

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JESUS KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO.

A Sermon

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“This he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.”—John vi. 6.

OBSERVE, dear friends, how careful the Holy Spirit is that we should not make a mistake about our Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that men are liable to think too little of the ever blessed Son of God, and that some, who call themselves Christians, nevertheless deny Christ's divinity, and are ever ready to forge an argument against the true and real deity of the Saviour out of anything which appears to limit his power or knowledge. Here is an instance of the care of the Spirit to prevent our falling into an erroneous conclusion. Our Lord consults with Philip, asking this poor disciple, “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” Some might therefore have inferred that Jesus did not know what to do, but felt embarrassed. From this they would argue that Jesus cannot be Almighty God, for surely embarrassment is inconsistent with Omnipotence. Why should Jesus consult with Philip if he knows all things? Now, the Holy Spirit would have us beware of falling into low thoughts of our great Redeemer and Lord, and especially of ever being so mistaken as to think that he is not God; therefore he plainly tells us, “this he said to prove Philip, for he himself knew what he would do.” Jesus was not asking information or taking counsel with Philip because he felt any doubt about his line of procedure, or needed help from his disciple. He did not want Philip to multiply bread, but he desired to multiply Philip's faith. Take heed, therefore, dear friends, that you never think little of the Saviour, or impute any of his acts to motives that would lessen his glory.

Learn here, too, that we, being very apt to make mistakes concerning Christ, need daily that the Spirit of God should interpret Christ to us. Jesus simply asks the question of Philip “Whence shall we buy bread?” and we are at once in danger of drawing a wrong inference, and therefore the Holy Spirit tells us more about Christ that we may escape from that danger. By giving us more insight into our Lord's motives, he prevents our misjudging his actions. We must have the Spirit of God

with us, or we shall not know Christ himself. The only way to see the sun is by its own light; and the only way to see Jesus is by his own Spirit. Did he not himself say, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you"? No man can call Jesus "Lord" but by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit must come to each man personally, and reveal the Son of God to him, and in him. Therefore, do not let us take up the Bible and imagine that we shall at once understand it as we do another book, but let us breathe the prayer that the Great Author of its letter would himself give us grace to enter into its spirit, so as to know its meaning and feel its power. Even with the infallible word before you, you will miss your way, and fall into grievous error unless you are taught of God. The mercy is that it is written, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord"; and again, "We have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." There is no knowing anything except by that unction, and by that divine teaching. What dependent creatures we are, since we make mistakes even about Jesus Christ himself unless the Spirit of God is pleased to instruct us concerning him! Lead us ever, O light of God!

Another thing we learn from the text before we plunge into it is, that our divine Lord always has a reason for everything that he does. Even the reason of his asking a question may be found out; or, if we cannot discover it, we may still be quite sure that there is a worthy reason. That reason in Philip's case certainly was not because of any want of wisdom in himself, but there was a reason,—“This he said to prove him.” Now, if there is a reason for all that Jesus asks, much more is there a reason for all that he does. We cannot tell the reason of election—why this man is chosen or that; but there is a reason, since God never acts unreasonably, though his reasons are not always revealed, and might not be understood by us if they were. Sovereignty is absolute, but it is never absurd. There is always a justifiable cause for all that God does in the kingdom of grace, though that cause is not the merit of the person whom he favours, for merit there is none. In the matter of your present trial and trouble, dear friend, you have been trying to spell out the design of the Almighty, but without success. Know you not that his ways are past finding out? In all probability this side of eternity you may never discover God's purpose in your present trial, but that he has a purpose is certain, and that purpose is a wise and kind one. It is such as you yourself would delight in if you were capable of understanding it. If you could have a mind like that of God, you would act as God does even in this matter which troubles you: at present your thoughts are far below those of God, and therefore you err when you try to measure his ways. If you have a quarrel with your heavenly Father about a bereavement or a sickness; end it at once with humble shame. There, child, if it ever comes to a question as to which is right—a poor, ignorant, inexperienced youth, or a great, good, wise Father—there cannot be a moment's deliberation; the Father's will must be better for the child than its own will. Be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live. Do believe in your Lord, and be quieted: Jesus knows what he is doing, and why he is doing it. For the loss of your health there is a reason. For those pains of body, for that depression of spirit, for that want of success in business, even for the permission of the cruel

