

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE.

A Sermon

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“The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”—Isaiah i. 20.

WHAT Isaiah said was, therefore, spoken by Jehovah. It was audibly the utterance of a man; but, really, it was the utterance of the Lord himself. The lips which delivered the words were those of Isaiah, but yet it was the very truth that “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” All Scripture, being inspired of the Spirit, is spoken by the mouth of God. However this sacred Book may be treated nowadays, it was not treated contemptuously, nor negligently, nor questioningly by the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Lord. It is noteworthy how he revered the written Word. The Spirit of God rested upon him personally, without measure, and he could speak out of his own mind the revelation of God, and yet he continually quoted the law and the prophets, and the Psalms; and always he treated the sacred writings with intense reverence, strongly in contrast with the irreverence of “modern thought.” I am sure, brethren, we cannot be wrong in imitating the example of our divine Lord in our reverence for that Scripture, which cannot be broken. I say, if he, the anointed of the Spirit, and able to speak himself as God’s mouth, yet quoted the sacred writings, and used the holy Book in his teachings, how much more should we, who have no spirit of prophecy resting upon us, and are not able to speak new revelations, come back to the law and to the testimony, and value every single word which “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken”? The like valuation of the Word of the Lord is seen in our Lord’s apostles; for they treated the ancient Scriptures as supreme in authority, and supported their statements with passages from Holy Writ. The utmost degree of deference and homage is paid to the Old Testament by the writers of the New. We never find an apostle raising a question about the degree of inspiration in this book or that. No disciple of Jesus questions the authority of the books of Moses, or of the prophets. If you want to cavil or suspect, you find no sympathy in the teaching of Jesus, or any one of his apostles. The New Testament writers sit reverently down before the Old Testament and receive God’s

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words as such, without any question whatever. You and I belong to a school which will continue to do the same, let others adopt what behaviour they please. As for us and for our house, this priceless Book shall remain the standard of our faith and the ground of our hope so long as we live. Others may choose what gods they will, and follow what authorities they prefer; but, as for us, the glorious Jehovah is our God, and we believe concerning each doctrine of the entire Bible, that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

I. Coming closely, then, to our text, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," our first head shall be—THIS IS OUR WARRANT FOR TEACHING SCRIPTURAL TRUTH. We preach because "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." It would not be worth our while to speak what Isaiah had spoken, if in it there was nothing more than Isaiah's thought; neither should we care to meditate hour after hour upon the writings of Paul, if there was nothing more than Paul in them. We feel no imperative call to expound and to enforce what has been spoken by men; but, since "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," it is woe unto us if we preach not the gospel! We come to you with, "Thus saith the Lord," and we should have no justifiable motive for preaching our lives away, if we have not this message.

The true preacher, the man whom God has commissioned, delivers his message *with awe and trembling*, because "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." He bears the burden of the Lord and bows under it. Ours is no trifling theme, but one which moves our whole soul. They called George Fox a Quaker, because when he spoke he would quake exceedingly through the force of the truth which he so thoroughly apprehended. Perhaps, if you and I had a clearer sight and a closer grip of God's Word, and felt more of its majesty, we should quake also. Martin Luther, who never feared the face of man, yet declared that when he stood up to preach he often felt his knees knock together under a sense of his great responsibility. Woe unto us if we dare to speak the Word of the Lord with less than our whole heart, and soul, and strength! Woe unto us if we handle the Word as if it were an occasion for display! If it were our own word, we might be studious of the graces of oratory; but if it be God's Word, we cannot afford to think of ourselves: we are bound to speak it, "not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." If we reverence the Word, it will not occur to us that we can improve upon it by our own skill in language. Oh, it were far better to break stones on the road than to be a preacher, unless one had God's Holy Spirit to sustain him; for our charge is solemn and our burden is heavy. The heart and soul of the man who speaks for God will know no ease, for he hears in his ears that warning admonition: "If the watchman warn them not they shall perish; but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." If we were commissioned to repeat the language of a king, we should be bound to do it decorously lest the king suffer damage; but if we rehearse the revelation of God, a profound awe should take hold upon us, and a godly fear lest we mar the message of God in the telling of it. No work is so important or honourable as the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and for that very reason it is weighted with a responsibility so solemn

that none may venture upon it lightly, nor proceed in it without an overwhelming sense of his need of great grace to perform his office aright. We live under intense pressure who preach a gospel of which we can assuredly say, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." We live rather in eternity than in time: we speak to you as though we saw the great white throne and the divine Judge before whom we must give in our account, not only for what we say, but for how we say it.

