

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

UNDERNEATH.

A Sermon

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"Underneath are the everlasting arms."—Deuteronomy xxxiii. 27.

GOD surrounds his children on all sides: they dwell in him. The passage before us shows that the Lord is *above*, for we read, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky." Assuredly he is *around* them, for "The eternal God is thy refuge;" and he is *before* them, for "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." Here according to the text the Lord is also *under* his saints, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," and by thee we are everywhere surrounded as the earth by the atmosphere.

"Within Thy circling power I stand;
On every side I find thy hand;
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
I am surrounded still with God."

The verse which contains our text should be interpreted somewhat after this fashion: "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place, or thy rest, and underneath are the everlasting arms." The parallel passage is that verse in the Song wherein the bride exclaims, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." The soul hath come to its resting-place in God, and feels itself to be supported by the divine strength. The heart has learned to abide in Christ Jesus to go no more out for ever, but to lean on his bosom both day and night. It is somewhat in the condition of Noah's dove which, when weary, was about to drop into the all-destroying waters, but Noah put out his hand and plucked her in unto him into the ark; and when she was all safe, in the hollow of his hands, held by her preserver with a firm but tender grasp, she found in that place a refuge which surrounded her and upheld her from below. The hands covered her on all sides and came beneath her too. Even thus the hand of God sustains all those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I am going, however, to take the words just as they stand in our own authorized version, and to consider them apart from the context. I ask your most careful consideration of them, for they must be very full of meaning, and very emphatic in their force. The words are placed at the end of Moses' song, and they are its crown and climax. He had wound himself up to the highest pitch of poetic excitement and spiritual fervour, and this passage is the result. He had spoken grandly before concerning the separate tribes, and the words which fell from his lips are unspeakably rich ; but now he is about to close, and therefore he pours forth his loftiest strains and utters full and deep meanings, the ripest and choicest fruit of a lifetime of communion with God. As our Lord ascended to heaven blessing his disciples, so did his servant Moses before climbing to Pisgah pour out a torrent of benedictions full and deep, inspired by the divine Spirit. It is not possible, therefore, that the language can be too greatly prized. The words mean all that we can make them mean, the nectar of their consolation is altogether inexhaustible ; may God the Holy Spirit help us to weigh and measure them, and then to distil their inner sense and drink of the spiced wine of his pomegranate.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." I shall handle the text in this fashion. *Where?* "Underneath:" *What?* "The everlasting arms:" *When?* They are underneath us now and evermore: and if it be so, *what then?*

I. First let us attend to the question:—*WHERE?* "*Underneath.*" Now, "*underneath*" is a *region into which we cannot see*. We glance downwards, and the dead cold earth stops our gaze. When we are heavy in spirit we fix our eyes upon the ground and look, and look, and look, but even an eagle's glance cannot see far below. Scarce can we peer beneath the thin green sod, the bottom of a grave is well nigh the full range of mortal vision. The under world is mysterious, we associate the subterranean with all that is dark and hidden, and because of this *it is often regarded as terrible*. A man scarcely ever fears that which he can see in proportion to his dread of what he cannot see. Hence our alarm at the "*underneath.*" What may be underneath us when we leave this sunlit region for the grave's o'ershadowing vault? What will happen to us in eternity? Life will soon end: what is death? What is the immediate result of death? What shall we feel when we are traversing those tracks unknown, and finding our way to the judgment seat of God? Not knowing, except that little which has been revealed to us, we are all too apt to conjecture terrors and invent horrors, and so to begin trembling concerning that which we do not understand. What a comfort it is to be told by the voice of inspiration that "*Underneath are the everlasting arms!*" Poets have usually been in a gloomy humour when picturing the under-world, and imagination is very apt to spin a black and tangled thread. You have read of caverns dark, where the bodies of men are fast detained, of which caverns death has the key. Of this the grim Anglo-Saxon poet wailed the warning note—

"Loathsome is that earth-house,
And grim within to dwell;
There thou shalt dwell,
And worms shall divide thee."

