

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“KNOCK!”

A Sermon

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“Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”—Matthew vii. 12.

I HAVE no doubt that, taken very strictly, the three exhortations of this verse—which, indeed, are but one—were first of all intended for God's believing people. It was to his disciples that the Lord said, “Cast not your pearls before swine;” and perhaps certain of them who were poor in spirit might turn round and say, “Lord, we have few pearls; we are too poor to have the treasures of thy grace so plentifully. Thou hast bidden us not to give that which is holy unto dogs; but holiness is rather a thing we seek after than possess.” “Well,” saith the Lord, “you have only to ask and have; ye have not because ye ask not; you have only to seek and you will be sure to find, for holy things, like rare pearls, are to be discovered if you look for them: you have only to knock and spiritual secrets shall open to you, even the innermost truth of God.” In each exhortation our Lord bids us pray. Beloved, let us abound in supplication. Depend upon it that failure in prayer will undermine the foundation of our peace and sap the strength of our confidence; but if we abound in pleading with God we shall grow strong in the Lord, and we shall be happy in his love, we shall become a blessing to those around us. Need I commend the mercy-seat to you who wait before it? Surely prayer must have become such a joy to you, such a necessity of your being, such an element of your life, that I hardly need press it upon you as a duty, or invite you to it as a privilege. Yet still I do so, because the Master does it by a triple exhortation. A threefold cord is not easily broken—let not my text be neglected by you. Let me urge you to repeated, varied, ever intensifying prayer: ask! seek! knock! Cease not to ask till you receive; cease not to seek till you find; cease not to knock till the door is opened unto you.

In these three exhortations there would appear to be a gradation: it is the same thought put into another shape, and made more forcible. *Ask*—that is, in the quiet of your spirit, speak with God concerning your need, and humbly beg him to grant your desires: this is a good

and acceptable form of prayer. If, however, asking should not appear to succeed, the Lord would arouse you to a more concentrated and active longing; therefore let your desires call in the aid of knowledge, thought, consideration, meditation, and practical action, and learn to *seek* for the blessings you desire as men seek for hid treasures. These good things are laid up in store, and they are accessible to fervent minds. See how you can reach them. Add to asking the study of the promises of God, a diligent hearing of his word, a devout meditation upon the way of salvation, and all such means of grace as may bring you the blessing. Advance from asking into seeking. And if after all it should still seem that you have not obtained your desire, then *knock*, and so come to closer and more agonizing work; use not alone the voice, but the whole soul; exercise yourself unto godliness to obtain the boon; use every effort to win that which you seek after; for remember that doing is praying; living to God is a high form of seeking, and the bent of the entire mind is knocking. God often giveth to his people when they keep his commandments that which he denies to them if they walk carelessly. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Holiness is essential to power in prayer: the life must knock while the lips ask and the heart seeks.

I will change my line of exposition and say: ask as a *beggar* petitions for alms. They say that begging is a poor trade, but when you ply it well with God no other trade is so profitable. Men get more by asking than by working without prayer. Though I do not discommend working, yet I most highly commend praying. Nothing under heaven pays like prevailing prayer. He that has power in prayer has all things at his call. Ask as a poor mendicant who is hungry and pleads for bread. Then seek as a *merchant* who hunts for goodly pearls, looking up and down, anxious to give all that he has that he may win a matchless treasure. Seek as a servant carefully looking after his master's interests and labouring to promote them. Seek with all diligence, adding to the earnestness of the beggar the careful watchfulness of the jeweller who is seeking for a gem. Conclude all by knocking at mercy's door as a *lost traveller* caught out on a cold night in a blinding sleet knocks for shelter that he may not perish in the storm. When you have reached the gate of salvation ask to be admitted by the great love of God, then look well to see the way of entering, seeking to enter in; and if still the door seem shut against you, knock right heavily, and continue knocking till you are safely lodged within the home of love.

