably to me? The saints are married unto Christ, but that were a strange conjugal union in which there was no sort of converse or communion whatsoever. If I am unable to see my Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, because my soul is in darkness, I must walk by faith; but I must not think the darkness light and try to be comfortable without him. I must feel that, until the daystar shines again, and Christ's presence returns, I must be unhappy, and I must search the city and go about the streets thereof, saying, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" But if never at all I have enjoyed his presence, if never once I could say, "He is near me; he is with me," then how can it be possible that I am his? If I go forth to the business of the day and never recognize God; if I come home at night and have never seen God's hand with me; if I go to my bed and never, ere I sleep, have a kind word from him, then, surely, I cannot be one of his: I lack the acknowledgment which the great

Father must and will give to his own children. I do not see how a man can feel at all certain, nay, how he can entertain the hope, that he belongs to the Lord, except as he enjoys his presence. Every true child of God wants his Father's company. Every true wife desires the presence of her spouse. Our Lord's presence is life and light, health and a dwealth, strength and song to us. Our prayer is,—If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence; for I should go forth a sheep untended to stray where grievous wolves watch for their feeble victims.

That is the first benefit of the presence of God. It is the glory which lights up the soul of the believer, and marks it as the special property of heaven.

Secondly, it is *by that presence that we are preserved and protected*. When Israel came out of Egypt the Egyptians followed hard behind them. Pharaoh was fierce to slay them or to drive them back again; but he could not touch them. They came not nigh one another all that night, because the Lord descended and like an impenetrable shield of darkness turned himself upon the enemy, while like a sun he turned the brightness of his glory upon his people. The presence of God enabled Israel to pass through the sea on dry foot, and that same presence brought down the floods upon their foes and swept them away. All through the wilderness they might have been fallen upon by the wandering tribes, especially of the Amalekites, but the camp of Israel was never stormed by an orderly army, nor even plundered by a marauding band. Never did an invader's foot plant itself within those streets of canvas. There were no bastions and fortifications, but the presence of the Lord was a wall of fire round about his people. None could touch them so long as the Lord was there. It was true that Amalek fell upon them once upon their march, and slew the hindermost of them, but this showed that those farthest off from God are in the greatest danger, and even these would not have been overthrown had not Israel sinned. Even their hindermost would have been secure if they had walked aright with God. Who can harm those whom Jehovah ordains to keep? Who shall fight against the God invincible and omnipotent? If enemies come out against his chosen, he will utterly destroy them. Who shall break through ramparts of fire to touch the sons of God?

I think every child of God must acknowledge how safe he has been when he has enjoyed the divine presence. When you get out of that presence you are liable to temptations which in the divine presence scarcely come to you, or, if they come, they are shaken off as trifles which have no power over you. When we dwell in God the baser passions lie still,—like the beasts in Noah's ark, they cause no uproar; but when God is gone those baser passions rush to the front, and the inferior appetites and propensities try to get the mastery over us, and cause us all sorts of trouble. While we are in the presence of God, we may safely stand in the midst of wicked men if Providence calls us there, and we shall keep our tongue with a bridle, and baffle all their cunning. Yea, our soul may be among lions, but no lion can touch us when God is with us in the den. We may go into the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, but the glowing coals cannot leave even the smell of fire upon us while God is with us in the flame. We are always safe in the presence of God in any place and in any work; but, if the Lord be withdrawn from us,

then in his sanctuary we shall be tempted to transgress, like Eli's sons; and in his temple the devil will meet with us and ply his horrible temptations. In the commonest transactions of life we shall blunder and transgress if we move without the Lord, for the presence of God is the sole protection of saints. Our sanctity depends upon communion with God. Like the moon, we are bright while the sun shines on us; all our glory is borrowed from our Lord. Oh, how blessed is the promise, then, if we view it in that light, for we all wish to be preserved from the defilement of the world, and this is the one golden method of sanctity, "My presence shall go with thee."

