

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NO DIFFERENCE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 12TH, 1878, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

On this night the Tabernacle was free to all comers, the regular congregation having vacated their seats.

“He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”—Matthew vi. 45.

You see our Lord Jesus Christ's philosophy of nature. He believed in the immediate presence and working of God. As the great Son of God he had a very sensitive perception of the presence of his Father in all the scenes around him, and hence he calls the sun God's sun—“He maketh *his* sun to rise.” He does not speak of the daybreak as a thing which happens of itself as a matter of course, but he traces the morning light to his Father, and declares, “*He maketh his sun to rise.*” As for the rain, our great Lord and Master does not speak of the laws of condensation causing the vapour to become fluid and fall to the earth in a beneficial shower, but he says of his Father, “*He sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust.*” Jesus knew far better than any of us all the laws by which the great Creator governs the world of matter, and yet he never speaks of these laws as though they operated without the divine power making them to be effective. In Christ's philosophy the Lord God himself was everywhere present, working all things, yea, even numbering the hairs upon the heads of his chosen, and marking the falling of a sparrow to the ground. Let such be your philosophy and mine, for it is the true one. Dr. Watts taught us to sing when we were children :

“My God, who makes the sun to know
His proper hour to rise,
And, to give light to all below,
Doth send him round the skies.”

So our mothers taught us, and they taught us the truth ; but the very wise men of this proudly enlightened age seem to be spinning all sorts

of theories to get rid of God, to turn our benefactor out of his own world, and put man's best friend as far away as possible. I am sometimes reminded by these schools of philosophy and science of Tom Hood's "I remember, I remember." Here is a verse of it—

"I remember, I remember,
 The fir-trees dark and high ;
 I used to think their slender tops
 Were close against the sky ;
 It was a childish ignorance,
 But now 'tis little joy
 To know I'm further off from heaven
 Than when I was a boy."

It were a good thing for our sceptical teachers who have banished God out of his own universe if they could go back to their mothers' knees again and learn to talk simply and naturally after the fashion of the wisest man that ever lived, namely, our Lord and Master: then would they also confess that our heavenly Father "maketh his sun to rise and he sendeth the rain," for so it is. Laws of nature can do nothing without a power at the back of the laws. What is nature, about which many infidels speak so very plentifully? Ask them to tell you what nature is, and they will reply, "Why, it is nature." Well, but what is that? And they can only say, "Why nature you know, you know, you know, nature is nature." Some such sensible reply was given to certain of our friends on Kennington Common by one who was there reviling his Maker. Now if men did but understand nature they would know that nature is simply God's creation, workshop, laboratory, storehouse, and banqueting-hall. In nature what God has made and what God is doing, are made visible before our eyes. God is among us still, blessed be his name.

Believing this, we at once perceive that the Lord has been talking with us during the last few days very sweetly and delightfully. The merciful Father speaks to us with charming eloquence on such a day as this, of which George Herbert would have said—

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
 The bridal of the earth and sky."

Coming just in the middle of this fair season of hope and promise, concerning which he sang—

"Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
 A box where sweets compacted lie,"

it has a still small voice which all should wish to hear. What a blessing to have enjoyed such a May-day as this has been. We have had God speaking to us according to the exact style of our text: he has made his sun to shine, and he has us sent rain. Our days for some little time have been made up of sunshine and shower, with every now and then that wondrous master-piece of glory in the sky which we call the rainbow, of which God has said, "I, even I, do set my bow in the cloud," "whose warp is the raindrop of earth, and whose woof is the sunbeam of heaven"; glorious ensign of his grace and faithfulness, who hung it on the cloud. Now what does God say to us in the sunshine

and the shower which thus come the one after the other in such pleasant alternation, making the grass so green and causing flowers to deck both tree and herb? What says he in all these? There is a voice full of the music of love, to which we shall do well to listen.