You have heard of gloomy ruins where the night-raven for ever sits and croaks; of corridors where prisoners incessantly rattle their chains to the dolorous music of sullen groans and hollow moans. We have been afraid of death because of the horrors with which our ignorance has surrounded it, and dismayed at the future because of the mysteries which darken it. Be comforted. Our text, like a lamp, reveals the abyss of death and uplifts the veil of the future; follow its gleam, and you will see how it dispels the darkness. If you are a child of God you may descend without fear into the lowest depths: even if like Jonah you had to cry, "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever," yet you need not be dismayed, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." If you were called to take some such awful journey as Virgil and Dante have fabled in their poems, when their heroes descended into the dread Avernus, you need not tremble, though it were said of you as of them,

"Along the illuminated shade
Darkening and lone their way they made."

If, I say, you were bound to traverse the sepulchral vaults, and all the gloomy dungeons of Hades, yet you need not fear, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Mystery of mysteries! thou art no longer terrible to us, because the light of lights is shining upon thee. Depths unfathomable, we no longer fear to pass through you, for there is One whose love is deeper than the depths beneath as it is higher than the heights above, and he hath said, "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring them up from the depths of the sea." We gladly take our journey downward at the call of God, and without fear we pass through the gates of the tomb, and enter the doors of the shadow of death, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

"Underneath"—the word *arouses thought and enquiry*. Everything ought to be sound, solid, and substantial there. "Underneath" must be firm, for if that fails we fail indeed. We have been building, and our eyes have been gladdened with the rising walls, and with the towering pinnacles; but what if something should be rotten "underneath"? Great will be the fall thereof, if we have built as high as heaven, if the sand lie underneath, yielding and shifting in the day of flood.

"Underneath" is the great matter to which the architect, if he be wise, will give his best attention. And truly, brethren, when you and I begin to examine into our graces and our professions, that word "underneath" suggests many a testing question. Is it all right with us as to the root of the matter—"underneath"? If not, the fair flower above ground will wither very speedily. The seed has sprung up hastily, but how is the soil underneath? for if there be no depth of earth the scorching sun will soon dry up the superficial harvest. "Underneath," though it be mysterious, is also intensely important, and hence the great joy of being able to say by faith, "Yes, 'underneath' is well secured; we have trusted in God and we shall not be confounded; we have relied upon the eternal promises and they cannot fail; we have rested on the infinite merits of the atoning sacrifice of God's dear Son, and we shall never be ashamed of our hope." Happy is he who rests upon the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, for with him all is safe under-

neath; and, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, he need not fear, but may patiently hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.

For a period we may be content with superficial pleasures, but there are times of trial when we have to fall back upon something deeper and more reliable: earthly props give way in their season, and we need superior sustaining power. The carnal mind meets with an hour when "the proud helpers do stoop under him"; and believers too, in proportion as they foolishly lean upon an arm of flesh, find their confidences departing; then it is that we feel the value of divine upholdings, and rejoice that "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Let us look more closely into this most important matter.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." That is, first, as *the foundation of everything*. If you go down, down, to discover the basement upon which all things rest you come ere long to "the everlasting arms." The things which are seen are stayed up by the invisible God. This outward visible universe has no power to stand for a single instant if he does not keep it in being. By him all things consist. There are no forces apart from God's power, no existences apart from his will. He bears up the pillars of the universe. He alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. He maketh Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Foolish are those philosophers who think that they can reach the essence and soul from which visible things were evolved, unless they bow before the invisible God. He is the foundation of creation, the fountain and source of being, the root and basement of existence. "Underneath" everything "are the everlasting arms."

Most true is this with regard to his church. He chose her and redeemed her to himself: the very idea of a church is from the Lord alone. As a temple he devised her architecture, saying, "I will lay thy foundations with sapphires"; and he hath built up her every stone by his own power; her walls he sustains against her enemies, so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her, for the foundation of God standeth sure. The foundation of every true church is the Lord himself, the Highest himself doth establish her. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Blessed be God, what is true of the church as a corporate body is true of every member of the church. There abides no spiritual life in the world which is not founded upon the everlasting arms. Beloved, if the life of God be in you, if you search deep and go to the basis of it, you will find that your life is staying itself and drawing its constant nurture, yea, deriving its very existence, from the life of the eternal God. Jesus says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Your life is the life of God in you; for the divine seed is the foundation of all spiritual life. Beware, then, of harbouring in your heart anything which hath not underneath it the everlasting arms. If there be any hope let it be founded on the everlasting covenant of God; if there be any joy let it well up from the everlasting love of God; if there be any confidence let it be stayed upon the everlasting strength of Jehovah; if there be any service rendered, let it be according to the everlasting commandment. If in your soul there be any grace, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, suffer none of

