

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE DEVIL'S LAST THROW.

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## A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 10TH, 1883, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

*On an evening when the regular hearers left their seats to be occupied by strangers.*

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“And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.”—Luke ix. 42.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ taught the people much by his words, but he taught them even more by his actions. He was always preaching, his whole life was a heavenly discourse on divine truth; and the miracles which he wrought were not only the proofs of his deity, but the illustrations of his teaching. His wonders of mercy were, in fact, acted sermons, truths embodied, pictorial illustrations appealing to the eye, and thus setting forth gospel teaching quite as clearly as vocal speech could have done. When we read of the miracles of our Lord, we should not only accept them as proofs of his Deity, and seals of his commission, but as instructions as to the manner of his gracious working. What he did of old to the bodies of men should be received as a prophecy of what he is to-day prepared to do to the souls of men. I am sure I shall not be straining the meaning of the text, or the intention of the miracle, if, instead of preaching about the youth possessed of the devil, and dwelling only upon that wonderful display of power, I endeavour to show that there are parallel cases at this time in the world of mind. Jesus is able to work in the unseen spirit-world miracles such as were foreshadowed by those which he wrought in the visible natural world.

I suppose that we have never seen Satanic possession, although I am not quite sure about it; for some men exhibit symptoms which are very like it. The present existence of demons within the bodies of men I shall neither assert nor deny; but certainly, in our Saviour's day it was very common for devils to take possession of men and torment them greatly. It would seem that Satan was let loose while Christ was here below that the serpent might come into personal conflict with the appointed seed of the woman, that the two champions might stand foot to foot in solemn duel, and that the Lord Jesus might win a glorious victory over him. Since his defeat by our Lord, and by his apostles, it would seem that Satan's power over human bodies has

been greatly limited ; but we have still among us the same thing in another and worse shape, namely, the power of sin over men's minds. That this is akin to the power of the devil over the body is clear from holy Scripture. "The God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not." "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," says the apostle Paul. Satan works in all ungodly men, as a smith at his forge ; do you wonder that they sometimes curse and swear ? These are only the sparks from the forge below, flying out of the chimney. The evil one is found co-operating with evil natures, finding fire for their tinder, blowing up the flame that is within them, and in every way assisting them, and exciting them to do evil ; so that, albeit men are not possessed of devils in the sense in which they were so in Christ's day, yet the evil one still has power over them and leads them whithersoever he desires. Do we not constantly meet with persons of this kind ? I do. I know passionate men in whom the fiercest of devils appear to rave and rage ; and I could point out others whose love of lying betrays the presence of the father of lies. One blasphemes and uses such filthy language that we are sure his tongue is set on fire of hell, even if the prince of devils is not ruling it. A man says, "Drink is ruining me, body and soul. I know that it is shortening my life. I have had delirium tremens, and I know that I shall have it again if I continue as I am ; but I cannot leave the drink. Sometimes the craving comes over me, and I seem as if I must swallow the intoxicating draught, whether I will or no." Whether this is the devil, or whether it is altogether the man himself, I am not going to argue ; but the drink-devil, whose name is legion, is certainly among us to this day, and we hear persons tell us that they are anxious to escape from its power, and yet they return to it, rushing to intoxication as the swine rushed into the sea when the demons had entered into them.

Need I mention another form of this evil in the shape of unchastity ? How many a man there is—alas, it is true of women too!—struggling against a fierce passion, and yet that passion conquers them ; the unclean desire comes upon them like a hurricane bearing all before it, and they yield to it as the sere leaf yields to the blast. Nay more, they rush into a sin which they themselves condemn, of which already they have tasted the bitter fruit : they could not be more eager for it if it were the purest of all enjoyments. As the moth dashes again into the candle which has burned its wings, so do men hurry into the vice which has filled them with misery. They are possessed and domineered over by the spirit of lust, and return to their crimes as the oxen return to the stream.

I need not go further into details, for one man falls into sin in one way, and another falls after quite a different fashion. All devils are not alike—though they are alike evil. Anger differs from lust, and profligacy laughs at covetousness, yet are they all of one brood, privates in the same dreadful legion. Men practise differing sins, but their sins all manifest the same evil power. Unless Christ has set us free we are all in some shape or other under the dominion of the prince of darkness, the master of the forces of evil.

