

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BLESSED GUEST DETAINED.

A Sermon

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them."—Luke xxiv. 28, 29.

WHAT a blessed walk was that from Jerusalem to Emmaus! Were they not highly favoured men to have such a companion as the Lord Jesus, to hear him converse upon such a subject, and to feel their hearts burning within them with so divine a flame? Brethren, these are not the only men who have walked with the Lord Jesus. I trust I look into the eyes of full many who can say, "We, too, have communed with the Son of the Highest; the eyes of our faith have seen him, and our ears have heard his voice." We have known that Jesus himself drew near, and we have heard the words of Holy Scripture as though they fell fresh from his lips, and thus they have, by the power of the Holy Spirit, burned in our hearts, and made our hearts to burn like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame. Thank God, our divine Master is still the familiar friend of his disciples, and our life-walk is with him. In one sense "he is not here, for he is risen;" but in another sense he is more peculiarly here because he has risen; and whereas unrisen he could only have been in one place at a time, now that he is risen he is by his Spirit present with thousands of his people at the same moment, and he walks not only from Jerusalem to Emmaus, but to many a village, through many a garden, along many a street. Jesus delights to manifest himself unto his people: he is not strange unto his own flesh. We are bound to bear witness to the fact that he is not ashamed to call us brethren, and to be found walking with us.

Yea, even to those who are not his people Jesus comes very near at times, and though they know him not he walks at their side; and this not in silence, for he instructs them by his word and makes their hearts warm by his sacred influence. I pray that any remark this morning which shall be made to believers may also lay hold of those attentive hearers to whom the kingdom has come very near; for some of you have often been moved in this house of prayer as you have heard Jesus speak,

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and speak to you ; and if you have not been able to call him friend, yet you have heartily wished you could do so. You have been more than half inclined to cast in your lot with his disciples because their Master has warmed your hearts, if he has not made them burn ; and if there has not been the glow of life yet there have been many flickering desires. I pray that Jesus may never leave you, but that your intimacy with him may be growing, till at last you shall know him and he shall know you, and there shall be a union formed between you which never shall be broken.

To return to that walk to Emmaus. How short it must have seemed ; by far too short for hearts so sad, who at every step found solace. I forget how many miles it was just now. It does not matter. I should think it seemed as if it had scarce begun when it ended : with such light feet they tripped over that pathway, that they thought Emmaus had been attracted nearer to the city. It was so short because it was so sweet : the conversation was such as good men prize more than dainties. The intonations of that voice must often have awakened memories within them which half compelled them to recognise their Lord ; his sweet voice must have charmed them, and the words he uttered, the wondrous words of exposition and consolation, how much they enriched them ! Nor was that walk more sweet than solemn ; for it is no mean thing to walk with the risen Son of God. Kings might fling their crowns away to enjoy five minutes of such honour ; it was nothing less than sublime. Those brethren must often during the rest of their lives have looked at each other and said, "We walked with Jesus." I should think whenever they met, their conversation would have in it fresh recollections of that walk, and each one would say to his fellow, "Brother, I have just remembered a point whereon the Lord spake to us. Do you not recollect the significant hint which he gave us as to the meaning of the prophet ?" If you and I had ever actually walked with Jesus, I am half afraid we might have grown proud of it : at any rate, if we were helped not to be proud, yet it would always be a sublime memory. How sublime a thing to have kept pace with incarnate Deity, and marched foot to foot with him who is God over all, blessed for ever ! No angel has ever walked with Jesus : they cast their crowns before him, and fly upon his errands, but he has not given unto angels the privilege of such familiar intercourse. How solemn to those who all unwittingly had enjoyed it ! Methinks when they knew him they must have been overwhelmed with the thought that they had been so near, and they must have feared in the silence of their souls that possibly they had been rashly familiar. Surely they said each one to himself, "Did we say anything improper ? Was it this which made him call us fools ? When we were expressing our doubts, did we not grieve him ? Alas, that we should have so misbehaved ourselves !" They must have looked back upon that high honour with great awe, even as Jacob did after he had communed with God at Bethel, and said, "Surely the Lord was in this place ; and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place ! this is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven."