these matters to be superficial or pretentious, the creation of your own native strength, but let them be all founded upon the work of the Holy Ghost in your soul; in fact, let it be said of each of them, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Nothing will serve our turn in the trials of life, the terrors of death, or the solemnities of the last great day, except that which hath underneath it the everlasting arms. See how the nations reel when God no longer sustains them: "he removeth the mountains and they know not, he overturneth them in his anger." See how those churches fly into apostasy which have not underneath them the everlasting arms, they are quenched as the fire of thorns, and only a smoke remaineth. Did not Jesus say, "Every plant that my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up"? See how hypocritical professors disappear like the morning mist when the sun ariseth. Nothing will abide the day of the Lord's coming unless its foundation be laid in the eternal God. The Lord help us to know what this meaneth, so that we may be like the wise man who digged deep and built his house upon a rock.

Again we may read the words, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," in the sense of being *the bottom and end and object of everything*. If in faith you search into divine providence, however dark and trying it may appear, you will soon find that underneath it are the everlasting arms. Satan may be mining, but God is undermining; even under the deep devices of hell the everlasting arms are to be found. Satan's craft is deep to us, but it is very shallow to the Lord, whose wisdom goes far deeper than all the cunning of the prince of darkness. The evils and errors which are in the world should not cause us to despair of the ultimate victory of the truth, for beneath them still there is the immutable decree of the Ever-living and the Ever-blessed; and that decree shall be accomplished whoever may oppose it; hath he not said, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear"? His purpose shall stand, he will do all his pleasure. He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. Trace your present trials below their surface, trace them to the deeps instead of groaning over their outward appearance, and you will find that underneath each trouble there is a faithful purpose and a kind intent; yea, beneath the utmost depths of distress and grief God is still at work in love to your soul, "From seeming evil still educing good, and better still, and better still, in infinite progression." Underneath the best events are the arms of love to make them good, and underneath the worst that can happen are the selfsame everlasting arms to moderate and overrule them. As the design, and object of all, "underneath are the everlasting arms."

I take the text, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," to mean next that the arms of God are there as *the preservation of his people*. His people sometimes appear to themselves to be in very great danger, but it is written, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Certain of the saints are set in very high places, and their brain might well be turned, so that they would fall; but they shall not slip with their feet, for God upholdeth the righteous. If under deep depression of spirit and sore travail of heart their feet should be almost gone, what a blessing it is to think that "underneath are the

everlasting arms." Sometimes faith walks upon a very slender thread high up above the ways of common men; poising her balancing pole of experience, she tries to keep her feet, but her satisfaction is that even if she should slip for awhile, and her joy should fail, yet there is a net beneath her which will receive her in her fall, so that she shall not be utterly dashed in pieces. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" is the gracious safeguard of those who fall, as Peter did, when Satan has them in his sieve. The people of God must and shall be safe. Satan may cast them down, but God shall save them ere they fall into perdition. Let us walk carefully none the less because of this. Let us watch well our footsteps as much as if our preservation entirely depended upon ourselves, but let us ever look alone to our Lord, knowing that he alone keepeth the feet of his saints. Holiness, strength of faith, and ultimate perfection are the things which we must daily aim at, but it is a blessed consolation that when through infirmity or carelessness we do not fully maintain our consecrated walk we are not therefore cast away for ever, for it is written, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

