

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

UNBELIEF CONDEMNED AND FAITH COMMENDED.

A Sermon

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“They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.”—Deuteronomy xxxii. 20.

“Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust.”—Psalm xl. 4.

THESE two texts will serve to show the different estimate which God has of unbelief and of faith. He says of unbelievers, in my text taken from Deuteronomy, “They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith”; as much as to say, that the absence of faith proves them to be froward, presumptuous, wilful, disobedient; a people at cross purposes with God. He says not only that they are perverse and froward, but he adds an emphatic word—“they are a *very* froward generation, children in whom is no faith.” The second text most clearly shows us that God has a high approbation for faith; for he himself by the Holy Ghost says, “Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust.” Here, then, we have set before us a great evil to which we are sadly inclined, and a great grace which we greatly need. May God the Holy Spirit work faith in us by his own gracious power! Alas, it is still true that “all men have not faith.” Even when an apostle preached, we read of the congregation that some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. There is that division among you at this time. Oh, that unbelievers may become believers before this service ends!

I will tell you what I shall be driving at this morning: I have a special character in view, and I long to be made useful to persons of that sort. Outspoken and naked unbelief the most of you abhor. Should unbelief display itself in its real hideousness, you who have been brought up religiously would be startled at its approach, would close the door immediately, and bolt it fast lest such a demon of the deep should gain an entry into your souls. Consequently, unbelief when it attacks the regular hearer of the gospel takes care to disguise itself. It feigns to be something other than it is. It does not walk abroad in all its natural deformity, but it approaches us as the Gibeonites came near to Israel when “they did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors.” There are those here who do not doubt for a moment the existence or goodness of God, neither have they any question

about the inspiration and infallible truth of Holy Scripture; and yet they are entertaining within their hearts an unbelief which doth eat as doth a canker. A deadening unbelief is upon them, so that they abide in darkness, and take no pains to come into the light. Yet they do not condemn themselves, but rather look for pity as though it were their infirmity and not their fault. To them unbelief acts like Jezebel when she tired her head and painted her face. Oh, that my words could strip off the disguise of this evil thing! Of this most deceitful form of unbelief I would say, as Jehu said of Jezebel, "Throw her down"; and then I would cry,—Go see now this cursed thing and bury it, for it is a horrible evil. That which prevents men from finding salvation by putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is an enemy so hateful and malicious that no quarter must be given to it; no excuse must be made for it; it must be utterly destroyed from under heaven.

Dear friend, you tell me that you are by no means an infidel or a sceptic, and yet you do not believe so as to find peace with God. You tell me that you cannot believe, which is a confession that you are so false at heart that you cannot believe the truth. It is well that you should own to this gross depravity; but I have reason to fear that you are hardly conscious of the horrible nature of the crime which you acknowledge. I beg you to lay to heart this fact, that unless you have faith in Jesus you will perish just as surely as if you were an open denier of the word of God and a reviler of his Son. There are, doubtless, degrees in the terribleness of the punishment, but there are no degrees in the certainty of the fact that every unbeliever will be shut out from the blessing of the gospel of Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." I want you to remove every flattering unction from your souls, and to know of a surety that "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John iii. 18.) Dream not that because you do not happen to be an avowed atheist, or deist, or agnostic, that therefore your own form of unbelief is harmless. We read of Israel in the wilderness that "they could not enter in because of unbelief;" yet they were not atheists. A passive unbelief will ruin a man as surely as an active infidelity. Suppose that an enemy is on this side of a river destroying everybody. To find safety the river has to be crossed, and there is but one bridge. Yonder man declares that he will never go over such a bridge; he does not believe in it; he asserts that it is a rotten old thing, which would break down under his weight. He hates the structure; he will not call it a bridge at all; he ridicules all who venture upon it. It is clear that he will stay on this side the river, and die by the pursuer's sword. He is the type of the avowed sceptic. *But where are you?* You say with unfeigned distress, "I am horrified to hear that man talk so of that excellent bridge; I believe that it is well constructed, and that it has carried hundreds of thousands over. I cannot bear to hear a word said against it, for my dear father and mother found refuge by crossing it, and they are now in the land of peace." Yet you do not escape by that bridge yourself, though well aware of your danger! Do you answer, "Well, I do not feel worthy to go over it." Why, that is nonsense; it is as if you should say, I cannot swim, and therefore

will not cross over the river by means of the bridge. Your unworthiness cannot be a reason for refusing to accept a free salvation ; on the contrary, it is a reason why you should accept it at once. However, it matters little what your excuse may be ; you will perish for ever if you do not believe in Jesus.