Brethren, it is a great thing to come near to Christ ; and you who have not yet believed in him, I should like you to feel in what a solemn position you have sometimes been placed when "he hath been evidently

set forth, crucified among you!" and you have felt somewhat of that presence. Jesus does not draw nigh to a man for nothing; he has an influence upon all whom he visits. Your sense of his presence has left upon you a deep responsibility, especially if you have remained chill under the influence of his holy love and have refused to believe in him. Oh, that you would think of this! Ere our Lord passes on and leaves you to your own devices, I would have you know that the King of heaven has been very nigh to you. Oh that you would cry out to him, nor cease the cry till he comes and abides with you!

I. This must suffice for an introduction. Oh that the Spirit of God may give the sermon. My subject runs thus: First, observe in the text, COMPANIONS LIKELY TO PART. The walk had come to an end, for they had reached Emmaus whither they went, and now the Master made as if he would have gone further, and so the holy talk was likely to end. Jesus is going on, and they may never see him again. The choicest of all conversations now draws to a close unless the speaker can be induced to stop with the two favoured travellers. We are told that our Lord Jesus would have gone further. He did not pretend that he would have gone; but he was actually going. It is the way of him not to stay anywhere except he is invited and pressed. I know not whither he would have gone, but with that glorified body of his he was under no necessity of finding shelter, he could have gone further and lodged elsewhere, or he could have suddenly returned to Jerusalem and in a moment have entered into the Apostles' meeting-room though the doors were shut. It would not have been the first night that—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervour of his prayer."

Certainly he would have gone further; he saith not whither, but he knew right well. Under the circumstances, he and his companions seemed likely to part.

Now, observe *the reason of parting*. They were not about to separate because of any ill-will on the part of those who had walked with him. No anger had broken out: nothing that he had said had aroused any animosity,—very, very far from it: they felt an intense reverence for the unknown stranger, and sincere gratitude to him for the charming words which he had addressed to them. He was likely to have gone further; but not because of any rupture between them. Nor would they have divided because of any weariness of him on their part: he had not prosed away and tired them out so that they would be glad to see the back of him. The rest of the narrative shows that they were in a very different condition of heart from that. If Jesus had gone further they would have lost his delightful society sheerly through forgetfulness. Turning into his house—for I suppose one of them lived there, and there does not appear to have been anybody else in the house—one of them spread the simple repast for his friend; and what if in his care about the evening meal he had forgotten to invite the wonderful stranger? If Jesus had gone further, it would have been entirely because they forgot to invite him, or failed to urge him to stay. They could not have felt an utter indifference to him, but they might have forgotten to press their hospitality upon him. Many have short memories when

hospitality is concerned. Sometimes we have failed to invite a friend when he needed our kindness, and we have felt sorry for it afterwards. They might have supposed that if he went further, so important a person was too great to tarry with them, and perhaps so wise a person had an errand further on which required immediate despatch, and therefore he could not remain with them. Thus they might have let him go. Had they lost him it would have been simply through forgetfulness and inadvertence.

Brothers and sisters, I hope there are very few of us who love the Lord who are likely ever to lose communion with him through any weariness of him, or distaste of him. Oh no: the happiest moments we have ever had have been spent in Jesus' company, and we are never so blessed as when he opens the Scriptures to us, and opens our hearts to receive them. But we are in danger lest in the press of worldly cares, lest in our frequent conversations with our fellow-men, lest even in our attendances upon the domestic concerns of our own little home, we may forget to invite Jesus to abide with us. Communion with the Lord is oftener broken by want of thought than by want of heart; though, alas, when the want of thought has let him "go further," then it has cooled down into that rock of ice which we have called a want of heart. Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us charge our hearts that we do never forget to entertain the Saviour. Let this be our first thought—that we give Jesus a lodging in our souls. Be this our morning prayer, "Abide with us"; be this our evening petition, "Abide with us"; be this the prayer of all the day long, "Abide with us." May we resolve that under no circumstances will we permit our souls to be at rest unless we rest in him, or to be happy except he shall be our joy. You see, if the two disciples had lost our Lord's company it would have been simply through neglect; and if you and I lose him it may be through a neglect which we think excusable because we were so very busy, and so intensely occupied, but this will not alter the fact, nor bring back our Lord. Oh do not let us treat him so ill. Are there other objects beneath the sun or above the sun, on earth or in heaven that are worthy to come between us and Christ even for a single moment? Will a wife treat her loving husband with coldness, and then excuse herself that she had other matters on her hands? It may be so; but never, never let the Lord's redeemed treat their Redeemer as though he might be left in any hole or corner till a more convenient time.

