

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH ESSENTIAL TO PLEASING GOD.

A Sermon

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“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—Hebrews xi. 6.

MEN have lived who have pleased God: Enoch was one of them, but he was not the only one. In all ages certain persons have been well-pleasing to God, and their walk in life has been such as was his delight. It should be the aim of every one of us to please God. The thing is possible, notwithstanding all our imperfections and infirmities: let us aim at it in the power of the Holy Ghost. What has been wrought in one man may be wrought in another. We, too, may be well-pleasing unto God; therefore let us seek after it with hopefulness. If we so live as to please the Lord, we shall only be acting as we ought to act; for we ought to please him who made us and sustains us in being. He is our God and Lord, and obedience to him is the highest law of our being. Moreover, the glorious Jehovah is so perfectly good, so supremely holy, that the conduct which pleases him must be of the best and noblest sort, and therefore we should seek after it. Should we not aspire to that character upon which God himself can smile? The approbation of our fellow-men is pleasant in its way; but they are always imperfect, and often mistaken; and so we may be well-pleasing to them, and yet may be far removed from righteousness. It may be a calamity to be commended in error, for it may prevent our becoming really commendable. But God makes no mistake; the Infinitely Holy knows no imperfection; and if it be possible for us to be pleasing to him, it should be our one object to reach that condition. As Enoch, in a darker age, was pleasing to him, why should not we, upon whom the gospel day has dawned? God grant us to find grace in his sight!

If we please God, we shall have realized the object of our being. It is written concerning all things, “For his pleasure they are and were created”; and we miss the end of creation if we are not pleasing to the Lord. To fulfil God’s end in our creation is to obtain the highest joy. If we are pleasing to God, although we shall not escape

trial, for even the highest qualities must be tested, yet we shall find great peace and special happiness. He is not an unhappy man who is pleasing to God : God hath blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed. By pleasing God we shall become the means of good to others : our example will rebuke and stimulate ; our peace will convince and invite. Being himself well-pleasing to God, the godly man will teach transgressors God's way, and sinners shall be converted unto him. I therefore, without the slightest hesitancy, set it before you as a thing to be desired by us all, that we should win this testimony—that we are pleasing unto God.

Here the apostle comes in with a needful instruction. *He asserts that faith is absolutely needful, if we would please God.* Then, to help us still further, *he mentions two essential points of faith:* "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." When I have spoken on these two points, I shall close, as God shall help me, by showing that *he then teaches us many valuable lessons.*

I. First, then, THE APOSTLE ASSERTS THAT FAITH IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO THE PLEASING OF GOD. Take, as a key-word, the strong word "*impossible.*" "Without faith it is impossible to please God." He does not say it is difficult, or so needful that without it success is barely possible ; but, point-blank, he declares it to be "*impossible.*" When the Holy Spirit says that a thing is impossible, it is so in a very absolute sense. Let us not attempt the impossible. To attempt a difficulty may be laudable, but to rush upon an impossibility is madness. We must not, therefore, hope to please God by any invention of our own, however clever, nor by any labour of our own, however ardent ; since infallible inspiration declares that, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

We are bound to believe this statement, because we have it in the sacred volume, stated upon divine authority ; but, for your help, I would invite you to think of some few matters which may show you how impossible it is to please God without faith in him.

For, first, *without faith there is no capacity for communion with God at all.* The things of God are spiritual and invisible : without faith we cannot recognize such things, but must be dead to them. Faith is the eye which sees ; but without that eye we are blind, and can have no fellowship with God in those sacred truths which only faith can perceive. Faith is the hand of the soul, and without it we have no grasp of eternal things. If I were to mention all the images by which faith is set forth, each one would help you to see that you must have faith in order to know God and enter into converse with him. It is only by faith that we can recognize God, approach him, speak to him, hear him, feel his presence, and be delighted with his perfections. He that has not faith is toward God as one dead ; and Jehovah is not the God of the dead, but of the living. The communion of the living God goes not forth toward death and corruption ; his fellowship is with those who have spiritual life, a life akin to his own. Where there is no faith, there has been no quickening of the Holy Spirit, for faith is of the very essence of spiritual life ; and so the man who has no faith can no more commune with the living God, and give him

pleasure, than can a stock or a stone, a horse or an ox, hold converse with the human mind.