tongue of slander to inflict its wounds upon you, there is a reason; and possibly that reason may lie in the words of our text, "This he did to prove him." You must be tested. God does not give faith, or love, or hope, or any grace without meaning to prove it. If a man builds a railway-bridge, it is that engines may go over it, that so its carrying power may be proved. If a man makes a road, it is that there may be traffic over it, every rod of it will be proved by wheels and hoofs. If he only makes a needle it must be tested by the work it can do. When the pillars that now support these galleries were cast, they were made with the object of supporting a great weight, and these twenty years they have bravely endured the pressure: it would have been an idle thing to have set them up and placed no weight upon them. So when God made you, my brother, to be strong in the Lord he meant to try every ounce of your strength; for that which God makes has a purpose, and he will prove it to see that it is equal to its design. I do not think that a single grain of faith will be kept out of the fire; all the golden ore must go into the crucible to be tested. You have heard of the Birmingham proving-houses for the barrels of guns; now, the great Maker of believers proves all whom he makes in his factory of grace with heavy charges of affliction, and only those that can bear the test shall receive his mark. When no other explanation of a providence can be found you may always fall back upon the belief that—this he said and this he did to prove you.

Let us at once come to the text, which seems to me to have much comfort in it. May the Holy Spirit lead us into it.

First, here is a *question for Philip*—"Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"—a question with a purpose. But, secondly, there is *no question with the Master*, for he himself knew what he would do. And, thirdly, if we enter into the spirit of the Master there will be *an end of questions with us*, for we shall be perfectly satisfied that he knows what he is going to do.

I. First, then, **HERE IS A QUESTION FOR PHILIP**, as there have been many questions for us. Jesus put this question to Philip *with the motive of proving him* in several points. He would thus try his *faith*. As one has well said, "He wanted not food of Philip, but faith." The Master enquires, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" What will Philip say? If Philip has strong faith he will answer, "Great Master, there is no need to buy bread; thou art greater than Moses, and under Moses the people were fed with manna in the wilderness; thou hast but to speak the word, and bread shall be rained around the host, and they shall be filled." If Philip had possessed great faith he might have replied, "Thou art greater than Elisha, and Elisha took a few loaves and ears of corn and fed therewith the sons of the prophets. O wonder-working Lord, thou canst do the same." If Philip had displayed greater faith still, he might have said, "Lord, I do not know where bread is to be bought, but it is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' Thou canst refresh these people without visible bread: thou canst satisfy their hunger and fill them to the full, and yet they need not eat a single mouthful; for it is written, 'By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live.' Speak thou the word, and they will be at once refreshed." This question,

therefore, was put to prove Philip's faith. It did prove it, and proved it to be very little, for he began calculating his pennyworths—"One, two, three, four." No; I will not count two hundred, but that is what Philip did. He began counting pennies, instead of looking to Omnipotence. Did you ever do the same, dear friend, when you have been tried? Did you get reckoning up and counting coppers, instead of looking to the eternal God and trusting in him? I fear that few of us can plead exemption from this failure, since even Moses once fell into unbelieving calculations. "And Moses said, The people among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" Remember God's answer to his anxious servant, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not." Even so shall we see the faithfulness of God, but if we are unbelieving we may have to see it in a way which will painfully bring home to us our sin in having distrusted our Lord.

