

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD.

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## A Sermon

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“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”—1 John ii. 28.

OUR first anxious desire is that our hearers would come to Christ. We lay ourselves out to lift him up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and to bid men look to him and live. There is no salvation except by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

When men have looked to Jesus, our next anxiety is that they may be in Christ, the City of Refuge. We long to speak of them as “men in Christ Jesus.” My beloved hearers, you must be in living, loving, lasting union with the Son of God, or else you are not in a state of salvation. That which begins with coming to Christ, as the engrafted branch is bound to the vine, continues in your growing into him and receiving of his life. You must be in Christ as the stone is in the building, as the member is in the body.

When we have good hope that our hearers have come to Christ, and are “in Christ,” a further anxiety springs up in our hearts that they may “abide” in Christ. Our longing is that, despite temptations to go away from him, they may always remain at his feet; that, notwithstanding the evil of their nature, they may never betray their Master, but may faithfully hold to him. We would have them mindful of that precept—“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” Oh, that they may be rooted in him, and built up in him, and may always be in union with him! Then shall we present them to our Lord in the day of his appearing with exceeding great joy.

To this third anxiety of the minister of Christ I would give my mind this morning. John says, “Little children, abide in him.” How sweetly those words must have flowed from the lips and the pen of such a venerable saint! Methinks he is in this the echo of the Lord Jesus; for in the fifteenth chapter of the gospel of John, the Lord Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except

ye abide in me. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." That word, "abide," was a very favourite one with the Lord Jesus, and it became equally dear to that disciple whom Jesus loved. In our Authorized Version, the translators have interpreted it sometimes "remain," and sometimes "continue"; but it is not very wise of them to have so changed the rendering. It is one of the virtues of the Revised Version that it generally translates the same Greek word by the same English word. This may not be absolutely requisite, for a little variety may be tolerated; but it is eminently instructive, since it allows us to see in our own mother tongue where the Holy Spirit used the same word; and if the translation be correct in one case, we may naturally conclude it will not be incorrect in another. "Abide" is one of John's special words.

May the Lord help us to consider these blessed words! Better still, may he write them on our hearts, and may we fulfil their teaching!

First, notice *to what he urges them*—"abide in him"; secondly, *under what character he addresses them*—"little children"; and thirdly, *by what motive he exhorts them*—"that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

I. First, then, observe *TO WHAT HE URGES THEM*: "Abide in him." By this he meant one thing; but that thing is so comprehensive that we may better understand it by viewing it from many sides.

He meant *fidelity to the truth taught by our Lord*. We are sure he meant this, because, a little previously, in the twenty-fourth verse, he had said, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." Beloved, you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ unto the salvation of your souls. You have trusted in him as the Son of God, the appointed Mediator, and the effectual sacrifice for your sin. Your hope has come from a belief in Christ as God has borne witness to him. Abide in the truth which you received from the beginning; for in your earliest days it wrought salvation in you. The foundation of your faith is not a changeable doctrine: you rest on a sure word of testimony. Truth is, in its very nature, fixed and unalterable. You know more about it than you did; but the thing itself is still the same, and must be the same. Take care that you abide in it. You will find it difficult to do so, for there is an element of changeableness about yourself: this you must overcome by grace. You will find many elements of seduction in the outside world. There are men whose business it is to shake the faith of others, and thereby to gain a repute for cleverness and depth of thought. Some seem to think it an ambition worthy of a Christian to be always questioning, or, as the apostle puts it, to be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." To throw doubt into minds which, by a gracious certainty, have been made blessed, is their chosen life-work. Therefore, you will be often led to try your foundation, and at times you will tremble as you cling to it. Hearken, then, to this word from the mouth of your Lord: "Abide in him." Keep you where you were as to the truth which you believe. That which has justified you, will sanctify you. That which has, in a measure, sanctified you,

will yet perfect you. Make no change as to the eternal verities upon which you ground your hope. As a stone, you are built on the foundation; abide there. As a branch, you have been grafted into the stem; abide there. As a member, you are in the body; abide there; it is all over with you if you do not. Abide in that holy mould of doctrine into which you were at first delivered. Let no man deceive you with vain words, though there are many abroad in these days who "would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect." Abide in Jesus, by letting his words abide in you. Believe what you have found to be the means of your quickening. Believe it with a greater intensity and a greater practicalness; but "cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