There is one instruction in it and only one that I shall be able to expound to-night. It is the fact brought out in the text, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

One of the most considerable heights anywhere near London is Leith Hill, near Dorking. And if you have ever stood there, as I often have done with delight, you may, perhaps, have thought over our text. Far around you see the distant lands, pasture, arable, park, wood, with here and there the laughing water, and beyond the blue hills the distant sea. Up comes a gleam of sunlight, where all was cloud before. By-and-by the sun bursts out in full beauty. Do you notice how impartial it is? Men have mapped out the country: so far is allotted to this squire, so far to that, with here and there an insignificant patch pilfered from the wayside or the common which may belong to some industrious peasant; but the sun shines on all, glances into the hall, peeps into the cottage, gleams from the white spire of the church, and flashes from the tavern signboard swinging in the breeze, shines on the wayside, floods the green where the children are at play with its golden light; sweeps over all, in fact. Now that farm over yonder belongs to a churl, who is sure to rake his stubble after the harvest, lest the poor should glean an ear or two—a man who fights and quarrels with his neighbour; yet the sun shines on his selfish heritage. Yonder farm belongs to one who would, if he could, rob the orphan and fatherless and the widow—a heartless wretch, unworthy to gather a sour apple from the sharpest crab; yet the sun shines on his wheat and barley just the same as on that portion of land which belongs to the generous-hearted and the free, to the gracious and the godly. There is no distinction made between the meadows of the righteous and the pastures of the wicked. As you see the sunlight bathe the whole of the scene before you, the entire landscape smiles with universal joy. While you are watching, that cloud, which all day long you had suspected would turn to a shower, comes rushing up with the wind—the Great Father blowing with his breath this travelling fountain of the sky. Then it begins to pour. We seek the shelter of the lofty tower of Leith without a murmur, for we know that the rain is seasonable. The land wants it; it has been dry and parched for weeks. Down comes the blessed shower that shall fill our barns with plenty. Yes, yes, the Lord is pouring forth a shower of food-creating moisture, and, see, it is raining on the churl's piece of land just as much as on his liberal neighbour's. It is watering the farm of the man who would rob the fatherless of his shoes if the law permitted him; it is making his broad acres teem with plenty just as surely as it is fattening the poor man's vatch, or falling upon the widow's scanty plot, or on the farm of the gracious godly man. As though he did not regard human character at all, God bids his sun shine on good and bad. As though he did not know that any men were vile, he bids the shower descend on just and unjust. Yet he does know, for he is no blind deity. He does know; and

he knows when his sun shines on yonder miser's acres that it is bringing forth a harvest for a churl. He does it deliberately. When the rain is falling yonder upon the oppressor's crops, he knows that the oppressor will be the richer for it, and means that he should be; he is doing nothing by mistake and nothing without a purpose. It is of his own will that he thus scatters sunlight with both his hands, and pours the bounteous shower on all things that grow. He knows what he is doing, blessed be his name. He on purpose sends forth shine and shower on the evil and on the good, and that is the one lesson we want to bring out to-night. What is the meaning of this boundless generosity? Why this impartial bounty, this indiscriminate liberality?

What does God say to us when he acts thus? I believe that he says this:—"This is the day of free grace; this is the time of mercy." The hour for judgment is not yet, when he will separate between the good and the bad; when he will mount the judgment seat and award different portions to the righteous and to the wicked. Sheep and goats as yet feed together, and he giveth to them all their fodder; wheat and tares grow in the same field and he ripens both for the harvest. This is not the day of justice, but the period of mercy—free rich mercy—mercy to the undeserving, grace to the worthless, sunlight of love for the evil, and showers of blessings for the unjust.

That is the teaching of the great Father to us to-night, and, in trying to bring it out, I shall first show *how forcible it is made to appear by its being placed as an example*; and secondly, *I shall dwell upon the act itself*, drawing inferences from the impartiality of sunshine and shower to encourage all who long to receive grace at the great Father's hand; and, lastly, I shall *let the plants and grass and trees talk to you a little*.

I. First, then, this which is spoken concerning God's causing his sunshine to fall on the evil as well as on the good is set before us as AN EXAMPLE, AND HENCE THE EMPHASIS OF ITS MEANING. We are, according to the verses which precede our text, to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us, because if we do so we shall be like our Father in heaven, who blesses with shine and shower the bad as well as the good. It must mean, then, that he, in causing his sun to shine upon the bad, is rendering good for evil, is wishing well to those who treat him ill, is intending favour to those that despitefully use him, and persecute his cause. That is what the text means. God would not command us to do what he will not do himself, if placed in similar circumstances. He bids us forgive, because his sunshine and shower teach us that he is ready to forgive. He bids us do good to those who do us ill, because in shine and shower he is doing good to those who hate him and despitefully use him. Now suppose, my brethren, that we were all enabled by divine grace to follow out the precept which is set before us, our conduct would be regarded by most men as being *very extraordinary*; for the most of people say, "Well, I will do good to a man if he is a deserving character, but you cannot expect me to help the undeserving. I will cheerfully render a measure of assistance to a person who is grateful, but to the ungrateful and the evil you do not expect me to be kind? Yes, I will be kind to my neighbour, but that man who the other day was so contemptuous in his behaviour as to treat