There is a third privilege which the presence of God brought to Israel, and brings to us: it is that of *direction and guidance*. Their route lay through a wilderness without a track-way, and they could not have known which way to go except the fiery cloudy pillar, which was the index of the presence of God, had gone before them. Their path was a very strange one as it was, winding in and out, backwards and forwards; but "he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Such is our pathway to the skies, a maze, a tangle, to ourselves; but all plain to the All-wise. You and I know nothing of what is going to happen to us between here and heaven; nay, we cannot tell what will occur within an hour; but some amazing blessing may come: I have no doubt you, my brethren, have had in your own lifetime days of surprises. You have been jogging along the ordinary road of life pretty comfortably, you never thought of what was going to happen; but you have come to a place where the road suddenly diverged, and from that instant new scenes have opened up before you. You hardly knew whether you were to go to the right or to the left, and you were at your wits' end as you pulled up, for there was no sign-post, and no mark to guide you. At such times, if the presence of God has been with you, you have not been left to ask the way; but that ancient promise has become true in your experience. "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee saying, This is the way: walk ye in it." You could not explain to other people why you took that particular road, but you can see that if you had taken any other your whole life would have been darkened. After a fashion you explain to yourself why you did this rather than that; but if you had talked about it to your most intimate friend, it is just possible he would have replied, "Don't you think there may be a touch of fanaticism about your action? Is there not a little superstition in your reasoning?" So it might be thought, but there is a secret something between you and your God, which is the key of the position, and accounts for acts which else were unaccountable. If God were not there, it would have been superstition; but as God was really there, and you are one with whom he has become so graciously familiar that he gives to you the Urim and the Thummim, and reveals to you his light and his truth to guide you, there was no superstition or fanaticism in it. O the soft, sweet guidances of the royal presence; they have made my life radiant; like all his other gentlenesses, they have made me great. "He leadeth me," and yet again "He leadeth me," is one of the most joyous notes of my song of loves.

Ah, if the Lord be not with us, it is extraordinary what muddles we make. I have sometimes had very, very difficult things to do, and I

have accomplished them with ease under the Lord's own eye, but if I am without my Lord's presence, I give very bad advice, and I most judiciously do very stupid things, and most prudently follow a course which everybody would say was prudent, but which turns out to be imprudent. I have noticed—and I often have to bless God for it—that when I have felt myself to be quite done over and nonplussed, I have simply asked guidance, and something has occurred to me which I had never thought of before; or something which I had thought of and rejected, but which was the best, has occurred strongly to my mind again; or somebody else has come in and taken the leadership and put me aside; but somehow or other God has been glorified, and I have been happy when I have had his presence. I am sure that every believer will find it so in daily life; wherein the first thing is not to have common sense and to be wise, as some say, but to have a sense of God's presence, which is better than common sense, and to trust in him for guidance, which is better than being shrewd. He will make the young men wise and prudent; he will give to babes knowledge and discretion, if they are but willing to be led by his divine instruction. You will find it so if you have his presence with you; but if you have not, you will do just as the Israelites did about the matter of the Gibeonites, which seemed too simple to pray about. You will be taken in with those mouldy crusts and those clouted shoes, and those crafty rascals that say, "We come from a far country," and without taking counsel with God, you will find yourself in fellowship with a brood of scheming Canaanites, who will entangle you and do you no end of harm. You will say, "Oh, but they are such nice old people, and it is wonderful how religiously they talk, and how nicely they persuade me to their side." Yes, when Satan would deceive, his traps are very simple ones, such as you would never think to be traps at all. When you are quite clear about a thing, pray about it: when you are in difficulty, do as you like. I believe in that fine piece of advice—"When it is a fine day in this country, carry an umbrella with you. When it is raining hard, do just as you like." I put it into another shape, and beg you to remember it. "Why," you say, "the matter is as plain as the nose on my face." Then pray to God about it, for the nose on your face may bring you trouble. He that trusts to his own understanding may turn out to have very little understanding to trust to. Take plain matters to God. Get into the presence of God, and keep there, and see all things in the light of that presence: that will be to you instinct, common-sense, judgment, wisdom.

We have thus seen that rich blessings are found in the presence of God—divine acknowledgment, divine protection, and divine direction; but there was another thing that Israel had by virtue of the presence of God, and that was, *real worship in the wilderness*. Their sacrifices could not have been presented if God had not been among them. There would not have been the tabernacle, with all its appurtenances, if God had not been there. God would not have commanded them to build him a house that he did not intend to inhabit, and he would not have instituted ordinances which he did not mean to fill up by his presence. If it be imaginable that there should be a tabernacle with all the outward gear of it, and sacrifices even until rivers of the blood of fed