Once again, ask for what you want, seek for what you have lost, knock for that from which you are excluded. Perhaps this last arrangement best indicates the shades of meaning, and brings out the distinctions. Ask for everything you need, whatever it may be: if it be a right and good thing, it is promised to the sincere asker. Seek for what you have lost; for what Adam lost you by the Fall, for what you have lost yourself by your neglect, by your backsliding, by your want of prayer: seek till you find the grace you need. Then knock. If you seem shut out from comfort, from knowledge, from hope, from God, from heaven, then knock, for the Lord will open unto you. Here you need the Lord's own interference: you can ask and receive, you can

seek and find ; but you cannot knock and open,—the Lord must himself open the door, or you are shut out for ever. God is ready to open the door. Remember, there is no cherub with fiery sword to guard this gate, but, on the contrary, the Lord Jesus himself openeth, and no man shutteth. But now I must drop this line of things, for my desire is to use the text in reference to those who are not yet saved.

Last Lord’s-day, when we preached upon glory, we had before us the end of the pilgrim way. It was a very, very happy time ; for in meditation we reached the suburbs of the Celestial City, and we tasted of eternal glory. This morning I thought we would begin at the beginning, and enter in at the wicket gate which stands at the head of the way to heaven. Mr. Bunyan, in his “ Pilgrim’s Progress,” says, “ Now over the gate there was written, ‘ Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’ ” His ingenious allegory is always as truthfully instructive as it is delightfully attractive. I concluded that this should be my text. If it be thought worthy to be written over the gate at the entering in of the way of life it must have a great claim upon the attention of those who have not yet started for glory, but are anxious to do so. May God the Holy Ghost instruct and quicken them while we hear the Lord from within his palace saying, “ Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

I. First, then, dear friend, whoever you are, if you are desirous of entering into eternal life, I would expound to you the inscription over the gate, by saying, first, THE DOOR OF MERCY MAY APPEAR TO YOU TO BE CLOSED AGAINST YOU. That is implied in the text: “ Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” If to your consciousness the door stood wide open, there would be no need of knocking ; but since in your apprehension it is closed against you, it is for you to seek admission in the proper way by knocking.

To a large extent this apprehension is the result of your own fears. You think the gate is closed because you feel it ought to be so ; you feel that if God dealt with you as you would deal with your fellow-men, he would be so offended with you as to shut the door of his favour once for all. You remember how guilty you have been, how often you have refused the divine call, and how you have gone on from evil to evil, and therefore you fear that the Master of the house has already risen up and shut to the door. You fear lest like the obstinate ones in Noah’s day you will find the door of the ark closed, and yourself shut out to perish in the general destruction. Sin lieth at the door, and blocks it. Your desponding feelings fasten up the gate of grace in your judgment. Yet, it is not so. The gate is not barred and bolted as you think it to be ; though it may be spoken of as closed in a certain sense, yet in another sense it is never shut. In any case it opens very freely ; its hinges are not rusted, no bolts secure it. The Lord is glad to open the gate to every knocking soul. It is closed far more in your apprehension than as a matter of fact ; for the sin which shuts it is removed so far as the believing sinner is concerned. Had you but faith enough, you would enter in at this present moment ; and if you did once enter in, you would never be put out again, for it is written, “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” If you could with holy courage take leave and licence to come in, you would never be blamed for it. Fear

and shame stand in the sinner's road, and push him back; and blessed is he whose desperate need forces him to be bold.

One thing we should remember when we fear that the door is closed against us, namely, that *it is not so fast closed as the door of our hearts has been.* You know the famous picture of "The Light of the World." It seems to me to be one of the finest sermons the eye has ever looked upon. There stands the Ever-Blessed, knocking at the door of the soul, but the hinges are rusted, the door itself is fast bolted, and wild briars and all kinds of creeping plants running up the door prove that it is long since it was moved. You know what it all means; how continuance in sin makes it harder to yield to the knock of Christ, and how evil habits creeping up one after another hold the soul so fast that it cannot open to the sacred knocking. Jesus has been knocking at some of your hearts ever since you were children; and still he knocks. I hear his blessed hand upon the door at this moment: do you not hear it? Will you not open? He has knocked long, and yet he knocks again. I am sure that you have not knocked at mercy's door so long as incarnate mercy has waited at your door. You know you have not. How, therefore, can you complain if there should be an apparent delay in answering your prayers? It is but to make you feel a holy shame for having treated your Lord so ill. Now you begin to know what it is to be kept waiting, what it is to be a weary knocker, what it is to cry "my head is wet with dew and my locks with the drops of the night." This will excite you to repentance for your unkind behaviour, and also move you to love the more intensely that gentle Lover of your soul who has shown such patience towards you. It will be no loss to you that the door was shut for awhile, if you do but gain a penitent heart and a tender spirit.