The question was meant, no doubt, to prove Philip's *love*, and he could endure that test better than he could stand the other; for he loved Jesus even though he was slow of heart to believe. In many true hearts there is more quiet love than active faith. I am sorry that there should be little faith, but thankful that there should be more love. The Saviour seemed to say, "Philip, I want these people fed. Will you come to my help in it? Whence shall *we* buy bread? I am going to associate you with me, Philip. Come, now, how shall *we* do the work?" Philip loves his Master, and therefore he is quite ready to consider the matter, and to give at least the benefit of his arithmetic. He says, "Lord, two hundred pennyworth is not sufficient." His Master did not ask him what would *not* be sufficient, but what would be; but Philip begins calculating the negative question—which question I also am afraid that you and I have often calculated. Even to give each one in the crowd a little could not be done under two hundred pence: is it not clear that our resources are inadequate? That is always a depressing and unpractical question to go into. Poor Philip counts up what would *not* be sufficient for all, and leaves the Lord all-sufficient out of the reckoning. Still, even in that calculation he showed his love for his Master. If he had not been full of love and esteem for Jesus he would have said, "My Lord, it is idle to go into that: we are a poor company: we have a trifle of money given us every now and then, and I do not quite know how it goes, perhaps Judas does: but I am persuaded that there is not enough in the bag to feed these multitudes, even if there were bakers' shops in the neighbourhood at which we could buy loaves." But Philip did not thus answer. No; he had too much reverence and too much love for Jesus for that; he failed in his faith, but he did not fail in his love. It will be well for us to love our Lord so much that we never speak of his gracious plans as being visionary, nor judge them to be impossible. Jesus never proposes Quixotic schemes, and we must never allow the idea to cross our minds: even the conquest of the world to truth and

righteousness is not to be looked upon as a dream, but to be practically considered.

The question also tried Philip's *sympathy*. Jesus by this query moved Philip's heart to care about the people. The other disciples said, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals." Jesus, perhaps, noticing a little more tenderness in Philip than in the others, said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread?" It was putting great honour upon Philip to associate him with himself; but perhaps he saw in him a sympathetic soul, and Christ loves to work with sympathetic agents. One thing I notice—that God seldom uses greatly a man who has a hard heart, or a cold heart. Warmth within ourselves can alone create warmth in others. A man must love people, or he cannot save them. A minister must have an intense desire that his congregation should be saved, and must get into sympathy with Jesus upon that subject, or else Jesus will not make use of him. So our Lord sought to stir up Philip's sympathy. "Come, Philip: what shall you and I do? Whence shall *we* buy bread to give them to eat?" I do not think Philip failed altogether there. He had not such sympathy with his Master as he ought to have had, but he had a measure of it. I trust that our God has given to us also some communion with his dear Son in his love to the souls of men; and so this question comes to prove us.

Let us not be wanting either in faith, or love, or sympathy. God grant that we may abound in all these through the effectual working of his Holy Spirit; then shall we be fitted to be workers together with him.

But why was that question put *to Philip*? Why is a special question put to some one of you, or a peculiar trial sent to one of you? It was sent to prove him it is said; but why to prove *Philip*?

Well, I think the Saviour spoke to Philip because Philip was of Bethsaida. They were near Bethsaida, and so Jesus said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread?" Every man should think most of the place where he lives. I want Jesus to say to some of you, "What shall we do for London?"—because many of you are Londoners—possibly born within the sound of Bow bells, or within the postal district. You belong to the four millions of this great province—nay this great nation, of a city, and it is a solemn responsibility to be a citizen of the greatest city in the world. If the Lord does lay London on anybody's hearts, he would naturally lay it upon the hearts of those who live in it; just as he said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread?" If he associates anybody with himself in the evangelization of a village or town, it will naturally be a person either born there, or living there. I know that the old proverb declares that the cobbler's wife goes barefoot, and sometimes a man will care for people thousands of miles away, and not look to his own house or to his own neighbourhood, but it should not be so, for it is to Philip, the Bethsaida man, that the message comes about the people when they are near Bethsaida—"Whence shall we buy bread?" It is said to prove him: and to you, brother Londoner, questions about this great city are sent to prove you.

It is also probable that it was Philip's department to attend to the providing for the little company of twelve and their Leader. Judas

was the treasurer, and, unless we are much mistaken, Philip was the butler. It was Philip's business to see that they had bread in the wallet, and his part to make some little provision when the band of disciples went into desert places. Even so, there are brethren here present whose official business it is to care for the souls of men. Among these are ministers, missionaries, Sunday-school teachers, deacons, elders, district visitors, Bible-women, and the like. If the Lord does not say to others, "What shall we do for London?" he says it to us. The question is sent to prove us whether we are fit for our office, or whether we have taken upon ourselves a position for which we are not qualified, because we have no heart for it. Christ asks *us* especially, but I think he also asks all those whom he has made priests and kings unto God, "Whence shall we buy bread? How shall we feed this great city?" The question comes to prove us because it is upon us that this burden ought to be laid.