Take another illustration. A fatal disease is abroad, and a remedy has been discovered of the most effectual kind. One man denounces the medicine, the physician who invented it, and the apothecaries who distribute it : he can hardly find words enough in the dictionary with which to express his contempt for what he calls a monstrous quackery. He will evidently receive no benefit from the medicine. That is not your case : you are of quite another mind. You esteem the medicine, reverence the physician, and even feel an affection for the apothecaries who distribute it. No question about the matter has ever crossed your mind ; on the contrary, you are an advocate for the great remedy, and believe firmly that it has healed multitudes of persons. *Why do you not take the wholesome draught yourself?* You tell me that you are trying to get better ; and that you do not quite see how the medicine can heal you. This shows that you mistrust the power of the medicine to heal you, just as you are. You will derive no more benefit from it than the other man who rails at it. It is quite impossible that any man should receive the blessing which comes through the atoning blood of Christ unless he has faith ; and whether he goes to the length of an utter contempt of the great Sacrifice, or stands off from it because he does not feel as he could desire, he will surely die without forgiveness. Out of Christ the doom of eternal wrath will fall on you, whether near to the kingdom or far off from it.

I want to talk with those unbelieving people who are not avowedly sceptical. Some of these I have seen, and I know that they are a numerous class. They are very sincere, and are really seeking after salvation ; but the one thing which they refuse to do is to believe in the Lord Jesus. They will not trust their God, they will not believe in the promise which he has made to us in Christ Jesus. They would suffer any penance, they would give anything they possess, they would cut off their right arm, they would consent to lose their eyes, if they might but be saved ; but this one matter of trust in God and accepting his way of salvation is the point in which they quarrel with the Most High. Upon this matter, in which the Lord will assuredly never yield to them, they stand out very obstinately, and so prove that they are "a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." If they would obtain the Lord's blessing, the only way to it is faith. Oh, that they would hold out no longer, for "Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust."

I. To begin, then : our first statement is, UNBELIEF IS FROWARDNESS—"They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." One very frequent disguise of unbelief is that of humility. "I feel myself such a great sinner ; I feel so much evil to be in my heart ; I dare not believe in Jesus!" If you judged by appearances you might think this unbelief very modest ; but, indeed, it is not so. It imitates the tone of humility, but it cannot catch the accent. This deceptive vice dares to hint that the sinner's unworthiness is a reason why Jesus should not be trusted. What, would any man tell me that his own

wickedness is a reason why he should distrust *me*? That would be too absurd. Because you are such a sinner, is God therefore a deceiver, and not to be trusted? This is not humility, but audacity. Our fearing to trust the promise of God because we are evil is a most perverse piece of wickedness. Surely, God is true, even if we are liars; and our falsehood does not make him false, or deprive him of his right to be believed. Do we dare to tell him that he cannot save when he assuredly promises to save us if we trust him? Do we deny his willingness to save when he sends us gracious invitations, and entreats us to turn to him? This is insolence, and not penitence. However great a sinner you may be, there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared, for "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Do not deny this. Do not be so profanely bold as to give the lie to Jesus.

Unbelief claims to be so timid. It cries, "I am afraid to come to Christ, afraid to trust him with my soul." This is not true fear, but an evil pride. The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. The sound is that of an amiable timorousness, but the spirit is that of frowardness. Friends, if you truly feared God you would tremble at the idea of distrusting him. It is a very daring act of impiety to question any promise of the Most High; it is the height of rebellion to deny the power of the death of his dear Son. That kind of timidity and humility is to be shunned and to be abhorred which dares to make God's love a dream, and his mercy a fiction. Since the Lord's mercy endureth for ever, since Jesus has never yet cast out a soul that has come to him, it is folly to talk of being afraid to come to him. Dread doubting; but fear not to trust your God.

