

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHOLE-HEARTED RELIGION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them.”—Jeremiah xxxii. 39.

THOSE of you who were present last Lord's-day morning will remember my sermon upon “Mongrel Religion,” in which I dealt with those who feared the Lord and served other gods. Their heart was divided, therefore they were found faulty. They had, as the Hebrew puts it, a heart and a heart,—a heart that went this way and a heart that went the other way, and so as a matter of fact they became, as the prophet saith, as “a silly dove that hath no heart.” The discourse of this morning is intended to exhibit whole-hearted religion, which is the opposite of the sad mixture which we have so lately denounced. We wish to look upon persons of Caleb's stamp, who followed the Lord fully, in whom by the grace of God the divided heart has become united, so that with their whole heart they serve the Lord their God.

Our text is an extract from Jeremiah's copy of the covenant of grace. The Lord promises to Israel, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” And in the fortieth verse he says, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” This, then, is the covenant of grace which God has made with his people, and it is highly suggestive that the first blessing of it relates to the heart; for God when he begins with men does not begin with the outward way, but with the inward spirit. He puts it, “I will give them one heart and one way”: the way is second, the heart comes first. Understand, then, that in all true godliness we must begin with heart-work. It is no use hoping to polish the outside until by degrees you enlighten the interior; nay, but the light must first be placed within, and then, as it shines through, spots on the exterior will be discovered, and will all the more readily be cleansed away. God works not *to* the centre, but *in* the centre, and then from the centre into the outer life.

In reference to the heart, one of the earliest works of divine grace is to unite it in one. Strange to say, I should be equally truthful if I

said that one of the first works of grace is to break the heart; but so paradoxical is man that when his heart is unbroken it is divided, and when his heart is broken, then, for the first time, it is united; for a broken heart in every fragment of it mourns over sin, and cries out for mercy. Every shattered particle of a contrite spirit is united in one desire to be reconciled to God. There is no union of the heart with itself till it is broken for sin and from sin. Early in the morning of grace the man comes to himself, and so is restored to the unity of his manhood. The effect of this inner reunion is very salutary. We read of the prodigal, that "when he came to himself," he said, "I will arise and go to my father." The heart is united in itself when it is united to the Lord; even as the Lord has said by the mouth of the prophet, "I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."

It is of this unitedness of heart that I shall speak first, and then I shall go on to those other covenant blessings which come after it, according to the text. These are placed after it in order to show its great value, since it is the first step to exceedingly precious blessings.

First, then, we will consider *unitedness of heart*:—"I will give them one heart"; secondly, the blessing which immediately arises out of it, *consistency of walk*,—"I will give them one way." From these two come the third blessing, *steadfastness of principle*,—"that they may fear me for ever"; and consequent upon all this comes *personal blessedness*,—"for the good of them": and attendant upon that favour, *relative benediction*,—"and for the good of their children after them." Our programme is very extensive, may the Spirit of God help us to fill it up.

I. We begin, then, at the beginning, with UNITEDNESS OF THE HEART.

Our first statement under this head shall be that *it is naturally divided*. Sin is confusion, and at its entrance it created a Babel, or a confusion, within the heart of man. Until man sinned his nature was one and undivided; but the fall broke him, and destroyed his unity. Within him now there are many voices, many imaginations, and many devices. Within him there is strife and contention, wars and fightings, which come of his lusts, which struggle with each other, and with his understanding. Observe the contest which is constantly visible between his conscience and his affections. His affections choose that which is evil, while his conscience approves that which is right. The desires go after that which appears to be pleasant, but the judgment warns the mind of its folly; hence a controversy between the two powers of the soul. The lusts crave for that which the intellect condemns; the passions demand that which the reason would deny; the will persists in that which the judgment would forego. The ship of our manhood will not obey the helm; there is a mutiny on board, and those powers which should be underlings strive for the mastery. Man is dragged to and fro by contending forces: conscience draws this way, and the affections drag in the opposite direction. Our propensities and faculties are by nature like the crowd in the Ephesian theatre of whom we read, "Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused." We sin not without some measure of compunction, and we do not quit our sin thoroughly even when we yield to conscience; for the

heart still hankers after that which the conscience disallows. To many a man it is given to admire things that are excellent, and still to delight in things which are abominable. His conscience bids him rise to a pure and noble life, but his baser passions hold him down to that which is earthly and sensual.