Let me, however, warn you that *the door can be closed and kept shut by unbelief.* He that believeth entereth into Christ when he believeth: he that cometh in by the door shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture; so our Lord says in the tenth of John. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life," there is no question about that; but we read on the other hand, "So then they could not enter in because of unbelief." Forty years the tribes were in the wilderness, going towards Canaan, yet they never reached the promised land because of unbelief. And what if some of you should be forty years attending this means of grace? Coming and going, coming and going, hearing sermons, witnessing ordinances, and joining with God's people in worship: what if after all the forty years you should never enter in because of unbelief? Souls, I tell you if you lived each one of you as long as Methusaleh, you could not enter in unless you believed in Jesus Christ. The moment you have trusted him with your whole heart and soul you are within the blessed portals of the Father's house, but however many years you may be asking, seeking, and knocking, you will never enter in till faith comes, for unbelief keeps up the chain of the door, and there is no entering in while it rules your spirit.

Do you, however, complain that you should have to knock? *It is the rule of the Most High.* Am I addressing any who have been earnestly praying for several months? I can sympathize with you, for that was my case, not only for months, but even for years: through the

darkness of my mind and my cruel misapprehensions of the Lord, I did not find peace when first I began to ask for it, although I also sought with much earnestness, going to the house of God every time I could, and reading the Bible daily with a burning desire to know the right way. I did not enter into peace till I had knocked long and heavily. Hearken, therefore, to one who knows your trouble, and hear from me the voice of reason. Ought we to expect to enter into the glorious house of mercy without knocking at its door? Is it so with our own houses? Can every straggler carelessly saunter in? Is it not God's way in the world to give great blessings, but always to make men knock for them? We want bread out of the earth, but the farmer must knock at the door of the earth with his plough and with all his instruments of agriculture ere his God will hand him out a harvest. Is anything gained in this world without labour? Is it not an old proverb, "No sweat, no sweet: no pains, no gains: no mill, no meal"? And may we not expect in heavenly things that at least these great mercies should be prayed for with fervency before they can be bestowed? It is the usual rule with God to make us pray before he gives the blessing. And how could it be otherwise? How could a man be saved without prayer? A prayerless soul must be a Christless soul. The feeling of prayer, the habit of prayer, the spirit of prayer are parts of salvation. Unless it can be said of a man, "Behold, he prayeth!" how can there be any sort of hope that he knows his God, and has found reconciliation? The prodigal did not come home dumb, neither did he enter his father's house in sullen silence. No, but as soon as he saw his father, he cried, "Father, I have sinned against heaven." There must be speech with God, for God gives not a silent salvation.

Besides, *to make us knock at mercy's gate is a great blessing to ourselves upon the spot.* It is a going to school for us when we are set to plead with God for awhile without realised success. It makes a man grow more earnest, for his hunger increases while he tarries. If he obtained the blessing when first he asked for it, it might seem dog cheap; but when he has to plead long he arrives at a better sense of the value of the mercy sought. He sees also more of his own unworthiness as he stands outside mercy's gate, ready to swoon away with fear; and so he grows more passionately earnest in pleading; and, whereas he did but ask at first, he now begins to seek, and he adds cries and tears and a broken heart to all the other ways of his pleading. Thus the man, by being humbled and aroused, is getting good by means of his sorrow while he is kept for a while outside the gate. Beside that, he is increasing his capacity for the future. I believe I never could have been able to comfort seekers in their anguish if I had not been kept waiting in the cold myself. I have always felt grateful for my early distress because of its after results. Many men, whose experiences are recorded in books which are invaluable in the Christian library, never could have written those books if they had not themselves been kept waiting, hungry and thirsty, and full of soul-travail, ere the Lord appeared to them. That blessed man, David, who always seems to be—

"Not one, but all mankind's epitome"

—the history of all men wrapped up in one—how he pictures himself as

sinking in the miry clay! Lower and lower did he go till he cried out of the depths, and then at last he was taken up out of the horrible pit, and his feet were set on a rock that he might tell to others what the Lord had done for him. Your heart wants enlarging, dear sir. The Lord means to prepare you to become a more eminent Christian by expanding your mind. The spade of agony is digging trenches to hold the water of life. Depend upon it, if the ships of prayer do not come home speedily it is because they are more heavily freighted with blessing. When prayer is long in the answering it will be all the sweeter in the receiving, like fruit which is well ripened by hanging longer on the tree. If you knock with a heavy heart you shall yet sing with joy of spirit; therefore, be not discouraged because for a while you stand before a closed door.