Unbelief is a very froward thing; we repeat the statement, and go on to prove it, because, in the first place, *it gives God the lie*. Can anything be worse than this? God saith, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and the unbeliever replies, "I cannot believe that Jesus will save me." That is to say, translating it into plain English:—You do not think that God speaks the truth; you do not believe that God is able to make his promises good to you. You do, in effect, imagine that he has said a great deal more than he means, or promised more than he is able to perform. At any rate, you think it unsafe to trust him with your soul. I do beseech you, if you must transgress, do not select a sin so presumptuous and so provoking as the sin of denying the truth of the Most High. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Oh, you poor, timorous soul, as some would call you, I may not flatter you, or excuse you, for I am afraid you must be very proud or you would not look the great Father in the face, and say, "Thou wilt not receive me if I come back to thee like the prodigal child"; when again and again he invites you to return, and promises to receive you. O soul, can you dare to look up to the cross of Jesus and say, "There is no life in a look at the Crucified One for me"? Can you even think of the Holy Spirit, and then say that he has no power to change a heart so black and hard as yours? Oh that this miserable slander of God and of his Christ might be stopped!

Again, unbelief is great frowardness because *it refuses God's way of*

salvation. No man can read the Scriptures without seeing that God's way of salvation is not by works nor by feelings, but by trusting in the Son of God, who has offered a full atonement for sin. Now the sinner says, "Lord, I would do or suffer anything if I might thereby be saved." God's answer is, "Trust in my Son"; and this is put into a great many shapes to make it plain. Jesus says, "This is the work of God,"—the highest and noblest work—"that ye believe on him whom he hath sent"; but the soul wriggles away from this believing in Jesus. It cries, "Surely I must feel this, that, and the other." Oh foolish heart, stop all these vain observations, and listen to this one thing—Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. If thou wilt make the Lord thy trust thou shalt be blessed; but if thou wilt not thou art assuredly accursed, seeing thou hast rejected the blood of the Eternal Sacrifice, refused the way of mercy which infinite love has appointed, and done despite to the Spirit of God. To what a pitch of madness hast thou reached! Thou wilt sooner destroy thine own soul than treat thy God as thou wouldst treat an honest man! Thou canst trust thy wife, thy husband, thy father, or thy friend; but thou wilt not trust thy Maker. Thou wilt sooner go to hell than trust thyself with Christ. Ah me! Ah me!

Unbelief is a very froward thing, again, because *it very often makes unreasonable demands of God.* When Thomas said, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," he was speaking very frowardly. I have heard the sinner say, "Oh, sir, if I could have a dream, if I could be broken down with anguish, or if I could enjoy some remarkable revelation, then I would believe God"; this also is frowardness. And so thou darest look the Eternal in the face and say, "Thou shalt be a liar to me unless thou wilt gratify my whims and wishes, and do this or that to prove what I admit to be true." Will you say to your fellow-man, "Sir, you have offered to help me in this time of need; I am quite willing to depend upon you for that help, provided you will do it in my way; but the way which you propose for my assistance I utterly reject"? You will probably turn your friend against you if you talk so. Beggars must not be choosers—certainly not with God. If I mistrust a friend who has been good to me all my life, it is an unjust thing; and if I tell him that I cannot believe him unless he will do what I choose to demand of him, I am insulting him. This towards man is evil; but what is it towards God? What! must God do according to our mind, and play the lackey to us, or else he shall be under this penalty, that we will not believe his word nor accept his gracious forgiveness? Shame on unbelief, that it should be so insulting to the God of heaven, before whom angels bow with veiled countenances! Surely, the devil himself cannot go further than unbelief; nor so far; for he believes, and trembles.

Unbelief is very froward, next, because *it indulges hard thoughts of God.* Why do you not trust your God to save you by the blood of Jesus? Do you say that "Salvation by faith is too good to be true"? Is anything too good to come from God, who is infinitely good? Is he not love? Do you say, "If I were to come to him he would not receive me"? How darest thou say *that* when it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? Oh, I have so offended that if I

were to cry, "Father, I have sinned," I could not expect him to forgive my offence. This is a base slandering of the heavenly Father! What penitent has he ever repelled? Thou knowest not how good he is—He is inconceivably gracious, he delighteth in mercy. It is his joy to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin. Hast thou never heard that "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts"? Has he not declared that he will abundantly pardon? Has he not said, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"? Why will you so cruelly defame the ever-merciful one? Turn from this wickedness, or you will destroy your own soul.