Frequently, too, there is a very great division between a man's inward knowledge and his outward conduct. Men are often wise in the head and foolish in the hand: they know the right and do the wrong. The law of God is read in their hearing and written upon their memories, and yet it is forgotten in their lives. They are men of great discernment in theory, and yet in their actions they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; darkness for light and light for darkness. They sin against the light: "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Often and often the man is as right as justice herself in his opinions, and clear as the day in his information; and yet he gropes as the blind, and stumbles at noonday as in the night. His knowledge goes one way, and his will another; he knows the consequences of sin, and therefore fears; he perceives the pleasureableness or profit of sin, and therefore presumes. He is sure that he will never be so base as to fall into a certain fault; by-and-by he rushes into it, and defends himself for so doing, till he changes his fickle mind, and then he denounces that which just now he allowed. How can he be right with God when he is not even right with himself?

All through the carnal man, if you look at him, there is confusion and mischief. We should call that creature a monster which had its head towards the earth and its feet towards heaven, and yet the carnal man lives in that position; he ought to tread the world beneath his feet, but he places it above; while the heaven to which he should aspire he daily spurns! He lets his animal passions, which should be treated as the dogs of his flock, become his lords and masters. He reverses the order of nature, and bids the beast within him have dominion over the spirit. Appetites which in their way are good if they are kept in with bit and bridle are permitted to become evil, because they have unlimited indulgence and are allowed to be the tyrants of the soul. The Ishmael of the flesh mocks at the Isaac of the conscience, and is unreprieved. Solomon said, "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth," and the same may be seen in the little world within, where appetites rule and grander capacities are placed in servitude. Man is a puzzle, and none can put him together but he that made him at the first. He is a self-contradiction, a house divided against itself, a mystery of iniquity, a maze of folly, a mass of perversity, obstinacy, and contention. Sin has made the heart to be so inwardly divided as to be like the troubled sea which cannot rest; or like a cage of unclean birds, every one fighting its fellow; or like a den of wild beasts which cease not to rend each other. When man cast off the yoke of the One God he fell under bondage to gods many, and lords many, who struggle for supremacy and make the one kingdom into many rival principalities: since sin became natural to man, it became natural that man's heart should be divided.

But *it must be united*—there is the point; and hence the covenant promise, "I will give them one heart." For, dear friends, in the matters

of godliness if our heart be not whole and entire in following after God we cannot meet with *acceptance*. God never did and never will receive the homage of a divided heart. Alexander, when Darius proposed that the two great monarchs should divide the world, replied that there was only room for one sun in the heavens. What his ambition affirmed that God declareth from the necessity of the case. Since one God fills all things there is no room for another. It is not possible for a heart to be given up to falsehood and yet to be under the power of truth. It is idle to attempt to serve two such masters as holiness and iniquity. God cannot smile upon an unhallowed compromise, and allow men to bow in the house of Rimmon and yet worship in his holy temple. God will have all or nothing: he will have us only, wholly, altogether, and always his or else he will have nothing to do with us. False gods can bear a divided empire, but the true God cannot have it. You may assemble a parliament of idols, but Jehovah saith, "I am God alone." It was once proposed to the Roman senate to set up the image of Christ in the Pantheon among the gods, but when they were informed that he would not agree that any worship should be mingled with his own the senate straightway refused him a shrine. In this they acted in a manner consistent with itself; but those are altogether inexcusable "who swear by the Lord and swear by Malcham." We provoke the Lord to jealousy when we offer him a corner in our souls and allow our vain thoughts to lodge within us. Errors can lie down like sheep in a field, but no error can lie side by side with the lordly lion of the truth. There is no god but God. Jehovah, he is the God! There is one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus. Whatsoever a man setteth up in his heart as the object of his affections in opposition to God is a vain, a vile, a vicious thing, and that man cannot be accepted of the Lord. Wouldst thou, then, serve God, O man? Him only must thou serve. Wouldst thou bring unto him an offering? Thou must first give him thine heart—thine undivided heart. He cries, "My son, give me thine heart," and he saith not, "Give me a share of it." He will not call that house his temple where other things are worshipped as well as himself. Abhorrence, not acceptance, shall fall to the lot of that man who is half-hearted with God. And is not this as it should be? Does not the love of Jesus deserve our whole-hearted love in return? His love, which made him become man, deserves man's entire homage. His love which led him to the cross deserves that we be crucified to the world for his sake. His love to death demands that we be dead to sin for his sake. His love which now rules all heaven for our sakes deserves our soul, our life, our all. He gave himself for us, his whole self, and we must give our whole hearts to him. In the chapter before us the Lord says, "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul." Shall we give half a heart to our whole-hearted God? Shall we be double-minded when he is so intense in blessing us? Shall we love the world and hope to have the love of the Father in us at the same time? God will not have it, and we do not wish it. The heart must be united.