me worse than a dog, and seemed as if he would tread me under his feet like dirt; would you have me do him kindness?" Now, suppose that you are able to rise to the example which is put before you, and that you persistently do good, and only good even to the worst of men; and when you are treated with evil suppose you are able to do only the more good, and thus heap coals of fire upon the offender's head by being more generous to him than ever—that will be very extraordinary conduct. You think so, I know, for you feel the proposal to be too hard for flesh and blood to carry out; and so indeed it is. If, however, you are enabled to rise to so great a height, you will astonish all around you and become a wonder unto many.

Admire, then, with all your hearts the marvellous conduct of your God. He is prepared to put away all the offences of the past; and he is ready to forgive, and to do good to those who have been doing ill all their days; yea, to take into his very heart of love and make into his children the very persons who have hated him and spoken evil against him. Will it not be extraordinary if he does that to you, dear friend, if such has been your character? Know, then, that the Lord loves to do extraordinary things. "Who is a god like unto thee, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts." God is prepared to save extraordinary sinners by an extraordinary act of love; wiping out the past, and causing them to begin a new life in which they shall be enriched with his favour and preserved by his love.

Again, if a man should carry out what I have tried to set forth—the continuous rendering of good to the undeserving—he would be regarded by all thinking persons whose judgment is worth taking to be *very noble*. When a man has been abused, misrepresented, and slandered, and he simply smiles and says, "If you knew me better you would not treat me so"; and if the first time he finds an opportunity he helps the man who injured him, and if he gets no gratitude, but, on the contrary, worse treatment than before, he is still able to persevere in doing good, most of you would say, "What a noble fellow he is." Even the man who does not praise him is obliged to feel his greatness. There is about such a man a superiority which covers him with honour in the consciences of those who observe his gentle spirit. Now, hearken, you that are conscious of great sin against God. If the Lord were to-night to put all your sins behind his back, and would take you into his family, as he took the poor returning prodigal; and make a great feast for you as he did when his son that was lost was found, would it not be noble of him? Would you not feel that his thoughts are far above your thoughts? Of course you would. Ay, but my God doth noble deeds such as make the harps of heaven ring with ecstatic music as the cherubim and seraphim behold his grace. O thrice noble God, there is none like unto thee, so ready to pardon and to receive each returning penitent and restore him to thy favour. To pardon you, my sinful brother, would be extraordinary and honourable to the last degree, but God is prepared to act after that noble fashion. Will you not accept such boundless love, and be at peace with such a Lord?

Do you not all feel that if you could act in so noble a style it would

be very *pleasurable* to you? No doubt, there is some pleasure in knocking a fellow down who insults you, but it cannot last long. When the fire of passion goes out a man begins to think whether it was a good thing to do after all: but not to do it, to turn the other cheek when you have been smitten, to do good instead of evil, have you ever tried that? If you have done so, you have heard music in your heart at midnight at the remembrance of your forbearance. When you have been lying awake you have thought it over, and you have said to yourself, "It makes me happy to think that I did not reply to that angry man in an angry tone—to think that I did not after all give him a smart blow when he gave me one; but that I showed patience and good temper, and endured ill treatment for Christ's sake." It is a pleasure as deep as it is noble. To be Christlike is to enjoy a heaven within your breast. Even so it is a pleasure to God to have mercy upon sinners: he delighteth in mercy. Nothing gives to God greater delight than to save those who have offended him. He is always ready for a gracious deed, and freely of his own will he meets those who seek his face; he does not want you to melt his heart with tears in order to win his love, and he does not require the laceration of your body by penance, nor a long period of agonizing doubt, before he grants full and effectual pardon. It is his joy to pardon. He meets returning sinners when they are yet a great way off, and kisses them. So rejoiced is he to receive them that if they are glad to be received, yet he is the gladder of the two. Joyous is the great Father's heart when he presses his Ephraims to his bosom.