And yet again, unbelief is a very froward thing because *it disparages the Lord Jesus*. It tramples upon the blood of the Son of God. The unbelieving sinner virtually asserts that he has found out the limit of the Saviour's power to save, and that he stands just over the margin to which his grace extends; for he thinks that Jesus may save any one except himself. O soul, dost thou doubt the infinite virtue of the divine sacrifice? Dost thou question the power of the intercession of the risen Lord? Is it not true, as he hath said it, that he is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"? "Oh, but I am such a singular person." And art thou so singular that thou hast a right to limit the Holy One of Israel? Oh, if thou didst but know my Lord and Master thou wouldst not talk so; for he with a word can cast out devils, heal the sick, and raise the dead. He hath but to say "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," and they are forgiven. He has but to look on thee, poor sinner, and thou shalt live. Yea, be assured that if thou wilt look on him thou shalt live. Hath he not said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"? Has he not also said, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"? If thou believest thou shalt see the glory of God. Trust him, trust him! He deserves thy trust; for he is a great Saviour for the greatest of sinners.

And do you not think it is another instance of great frowardness that unbelief *casts reflections upon the Holy Spirit*? It seems to say, "I feel sorely afraid, and therefore there is no peace for me. I am too hardened and foolish for the Holy Spirit to lead me to faith in Jesus; and therefore I will not trust." "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Change thee, man? Why, he hath turned millions from darkness to light. Look upward, see what hosts surround the throne of glory and "day without night" magnify his saving grace! Not save thee? Who art thou that thou shouldst stand out against the witness of the Spirit of truth? Wilt thou refuse the three-fold witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood? Who art thou that thou shouldst set thyself up as a kind of vanquisher of grace, conquering grace by thy sin, and saying to the ocean of God's love, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further"? Thine unbelief is a very froward thing; nothing can be said for it; it dishonours Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; denies the inspired Scripture, and keeps thine own soul in cruel bondage.

This vile unbelief *has in it a tendency to destroy the gospel itself*. If it could but have its own way it would undermine the whole fabric of

salvation. When a man says that God cannot save him he suggests that there may be others in the like case. Where, then, is Christ's wisdom in bidding us preach the gospel to every creature? If it would be vain for one man to believe, each one of us would be afraid that it would be vain for us also, and where, then, would be the gospel promise? If it could be proved that any one man if he believed in Jesus would not be saved, then the gospel itself would be disproved. Who among us would have any ground for believing in Christ if we knew that it was possible to believe in him and yet to be cast away? What is this but to rob us all of hope? Why, man, you are scuttling the ship! I mean that such is the tendency of your unbelieving talk. If Jesus is not worthy to be trusted, and you seem to say so by your own refusal to trust him, then all of us who are resting upon him for salvation are under a delusion. Dost thou mean to say this? If thou, as a sinner, canst not be saved upon believing in Christ, then the whole gospel is called in question; thou hast broken the whole staff of bread for the souls of men. Oh, wicked unbelief, God-dishonouring, soul-killing unbelief! Dear hearer, be warned against it, for it will shut thee out of heaven unless thou shut it out of thy heart.

II. And now, secondly, we turn to the better side of our subject, and remark that FAITH HAS THE DIVINE APPROVAL. "Blessed," says God, "is that man that maketh the Lord his trust." *We are sure that it is so.* Wherever there is faith, God is pleased with it; for faith is the sure mark of God's elect. We can only know them by their believing in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. God would never have set that of which he disapproved to be the mark of his eternal choice; but as he makes faith in Jesus to be the token of his covenanted ones, he must approve of it.

Remember, that God has been pleased in his great love to make this the main requirement of the gospel. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The Lord puts faith into the very forefront because he delights in it. I find not that the Lord has promised salvation to love, or to patience, or to courage, admirable as these graces are; but he has put this crown upon the head of faith—"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The Lord must certainly approve of that which he makes to be the grand necessity of salvation.

Dost thou not know that God has made faith to be the one thing needful in the matter of prayer? If thou comest before him in prayer he will not ask thee to bring thy hands laden with gifts, nor to drop from thy tongue choice words of eloquence; but thou "must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," or else thou canst have nothing at his hands. If, then, God has made the efficacy of prayer to turn upon faith, he must have a high estimate of it. He has made faith to be the master-key by which all the chambers of his treasury may be unlocked, and therefore depend upon it he will never cast it out as unwarranted and presumptuous. "Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust," whoever that man may be.