We have seen that it must be united for acceptance, we now note that it must be united for *sincerity*: a divided heart is a false heart.

Where there is no unity of heart there is no truth in the spirit. Tell me that thou lovest the world, and I will tell thee that the love of the world is enmity to God. Declare that thou wilt serve Belial ever so little, and I know that thy service of Christ is but Judas' service—mercenary, temporary, traitorous. Sincerity does not open the front door to Christ and the back gate to the devil.

Our heart must be united, next, for *intensity of life*. True religion needs the soul to be ever at a fervent heat. "The kingdom of heaven," saith our Lord, "suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." None climb the hill whereon the New Jerusalem is built except such as go on hands and knees, and laying aside every weight give themselves wholly to the divine ascent. The pilgrim who hopes to reach the better land and makes a pleasure trip of it is under a mistake: it is hard travelling, and requires ardour and perseverance. It is so in every good word and work. A lazy prayer requests a denial, and shall have it. Half-hearted praise is an insult to God, and everything in religion that is not done with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, is a sin, however much it may look like a virtue. When we are most intense we do not come up to the zeal which these important things deserve: how can we then imagine that we can please God with less than our best? Know ye not that our Lord hath said, "Because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth"? No stronger expression of disgust can possibly be used, and this disgust is not for the bold and hardened rebel, but for the moderate disciple who served God without fail, but without zeal. God loves a whole heart, but half a heart is his abhorrence. Only those who run with all their might will win the race; and, as the man of divided heart is lame on both his feet, he can have no hope of the prize. Lord, make my heart one, that I may give it all to thee, and spend and be spent in thy one service, since thou only art the One in whom my soul delighteth.

The heart must be united to be *consecrated*. Will God be served with broken cups and cracked flagons, and shall his altars be polluted with torn and mangled sacrifices? All the things in heaven and earth which the Lord acknowledges as consecrated things are dedicated to him and to him alone. Can you imagine that within the Holy Place there would be an altar part of which was used for sacrifices offered to Jehovah, and another portion for victims presented to Moloch? The idea cannot be endured. The Lord said of old to Ezekiel, "Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts." God will not account that to be consecrated to himself which is used by another. Brethren, we must be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, or we cannot be consecrated to him at all. We are unconsecrated, we are polluted, we are as things accursed if we are divided in heart.

Once more, we must have our heart united, or else *none of the blessings which are to follow in covenant order can possibly reach us*. For, look, "I will give them one heart," and then it follows, "one way";—no man will have a consistent, uniform way while he has a

divided heart. Read next, "That they shall fear me for ever"; but no man will fear God for ever unless fear has taken possession of his whole heart. The convert may profess to follow the Lord for awhile, but he will soon turn aside; he who does not begin with his whole heart will soon tire of the race. "For ever" is a long day, and requires our whole soul to hold on and to hold out. The Lord also promises that this shall be "for the good of them, and of their children after them"; but those who give God a part of their heart, neither win a blessing for themselves nor for their posterity; they are not among the seed that God has blessed, neither can they be. Oh men and women, if your hearts run hither and thither, and your aims and desires are scattered like a flock of sheep, running abroad according to their own wilfulness, the Good Shepherd will not feed you. When he comes to visit you he will gather all your desires and aspirations into one fold, and then will he lead you into green pastures, and make you to lie down therein. As under the old law men might not sow with mingled seed, nor wear garments of linen and woollen mixed, so neither can those of divided way and heart come into the favour of God.