Dear brethren, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken the truth of God, we therefore endeavour to preach it with *absolute fidelity*. We repeat the Word as a child repeats his lesson. It is not ours to correct the divine revelation, but simply to echo it. I do not take it to be my office to bring you new and original thoughts of my own; but rather to say, "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Believing that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," it is my duty to repeat it to you as correctly as I can after having heard it and felt it in my own soul. It is not mine to amend or adapt the gospel. What! Shall we attempt to improve upon what God has revealed? The Infinitely Wise—is he to be corrected by creatures of a day? Is the infallible revelation of the infallible Jehovah to be shaped, moderated, and toned down to the fashions and fancies of the hour? God forgive us if we have ever altered his Word unwittingly; wittingly we have not done so, nor will we. His children sit at his feet and receive of his words, and then they rise up in the power of his Spirit to publish far and near the Word which the Lord has given. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully," is the Lord's injunction to us. If we could abide with the Father, according to our measure, after the manner of the Lord Jesus, and then come forth from communion with him to tell what he has taught us in his Word, we should be accepted of the Lord as preachers, and accepted also of his living people far more than if we were to dive into the profound depths of science, or rise to the loftiest flights of rhetoric. What is the chaff to the wheat! What are man's discoveries to the teachings of the Lord! "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"; therefore, O man of God, add not to his words lest he add to thee the plagues which are written in his Book, and take not from them, lest he take thy name out of the Book of Life!

Again, dear friends, as "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we speak the divine truth *with courage and full assurance*. Modesty is a virtue; but hesitancy when we are speaking for the Lord is a great fault. If an ambassador sent by a great king to represent his majesty at a foreign court, should forget his office and only think of himself, he might be so humble as to lower the dignity of his prince, so timid as to betray his country's honour. He is bound to remember not so much what he is in himself, but whom he represents; therefore, he must speak boldly and with the dignity which befits his office and the court he represents. It was the custom with certain Oriental despots to require ambassadors of foreign powers to lie in the dust before them. Some Europeans, for the sake of trade interests, submitted to the degrading ceremony; but when it was demanded of the representative of England, he scorned thus to lower his country. God

forbid that he who speaks for God should dishonour the King of kings by a pliant subservience. We preach not the gospel by your leave; we do not ask tolerance, nor court applause. We preach Christ crucified, and we speak boldly as we ought to speak, because it is God's Word, and not our own. We are accused of dogmatism; but we are bound to dogmatize when we repeat that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. We cannot use "ifs" and "buts," for we are dealing with God's "shalls" and "wills." If he says it is so, it is so; and there is an end of it. Controversy ceases when Jehovah speaks.

Those who fling aside our Master's authority may very well reject our testimony: we are content they should do so. But, if we speak that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, those who hear his word and refuse it, do so at their own peril. The wrong is done, not to the ambassador, but to the King; not to our mouth, but to the mouth of God, from whom the truth has proceeded.

We are urged to be charitable. We *are* charitable; but it is with our own money. We have no right to give away what is put into our trust and is not at our disposal. When we have to do with the truth of God we are stewards, and must deal with our Lord's exchequer, not on the lines of charity to human opinions, but by the rule of fidelity to the God of truth. We are bold to declare with full assurance that which the Lord reveals. That memorable word of the Lord to Jeremiah is needed by the servants of the Lord in these days: "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." When we speak for the Lord against error, we do not soften our tones; but we speak thunderbolts. When we come across false science, we do not lower our flag: we give place by subjection—no, not for an hour. One word of God is worth more than libraries of human lore. "It is written" is the great gun which silences all the batteries of man's thought. They should speak courageously who speak in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

I will also add, under this head, that, because "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," therefore we feel bound to speak his Word *with diligence*, as often as ever we can, and *with perseverance*, as long as ever we live. Surely, it would be a blessed thing to die in the pulpit; spending one's last breath in acting as the Lord's mouth. Dumb Sabbaths are fierce trials to true preachers. Remember how John Newton, when he was quite unfit to preach, and even wandered a bit by reason of his infirmities and age, yet persisted in preaching; and when they dissuaded him, he answered with warmth, "What! Shall the old African blasphemer leave off preaching Jesus Christ while there is breath in his body?" So they helped the old man into the pulpit again, that he might once more speak of free grace and dying

love. If we had common themes to speak about, we might leave the pulpit as a weary pleader quits the forum; but as "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we feel his Word to be as fire in our bones, and we grow more weary with refraining than with testifying. O my brethren, the Word of the Lord is so precious that we must in the morning sow this blessed seed, and in the evening we must not withhold our hands. It is a living seed and the seed of life, and therefore we must diligently scatter it.