And perhaps it came to Philip because he was not quite so forward in the school of grace as some were. Philip did not make a very wise remark when he said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," for our Lord answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" He was evidently slow in learning. I do not think that Philip was the most stupid of the twelve, but I am sure that he was not the most intelligent. James and John and Peter were the first three: Andrew and Thomas followed close behind, and probably Philip was close after them. Perhaps Philip was number six; I do not know; but certainly the Saviour selected him as not the lowest in the class, yet not the highest, and he said to him, "Whence shall we buy bread?" These people in the middle position very much want proving for their own satisfaction. The lowest kind of Christians are so feeble that they can hardly bear proving. Poor souls, they need encouraging rather than testing, and therefore the greatest problems are not often pressed upon them. On the other hand, the highest kind of Christians do not so much require testing, for they make their calling and election sure. The middle sort most need proving, and they make up, I am afraid, the great bulk of the rank and file of the army of God. How many there are who may be described as half instructed, half enlightened, and to these the Lord puts the question, "Whence shall we buy bread?" This he says that he may prove them.

Note well that *the question which the Saviour put to Philip to prove him answered its purpose*. It did prove him. How it proved him I have shown you already. It answered its purpose because it revealed his inability. "Whence shall we buy bread?" Philip gives it up. He has made a calculation of what would *not* suffice even to give every man a little refreshment, and that is all his contribution to the work: he has not even a loaf or a fish which he can produce to make a start with. Philip is beaten. What is more, his faith, being proved, is beaten too. "Oh, good Master," he seems to say, "the people cannot be fed by us. We cannot buy bread—we—not even you and I. Thou art the Lord, and thou canst do great things; yet my faith is not strong enough to believe that *we* could buy bread enough for all these thousands of people." So the question answered its purpose. It tested Philip's

faith, and his faith was proved to be very weak, very wavering, very short-handed. Is it a good thing to find that out? Yes, brethren, it is good to know our spiritual poverty. Many of us have a heap of faith, as we think, but if the Lord were to prove it, he would not need to put it *in* the fire to melt it; he has only to put it *on* the fire, and the most of it would evaporate. Under ordinary trial much faith disappears like morning dew when the sun looks upon it. What a deal of faith a man has when he is healthy! Just turn on the screw and let him suffer. See how much of that faith will vanish. How many men have faith if they have an excellent income regularly paid; but when they have to ask, "Where will the next meal come from?" have they faith? Alas, they grow anxious and cumbered. It is a wholesome thing to be made to see what weaklings we are, for when we find much of our faith to be unreal, it drives us to seek for more true faith, and we cry, "Lord, increase our faith." Philip was drawn into his Master; and it is a grand thing to be driven right out of ourselves to our Lord so as to feel, "Lord, I cannot do it; but I long to see how thou wilt perform thy purpose. I cannot even believe in thee as I ought to believe, unless thou givest me faith, so that even for more faith I must come to thee. Quite empty handed I must come and borrow everything." Then it is that we become full and strong. You will see Philip breaking the bread directly, and feeding the multitude just because Christ has emptied Philip's hands. Until he has emptied our hands he cannot fill them, lest it should be supposed that we shared in the supplying. "This he said to prove him," to make him see his own weakness, for then he should be filled with the Master's strength.

This question did good, for *it was meant not only to prove Philip but to prove the other disciples*, and so they came together, and they had a little talk upon the subject. At any rate, here is a committee of two—Philip and Andrew. Philip says, "Two hundred pennyworth is not sufficient," and Andrew says, "Well no, it is not; but there is a lad here with five barley loaves, and two small fishes." I like this brotherly consultation of willing minds, and to see how they differ in their ideas. Philip is willing to begin if he has a grand start; he must see at least two hundred pennyworth of bread in hand, and then he is ready to entertain the idea. Andrew, on the other hand, is willing to commence with a small capital; a few loaves and fishes will enable him to start, but he remarks, "What are they among so many?" When saints converse together they help each other, and perhaps what one does not discover another may. Philip was counting the impossible pence, and could not see the possible loaves: but Andrew could see what Philip overlooked. He spied out the lad with that basket packed full of loaves and fishes. It was not much: Andrew had not faith enough to see food for the thousands in that little basket; but still he saw what he did see, and he told the Master of it. Thus they made a commencement by mutual consultation; perhaps if we were to consult we might make a start too. When a question eats into men's hearts like this—"What shall we do for London?" when it leads Christian people to come together and talk about it, and when one sighs out, "Why, it will take many thousands to build chapels, and find ministers, and maintain missionaries," there is something hopeful in the calculation. All right, Philip, I am glad