The point at which they were at all likely to part company with Christ is worth noting, for it may give us timely warning.

It was, first, a point of change. They had been walking with him, and the journey was over. They had been out of doors, but now they have come to their house and are about to enter. Always there is a danger to us of missing fellowship with Christ at points of change, and especially at seasons of greatly altered circumstances. I do not wish, brethren, that you and I should be often transplanted: trees do not flourish well when this happens to them. I knew a friend who appeared to be wedded to the gospel, and was zealous in promoting it when he was persecuted very severely by his father. His father died, and he inherited the old man's property; and from that hour he was not seen in his former place, nor did he manifest any love to the Lord. This is sad. I would hardly dare to pray for some men that they might have a change

from persecution to prosperity : plants that flourish amid ice and snow are burned up when placed beneath a tropical sun. I have known those who appeared to love their Master right heartily when they were poor who have become rich, and now where is their ardour? I hope they have not altogether cast off affection for the sacred name ; but certainly the people with whom they once associated know nothing of them now, and they are not engaged in those holy works in which they formerly delighted. How dare I pray for the temporal prosperity of those who would degenerate beneath its influence? On the other hand, I have known many who once were in comfortable circumstances, and when prosperous they appeared to walk with God ; as far as we could judge they were patterns of godliness ; but they fell upon hard times, and they grew poorer and poorer, till they tasted the bitterness of want, and now they say they do not like to be seen by those who knew them, and, therefore, they stay away from the house of God. They have lost the comforts of religion when they most need them, lost worldly substance, and, alas, lost fellowship with Christ as well. This is equally sad, for whether Jesus leaves us at the golden gate, or at the broken-down door of poverty, his departure is equally a calamity. I am mentioning facts. I give no names, but I have seen these things many times, and therefore I have drawn this deduction, that at points of change there is danger. I suppose there is upon the railway a measure of peril at the switches where the train is turned upon another line, and it is certainly so on the main line to glory. At all times it is well to watch, but especially when we are entering upon new duties, new trials, new temptations. Lord, let not the novelty of our position fascinate us even for a moment ; but evermore do thou abide with us.

It was a point, too, where something had been accomplished. They had finished their journey and reached their homes. Oh, we are such poor things that we can hardly complete anything without being self-satisfied. As little a thing as a finished walk will exalt little minds ; but if it is some greater work, the peril is increased. When Christ said, "It is finished," he opened a river of comfort ; but when we exclaim, "I have finished it," we too often set our minds on fire with pride. Certain men have undertaken a work for Jesus and they have done it by the Holy Spirit's blessing, and now they feel so pleased with themselves and so satisfied that they are likely to spoil all, and give their Lord occasion for grief. The lowly Jesus does not seek self-exalting companions. I have known him go many a mile to speak with the contrite, and it is his delight to dwell with the broken-hearted ; but with those who have done something, and therefore feel that they do not further need his presence, he soon parts company. Nothing drives Christ and holy angels out of a room like the foul odour of pride.