That leads me to read my text in the fourth sense as teaching us that the everlasting arms are *the rest of his people*. If these everlasting arms are always outstretched to preserve me lest I totter in weakness and fall into destruction, then on those arms let me lean my whole weight for time and for eternity. That is the practical lesson of this choice word. Repose yourselves, beloved, in those arms which even now are embracing you. Wherefore vex your heart when you may be free from care? Underneath everything your Father's arms are placed—what, then, can fret you? Why are you disquieted when you might dwell at ease and inherit the earth? Are you afraid to rest where the universe resteth? Are not your Father's arms a sufficient pillow for you? Do you think that it is not safe to be at peace when the love and might of God, like two strong arms, are stretched out for your upholding, and the divine voice whispers to you "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him"? His own word to his prophets is, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." Will you not accept the comfort which he sends by his Spirit, and bids his servants impart to you? When God himself doth rest in his love will not you rest in it, and shall it not again be proven that "we that have believed do enter into rest"? Is not the Lord Jesus our peace? Why, then, are we troubled? Well may you lie down to sleep in peace when underneath you are the everlasting arms. Well may your spirit be filled with composure and become indifferent to outward trials when you are thus upborne. Blow ye winds and toss ye waves, the barque cannot sink, or if it did sink it could not sink to our destruction, we should only drop into the great Father's hand, for underneath even the sinking vessel are the everlasting arms. Now, let the earth reel with earthquake, or open wide her mouth to swallow us up quick, we need not fear to descend into her dreariest gulf, since underneath us still would be the everlasting arms. What a fulness of rest this secures to the believing people of God!

I will fetch from the text one more meaning while I am speaking upon the position of these arms. The text seems to give us a promise of *exaltation*

and uplifting. We may be very low and greatly cast down, but "underneath are the everlasting arms." The merciful God is great at a dead lift. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." Who can tell how high a man may be lifted up—to what sublime elevations he may safely ascend when the Lord makes his feet like hind's feet that he may stand upon his high places? If still underneath him are the everlasting arms he may safely obey the word, "Get thee up into the high mountains." He may outsoar the eagle, mounting higher and higher till he has left the sun like a speck beneath his feet, and still underneath him shall be the everlasting arms. Therefore higher, and yet higher may we hourly ascend in thought, in joy, in holiness, in likeness to our God; this is meant to encourage us to rise, since there can be no danger while the arms of God are underneath. This then, my brethren, is where we may expect to find the strength and power of God: it is underneath us, bearing us up. We may not always see it, for the underneath is hidden from our sight, but surely as in secret the Lord upholds the huge columns of the universe so he upbearth all his own servants, and their concerns. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

II. Secondly let us meditate upon **WHAT** is it which is beneath us. *The everlasting arms.* What is meant by this? I hope the gentlemen who are so ingenious in toning down the word "everlasting" will not meddle with my text. A new way of reading the Bible has been invented in these highly enlightened days. I used to get on exceedingly well with the book years ago, for it seemed clear and plain enough, but modern interpreters would puzzle us out of our wits and out of our souls, if they could, by their vile habit of giving new meanings to plain words. Thank God, I keep to the old simple way; but I am informed that the inventors of the new minimizing glasses manage to read the big words small, and they have even read down the word "everlasting" into a little space of time. Everlasting may be six weeks or six months according to them. I use no such glasses; my eyes remain the same, and "everlasting" is "everlasting" to me whether I read of everlasting life or everlasting punishment. If I clip the word in one place I must do so in another, and it will never do to have a terminable heaven. I cannot afford to give it up *here* when its meaning is joyous to the saint, and therefore not *there* when its sound is terrible to the sinner. What, then, are "the everlasting arms"? They are arms which always were, and always will be: arms which always were strong, and never will grow faint or weary; arms which once outstretched will never be drawn back again; arms which once engaged for the defence of the chosen people shall never cease to work for their good world without end. Not failing arms, nor dying arms, but everlasting arms, are underneath the saints of God.

I understand the words to mean, first, the arms of *everlasting purpose*, "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." His purpose may be called his arms, by which he stretches out his hands to do his work, and these can never fail: for "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth even that he

doeth." We have to deal with One whose gifts and calling are without repentance. In the book of his purpose is it written, and his providence and grace shall tally with the secret decree, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion," and the everlasting purpose of sovereign grace shall be carried out to the end. O my soul, when thy poor purposes shift and vanish, and thou hast to change them twenty times a day, what a blessing it is to think that the purpose of thy God standeth fast, and he himself is without the shadow of a turning. He has declared that he that believeth in Christ shall be saved, and so thou shalt be, though all hell assail thee. Come what may, the eternal purpose lies at the bottom of all, and will be the end and result of all, and so all Israel shall be saved; for "underneath are the everlasting arms" of unchanging purpose.

