

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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CONCERNING THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD.

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## A Sermon

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“Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?”—Job xv. 11.

THESE are the words of Eliphaz, one of those three friends of Job who blundered dreadfully over his case. Their words are not to be despised; for they were men in the front rank for knowledge and experience. Eliphaz says, “With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father.” Their errors were not the superficial mistakes of fools, but the profound reasonings of men of light and leading. Their utterances are, at least, equal to anything our own learned men may have to say on the same problem. However wrong Eliphaz may have been in reference to Job—and in reference to him his remarks were grossly unjust—yet many of them are correct in themselves, and may usefully be applied to our own hearts. Inasmuch as Eliphaz, in this verse, teaches no doctrine, but only asks two searching questions, he cannot mislead us; but he may do us good service. May God the Holy Spirit enable us so to consider these questions that we may be profited thereby!

The text is in the form of question, and its sense I shall endeavour to bring out by other questions, each of which will have a practical relation to ourselves. The passage in the original has proved hard to translate; but I think that in four questions I can set forth the essence of the meanings which have been found therein.

If we are indeed believers in the gospel, and are living near to God, our consolation should be exceeding great. Passing through a troubled world, we have need of consolations; but these are abundantly provided by our God, and their influence upon us should be exceeding great. We ought not to be unhappy; for we have joy urged upon us by the precept, “Rejoice in the Lord alway”; and that precept is in substance often repeated. It is both the duty and the privilege of Christians to be of good cheer; if we are not glad, even amid our trials, there is a reason for it, and we shall do well, at this time, to use the text as a candle by which to search out that reason. “Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?”

I. Our first question follows the interpretation given by most authorities: "DO YOU REGARD THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD AS SMALL?" Do you judge that the comforts of faith are insignificant? "Are the consolations of God too small for thee?"

I would ask you, first, *Do you think religion makes men unhappy?* Have you poisoned your mind with that invention of the enemy? Have you made yourself believe that godliness consists in morbid self-condemnation, despondency, apprehension, and dread? If so, permit me to warn you that there are many popular errors, and that, in this case, "common fame is a common liar." Do you find in the preacher, and the members of his church, any confirmation of this silly assertion? We can personally assure you that the joys of religion are by no means meagre in our case. We beseech you not to let a groundless prejudice blind your eyes to the truth. I will hope that, like the Bereans, you are of a noble spirit, and will examine that which is told you.

*Is not your verdict different from that of those who have tried godliness for themselves?* Do you not know that many, for the joy they have found in the love of Christ, have renounced all sinful pleasures, and utterly despised them? They were once fascinated with the world, but they tasted higher joys, and shook off the spell. He that drinks of the river of the water of life will count the streams of sin to be foul and brackish, and will no more drink thereof. Many a believer for the joy that is set before him has, in the service of God, encountered much ridicule, endured severe losses, and borne great hardships; and has done so with delight. Have you not also remarked, in many afflicted Christians, a peace which you yourself do not know? Have you not observed their patience under adversity? They have been poor, but perfectly content; they have been sick, and yet cheerful; racked with pain, and yet joyous. Under the apprehension of surgical operations, have you not seen them happily resigned? Have you ever seen one of them die? How often have we heard them singing in their death-throes, which have been to them death joys! Is it not a fact which cannot be disputed, that faith in our Lord Jesus has uplifted the sorrowful, and has rendered others supremely happy? This joy has sprung entirely from their hope in Christ, their communion with God, their delight in the truth revealed in Holy Scripture. Have we not among us in Christian fellowship many notable proofs that

" 'Tis religion which can give  
Sweetest pleasure while we live " ?

Therefore, my questioning friend, it behoves you to look into this matter, and not to remain under the impression that the consolations of God are small. Those whose experience asserts that the joys of religion are great are not foolish or disreputable persons: give due weight to their witness, and believe that the consolations of God are precious beyond expression. Amid many pains and afflictions, I can personally assure you that it is a blessed thing to trust in the Lord.

