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MEDICINE FOR THE DISTRACTED.

A Sermon

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“In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.”—
Psalm xciv. 19.

GODLY people are thoughtful people. Indeed it is often a sign of the beginning of grace in a man when he begins to consider. Want of thought has to do with the ruin of most of those who perish: it is not so much that they despise as that they neglect the great salvation. They have no time for thinking; they fly through life like mere butterflies, and they rush upon destruction like wanton moths. Alas! that they should be so brutish. It is shameful and grievous that men whose noblest attribute is an intellect akin to angels, should live like “dumb, driven cattle.” Even men who call themselves religious often seek for priests or ministers to do their thinking for them, and cannot be induced to give personal heed to their eternal welfare.

Good men are none the less full of thought because they are men of faith: believing is not the death of thinking, it is the sanctification of it. When our Saviour said, according to our version, “Take no thought,” he was very far from meaning what those words would seem to imply, but he meant take no carking care, no anxious thought; it was anxiety not prudence which he condemned. Christians are among the most thoughtful and contemplative of men. It is the foolish man who leaps before he looks, and therefore often looks backward with vain regret after he has leaped. Men of Belial hate meditation, but men of God delight in it. The gospel excites thoughts and perfumes them. It does not allow the mind to lie fallow, but sows it with heavenly seed, from which spring meditations of truth, contemplations of purity, and purposes of virtue. Believing in God opens up to us the stores of divine wisdom, and then by holy meditation we feed thereon. Faith gathers the handfuls of sacred corn, from which contemplation threshes out the ears and prepares soul-sustaining bread.

Nos. 1,116—17.

Gracious men take much account of their thoughts, and make a conscience of them. Other men are scarcely alarmed in conscience by their actions, unless they happen to commit some glaring crime, but the saint has lost his heart of stone, and his heart of flesh is conscious of God's displeasure, and trembles at it, when an impure thought has defiled his soul. Regenerate men have sensitive minds, so that a word wrongly spoken grieves them sorely; and if it should never go so far as a word, and only an evil thought like an unclean bird flits through their mind, they are troubled lest they should have invited or secretly entertained so foul a lodger. They dread the sparks of desire, for they know what flames may be kindled by them. They have a horror of sin in any shape; it is a deadly poison, and they dread the very odour of it. If they thought that they had lost their sensitiveness in any degree, it would grieve them and make them pray—

“Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make;
Awake my heart when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake.”

They judge themselves their thoughts severely, and cannot be induced to imagine that they are mere trifles. In this they are fully justified, for thought is the foundation and formation of character. “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.” If thou hadst not thought of evil thou hadst never spoken it; if thy thought had never conceived, thy hand had never executed. Thoughts lie upon the anvil like rough iron, and time hammers them into actions. If there were no plastic clay of evil thoughts there were no potters' vessels of evil deeds. The thought is the man, the essence of himself, the core of his humanity. The outward act is but the bone, the marrow lies in the motive intent and design: hence he who desires to be right looks mainly at his thoughts.

And as thought makes character—and therefore good men cannot afford to trifle with it—so thought makes happiness or woe. In the present life it is certainly so. Many a man never possessed a diamond or a chain of gold, and yet he is not unhappy, because he wears the pearl of content, and his thoughts of future bliss are as an ornament about his neck. Men who have their breasts made brilliant with stars and gems might well envy those whose jewels flash within their bosoms, and light up the secret chambers of their souls. Thoughts have more to do with true wealth than all the miser's stores. The soul makes the estate. He is a poor man who ranks with emperors and yet is a stranger to inward peace; and he is rich who has not a foot of land to call his own, whose heritage is altogether in another world, but who nevertheless can say—

“My God, thou art mine,
What a comfort divine,
What a blessing to know
That my Jesus is mine!
In the heavenly Lamb,
Thrice happy I am,
And my heart, it doth leap,
At the sound of his name.”

Thought does it all. If his thoughts are full of faith in Jesus, confidence in the great Father, hope of heaven, and love to his fellow-men, the man has a young heaven within the boundaries of his manhood, but if his thoughts be full of sadness, despondency, ambition, pride, selfishness, revenge, discontent and the like, the man is and must be unhappy, he creates his own hell, and is his own tormentor.

We must, then, look well to our thoughts, and keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. We must watch thought, think upon thought, and pray about thought, and happy shall we be if we can say, in the language of the text, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."