But next we see here the arms everlasting of *love*. I do no violence to Scripture when I compare love to arms, for is it not written, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"? Love has hands and arms with which it draws us, and these are at this moment underlying all the dealings of God with us. This love is everlasting love: without beginning, without variation, without end. Underneath thee, child of God, is the infinite affection of the omnipotent God; what, then, can harm thee? Thy love! Ah, how it flames forth at times, and then how dull it becomes; but thy safety comes from a love which never varies, which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown. Look beneath thee, and thou mayest see a depth of love, fathomless and eternal, which may well remind thee of what Moses said when he spake of "the deep which lieth under." The strength of love which abides in God, who is love itself, no mind can conceive, but all this is placed under thee, O believer, for thy succour, support, and security. Immovable arches of immortal love sustain thy soul from fear of ruin. Rest thou there and sing unto the Lord thy song upon thy stringed instrument as long as thou hast any being.

But next, these arms may be described as the arms of *power*. And what saith Isaiah the prophet? "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." What said Jeremiah? "Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." Strength is needed to uphold the people of God lest they fall to their confusion, and that strength is always ready, nay, it is always in exercise. Believer, thou hast been able to stand because the arm of divine strength has never been withdrawn. He is able to keep thee from falling and to present thee faultless, and he will do it. "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved."

These are the arms of *immutability*, for God abideth for ever the same. "I am God; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." He saved his people "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his mercy endureth for ever." They are the arms of everlasting *blessing*, for God has determined to make his people happy, and happy they shall be. "Surely," saith he "in blessing I will bless thee." "Thy blessing is upon thy people." He giveth liberally unto them, and that liberality is never diminished, nor can it be stayed. Underneath thee, believer,

are the everlasting arms, for ever carrying thee as a nurse carries her child, for ever gathering up for thee innumerable blessings, and carrying them for thy provision. He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and with that same arm will he show strength unto his people. How blest are they who have such arms beneath them. I heard of a man who was spending a great deal of money, living in grand style, and launching out in business, and certain of his fellow tradesmen told me that they could not see a reason for his cutting such a figure. But said one, "There is somebody at his back; we are quite sure of that." And so it is with us: we may well be strong, we may well be happy, for there is a power unseen of men which is at our back: the everlasting arms are underneath us, and we cannot fail. Let us be joyous and confident, and praise the right hand of the Lord. Yea, though our conflicts should multiply let us not fear, but let us sing unto the Lord, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. The right hand of the Lord is exalted. The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." For this right hand upholdeth the cause of his servants.

III. Now, in the third place, let us consider *WHEN* are the everlasting arms underneath us? The only answer is *now and for evermore*.

Now; at this moment, beloved, the everlasting arms are underneath us. The life of a Christian is described as walking by faith, and to my mind walking by faith is the most extraordinary miracle ever beheld beneath the sun. Walking on the waves, as Peter did, is a type of the life of every Christian. I have sometimes likened it to ascending an invisible staircase far up into the clouds. You cannot see a step before you, but you wind up towards the light. When you look downward all is dark, and before you lies nothing visible but cloud, while beneath you yawns a fathomless abyss. Yet we have climbed, some of us, now for years up this perpetually ascending stair, never seeing an inch before us. We have often paused almost in horror, and asked in wonder, "What next, and what next?" Yet what we thought was cloud has proved to be solid rock; darkness has been light before us, and slippery places have been safe. Every now and then, when the darkness has been denser than usual, a darkness which might be felt, when all the past behind us has vanished, and nothing has been seen but the one step we stood on, we have said, "How did I come here? What a strange, mysterious life mine has been!" We have almost wished ourselves down on the level among the worldlings, who can always see their way and know what is underneath them, but faith has come to our help again; we have believed, and believing we have seen the invisible and grasped the eternal; and then we have gone on, have put our foot down again, and anon have run up with joy the shining way. What an ascent we have sometimes made upon that ladder of light, so that we have companied with angels and left the world far down beneath our feet! Now and then we have enjoyed a glimpse through the thick darkness of the jewelled walls of the eternal city, which needeth no candle, neither light of the sun; we have seen, I say, its brightness, and determined still to climb the mysterious way. Well, believer, at this moment, though thou canst not see thy way, yet since thou art walking by faith "underneath are the everlasting arms."