Will you follow me a while as I ask you, *Upon consideration, will you not amend your judgment?* What are these consolations of God? The more you know of them, the more ground will you see for believing

that they must be great. They are the "consolations of God." If God himself deigns to comfort men, will he not greatly cheer them? Knowing human sorrow, and stepping from the height of his glory to comfort it, is it conceivable that he will labour in vain? Do you think that the All-sufficient cannot provide consolation equal to the affliction? The consolations we speak of are applied by the Spirit of God; and to prove how earnestly he performs his work, he has taken the name of "Comforter." Will the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, think you, come to any human heart with insufficient consolations? Will he trifle with our griefs? Can it be that he does not know how to give sunlight when our day is dark with sorrow? Think not so. Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, is the substance of those consolations. He is called "The consolation of Israel." Can a man have Christ to be his portion, and yet be poor? Can a man have Jesus for his joy, and yet be weighed down with sadness? Might he not well ask, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" I cannot for a moment dream of a joyless Christ.

See again, my friend, these consolations of God deal with the source of sorrow. Whence came the curse, but from the sin of man? Jesus has come to save his people from their sins. Those thorns and thistles which now rend our flesh are not the natural fruits of the earth as God created it. Sin sowed all these. The consolations of God deal with sin. As for the guilt which we have incurred, and the inevitable punishment, both are removed by pardon full and free. Jesus bore the guilt of sin, and put it all away by his death upon the cross; and, in consequence, sin can be blotted out. Is not this the grandest of all consolations—the consolation of God? When we lay hold on Jesus, and receive forgiveness, affliction may remain, but sin is gone for ever; and hence the affliction itself loses its bitterness. Sin reigning in the heart is the death of peace; but the dethronement of the usurper is provided for, and hence another divine consolation. Until we get the mastery over evil, we must be uncomfortable; but the consolations of God assure us of a new heart and a right spirit, and of a power supreme and divine, which enters the nature of the believer, and subdues, destroys, and at last annihilates the propensity to sin. Is not this a rich and rare consolation? Comfort which left us under the power of evil would be dangerous comfort; but comfort which takes away both the guilt and the power of sin is glorious indeed. Dream not that it can be small!

Remember, too, that the consolations of God reveal to us a reason for the sorrow when it is allowed to remain. There is a needs-be that we are in heaviness. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." If suffering be a fire, the consolations of God assure us that it is a refining fire, which only consumes our dross. Do you not think that the comfortable fruits of righteousness, which are brought forth in those believers who are exercised by trial, are the source of great comfort to the afflicted of the Lord?

**"Since all that I meet shall work for my good,  
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food."**

Another reflection sweetly cheers the heart of the tried one during his tribulation, namely, that he has a comrade in it. We are not passing through the waters alone. We have a fellow-sufferer, of whom we read, "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Our Lord drank long ago of that cup whereof we sip. He knows the sting of treachery, the stab of calumny, the spit of scorn; for he was "in all points tempted like as we are." Many of us have found this to be an eminent comfort. Do you not think it must be so? Has not many a man, at the sound of another's voice, been cheered in the darkness of the night when pursuing a dangerous way? Has not the presence of a stronger and wiser one acting as guide been quite enough to remove all dread? If the Son of God be with us, surely there is an end of every sort of fear. Does he not use this as his own note of cheer, saying, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee?"

Besides, "the consolations of God" lie also in the direction of compensations. You have the rod; yes, but this is the small drawback to heavenly sonship, if drawback indeed it be. You have become a son of God, and "what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?" You are an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ; and in accepting heirship will you not cheerfully take the cross therewith, seeing it is part of the entail? It is true that you have special sorrow; but then you have the royal nature to which that sacred sorrow is a witness. God has given to you a nature that wars against evil: hence these tears! Would you be of the seed of the serpent, and have your meat as plentiful as dust? Would you not far rather be of the seed of the woman, and have your heel bruised? What is the bruising of the heel compared with the eternal dominion to which that seed is predestinated? Compensations abound in every case of trouble. You have lost your child, but you believe in the resurrection. You will die yourself, it may be; but you shall rise again from the dust. You have lost your property; but you are an heir of all things in Christ Jesus. You have been persecuted; but in this you rejoice as a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. The compensations of the covenant of grace are so overflowing that we call our troubles "light afflictions, which are but for a moment," and they work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Besides, there is one consolation, with which I finish; not because I have completed my list, but because time does not permit me to enlarge: there is the consolation that you are on your journey home, and that every moment you are coming closer to the eternal rest. When we once reach heaven, we shall forget the trials of the way. An hour with our God will make up for a life of pain. You languish on that bed; but if you languish into immortality, you will no more remember your anguish. When your head wears the crown and your hand waves the palm, you will count it all joy that you were thought worthy to be persecuted for Christ's sake.