Next, he means "abide in him" *as to the uniformity of your trust.* When you first enjoyed a hope, you rested upon Christ alone. I think I heard the first infant prattle of your faith when it said,

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

At the first, you had no experience upon which you could rely, you had no inward graces upon which you could depend: you rested wholly upon Christ and his finished work. You rested in no degree upon the works of the law, nor upon your own feelings, nor upon your own knowledge, nor upon your own resolves. Christ was all. Do you not remember how you used to tell others that the gospel precept was "Only believe?" You cried to them, "Trust in Jesus; get out of yourselves; find all your wants provided for in him." Now, beloved, you have experience; thank God for it. Now you have the graces of the Spirit; thank God for them. Now you know the things of God by the teaching of the Holy Spirit; be grateful for that knowledge. But do not now fly in the face of your Saviour by putting your experience, or your graces, or your knowledge, where he and he alone must be. Depend to-day as simply as you depended then. If you have some idea that you are hastening towards perfection, take care that you do not indulge a vain conceit of yourself; but even if it be true, still mix not your perfection with his perfection, nor your advance in grace with the foundation which he has laid for you in his blood and righteousness. "Abide in him." He is that good ship into which you have entered that he may bear you safe to the desired haven. Abide in the vessel: neither venture to walk on the water, like Peter, nor think to swim by your own strength; but "abide in him," and you shall weather every storm. Only as you keep to your first simple confidence in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus can you have peace and salvation; as it is written, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Moreover, abide in the Lord Jesus Christ in *making him the constant object of your life.* As you live *by* Christ, so live *for* Christ. Ever since you trusted in Christ as dying for you, you have felt that if he died for you, then you died in him, that henceforth your life might be consecrated to him. You are not your own, but you are Christ's, and Christ's only. The first object of your being is to honour and serve

him who loved you and gave himself for you. You have not followed after wealth, or honour, or self-pleasing, but you have followed Jesus: take heed that you "abide in him" by continuing to serve him. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." You may wisely continue where you are, for you have chosen the right pursuit, and you have entered upon the right road. That crown which glitters in your eye at the end of the race is worthy of all your running. You could not have a nobler motive power than the constraining love of Christ. To live for Christ is the highest style of living: continue in it more and more. If the Lord changes your circumstances, still live for Christ. If you go up, take Christ up with you: if you go down, Christ will go down with you. If you are in health, live for Christ earnestly; if you are bound to a sick bed, live for Christ patiently. Go about your business, and sing for Jesus; or if he bids you stay at home, and cough away your life, then sicken for Jesus; but let everything be for him. For you, "Excelsior" means higher consecration, more heavenly living.

Surely, we should also understand by "Abide in him," that we are to *persevere in our obedience to our Lord*. The next verse is, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him." What your Lord bids you, continue to do. Call no man Master, but in all things submit your thoughts, your words, and your acts to the rule of the Lord Jesus. Obey him by whose obedience you are justified. Be precise and prompt in your execution of his commands. If others reckon you morbidly conscientious, heed not their opinion, but "Abide in him." The rule of the Master is always binding on all his disciples, and they depart from him in heart when they err from his rule. Reverence for the precept is as much included in our homage of Christ as credence of the doctrine. If you have been upright in your dealings, be upright; be accurate to the penny in every payment. If you have been loving and generous, continue loving and generous; for your Lord's law is love. If you have closely imitated the Lord Jesus, go on to copy him still more minutely. Seek no new model; pray the Holy Spirit to work you to the selfsame thing. To you, as a soldier, your Captain's word is law:

"Yours not to reason why,  
Yours but to dare and die."