Did I hear somebody say, "But this that you are talking about is not justice"? Listen: *it is not unjust*. Look at the conduct which our Lord commands us and see if that would be unjust. If a man has insulted me and I forgive him, am I unjust? If a man has slandered me, and I overlook it, am I unjust? If a man has done me an injury, and I refuse to take any revenge except that of doing good to him, am I unjust? Certainly I am not acting according to the laws of justice, but then I am not the judge, and not being the judge, why should I undertake an office to which I am not called? God is the judge of all by necessity of his nature, but he will not fully display that character till the day when in the person of his Son he shall come with all his holy angels to summon men to his bar: for the present he does not deal with living men after the rule of justice, but he deals with them according to his grace. If any one should question why he should give his grace to the undeserving, here is a sufficient answer for them: "May I not do as I will with my own? Is thine eye evil because mine is good?" If you choose to show kindness to those who do not deserve it, who shall say you "nay"? May not a man be as generous and forbearing as he pleases? What law, human or divine, forbids him? And if God, with infinite sovereignty of mercy, chooses to dispense his favours even to those who deserve nothing at his hands, let him be adored for ever, but let him not be questioned for so doing. At any rate it ill becomes the undeserving themselves to raise such a question; rather let them eagerly accept the bounty of the pardoning God.

And then note this thought—that to do good to the evil is, after all, *promotive of righteousness*. To be good to the unjust is to

help on the cause of right, for goodness to the evil is one of the most wooing things in the world, wooing them, I mean, to repent and do good in return. Let me give you an anecdote. There was a farmer who lived in one of the new settlements of America. We will call him Mr. Wrath, for he was a man of a horrible temper, and everybody who lived near him was made to know it. He had an excellent Christian man living near him—a gentle, good, easy-tempered soul; and on one occasion this good man's hogs strayed into the bad man's wheat and caused damage. Mr. Wrath came down in a tearing rage, and said what he would do and what he would not do; the other offered to pay for the damage, and said that he was very sorry for his neglect and would do his best that it should not happen again. However, it did happen again, and the owner of the wheat was in a great passion. He caught the swine and killed them all, put their bodies on a cart and took them back to his neighbour. "Your hogs," said he, "got into my corn: *here they are*"—and sure enough there they were, all dead. Of course, the owner of the hogs might have gone to law with Mr. Wrath and obtained damages at more or less cost of trouble and temper; but he merely said that he was exceedingly sorry that his hogs had transgressed again, and there ended the matter. Some time after it came to pass that Mr. Wrath's pigs went astray, as pigs will do, and they damaged this good man's wheat. What did he do? He had not sought a legal remedy against his adversary; would not it have been fair and straightforward to butcher Mr. Wrath's hogs, on the principle of tit for tat, as the proverb puts it? Of course it would have been, but a Christian does not act upon that worn-out legal principle. Instead of killing the creatures, he caught them all, tied their legs, put them on a cart, drove up to the door and said, "Friend Wrath, your hogs got into my corn: I have brought them to you: *here they are*,"—the very words that Mr. Wrath had used to him. He went to the cart, of course expecting to find his swine all dead; but there they were, all right enough, grunting in proof of their continued existence. "There," said he, "hogs are always troublesome. I dare say you could not help their getting into my corn: there they are." Mr. Wrath's temper was changed from that very day. How could he behave ill to such a neighbour who had vanquished him by forgiving him the injury that he had done him? Now, just as men can win upon men by their kindness, so does God win upon the hearts of men by his love when the Holy Spirit leads them to see and feel that he acts graciously towards them. There is no power to win a man like the power of love. If you have ever been converted, dear friends, I think that you have felt that you could say—

"I yield, by sovereign love subdued:
Who can resist its charms?"

The thunderbolts of God might have broken you down, but they could not have forced love into your terrified soul; yet, when Jesus came in love and mercy, you were compelled to yield, and that most gladly and heartily. So God's goodness to the unjust is aiding and assisting the cause of righteousness and justice, and who, therefore, shall say a word against it?