you have had your say, and shown the difficulty of the task. And then I like Andrew to get up and say, "It is a very difficult task, but still we must do what we can do, and as we have these five loaves and two small fishes we must at least put these before the Lord, and leave it with him as to what is to be done." All this is better than shirking the question altogether, and leaving the crowd to starve.

Philip had his faculties exercised. Christ tried his arithmetic; he tried his eyesight; he tried his mind and spirit; and this prepared him to go and serve at the monster banquet which followed. A man never does a thing well till he has thought about it; and if Philip had not thought about how to feed the multitudes he would not have been a fit man to be employed in it. It prepared him also to adore his Master after the feast, for Philip would say when the meal was over, "The Master asked me how it was to be done, but I could not tell him, and now, though I have had a share in doing it, he must and shall have all the glory. He multiplied the fishes, and increased the loaves. My poor faith can take no glory to itself. He did it. He did it all." Perhaps some question comes to you, my brother, about the Lord's work—"How can it be done? How can England be evangelized? How can the masses be reached? How can the world be made to hear the gospel?" Whatever the question is which is put to you, it is a question sent on purpose to do you good, and benefit your soul, and to lead you to magnify the Lord all the more when the miracle of grace is done.

II. Now I come to the second part of the subject, and that is, that **THERE WAS NO QUESTION WITH JESUS.** The question was with Philip, but Christ had no question "This he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do."

Let us take these words and pull them to pieces a minute. "*He knew.*" He always does know. "Ah," says one, "I am sure I do not know what I shall do." No, dear friend, and yet you have been taking advice, have you not? That is a splendid way of confusing yourself. I hear you cry in bewilderment, "I do not know. I have been to everybody, and I do not know what I shall do." That is a chronic state with us when we puzzle our own poor brains; but Jesus knew what he would do. This is sweet comfort; Jesus knows. He always knows all about it. He knew how many people there were. He knew how much bread it would take: he knew how many fish he would want, and how he meant to feed the crowd, and send them all away refreshed. He knew all before it happened. Tried brother, Jesus knows all about *your* case and how he is going to bring *you* through. Do not think that you can inform him as to anything. "Your heavenly Father knoweth what ye have need of before ye ask him." Prayer is not meant for the Lord's information. The question is not put to you that you may instruct him, but that he may instruct you. He made the heavens and the earth without you. With whom took he counsel? Who instructed him? And he will bring you through this present trial of yours without needing to add your poor wisdom to his infinite knowledge. He knows.

Jesus *knew what he would do.* He meant to do something; he was quite ready to do it; and he knew what he was going to do. We embarrass ourselves by saying, "Something must be done, but I do

not know who is to do it." The Saviour knew that something must be done, and he knew that he was going to do it himself. He was not in a hurry, he never is: "He never is before his time, he never is too late." Our blessed Master has glorious leisure, because he is always punctual. Late people are in a hurry; but he, being never late, never hurries. He does everything calmly and serenely, because he foresees what he will do. Jesus knows, dear friend, concerning you, not only what you will do, but what *he* will do. That is the point, and he means to do some great thing for you and to help you. He means also to bring this city and this nation to his feet. He means that every knee shall bow to him, and that the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. He knows what he means to do.