II. Secondly, A DOOR IMPLIES AN OPENING. What is a door meant for if it is always to be kept shut? The wall might as well have remained without a break. I have seen certain houses and public buildings with the form and appearance of doors where there were none; the sham doorway being made for architectural purposes; but nothing is a sham in the house of the Lord. His doors are meant to open; they were made on purpose for entrance; and so the blessed gospel of God is made on purpose for you to enter into life and peace. It would be of no use to knock at a wall, but you may wisely knock at a door, for it is arranged for opening. You will enter in eventually if you knock on, for *the gospel is good news for men*, and how could it be good news if it should so happen that they might sincerely come to Christ and ask mercy, and be denied it? I fear that the gospel preached by certain divines sounds rather like bad news than good news to awakened souls, for it requires so much feeling and preparation on the sinner's part that they are not cheered nor led to hope thereby. But be you sure that the Lord is willing to save all those who are willing to be saved in his own appointed way. A dear brother beautifully said in prayer on Monday night—"Thou, O Lord, art perfectly satisfied with the Lord Jesus, and if we are satisfied with *him*, thou art satisfied with us." That is the gospel put into a few words. God is satisfied with Christ, and if you are satisfied with Christ, God is satisfied with you. This is glad tidings to every soul that is willing to accept the atonement made, and the righteousness prepared by the Lord Jesus.

Dear friend, *this gospel must be meant to be received by sinners*, or else it would not have been sent. "But," saith one, "I am such a sinner." Just so. You are the sort of person for whom the news of mercy is intended. A gospel is not needed by perfect men; sinless men need no pardon. No sacrifice is wanted if there is no guilt: no atonement is wanted where there is no transgression. They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. This door of hope which God has prepared was meant to be an entrance into life, and it was meant to open to sinners, for if it does not open to sinners it will never open at all; for we have all sinned, and so we must all be shut out unless it be of free grace for those who are guilty.

I am sure this door *must open to those who have nothing to bring with them*. If you have no good works, no merits, no good feelings, nothing to recommend you, be not discouraged, for it is to such that Jesus Christ

is most precious, and therefore most accessible, for he loves to give himself to those who will prize him most. A man will never have Christ while he has enough of his own; but he that is consciously naked, and poor, and miserable is the man for Christ's money, he it is that has been redeemed by price. You may know the redeemed man, for he feels his bondage, and owns that he must remain therein unless the redemption of Christ be applied for his deliverance.

Dear friends, that door of hope will be opened to you though you may be ignorant, and weak, and quite unable to fulfil any high conditions. When the text says, "*Knock*, and it shall be opened unto you," it teaches us that *the way of winning admission to the blessing is simple*, and suitable to common people. If I have to enter in by a door which is well secured, I shall need tools and science. I confess I do not understand the art; you must send for a gentleman who understands picklocks, "jemmies," and all sorts of burglarious instruments: but if I am only told to knock, fool as I am at opening doors, I know how to knock. Any uneducated man can knock if that is all which is required of him. Is there a person here who cannot put words together in prayer? Never mind, friend; knocking can be done by one who is no orator. Perhaps another cries, "I am no scholar." Never mind, a man can knock though he may be no philosopher. A dumb man can knock. A blind man can knock. With a palsied hand a man may knock. He who knows nothing of his book can still lift a hammer and let it fall. The way to open heaven's gate is wonderfully simplified to those who are lowly enough to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, and ask, seek, and knock believingly. God has not provided a salvation which can only be understood by learned men; he has not prepared a gospel which requires half-a-dozen folio volumes to describe it: it is intended for the ignorant, the short-witted, and the dying, as well as for others, and hence it must be as plain as knocking at a door. This is it,—Believe and live. Seek unto God with all your heart and soul, and strength, through Jesus Christ, and the door of his mercy will certainly open to you. The gate of grace is meant to yield admission to unscientific people since it shall be opened to those who knock.