"Ah," says somebody, "but it is very *liable to be abused*. If you go

and help the bad, and benefit the unjust, you will find that they will take your charity and spend it wrongly, or perhaps they will turn again and rend you." This is very true, but still the Master says, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you." He does not insert a clause to the effect that we are only to do this where we are sure that it will not be abused. No, it is absolute. If they make bad use of it, that is no business of yours. Your heavenly Father knows that the churl, when he reaps his harvest, will simply spend it on himself; yet he sends him the sunlight and the shower. He knows that yonder oppressive wretch will, with his wealth, go on to grind the poor; but he sends his crops the warm, genial sun, and the refreshing rain, notwithstanding it. But, dear friends, there is this thing to be said about divine grace, that if God gives it to you, you cannot misuse it, for grace will change your heart and renew your nature, and if he is so ready to give to men those benefits which they can and do abuse, much more will he bestow that grace which is liable to no such ill usage.

Let me add, however, if anybody does abuse God's mercy, just as if any man abuses your practical kindness, *it involves him in great guilt*. Men cannot do despite to goodness without becoming exceeding vile. You will soon see this if I mention one anecdote. In Holland, in the days when the Baptists were persecuted, it happened that the canals were frozen over, and one poor despised Baptist escaped from a person who was seeking to drag him before the magistrates to get blood money for his head. He ran across the river, which was wide and frozen. The ice was strong enough to bear him and he got safely to the other shore. The person who was seeking his life was a heavier man and he slipped through the ice and went into the water. And what did this poor hunted Christian man do? He turned round and at the peril of his own life he helped his persecutor out and landed him on the bank; and what did the wretch do but seize him and drag him before the magistrates and he was burnt as the result of his own act of generosity. There is not a man in the world who does not feel that the wretch deserves universal execration. Everybody denounces him at once. So if after God's mercy to the unjust and the bad they still go on to sin against him I will leave the universal conscience of mankind to cry them down. I heard the other day an instance of a dog's returning good for evil, and this places the matter in an equally strong light. A man had taken a dog with the intention of drowning him,—a large Newfoundland dog. He went into a boat with a big stone intending to throw the dog out of the boat into the stream with the stone about his neck. Somehow or other before he had securely tied the stone, the dog had become free and in some little scuffle between them the boat was upset and dog and man were both in the water. The man sank and was nearly drowned; but the dog, noble creature, swam up and seized hold of the man and drew him safely to shore. Now suppose he had drowned the dog after that! Did I hear some indignant person say, "Let him be drowned himself." He would not deserve to live, surely. I would take such a dog as that home and say, "While I have a crust, there shall be a bit for you, good dog, who saved my life when I was destroying yours." Now, if even a dog when it renders good for evil gets a claim upon us, what shall I

say of the great God who with generous liberality continues to feed and keep in life and health the undeserving sons of men, and who more than this has given his own Son to die, and sent a message of amazing love to mankind, in which he says, "Come to me: I am ready to forgive you. Come and accept my love and mercy. Let us be friends, for I delight to forgive sin"? Is it not clear that to abuse such love is black-hearted baseness? I beseech you, be not guilty of it.

II. Now, secondly, we may gather fresh hope and encouragement from THE FACT ITSELF. When the sunlight comes upon a wicked man's field and the rain descends upon the farm of a blaspheming atheist, the man has done nothing to deserve either shower or sun, but yet they favour him. And, blessed be God, he gives his grace to those *who have done nothing to deserve it*. If all your life long you cannot think of one good action you have ever performed, nevertheless the grace of God is free to you if you will have it. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" is preached to you; for deservings and merits are out of the question. God gives freely even to the evil and the unjust.

Showers from heaven and sunlight come to those *who have not sought them* at the Lord's hands. That churl there never prayed for the sunlight. He does not believe in praying—not he. And that oppressor over yonder, that we spoke of, never asked God to send the rain: he said it was a matter of chance, and he did not see the good of praying about it. Yet it came. And oh, what a wonder it is that God is often found of them that sought him not! Persons have come into this Tabernacle, and the last thing they thought of was that they would be saved that night, and yet they have been. God's infinite mercy sometimes comes to those who do not ask for it: according to the text, "I am found of them that sought me not." Look at Colonel Gardiner. He had made an assignation, was about to perpetrate a gross act of vice, but the person whom he expected to meet had not come, and therefore he had to wait an hour or two; and while he waited he saw or thought he saw a vision of the Saviour who said to him, "I did all this for thee, what hast thou done for me?" That question with the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, by divine grace, changed his heart: he never kept that assignation, but, as most of you know, he became one of the most devout Christians in the world. Oh, tell it the wide world over that as the rain tarrieth not for man nor waiteth for the sons of men, but cometh according to the good favour of God, so often does his grace visit those who knew not God and sought not after him. Let him be praised and extolled for ever and ever because of this.