"Abide in him." I know you might be rich by doing that un-Christly act: scorn to win wealth in such a way. I know you may involve yourself in persecution if you follow your Lord closely. Accept such persecution gladly, and rejoice in it, for his name's sake. I know that a great many would say that for charity's sake you had better make compromises, and keep in union with evil doctrine and worldly practice; but you know better. Be it yours to follow the Lamb whithersoever

he goeth; for this is what his beloved apostle means when he says, "Abide in him."

But I have not completed the full description yet; I fear I am not able to do so, by reason of my shallow knowledge and forgetfulness. *Continue in spiritual union with your Lord.* All the life you have is life derived from him; seek no other. You are not a Christian except as Jesus is the Christ of God to you; you are not alive unto God, except as you are one with the risen Lord. You are not saved, except as he is your Saviour; nor righteous, save as he is your Righteousness. You have not a single pulse of heavenly desire, nor a breath of divine life in you, but what was first given you from him, and is daily given to you by him. Abide in this vital union. Do not try to lead an independent life. "Abide in him," in complete dependence from day to day upon the life which is treasured up in him on your behalf.

Let your life "abide in him" in the sense of being directed by him. The head directs all the members. The order which lifts my hand, or spreads my palm, or closes my fist, or lowers my arm, comes from the brain, which is the head-quarters of the soul. Abide in your Lord by implicitly owning his headship. Let every regulation of your life come from him who is the head, and let it be obeyed as naturally as the desires of the mind coming from the brain are obeyed by every part of the body. There is no war between the hand and the foot, for they abide in the head, and so are ruled without force, and guided without violence. If the leg were to set up an independent authority over itself, instead of obeying the head, what strange walking we should see! Have you never met with afflicted people in whom the nerves have lost vigour, and the muscles seem to jerk at random, and throw out a leg or an arm without reason? Such movements are painful to see, and we know that such a man is diseased. Do not desire to be without law to Christ. Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: in that respect "abide in him."

"Abide in him" as the element of your life. Let him encompass you as the air surrounds you on all sides. As a fish, whether it be the tiniest sprat or the hugest whale, abides in the sea, so do you abide in Christ. The fish does not seek the sky or the shore, it could not live out of the element of water; and even so, I beseech you, do not seek to live in the world and in its sins; for as a Christian you cannot live there: Christ is your life. There is room enough for you in the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is the infinite God. Go not out of him for anything. Seek not pleasure outside of Christ, nor treasure outside of Christ; for such pleasure or treasure would be ruinous. Have neither want, nor will, nor wish, beyond your Lord. Let him draw a line around you, and do you abide within that circle.

"Abide in him" in the sense of *being at home in him*. What a world of meaning I intend by that word "being at home in Christ"! and yet this is the sense of the word, "Abide in him." I was speaking yesterday to a friend who had bought a pleasant house, with a large garden; and he said to me, "I now feel as if I had a home. I have lived in London for years, and I have changed from one house to

another with as little regret as a man feels in changing an omnibus; but I have always longed for the home feeling which hung about my father's house in the country. Why, there we loved the cosy rooms, and the look-outs from the little windows, and the corner cupboards in the kitchen. As for the garden and the field, they yielded us constant delight, for there was that bush in the garden where the robin had built, and the tree with the blackbird's nest. We knew where the pike lay in the pool, and where the tortoise had buried itself for the winter, and where the first primroses would be found in the spring. There is a vast difference between a house and a home." That is what John means with regard to Christ: we are not merely to call on him, but to abide in him. Do not go to Jesus one day and to the world another day: do not be a lodger with him, but abide in him. My friend spoke of changing from one omnibus to another, and I fear that some change from Christ to the world when the day changes from Sunday to Monday; but it should not be so. Say with Moses, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Thy cross is the roof-tree of the family of love; within the thorn-hedge of thy suffering love our whole estate is shut in; thy name is named on our abiding-place. We are not to thee as tenants with a lease, but we have a freehold in thee. We can truly say and sing—

"Here would I make a settled rest  
While others go and come:  
No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home."