This poor young man of whom we are to talk to-night was brought into a most horrible condition through the influence of a Satanic spirit.

He was a lunatic : reason had been dethroned. He was an epileptic, so that if left alone he would fall into the fire or into the water. You have yourself seen persons in fits of epilepsy, and you know how dreadful would be their danger if they were taken in a fit in the middle of a street, or by the side of a river. In this youth's case the epilepsy was only the means by which the demon exercised his power, and this made his condition seven-fold worse than if it had been simply a disease. This afflicted one had become deaf and dumb besides, and very violent, so that he was capable of doing a great deal of mischief. In all the Holy Land there was only one who could do anything for him ! There was one name by which he could be cured, and only one. It was the name of Jesus. The Lord Jesus had disciples who had wrought miracles in his name, but they were baffled by this extraordinary case. They tried what they could do, but they were utterly defeated, and gave up the task in despair ; and now there remained only one person beneath the canopy of heaven that could touch this child's case and drive out the devil. Only one person could now answer the poor father's prayers : every other hope was dead. That is just the state in which we are : there is but one name under heaven whereby we must be saved. Many are the pretended salvations, but only one is real.

“ There is a name high over all,  
In hell, and earth, and sky.  
Angels and men before it fall,  
And devils fear and fly.”

That one name is the name of Jesus, the Son of God, to whom all power is given. He is God, and can deliver any man from the dominion of evil, whatever form it may have assumed, and however long established the dominion may be. Cure besides there is none. Nothing else can rescue a man from the thralldom of his sin but the word of Jesus. When the word of power is spoken from his divine mouth all things obey ; but none out of the ten thousand voices of earth can deliver us from evil. We are shut up to heaven's unique remedy : God grant that, being so shut up, we may avail ourselves of it.

This poor lad, although nobody could cure him save Jesus, had a father that loved him, and nobody could tell the sorrow of that father's heart because of his poor son. The father had a sharp struggle to get his son to the disciples, for epileptic persons who are also insane are hard to manage. I cannot tell how many round about assisted to hold him, all pitying the poor creature. Alas, the Lord Jesus Christ was away ! The parent's heart was heavy when he found that the great Healer to whom he looked was for a while absent. But when Jesus came down from the mountain-top the poor demoniac had this one great advantage—that he had friends to aid in bringing him to Christ. I hope that all here who are not saved are privileged with relationship to some friend who seeks their salvation. Perhaps it is a wife who cannot bear that her husband should remain out of Christ, or a husband who pines till his spouse is turned unto the Lord, and in either case it is a great help. How often a mother bears a secret anguish in her breast for her unconverted sons and daughters ! I have known a sister in the family to be the only one who knew the Lord, and she has

pleaded with the Lord day and night, entreating him to bless the whole of her household. Frequently a servant in the house becomes its best helper, or it may be a neighbour who has seen the ungodly conduct of his neighbours never ceases to pray for them. When some few get together to bring a specially hard case before Jesus, it is blessed work: for desperate cases grow hopeful under the influence of prayer. Come, ye saved ones, pray with me now for these unrenewed sinners, that at this moment they may feel the power of our Lord Jesus.

I. So, then, my first point shall be, that **OUR HOPES ARE ALL AWAKENED.** Here is a poor youth, but bad as he is, terribly possessed as he is, he is coming to Christ! Prayer has been offered for him by his father, and Jesus is near. All looks well! We will take the case of a sinner who is in a similar condition: prayer has been offered for him, and that prayer has, in some measure, been heard. We have in this congregation, I trust, some who are coming to Christ, and I am right glad of it. Coming to Christ is not the best possible condition, for the best condition is to have already come to him. For a hungry man to be coming to a dinner is not enough: he must actually reach the table and eat. For a sick man to be coming to an eminent physician is hopeful, but it is not enough; he must get to that physician, take his medicine, and be restored. That is the point. To be coming to Christ is not enough: you must actually come to him, and really receive him; for to such only does he give power to become the sons of God.

