

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THREE TEXTS, BUT ONE SUBJECT,—FAITH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 22nd, 1889.

“In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge.”—Psalm lvii. 1.

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee.”—Psalm lv. 22.

“Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.”—Isaiah l. 10.

It is the preacher's business to endeavour to make plain to the people the meaning of the word FAITH. Inasmuch as salvation comes by believing, it is most important that men should know what believing is; and though we have to preach upon many topics, and take the whole range of the Word of God, yet it often behoveth the minister of Christ to dwell especially upon the way whereby men are saved, and to explain what is that step by which they enter into eternal life.

You may think that it is very easy to explain faith, and so it is; but it is easier still to confound people with your explanation. There is nothing simpler in the world than to believe in Christ Jesus; yet probably there is nothing more difficult than to explain to a man what it is to believe in the Lord Jesus; not that the thing itself is difficult, but the explaining of it is not so easy. You remember the story, perhaps, of Mr. Thomas Scott, a very excellent commentator, who brought out an edition of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, to which he has written very excellent, and, I think that I must add, very dull notes. On going round his parish, he called on an aged person, and found her studying the book. “Well, my good woman,” said he, “I see that you are reading Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.” “Yes, sir,” she replied, “I always enjoy that book.” “And, pray, do you understand it?” “Yes, sir, I understand it very well; and I think that, by the grace of God, I shall one day understand your explanation of it,” which was not very complimentary to Mr. Scott. So, I have no doubt that there are many who better understand what faith is without our explanations. It is so easy to darken counsel by words without knowledge, and to give illustrations which themselves need to be illustrated, and definitions which need to be defined. I am afraid of

doing that to-night; I see my difficulty, and I cry to God to help me to put faith very plainly before every sinner here, that you may all know what it is, and may at once exercise it.

I have met with a large number of persons, who have believed in Christ, who were accustomed to hear the gospel preached, and to have faith explained to them; but in almost every case they have told me that they did not know what faith was till they themselves believed, and, although they were told, a hundred times over, that it was simply trusting in Christ, they still did not get a hold of the right idea, they still entertained the thought that there was something to be felt, something to be done, something to be endured, something or other more than the simple casting of themselves upon Christ for eternal salvation. I have also noticed how, when I have tried to use illustrations, the friend to whom I have spoken has not been affected by them, and has not understood my illustrations. Speaking to a young man once, I quoted to him that verse of Dr. Watts which begins,—

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall.”

“But,” said he, “I cannot fall.” “Oh! my dear friend,” I replied, “you do not catch the idea at all, because it is not a thing that a man can do. He falls because he cannot help it; there is no effort in falling, it is cessation from effort.” Still, though I put it, as I thought, so that he ought to understand it, he did not comprehend it then. It was some time after, when the Holy Spirit revealed it to him, that he came to understand what faith was. Perhaps you ask, “Are we such dolts that we do not even understand plain Saxon language when it has to do with spiritual things?” Ah, my hearers, sin has made fools of us! Sin has so befooled us, that even God’s Word itself does not convey God’s meaning to our stupid minds until the Spirit of God comes, and teaches our reason, reason, and takes the film from our eyes, and helps us to see what is, in itself, plain as a pikestaff, but is not plain to us by reason of our sinful and corrupt nature. Before I try, then, to preach about what faith is, may I ask you to pray the Holy Ghost to come, and open men’s eyes, that they may see what faith is? For truly, as we know not what we should pray for as we ought, we know not how to believe as we ought; and we make mistakes on this simplest of all subjects until the Holy Spirit sets us right. Divine Spirit, we believe in thee, but we do not believe in ourselves! We see, in some measure, how stupid, how ignorant we are. Come, we pray thee, and teach us even the first lesson of the doctrines of Christ, teach us to believe in Jesus!

If you want to cut a diamond, you must cut it with a diamond; so, if you want to explain Scripture, you must explain it with Scripture. I thought, therefore, that I would take three expressions from the Old Testament, which may help to set forth what faith really is.

I. The first expression you will find in the fifty-seventh Psalm, and the first verse. It shows that faith is HIDING IN GOD: “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge.”