Now, if grace sometimes comes to those who have not asked, do you not think that it will come to you who are asking for it? Oh you that are groaning for it, sighing for it, and longing for it, do you think it will be denied to you? God forbid! He will be sure to bless you. Believe in the Lord Jesus and it is yours at once.

The rain comes to those *who do not even acknowledge the existence of God*. It waters the atheist's fields, and refreshes the pastures of the fool who saith in his heart, "There is no God." Even so, I have known the grace of God descend on those who have loudly denied his very existence. In our church there is one at least who not long ago was a

loud spokesman against God, but upon his dropping into this house the word came with power to his soul, and again, and again, and again it described his case, till at last he said, "There is a God, for he has found me out. The preacher seems to know my case and character." Every time he came something was said which so accurately described himself that he could not understand and interpret it in any other way than that God had spoken to his soul. Now, if God calls by his effectual grace some that even doubt his existence, how much more will he look on you who have been made to tremble before him, and who desire to be reconciled to him? Surely he will hear the cry of the humble, and grant your penitent request.

The Lord sends the rain to some *that never thank him for it*. "A heavy shower, William," says the churl. "Yes, sir," says his pious servant, "God be thanked for it." "I do not know much about that, William. I dare say the wind had a good deal to do with it. I knew it would come, for the glass was down." So he ends that talk. Ay, but, dear friend, if God sends temporal blessings to those who do not thank him, will he not give his grace to those of you who feel that you would bless him for ever, if he would but save you? A good woman said when she sought the Lord, "If he saves me he shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise him as long as ever I live, and then to all eternity." Well, now you may reckon quite surely that when a soul feels after that manner the Lord will not deny it the sun of his love, or the rain of his grace. He gives rain even to those whom he knows will remain thankless, will he not give his Spirit to those who will become his grateful children?

Recollect, too, dear friends, that God gives this rain, and this sunshine, year after year. If I were very kind to a man, and he treated me unthankfully I should think that I had a good deal of grace if I kept on being kind to him for twelve months. And supposing I kept on seven years, I fancy that I should think that I had endured a long enough trial of him, and should get a little tired of being grieved by him; would not you? Yet, see, God has sent sunshine and shower upon the fields of the wicked all their lives long; he has continued to be kind to them, and yet he has not grown weary. Perhaps some of you are fifty years old and yet have never yielded to the love of God. Ah, you have been hearing sermons these fifty years. Perhaps you are getting on for seventy now. Why, you have heard tender words of love that went further than your ears, and touched your conscience, but you have still held out against God. Oh, the patience of God to have borne with you from day to day! Now, if he has suffered you so long, and if to-night you turn to him with purpose of heart, and say, "I have had enough of this rebellion. Lord, I would be at peace with thee," do you think that he will refuse you? Far from it, for his mercy endureth for ever.

One more remark only on this. The sunshine which you saw to-day, I do not doubt, was as bright a sunlight as that which Joshua saw when he bade the sun stand still; and the shower that fell the other day, especially as it fell in these quarters and at Brixton, I should say was quite as plentiful as any downpour which our grandsires can remember. It is evident that the sun's fire is not burnt out, and that the

clouds are not exhausted. Well, it is so in heavenly things, for there the eternal fulness dwells. God has as much love as ever, and as much grace as ever; and as a thousand years ago he poured forth his grace to convert the bad and the unjust, he is just as able to pour them out now upon the most guilty, and the most worthless. His grace in conversion, pardon, adoption, and preservation is as large as ever. Glory be to his blessed name, he still rains his bounties on the unjust; and that Christ who when we were dead in sins died for us, and who while we were yet sinners manifested his great love to us—that Christ who came into the world to save sinners—still aboundeth in power to save and bless; and if you will go to him (and oh may his grace constrain you) you shall find it to be so.

III. Lest I should weary you, I will finish with the last head, under which I should like to MAKE THE EARTH, THE FLOWERS, AND THE TREES, WHICH HAVE BEEN WATERED AND WARMED, SPEAK TO YOU A LITTLE.