This poor child was coming, and so are some here: that is to say, they have begun to hear the gospel with attention. They did not aforetime go anywhere on the Sabbath; nor did they get up very early on a Sunday morning. I can see a man who seldom rose on a Sunday morning, and when he did, he read his newspaper. You might see him any time before one o'clock in his shirt-sleeves. Half this city of London is in that condition every Sunday morning, because they look upon the day as simply their own day, and not the Lord's-day. They have very short memories, and do not "remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy:" they forget all about its being the Lord's-day, and do not reverence it. This is shameful conduct towards God. If a man on the road were to meet with a poor beggar, and give him six out of seven shillings which he had with him, the beggar would be a wicked wretch if he afterwards knocked the man down and stole the other shilling. Yet there are multitudes of people to whom God gives six days out of seven, and nothing will satisfy them but they must have the seventh all to themselves, and rob God of it. The man I refer to is repenting of this wrong, and so you see him coming upon the Sunday morning to hear the gospel. He hears it very attentively; he leans forward to catch every word, and he treasures up what he hears.

We are sure that he is coming to Christ, for when he gets home he reaches down his Bible. He has begun to read the Word of God in an earnest way. He thought at one time that it was about the dullest book in the world. He even dared to turn it into a jest, and all because he never read it; for those who deny the inspiration of Scripture are almost always people who have never read it for themselves. It is a book which carries conviction within itself to

candid minds when they carefully peruse it. Assuredly this man is coming to Christ, for he searches the Scriptures.

I feel sure he is coming to Christ, for he has begun to mend in many respects. He has dropped his frequent attendance at his usual place of worship, namely, the public-house. He keeps more at home, and is therefore sober. Plenty of people in London need no bell to fetch them into the temples of their gods. We see in some of our churches and chapels persons going in twenty minutes or half-an-hour after service begins; but look at the temples of Bacchus at one o'clock, and at six in the evening, and see how punctual are his votaries! The worshippers of liquid fire stand outside till the shrine is opened; they are afraid of being late; they are so thirsty that they long for the time of the deadly libation. Drink seems to be the water of life to them, poor creatures that they are! But now our friend of whom we are so hopeful is not seen waiting at the posts of the doors—the “Blue Posts,” I mean. Thank God, he is looking to another fountain for comfort.

Note also that he has dropped his blasphemy and his unchastity. He is a purer man in mouth and body than he used to be. He is coming to Christ. But, as I said, coming is not enough. The thing is really to reach the Lord Jesus and to be healed by him. I pray you, do not rest short of this.

Still, this is all hopeful, very hopeful. The man is a hearer; he is also a reader of the Scriptures; he has begun to mend a bit; and now he is a thinker, too, and begins to be a little careful about his soul. While he is at his labour, you can see that there is something working in his brain, though once it was filled with vanity and wickedness. He has a weight, too, at his heart, a burden on his mind; he is evidently in earnest; so far as he knows the teaching of Scripture he is deeply affected by it. He has learned that he will not cease to exist when he dies; but that he will continue to be when yonder sun becomes black as a burnt-out coal. He knows that there will be a day of judgment, when throngs upon throngs, yea, all the dead, shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ to give an account of the things which they have done in the body; he thinks this over, and he is alarmed. He chews the cud upon divine truth, and finds time for solitary meditation. That man is coming to Christ, for there is no better evidence of the face being set towards Christ and heaven than a thoughtful state of mind.

And I have heard—of course, I cannot tell, for I was not there to see—I have heard, I say, that the other night he began to pray. If so, I know that he is coming to Christ, for prayer is a sure token. He has not yet cast himself fully at the feet of Jesus, but he cries, “Lord, save me.” He is coming, and I am as glad as the birds on a spring morning. The angels are watching; they are leaning from the battlements of heaven to see whether it will end rightly, and you and I are very hopeful, especially those of us who have been praying for this man; for since we see that there is some change in him, and he begins to think and pray, we look for his salvation, as men look for flowers when April showers are falling. So, you see, our hopes are excited.

II. And now I will read the text again,—“As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.” By this OUR FEARS ARE

AROUSÉD. What a sight it must have been! Here is the poor father bringing his lunatic son, and friends are helping him; they are getting him near the Saviour, and he is just coming to him who can cure him, when, on a sudden, he is taken in a fearful fit, worse than he had ever suffered before. He is cast down, thrown about, dashed to and fro; he wallows on the ground: he seems to be flung up and down as by an unseen hand, we fear that he will be torn to pieces. See! he falls down like a dead man, and there he lies. As the crowd gathers around him, people cry, "He is dead." Does it not seem a dreadful thing that when hope was at its brightest all should be dashed aside?