Brethren, if we get a right apprehension concerning gospel truth—that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—it will move us to tell it out with *great ardour and zeal*. We shall not drone the gospel to a slumbering handful. Many of you are not preachers, but you are teachers of the young, or in some other way you try to publish the Word of the Lord—do it, I pray you, with much fervour of Spirit. Enthusiasm should be conspicuous in every servant of the Lord. Let those who hear you know that you are all there; that you are not merely speaking from the lips outwardly; but that from the depths of your soul, your very heart is welling up with a good matter when you speak of things which you have made, touching the King. The everlasting gospel is worth preaching, even if one stood on a burning faggot and addressed the crowd from a pulpit of flames. The truths revealed in Scripture are worth living for and dying for. I count myself thrice happy to bear reproach for the sake of the old faith. It is an honour of which I feel myself to be unworthy; and yet most truly can I use the words of our hymn—

"Shall I, to soothe th' unholy throng,
Soften thy truths and smooth my tongue?
To gain earth's gilded toys, or flee
The cross endured, my God, by thee?"

"The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave.

"My life, my blood I here present,
If for thy truth they may be spent:
Fulfil thy sovereign counsel, Lord!
Thy will be done, thy name adored!"

I cannot speak out my whole heart upon this theme which is so dear to me, but I would stir you all up to be instant in season and out of season in telling out the gospel message. Specially repeat such a word as this—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And this: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Tell it out boldly, tell it out in every place, tell it out to every creature, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." How can you keep back the heavenly news? "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—shall not your mouth rejoice to repeat it? Whisper it in the ear of the sick; shout it in the corner of the streets; write it on your tablets; send it forth from the press: but everywhere let this be your great motive and warrant—you preach the gospel because "The

mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Let nothing be silent that hath a voice when the Lord hath given the Word by his own dear Son.

"Waft, waft, ye winds his story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till like a sea of glory
It spreads from pole to pole."

II. Let us now row in another direction for a moment or two. In the second place, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." THIS IS THE CLAIM OF GOD'S WORD UPON YOUR ATTENTION.

Every word which God has given us in this Book claims our attention, because of the *infinite majesty of him that spake it*. I see before me a Parliament of kings and princes, sages and senators. I hear one after another of the gifted Chrysostoms pour forth eloquence like the "Golden-mouthed." They speak, and they speak well. Suddenly, there is a solemn hush. What a stillness! Who is now to speak? They are silent because God the Lord is about to lift up his voice. Is it not right that they should be so? Doth he not say, "Keep silence before me, O islands"? What voice is like his voice? "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. O my hearer, let it not be said of you that you went through this life, God speaking to you in his Book, and you refusing to hear! It matters very little whether you listen to *me* or not; but it matters a very great deal whether you listen to God or not. It is he that made you; in his hands your breath is; and if he speaks, I implore you, open your ear, and be not rebellious. There is an infinite majesty about every line of Scripture, but especially about that part of Scripture in which the Lord reveals himself and his glorious plan of saving grace, in the person of his dear Son Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ hath a great claim upon you. Hear what Jesus preaches from the tree. He says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live."

God's claim to be heard lies, also, in the *condescension which has led him to speak to us*. It was something for God to have made the world and bid us look at the work of his hands. Creation is a picture-book for children. But for God to speak in the language of mortal men is still more marvellous, if you come to think of it. I wonder that God spoke by the prophets; but I admire still more that he should have written down his word in black and white, in unmistakable language, which can be translated into all tongues, so that we may all see and read for ourselves what God the Lord has spoken to us; and what, indeed, he continues to speak; for what he has spoken he still speaks to us, as freshly as if he spake it for the first time. O glorious Jehovah; dost thou speak to mortal man? Can there be any that neglect to hear thee? If thou art so full of lovingkindness and tenderness that thou wilt stoop out of heaven to converse with thy sinful creatures, none but those who are more brutal than the ox and the ass will turn a deaf ear to thee!