Again, *without faith the man himself is not pleasing to God.* We read, "Without faith it is impossible to please God"; but the Revision has it better: "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God." The way of acceptance described in Scripture is, first, the man is accepted, and then what that man does is accepted. It is written: "And he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." First, God is pleased with the person, and then with the gift, or the work. The unaccepted person offers of necessity an unacceptable sacrifice. If a man be your enemy, you will not value a present which he sends you. If you know that he has no confidence in you, but counts you a liar, his praises are lost upon you; they are empty, deceptive things which cannot possibly please you. O my hearers, in your natural state you are so sinful that God cannot look upon you with complacency! Concerning our race it is written: "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Concerning many God has said, "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me." Is this true of us? "Ye must be born again," or ye cannot be pleasing to the Lord. Ye must believe in Jesus; for only to as many as receive him does he give power to become the sons of God. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, the Lord God accepts us for his Beloved's sake, and in him we are made kings and priests, and permitted to bring an offering which pleases God. As the man is, such is his work. The stream is of the nature of the spring from which it flows. He who is a rebel, outlawed and proclaimed, cannot gratify his prince by any fashion of service; he must first submit himself to the law. All the actions of rebels are acts done in rebellion. We must first be reconciled to God, or it is a mockery to bring an offering to his altar. Reconciliation can only be effected through the death of the Lord Jesus, and if we have no faith in that way of reconciliation we cannot please God. Faith in Christ makes a total change in our position towards God—we who were enemies are reconciled; and from this comes towards God a distinct change in the nature of all our actions: imperfect though they be, they spring from a loyal heart, and they are pleasing to God.

Remember, that, *in human associations, want of confidence would prevent a man's being well-pleasing to another.* If a man has no confidence in you, you can have no pleasure in him. If you had a child, and he had no trust in his father, no belief in his father's kindness, no reliance on his father's word—it would be most painful, and it would be quite impossible that you should take any pleasure in such a child. If you had a servant in your house who always suspected your every action, and believed in nothing that you said or did, but put a wrong construction upon everything, it would make the house very miserable, and you would be well rid of such an inmate. How can I take pleasure in a man who associates with me, and pretends to serve me, but all the while thinks me a sheer impostor, and gives me no credit for truthfulness? Such a person would be an eye-sore to me. It is clear that want of confidence would destroy any pleasure which one man

might have in another. When the creature dares to doubt his Creator, how can the Creator be pleased? When the word which wrought creation is not enough for a man to rest upon, he may pretend what he will of righteousness and obedience, but the whole affair is rotten at the core, and God can take no pleasure in it.

Note again: *unbelief takes away the common ground upon which God and man can meet.* Two persons who are pleasant to one another, must have certain common views and objects. God's great object is the glorification of his Son; and how can we be pleasing to him if we dishonour that Son? The Father delights in Jesus: the very thought of him is a pleasure to God. He said, as if to himself only, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This he said, afterwards, to others, that they might regard it—"This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." He delights in what his Son has done: he smells a sweet savour of rest in his glorious sacrifice. If you and I believe in God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, we have a common ground of sympathy with God; but if not, we are not in harmony. How can two walk together except they be agreed? If we have thoughts of Jesus such as the Father has, we can live together and work together; but if we are opposed to him on a point which is as the apple of his eye, we cannot be well-pleasing to him. If Jesus be despised, rejected, distrusted, or even neglected, it is not possible for us to be pleasing to God. According to the well-worn fable, two persons who are totally different in their pursuits cannot well live together: the fuller and the charcoal-burner were obliged to part; for whatever the fuller had made white, the collier blackened with his finger. If differing pursuits divide, much more will differing feelings upon a vital point. It is Jesus whom Jehovah delights to honour; and if you will not even trust Jesus with your soul's salvation, you grieve the heart of God, and he can have no pleasure in you. Unbelief deprives the soul of the divinely-appointed meeting-place at the mercy-seat, which is the person of the Lord Jesus, where God and man unite in one Mediator, and the Lord shines forth on the suppliant.