O sirs, we have the best of it! Whatever trouble may come to us as Christians, so much more of joy comes with it, that we have the best of the bargain. We give up drops of poisonous delight, but we dive into rivers of ineffable joy. The Christian's joy far excels the best that earth can afford. Grace is the dawn of glory. Faith brings

heaven down to us, while love bears us up to heaven. Celestial fruits are gathered upon earthly ground by those who look up for the manna. Let us begin the song which with sweeter voices we shall continue, world without end—"Unto him that loved us and laved us in his own blood, be glory for ever!"

Still I fear there are some to whom it appears as if the joys of religion and the consolations of God were small. Let them correct their mistake; for the truth is far otherwise.

II. But now a second question comes up, which will come home to many Christian people. HAVE THESE CONSOLATIONS BEEN SMALL IN THEIR EFFECT UPON YOU? Have these consolations, though great in themselves, been small in their influence *upon you*?

I will begin my examination by putting to one disciple this question: *Have you never very much rejoiced in God?* Have you always possessed a little, and but a very little, joy? Are you one of those who are only up to the ankles in the river of grace? Why is this? Dear friend, you are believing upon a slender scale; you are living on a low plane. Why is it so? You hope you are saved, but it is by the skin of your teeth; you hope you are a child of God, but you are not very sure about it; and, consequently, you get very little joy out of it. This is mischievous. Whence comes it? Is it *ignorance*? Do you not know enough of the great doctrines of the gospel, and of the vast privileges of the redeemed? It may be so. We have heard of persons in Australia who walked habitually over nuggets of gold. We have heard of a bridge being built with what seemed common stones, but it contained masses of golden ore. Men did not know their wealth. Is it not a pity that you should be poor in comfort, and yet have all this gold of consolation at your foot? You have, lying within the leaves of your Bible, cheques for millions, and yet you have scarcely a penny to spend. What a pity! Is it *listlessness*? Have you never felt desirous to know the best of the Christian life? Have you never had the sacred ambition to gain all the blessings which are provided in the covenant of grace? It is wonderful how indifferent some people can be: they can fret when within reach of unutterable joy! I have heard of a person who walked some seven hundred miles to see the Falls of Niagara. When he was within seven miles, he thought he heard the roar of the cataract, and he called to a man working in the fields, and said, "Is that the roar of Niagara?" The man answered, "I don't know, but I guess it may be. What if it is?" With surprise, the good man said, "Do you live here?" "Born and bred here," the man answered. "And yet you don't know whether that thundering noise is from the waterfall?" "No, stranger," said he, "I don't care what it is. I have never seen those Falls. I look after my farm." No doubt there are many within hail of heaven's choicest joys who have never cared to know them. They hope they are saved, but they don't care for great joy. They use their spade and their hoe, and dig their potatoes; but Niagara is nothing to them. Many look well to this life, but do not arouse themselves to gain present spiritual joy. Oh, sad, that you should be so much a Christian, that we should not wish to question that you are converted, and yet you are half-asleep, and

self-content! You labour under the notion that those good people who rejoice in the Lord are enthusiasts, or else you say to yourself, "It would be presumption on my part to aspire to have the same joy." What nonsense! Go in for everything that God can give you. If you are his child, nothing in his house is denied you. He saith to you, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Do not you, like the elder brother, complain that you have served him all these years, and yet he never gave you enough to make you merry with your friends.