It is so, though at this moment you fear that you are going down into a gloomy glen. You have lost a great deal of money lately, and the

friend who so kindly helped you is taken away, so that you are going down in the world : yes, but underneath are the everlasting arms. You are getting nearer to those arms now. Friends and wealth came between you and the almighty arms : but now you must lean on them alone. The creature fails, and you must rest on the Creator. You will have sweeter fellowship now than ever you had, since there is nothing to come between you and your Lord. "Ah," saith one, "but I am sinking in spirit; I am greatly depressed." Still underneath are the everlasting arms. Thy soul is sinking, like Peter amid the waves, but a hand is outstretched to save thee : thou canst not sink while thy heavenly Father's hand is near. Go on sinking, if the Lord so will it. Sometimes the greatest sweetness in life is found amid intense bitterness. I never have in my soul a more solid and real joy than when I have been cast into the dust with fearful depression of spirit. I stay myself upon my God, and him only, and then I touch the confines of bliss, though trembling all the while. I hardly know how to express the unrivalled sweetness of resting upon the Lord alone. When you are flung upon God altogether, then does your soul enter into the divinest peace. The natural spirits have gone, everything that sprang from the vigour of youth and the natural elasticity of the mind has departed : now you come right upon God, and lie naked in his hands ; and then there is cast into your cup a foretaste of heaven which the soul sits down and humbly sips to herself, for the secret she can never tell ; no ear would understand her if she did. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." And so, dear friends, if you should sink both in circumstances and in spirits, and your experience should happen to be a very downcast one, it will still be well. If now you have to discover the corruption of your nature, which you knew little of before ; if now your experience, instead of being that of the brethren of the higher life, should be one of humiliation, of prostration of spirit, of deep self-loathing, still underneath thee are the everlasting arms. If you are not to climb to Pisgah with Moses, but must dive to the bottom of the mountains like Jonah, still underneath are the everlasting arms, even at the lowest point of your going down.

So it shall be for ever and for ever, for the arms are everlasting in their position as well as their power. Now thou hast come to die ; thou hast gathered up thy feet in the bed ; the death sweat stands upon thy brow : thou art sinking so far as this life is concerned among the sons of men, but underneath thee shall then be the everlasting arms. Beautifully has Bunyan described confidence in death, when he pictures the pilgrims passing the river. Christian cried out to young Hopeful, "I sink in deep waters, the billows go over my head, all his waves go over me." Then said Hopeful, "Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good." Thus, beloved, shall it be with you. You shall feel the bottom of death's chill river, but you shall say "it is good" ; for underneath are the everlasting arms. Then comes the last plunge, and we shall be as when a man stands on the edge of a precipice and leaps over into the clouds below him. You need not fear to take your last farewell and drop into your Father's arms, for underneath you shall be the everlasting arms ; and oh, how sweetly shall you be caught up together with the Lord in the air, pressed to the bosom of the great Father, and borne upward into the heaven of heavens, where you shall behold the face of

the Well Beloved, and find yourselves entranced in his company for ever and for ever. O heir of glory, underneath thee there is no hell : underneath thee there is no annihilation : underneath thee are the everlasting arms ; therefore commit thy spirit unto thy faithful Creator, and then welcome life or death, for all is well with thee.