Beside that, he has been pleased to make faith to be the mode and manner of the spiritual life. "The just shall live"—how? by works? No—"the just shall live by faith." There is no living except by

faith. Let any child of God try to live by sense or reason, even for a day, and see how miserable he will be. It comes to this with me—I must believe my God or else I perish. I can walk the waves by faith; but beginning to doubt, I sink. It is only as I trust that my soul can bear her daily burden and perform her daily duty. If, then, God has made faith to be the way of his people, rest assured it can never be wrong for a soul to exercise faith in him.

Why, brethren, see what God has done to make us believe! He cannot object to our trusting in him, seeing he works to that end. For this purpose the Scriptures are in our hands. John says, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John xx. 31). The Lord multiplies his exceeding great and precious promises that we might have strong consolation, and find it easy to put our trust in him. His Holy Spirit comes on purpose to work faith in the soul, and the witness of the Holy Spirit in the word, and in the hearts of his people, is intended to create and nourish faith in God. The Lord rewards faith even in this life. Read the eleventh of Hebrews, see what men gained, what they enjoyed, what they did, by faith. Unbelief does nothing, gets nothing, rejoices in nothing; but faith wins the blessing. The covenant was made with Abraham, who "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." Who are Abraham's seed? Why, they that trust as Abraham trusted, that exhibit a whole-hearted confidence in God, feeling that what he hath promised he is able also to perform. Oh souls, ye cannot have too much faith in God! You need never say, "May I believe?" It is altogether another question,—How dare you doubt your God?

"But is it true," says one, "that faith means trusting in God?" That is it. God bids you trust Jesus, and you shall be saved. Will you accept his testimony and trust Jesus? That is the whole of it. In common life we exhibit faith in man, and no one blames us for a legitimate trust. A man says that he has received a thousand pounds. How is that? He has nothing in his hand but a bank-note, and that is merely a bit of paper. Yet he is quite confident that he has the thousand pounds, because he has faith in the Bank of England and in its promises. That is my own mind as to God's promise: it is to me the thing which it promises, even as the note for £1,000 is a thousand pounds. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." If thou believest God as thou believest thy friend, thou art saved: for faith has brought thee into the state of salvation. But this is what men will not come to. They will stop and mutter and sputter, and spin all kinds of cobwebs, and invent all sorts of theories in order to evade the sweet necessity of trusting in the Lord. Simply and wholly to hang upon the bare arm of God and trust the merit of his Son, this is what they will not come to: for they are "a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith."

Furthermore, it is not unreasonable, but *it is highly reasonable, that God should take pleasure in faith.* Beloved, look at yourselves. Judge of the Lord from yourselves in this matter; for the Lord Jesus permits you so to judge of the Father's mind. You who are fathers, what would you say of your child if he did not believe your promise? If he said that he could not trust you, what would you think of him? If

your boy had offended, and refused to ask pardon because he would not believe that you would forgive him, what would be your judgment of his character? Would you be pleased with him if he would not confess that he was wrong, but took to sulking because he thinks you are unwilling to forgive? Would you take pleasure in such a child as that? No, but one of the beautiful things about your little children is just this, that they have not a thought or a care, but just trust you implicitly. They never question where Monday's dinner will come from—father has always found food; father will always do so. If you make them a promise of a treat on Saturday, see how they will jump for joy; though there is yet a week to come before that promise is to be fulfilled, yet they begin to live on the prospect of it, and they enjoy the pleasure a hundred times over by the expectation of it. They will ask you to-morrow whether it is not Saturday already. You are pleased that your children should trust you: it would be most unpleasant for you if they did not. When children have lost confidence in their parents, farewell to domestic peace. If you, being evil, love to be trusted, must it not be so with God? If you, a poor sinner, come and say, "Lord, I have greatly sinned, but I believe thou art such a greatly loving Father that thou canst blot it all out for Jesus' sake," do you not think that he will be pleased to hear your confidence? But he cannot be pleased with you when you say, "Lord, I know all about thy gospel and its blessings, but I really cannot trust thee!" Oh naughty words! Vile words! How can they look for favours who thus throw dirt into the face of God? How shall he bestow his grace on men who will not even believe him?