I am sure this door will open to you, because *it has been opened to so many before you*. It has been opened to hundreds of us now present. Could not you, dear brothers and sisters, stand up and tell how the Lord opened the gate of his salvation to you? That door has opened to many in this house during the last few weeks. We have seen persons coming forward to tell how the Lord has been pleased to give them an entrance into his mercy, though at one time they were afraid that the door was shut, and they were ready to despair. Well, if the door has been so often opened for others, why should it not turn on its hinges for you? Only knock, with faith in God's mercy, and before long it shall yield to your importunity.

It is for God's glory to open his door of grace, and that is one reason why we are sure he will do so. We cannot expect him to do that which would be derogatory to his own honour, but we do expect him to do that which will glorify his sacred attributes. It will greatly honour the mercy, the patience, the love, the grace, the goodness, the favour of God if he

will open the door to such an undeserving one as you are; wherefore knock. Knock since God delights to give; knock at a door which every time it turns on its hinges unveils his greatness; knock with holy confidence at this present moment, for "it shall be opened unto you." It is a door which seems closed, but because it is a door, it must be capable of being opened.

III. Thirdly, knock, for A KNOCKER IS PROVIDED. When persons can be admitted by knocking, a knocker is usually placed on the door; and if not, we often see the words, NO ADMITTANCE. Before bells became so common the habit of knocking at the door was well-nigh universal, and people were accustomed to make the door resound with their blows. There was a nail-head for the knocker to drop upon, and people used to smite it so heavily that it became remarked that such blows on the head were killing, and hence arose the mirthful proverb, "as dead as a door-nail." It betokens a hearty kind of knocking, which I would have you imitate in prayer. Knock at heaven's gate as earnestly as people knocked at doors in the olden times. Have you not had knocks at your own doors which could be heard all through the house? Some of our friends are vigorous, and knock as if they meant coming in. It may be that gentle folks give such tender taps that they are not heard by the servants, and so they have to wait; but these I am speaking of never fall into that error, for they so startle everybody that people are glad to let them in, for fear they should thunder a second time. In this style let us pray: let us plead in downright fashion, and never cease till we gain admission.

I have said that the Lord has provided a knocker. What is this knocker? First of all, it may be found in *the promises of God*. We are sure to speed well when we can plead a promise. It is well to say unto the Lord, "Do as thou hast said." What force abides in an appeal to the word, the oath, and the covenant of God. If a man presents to another a promissory note upon the day on which it is due he expects to receive the amount stated therein. God's promises are bills of exchange, and he will duly honour them. He was never known to dishonour a bill yet, and he never will do so. If you can only quote a promise applicable to your condition, and spread it before the Lord in faith, and say, "Remember this word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope," you must obtain the blessing. Pleading the promise gives such a knock at the gate of heaven that it must be opened.

The great knocker, however, is *the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*. If a person were to call upon you in the name of some dearly-beloved son who is far away, if he brought you due credentials, and a letter, saying, "Father, treat the bearer well for my sake," you would be sure to show him kindness; and if the aforesaid person was authorized to receive a promised amount in the name of your son, would you not hand out the money? Now, when we go to God and plead the name of Christ, it means that we plead the authority of Christ, that we ask of God as though we were in Christ's stead, and expect him to give it to us as if he were giving it to Jesus. That is something more than pleading for Christ's sake. I suppose the apostles at first did plead with God for Christ's sake, but Jesus says to them, "Hitherto ye have

asked nothing *in my name*." It is a higher grade of prayer, and when we get to pleading Christ's name with the Father, then do we gloriously prevail. At a Primitive Methodist meeting a person was trying to pray, but did not get on at it, and presently a voice was heard from the corner of the room, "Plead the blood, brother! plead the blood!" I am not very fond of such interruptions, yet this was to be commended, for it gave the right note, and set the pleader in his right place. Plead the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and you have knocked so that you must be heard.