He knew, moreover, *how he meant to do it*. He knew precisely the way and method which he intended to use. He perceived long before Andrew told him that there was a lad somewhere in the crowd with five barley cakes. When the lad set out that morning, I cannot make out what made him bring five barley loaves and fishes into that crowd; except the Master had whispered in his heart, "Young lad, take with you a good lunch. Put those barley cakes into the basket, and do not forget the fishes. You do not know how long you may be from home." Nature bade him provide for contingencies, but then nature is God's voice when he chooses to make it so. He was a hungry, growing lad with a fine appetite, and he meant to be well provided for; but had he ever thought in his mind that these strangely providential cakes would multiply so as to feed that mass of people? Where is the man that is to be the universal provider? Where is the chief of the commissariat? It is that youth, and that is the whole of his storehouse. He is carrying a magazine of victuals on his back—in that basket. The Saviour knew that. And he knows exactly, dear friend, where your help is to come from in your hour of trouble. You do not know, but he does. He knows where the ministers are to come from that will stir up this city of London; and he knows in what style and manner they shall come, and how they shall get at the masses. When everybody else is defeated and nonplussed, he is fully prepared. He knew that those loaves and fishes would be fetched out in due time to be the basis of a banquet; he knew that he would bless them, break them, multiply them, and give them to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. Everything was arranged in his mind, and as much fixed as the rising of the sun.

Once more, *he did it as one who knew what he was going to do*. How does a man act when he knows what he is going to do? Well, he generally proceeds in the most *natural* way? He knows that he is going to do it; so he just goes and does it. Can you conceive that a miracle was ever performed in a more natural style. If this had been a Roman Catholic miracle, they would have thrown the loaves up in the air, and they would have come down mysteriously transformed and multiplied a million times; all popish miracles, if you observe, have a great deal of the theatrical and showy about them. They are totally distinct from the miracles of Christ. He does this miracle in the most natural way in the world, because it is virtually the same miracle which Christ works every year. We take a certain quantity of wheat, and put it into the

ground, and, in the long run, the end of it is that it is multiplied into loaves of bread. Certain fishes are in the sea, and they increase into great shoals. The sown wheat passes through the same operation in the ground in the same hands—in God's hands, but it comes out loaves of bread; and that is precisely what came of our Lord's action. He took a little into his own blessed hands, and brake it, and it kept on multiplying in his hands, and in the hands of his disciples, till they were all filled.

He knew what he was going to do, and so he did it naturally, and did it *orderly*. It is not so when a man does not know what he is to provide for. We have a large meeting, and there is provision made for tea, and three times as many come as you have provided for. What a hurry! What a scurry! What a running to and fro! Jesus never conducts his matters in that way. He knew what he was going to do, and, therefore, he bade the men sit down on the grass; and they sat down like so many children. Mark tells us that they sat down in rows by fifties and by hundreds; they were arranged as if each one had been specially set to his plate, and found his name laid upon it. Moreover, there was much grass in the place, so that the hall was carpeted in a way that no firm in London could have done it. The feast was conducted as orderly as if there had been notice given seven days beforehand, and a contractor had supplied the provisions. Nothing could have been done in a better way, and all because Jesus knew what he would do.

Moreover, he did it very *joyfully*. He took bread and blessed it. He went about it with great pleasure. I should have liked to have seen his face as he looked on these poor famishing people being fed. Like a good host, he cheered them with his smile, while he blessed them with the food.

And then he did it so *plentifully*, for he knew what he would do; so he did not come half provided, or stint them so that every man should have "a little." No; he knew what he would do, and he measured their appetites exactly, a difficult thing when you have a number of hungry people to feed. He provided all that they wanted, and afterwards there was provision left for the head waiters, so that each one should have a basketful for himself; for they took up of the fragments twelve basketfuls—one for each of the head waiters.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the matter of bringing in his own elect, is going about it, I am quite certain, knowing what he is going to do; and when you and I see the end of the great festival of mercy we shall say, "Blessed be the Lord! We were in a great worry; we were in sore trouble; but our Lord has done it easily, and thoroughly. There has been no muddle, no crowding, no passing over of anybody. Blessed be his name! He has not done it by chance or through fortunate circumstances; but he knew what he would do, and he has planned it all through from the beginning to the end in such a way that principalities and powers in heaven shall sing for ever of the grace and love and wisdom and power and prudence wherein he has abounded towards his people." Oh, but if we could see the end as well as the beginning we should begin even now to exalt the name of Jesus our Saviour, who foreknows all his work, and never deviates from his plan.