Then, dear friends, they were now about to rest for a time. They had reached home, and they looked for repose after the excitements of the week. They had been detained at Jerusalem by grand yet terrible events, and one of them was glad that day to lodge in his own house ; as for the other, he was glad to get out of the city and retire with his friend for a little till good news should come from the apostles. They both hoped for a little peace. Just then the Master made as though he would have gone further ; and when you and I are promising

ourselves repose, such as we have known little of upon earth, it is well at such times to specially ask the Master to abide with us. When we are in the battle we are sure to beg him to abide with us, because he covers our head, and we cannot live without him, and when we are proceeding in a weary walk we are likely to pray him to remain with us, for we are then leaning on our Beloved ; but when we sit down upon the settle of ease, sleep too often creeps over us. Having put off our travelling sandals, and stretched ourselves at ease, ah, then there is the possibility, the sad possibility, of the Master's going further while we take our rest. He is always going further ; and when we resolve to go no further, but to consider ourselves to have attained, then our Lord will soon be gone. We must not take the motto of the famous statesman who has been so often laughed at for his finality : we must not say, "Rest and be thankful," or we shall soon come to grief. If we fall into that vein it is well to remember that just at such a point Jesus and the disciple are apt to break fellowship. I mention this that we may be wise in the hour of trial.

Now, had they parted company, *the act would have been most blameworthy on their part.* To have lost the society of such a friend, how foolish ! Here was one who had instructed them with tenderness and skill,—one who spake as never man spake : would they let him go ? Here was one who evidently could explain their mysterious sorrows, and take the sting out of their griefs, and would they let him pass on ? They had been fools indeed if they had done so. It would have shown that they did not appreciate his teaching, nor feel grateful for his opening to them the Scriptures. It would have been gross folly.

And yet there is another thought. It was toward evening, and night was lowering, and therefore they said, "Abide with us : for the day is far spent." It would have been very cruel to have allowed him to journey on in the dark and the dews. Would we thus treat any friend of ours ? Could we allow a beloved one to abide abroad all night ? Was not that his own argument in the Golden Canticle, when he knocked, and said, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled : for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" ? It would have been inhospitable on their part, inhuman for them to leave him to prosecute his journey in the darkness of the gathering night when they had a home in which they could entertain him. And so I charge it upon my own soul never to let Jesus be left unhoused, a stranger who has not where to lay his head. All hearts are cold in every place towards the Well-beloved : it is a cold world for Jesus to-day even as at the time of his life below. Then "he came unto his own and his own received him not." Let not that be said over again, and said of us who are in a more special sense his own than were his brethren according to the flesh. "Be ye not forgetful to entertain strangers" is a gospel command ; but be ye specially eager to entertain your Lord. Shall your Lord ever say to any of you who are called Christians, "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in" ? Oh, no, let us invite him, beg him, entreat him, constrain him to abide with us for his own dear sake, and let us give him in our warm hearts the best entertainment that we can. Sure we never received such a guest before, and another such we shall never see again. Men are willing to give up their estates and houses for a time to entertain royalty,

and they reckon them to be increased in value when once a monarch has sojourned in them, and shall not we be more than willing to open wide our hearts, and minds, and homes, that Jesus may enter and be entertained by us as the King of kings? There is something, then, to be learned from companions likely to part. May the Holy Spirit sweetly teach us!

II. Now I change the scene, and notice next THE GUEST NEEDING TO BE PRESSED. The guest is Jesus, and he is about to go further, and he will go further unless they invite him, ay, unless according to the twenty-ninth verse they constrain him. It is a very strong word that, "they constrained him"; it is akin to the one which Jesus used when he said, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." They not only invited him, but they held him, they grasped his hand, they tugged at his skirts, they said he should not go: they would not have it: the cold night should not accuse them of being churls: he should not go another yard along that dangerous road; they must have him for a guest, and they could not take a denial.

Let us recollect why this guest wants constraining, and the first thought is, *he could not very well have tarried otherwise*. If I were a stranger and walked along the road with two persons who did not know me, if I were able to talk to them ever so instructively, I should not think of intruding into their house when the conversation was over. You never see anything in Jesus approaching to roughness or want of delicacy; he exhibits the manners of the noblest man that ever lived. He does not force his acquaintance upon any, he goes where he is constrained. Besides, what pleasure could it have been to him or to them for him to have lodged in their house if he had not been wanted? Without a welcome, few of us would care to accept a lodging. Jesus therefore naturally, because the other thing was scarcely feasible, waited till he was asked, and even pressed, and had they not constrained him he would have gone further.