Lord Jesus, I am at home nowhere but in thee; but in thee I abide. Wherever else I lodge, I have in due time to shift my quarters. Whatever else I have, I lose it, or leave it; but thou art the same, and thou changest not. What a comfort to have our Lord himself to be our chosen dwelling place in time and in eternity!

Now I think I have come nearer to the full sense of my text. "Abide in him" means, hold fast to him, live in him, let all your noblest powers be drawn forth in connection with him, as a man at home is all there. Feel at ease in fellowship with him. Say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

Why does the apostle urge us to abide in Christ? Is there any likelihood of our going away? Yes; for in this very chapter he mentions apostates, who from disciples had degenerated into anti-christs, of whom he says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would, no doubt, have continued with us." "Abide in him," then, and do not turn aside unto crooked ways, as many professors have done. The Saviour once said to his apostles, "Will ye also go away?" and they answered him with that other question, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" I hope your heart is so conscious that he has the words of eternal life that you could not dream of going elsewhere.

"But surely it is implied in these warnings that saints do leave their Lord and perish?" I answer, "No." Carefully observe the provision which is made against that fatality—provision to enable us to carry out the precept of the text. Will you open your Testaments,

and just look at the verse which immediately precedes my text. What do you see? "Ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him." There is a promise made to those who are in Christ that they shall "abide in him"; but that promise does not render the precept unnecessary; for the Lord dealeth with us as with reasonable beings, not as with stocks and stones; and he secures the fulfilment of his own promise that we shall abide in him, by impressing upon our hearts his sacred precept, whereby he bids us "abide in him." The force he uses to effect his purpose is instruction, heart-winning, and persuading. We abide in him, not by a physical law, as a mass of iron abides on the earth; but by a mental and spiritual law, by which the greatness of divine love and goodness holds us fast to the Lord Jesus. You have the guarantee that you shall abide in Christ in the covenant engagement, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." What a blessed promise that is! You are to take care that you abide in Christ as much as if all depended upon yourself; and yet you can look to the promise of the covenant, and see that the real reason for your abiding in Christ lies in the operation of his unchanging love and grace.

Moreover, brethren, if you are in Christ Jesus, you have the Holy Ghost given you to enable you to abide in him. Read the twenty-seventh verse: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

The Holy Ghost brings the truth home to your heart with savour and unction, endearing it to your inmost soul. The truth has so saturated you through the anointing, that you cannot give it up. Has not your Lord said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life"? Thus, you see that what is commanded in one Scripture is promised and provided for in another. To his people, God's commandings are enablings. As he bids you abide in him, so by that very bidding he causes you to abide in him to his praise and glory.

II. Secondly, notice UNDER WHAT CHARACTER JOHN ADDRESSES THESE BELIEVERS. He says, "And now, *little children*." This indicates *the apostle's love to them*. John lived to a great age; and the tradition is, that they used to carry him into the assembly, and, when he could do nothing else, he would lift his hand, and simply say, "Little children, love one another." Here, to show his tender concern for those to whom he wrote, he called them "Little children." He could not wish them a greater blessing out of the depth of his heart's affection, than that they should faithfully abide in Christ.

Next, by this he suggests *their near and dear relation* to their Father in heaven. You are the children of God; but as yet you are little ones, therefore do not leave your Father's house, nor run away from your elder brother's love. Because you are little children, you are not of travelling years, therefore stay at home and abide in your Lord.

Does he not hint at *their feebleness*? Even if you were grown and strong, you would not be wise to gather all together and wander away

into the far country ; but as you are so young, so dependent, so feeble, it is essential that you abide in him. Shall a babe forsake its mother? What can you do apart from God? Is he not your life, your all?

Does not the apostle also gently hint at *their fickleness*? You are very changeable, like little babes. You are apt to be hot and cold in half an hour. You are this and that, and fifty other things, in the course of one revolving moon. But, little children as you are, be faithful to one point—abide in your Saviour. Change not towards your Redeemer. Stretch out your hands and clasp him and cry,

“ My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine,  
For thee all the follies of sin I resign.”