I have observed this thing scores of times: I might say, I think without exaggeration, hundreds of times. I have seen men, just when they were beginning to hear and beginning to think, taken on a sudden with such violence of sin, and so fearfully carried away by it, that if I had not seen the same thing before I should have despaired of them; but, having often seen it, I know what it means, and I am not so dismayed as a raw observer might be; though I must confess that it half breaks my heart when it happens to some hopeful convert whom I hoped to receive into the church, and to rejoice over. We mourn when we hear that the man who was somewhat impressed has become worse than aforesaid, and has gone back to the very vice from which we had rescued him. The case runs on the same lines as our text—"As he was a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him."

How does the devil do this? Well, we have seen it done in this way:—When the man had almost believed in Christ, but not quite, Satan seemed to multiply his temptations around him, and to bring his whole force to bear upon him. There is a wicked man in the shop, and the devil says to him, "Your mate is beginning to be serious: ridicule him. Tempt him all you can. Treat him to strong drink. Get him away to the theatre, the music-hall, or the brothel." It is wonderful how the ungodly will lay all kinds of traps for one who is escaping from his sins. They are fearfully set on keeping him from Christ. This is a free country, is it not? A wonderfully free country when a Christian man in the workshop has to run the gauntlet for his very life to this day. A man may swear, and drink, and do what he likes that is detestable, and never is there a word of rebuke for him; but the moment he begins to be serious and thoughtful the wicked are down upon him like so many dogs on a rat. The devil finds willing servants, and they worry the poor awakened one; is there any wonder that, as he has not yet found Christ and is not yet saved, he should for the time be carried away by these assaults, and feel as if he could not go further in the right road?

I have known in addition to all this that Satan has stirred up the anxious one's bad passions. Passions that lay asleep have suddenly been aroused. Moreover, the man has become thoughtful, and from that very fact doubts which he never knew before have come upon him. He begins to mend, and now he finds a difficulty in getting his needle through where the rent was made. He finds that tearing is easier work than mending, and that running into sin is a much more easy thing than rising out of the black ditch into which he has fallen. So now, what with those about him tempting him, his bad passions responding to the temptation,

and his doubts overclouding everything, it is not a marvellous thing that the poor creature grows worse before he gets better. The disease which before had been concealed in more hidden and vital parts, seems to be thrown out upon the surface, and the sight is sickening. This, however, is not always a bad sign. Doctors rather prefer it to an inward festering.

So have I seen it when men have been coming to Christ; their boat has been tossed with tempest, and they have been driven far out upon a raging sea.

Yes, and I will tell you what I have seen. I have seen a man almost converted—well-nigh a believer in Christ, on a sudden become more obstinate in his opposition to the gospel than ever he was before. A man that was quiet and harmless and inoffensive before has, under the influence of Satan, just when we hoped the best things of him, turned round in a rage against the people who sought to do him good, and he has spoken opprobriously of the gospel which a little while before he seemed anxious to understand. Sometimes such persons act as if they were reckless and profane; just as boys, when they go through a graveyard, whistle to keep their courage up. Many a man says big things against the gospel when he is pretty nearly caving in, and he does not like anybody to know that he is beaten. He is coming to Jesus; but still he does not want anybody to see that he is so, and therefore he pretends to an opposition which is not sincere. Have you not discovered that a man is never so violent against a thing as when he is unwillingly convinced of the truth of it? He has to try and demonstrate to himself that he does not believe it by being very loud in his declarations: a secret something in his soul makes him believe, and he is mad because he cannot resist the inward conviction.

Do not be astonished—you that are trying to bring men to Christ—if it should often happen that these lunatics break loose—that these epileptics have a worse fit just before Christ cures them than ever you knew them to have had before.