But it may be, dear friend, that you once did joy and rejoice. Well, then, *is it of late that you have lost these splendid consolations, and come down to feel them small with you?* I suggest to you that you observe what alteration you have made of late. Is it that you have more business, and have grown more worldly? You cannot get out to prayer-meetings now, nor to week-night services. "No," you say, "I cannot; and if you knew what I have to do, you would not blame me." Just so, a little while ago you had not so much to do; but you chose to load yourself with an extra burden, knowing that you would not be able to get so much of spiritual food as aforetime. Somewhere in that line you will find the reason why your joy has declined. If anybody said to me, "The days are darker now than they used to be," I should remember that the sun is still the same. Perhaps my friend has not lately cleaned his windows; or he has not drawn up his blinds; and that is why he thinks there is less light. It is very possible to be much more in the dark than you need to be. The gloom may be in the eyes rather than in the heavens. May I suggest a little looking at home, that you may see why your former blessedness is gone?

Do you reply to me that you do use the means of grace? *Do the outward means fail to bring you the consolation they once did?* To what means do you refer? Are you as much in prayer as ever? and is prayer less refreshing than it used to be? Do you read the Scriptures as you formerly did, with the same regularity, attention, and devotion? Do you no longer draw the waters of comfort from these wells of salvation? Do you really go on hearing the Word as you once did, with the same hunger for it, and love to it, and yet do you find it unsatisfactory to you? I must again remind you that these things have not altered in themselves; for the ministry is the same to other saints, the Scriptures must be the same, and the mercy-seat is not removed. The fault is not in these, but in yourself. Surely, dear friend, some evil thing within you has curdled the milk of blessing, and stopped the flow of joy. Search yourselves, I pray you, if the consolations of God are small with you. He has not forgotten to be gracious, neither has he ceased to hear prayer and to speak to his servants through his sacred Word. You shut the door from within; he bars it not from without.

I may come near to your experience if I ask—*Do you revive occasionally, and then relapse?* I think I hear you say, "Oh, yes; I sometimes can clap my hands; for I feel delighted while hearing the gospel. I could shout Hallelujah, I do so rejoice. I am for a time up in the stirrups." But you come down again just as readily. Why is this?

Surely, you are in a very changeful frame, and live by feeling rather than by principle. Are not the grounds of comfort always the same? If a promise is true this morning, it will be true this afternoon; and if it is a real source of comfort to you this afternoon, it ought to be a comfort to you on Monday and all the other days of the week. If the feast does not alter, and yet it does not satisfy you as it once did, you must be ill, some fever or other disease is upon you. Haste away to the Great Physician of souls, and say to him, "Lord, search me and try me, and see what evil thing there is in me, and make me right, that I may again be satisfied with heavenly food." It is childish to be so changeful. Grow in grace, and be rooted in faith.

*Does the cause of your greater grief lie in a trial to which you do not fully submit?* I think I hear you admit that you faint under your load. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." But he giveth more grace. Get it. Are you impatient? Do you kick against the pricks? Do you feel that you can endure no longer? Since you are impatient, do you wonder that you are unhappy? Since you walk contrary to God, do you wonder that he walks contrary to you? Do not find fault with his consolations; find fault with your own rebellious heart. When a child rebels against his father, it is not likely that his father's love will be a source of much comfort to him. Dear friend, the Lord help you to get rid of impatience, and you will be rid of anguish. Take the cup, and drink it, and say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt"; and an angel will appear unto you strengthening you. As it was with your Lord in a similar case, so shall it be with you. Are you alarmed at what may yet come? Do you dread the future? Well, if you will import trouble from the future, blame not the consolations of God; for he has told you that "the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." He has never taught you to pray, "Give me to-morrow my daily bread": he has limited you and pegged you down to this, "Give us this day our daily bread." Will you not be content to live by the day? Walking with him who is the God of Eternity, you may leave days and years to him; and let one day at a time be enough for you.