Surrender yourself to him by an everlasting covenant never to be cancelled. Be his for ever and ever.

Did not this remind them of *their daily dependence* upon the Lord's care, as little children depend on their parents? Why, beloved, the Lord has to nurse you. He feeds you with the unadulterated milk of the Word ; he comforts you as a mother doth her child ; he carries you in his bosom, he bears you all your days. Your new life is as yet weak and struggling ; do not carry it into the cold atmosphere of distance from Jesus. Little children, since you derive all from Jesus, abide in him. To go elsewhere will be to wander into a howling wilderness. The world is empty ; only Christ has fulness. Away from Jesus you will be as a child deserted by its mother, left to pine, and starve, and die ; or as a little lamb on the hillside without a shepherd, tracked by the wolf, whose teeth will soon extract its heart's blood. Abide, O child, with thy mother ! Abide, O lamb, with thy shepherd !

We may all come under John's description at this time. The beloved John speaketh unto us as unto little children, for we are none of us much more. We are not such wonderfully knowing people as certain of our neighbours ; we are not such learned scientists and acute critics as they are ; neither have we their marvellous moral consciousness, which is superior to inspiration itself ; therefore we are bound by our very feebleness to venture less than they do. Let the men of the world choose what paths they will, we feel bound to abide in Christ because we know no other place of safety. They may push off into the sea of speculation ; our smaller boats must hug the shore of certainty. To us, however, it is no small comfort that the Lord has revealed to babes the things which are hidden from the wise and prudent. Those who become as little children enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Cling to the Lord Jesus in your feebleness, in your fickleness, in your nothingness ; and abidingly take him to be everything to you. “ The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks ” ; be you like them. Abide in the rifts of the Rock of Ages, and let nothing tempt you to quit your stronghold. You are no lion, able to fight your foes, and deliver yourself by main strength ; you are only a little cony, and you will be wise to hide rather than fight. “ Little children, abide in him.”

III. I now come to my last point, which is most important, for it

finds steam wherewith to drive the engine. Thirdly, we shall consider BY WHAT MOTIVE JOHN EXHORTS US TO THIS PLEASANT AND NECESSARY DUTY OF ABIDING IN CHRIST.

Kindly look at the text, for there is in it a little word to be noticed. The apostle exhorts us *by a motive in which he takes his share*. Let me read it: "Now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, *you* may have confidence." No, no. Look at that little word: it runs thus, "that *we* may have confidence." The beloved John needed to have confidence at the appearing of the Lord, and confidence fetched from the same source as that to which he directed his little children. They must abide in Christ, that they might have confidence, and the dearest of the apostles must practise the same abiding. How wisely, and yet how sweetly, he puts himself upon our level in this matter!

Notice, further, that the motive is one *drawn from Jesus*. John does not drive believers with the lash of the law, but he draws them with the cords of love. I never like to see God's children whipped with rods gathered from the thorny sides of Sinai. We have not come to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion. When a man tries to pommel me to my duty by the law, I kick at the goad like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; and rightly so, "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." The motive which sways a free-born heir of heaven is fetched from grace, and not from law; from Jesus, and not from Moses. Christ is our example, and our motive also, blessed be his name!

*The motive is drawn from our Lord's expected advent.* Notice how John puts it. He uses two words for the same thing: "When he shall appear," and, "at his coming." The second advent may be viewed in two lights. First, as the appearing of one who is here already, but is hidden; and next, as the coming of one who is absent. In the first sense, we know that our Lord Jesus Christ abides in his church; according to his word, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Yet, though spiritually present, he is unseen. Our Lord will, on a sudden, be "manifested," as the Revised Version has it. The spiritual and secret presence of Christ will become a visible and manifest presence in the day of his appearing.

The apostle also uses the term, "at his coming," or, "his presence." This is the same thing from another point of view. In a certain evident sense our Lord is absent: "He is not here, for he is risen." He has gone his way unto the Father. In that respect he will come a second time, "without a sin-offering, unto salvation." He who has gone from us will so come in like manner as he was seen to go up into heaven. There is thus a difference of aspect between the second advent when it is described as "his appearing" and "his coming." John pleads the glorious manifestation of our Lord under both of these views as a reason for abiding in him.