Remark that *this is a characteristic of the Son of God at all times*. I have not time this morning, otherwise I could show you that all through the Old Testament as well as the New, when the Lord reveals himself in any visible form he has to be pressed ere he will abide with any. The Lord came to Abraham, and Abraham said, "My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant" (Gen. xviii. 3, 4, 5). Abraham constrains these wondrous guests, or otherwise they will pass on. Look at chapter nineteen, and see what Lot did when two angels came to him. Even supposing these were nothing more than angels, they show the manners of the court of heaven, so that it is an equally good illustration for me. He said, "Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house" (verses 2, 3). Joseph was in this a type of Jesus, for you know how slow he seemed to

reveal himself to his brethren, though all the while he was full of love to them. To Moses the Lord said, "Let me alone," and only by mighty pleadings could the man of God prevail. When an angel came to Manoah and his wife, to tell them about Samson, we find that he had to be detained, or else he would have departed speedily. "And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee." (Judges xiii. 15, 16). You see, the heavenly messenger needed to be detained, or he would have gone at once. And then comes in that instance of which you have already thought, when the angel said to Jacob, "Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." It is clear that the Lord will be entreated of by the house of Israel to do good things for them. We shall have to cry,—

"In vain thou strugglest to get free,
I never will unloose my hold !
Art thou the Man that died for me ?
The secret of thy love unfold :
Wrestling, I will not let thee go,
Till I thy name, thy nature know.

"I know thee, Saviour, who thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend ;
Nor wilt thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end ;
Thy mercies never shall remove ;
Thy nature and thy name is love."

We know that our Lord himself had a shy habit : he often withdrew himself, and the multitude sought after him ; he walked upon the sea, and they in the vessel saw him and he would have gone by them, but they cried out to him. The Syro-Phœnician woman, who sought for the healing of her daughter, found him at first very cold to her, and only by the greatest faith did she win her desire. He needed earnest pressure ere he yielded to her suit. The blind men cried unto him for sight, but he passed on, till louder and louder yet went up their piteous cries, and they held him, for Jesus stood still. The nobleman when he came about his son pleaded with tears till he cried, "Lord, come down ere my child die." It has been often so with our gracious Lord ; he would not come until he saw that the desire for him was intense. He gives us two parables—one tells us of the man in bed who must be roused with many a knock and many a call ere he would rise to give bread to his friend who sought it; and the other parable is that of the unjust judge who must be wearied by the woman's importunate entreaties before he will vindicate her cause. From all this you see it is the Master's habit to hold back till he is pressed and constrained.

If we must give a reason for this I would remind you of the jealousy of his character. He is jealous of our love ; he says, "Give me thine heart," and so he pauses awhile that he may see that we love his person and prize his benefits. Of old the Father said, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God ;" and Jesus, the incarnation of the divine love, has told us that "love is strong as death ; jealousy is cruel as the grave," and hence it is that he will not give his company to those who have no heart for it. Ye shall not have his smiles if the smiles of the world will do

as well. If intercourse with worldlings will please you as much as intercourse with him, you shall have none of his company. It is only when you languish for him, sigh for him, and cry for him that he will abide with you.

He has another reason, and that is, his anxiety to do us good ! He wisely wishes that we should value the mercy which he gives by being led to consider what a case we should be in if he did not give it. He stirs up our prayers and then answers them, and so we get a double blessing, the prayers themselves being of much service to us, and then the answer being all the more a blessing. It was good to these two disciples to be allowed to be hospitable : it was good for them to rouse themselves to entreat him. They valued the company of Jesus all the more when they had hardly persuaded him to sit at their table and partake of their simple meal. Now, beloved, let us look at Jesus in this light, and say within ourselves, "I am fearful lest I should do anything to excite his jealousy, and I am anxious to show my eager longing for his presence lest he should think me unkind. I would not make him 'go further' and leave me, but I would hold him fast, constraining him to abide with me."