IV. Lastly, let us reply to the query, **WHAT THEN?** If underneath us are the everlasting arms, what then?

First, *let us look underneath.* My brother, you have been going on with great discomfort, sighing and crying because your way is rough, and because sometimes you think it dangerous, and fear that you will slip into a chasm and perish. Now, instead of complaining after this fashion, and fearing the road, stop a little and begin to examine—"What is underneath me? What is the bottom of my hope?" You hypocrites dare not examine ; you formalists dare not search. You are afraid to ask questions and to open your eyes, lest you should see too much ; but those who are honest and sincere in the way of our Lord are not afraid to be tested. You who are under any anxiety will do well to pull right up and say, "I have been troubled with doubts and fears, and I will no longer endure it. I will know the end of this ; I will search myself and know my ways, and pray the Lord to let me see the worst of my case ; for I long to know what there is underneath." If you are believing in Jesus Christ with a sincere heart, and resting in the atoning sacrifice, and the covenant of which his blood is the seal, you can afford to search underneath ; for you will find all things solid and eternal. It is well to look underneath an outward providence when it frowns darkly upon you, for it conceals the eternal purpose of love. The sorrows which you see are but, as it were, a napkin hiding the precious treasure of eternal grace, hence you can say to yourself in all ill weathers, "All is well, for all is well underneath. The eternal purpose is working out my lasting good." Do not be afraid to search underneath, my trembling brothers and sisters ; but when you do so and find the everlasting arms to be there, then sing unto the Lord with all your might.

The next inference is, if underneath us are the everlasting arms, *let us lean heavily.* We are afraid to lean too hard on God. To be careful not to encroach on a friend is a very proper disposition. Do not spoil a generous friend by drawing upon him so heavily that he will dread to see you again. I wish some people had a little more of that disposition, as far as I am concerned ; but this is not a right feeling when you have to deal with the Lord. Never fear that you will weary your God ; never say to yourself, "I will ask as little as I can." Why, he says, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." Never say "I will trust him a little, take him a part of my cares and rest a portion of my trials upon him." No, lean with your whole weight. Do not keep a spare ounce for your own carrying. That will break your back. Bring all the tons and the pounds and the ounces and the pennyweights, and cast them all on God. He loves his children to treat him with entire confidence. All your weight will not trouble him. You know Æsop's fable of the polite little gnat which apologised to the ox for burdening him when he alighted on his horn, and the ox replied that he really did not know he was there. Your God will not tell you that, for he counts the very hairs of your head, but he will tell you that your load is

no burden to him. Why, if you had fifty kingdoms burdening your brain and if you carried the politics of a hundred nations in your mind, or were loaded with all the cares of a thousand worlds, you might safely leave them with the Wonderful Counsellor and go your way rejoicing. Lean hard, brothers, lean hard, sisters, for underneath you are the everlasting arms.

The next thing is then, *let us rise confidently*. Do not be afraid of ascending to heights of love: do not be afraid of having a high ambition for a wholly consecrated life. Be not afraid of high doctrines, or high enjoyments, or high attainments in holiness. Go as high as you like, for underneath you are the everlasting arms. It would be dangerous to speculate, but it is safe to believe. Some men are always going downward, turning diamonds into gas and hallelujahs into howlings; they are trying to get rid of precious truth, and to substitute for it some new theory or the other. Let us be brave in the other direction, and seek to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. You may climb, my dear young brother, nor fear to fall even if you reach the masthead of truth, for underneath are the everlasting arms.

Once more, *let us dare unhesitatingly*, and be very courageous for the Lord our God.

"Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where he goes,"

for underneath are the everlasting arms. Are you called upon to lose everything for Christ? Go on and leap like Curtius into the gulf for your Lord Jesus, for underneath you are the everlasting arms. Does your Master call you to an enterprise which seems impossible? Nevertheless, if God has called you to it, attempt it, for he rendereth to every man according to his work. Remember what the negro said: "If Massa Jesus say to me, 'Sam, you jump through that brick wall.' I jump. It is Sam's business to jump: it is Massa's work to make me go through the wall." So it is with you. It is yours to leap forward when the captain gives the watchword, and in confidence to attempt what mere nature cannot achieve, for the supernatural is still with us. The best of all is, God is with us. Underneath us are the everlasting arms. Less reliance upon self and more reliance upon God; less counting of the barley loaves and fishes, and a greater readiness to bring them to his hands who can multiply them till they shall feed the thousands, this is what we want. God grant us grace to trust in his almighty power and sing henceforth and for ever "underneath are the everlasting arms."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Deuteronomy xxxiii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 731, 732.