Assuredly, again, *want of faith destroys all prospect of love.* Although we may not perhaps see it, there lies at the bottom of all love a belief in the object loved, as to its loveliness, its merit, or its capacity to make us happy. If I do not believe in a person, I cannot love him. If I cannot trust God, I cannot love him. If I do not believe that he loves me, I shall feel but slight emotions of love to him. If I refuse to see anything in the greatest display of his love, if I do not value the gift of his dear Son, then I cannot love him. We love him because he first loved us; but if we will not believe in his love, the motive power is gone. If we reject the word which saith, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," then we have put from out of the heart the grand incentive to love. But love on our part is essential to our pleasing God: how can he be pleased with an unloving heart? Is not the Lord's chief demand of men that we love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength? Without faith love is impossible, and God's pleasure in us must be impossible.

Again, dear friends, *want of faith will create positive variance* on many points. Note a few. If I trust God, and believe in him, I shall submit myself to his will; even when it becomes very painful to me I shall say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." But if I do not believe that he is God, and that he is aiming at my good, then I shall resent his chastisements, and shall kick against his will. What he wills me to suffer, I shall not be willing to suffer; but I shall rebel, and murmur, and proudly accuse my Maker of injustice, or want of love. I shall be in a rebellious state towards him, and then he cannot have pleasure in me. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy"; but he will walk contrary to us, if we walk contrary to him by refusing to bow ourselves before his hand.

Without faith, moreover, I get to be at variance with God in another way; for inasmuch as I desire to be saved, I shall seek salvation in my own way, and go about to establish a righteousness of my own. Whatever it may be, whether it be by ceremonies, or by good works, or by feelings, or what not, I shall, in some way or other, set up a way of salvation other than that which God has appointed through Christ Jesus. God's love to Christ is supreme, and he will not endure that a rival should be set up in opposition to him. Another way of salvation is Antichrist, and this provokes the Lord to jealousy. If you are labouring to be saved in one way, while God declares that through his Son is the only way of salvation, you are acting in distinct opposition to the Lord in a matter which does not admit of any compromise. Rejectors of Christ are enemies to God. If you pretend that you are God's servants, you are convicted of falsehood if you refuse to honour his Son by trusting in him. If you believe in Christ, whom he has sent, you work the work of God; and not else. Self-righteousness is an insult to Christ, and a distinct revolt from God. He who has no faith seeks salvation by a way that is derogatory to the Lord Jesus, and it is impossible for him to please God.

We must be at variance with God if we are without faith; for it is a solemn truth that "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." This is the crime of the unbeliever: so is it stated by the Holy Spirit speaking by the beloved John. Could you take any pleasure in a man who made you out to be a liar? Perhaps with great patience you could bear with him, but you could not be pleased with him: that would be out of the question. Does a man daily, by the mode of his life, and by the evident drift of his actions, give you the lie?—how can he talk of giving you pleasure? Nothing he could do would please you while he calls you a liar. He that makes God to be a liar, makes him to be no God; to the best of his ability he undeifies the Deity; he uncrowns the Lord of all, and even stabs at the heart of the Eternal. To talk of being well-pleasing to God in such a case is absurd.

Let me conclude this point by asking, *by what means can we hope to please God, apart from faith in him?* By keeping all the commandments? Alas! you have not done so. You have already broken those commands; and what is more, you still break them, and are in

a chronic state of disobedience. If you do not believe in him you are not obedient to him; for true obedience commands the understanding as well as every other power and faculty. We are bound to obey with the mind by believing, as well as with the hand by acting. The spiritual part of our being is in revolt against God until we believe; and, while the very life and glory of our being is in revolt, how can we please God?