As to our Lord's "appearing," he would have us abide in Christ, that we may have confidence when he appears. Confidence at his appearing is the high reward of constant abiding in Christ. The apostle keeps most prominent "the appearing" as an argument. A thousand things are to happen at our Lord's appearing; but John does not mention one of them. He does not hold it up as a thing to

be desired that we may have confidence amid the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, when the stars shall fall like autumn leaves, when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; when the graves shall be opened, and the dead shall rise, or when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Those will be direful times, days of terror and dismay; but it is not of these that he speaks particularly; for he regards all these events as swallowed up in the one great fact of the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

His desire is that we may have confidence if he appear on a sudden. What does he mean by having confidence when he shall appear? Why, this: that if you abide in him when you do not see him, you will be very bold should he suddenly reveal himself. Before he appears, you have dwelt in him, and he has dwelt in you; what fear could his appearing cause you? Faith has so realized him, that if suddenly he were to appear to the senses, it would be no surprise to you; and, assuredly, it would cause you joy rather than dismay. You would feel that you at last enjoyed what you had long expected, and saw somewhat more closely a friend with whom you had long been familiar. I trust, beloved, that some of us live in such a style that if, on a sudden, our Lord were to appear, it would cause no alarm to us. We have believed him to be present, though unseen, and it will not affect our conduct when he steps from behind the curtain, and stands in the open light. O Lord Jesus, if thou wert now to stand in our midst, we should remember that we had thy presence before, and lived in it, and now we should only be the more assured of that which we before knew by faith. We shall behold our Lord with confidence, freedom, assurance, and delight, feeling perfectly at home with him. The believer who abides in his Lord would be but little startled by his sudden appearing; he is serving his Lord now, and he would go on serving him; he loves him now, and he would go on loving him, only as he would have a clearer view of him, he would feel a more intense consecration to him.

The word translated "confidence" means freedom of speech. If our divine Lord were to appear in a moment, we should not lose our tongue through fear, but should welcome him with glad acclaim. To desert our Lord would rob us of that ease of mind which is betokened by free speech; but to cleave to him will secure us confidence. We now speak to him in secret, and he speaks again to us; we shall not cease to speak in tones of reverent love when he appears. I have preached concerning my Lord, while he is not seen, those truths which I shall not blush to own before his face. If my Lord and Master were, at this instant, to appear in his glory in this Tabernacle, I dare with confidence hand in to him the volumes of my sermons, in proof that I have not departed from his truth, but have heartily continued in him. I ought to improve in many things, but I could not improve upon the gospel which I have preached among you. I am prepared to live by it, to die by it, or to meet my Lord upon it if he should this day appear. O my hearers, if you are in Christ, see to it that you so abide in him that, should he suddenly appear, you would behold him

with confidence. If we abide in him, if he were to unveil his majestic face, we might be overcome with rapture, but our confidence in him would grow stronger, our freedom with him would be even more enlarged, and our joy in him would be made perfect. Has he not prayed for us that we may be with him, and behold his glory; and can we be afraid of the answer to his loving prayer? If you abide in Christ, the manifestation of Christ will be your manifestation, and that will be a matter of delight, and not of fear.

Beloved, if you do not abide in him, you will have no confidence. If I were to compromise the truth, and then my Lord were to appear, could I meet him with confidence? If, to preserve my reputation, or be thought liberal-minded, I played fast and loose with the gospel, how could I see my Lord's face with confidence? If any of you have failed to serve your Master; if you have preferred gain to godliness, and pleasure to holiness; if he were suddenly to shine forth in his glory, what confidence could you have in meeting him? A good man was asked, one day, "If the Lord were now to appear, how would you feel?" He replied. "My brother, I should not be afraid; but I think I should be ashamed." He meant that he was not afraid of condemnation, but he blushed to think how little he had served his Lord. In this case it was genuine humility. I pray you, get not only beyond being afraid, but may the Lord make you so to abide in him that you would not even be ashamed at his appearing!