Now, as I may be helped to do it, I shall this morning first speak upon *the Psalmist's declaration*, setting it out in some of the different lights in which he intended it to be seen, and, secondly, I shall dwell for a little upon *the subject in this declaration upon which he lays the greatest stress*. "Thy comforts delight my soul."

I. First, then, let us look at THE PSALMIST'S DECLARATION. We shall set it forth under five aspects.

The first will be this:—May we not, without twisting the text, understand David to mean, that *when passing many subjects in review before him, he selected the joys of true religion, or the comforts of God, as the subjects which he preferred beyond all others?* The poet-king sees marching before him in procession a thousand themes for thought, many of them exceedingly attractive and fascinating, but after looking at them all with the fixed eye of contemplation, he says, "Notwithstanding the multitude of all these subjects for thought, none of them charm me like the testimonies of my God: they afford me pleasure for awhile, but my deepest pleasure, that which delights my very soul, is found in the comforts of God." It is worthy of note that David was a man whose contemplations could take a wide range, because his experience had been a singularly varied one. He knew the joys of quiet meditation, for in his early youth he had been a shepherd's boy and had kept his father's flock. There are some who fancy that if happiness is to be found on earth, it may be discovered in rural scenes, in quietude and peace, and I am inclined to think that they are not far off the mark, and that to the mind which is rightly attuned, there are sacred charms in solitude. Well might our poet praise God for quiet, and sing—

"The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by thy kind bounty made
For those that worship thee."

In the quietude in which he fed his flocks, David had not been a soulless clown, but a poet, a student, a divine. At midnight he surveyed the heavens and gave us that wonderful eighth Psalm in which he says, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?" He had considered objects upon earth as well as those in the skies. Many psalms will show that he was a careful observer of all the works of God's hands. He loved to ramble where he startled the hind of the morning, and glanced at the eagle renewing his youth. He delighted to sit down by the

brooks which ran among the hills, to watch the wild goats and the conies, and listen to the birds which sang among the branches of the trees. He noted the fir-trees where the storks have their nests, and the cedars of Lebanon so full of sap. He knew the joys of observing the works of God's hands, and they are by no means small. If we all observed nature more it would be well for us. An eminent physician of the insane has said that he has never met with an insane naturalist. The observation of the works of God in the animal and vegetable kingdoms is so amusing and entertaining to the mind, that it affords relaxation from the severer studies and ruder cares of life. David knew something of natural history, and something of astronomy, indeed, something of every natural science ; and, withal, he was acquainted with the charms of music and the delights of poetry, for he was himself a poet of transcendent genius. Methinks, of all purely intellectual joys, there is none greater than to be able to pour forth sublime truths in fitting words. Surely if the new-born child gives pleasure to its mother, the new-born poem gives even more rapturous joy to its author ; " this is my own thought ; it has sprung from my own soul." The author feels a fuller joy in every stanza than the reader is ever likely to do ; for who admires the child one-half so much as does the parent ? And then to wed an immortal hymn to celestial music, as David often did, is not this delight ? To sit beneath some spreading oak, and there with skilful fingers wake the harp to ecstasy, and sing, " My hand shall find thee, O my God, and every string shall have its tribute to sing "—is not this pleasure ? David knew, beyond all others of his times, the united charms of the divine arts of poesy and music. Yet in looking back the royal psalmist exclaims, " In the multitude of all these charming subjects, rich beyond all price, thou, my God, even thou, art the chief of my delights, and the comforts thou hast revealed to me and applied by thy Spirit to my heart, these are the summit of my joy. In all the rest I may take a measured solace, but thy comforts fill my heart to the brim ; they not only sustain and cheer me, but they delight my soul."

Remember, beloved friends, that David not only knew the joys of retirement, but he had felt the delights of active life, and they are not few to a man who is in vigorous health and mental force. There is rapture in being able to serve one's country by noble deeds. When the cowards were flying before Goliath, it was no small joy for the stripling of Bethlehem to come to the front to do battle for his country in heroic fashion. It is no mean thing to be stirred by

"That stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel."

When he came back with the grizzly head of the champion in his hand, it was no trifling joy that flushed the young warrior's bosom. He had slain the enemy of his country, and now would the daughters of Israel rejoice in the dance and say : " Saul has slain his thousand and David his ten thousands." He knew the joys of battle and of victory.