See then, trusting in God, that is, faith, is the same thing as hiding

under the shadow of God's wings by way of refuge. Let me explain that figure, first, as relating to *birds beneath their mother's wing*. There is a hawk in the sky, the hen sees it, she begins to give her warning "cluck"; the little chickens hardly know what the danger is, but they understand the mother's call, and they see her crouching down on the ground. Have you never seen her close to the earth, with her wings outspread, and calling and calling again till every one of her birdlets comes and hides beneath the mother's wing? They are out of sight of the bird of prey; if that hawk comes down at all, it will have to attack the hen, and kill her before it can reach her chicks. The pecks of its bill, the tearing of its talons, will have to be first upon the mother-bird, for her little ones are all hidden beneath the covert of her wings.

Now, that hiding is an illustration of faith. Here is Christ, the Saviour, and I hide myself under him. The justice of God must smite the sinner, or One who is able and willing to suffer in the sinner's stead. It is imperative, as a first law of the universe, that sin cannot go unpunished. As justice approaches, with drawn sword, I find Christ coming, and interposing between me and the sentence of the law; and if the avenger seeks me, I hide away under Christ, and all the blows must be dealt upon him. You know how he was wounded, rent, torn, that you and I, hiding beneath him, might escape. It sometimes happens, on the sides of the Alps, that a mountain goat or a wild gazelle may be feeding there, and an eagle spies out a kid close by its mother, and the powerful bird thinks to devour that kid, and down it flies; but the little creature crouches as low as it can at its mother's side, and there stands the mother with horns ready to meet the eagle, and to fight against it for the life of her beloved little one. So the little kid is hidden away behind its mother, and she valorously contends for it. In that way we must hide behind the Saviour. We sang just now,—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!"

I put myself behind my Saviour; I say to God, "Deal not with me; deal with my dying Saviour. My God, I interpose between thy wrath and my guilty head the sacrifice which he presented on the cross, when he bowed his head, and said, 'It is finished.'"

The act of the chickens hiding away beneath the hen's wings is a very good description of the act of faith.

It may be further illustrated by *travellers hiding beneath a rock*. Journeying through hot countries, they find towards noon that the air is very sultry, and that the sandy soil beneath them reflects the heat of the sun; they seem to be travelling in a hot bath, and they feel faint and weary. But yonder there is a great rock cropping out of the soil, and under its shadow the heat is not felt. I have often been struck with the singular coolness that there is just by the side of a great rock. I have myself sometimes stood out in the sunshine in the South of France, and it has been so hot that I have felt ready to faint, and I have just stepped back within the shadow of a rock, and found it almost as chilly as a vault. Refreshing indeed has it been to get into the

cooler atmosphere. Well, now, Christ is the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land ; and if you and I come to him, and let his shadow come between us and the burning heat of the sun of divine justice, the heat will fall on the rock, not on us. We shall be safe and refreshed, and the Rock will screen us from all evil. Come and put Christ between you and God. He is the Interposer between God and man ; and that is true faith which gets to the side of the Rock Christ, and hides away beneath his sheltering shade.

Take another Biblical metaphor, that of *the manslayer hiding in the city of refuge*. That was a part of the law, you remember. If one had killed a man inadvertently, and not of malice, the next of kin of the man killed would seek revenge ; and he followed up the manslayer, and the poor man's only hope of life was to hurry away as quickly as ever he could to a refuge city belonging to the priests. If he could once pass through the gate of a city of refuge, he was sure of a fair trial, and could not be put to death by the avenger of blood. Oh, how he hurried ! How his feet seemed to fly over the soil, especially if he saw the avenger at some little distance following him with hot foot ! But once let the city gate be shut, within the sacred streets he breathed freely, he was safe. Come, guilty souls, and fly away to Christ, as the manslayer fled away to the city of refuge ; and once safe in him, with Jesus as the great gate between you and the avenger of blood, you are perfectly safe. Do you comprehend and catch the thought ? It is hiding away in Christ from the pursuit of vengeance, from the righteous wrath of God, that brings safety.