beasts should be poured out, yet it would have been all an empty, hollow sham if God had not himself been there. Brethren, we cannot in spirit and in truth worship God if we feel him to be absent. We must "believe that he is"; and it is a part of the "is" that he is everywhere present. We must believe that God is here, at this moment, or we are quite unable to pray to him. To pray to a God who is many leagues away is like the worshipper of Baal who says, "Peradventure he is on a journey, or he is hunting, or he sleepeth and must be awakened." Elijah never thought that of Jehovah. When he stood by the altar and began to plead with the Lord God of Israel, it never entered into his head that he was sleeping and must be awakened, or that he was up among the stars and needed to be aroused by shouting. The prophet knew that he spoke right into the eternal ear, and talked right into the divine heart, for he felt that God was there. No worship will do us good, or can be accepted with God, except the Lord be present with us in it. When you live in the presence of God how delightful worship is! You can right jubilantly sing songs upon your stringed instruments when the Lord Jehovah hears your praise. The same is true of prayer. You can wrestle with the angel, and hold him when you are sure he is there; but if he is not there you cannot wrestle with him, or even hold him. You can go forth to preach right bravely when you go in the strength of the Lord God to make mention of his righteousness, even of that only; but if the Lord go not with the minister what a vain-glorious place the pulpit is, and what empty stuff our talk must be. How delightful to come to the Lord's table if the King sits thereat, and his spikenard gives forth a sweet perfume. But what is bread, and what is wine, and what is the table, if the King himself be not there? The presence of Jesus consciously enjoyed is the sweetness of our worship, and all goes awry where this is not found. Oh, that we may never attempt to do anything for God except with God, or think that we can worship at all unless the Spirit of God be in the worship, prompting and quickening it.

Once more, if God had withdrawn from Israel there would have been *no communion with him*. God's presence meant communion with God. The Israelites could speak with God through their priests when he was in the midst of them, but if he had departed all fellowship would have closed. And is not that one of the greatest enjoyments of a child of God—that he can speak to his Father whenever he desires it? No child, I think, as a rule asks leave to speak to his father, but feels an unquestioned freedom on that point. I did go some time ago into a house where I sat with the head of the family, and heard a humble knock at the door: it was his wife, who asked if she might come in, but her lord and master spoke somewhat sharply, and she went away. I heard afterwards one of the girls come to knock at the door to know whether she might come in, and I wondered at it, because it is rather unusual nowadays for a man to be lord enough, but this gentlemen was lord too much by a long way. I thank God that I have never seen more than one instance in which a wife or a child was called upon humbly to knock at the door before she could come into the majestic presence of her husband or her father. I have always enjoyed the respect of my sons, but it has never occurred to them to ask leave to

speaking to me. Yet many professed Christians treat their heavenly Father in that way: they are afraid of him, and dare not tell him all their hearts. But this is just the sweet privilege of a dear child, that he may turn his eye to the great Father whenever he pleases, and have a private audience with the King of kings at any hour of the day or night. Strangers may not do this; strangers must get an introduction; strangers must come with a great deal of ceremony if they want to see a king, but the little prince does not need any usher of the black rod to introduce him to his sire. The believer's relation to his Father is a key which opens every door. We are on familiar terms with the great God, as it is written, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." In another place he puts it thus: "They shall be my sons and daughters." Oh sweet word—"my sons and daughters." This is a privilege which is secured to us by the presence of God.

If any of you have lost the presence of God, I have no doubt you have some kind of awe that makes you stand a long way off, as Israel stood at a distance from the burning mount of Sinai; but if God is with you, then no notion of standing a long way off need come to you. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." We eat and drink and sleep eternal life. Whatsoever we do, we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the power of his abiding presence. The presence of God comes to be as palpable to us as the air we breathe, perhaps more so; as certain to us as the life we live. We know him to be with us, and we are as much in the habit of speaking with him as with our dearest friend; yea, much more, because we must be parted from the dearest friend at times, but from our God we are never divided; but, be we where we may, and in what frame of mind we may, we can always speak with him. "When I awake I am still with thee." I fall asleep, and he is at my bedside; I wake up at any hour of the night, and there is he. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He is always ready for fellowship with his people. May you have this ever-enjoyable, always encompassing presence with you all the year round. May the Spirit of God put it to those whom I have mentioned, who are moving or shifting their place by taking a long journey, or who are about to take the last long journey, who feel that the sentence of death is written upon them—is not this presence all that your spirits can possibly crave? Even death will give you no alarm if this sweet text is fully enjoyed by you—"My presence shall go with thee." Certainly the hardships and dangers of emigration dwindle into insignificance before this promise:—"My presence shall go with thee among strangers. My presence shall go with thee across the sea. My presence shall go with thee to the bed of sickness. My presence shall go with thee through the valley of the shadow of death. My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

That is the first point.

II. The second head shall not occupy much time, but I hope that it will be hammered out into a lifelong sermon, preached by yourselves. **WHAT ARE THE DEMANDS OF THIS PRESENCE?** Supposing that the divine presence shall go with us, what then?