III. I conclude by saying that because there is no question with Christ, though he puts questions to us, THERE OUGHT TO BE NO QUESTION OF A DOUBTFUL CHARACTER ANY LONGER TO US. Let me mention three questions and I have done.

The first question that troubles a great many people is, "*How shall I bear my present burden?*" How shall I endure this suffering? How shall I get a living?" That question is sent to you to prove you; but do remember that there is no question with Christ as to how you will get through, for "as thy day so shall thy strength be," and he will keep his saints, even to the end. Therefore let there be no question with you, for Jesus himself knows what he will do. You came here to-night very distressed, and you said, "I wish I might get a word to tell me what I should do." You will not get half a word as to what *you* shall do, but you shall hear a word of a different sort. Jesus knows what *HE* will do; and what he will do is infinitely better than anything you can do. Your strength, my friend, is to sit still. Roll your burden upon the Lord. Do the little you can do, and leave the rest with your heavenly Father. This is the answer from the Urim and the Thummim for you,—Jesus knows what he will do.

There is that other question, which I have already mooted: *What is to be done with this great city?* I had the great privilege of being able to preach yesterday afternoon in one of our eastern suburbs, and setting out from my own house early in the morning, I went on riding, riding, upon one railway and another till I think I must have been journeying for fully two hours and a half before I had passed from one end of London to another. What a city of magnificent distances! It seems as if there was not a green tree which the builders will not cut down, nor a grassy meadow which they will not turn into ugly streets. "Replenish the earth," indeed? It is replenished. The dead earth is buried away beneath the abodes of living men. As for creatures of our race, what myriads there are of them! And, then, as you go along with a Christian friend, he says, "There is a chapel wanted here." Or "There is a little chapel here, but not one person in fifty goes to a place of worship." Then you arrive at another suburban place, and your guide will say, "Here are people anxious for the gospel, but there is nobody to take it to them." I went along yesterday sorely burdened, and questioning in my heart, "What shall we do?" I kept thinking "You had better not ask yourself that question, for you cannot do much towards answering it, and it will only worry you." And yet it came back to me, "How shall we buy bread for this multitude?" My Lord and Master would say "*We*." In my heart I wanted him to leave me out, but he would not. He never could have said, "How shall I buy bread?" because he knows that; but he put it to me, and I felt that I was a hindrance for making it a question at all, for he only makes it a question to me for my sake. O that we had men and money to send out ministers and to build places for them to preach in. We have preachers ready in the College, but I have no means for building places of worship. Surely many of you must have been burdened with the hugeness of this city. But, dear, dear, this is like one drop of rain in a great shower compared with the whole world that lieth in the wicked one. How is this world to be enlightened? It is no question with

Jesus, and, therefore, it should never be an unbelieving question with us. "Can these dry bones live?" Let us answer "Lord, thou knowest." There will we leave it. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or even think, and we may depend upon it that if he has sworn by himself that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess to him, it shall be so, and he shall have the glory.

One other question should be mentioned. It is this. Has the Lord put into the heart of any unconverted person the question,—"*What must I do to be saved?*" And is that question perplexing any of you? I am glad it is so, but I hope you will turn to the right place for an answer. I hope you are enquiring,—Lord, what wouldst thou have *me* to do? Do you know why that question is put to you? It is to prove you, and to humble you. It is meant to make you feel the impossibility of salvation by your own works, that you may submit yourself to the righteousness of God, and be saved by faith in Christ Jesus. Remember that there is no question with Christ about how you are to be saved. In fact, that question was settled—when shall I say? Settled when he died? No, settled long before that: it was decided in the everlasting covenant before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. God had then regarded his son as the Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world, and to this day the word still stands—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Look unto him and be saved. There is no question about the possibility of your salvation, or about Christ's ability to save you. The question in your heart, "*What must I do to be saved?*" is put there to prove you; but Jesus himself knows what he will do. What a blessed word is that! He knows how he will pardon, comfort, regenerate, instruct, and lead you. He knows how he will keep you to the end by his unchanging grace. He knows how he will preserve you, and sanctify you, and use you, and glorify his own name by you, and take you up to heaven, and set you upon his throne, and make all the angels wonder and adore, as they see what he will do. God bless you for Jesu's sake. Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—210, 701, 681.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John vi.