III. I have said that here was a guest who needed pressing : there will be no necessity to enlarge upon the remark that here was A GUEST WORTH PRESSING. He was indeed worth pressing when we consider what he had done for them. He had given them comfort and instruction, and he was worth detaining if only for that. Had they known him they would have felt still more that they could not let him go. Would they not have borne him on their shoulders into the house, and said, "Good Master, we cannot think of letting thee go, for thou art he whom our soul loveth, our Master and our Lord, over whom we have been mourning as one dead, and lo, thou art alive" ? So much were they indebted to him that they could not fail to make him their guest.

They must press him again ; for how comfortless the house would have been without him ! I think I see those two disciples sitting down to their meal, supposing the Master had gone on. Suddenly one would have recollected, and said, "My heart feels heavy now that he is gone ;" and the other would have said, "How came it that we let him go ? Why did we not entreat him to stay the night with us ?" Their meal would have half choked them : they would have gone to their beds and tossed about throughout a sleepless night if they had failed in hospitality to him. This is what has happened to some of us when we have carelessly let slip our Lord : we have been like widows who have newly lost their husbands, sore in heart and desolate. "Should the children of the bridegroom fast ?" Not while the bridegroom is with them ; but if he be taken from them, then shall they fast. Better to have been outside in the open air, or to have gone further with the unknown traveller, than to have been comfortably housed, and to have treated him ill. He was a guest worth constraining to remain when we think of the vacuum there would have been if he had gone further.

Besides, we know what they did not then know, that this unknown One would make himself known to them, as he has done to us. Now knowing him, as they knew him afterwards in the breaking of the bread, we ought to feel, we must feel, we do feel, that we cannot, will not let

him go, but will detain him : for he is Christ our Lord. I spoke at the beginning to some here who have never known our Lord, and yet he has been very close to them frequently, in hearing sermons, and the like. Dear friends, I earnestly beseech you to receive Christ as a stranger, and you shall soon know him as a friend. You only know of my Lord, that he makes you have the heartburn every now and then, and when we talk about him you go home very uncomfortable. How I wish that you knew him better ! Oh, that you would entertain him, for then you would know his excellence ! Bid him come into your heart, and he will be infinitely more to you than he is now. You have no idea what he is : he seems a well-spoken friend, but he will prove to be a brother ; he promises now to instruct you, but he will love you, enrich you, and glorify you.

Oh dear child of God, not well-instructed yet, your eyes are holden and you see not Jesus as you shall see him ; still I pray you heartily entertain the Saviour, even if your eyes be holden. Take him in, and let him still lodge with you, and you will know more and yet more of him. You will know most of him as you break your bread to the hungry, and so break it to him ; you will know more as you break the bread at the communion-table, and so commune with him. Only remember he is a guest worth pressing, and be sure you do your best humbly but earnestly to detain him.

IV. I close by telling you of AN ARGUMENT WITH WHICH TO HOLD HIM. Here it is in the text. "They constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

My first way of using this text does not commend itself to my judgment, but yet it is necessary. All the commentators and preachers I have ever met with suppose that these disciples meant by this argument that it was dreary for themselves to be alone, and therefore for their own comfort and protection they begged the stranger to remain. I do not believe it for a moment : still, that would have been a good argument with the tender-hearted Saviour, and if you and I cannot attain to anything else, let us use that plea. It is toward evening with many of you. You are *in affliction*, and the shadows thicken ; your light has departed, and you are afraid ; sorrows come on like the darkness of night ; you know not what approaches ; you are heavy of heart. Ah, then that is a blessed prayer,—

"Fast falls the eventide !

The darkness thickens : Lord with me abide."

You can bear any trouble with Christ. No adversities shall hurt you, no afflictions shall grieve your spirit if he be with you. Pray, therefore, this prayer, and no longer fear as you enter into the cloud.