Moreover, the psalmist knew the splendours of a court, and the glory of a throne, for he was the chosen king of Israel. He was an absolute monarch of a people glad to serve him. He knew the pleasures of power and the sweets of eminence. David's history was the epitome

of all human experience ; it was not so much one life as all our lives condensed in one. " He seemed to be not one but all mankind's epitome." That Book of Psalms—to which of us does it not belong ? Is there not a portion there for each man among us ? Whereas we each have had a separate way, David appears, like his greater Lord, to have trodden all our ways, and to have known the sorrows and the happiness of us all. Yet, reviewing all his life-thoughts, he says, " In the multitude of my thoughts within me, of all I have suffered, and all I have enjoyed ; all I have gained, and all I have lost ; all I have desired, and all I have attained, the delight of my soul is in my God, and in nothing else ; thy comforts, O my God, delight my soul." I feel sure that we are not going away from David's words, and certainly not from David's sense, if we give this meaning to the text.

Now, I say to every Christian here, should not this be your assertion, that although all desirable things should pass before you in procession, yet nothing to you is like your God, nothing is comparable to his comforts. Perhaps some of you are now growing grey, having in your time passed through many phases of life ; you were rich once, you have also been poor ; you have been in company, you have been in solitude ; you have been a wife, you have been a widow ; you have been a child, you have been a parent ; you have been a master, you have been a servant ; you have been honoured, you have been slandered ; you have gone through most conditions of life ; and now, what is your verdict ? Your answer is concerning everything else except the love of Christ, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity" ; but concerning the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, you confess that it delights your souls as much as it did in your youth, when you consecrated your first energies to God. The gospel still delights us ; now that we begin to miss the strength from the arm, and the spring from the footstep ; now that grey hairs are on us, and we are descending to the grave, it delights us, ay, and delights us in our last hours as much as it did in our first. Blessed be the name of the Lord for this.

But we cannot linger. A second sense of the text will now come before us. David also means that *when he was exercised with many cares in life he found his solace in the comforts of his God*. David had many reasons for care. Probably the first part of his life was the happiest, when he had only his sheep ; afterwards, when he was called to court, his evil days began. Then was he persecuted by Saul, and hated without a cause. His cares were many when he roamed the wilderness with that rough warrior band around him, so eager for vengeance, so apt to censure their leader's actions. Then his thoughts must have been many and perplexed. We find passages in David's life full of bewildering trouble, like the scene at Ziklag when the city was burned with fire, and all the property of himself and his followers was taken away and their wives and children too. The rough soldiery, in the bitterness of their spirits, spoke of stoning David, and David was much distressed ; his own dear ones were missing, and thus he had to bear his own share in the common calamity, and the blame of all his followers besides. At that time "David encouraged himself in his God." He does not appear to have talked to Joab and Abishai about it, but his

heart went away to his God, so that in the multitude of his cares his resort was to the Lord. After he had assumed the throne David's cares multiplied. The care of the Church of God, as well as of the state, was upon him. His own sins also multiplied his cares, for when he had transgressed against his God, his family became to him a constant source of distress, and even to the last he had to say, "My house is not so with God." He had cares heavier than yours or mine, because we are not kings, and have neither armies at home, nor foes abroad to look after. However much we may have to think of, we can scarcely claim to be quite so burdened as David must have been. And I thank God we have not such rebellious children to deal with as David found in Amnon, Absalom, and the rest. What, then, did David do when he was beset with thoughts of trouble and distress? He went always to the Lord and delighted in the comforts of his God. Ah, brethren, this age is an age of care. We live too fast by half, we do too much and accomplish, therefore, too little. Our good sires could afford time for lengthened family devotions of a character which seem impossible to us. They could listen to sermons which would altogether tire us, and snap the bands of our patience, because their minds were of a more solid order and their lives were vexed with fewer cares. We are all hack and hurry, we ride the whirlwind, we are scarcely satisfied with the speed of lightning. Now, Christian people cannot rush at this pace without serious injury to themselves unless they often refresh themselves with the comforts of God. The Sabbath day is the great safeguard for the sanity of merchants and business men, and those who break the Sabbath to bring business cares into the one day in seven act a suicidal part. If oftener in the other six days Christian men would get alone with God, pour out their hearts before him, tell him their cares, and unveil to him their souls, they would have more ease of mind, be more strong for the struggle of life, and less likely to fail through an over-wrought brain. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." The Londoners in the olden times went into the fields on May Day morning to bathe their faces in the dew, for they thought it made them fair; I would that every morning we bathed our faces in the dew of heaven, so should we be comelier to look upon when mingling with men in the business of the day. If every night before we went to sleep we dipped our foot in the ocean of divine love our sleep would be more sweet to us, and care would not corrode and eat into the heart and even into the bodily constitution, as I fear it does in a great number of cases in this weary age. Get away to your God, O Christian! You see the rooks by day flying over the fields, searching for food, but as the sun goes down they congregate around their nests, and offer their evening hymn together among the tree-tops. Beloved, let us hie away to our God when the cares of the day are over, and praise and magnify his name, and then nestle down beneath the shadow of his wing.