I will describe the usual way in which the devil throws men down and tears them. You need not listen to this unless you like, because it does not relate to all of you here; but it is true of a sufficient number to render it needful for me to speak of it. It is a very curious thing that if there is a poor soul in London that is well-nigh insane through despair of heart he wants to talk to me. I am often sore burdened by the attempt to sympathize with the distracted. I do not know why they should be attracted to me, but they come to tell me of their evil state of mind—people who have never seen me before. This fact gives me a wide field of actual practice and careful observation. I frequently meet with persons who are tempted with blasphemous thoughts. They have not yet laid hold on Christ, but they are trying to do so; and at this stage of their experience most horrible thoughts pass through their minds. They cannot prevent it: they hate the thoughts, and yet they come, till they are ready to lose their reason. I will tell you what happened to me. I was engaged in prayer alone in a quiet place one day when I had just found the Saviour, and while I was in prayer a most horrible stream of blasphemies came into my mind, till I clapped my hand to my mouth for fear that I should utter any

one of them. I was so brought up that I do not remember ever hearing a man swear while I was a child; yet at that moment I seemed to know all the swearing and blasphemy that ever was in hell itself; and I wondered at myself. I could not understand whence this foul stream proceeded. I wrote to my venerable grandfather who was for sixty years a minister of the gospel, and he said to me,—“Do not trouble about it. These are no thoughts of yours; they are injected into your mind by Satan. The thoughts of men follow one another like the links of a chain, one link draws on another; but when a man is in prayer the next natural thought to prayer is not blasphemy; it is not, therefore, a natural succession of our own thoughts. An evil spirit casts those thoughts into the mind.” I read also in an old book what they used to do years ago in our parishes in the “good old times” when nobody had any sense of humanity. If a poor wretch came to a parish begging, they whipped him through the place and sent him on to his own parish. Thus should we treat these diabolical thoughts. Whip them by hearty penitence, and send them off to where they came from, back to their own parish, which is far down in the deeps. Thoughts of this sort, seeing you loathe them, are none of yours. Do not let Satan lay his brats at your door, but send them packing. Perhaps when you know this, it may help to break the chain; for the devil may not think it worth his while to worry you in this way any more, when he cannot by this means lead you to despair: he seldom wastes his time in spreading nets when the bird can see them. Therefore, tell Satan to begone, for you can see him, and you are not going to let him deceive you. It may be he will take the hint and begone.

When this does not answer, I have known Satan to throw the coming sinner down and tear him in another way. “There,” says he, “did you not hear the preacher speaking about election? You are not one of the elect.” “Perhaps I am not,” says one. Perhaps you are, say I, and I think that whether you are one of the elect or not, you had better come, on the ground that Jesus says—“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” If you come, he will not cast you out, and then you will find that you are one of the elect. You need not trouble about predestination: you will see *that* clearly enough very soon. If any man had a ticket to go to a meeting, and he said, “I do not know whether I am ordained to get in or not,” I should think it very probable that he was not ordained to enter if he sat at home in the chimney-corner and did not make the attempt to go; but if, having his ticket, he walked to the place and went in, I should feel sure that he was ordained to go in. You will know your election when you have obeyed your calling. Go you to Christ because you are commanded and invited, and leave the deeper question to be answered by the facts.

Satan will throw men down and tear them in another way. “Ah!” says he, “you are too big a sinner.” I make short work of that. No man is too big a sinner. “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.”

“Oh but,” says Satan, “it is too late.” Another lie of his. It is never too late so long as we are in this world, and come to Jesus for pardon. Generally in the case of young people he puts the clock back, and says “It is too soon”; and then when they get old he puts the clock on, and

says "It is too late." It is never too late as long as Jesus lives, and the sinner repents. If a sinner were as old as Methuselah, if he came to Christ and trusted him he would be saved.

"Oh but," the devil says, "it is no use your trying at all. The gospel is not true." Ay, but it is true, for some of us have proved it. I could bring before you to-night, if it were necessary, men and women who lived in sin and wallowed in it, and yet the Lord Christ has saved them by his precious blood. They would rejoice to tell you how they have been delivered from the reign of sin by faith in Jesus, though they could never have delivered themselves. The gospel is true. Our converts prove it. Conversion is the standing miracle of the church; and while we see what it works every day in the week, we are confident and sure. When men that were passionate, dishonest, unchaste, covetous, become holy, gracious, loving, pure, generous, then we know that the gospel is true by the effect which it produces. A lie would never produce holiness and love. Out of the way, devil! It is all in vain for you to come here with your falsehoods; we know the truth about you, and about the gospel, and you shall not deceive us.