And, first, I will suppose, dear friend, that you are here to-night, and feel that you cannot pray—feel as if you could not come to God, could not do anything. The flowers say, “We are cheered by the sun, and refreshed by the rain; we do nothing to deserve these blessings, *but we do long for them.*” The little flowers say, “We do long for the rain.” Look at them; they droop their heads during a long drought. See the grass, how brown it gets; see the leaves, how dry they are; see the earth, how chapped it is after a dry season. Now, soul, do long for the mercy of God; pine for it; sigh for it; cry for it. God help you to do that. To be forgiven, to get the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, is not that worth having? Do pant for it, I say, as the flowers sigh for the rain and the sun.

And next, the flowers seem to say, “*Do turn to it.*” If you keep a plant in your window see how it grows the way the sun comes. Notice the trees how they put out their branches sunward. See the sunflower how it turns its head in the direction of the sun. The flowers love the sun. If you cannot do anything to get divine grace, at least turn your head that way. Look that way; long that way; grow that way. You will receive it, it will not be denied. It will come to you. It *has* come to you if you already begin to turn to it with longing gaze.

And then the flowers seem to say, “*Drink it in when it does come.*” In January there was the crocus just peeping up from the soil, and the sun shone on it, and in gratitude it brought up from the deeps—from its cellar somewhere—a gold cup, and set it out to catch the sunbeams till the sun smiled and graciously filled it to the brim. And have you noticed when the soft April showers fall how the flowers seem each to have a cup to hold a share of heaven’s bounty? and certainly beneath the soil each flower has its little travelling rootlets sucking up each drop of moisture they can find.

Now, dear hearers, when grace does come specially near to you, drink it in. Is the sermon blest to you? Do not go away and lose its influence. Do you feel some tender movements in your conscience? Yield to them. Is there an invitation? Accept it. Is there a threatening? Tremble at it. Open your bosom and say “Come in, my Saviour, come in and reign and save my soul from the wrath to come.”

But then the flowers say once more, "*Do thank God for it.*" The last two or three days I have seemed to live in a temple. When I go into my garden I have a choir around me in the trees. They do not wear surplices, for their song is not artificial and official. Some of them are clothed in glossy black, but they sing like little angels; they sing the sun up, and wake me at break of day; and they warble on till the last red ray of the sun has departed, still singing out from bush and tree the praises of their God. And all the flowers—the primroses that are almost gone—these look into my heart deep meanings concerning God till the last one shuts his eye. And now the forget-me-nots and the wall-flowers and the lilacs and the guelder-roses and a host of sweet beauties are pouring out their incense of perfume, as if they said, "Thank the God that made us. Blessed be his name. The earth is full of his goodness."

Now, dear hearers, if you do get the Lord's grace, thank him for it. Grow by it, blossom with it, be fragrant with it. If you only receive a little grace be very grateful for it, for a little grace is worth a great deal. If God gives you grace enough to be called starlight, thank him for it, and he will give you moonlight; and when you get moonlight grace, thank him for it, and he will give you sunlight; and when you have obtained sunlight grace, thank him for it, and he will give you the light of heaven which is as the light of seven days.

Lastly,—and this the flowers cannot teach you, because the flowers cannot do it—*pray for grace*. It will come; it will come. Do you remember George Herbert's pretty verse. With that I will finish. He says:—

"The dew doth every morning fall:
And shall the dew outstrip thy dove?
The dew for which grass cannot call—
Drops from above."

See his point? The dew comes every morning. The grass cannot ask for it, but it comes. And shall the dew be more free and swift than the Holy Ghost. No, saith the poet: I can pray for that holy Dove: will he not come to me who pray, since the dew comes to the grass which cannot call for it? Behold he visits the earth and waters it with the river of God which is full of water, and flings back the curtains of the sky and bids the sun shine out with genial face upon the poor dead soil; and if he does all this for the fields that cannot pray and for flowers that cannot speak, how much more will he do it for you who seek his face through Jesus Christ.

Come then to him. He will gladly welcome you. Come and trust his Son. Come and rest in the merit of Jesus' blood, and you shall find eternal life. May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew v. 17—48;
vi. 1—8.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—176, 555, 549, 1051.