But what will you bring to the Lord wherewith to please him? Do you propose to bribe him with your money? Surely you are not so foolish! Is the Lord to be bought with a row of almshouses, or a chapel, or a cathedral? To most of you it would be impossible to try the plan for lack of means; but if you were wealthy enough to lavish gold out of the bag, would this please him? The silver and the gold are his, and the cattle on a thousand hills. If he were hungry, he would not tell you. What can you give to him to whom all things belong? Truly, you can assist in an ornate worship, or build a gorgeous church, or embroider the furniture of an altar, or emblazon the windows of a church. But are you so weak as to believe that such trifles as these can cause any delight to the mind of the Infinite? Solomon built him a house, but "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." To what shall I liken the most glorious erections of human genius but to the ant-hills of the tropics, which are wonderful as the fabrication of ants, even as our cathedrals are marvellous as the handicraft of men. But what are ant-hills or cathedrals when measured with the Infinite? What are all our works to the Lord? He who with a single arch has spanned the world, cares little for our carved capitals and groined arches. The prettinesses of architecture are as much beneath the glory of Jehovah as the dolls and boxes of bricks of our children would be beneath the dignity of a Solomon. God is not a man that he should take delight in these things. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" It is not this that he asks of you, but to walk humbly with him, never daring arrogantly to doubt his truth and mistrust his faithfulness. Go not about by a thousand inventions to aim at what you will never compass, but believe your God, and be established. So much upon that painful point. Remember the impossibility of pleasing the Lord without faith, and do not dash your ship upon this iron-bound coast.

II. Now, secondly, THE APOSTLE MENTIONS TWO ESSENTIAL POINTS OF FAITH.

He begins by saying, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." Note the key-word "*must*": it is an immovable, insatiable necessity. Before we can walk with God, it is clear that we must *come to God*. Naturally, we are at a distance from him, and we must end that distance by coming to him, or else we cannot walk with him, nor be pleasing to him. That we may come to him, we must first believe that there is a God to come to. More; we must not only believe that there is a God—for only a fool doubts *that*: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"—but we must believe that Jehovah is God, and God alone. This was Enoch's faith: he believed that

Jehovah was the living and true God. You are to believe, and must believe in order to be pleasing with God, that he is God, that he is the only God, and that there can be none other than he. You must also accept Jehovah as he reveals himself. You are not to have a God of your own making, nor a God reasoned out, but a God such as he has been pleased to reveal himself to you. Believe that Jehovah is, whoever else may be or may not be.

But the devils believe and tremble, and yet they are not pleasing to God, for more is wanted. Believe that God *is* in reference to yourself; that he has to do with your life, and your ways. Many believe that there is a hazy, imaginary power which they call God; but they never think of him as a person, nor do they suspect that he thinks of them, or that his existence is of any consequence to them one way or another. Believe that God *is* as truly as you are; and let him be real to you. Let the consideration of him enter into everything that concerns you. Believe that he is approachable by yourself, and is to be pleased or displeased by you. Believe in him as you believe in your wife or your child whom you try to please. Believe in God beyond everything, that "he is" in a sense more sure than that in which anyone else exists. Believe that he is to be approached, to be realized, to be, in fact, the great practical factor of your life.

Hold this as the primary truth, that God is most influential upon you; and then believe that it is your business to come to him. But there is only one way of coming to him, and you must have faith to use that way. He that died and lives for ever saith, "I am the way. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He that cometh to God must believe in God as he is revealed, and must come to God as God reveals the way of approach; and this is an exertion of faith. Faith as to this point is essential. You cannot come to him in whom you do not believe. Are not many hearers of the Word really as far from God as infidels? Let me ask you, how many atheists are now in this house? Perhaps not a single one of you would accept the title, and yet, if you live from Monday morning to Saturday night in the same way as you would live if there were no God, you are practical atheists; and as actions speak more loudly than words, you are more atheists than those doctrinal unbelievers who disavow God with their mouths, and, after all, are secretly afraid of him. A life without God is as bad as a creed without God. You cannot come to God unless you believe in him as the All-in-all, the Lord God beside whom there is none else.