God's Word has a claim, then, upon your attention because of its majesty and its condescension; but yet, further, it should win your ear because of *its intrinsic importance*. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—then it is no trifle. God never speaks vanity. No line of his writing treats of the frivolous themes of a day. That which may be forgotten in an hour is for mortal man, and not for the eternal God. When the Lord speaks, his speech is God-like, and its themes are worthy of one whose dwelling is infinity and eternity. God does not play with thee, man: wilt thou trifle with him? Wilt thou treat him as if he were altogether such a one as thyself? God is in earnest when he speaks to thee: wilt thou not in earnest listen? He speaks to thee of great things, which have to do with thy soul and its destiny. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life." Thy eternal existence, thy happiness or thy misery, hang on thy treatment of that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Concerning eternal realities he speaks to thee. I pray thee, be not so unwise as to turn away thine ear. Act not as if the Lord and his truth were nothing to you. Treat not the Word of the Lord as a secondary thing, which might wait thy leisure and receive attention when no other work was before thee: put all else aside, but hearken to thy God.

Depend upon it, if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," there is an *urgent, pressing necessity*. God breaks not silence to say that which might as well have remained unsaid. His voice indicates great urgency. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, hear it; for he demands immediate attention. God does not speak without abundant reason; and, O my hearer, if he speaks to thee by his Word, I beseech thee, believe that there must be overwhelming cause for it! I know what Satan says: he tells thee that thou canst do very well without listening to God's Word. I know what thy carnal heart whispers: it says, "Listen to the voice of business, and of pleasure; but listen not to God." But, oh! if the Holy Spirit shall teach thy reason to be reasonable, and put thy mind in mind of true wisdom, thou wilt acknowledge that the first thing thou hast to do is to heed thy Maker. Thou canst hear the voices of others another time; but thine ear must hear God first, since he is first, and that which he speaks must be of first importance. Without delay do thou make haste to keep his commandments. Without reserve answer to his call, and say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." When I stand in this pulpit to preach the Gospel, I never feel that I may calmly invite you to attend to a subject which is one among many, and may very properly be let alone for a time should your minds be already occupied. No; you may be dead before I again speak with you, and so I beg for immediate attention. I do not fear that I may be taking you off from other important business by entreating you to attend to that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken; for no business has any importance in it compared with this: this is the master theme of all. It is your soul, your own soul, your ever-existing soul which is concerned, and it is your God that is speaking to you. Do hear him, I beseech you. I am not asking a favour of you when I request you to hear the Word of the Lord: it is a debt to your Maker which you are bound to pay. Yea, it is, moreover,

kindness to your own self. Even from a selfish point of view, I urge you to hear what the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, for in his Word lies salvation. Harken diligently to what your Maker, your Saviour, your best friend, has to say to you. "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation," but "incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Thus I have handled my text in two ways: it is warrant and motive for the preacher; it is a demand upon the attention of the hearer.

III. And now, thirdly, THIS GIVES TO GOD'S WORD A VERY SPECIAL CHARACTER. When we open this sacred Book, and say of that which is here recorded, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," then it gives to the teaching a special character.

In the Word of God the teaching has *unique dignity*. This Book is inspired as no other book is inspired, and it is time that all Christians avowed this conviction. I do not know whether you have seen Mr. Smiles' life of our late friend, George Moore; but in it we read that, at a certain dinner-party, a learned man remarked that it would not be easy to find a person of intelligence who believed in the inspiration of the Bible. In an instant George Moore's voice was heard across the table, saying boldly, "I do, for one." Nothing more was said. My dear friend had a strong way of speaking, as I well remember; for we have upon occasions vied with each other in shouting when we were together at his Cumberland home. I think I can hear his emphatic way of putting it—"I do, for one." Let us not be backward to take the old-fashioned and unpopular side, and say outright, "I do, for one." Where are we if our Bibles are gone? Where are we if we are taught to distrust them? If we are left in doubt as to which part is inspired and which is not, we are as badly off as if we had no Bible at all. I hold no theory of inspiration; I accept the inspiration of the Scriptures as a fact. Those who thus view the Scriptures need not be ashamed of their company; for some of the best and most learned of men have been of the same mind. Locke, the great philosopher, spent the last fourteen years of his life in the study of the Bible, and when asked what was the shortest way for a young gentleman to understand the Christian religion, he bade him read the Bible, remarking: "Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any admixture of error, for its matter." There are those on the side of God's Word whom you need not be ashamed of in the matter of intelligence and learning; and if it were not so, it should not discourage you when you remember that the Lord has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. We believe with the apostle that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." It is better to believe what comes out of God's mouth, and be called a fool, than to believe what comes out of the mouth of philosophers, and be, therefore, esteemed a wise man.