Another illustration comes in here, it is that of *the conies hiding in the rocks* : "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." A coney was not exactly like a rabbit ; a rabbit hardly dwells among rocks, but this creature was always found in holes and crannies of the rocks. Poor little coney, a dog is after it, and the sportsman seeks to destroy it ; but there is an opening in the rock, and he slips in there, and is perfectly safe. The dog barks, and the coney's little heart beats fast ; but barking will not kill conies. The sportsman looks up and down, but he cannot see the coney ; he can see the rock, but he cannot see the coney within the rock. The coney has hidden right away from the keenest sight of the man who would destroy him. Now, just hide in that way in Christ, who died for guilty men. Trust him ; believe him ; believe that he will save you. Hide yourself in the Rock of Ages, and then, though you may feel some fears, you will have no need of any. Once safe in Christ, all is well with you. You know that, when a ship has been driven by a storm, and the winds are out, the mariners hasten to the harbour. When they get into port, down goes the anchor. The rattle of the chains is one of the pleasantest sounds ever heard when one is sea-sick, and worn out with a tempest-tossed voyage. Down goes the anchor ; well, but after that the motion of the ship still keeps on, she rocks to and fro ; yes, but the anchor is down, the fear is all over ; no matter how the vessel rocks, the winds cannot drive her out of the harbour ; she is safe in port, and the anchor is down, all is well with her. Oh, if to-night you can let the anchor go right down into the deeps, and trust Christ, get a grip of Christ, and hold on to Christ, you may have some

fears, and there may be some tossings for you yet to endure, but all is well! As the ship hides itself in the harbour, so do you hide away in Christ, saying with David, "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge." This is faith.

I cannot preach as I would. I have been learning to preach for ever so many years, but I cannot do it as I want to; but I wish that, instead of my preaching to you, you would practise what I bid you, and hide away under the shadow of Christ's wings.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesu's wounds;
This is the welcome gospel-day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

I remember when I first hid away in that Rock. I have been tempted many times to come out; but I never will. I cannot fight the hawk, I cannot kill the eagle, but I can squeeze myself further back into my Rock, and hide away there; and even—

"When my eye-strings break in death,
When I soar through tracks unknown,"

and see Christ on his judgment-throne, I hope still to shelter in the Rock of Ages. Do the same, dear sister. Do the same, dear brother. May the Holy Ghost lead you to do it now! Remember that you have to believe for yourself; the Holy Ghost will not believe for you, he cannot believe for you. How can he? He has nothing to believe. It is you who have to believe; and though he worketh in you to will and to do, he works, but you believe. It is only personal faith that saves; it could not be the faith of the Holy Ghost, it must be the sinner's own faith though it is wrought in him by the Spirit of God. Therefore, believe thou, and live thou unto God.

II. Having dwelt on that illustration long enough, I ask you now to notice another expression in Psalm fifty-five, verse twenty-two: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." This passage sets forth faith as ROLLING OUR BURDEN UPON GOD.

I believe that this text might be rendered, "Roll thy burden upon the Lord." The similar passage in Psalm thirty-seven, verse five, "Commit thy way unto the Lord," is in the margin, "Roll thy way upon the Lord."

Faith, then, is *the leaving of our burdens with God*. When a man believes in Christ, he shifts his burden from his own shoulders on to the shoulders of Christ.

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

There you are, stooping down beneath a crushing load, heavy as that which Atlas was supposed to bear when the whole world was on his back, and Christ comes in, and says, "Roll thy burden from off thy shoulders on to mine; let me bear it for you."

Well, then, if the burden be laid upon Christ, then *we have not to*

bear it ourselves. Notice that. Some will say, "We trust Christ, but yet we are not at ease." How is that? If you have trusted Christ, you have rolled your burden upon him; it is no longer upon you. I do not know whether there are still, near Ludgate Hill, as there used to be, certain rests for burden-bearers. You might have seen the porter come toiling up to that spot, and as he shifted his burden on to the rest, he was himself relieved of the load. I have often looked at one of those rests at Mentone, and seen the women come along the road, with huge baskets of lemons or oranges on their heads, and as soon as they have reached this kind of table, they have put their burden on it, and sat down, and rested a while. Now, when they put their basket of oranges there, it is not on their head, is it? There is the beauty of rolling your burden upon Christ; when he takes it, it is not on you any longer. A thing cannot be in two places at one time; and when, by faith, I lay my burden down at Jesus' feet, I have not got it. If my sin is laid on him, it does not any longer lie on me. Come, poor soul, here is the act of faith, to take the mighty burden, that will crush thee lower than the lowest hell, and lay it on Christ thy Saviour.

When the burden is on him, and not on us, *the burden is not ours to take up again.* I have heard that some of our rests in London were done away with, because porters were known to come and put their loads on them, and sit down a while, and afterwards get up and go home without them. You would hardly believe they could be so forgetful; but people do strange things. However, that is a mistake that I want you to make with regard to Christ, for there is no mistake in it. Lay your sin on him by an act of faith; but do not take it up again. I never can believe, as some do, in God forgiving our sin, and afterwards laying it to our account. I do believe that, in the day when our sin was laid on Christ, it was all laid there, and taken away from his people never to be charged against them again. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." How far is the East from the West? If you could travel, like a ray of light, as far eastward as you pleased, while another went as far westward as he could desire, you might go on for ever and for ever, and yet not meet. The distance, so far as created things can be, is infinite; and so far hath the Lord removed our transgressions from us. If we, by faith, lay our sins upon Christ, God himself forgets them, and casts them behind his back, so that he says that, if they are searched for, they shall not be found any more for ever.