God will accept our faith, for it is in conformity with our position towards him. What position ought the creature to occupy to its Creator? Should it not constantly depend upon him? What position should a sinner occupy towards his Saviour? Should he not rely upon him most heartily? What position should a child of God occupy towards the divine Father but one of loving confidence?

Brethren, God loves faith because faith supplies the missing link between us and himself. If we cannot perfectly keep his law, as indeed we cannot, for we have already broken it, yet if we trust him our heart is right before him. The complete confidence of the heart is the essence of obedience, and the fountain of it. A servant who thinks evil of his master cannot be an acceptable servant to any man: he will be looking out for his own interests, and whenever they come across those of his master we know what will happen. But if, after having acted very crookedly, the man should have proof of his master's affection for him, and should come to the belief that his master is a model of goodness, then you have laid the foundation of another kind of service, such as no wages can purchase. From a loving trust there will proceed patience, diligence, zeal, fidelity, and obedience, and everything which is suitable in a servant towards a good master. So when a soul comes to make the Lord its trust it has set out upon the right track; and though it be but at the head of the way, yet it will make advances and arrive at no mean degree of rightness with God.

"Oh," saith one, "it seems such a small matter simply to trust." It may seem so, but within the compass of that little thing there lies a force whose power it would be difficult to measure. Every grace in

embryo lies within true faith. It is a virtue which contains within it seed enough to sow all the acreage of life with holiness. O my hearer, God blesses faith, therefore, I pray thee, render it to him. God hath put his curse on unbelief—oh may his Spirit help thee to shake thyself free of it this day!

III. My time has failed me, and therefore I must close by noticing, in the last place, this fact—that FAITH IS BLESSEDNESS. “Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust.” To believe in God is to be blessed by God. “Oh, but,” saith one, “I believe in God, and I am in great trouble.” Just so, and within that trouble there dwells a measureless blessing. Your trial is the veil which covers the face of a loving God. Faith will make you to sing with the author of this psalm, “I waited patiently for the Lord.” Faith says, “I am in deep trial, but all things work together for my good. It is therefore a great gain to me to be as I am. All these griefs and woes are but a heavenly surgery to cure me of the malady of inbred sin.” This enables the believer to receive correction with patience. He knows that all is right, and therefore the child of God frets not, and does not kick against the pricks. As in the old days of surgery a brave man laid himself down and gave himself up to the knife, so does the believer resign himself to sharp affliction because he knows that it is necessary for his spiritual life, and will tend to his perfection in grace. Thus faith distils a potent medicine from poisonous plants, and extracts light out of darkness. Is not this enough to make a man blessed?

Faith, again, releases the afflicted out of trouble. Turn to the psalm again and read: “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” If you are shut in by affliction like a man in a deep pit, and if instead of rising out of it by your exertions you only sink the lower, like one who struggles to rise out of miry clay, if you see no way of escape whatever, do not despair or resort to desperate means, or think hardly of God, but just pray and trust, and soon, like David, you shall bear witness to the blessedness of trusting. “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” The Lord knoweth how to deliver the righteous when they cannot guess how he will do it. Jehovah is not limited in ways and means. Is the Lord’s arm waxed short? Trust in the Lord in the dark and he will bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday. Thousands of saints who have tried and proved the faithfulness of the Lord unite in chorus to declare that he hath delivered his people and will deliver them.

The man that maketh the Lord his trust is blessed because his faith creates in him a deep peace. It is responsibility which causes the wear and tear of life; at least, it is so in my case: now, he who trusts a matter with the Lord sees that the fulfilment of the promise lies with God and not with him. When we trust in the Lord we cease to worry, because it is the Lord’s business to answer to our faith—

“’Tis mine to obey, ’tis his to provide.”

He who takes the Lord for his guide no longer worries about the way; he who takes him for his Watchman rests in perfect peace; he who accepts him as a Saviour looks for sure salvation at his hands. There is a wonderful calm in the heart when we can commit our way unto the Lord; then we delight ourselves in the Lord, and he gives us the desires of our heart. That blessed act of casting every burden upon the Lord is faith's masterpiece, and it gives a sweet quietus to all care. To rest in perfect peace of mind is the best blessedness beneath the stars; and we have it, for we hear the Spirit say concerning all the people of God, "And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him."