Yet all this would be nothing without the second point of belief. We must believe that "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." How do we *seek him*, then? Well, we seek him, first, when we begin by prayer, by trusting to Jesus, and by calling upon the sacred name, to seek salvation. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is a grand promise, and it teaches how we come to God; namely, by calling upon his name. Afterwards we seek God by aiming at his glory, by making him the great object for which we live. One man seeks money, another seeks reputation, another seeks pleasure; but he that is pleasing to God seeks God as his object and end. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The man with whom God is pleased, is pleased with God; he sets the Lord always before him, and seeks to live for him. This he would not do, unless he believed that God would reward him in so doing. Take this as a certainty, that we must believe that "God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," or we shall not seek him. We are sure that, somehow or other, it will be to our highest benefit to honour the Lord and trust on him. Albeit we deserve nothing at his hands but wrath, yet we perceive from the gospel that if we seek him through his Son, we shall be so well-pleasing to him as to get a reward from his hands. This must be of grace—free, sovereign grace! And what a reward it is! Free pardon, graciously bestowed; a change of heart, graciously wrought; perseverance graciously maintained, comfort graciously poured in, and privilege graciously awarded. The reward of godliness, even in this world, is immeasurable, and in the world to come it is infinite. We may have respect unto the recompence of the reward; indeed, we should have respect to it, and therefore boldly seek God, and seek nothing else.

The Lord is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." That is not quite an exact translation: the Greek word means not only seek him, but "seek him out"; that is, seek him till they find him, and seek him above all others. It is a very strong word; we hardly know how to transfer its meaning into English, for though it does not say "diligently," it implies it. We must seek, and seek out; that is, seek till we really find. Those who with their hearts follow after God, shall not be losers if they believe that he will reward them. You have to believe God so as to seek his glory. Even when you do not obtain any present reward for it, you are to say, "I shall have a reward ultimately, even if I am for a while a loser through his service. If I lose money, respect, friendship, or even life from following God, yet still he will be a rewarder, and I shall be repaid ten thousandfold, not of debt, but according to his grace." He, then, that would please God, must first believe that he is; and then, dedicating himself to God, must be firmly assured that this is the right, the wise, the prudent thing to do. Be certain that to serve God is in itself gain: it is wealth to be holy; it is happiness to be pleasing to God. To us it is life to live to God—to know him, to adore him, to commune with him, to become like him. It is glory to us to make him glorious among the sons of men. For us to live is Christ. This, we are persuaded, is the best pursuit for us; in fact, it is the only one which can satisfy our hearts. God is our shield, and our exceeding great reward; and in the teeth of everything that happens we hold to this, that to serve God is gain. If God helps us to trust him, and therefore to live unto him and seek to be well-pleasing in his sight, we shall succeed in pleasing him. We cannot conceive that the heavenly Father sees, without pleasure, a man struggling against sin, battling against evil, enduring sorrow contentedly through a simple faith, and labouring daily to draw nearer and nearer to him. God is not displeased with those who, by faith, live to please him, and are content to take their reward from his hand. He must be pleased with the work of his own grace. The desire to come to God, the way to come to God, the power to

come to God, the actual coming to God—these are all gifts of sovereign grace. Coming to God, however feebly we come, and seeking him, however much else we miss, must be well-pleasing in his sight; for it is the result of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the world began. But all this hangs upon faith. Without faith there is no coming to God who is, and no seeking of God who is a rewarder; and therefore without faith it is impossible to please God.