And then the devil will come with this—"It is of no use. Give it up; give it up." Many and many a man who has been on the brink of eternal life, has been thrown down and torn with this, "It is of no use; give it up. You have prayed, and you have not been answered: never pray again. You have attended the house of God, and you have become more miserable than ever: never go again. Ever since you have been a thinking man and a sober man, you have had more trouble than ever you had. See," says the devil, "what comes of your religion." Thus he tries to induce the newly awakened to give it up. But oh, in God's name let me implore you do not turn from it, for you are on the brink of the grand discovery. Another turf turned, and there is the golden treasure. After all your striving—your long striving—never give up the search until you have found your Saviour; for your Saviour is to be found. Trust in him this night, and he is yours for ever.

III. I shall not detain you much longer. But as our hopes have been awakened and our fears have been aroused, let us look on the scene till OUR WONDER IS EXCITED. Did you notice when I was reading in the ninth chapter of Mark, how Jesus healed this poor child? He did *heal* him, he healed him of all that complication, healed him of the devil's domination, healed him of the epilepsy, healed him of being deaf and dumb, healed him of being a lunatic, healed him of pining away; and in one moment that young man was completely saved from all his ills. He could speak; he could hear; he was cured of his epilepsy, and was no more a lunatic, but a happy rational being. The whole thing was done at once. Wonder, and never leave off wondering!

"Can a man be changed all at once? It must take a long time," says one. I admit there are certain qualities which come only by education and patient watchfulness. There are certain parts of the Christian character that come of culture, and must be watered with tears and prayer. But let me assure you, not as a matter of theory, but as a matter which I have seen for thirty years, that a man's character may be totally changed in less time than it takes me to tell you of it. There is such power in

the name of Christ that, if that name be preached and the Spirit of God applies it, men can be turned right round. There can be a total reversal of all their conduct, and, what is more than that, of all their inclinations, and desires and wishes, and delights and hates; for God can take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh. The child of darkness can be translated into the kingdom of light. The dead heart can be quickened into a spiritual existence, and that in a single moment, by faith in Jesus Christ. When that poor epileptic child was healed, it is said that the people were amazed. But how much greater will be our amazement if we see the Lord Jesus work such a miracle upon you! You have struggled to get better, you have prayed to get better, and all seems to be unavailing. Now, just trust Christ, the blessed Son of God who reigns in heaven, who died for sinners, and now lives for sinners. Only trust him, and this blessed deed is done. you become a new creature in Christ Jesus, and commence a holy life which shall never end. This wonder can be performed *now*.

This cure was perfected at once, and it remained with the youth. The most charming point about it was that the Lord Jesus said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." Enter no more into him—there is the glory of it! Though the epileptic fit was ended, yet the young man would not have been cured if the devil had returned to take possession of him again. The Saviour's cures endure the test of years. "Enter no more into him" preserved the young man by a life-long word of power.

I never dare to preach to anybody a temporary salvation. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," not for to-night merely, but for ever. When God saves a man he *is* saved: not for weeks and years, but eternally. If Christ turns the devil out of him he shall enter into that man no more for ever. Now, this is a salvation that is worth your having, and worth my preaching. A temporary, I had almost said, a trumpery salvation, that saves a man for a few months and then lets him perish, is not worth preaching or having; but that which so makes a man new as to put into him "a well of water springing up into everlasting life"—that is worth worlds. I will tell you a story of Christmas Evans which I like to tell on this point. Christmas Evans was once describing the prodigal's coming back to his father's house, and he said that when the prodigal sat at the father's table his father put upon his plate all the daintiest bits of meat that he could find; but the son sat there and did not eat, and every now and then the tears began to flow. His father turned to him and said, "My dear son, why are you unhappy? You spoil the feasting. Do you not know that I love you? Have I not joyfully received you?" "Yes," he said, "dear father, you are very kind, but have you really forgiven me? Have you forgiven me altogether, so that you will never be angry with me for all I have done?" His father looked on him with ineffable love and said, "I have blotted out thy sins and thy iniquities, and will remember them no more for ever. Eat, my dear son." The father turned round and waited on the guests, but by-and-by his eyes were on his boy, they could not be long removed. There was the son weeping again, but not eating. "Come, dear child," said his father, "come, why are you still mourning? What is it that you want?" Bursting into a

flood of tears a second time, the son said, "Father, am I always to stop here? Will you never turn me out of doors?" The father replied, "No, my child, thou shalt go no more out for ever, for a son abides for ever." Still the son did not enjoy the banquet; there was still something rankling within, and again he wept. Then his father said, "Now, tell me, tell me, my dear son, all that is in thy heart. What do you desire more?" The son answered, "Father, will you *make* me stop here? Father, I am afraid lest, if I were left to myself, I might play the prodigal again. Oh, constrain me to stay here for ever!" The father said, "I will put my fear in thy heart, and thou shalt not depart from me." "Ah! then," the son replied, "it is enough," and merrily he feasted with the rest. So I preach to you just this—that the great Father when he takes you to himself will never let you go away from him again.