And here is one of the greatest mercies of all, that *the burden is not even on Christ now.* Roll thy burden upon him; and if thou dost, that burden is not on him now. He died on the cross, and they laid him in the sepulchre. Thy sin rolls into his sepulchre, it is buried; Christ has left it as a dead and buried thing, and he has risen from among the dead. He took your debt upon himself; but when he paid that debt, it was not any more due from him, neither was it due from you; therefore, we rightly sing,—

"Now both the Surety and sinner are free."

The atoning sacrifice of Christ is so complete a satisfaction to the Lord, that even the sin that was laid on the Lamb of God is gone for

ever. It has ceased even to be, so that a believer in Christ may indeed rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now then, roll your burden upon the Lord. I really think that, if a number of friends all stood here to-night, groaning under a great load, and I said, "Just roll your burdens off," they would understand me. What a lot of rolling off would be done very soon! That is all that is required with your sin. Jesus is willing to take it; Jesus is willing to obliterate all the black record against you; let it go to him. Tell the devil that you have been answering him long enough, and you are not going to talk to him any longer, for you have an Advocate, in whose hands you are going to leave your case. When a man has an advocate, he does not go and do his legal business himself; he refers everybody to his advocate. "Go and settle with him," says he; and to-night, when the devil says, "You are a sinner," I reply, "I know I am; and so are you." "Ah!" says he, "but you deserve death." "Yes," I answer, "but there is One who stood in my stead; go and settle my account with him. He undertook my business, and he said that he would see me through with it if I would but trust him, and I do trust him; I must refer you to my Advocate, he can settle with you; I cannot." Do that, I pray you. Roll your burden upon the Lord. Trust in him; to roll your burden upon him, is to trust him; I do not know a better figure by which to set faith forth. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit may use it to-night to the unburdening of many poor souls!

III. I said that we would have three of these Old Testament diamonds; the third is found in the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah, and the tenth verse, where faith is likened to STAYING UPON GOD. I read it to you just now, but we will read the verse again: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and" (here is the same thing as trusting in the name of the Lord, the explanation of it) "stay upon his God."

The word "stay" means "lean." If I cannot stand, if I feel giddy, I naturally put out my hand; and if I feel faint, I lean upon some support; and the more faint I am, the more I lean. At this moment, I lean my whole weight upon this platform rail, just so. If this rail gives way, I must go down. I am leaning, staying myself wholly here. Now that is what you have to do with Christ, lean on him; with all your weight of sin and sorrow, lean on Jesus Christ, and lean hard. Do not try to hold yourself up now; throw yourself right on him, lean on him, rest on him, let him bear the whole of your weight. Stay yourself upon him.

In order to do that, you must believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to bear you up. Do you not believe it? He is God as well as Man; he has offered an all-sufficient atonement to God; he is well-pleasing to the Father; he is the Lord strong and mighty, a Saviour, and a great One. Lean on him, and lean hard. Did anyone say, "I am afraid to trust Christ, lest he may not be able to bear me up"? Oh, dear friend, do not talk so! It does seem so absurd. I remember a good old lady, who would never go over the Saltash bridge at Plymouth. She looked up at it, and said that she did not believe

that it would ever bear her weight. There were great luggage trains that went rolling over it, but still she always said that it would not bear her. You smile, do you? Now, just think that you are that old woman; you are doing a more foolish thing than she did, if you cannot trust Christ with your weight, Christ who is omnipotent to save. How foolish you must be! He is able to save you. He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him; therefore stay yourself upon him.