III. WE WILL NOW GATHER A FEW LESSONS FROM WHAT THE APOSTLE HAS TAUGHT US. Help us, O gracious Spirit!

First, then, the apostle teaches us here by implication that *God is pleased with those that have faith*. The negative is often the plainest way of suggesting the positive. If we are so carefully warned that without faith it is impossible to please God, we infer that with faith it is possible to please God. If you believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; if you are willing to believe all that he teaches you because he teaches it, and are really a believer in himself and in all that he is pleased to reveal, then are you pleasing to him. He that believes in God believes in all the words that God speaks, and he surrenders himself to all that God does; and such a man must be pleasing to God. We believe in one God, and in one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; and we trust in the Lord as he thus draws near to us: thus are we in the way of pleasing God. By faith we ourselves have become pleasing to God, and our actions performed with a view to his honour are pleasing to him. What a joy is this! It is bliss to think that I, who, in my unregenerate state, grieved the Holy Spirit, and vexed him day by day, am now the object of pleasure to him. I, whose actions were contrary to the law of God, and the bent of whose mind was against the gospel of Christ, I, even I, who was once obnoxious to Divine anger, an heir of wrath, even as others, have now, through faith, become to God an object of his complacency. This is very wonderful. If the Holy Spirit leads you to feel the full sweetness of this truth, you will rejoice with joy unspeakable. I feel like singing rather than preaching. Oh, guilty one, wilt thou not now believe thy God? This is the way to come back to him. When the prodigal said, "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare," he believed in his father's power to supply all his needs. When he thought in his heart that his father would receive him, then he said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." You must have so much belief in God as to believe him to have the heart of a father towards you, or you will never come back to him; but when you begin to trust your God your face is already towards the heavenly home, and before long your head will be in your Father's bosom. If faith can make the vilest and guiltiest pleasing to God, will they not believe in him? What a transformation this would work in them! Oh, that this morning all of us may stand out in the clear sunlight of Jehovah's good pleasure, and know ourselves to be well-pleasing to him through Jesus Christ!

Learn, next, that *those who have faith make it the great object of their life to please God*. Am I speaking the truth? Will each one ask whether it is true about himself? Do I, as a believer, live to please God? We

need personal heart-searching on this point. The believer in the invisible God delights to act as in his sight, and in secret to serve him. I take a choice pleasure in rendering to my God a service unknown to others, not done for the sake of my fellows, but distinctly that I may do something for my Lord's own self. It is sweet to give or do simply to please *him*, without respect to the public eye. Even such actions as must come under the gaze of others are not to be done with the view of winning their approbation, but only to please God. The doing of such actions is a singular fountain of strength to a man's mind. It is ennobling to feel that you have only one Master, and that you live to please *him*, even God. To please men is poor work. To live to follow everybody's whim is slavery. If you let one man pull you by the ear in his direction, another will tug at you from another direction, and you will have very long ears before long. Happy is he who, pleasing God, feels that he has risen above seeking to please men. It is grand to say, "This is what God would have me do, and I will do it in happy fellowship with others, or alone by myself, as the case may be; but do it I must." This gives a man backbone, and at the same time removes the selfishness which is greedy of popular applause. It is a grand thing to be no longer looking down for cheer, but to be distinctly looking up for it. The man who truly believes in God makes small account of men. Put them together, they are vanity; heap them up in their thousands, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Nations upon nations, what are they but as grasshoppers! The lands in which they live, what are they before God! "He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." To please God even a little is infinitely greater than to have the acclamations of all our race throughout the centuries. The true believer feels that God is, and that there is none beside him; none that needs to be thought of in comparison with him. The theology of the present aims at the deification of man, but the truth of all time magnifies God. We shall stand by the old paths, wherein we hear a voice which bids us worship Jehovah, our God, and serve him alone. He shall be all in all. Only as we see men loved of him can we live for men; we seek their good in God, and for his glory, and regard them as capable of being made mirrors to reflect the glory of the Lord.