It may be that while you are thus without the enjoyment of divine consolation, *Satan is tempting you to look to other things for comfort.* I pray you, touch not the wine-cup, if this be placed before you as a means of consolation. A dark hour is often the crisis in the history of a man of God: if he can weather this storm he will have fair sailing. Satan will now be very busy to get you to act hastily, or wickedly. It will be whispered to you, "Put your pen to that accommodation bill. Borrow, though you cannot pay. It may be wrong, but you can put it right afterwards." I pray you, do not dream of any means of help which you cannot lay before God. How often have men in offices of trust been tempted to handle money, for just a little while, and then to put it back again! I beseech you, shake this viper off your hand into the fire, for it is a viper. Better suffer anything than do wrong. Keep in the furnace till God bids you come out of it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when they found themselves walking safely in the midst of the flames, and saw Nebuchadnezzar standing at the

mouth of the furnace, did not leap out to assail the tyrant. Not they: they stayed till they came out with honour. Brother, seek not consolation in policy, in trickery, in falsehood. Do not even seek it in over-haste. Many a man who has run before the cloud has had to slink back again. Many a man who has taken a knife to carve for himself, has cut his fingers. Do not be tempted to think that you can find better comforts than God can give you. Look not to man, but let your expectation be in God alone. If you have despised the consolations of God by setting them below your own efforts, you cannot expect that they should be sweet to your taste. Amend this and you will be happy. Your lack of comfort lies not in the consolations themselves, but in your own heart. Pray God the Holy Spirit to revive the work of grace in your soul, and that being done, either the trouble will grow lighter, or your back will be stronger to bear the burden.

III. Our third question is this—Since the consolations of God appear so small to you, HAVE YOU ANYTHING BETTER TO PUT IN THEIR PLACE? Perhaps this is what Eliphaz meant when he said, “Is there any secret thing with thee?” He seemed to say to Job, “We cannot tell you anything. You will not hear us. Have you some wonderful discovery of your own? Have you some secret cordial, some mystic support, some unknown joy? Have you discovered a balm of greater efficacy than ours, a cure-all for your sorrow?” Let me ask you a similar question. If God’s gospel fails you, what will you do?

*Have you found out a new religion with brighter hopes?* I do not think you have, for the prognostications of modern thought are dreary enough! Moreover, I have been informed by those who know most about it, that the theology of the future has not yet crystallized itself sufficiently to be defined. As far as I can see, it will take a century or two before its lovers have licked it into shape; for they have not yet settled what its shape is to be. While the grass is growing, the steed is starving. The new bread is baking: the arsenic is well mixed within it; but the oven is not very hot, and the dough is not turned into loaf yet. I should advise you to keep to that bread of which your fathers ate, the bread which came down from heaven. Personally I am not willing to make any change, even if the new bread were ready on the table; for new bread is not very digestible, and the arsenic of doubt is not according to my desire. I shall keep to the old manna till I cross the Jordan, and eat the old corn of the land of Canaan. Are you hopeful of finding comfort in new speculations? Is that the “secret thing”? Then you feed upon the wind.

*Are you hoping to find comfort in the world?* Will you be happy if you manage to get that position? if you pass that examination? if you save so much money? I beseech you, do not play the fool: there is no consolation in all this. Did you ever read a little book called “The Mirage of Life,” published by the Tract Society? It ought to convince anybody that there is no satisfaction to be found in the greatest worldly success; for it shows us millionaires, statesmen, and princes all dissatisfied. But I need not refer to any book; observe for yourselves. The richest men have often been the most miserable, and those who have succeeded best in rising to places of honour have been worn out in the pursuit, and disgusted with the prize. Wealth

brings care, honour earns envy, position entails toil, and rank has its annoyances. One of our richest men once said, "I suppose you fancy I am happy, because I am rich. Why, a dozen times in a year, and oftener, some fellow threatens to shoot me if I do not send him what he wants. Do you suppose that this makes me a happy man?" Believe me, the world is as barren of joy as the Sahara. Vain is the hope of finding a spring of consolation in anything beneath the moon. Seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

Or, *do you conclude that you are strong-minded enough to bear all the difficulties and trials of life without consolation?* Well, friend, I will not discuss the point. I have found that persons who think themselves strong in mind are generally strong in the head. Yet I would remind you that the strongest are not too strong for life's battle. There never was a wise man yet who thought he was wise. This world has enough of woe in it to test all the wisdom you are likely to possess. For my own part, I feel very diffident, and would be glad of all the consolations heaven can give me. I suspect that you are as I am, and will not be able to play the man without help from God.