"Alas!" says one, "I see the knocker, for I know something of the promises and of the person of our Lord, but how am I to knock?" With the hand of faith. Believe that God will keep his promise; ask him to do so, and thus knock. Believe that Jesus is worthy, whose name you are pleading, and so knock in confidence that God will honour the name of his dear Son. "Alas! my hand is so weak," say you. Then remember that the Holy Spirit helpeth our infirmities. Ask him to put his hand upon your hand, and in that fashion you will be able to knock with prevailing vehemence. I beseech you knock with all the strength you have, and knock often. If you are not in Christ, my dear hearer, do not give sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you have found him. If you have prayed once, go and pray again; and if you have prayed ten thousand times, yet still continue in prayer. Knock with all your might, with all the vigour of your spirit; plead as for life; knock at the door as a man would knock who saw a wolf ready to spring upon him. Knock as one would knock who found himself ready to die of cold outside the door. Throw your whole soul into the work. Say unto the Lord, "I beseech thee have mercy upon me, and have mercy upon me now. I faint, I die, unless thou manifest thy love to me and take me into thy house and heart, that I may be thine for ever." "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." There is the knocker.

IV. Next, to you who are knocking at the gate A PROMISE IS GIVEN. That is more than having a door before you, or a knocker to knock with. The promise is above the gate in plain words. Read it. You are growing faint and weary; read the promise, and grow strong again. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Observe how plain and positive it is with its glorious "shall" burning like a lamp in the centre of it. In letters of love the inscription shines out amidst all the darkness that surrounds you, and these are its words, "It shall be opened unto you." If you knock at the door of the kindest of men you see no such promise set before you, and yet you knock, and knock confidently; how much more boldly should you come to the door of grace when it is expressly declared, "It shall be opened unto you"!

Remember that this promise was *freely given*. You never asked the Lord for such a word, it was uttered by spontaneous goodness. You did not come and plead with Jesus for a promise that you should be heard in prayer. Far from it—you did not even pray. Perhaps you have been living in the world forty years, and have never truly prayed at all; but the Lord out of his overflowing heart of generous love has made this promise to you, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Wherefore do you doubt? Do you think he will not keep his word? A God who

cannot lie, who was under no necessity to promise, freely, out of the greatness of his divine nature, which is love, says to a poor sinner, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Oh, be sure of this, that he means it; and till heaven and earth shall pass away his word shall stand, and neither you nor any other sinner that knocks at his door shall be refused admittance.

This inscription has encouraged many to knock: when they have been ready to faint and give up all further seeking, they have read again the cheering lines, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you," and they have taken heart and made the gate resound again. Now, do you think God will tantalize us, that he will make fools of us, that he will excite hopes in poor sinners, for the mere sake of disappointing them? Will he induce you to knock by his promise, and then laugh at you? Did the God of mercy ever say, "I called and you came; I stretched out my hands and you drew near to me, and yet I will mock at your calamity, and laugh when your fear cometh"? Why, a bad man would scarcely speak so: such an act would be more like Satan than God. Do not tolerate the thought that the God of all grace could treat a seeker thus; if it ever crosses your mind, thrust it away and say, "He that taught me to pray has thereby bound himself to answer prayer. He will not invite me to knock in vain! Therefore, I will knock again, only this time more vigorously than ever, relying upon his word and his truth." Oh, that you may never stop your knocking till salvation's door is entered by you! The promise of the Lord was given freely, and on the strength of that promise we knock, therefore we are sure that the Lord will not deny his trusting servants.

The mercy is that *this promise is meant for all knockers*—"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The Lord has not denied to you, my hearer, the privilege of praying, or declared that he will not answer your requests. You may knock, and you may expect to see the door open. I know the blessed doctrine of election, and I rejoice in it; but that is a secret with God, while the rule of our preaching is,—*"Preach the gospel to every creature."* I would, therefore, say to each one here, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The Lord knows who will knock, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his." But knock, my friend, knock now, and it will soon be seen that you are one of God's chosen ones. Remember the story of Malachi, the Cornishman. When a Methodist friend had some money to give him he smilingly said, "Malachi, I do not think I shall give you this money, because I do not know whether you are predestinated to have it. Will you tell me whether you are predestinated to have it or not?" Malachi replied, "You put the money in my hand, and I will tell you." As soon as Malachi had the sum in hand he knew that he was predestinated to have it; but he could not know before he had it in possession. So the secret counsel of the Lord is revealed to our faith when it gets Christ in possession, and not before. Knock at once. If you are predestinated to enter, I know you will knock, and knock till you are admitted, for so it stands, and no exception is made to it—"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It is a rule with the Lord that to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Blessed be God, this text of mine shines out as if printed in stars, and *it continues to shine from day-dawn of life to set of sun.* As long as a