Why, first it is needful that *we rely upon it*. Beloved, if the presence of God be with us, do not let us act as if it were not with us,

or as if it were not worth much although it is with us. If God's presence is with us, what have we to be afraid of? Where is the excuse for our spirit being cast down? If God's presence be with us, why do we talk about difficulties? That word should not be in our dictionary now that omnipotence is at our right hand. If God's presence be with us, why should we speak about fears? Whom shall we fear? "Thou art the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?" Oh, let this presence of God be real to you, if you are enjoying it. Do not talk about it, and then speak as if you were all alone, and go forth to your work, saying, "I am not strong enough." What, not if the Lord is with you? Do set down your God at a right figure in all your calculations; that is to say, if you can find a figure that will represent him. What is your strength? A unit. Well, if you like, you may make a cipher of it, for that is nearer the truth. But what is God's strength? Oh, you may carry it up to the *n*th, as we say in algebra. You may work it out to the utmost conceivable limit, but you will never get a figure that will come near expressing the power of the presence of God. "I am with you"—"*I*," and the universe echoes to the voice, as the words "I AM" roll in thunder peals along the heavens. "I have formed the earth and laid its foundations, and upreared the arches of the sky. I am with you, with my omnipotence, omniscience, all-sufficiency." Well, if that be so, rely upon it; stay yourself upon God, and do not play the fool by being dismayed and cast down. "I am with thee." Away with melancholy! Should a little child be always trembling and sobbing out, "Mother, I am alone, and I am afraid"? Her mother says, "I am with you, dear child; I am with you." Will she not have done with her sobbing? So does the Lord say, "How canst thou fear? How canst thou fall? I am with thee." If we have his presence, let us treat it as a matter of fact, and be filled with rest.

In the next place, if we have his presence, *let us use it*. Every now and then we meet with persons who have thousands of pounds, and yet are half starved. We have heard of two great lords who were spending the evening together at a coffee-house, and the bill came to an odd sum, and they quarrelled about who should pay the odd farthing, till one of the waiters said, "Come up here! Here are two lords worth fifty thousand a-year each, and they are quarrelling about a farthing." That was a strange sight; but have you not seen Christian people behaving quite as inconsistently? They have the revenues of the universe to spend, and yet they starve themselves by the little enjoyment that they dare to take? Of heavenly food they live upon a crumb a day. They are just like the elder brother who said to his father, "These many years do I serve thee; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." You remember his father's answer. He said, "Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. If you have not eaten all the goats, it is your own fault. You might have been as merry with your friends as you liked, for all that I have is thine." And so may the Lord often reproach his people. "I am with you, but you do not use me. You do not exercise faith in me as to the mountains which lie before you, which should become plains if you left them

to me. You do not leave me your sycamine trees, for me to pluck them up by the roots. I can do all things, and here you are using this poor feeble arm of yours with all its wasting, aching sinews, when there is an everlasting arm which would be made bare for your defence, and which would shake heaven and earth rather than fail to bring you deliverance." Why, brethren? Why are we so slow to believe? Oh, if you have the presence of God, utilize it.

And then, next, if you have the presence of God, do not grieve him : *do not lose it*. In the presence of a king men behave themselves. Have you never known, as a boy, when you have been up to some little trick, some one has said, "Hush, here is father coming;" and you have stopped your game at once. Oh, how reverently, how cautiously, how jealously, how holily ought we to behave ourselves who are in the presence of God!

It is wonderful what God will do for us. He often surprises us with what he does. He seems to be inventive in the liberality of his grace. He will make our path smooth, though hitherto it has been roughness itself. Often and often does he enrich our way, as though we were like the lepers who followed the Assyrians when they threw away their silver and their gold. We are surprised to find what goodness his mercy has scattered for us. Do we not feel that we must walk tenderly towards one who deals with us so gently? Such mercy as his should make us fear and tremble, because of the great goodness of God. It must be, I was going to say, a terrible thing to be a king's favourite; but what a terribly blessed thing it is to be the favourite of God—to be lifted up so near to him as to enjoy the light of his countenance. We ought to look at all our words before we speak them when we are in his presence, and stop our thoughts before we think them, if such a thing could be, lest any of them should vex his Spirit, and prove unbecoming in the presence of his majesty.