*Do you say that what can't be cured must be endured, and you will keep as you are?* This is a poor resolve for a man to come to. If there is better to be had, why not seek it? Do you mean to abide in the sad state into which you have fallen? Are you content to be discontented? Have you had a child of your own? Have you seen it go wrong, and get itself into trouble, and then resolve not to confess it, but to make itself appear a martyr and fret? You wished to put it right, and cheer it into obedience; but it would not get out of the sulks. What did you do with it? I suppose, in the long run, you had to leave it to have its sulk out, and you thought to yourself, "Silly child! How miserable you make yourself, and all for nothing. You might be as happy as your brothers and sisters; but if you must sulk, you must." Some believers are of this sort. Because they had a serious loss, they must needs rob themselves of communion with God. Because they have endured terrible bereavement, they bereave themselves of their Lord. Because they are not well, they fret themselves into worse health. Some are only satisfied when they are in the depths of misery. I know some whose wretchedness is chronic: like polar bears, they are only at home in the ice. You smile, and well you may; but then you should also weep, if this is your case. You should cry, "O Lord, put me right with thyself! I cannot be content to be always repining and lamenting! If there are consolations to be had in thee, let me have them now. I know there is no consolation anywhere else. To whom should I go? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life! There is no secret thing with me, my God, upon which I can rely. I must have thy consolation, or I shall have no comfort!"

IV. Here comes the most practical question of all, and with this I close. If it be so, that you have hitherto found heavenly consolations to have small effect with you, and yet have nothing better to put in their place, IS THERE NOT A CAUSE FOR YOUR FAILURE? Will you not endeavour to find it out?

Dear friends, you that seek to be right, you that desire to be full Christians, and yet cannot rejoice in God, at least not often, nor

greatly, *is there not some sin indulged?* A child of God may go on with a sin unwittingly, and that for years; and all the while that sin may be causing a dreadful leakage in his joy. You cannot be wrong in life, and thought, and word, without a measure of joy oozing away. Take a good look at yourself, and examine your life by the light of Scripture, and if you find that you have been doing something wrong unawares, or for which you have made an unworthy excuse, away with the evil! Away with it at once! When this Achan is stoned, and the accursed thing is put away, you will be surprised to find what joy, what comfort will immediately flow into your soul.

Next, *may there not have been some duty neglected?* We are not saved by good works; but if any Christian omits a good work, he will find it injurious to his peace. Many Christian people never get into the clear light of full assurance, because they do not obey their conscience upon every point. I pray you, never quarrel with conscience, for it will have the best of it with you—if you have a conscience. If you go contrary to conscience, there will be trouble inside the little kingdom of your soul, as sure as you are alive. “Oh, but I have always been intending to do it.” That makes it the greater sin that you have not done it, for evidently you knew your Lord’s will. Have you considered that any wilful omission of duty is not one sin, but many? It is your duty to do it now; it is a sin that you have not done it already. It will be your duty to do it to-morrow; it will be another sin if you omit it to-morrow. How often the omission creates a new sin I cannot tell; but as surely as you rob God of obedience, sin will rob you of comfort. If you neglect obedience to the precept, you cannot have the comfort of the promise. Get that matter seen to at once, there’s a dear friend! Omitted duty is like a little stone in the sole of your shoe. It is small, and some say it is a non-essential matter; but it is just because it is so small that it can do so much mischief. If I had a great pebble in my boot, I should be sure to get it out; but a tiny stone may remain, and blister me, and lame me. Get out the little stones, or they will hinder your travelling to heaven.

Again, *may there not be some idol in your heart?* That is a very searching suggestion. If the consolations of God are small with you, may you not have set up something in the place of God—a lover, a wife, a husband, a child, a friend, learning, honour, wealth? I need not mention the many forms taken by our idols. It is very easy to set up an image of jealousy. A thing in itself harmless and even lovely, may grievously provoke the Lord through our heart going after it. Brother, sister, is it so? Do you love anything as you love God? I suggest that you should at once cry—

“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate’er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only thee.”