man lives, if he knocks at God's door, it shall be opened unto him. You may have been long a rebel, and you may have heaped up your sins till they seem to shut out all hope from you, but still knock at Christ, the door, for an opening time will come. Even if it were with thine expiring hand, if thou couldst knock at mercy's gate it would open to thee; but put not off thy day of knocking because of God's long-suffering mercy; rather to-day knock, knock now while sitting in the pew, and if you are not answered immediately, as I trust you will be, yet go home, and there in secret cry unto the Lord, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me. I am lost unless thou find me; I am lost unless I find my Saviour and Lord, I am not playing at prayer now, my very soul means it; I must have Christ or else I die just as I am; I cast myself upon him, and trust his atoning sacrifice. Oh, manifest thyself to me as a pardoning God!” I will be bound for God as a hostage that he will answer you. I sought the Lord, and he heard me; and since then I have never doubted of any living soul but that if he too will seek the Lord through Jesus Christ he will certainly be saved. Oh, that you would try it! The Lord move you thereto by his own blessed Spirit.

V. So I close with one more point. When the door opens IT WILL BE A GLORIOUS OPENING TO YOU. “Knock, and it shall be opened.” What will come of it then? Immediately you who have knocked will *enter*. If you have knocked in sincerity, the moment you see Christ as a Saviour you will accept him as your Saviour. Enter into Christ by faith. Behold, he sets before you an open door, and no man can shut it. Do not hesitate to enter in. Hitherto you have thought there were many difficulties and obstacles in your way, but indeed it is not so—Believe and live. When, in answer to your knocking, you see the door move, then arise, and tarry not.

Remember that the opening of that door will not only give you entrance, but it will ensure you *safety*. He who once enters into Christ is safe for ever. Only pass beneath that blood-besprinkled portal, only rest in the house of the Well-beloved, and you shall go no more out for ever. The life which he bestows is eternal, therefore you shall not die. The destroying angel, whenever he may take his flight, must pass you by. Only believe, and you are saved; only trust Christ with your whole heart, and soul, and strength, and salvation has come unto your house, and you have come unto the house of salvation.

But then there shall come to you more of blessing yet, for yours shall be *the adoption*. Once entered in you shall abide in the mansion of grace, no more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home. You shall sit at the Father's table and eat and drink as a son, a heir, a joint-heir with Christ. Yours shall be the liberty, the plenty, the joy of the great house of love. At God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore, and these shall be your heritage. Yes, and more than that; when you have once entered into the house of love you shall have access to its inner chambers. Even the vestibule of God's house is a place of safety, but afterwards the Master of the house shall take you into curious rooms, and show you his treasures, and open to you his storehouses, so that you shall go from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, and glory to glory, by continued progress. All this can

only be understood by experience, and that experience can only be obtained by knocking.

I want to say this, and I have done. Some people think if they have begun to pray, and are a little in earnest, that this is enough. Now, praying is not an end, it is only a means. Knocking is not the ultimatum: you must enter in. If any of you are seeking, I am glad of it; if you are knocking, I am glad of it; but if you say, "I am perfectly satisfied to stand outside the door and knock," then I am grieved for you. You are foolish to the last degree, because you are resting in the means as if they were the end. You must enter by the door or else knocking will be labour in vain. Would any of you be content to visit a friend, and merely to stand for an hour or two outside of his door knocking. Did you ever say, "I do not want anything more: I shall sit down comfortably on the doorstep, and then get up and have another knock or two?" Knocking would not give you a dinner, nor do your business for you. Knocking is only the way of entrance, but if you stop at knocking it is poor work. The most earnest praying is only a way of getting to Christ: the gospel itself is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Come, then, to Christ. If you find the door shut, knock. But oh, remember, the door is not really shut; it is only so in your apprehension! Heaven's gate stands open night and day. At once believe and live. Trust in the merit of Jesus Christ, and you are clothed with it: trust in the blood of Christ, and you are washed in it. Faith saves in an instant. It touches Jesus, and the healing virtue pours forth from his garment's hem: faith steps over the threshold, and the soul is safe. The Lord grant that you may enter in at once, and then it shall be our joy, and the angels' joy, and the great Father's joy, for ever and ever, to see you rescued from destruction!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew vii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—5, 605, 607.