There is also about that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken an *absolute certainty*. What man has said is unsubstantial, even when true. It is like grasping fog, there is nothing of it. But with God's Word you have something to grip at, something to have, and to

hold. This is substance and reality; but of human opinions we may say, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Though heaven and earth should pass away, yet not one jot or tittle of what God has spoken shall fail. We know that, and feel at rest. God cannot be mistaken. God cannot lie. These are postulates which no one can dispute. If "The mouth of God hath spoken it," this is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail; and henceforth we question no more.

Again: if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we have in this utterance the special character of *immutable fixedness*. Once spoken by God, not only is it so now, but it always must be so. The Lord of Hosts hath spoken, and who shall disannul it? The rock of God's Word does not shift, like the quicksand of modern scientific theology. One said to his minister, "My dear sir, surely you ought to adjust your beliefs to the progress of science." "Yes," said he, "but I have not had time to do it to-day, for I have not yet read the morning papers." One would have need to read the morning papers and take in every new edition to know whereabouts scientific theology now stands; for it is always chopping and changing. The only thing that is certain about the false science of this age is that it will be soon disproved. Theories, vaunted to-day, will be scouted to-morrow. The great scientists live by killing those who went before them. They know nothing for certain, except that their predecessors were wrong. Even in one short life we have seen system after system—the mushrooms, or rather the toadstools, of thought—rise and perish. We cannot adapt our religious belief to that which is more changeful than the moon. Try it who will: as for me, if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," it is truth to me in this year of grace 1888; and if I stand amongst you a grey-headed old man somewhere in 1908, you will find me making no advance upon the divine ultimatum. If "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we behold in his revelation a gospel which is without variableness, revealing "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Brothers and sisters, we hope to be together for ever before the eternal throne, where bow the blazing Seraphim, and even then we shall not be ashamed to avow that same truth which this day we feed upon from the hand of our God.

"For he's the Lord, supremely good,
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth, which always firmly stood,
To endless ages shall endure."

Here let me add that there is something unique about God's Word, because of *the almighty power which attends it*. "Where the word of a king is, there is power"; where the word of a God is, there is omnipotence. If we dealt more largely in God's own Word as "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we should see far greater results from our preaching. It is God's Word, not our comment on God's Word, that saves souls. Souls are slain by the sword, not by the scabbard, nor by the tassels which adorn the hilt of it. If God's Word be brought forward in its native simplicity, no one can stand against it. The adversaries of God must fail before the Word as

chaff perishes in the fire. Oh, for wisdom to keep closer and closer to that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken!

I will say no more on this point, although the theme is a very large and tempting one; especially if I were to dwell upon the depth, the height, the adaptation, the insight and the self-proving power of that which "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken."

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, THIS MAKES GOD'S WORD A GROUND OF GREAT ALARM TO MANY. Shall I read you the whole verse? "But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Every threatening that God hath spoken, because he hath spoken it, has a tremendous dread about it. Whether God threateneth a man or a nation, or the whole class of the ungodly, if they are wise they will feel a trembling take hold upon them, because "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." *God has never yet spoken a threatening that has fallen to the ground.* When he told Pharaoh what he would do, he did it; the plagues came thick and heavy upon him. When the Lord at any time sent his prophets to denounce judgments on the nations, he carried out those judgments. Ask travellers concerning Babylon, and Nineveh, and Edom, and Moab, and Bashan; and they will tell you of the heaps of ruins, which prove how the Lord carried out his warnings to the letter. One of the most awful things recorded in history is the siege of Jerusalem. You have read it, I do not doubt, in Josephus, or elsewhere. It makes one's blood run cold to think of it. Yet it was all foretold by the prophets, and their prophecies were fulfilled to the bitter end. You talk about God as being "love," and, if you mean by this that he is not severe in the punishment of sin, I ask you what you make of the destruction of Jerusalem. Remember that the Jews were his chosen nation, and that the city of Jerusalem was the place where his temple had been glorified with his presence. Brethren, if you roam from Edom to Zion, and from Zion to Sidon, and from Sidon to Moab, you will find, amid ruined cities, the tokens that God's words of judgment are sure. Depend on it, then, that when Jesus says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," it will be so. When he says, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," it will be so. The Lord never plays at frightening men. His Word is not an exaggeration to scare men with imaginary bugbears. There is emphatic truth in what the Lord says. He has always carried out his threatenings to the letter, and to the moment; and, depend upon it, he will continue to do so, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

It is of no avail to sit down, and draw inferences from the nature of God; and to argue, "God is love, and therefore he will not execute the sentence upon the impenitent." He knows what he will do better than you can infer; he has not left us to inferences, for he has spoken pointedly and plainly. He says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and it will be so, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Infer what you like from his nature; but if you draw an inference contrary to what he has spoken, you have inferred a lie, and you will find it so.