If you do not remove the idol from its throne, if God loves you, he will make your Dagon fall and be broken. If you want to lose that which is the object of your comfort and delight, love it too much. This is a sort of unwilful murder which good people can perform upon

their children and their friends. Idolize and destroy. Love the creature more than the Creator, and it may be necessary that they should be taken from you altogether.

But, beloved, if you do not enjoy the consolations of God, do you not think it is because *you do not think enough of God*? I am ashamed of myself that I do not live more with my God. How little time do we spend with him! We think about his work rather than himself. Even in the Scriptures we look more to the words than to God speaking by the words. We criticize a phrase when we should be drinking in the spirit of the revelation, and so be getting near to God. If we are cold, is it not because we do not sit in the sun? If we are faint, is it not because we do not feed on him whose flesh is meat indeed? How would a fish fare if it left the water? How can we prosper if we leave our God, who is the element of our life? Say with David, in the psalm we sang just now :

“ Like as the hart for water-brooks  
In thirst doth pant and bray ;  
So pants my longing soul, O God,  
That come to thee I may.”

And then you will not long be disquieted, for you will go on to sing :

“ For yet I know I shall him praise,  
Who graciously to me,  
The health is of my countenance,  
Yea, mine own God is he.”

If any of you have not the joy of the Lord which you once possessed, is it not possible that *when you used to have it you grew proud*? “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.” He will have to be starved a bit to bring him to his senses. Ah! I have known a child of God so happy in the Lord, so useful and so blessed in every way, that he began to think he was something out of the common. He grew very sublime. As to the poor brethren around him, he could hardly put up with them—they were more dead than alive; they were weaklings, foolish men, mere babes, and so on. He saw a poor tried believer looking out of one of the windows of Doubting Castle, and instead of helping him out, he bullied him so much for being there at all that the poor prisoner was more shut up than ever. Look at him! He is a fine fellow! *He* never had sad doubts; *he* never felt anxious fears. Not he! You remind me, my dear brother, of the fat cattle mentioned in Ezekiel, of whom the prophet says that they thrust with side, and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with their horns till they had scattered them. “Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them; behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.” The Lord will not have you condemn the weak and sneer at the feeble. You may yet be such yourselves. His consolations will be small with you if his people are small with you. If you do not care for the little ones who believe in him, neither will he be quick to comfort *you*. Be humble. Take the lowest place. If you will lie low before the Lord, he will lift you up; but if you lift up yourself, God will throw you down.

I will close by saying that one of the worst causes of disquietude is unbelief. *Have you begun to distrust?* Do you really doubt your God? Then I do not wonder that the consolations of God are small with you. Here is the rule of the kingdom—"According to your faith, so be it unto you." If you doubt God, you will get but little from him. He that wavereth may not expect to receive anything of the Lord. Strong faith may have what it wills; but when your doubts master your faith, prayer cannot prevail. Few are the dainties from the King's table which come to the dish of mistrust. What do you doubt? Do you question the Word of God? Has the Lord said more than the truth will warrant? Do you think so? Will you dare to throw such a handful of mud upon the veracity of God? His truth is one of his crown jewels; would you take it away? Do you distrust his power? Do you think he cannot comfort you? Do you imagine that he cannot make you ride upon the high places of the earth? Do you think that he cannot put a new song into your mouth, and make you rejoice in his name from morning to night? Wherefore should you doubt his power to make you joyful in his house? Do you doubt the Lord's wisdom? Do you think the Holy Spirit cannot meet your case, and provide comfort suitable for your distress? Surely, you cannot have fallen into this base suspicion! Or, do you doubt the Lord's presence? Do you think that he is too far off to know you and help you? He is everywhere present, and he knows the way that you take.

Come and trust the Lord. Come, beloved, whether you be saint or sinner, come through the Lord Jesus, and fall down at Jehovah's feet and say, "Lord, my hope is in thee. I have no comfort elsewhere; but I know thy comforts are not small. Comfort me, I pray thee, in Christ Jesus." If you would have that prayer answered, listen to these words of the Lord Jesus: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Though the tears be in your eyes, yet turn them to Christ crucified. Put your trust simply, immediately, wholly, and alone in him who died for you, and you shall go your way filled with consolation. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxvi.

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HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—42 (Vers. I.), 622, 713.