And, oh, when you have the presence of God, do take care to *glorify him all that you possibly can*. Does he deign to dwell in you? Then lay yourself out for his honour. Seek out those who have lost his company, and go and cheer them. Find out all the daughters of sorrow, all the backsliders and wanderers, and all the poor sinners that are on the wild mountains, and seek to bring them where you are yourself—into the presence of the gracious Three in One. I think that if we do not work at any other season, we certainly should do so when we are abiding in the light of his countenance. If my soul keeps no holiday at any other time, she shall certainly be dressed in her bravest, and shine in her best when the King himself visits me. It is a grand thing to go to work for God with the glory of God about your brow, and the love of God warming your heart, and the strength of God making your spirit courageous, and the wisdom of God directing you in the choice of words. Thus shall you work to purpose, and a work shall be done which will redound to the eternal glory.

Thus you see that the presence of God has its demands.

III. My time has gone, and therefore I must say only two or three words about that last word of promise. **WHAT IS THE CHOICE BLESSING WHICH IS APPENDED TO THIS PRESENCE?** "My presence shall go with thee, and *I will give thee rest.*"

In this particular text we must confine the "rest" to the end of the journey; for Israel were to have their *rest* in Canaan; and so the promise was, "My presence shall go with you through the wilderness, and I will give you *rest* in the land that floweth with milk and honey."

Beloved, it were no narrowing of the promise if we were to limit it to that sense to-night. If God's presence be with us here, we shall be in God's presence hereafter, and there we shall have rest. Some of you good workpeople come in here on Thursday nights, and cannot come in quite in time. Well, never mind, you can come late. I would sooner have you for ten minutes than not at all. A piece of a loaf is better than starving. I know that to many of you the idea of rest must be very sweet. To those who work very, very hard, as some of you do, the thought of an everlasting rest is very pleasant. But perhaps some of you have never been converted. I want to put this thought into your mind: Will you rest? Will you rest at last? They will lay your bones in the cemetery, and apparently you will rest; but *will you rest?* Oh, will you rest? Do you think you can rest if you die with unforgiven sin? Can you rest if you die unreconciled to God? Ah, no. "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked. They are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Only think if that should be your portion for ever and ever—never to rest, but to be like the troubled sea, foaming, raging, and tossed about throughout eternity! God grant, dear hearer, that such a fearful unrest may not be your portion. But oh, if you will trust in Jesus, and value his presence with you here, what sweet rest there will be above! I have heard some people speak about the rest of heaven as though it were only a bribe to lazy people. They sneer at the idea of rest, but those people who do not desire rest are unacquainted with hard work. I am persuaded of that. Your lackadaisical ladies and gentlemen, who never did a stroke of work in all their lives, and could not if they tried, may despise heaven as a rest, but to many of us that Scripture is most pleasant, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." The idea of service is, undoubtedly, very sweet—eternal service—very sweet to the strong, active young Christian; but I tell you that when you get older, and when your heads often ache with anxious care, and oftentimes you are worn down in the service of your Master, you will get more inclined to look upon heaven as a place of rest, and you will thank God that the Holy Spirit was not quite so hard as these fine ladies and gentlemen, but did speak to us of heaven as a place where the saints shall rest from their labours and their works shall follow them. We do not know where we shall go between now and heaven, but we shall get home at last, and then we shall rest. We do not know how much more work we have to do, we cannot tell how often the burden will press our shoulder; but we shall rest one day. "I will give thee rest." Here is a "*shall*" and a "*will*." "My presence *shall* go with thee, and I *will* give thee rest." Ah, poor toiler, you shall rest. O poor aching eyes, ye shall rest when ye shall see the King in his beauty. O poor aching brain, thou shalt rest when thou shalt have nothing to do but to joy in God, and praise him day and night in his temple.

But I think that under the gospel dispensation we may take this promise in a far wider sense. "My presence shall go with thee, and

I will give thee rest," *even now* ; for "we which have believed do enter into rest." While we are believing we obtain rest, and this is the kind of rest. We have not the rest of inactivity, but that of peace : the Israelites kept journeying on, and yet the Lord was their dwelling-place. We have not the rest of luxury : the Israelites had to tread the barren sand, and live in tents ; but ours is the rest which is consistent with daily service and with frequent trial. We rest in this way : we are perfectly at ease about everything. As to the future, what have we to do with that? We have not come to it yet. God arranges things to come. As for the present, we "cast our care upon him, for he careth for us." As to our sins, they are gone, dead, buried, lost, and never will be seen again. They cannot be found, for God himself has cast them behind his back. As for the devil, he is a chained enemy. As for the world, Christ has said, "Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world." As for the needs of the body, he has said, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." As for the needs of the soul, Christ is ours, and all things are ours in Christ. As for our eternal safety, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified." He will glorify us as certainly as he has justified us.

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King."

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus xxxii. 30 to
end, and xxxiii. 1—16.

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