Or it may be that some of you are falling into *depression of spirit* through the loss of the light of God's countenance ; you are not as joyful a Christian as you used to be ; the high felicities of your spirit have burned down, and all is dim. Now is the time to say, "Lord, abide with me. If I have no joy, still let me have thyself." It is a blessed thing when a believer does not set his affection so much upon the joy of the Lord as upon the Lord of his joy : when he says not only, "Lord, I will rejoice in thee whilst thou dost smile," but cries with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Better to have to do with a killing

God than to have God away. So, cry, "Lord, if I never get a smile from thee, if I am never again cheered and comforted by thee, and if I never sing a hymn of gladness, yet still abide with me. Be near, even if I know it not." It was a beautiful expression of David, who often asked the Lord to shine upon him, when he said, "In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." As much as to say—if I have no light from God's face, I will be glad to be hidden beneath his wing. Abide with me, then, even if my reason almost fails me, and my darkened soul dreads a yet more tremendous night. Abide with me, O Lord, even should my sorrow seal my eyes in death.

"Abide with me" is a blessed prayer for those believers who are *getting aged*. With them it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. Now should they cry, "Abide with me." Then will you sweetly go to your chamber and fall into your last, most blessed sleep, and obtain the fulfilment of your prayer that you may be for ever with the Lord.

I have used the text in this way because everybody has used it so, but I believe that these disciples meant it in quite another sense. They used the argument to detain Christ because it was evening: *for his sake*, because the night was coming on, and they could not think of his being out in it. They knew how heavy the Eastern dews are, and so they pressed him with this: "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Let us each one use that argument with our Lord even now:—Lord, the world has no entertainment for thee; unbelieving hearts give thee no shelter; the self-righteous repel thee from their doors; the worldly see no beauty in thee; carnal hearts refuse thee; every house is locked against thee, therefore come in and abide with me. Here is lodging for thee: come in, thou blessed one, and stay with me. If thou lackest shelter in king's palaces, abide with me; if there is no room for thee in the inn, yet come in hither and find thyself at home, for I shall count myself greatly honoured by receiving thee. Therefore, dear Master, abide with me. How we ought to long to cheer the Blessed One with our love, because he is still so despised and rejected everywhere else. Everywhere else they treat him ill. O do not let him be wounded in the house of his friends! If he had fifty houses to go to I might say, "Lord, they can give thee better entertainment than lies in my power," but when it is "toward evening" and no other door is open, Lord come into my poor cot. I will set all that I have before thee and be myself thy willing servitor. That is the plea.

Another form of the plea is this. The ages are growing old and dark. What a plea that is for the church to put up now, for the coming of her Lord. O Lord, it is toward evening, the world's sun is setting; it is nearly nineteen hundred years ago since thou didst ascend, and still the world lieth in the wicked one: Lord, come to thy church, come and abide with her, for as the world grows old, good Master, a chill night comes on, and the love of many waxes cold, and there be some that turn aside who once ran well. Dire evils walk abroad in the dark, and blasphemy and rebuke are rife. Good Master, come unto thy church, and dwell in her, and find there thy home.

And the night of all nights is coming on, even the end of the world. We know not when, but we know we are getting nearer to it every day. Earth's day is far spent; her day of mercy comes toward its eventide,

and the night draws on, therefore, Master, come and abide with us, that we may win the world for thee. Come, come that we may convert the heathen to thy cross, and that thou mayest have them for thine inheritance. It is with thy church that thou wilt do this; come, then, and abide with her ministers and her missionaries, and all her living membership, that yet the prophecies may be accomplished and the purpose of the Lord may be fulfilled, and thy reward may be the salvation of thine own. Is not that a good missionary text after all, a blessed prayer with which to begin this missionary week—"Abide with us : for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent"? In the Romish church there is a chant which they use from Easter to the day of Ascension, and though I care nothing for liturgies or anything of the sort, yet it is certainly a suggestive canticle. The first line of the chant is,

"Abide with us : Hallelujah."

And the next is,

"For it is toward evening, and the day is far spent : Hallelujah."

With that I close. May we use that argument well, until our Lord shall in very deed abide with us.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ps. xxxi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—34 (Version II.), 808,
669, 1028.

P.S.—This sermon was preached on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society. To the great regret of the preacher, the weather kept many away at each of the Sabbath services, and the collection was lessened some £50. The Society is just now in much need. It would be very grateful to the preacher's mind if certain of his readers would help that noble mission to that extent. Direct to C. H. SPURGEON, Upper Norwood, London.