Then, *lean all your weight on him*; if you do that, you no longer have to support yourself. The sinner says, "I do not think that I could ever get to heaven." Lean upon Christ to get you there. "Oh, but if I were to leave my sins, I am afraid that I should go back to them!" Lean upon Christ to keep you from going back. "Oh, but if I lived here many years, I should be tempted, and I might fall!" Lean upon Christ to preserve you from falling. "Ah, but you do not know what a temper I have!" Lean upon Christ to conquer your temper. "But, sir, I have gone back so many times." Lean upon Christ to keep you from going back any more; stay yourself upon him. I cannot possibly mention all your weaknesses, and all your doubts, and all your fears; but whatever they are, lean upon Christ, lean hard on him, like one of our female missionaries, when sustained by one of her converts in the hour of death. The convert said, "Lean on me, missionary; lean on me, sister;" and as she thought that the missionary had a delicacy in resting all her weight, she said, "If you love me, lean hard; for the harder you lean, the more I shall feel that you love me." And Christ says to you, "Sinner, if you love me, lean hard." Lean hard on him, and he will bear you up. You do not need strength for leaning on Christ.

" True belief and true repentance,"

perseverance, and every grace that you want to make you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, Christ will give it all to you. Depend upon him for it all. You will never have ease of mind, you will never know what full salvation means, till you just give yourself up, as though you were dead, that he might be your life. Resign yourself to Christ, as a wandering sheep has to do to the shepherd, when he takes it by the legs, and throws it on his shoulders, and carries it home rejoicing. Christ can save; he will save; therefore, stay yourself upon him.

If you do, *you shall have perfect peace*. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." I should like to begin preaching again with that for my text, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." If you have not perfect peace, it is because you are not staying yourself on God as you ought to do. There is no other way of coming to a perfect rest but by a perfect leaning upon Christ. Will you do that to-night? If a man were to get one foot on a rock, he might stand very well. Suppose that he puts the other foot on the sand, the sea comes up, the sand is treacherous, and his foot begins to sink. I should recommend him to get wholly on that bit of rock, and to stand there. Do so, then; stay yourself wholly upon Christ. Have

no confidence in yourself, in baptism, in sacraments, in prayers, in good works, in anything but the finished work of Christ; and when you get there, you are on a foundation that never can be moved.

I would like to say, as I finish, that I have now served the Lord Jesus Christ for about forty years, and I have preached his gospel, I can say, with all my heart, neither have I cared for anything but to win souls to my Lord Jesus: but when I came to him at first, I had no hope but in his blood and merits, and I have no more hope now, apart from his blood and merits, than I had at the beginning. I stand on the same foundation as I stood upon then. I have heard of a good man, who said, as he was dying, that he was sorting over his life, putting his good works in one bundle, and his bad ones in the other. At last he said to his wife, "It is no use sorting them out, for the good ones are so bad that I think that I will fling them all away, and cling to Christ alone." There was a famous cardinal, in Luther's day, who fought tremendously against the Reformer; but he said, in the course of the discussion, that, seeing that there is much in our good works that is faulty, and no man can be quite sure that he has done enough good works to save him, upon the whole it is better to trust only to the merits of Christ. Well, the best of everything always suits me; and if that is the best, I will let other people have the second best, and just trust in Christ, and trust in Christ alone. Oh, that you would all do so to-night! Have done with yourself, have done with your good works, have done with your bad ones, have done with any reliance upon self whatever; and just come as you are, and trust Christ, who died for the guilty and undeserving. O bankrupt sinner, O sinner without a hope, come thou and just stay thyself upon the immovable foundation of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and thou shalt find eternal life to-night, yea, even to-night! God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH L.

Verse 1. *Thus saith the LORD,*

There is always something weighty coming when you have this preface. If God speaks, we ought to hear with reverence, with attention.

1. *Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?*

God is here addressing his ancient people; they had been given up, as it were, left, forsaken. They compared themselves to a wife who had been divorced by her husband, or to children who had been sold by their father because of his extreme poverty. The Lord says, "Now, tell me, have I really put away my chosen people as a man in a pet puts away his wife? Have I really sold you to profit by you? What benefit is it to me that you are carried away captive, and that you are left without comfort?"

1. *Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.*

It was not God's changeableness, but their own sinfulness, that had

brought upon them all their sufferings. The Jews might have remained a nation in possession of their own land to this day, if they had not turned aside unto idols. It was not that God cast away his people whom he did foreknow; but they cast him off, they sold themselves. Now, if any child of God has fallen into trouble of heart, and has lost his comfort, let him not blame God; his sorrow is caused by his own act and deed. And if any man or woman here should be in deep trouble brought on by sin, let them not set it down to their destiny, let them not call God unkind; but let them take the blame to themselves: "For your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away."