A third meaning of the text is this: *when oppressed with evil thoughts the psalmist found his shelter in God.* I may be speaking upon a subject which will be novel to some here, but it is one in which others of you have had too much experience. There are times when the thoughts

within us are terrible and horrible. If all the thoughts of the chastest and holiest here could now be unveiled to all, a life-enduring blush would crimson every cheek. Some evil thoughts arise from our own depraved hearts, and these are bad enough ; others are excited by the unholy world around us, and these are equally as evil ; but there are some of still darker form, which are not thoughts of ours at all, but which are injected into the soul by Satan. How horrible they are, and how desperate is the conflict of a gracious soul when it is tortured with them ! Satan will make you think that there is no God, no Saviour, no Holy Spirit. There is not a doctrine of the gospel which he will not tempt you to doubt, there is not a holy thing which he will not urge you to blaspheme. I know some who have been forced to put their hands to their mouths for fear they should utter the accursed thoughts which have rushed through their minds. Do you suppose that these were drunkards and swearers ? No, I am not speaking of such, I am speaking of the purest and most holy men and women it was ever my lot to know, who have nevertheless been tormented by the devil with the most hideous and horrible suggestions with regard to the things of God. If you have never felt this temptation I hope you never may, but the probabilities are you will, for there is scarcely a child in God's family that the dog of hell has not barked at. I have known such seasons, have known them to my horror. Now in such times, when obscene, profane, and blasphemous thoughts swarm in the brain like so many flies, as though Beelzebub, the god of flies, had taken possession of the whole mind, and made it swarm with every filthy thing—at such times the only consolation is to fall back upon your God. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, when they fret and wear me, like moths, or rather tear and rend me like wolves, I will fly to thee, my God, to the splendour of thy love, to that fountain filled with blood which washes even these sins away, and to the mighty Spirit whose strong hand can chase these evil ones far away, and give peace to my spirit ; thy comforts shall lift me right away from all this tempestuous weather into the clear sky of communion, wherein thy comforts shall delight my soul.

Let me give a fourth rendering, upon which I will be very brief. *When the mind is worried with thoughts which cannot be dissipated, it is well to turn unto the Lord.* Thoughtful men will have periods in which they do not seem so much to have a subject for thought as to be prisoners of war to ten thousand subjects at once. They are carried away as with a flood. Their thoughts leap over one another, they press and struggle like a raging mob, they surge like the billows of the sea, they overflow the brain as though some mountain torrent had burst its banks and rushed down with devastating force into the valleys beneath. There are riots of thoughts ; not one is well formed, or if well formed, it jostles its neighbour, and is jostled in return. The motions of the mind are at such times quick, hurried, impetuous, as though a whole lifetime of thought could be lived through in a few minutes. Have you never been borne away by thoughts which you long to be rid of ? Have you not put your hand to your weary brain and wished it would leave off thinking ? Have you not envied the country boy who swings upon a gate, scares the birds, eats bacon,

and is as happy as a king? Have you never wished you could turn into a flower and shut yourself up for the night as a flower does? O those nights of weary watchings and longings for rest that will not come! Now there is no sleeping draught that I know of like contemplation of the love of God; I do know nothing which can give the jaded spirit rest like drawing near to God. When God smites me with pain I love to tell him, "O God, I would not smite a child of mine like this. If I did, if there were some necessity for it, I should pity him, my bowels would yearn over him, I could not be untender to my dear boy; and I am thy child and thou art a better Father than I am: wherefore, then, dost thou smite me?" Lay hold of the Lord, my brethren, in his relationship of Father; lay hold upon his heart, draw near to him, and wrestle with him in this way, and pain will often give way before your pleadings; and trouble of heart will fly when you thus come to close grips with the covenant angel, and rise to really childlike, believing dealings with your Father which is in heaven. If you know the law of mental storms you may reach peace, and that law may be summed up in one line: Steer to God right away; fly to him, and you will find a peaceful shelter where—

"You shall smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world."