Now, suppose you and I were labouring to reach heaven by our own merits, then we might bid farewell to peace; for all the way we should be terribly afraid that we had not done enough, or suffered enough, or prayed enough, or repented enough. There is no rest upon that bed, for it is shorter than that a man may stretch himself on it. But "we which have believed do enter into rest." Jesus is our rest; in him we have peace with God. If I could make the Lord Jesus my trust and yet be lost I should be a great loser, but I should not lose so much as God would. How is that? I should lose my salvation, but the Lord would lose his glory, his truthfulness, his goodness; his gospel would be dishonoured, and his Son robbed of his reward. That cannot be. When a man trusts his money with a firmly-established bank, he does not sit up all night to protect his cash-box and iron-safe. No, his money is out of his own keeping, and he feels at ease about it. Thus we commit our body, soul, and spirit into the pierced hand of Jesus, who hath redeemed us, and we know and are confident that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him until that day. None can know perfect rest of heart but those whose minds are stayed on God by a sincere trust in him.

Faith, in addition to bringing peace, creates a holy elevation of character, and that is blessedness. The man who lives by sight and walks according to the judgment of the flesh, is cabined and confined within a range too narrow for blessedness. He is not much above the brute that perisheth; his provender and stall are the main dependence of his joy; but the man that lives by faith ranges among eternal things, and drinks from celestial fountains. His is a high, sublime, mysterious life. Is it not the life of God in man? I have compared the ascent of faith to climbing a succession of lofty stair-ways. Up from the depths we have already risen by no other means than faith in the Invisible. Not a single step before us can we see. Beneath, and around, clouds and darkness roll in enormous masses; the mist hangs thick over our nearer pathway. Like the world, which the Lord hangeth upon nothing, so our life has no visible dependence. We put down our foot on what seems thin as air, and behold, it is firm as a rock beneath us! Rising, ever rising, we tread from stair to stair, and are safe as the throne of the Eternal; but we never see more than one step at a time, and at times scarcely so much as that. Sight brings us no comfort, but faith fills us with delight; for above her head shines out clear as the sun the word of the immutable Jehovah.

"Ah," cries one, "I could not live with nothing to depend upon!"

Oh, my brother, is God nothing? Elijah had nothing to depend upon, for Cherith dried up, and the ravens came no more with bread and meat, and the widow woman had only flour enough for one more meal; yet the little meal in the barrel wasted not, and the cruse of oil never failed. He had nothing to depend upon but God, you know: that is to say, he had only everything. The believer has nothing to depend upon except his God, and what more does he want? What more could he have? Mark how yon heavens stand without a pillar! See how the round world floats in space without a stay! What more does the universe require than the power of the Eternal? O believer, get thee out into these deep waters, where there is sea-room for faith, and no weak creatures to interfere with unmingled reliance upon God; for blessed is that man whose life is rendered sublime by an undivided confidence in the living God.

Lastly, blessed is the believing man when he thinks of dying, for he is sure and certain that he cannot truly die. Faith has so linked him with the one living God that he feels immortality pulsing through his entire nature. When he comes to lie on the bed of sickness, and gradually decays, he has no fear of his departure; on the contrary, he looks forward with expectation to be delivered from the bondage and sinfulness of this mortal life, and to be admitted into the liberty and perfection of the life eternal. See him as he quits the shores of earth: he is not torn away by violence, forced unwillingly into an unknown hereafter. No, he undresses for his last rest, solemnly but expectantly. A song is on his lip, and glory is in his heart. He has finished his work, he has been washed from his sin, he has embraced the promise, and now he falls asleep upon the breast of his Redeemer, assured that he shall wake up in the likeness of his Lord. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

Oh, souls, if ye will believe, ye shall have both heaven on earth and heaven in heaven; but if ye will not believe your God, your Saviour, many sorrows shall be to you, and in the end you will destroy yourselves for ever. It matters not what excuses you make about this, or that, or the other; if you will not trust your God he will have nothing to do with you. If you cannot believe him, if you will make his Son to be false, he must say at the last, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." It cannot be otherwise. This shall make the great division between you and the righteous, that you believe not in him, while they have made the Lord their trust. If you believe in the Lord Jesus you shall be numbered with his chosen, and all his promises shall be fulfilled to you; for with you has he made an everlasting covenant which shall stand fast for ever and ever, when all visible things have melted away. May God uplift you from the miry clay of unbelief to the rock of confidence in him, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xl.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—192, 738, 685.