"Alas," says one, "I shudder at the severity of the divine sentence." Do you? It is well! I can heartily sympathize with you.

What must he be that does not tremble when he sees the great Jehovah taking vengeance upon iniquity! The terrors of the Lord might well turn steel to wax. Let us remember that the gauge of truth is not our pleasure nor our terror. It is not my shuddering which can disprove what the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. It may even be a proof of its truth. Did not all the prophets tremble at manifestations of God? Remember how one of them cried, "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones." One of the last of the anointed seers fell at the Lord's feet as dead. Yet all the shrinking of their nature was not used by them as an argument for doubt.

O my unconverted and unbelieving hearers, do remember that if you refuse Christ, and rush upon the keen edge of Jehovah's sword, your unbelief of eternal judgment will not alter it, nor save you from it. I know why you do not believe in the terrible threatenings. It is because you want to be easy in your sins. A certain sceptical writer, when in prison, was visited by a Christian man, who wished him well, but he refused to hear a word about religion. Seeing a Bible in the hand of his visitor, he made this remark, "You do not expect me to believe in that book, do you? Why, if that book is true, I am lost for ever." Just so. Therein lies the reason for half the infidelity in the world, and all the infidelity in our congregations. How can you believe that which condemns you? Ah! my friends, if you would believe it to be true and act accordingly, you would also find in that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken a way of escape from the wrath to come; for the Book is far more full of hope than of dread. This inspired volume flows with the milk of mercy, and the honey of grace. It is not a Doomsday Book of wrath, but a Testament of grace. Yet, if you do not believe its loving warnings, nor regard its just sentences, they are true all the same. If you dare its thunders, if you trample on its promises, and even if you burn it in your rage, the holy Book still stands unaltered and unalterable; for "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Therefore, I pray you, treat the sacred Scriptures with respect, and remember that "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

V. And so I must finish, for time fails, when I notice, in the fifth place, that THIS MAKES THE WORD OF THE LORD THE REASON AND REST OF OUR FAITH. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," is the foundation of our confidence. There is forgiveness; for God has said it. Look, friend; you are saying, "I cannot believe that my sins can be washed away, I feel so unworthy." Yes, but "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Believe over the head of your unworthiness. "Ah," says one, "I feel so weak I can neither think, nor pray, nor anything else, as I should." Is it not written, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"; therefore, over the head of your inability still believe it, for it must be so.

I think I hear some child of God saying, "God has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' but I am in great trouble; all the

circumstances of my life seem to contradict the promise": yet, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," and the promise must stand. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Believe God in the teeth of circumstances. If you cannot see a way of escape or a means of help, yet still believe in the unseen God, and in the truth of his presence; "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." I think I have come to this pass with myself, at any rate for the time present, that when circumstances deny the promise, I believe it none the less. When friends forsake me, and foes belie me, and my own spirit goes down below zero, and I am depressed almost to despair, I am resolved to hang to the bare word of the Lord, and prove it to be in itself an all-sufficient stay and support. I will believe God against all the devils in hell, God against Ahithophel, and Judas, and Demas, and all the rest of the turncoats; yea, and God against my own evil heart. His purpose shall stand, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Away, ye that contradict it: ours is a well-grounded confidence, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

By-and-by we shall come to die. The death-sweat shall gather on our brow, and perhaps our tongue will scarcely serve us. Oh that then, like the grand old German Emperor, we may say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," and, "He hath helped me with his name." When we pass through the rivers he will be with us, the floods shall not overflow us; "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we shall fear no evil, for he will be with us; his rod and his staff shall comfort us. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Ah! what will it be to break loose from these bonds and rise into the glory? We shall soon see the King in his beauty, and be ourselves glorified in his glory; for "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "He that believeth hath everlasting life"; therefore a glad eternity is ours.

Brethren, we have not followed cunningly devised fables. We are not "wanton boys that swim on bladders," which will soon burst under us; but we are resting on firm ground. We abide where heaven and earth are resting; where the whole universe depends; where even eternal things have their foundation: we rest on God himself. If God shall fail us, we gloriously fail with the whole universe. But there is no fear; therefore let us trust and not be afraid. His promise must stand; for "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." O Lord, it is enough. Glory be to thy name, through Christ Jesus! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah i. 1—20.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—191, 483, 119.