The last meaning I shall give the text is this, that *if ever we are beset by a multitude of thoughts of a doubting kind, we shall find our best solace in flying to our God*. Do you ever fall into this state? Do you thus speak:—"No doubt there is a Saviour, and a Saviour for sinners, but is there a Saviour for me? He can forgive sins, but will he forgive mine? He is able to renew the heart, but has he renewed mine? May I not prove after all to be a hypocrite? Is not my experience imaginary? Is not my faith presumption? May I not be self-deceived? Can I hope to hold out to the end? Shall I not after all fall by the hand of the tempter? Above all what shall I do when I come to die—will not the waves of death overflow me? Will not its chill floods swallow me up? What shall I do in the world to come, if God forsaketh me? Alas, may he not have forsaken me already? My present circumstances are grievous, may I not expect to be deserted in my future distresses, and if so, what shipwreck shall I make, and what a by-word will my character be? Will he not leave me to my own devices, because I have in former times been so worldly and unholy? Alas, if he do I shall become like others, who were at their outset flaming professors and ended in being apostates from the Lord?" Now, my brother, whenever such thoughts assault your soul, remember David's declaration: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." Come and anchor close by your God, and the storms of unbelief will no more affect you. Francis Quarles, in his quaint "Emblems," represents a man with a flail who is dealing heavy blows all round, and the only one who escapes is a person who, with much daring, comes close to him; the way to escape the heavy blows of Providence is to close in with him who wields the rod, for the further off the heavier is the blow. In all dark times run home. Return unto your rest. If you cannot come to the Lord as a saint,

come as a sinner. If the past should have been altogether a delusion yet begin again. Do not discuss with Satan the question as to whether you are a saint or no, but fly to Christ Jesus. Cease all your questioning about whether or not you are saved, and say—

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I'll fall;
He'll be my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.”

Thus will you quickly end a fray and begin a feast, for God's comforts will delight your soul.

II. We will spend a few minutes on the second point, which is this: WHAT IS THIS SUBJECT UPON WHICH DAVID LAYS SUCH STRESS? He says, “Thy comforts delight my soul.” What are God's comforts? They are very many—they are certainly as many as the multitudes of our thoughts, and they are very weighty—they are certainly as weighty as our thoughts can be; so that the one may be set over against the other.

The comforts of God are those refreshing truths which surround the person and the offices of the blessed Three in One. First there is the Father, Oh! is there no comfort in the thought that he is our Father, and not a stranger? Not a task-master, as some like to call him, but our Father, and “like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Can I be his child, and will he take delight in my misery? He may chasten me for my sin, but will he always chide, will he keep his anger for ever? If he be indeed a father and the best of fathers, my soul why art thou cast down, why art thou disquieted in me? Hope in his eternal love, for he will yet comfort thee and be the light of thy countenance.

Then comes Jesus, Jesus the Son of God. What comforts there are in him! A man, of the substance of his mother, suffering just as we suffer, touched therefore with a feeling of our infirmity, with a heart that always beats true to us. Jesus, God as well as man, and therefore able to succour. Is not that case well cared for which is in his hands? Is not a soul safe when it is under his protection? Look up, thou troubled heart, into the eyes of Jesus, and see if they are not as stars to chase away the midnight of thy spirit. Look at the thorn-crown of Jesus, and see if it does not pluck the thorns out of thy spirit. Behold him suffering for thee as Son of Man and Son of God, and find thy richest consolation there. Does my sin trouble me? It was laid on Jesus, why should it trouble me? Does God's wrath distress me? It has spent itself on Jesus, how can it fall on me? Where are fears about the future? Is it not written, because I live, ye shall live also? Can we be burdened by fears of death? Jesus himself has died, perfumed the grave in which we shall sleep, and then removed its door, so that none shall be imprisoned therein, Shall we be dismayed concerning the judgment? “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that hath risen

again." What room is there for distress of mind, if we think upon the person and the work of Jesus Christ?

Nor let us forget the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has already regenerated us, and, in some degree, sanctified, illuminated, and comforted us, and he at this time "helpeth our infirmities." Shall we not in all times of our distress think of him? What if I cannot pray? He "maketh intercession in the saints." What if I cannot feel? He can quicken me. What if I feel utterly dead to divine things in my own apprehension? Cannot he make me like the chariots of Amminadib, and that, too, in a single moment? Has he not coals of fire with which to kindle on the cold altar of my spirit another flame such as burned there in the day of my espousals? O blessed Spirit, thou canst do everything, deal graciously with me. Thus from the Father, Son, and Spirit we obtain fulness of comfort.