The other point is, that you should "not be ashamed before him at his coming." That means, that having regarded him as being absent, you have not so lived that, if he should suddenly be present in person, you would be ashamed of your past life. What must it be to be driven with shame away from his presence into everlasting contempt! The text may have such a meaning. What have you been doing while he has been absent? This is a question for a servant to answer at his Lord's arrival. You are left in his house to take care of it while he is in the far-off country; and if you have been beating his servants, and eating and drinking with the drunken, you will be greatly ashamed when he returns. His coming will be in itself a judgment. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Blessed is that man who, with all his faults, has been so sanctified by grace that he will not be ashamed at his Lord's coming. Who is that man? It is the man who has learned to abide in Christ. What is the way to prepare for Christ's coming? By the study of the prophecies? Yes, if you are sufficiently instructed to be able to understand them. "To be prepared for the Lord's coming," some enthusiasts might say, "had I not better spend a month in retirement, and get out of this wicked world?" You may, if you like; and especially you will do so if you are lazy. But the one Scriptural prescription for preparing for his coming is this, "Abide in him." If you abide in the faith of him, holding his truth, following his example, and making him your dwelling-place, your Lord may come at any hour, and you will welcome him. The cloud, the great white throne, the blast of trumpets, the angelic attendants of the last assize, the trembling of creation, and the rolling up of the universe as a worn-out vesture,

will have no alarms for you; for you will not be ashamed at his coming.

The date of that coming is concealed. When he shall come, no man can tell. Watch for him, and be always ready, that you may not be ashamed at his advent. Should a Christian man go into worldly assemblies and amusements? Would he not be ashamed should his Lord come and find him among the enemies of the cross? I dare not go where I should be ashamed to be found should my Lord come on a sudden. Should a Christian man ever be in a passion? Suppose his Lord should there and then come; would he not be ashamed at his coming? One here says of an offender, "I will never forgive her; she shall never darken my doors again." Would you not be ashamed if the Lord Jesus came, and found you unforgiving? Oh, that we may abide in him, and never be in such a state that his coming would be unwelcome to us! Beloved, so live from day to day in duty and in devotion, that your Lord's coming would be timely. Go about your daily business and abide in him, and then his coming will be a glorious delight to you. I called to see one of our friends, and she was whitening the front steps of the house. She apologized very much, and said that she felt ashamed of being caught in such a position; but I assured her that I should like my Lord to come and find me, just as I found her, doing my daily work with all my heart. We are never in better trim for seeing our Master than when we are faithfully doing his work. There is no need for a pious smartening up; he that abides in Christ always wears garments of glory and beauty; he may go in with his Lord into the wedding whenever the midnight cry is heard. Abide in him, and then none can make you ashamed. Who shall lay anything to your charge?

He will come—behold, he is coming even now. Hear ye not the sounding of his chariot wheels? He may arrive before yon sun goes down. "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." When the world is eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, he will bring destruction upon the ungodly. Be ye so engaged, day by day, that you will not be taken at unawares. What will it be to be caught up together with the saints in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air! What will it be to see him come in the glory of the Father, and all his holy angels with him! What will it be to see him reign upon the earth, with his ancients gloriously! Can ye imagine the millennial splendour, the age of gold, the halcyon days of peace? As for the judgment of the world, know ye not that the saints shall judge angels? They shall appear as assessors with Christ, and the Lord shall bruise Satan under their feet. Glory awaits us, and nothing but glory, if we abide in Christ. Therefore, keep your garments unspotted, your loins girt, your lamps trimmed, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves as men that look for your Lord, that, when he cometh, you may have confidence, and not shame. May the Holy Spirit, without whom this cannot be, be freely given to us this day, that we may abide in the Lord! And you who have never trusted in Christ for salvation, may you come to him, and then "abide in him" from this good hour! To his name be glory! Amen.