Whatever your condition, if you trust your soul to Jesus, you shall be saved, and saved for ever.

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever :  
Nothing from his love can sever."

"But what if we fall into great sin?" says one. You shall not abide in great sin. You shall be kept and preserved by that same power which has begun the good work, for it will surely carry it on even to the end.

Just two or three sentences and I have finished. I have been speaking about the devil throwing some down and tearing them when they are coming to Christ. Are there any of you who do not know anything about it? Well, I am glad that you do not. If you come to Christ without being thrown down and torn I am glad of it. I have endeavoured to help those that are terribly tormented; but if you are not so tried, do not wish to be. There were here this morning two or three of the good fish-people from Newhaven, and when I saw them in their picturesque costumes they reminded me of a story that I heard about an old fish-wife who used to live near Edinburgh. A young man visited her, and began speaking to her about her soul. She was going out, and she took up her great load of fish to carry on her back, much more than most men would like to carry. The young man said to her, "Well, you have got a great burden there, good woman. Did you ever feel a spiritual burden?" She put down her load and said, "You mean that burden which John Bunyan speaks about in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, do you not?" "Yes," he said. "Well," she said, "I felt that burden before you were born, and I got rid of it, too; but I did not go exactly the same way to work that John Bunyan's pilgrim did." Our young friend thought that she could not be up to the mark to talk so, for he fancied that John Bunyan could not make a mistake. "Well," she said, "John Bunyan says that Evangelist pointed the man with the burden on his back to the wicket-gate, and when he could not see the gate, Evangelist said, 'Do you see that light?' And he looked till he thought he saw something like it. 'You are to run that way—the way of that light and that wicket gate.' Why," she said, "that was not the right direction to give a poor burdened soul. Much good he got out of it; for he had not gone far before he fell into the Slough of Despond, up to his neck in the mire, and had like to have been swallowed up. Evangelist

ought to have said, 'Do you see that cross? Do not run an inch, but stand where you are, and look to that; and as you look your burden will be gone. I looked to the cross at once and lost my load.' "What!" said the young man, "did you never go through the Slough of Despond?" "Yes," she said, "I have been through it far too many times; but let me tell you, young friend, that it is a deal easier to go through the Slough of Despond with your burden off than it is with your burden on." There is much blessed truth in this story. Do not any of you be saying to yourselves, "How I wish I could get into the Slough of Despond!" If you say that, you will get in, and then you will say, "How I wish I could get out of the Slough of Despond!" I have met with persons who fear that they never were saved because they have not experienced much terror. I meet with others who say that they cannot be saved because they experience too much terror. There is no pleasing people. Oh that they would look to Jesus whether or no! After I was preaching Jesus Christ from this platform once, there came a man into the vestry who said to me, "Blessed be God that I entered this Tabernacle. I come from Canada, sir. My father, before he found true religion had to be locked up in a lunatic asylum, and I always thought that I must undergo a similar terror before I could be saved." I said, "No, no, my dear friend, you are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you do that, despond or not despond, you are a saved man." This gospel I preach to you. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust him quietly, humbly, simply, immediately. Trust him to make you a holy man—to deliver you from the power of the devil and the power of sin, and he will do it: I will be bound for him that he will keep his word. Jesus is truth itself, and never breaks his word. He never boasts that he can do what he cannot do. He has gone into heaven, and he is therefore "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Only trust him. Trust him to overcome the evil you have to fight with. You will conquer it, man, if you will only trust Jesus. Woman, there is hope for you if you will! trust the wounded, bleeding, dying, risen, living Saviour. He will battle for you, and you shall get the victory.

God bless you, everyone, and may we all meet in heaven to praise the Son of God for ever and ever.