2. *Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer?*

It is Christ who is speaking here by the mouth of the prophet. When he came, there was "no man." He could not find in all the nation any faithful one to help him in his great redemptive work. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He preached repentance and faith throughout the land; but they cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

2. *Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?*

If you are in the worst plight in which you can be, God can still help you. Despair of yourself; but do not despair of him. If you have come to the very bottom of all things, and the last ray of hope is quenched in midnight darkness, God is still the same. Hear what he says to you, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?" Can he not break the bonds of drunkenness? Can he not deliver the unchaste from their vile passions? Can he not pick up from the dunghill the outcast and the offcast? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is the salvation of the greatest sinners impossible for him to accomplish? That can never be, for he is "mighty to save."

2. *Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.*

God divided the Red Sea, he parted the Jordan asunder, and made a way for his people to pass over. He who has done this can do anything. When God takes up the case, impossibility is not in the dictionary. However great your sorrow, however deep your misfortune, or however grievous your sin, if God comes to deal with it, he will make short work of all your troubles, and all your despair.

3, 4. *I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.*

This is Christ speaking again. When he came here, though he found no man able to help him, none to come and join him in the redemption of his people, yet he gave himself up to the tremendous task. He became instructed of the Father. He was taught to speak a word to weary ones. "Never man spake like this Man." There is no gospel like his gospel, no doctrine like his doctrine. He went to God in private "morning by morning." He received his message from his Father, and he came and delivered it to the people. Oh, what a glorious Christ we have!

5. *The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.*

He had his ear bored, as slaves had when they would not go out free, but meant to remain with their master. Christ had a bored ear, an opened ear. He never rebelled against God's will. He was obedient to the Father,

even unto death. If you want to know how obedient he was, hear me read the next verse :—

6. *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*

Now let me go back a little, and read again the third verse: "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." It is the same divine Person, who musters the hosts of heaven till the very skies are blackened with the artillery of God, who here says, "I gave my back to the smiters, bowing down to the brutal Roman scourge, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." You remember the scene that I pictured last Sunday night, the whole band of soldiers mocking Christ, and even spitting upon him.* That was the fulfilment of these words, "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." That same Christ, without whom was not anything made that was made, whose face is the sun of heaven, whose glory is matchless and unsearchable, says, "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Do not say, then, that God has no love to you. Do not say that he has cast you away as a husband divorces his wife. Talk no more as if there were no help for you, no means of your deliverance. Behold how low your Saviour stooped, how gracious he was to suffer so much for guilty men, and be encouraged to trust him. He who gave his back to the smiters says to you, "The chastisement of your peace was upon me, and with my stripes you are healed."

7. *For the Lord GOD will help me;*

This is Christ still speaking. Though God himself, yet as the God-Man, looking to his Father for help in the dread struggle through which he went to save us, he declared, "The Lord God will help me."

7. *Therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.*

And he was not; he went through with all that he had undertaken. He drank our bitter cup till none of the dregs remained. He bore the terrible wrath of God, which else would have rested on us for ever; God helped him, and he bore it all.

8, 9. *He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.*

Will any now come to battle against Christ, and hope to conquer him? Voltaire used to say, "Crush the Wretch!" but where is Voltaire now? And those who agreed with Voltaire, where are they now? But Jesus ever liveth and reigneth, and God is with him. He who shall once come to battle with our glorious Lord shall soon know the power of Christ's weakness, and the omnipotence of his death.

10. *Who is among you—*

Here is a very blessed question. Christ, having passed through all the trouble that could be passed through, and having come out of it triumphant, now looks round on all his followers, on all the children of God, and he says, "Who is among you"—

10. *That feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.*

Do you see the drift of it? Our Saviour trusted, and he was not con-

* See the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,333, "The Whole Band against Christ."

founded. He stayed himself upon God even when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and he came off a conqueror. Trust you in God, and you also will be victorious. Let your strength be drawn from that strong and mighty One who is pledged to help all who trust him, and you shall triumph even as Jesus did.

Do you refuse to trust God? Then listen to this:—

11. *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled.*

If you think to make yourselves happy in sin, go and do it. If you fancy that your own righteousness will save you, go and try it.

11. *This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

Your fire shall not warm you; your sparks shall not enlighten you; you will have to lie down to die, and you shall lie down in sorrow. O my dear hearers, the time will come when every one of us must put off this body, and lie down to die! God grant that we may none of us have to lie down in sorrow; but instead thereof, having trusted in God, may he light our candle for us in the last moment, that we may fall asleep in Jesus, and wake up in his likeness in the everlasting glory!

May God bless to us the reading of his Word! Amen.