But these consolations also spring from the whole work and system of divine grace. Old Christians as a rule become more and more Calvinistic, because they want more comfort, and having had more experience, they have an appetite for the more solid and soul-satisfying doctrines of grace which they were strangers to in their youth. The idea that we are to preserve ourselves, and that our salvation hinges upon our own future endeavours may be very pleasant for a summer-weather sailor, but for navigating the wintry seas we need something more cheering. The idea that we have not an immutable God to deal with may be put up with when the birds are singing in the sun, but it will not be tolerated when the owls are hooting in the night: a tried believer must have an immutable God or he will feel his case to be hopeless.

At this moment my richest comforts are summed up in the verse,—
 "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." That whole system which begins in grace, which goes on in grace, which ends in grace; that system which makes the creature nothing and the Creator everything; that system which says to self-righteousness, "Begone, for if thou remainest here men will boast;" but which says to grace, "Come in and dwell with guilty, worthless, helpless sinners, and save them from first to last, that Christ may wear the crown"—that entire system is my consolation. In times of spiritual gloom I cling more tenaciously than ever to the old faith of my fathers, the faith which I have taught you from the beginning—that salvation is of the Lord, not of man, neither by man, but is the entire and sole work of God. I am a lost man if it be not so. If there be anything for me to do to complete the Saviour's work, I shall never accomplish it; and if the grace of God be not effectual to save the very worst of men, then where God's face is seen in splendour I shall never come. Salvation is all of grace, rich grace, triumphant grace, and therefore it delights my soul.

Again, in times when many thoughts assail us, the attributes of God are each one of them the delight of our soul, if we are enabled to see them aright; though, alas, Satan too often makes us see them in a

wrong light, and tempts us to extract sorrow instead of joy from them. Is God omniscient? Then my heavenly Father knows what things I have need of before I ask him. Is God omnipotent? Then he is able to save to the uttermost them that come to him. Is God immutable? Then from his purpose he will never turn, but will certainly perform the work of grace. There is light in every divine attribute for the believer. God is love! Oh, what a Kohinoor that sentence is! What a mountain of light! God is love! Child of sorrow, sing of that God and let thy sorrows flee. God is love, unbounded, infinite, immutable, omnipotent, eternal love; love even to thee,—rejoice thou in it. It is also most comforting to remember that God is just, for he is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, he is not unrighteous to forget his promises or break the bonds of the covenant, frustrate his oath and discard the many solemn engagements under which he has laid himself to his only Son.

Furthermore, dear friends, at such times the promises of God are still before us, and what a field of comforts to delight the soul one has opening up before him. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord.” “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.” “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” “I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck thee out of my hand.” “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “He will keep the feet of his saints.” “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk upright.” But, oh, if I had a thousand mouths, I could not repeat and dwell upon a thousandth part of the promises as they should be dwelt upon. This Bible is a great honeycomb, and it drips with honey. Come and taste its virgin sweetness, O ye whose mouths are full of bitterness, and the next time the multitude of your thoughts shall make your mouth taste of gall and wormwood, come ye to these comforts of the Lord, for they shall delight your soul. It is worth while to taste the bitters that the sweets may be the sweeter. Thank God for winters, we should not value summers half so much without them. Blessed be God there are nights as well as days, or we might grow weary of the sun himself. Blessed be God for trouble, for depression of spirit, for adversity, for

waves and billows to go over us one after another, for here in the midst of all these his comforts delight our soul.

The gist of the whole matter is this, the way to comfort is the way where God is to be found. Christian, the way for sustenance, strength, hope, and consolation is the way which leads thee to thy God. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.

And oh, poor sinner, the same way is open to you. Do not look within for comfort, for you will find none. As well go to the Arctic regions and pierce icebergs to discover warmth, as look to yourselves for consolation. Away, away, away, away from your own thoughts to God's thoughts; away from your own judgments and weighings, and computations, and speculations, and expectations to the firm promises of a God that cannot lie, who has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," and "Whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is not condemned." Come and throw thyself at the cross foot, though thou be the blackest sinner out of hell. Thou who art half-damned already in thine own apprehension, come where the bleeding hands are streaming priceless blood, and put thy confidence in the propitiation God himself has provided for such as thou art. Thou canst never perish if thou wilt come there, but in the multitude of thy thoughts within thee the comforts of Jesus shall delight thy soul.

God bless you, dear friends, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xciv.

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