Note, next, the apostle teaches us here that *they that have faith in God are always coming to God*; for he speaks of the believer as "He that cometh to God." If you once learn to believe God, and to please him, you are coming to him day by day. You not only come to him, and go away from him, as in acts of prayer and praise; but you are always coming; your life is a march towards him. The way of the believer is toward God; by his faith he comes ever nearer and yet nearer to the eternal throne. What is his reward? Why, he that sitteth on the throne will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Come! Come on! You have been coming, keep on coming for ever. There is a gentle, constant, perpetual progress of the believer's heart and mind nearer and closer to God. I could not wonder at Enoch being translated after walking with God hundreds of years; for it is such a small step from close communion with God on earth

to perfect communion with God in heaven. A thin partition divides us which a sigh will remove. The breaking of a blood-vessel, the snapping of a cord, the staying of the breath, and he that had God with him shall be with God. Sometimes he could not tell whether he was in the body or out of the body, but had to leave that question with God; he will soon be able to answer the question for himself, and know that he is absent from the body, and present with the Lord. O beloved, please God, please God; and as you please him by your simple confidence and childlike trust, you are coming nearer to him.

The next lesson is one I have already spoken of: *God will see that those who practise faith in him shall have a reward.* I say, God will see to it, for the text says, "*He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" The Lord will not leave the reward of faith to the choicest angel: he himself will adjudge the recompence. Here we may get but scant reward from those whom we benefit: indeed, they usually return us base ingratitude. Joseph was a faithful servant to Potiphar; but Potiphar put him in prison on a groundless charge. Joseph helped the butler, and interpreted his dream, yet he remembered not Joseph, but forgot him. You may not reckon upon due returns from your fellow-men, or you will be disappointed. Like David, you may guard Nabal's sheep, and when the sheep-shearing comes you may hope to be remembered, and he will insult you with a churlish answer. Expect little from men and much from God, for by nature and by office he is a rewarder. No work done for him will go unrewarded. In his service the wages are sure. Rise into the Abrahamic life which stays itself upon the Lord's word, "Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." It is enough reward to have such a God to be our God. What if he gives us neither vineyards nor olive gardens, neither sheep nor oxen; he himself is ours, and this is a greater reward than if he gave us all the world. God himself is enough for the believer. If his faith be true and deep, and intelligent, he cries, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

The last lesson we gather from it is this: *those who have no faith are in a fearful case.* I speak not of the heathen, but of unbelievers who reject the gospel. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Some of you are always fashioning fresh nets of doubt for your own entanglement. You invent snares for your own feet, and are greedy to lay more and more of them. You are mariners who seek the rocks, soldiers who court the point of the bayonet. It is an unprofitable business. Practically, morally, mentally, spiritually, doubting is an evil trade. You are like a smith, wearing out his arm in making chains with which to bind himself. Doubt is sterile, a desert without water. Doubt discovers difficulties which it never solves: it creates hesitancy, despondency, despair. Its progress is the decay of comfort, the death of peace. "Believe!" is the word which speaks life into a man; but doubt nails down his coffin. If thou canst believe, O guilty one, that Jesus Christ bore the guilt of sin upon the cross, and by his death has made atonement to the insulted government of God; if thou canst so believe in him as to cast thyself just as thou art at his dear feet, thou shalt be pleasing to God. I entreat thee

to look up and see the pierced hands, and feet, and side of the dear Redeemer, and read eternal mercy there; read full forgiveness there, and then go thou away in peace, for thou art well-pleasing to God. The sinner who believes God's testimony concerning his Son has begun to please him, and is himself well-pleasing to the Lord. Oh that you would now trust him who justifieth the ungodly and passeth by the iniquities of sinful men! He will receive you graciously and love you freely. Oh, come to him, for he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. God help you to do so at once. But without faith you cannot please him. Do what you may, feel what you like, you will labour as in the very fire, and nothing will come of it but eternal despair. The Lord help you to believe and live. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews xi. 1—29.

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