So I leave the first head when I have noticed that according to the text *God will give his chosen this unified heart*: "I will give them one heart." Ah, we shall never obtain this blessing otherwise than as a free gift of God's grace. Teachers may put holy thoughts into our heads, but they cannot alter our hearts. We may unite our thoughts in some system of divinity, but we can never unite our desires upon the Divinity himself except we experience a work of grace upon our souls. The one Lord must make our heart one. He who once made the heart must make it anew to make it one. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." But none of these seven ones would ever be ours unless it were added, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," and that grace must make our heart one. This the Lord does in part by enlightenment through the light of his Holy Spirit. He shows us the worthlessness and deceptiveness of everything that would attract our hearts away from Jesus and from our God; and when we see the evil of the rival, we give our heart entirely to him whom we worship. The Lord works this also by a process more thorough still; for he weans us from all idolatrous loves. He makes our carnal delights to become bitter to us, so that we turn aside from them with disgust, even as the Egyptians loathed to drink of the waters of the river which they formerly idolized, for the Lord had turned it into blood. He puts gall upon the breasts of the world, and then we look elsewhere for comfort. It takes much to make us cry with David, "My soul is even as a weaned child." Disease and death are summoned to shoot their fatal arrows at our dearest ones before we will give God the whole of our hearts. It is hard to love the creature much and yet not too much; it is a great thing to love our beloved ones in Christ and in subordination to Christ. Many a mother has had to lose child after child because she had stirred the jealousy of the best Beloved one by dividing her heart between him and her little ones. Many a man in business has fallen from wealth and prosperity because God saw

that his heart went astray after his possessions. Doubtless many have had eloquence, talent, and gifts of various kinds, and they doted upon these things until it has been needful to remove them to unite their hearts upon God, and so they have been laid aside by sickness, or the mind has lost its vigour, or the voice has failed, and the gift has become a plague rather than a comfort, and thus their heart has lost its idol, and has turned unto the Lord. If Christ is married to us he will have us chaste unto himself. What think we of a man who is engaged to a woman and is found spending his love upon another as well ! We say he is false and treacherous, and we utterly despise him. He ought to give his heart to her whom he has espoused, and to love her with constancy, or he cannot be esteemed a pure minded man. Even so in our dealings with the Lord Jesus we must be watchful lest a single desire or affection should prove false to him. Such a glorious object of affection must fill the whole horizon of the soul, even as the sun fills all the heavens with his light, and the stars are quite forgotten. All the rivers run into the sea, and so must all our loves run to Jesus. Oh men and brethren, shut the gates of your hearts lest any steal away by night from the Lord. The heart must be whole and wholly his. Recollect that you may have a great gash in your head, and yet you may live ; but if but a pin's point should divide your heart you will die. Ask grace to say with the psalmist, "O God my heart is fixed"; then, indeed, will you sing and give praise. This is not only important, it is essential. See ye, my hearers, whether you have received this choice blessing of the covenant of grace each one for himself,—this holy, uniting work of the Spirit of God.

II. If we have this we may now advance to the second blessing of the covenant here mentioned, which is CONSISTENCY OF WALK : "I will give them one way." When the heart is united the man lives for a single object, and that alone. Running in one direction, striving for one purpose, he keeps to the one way which leads to heaven. As Christ is our one life, so is he our one way.

Without this unity there can be *no truth* in a man's life. If he spins by day, and unravels at night, he is acting out a falsehood. If he runs to the right while men look at him, but trudges back again to the old post as soon as men's eyes are taken from him, his life is an equivocation, which is but a fine word for a lie. It is a dreadful thing for a man's word to be a lie, but for a man's whole life to be a lie is still more horrible. We may have much more of the liar about us than we dream of : let us see to it, and pray God that like Nathanael we may have no guile in us. We may patch up our life with bits of religion, and remnants of profession, till it becomes like the beggar's coat of which no man knows the original : such a garment may be fit for a beggar, but shall we wear it? The seamless garment of truth, woven from the top throughout adorns a Christian, but motley raiment proves a man a fool. Unless we follow the Lord with one heart, and one way, we shall be found to be liars after all ; and if all liars have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, what will be his lot whose life was false to itself and false to God? Inconsistency of behaviour shows that truth is little set by in the heart.

We must, dear friends, have one walk, or else our life will make

no progress. He who travels in two opposite directions will find himself no forwarder. How is it that some professors are at much the same place as they occupied twenty years ago? Years have made them more grey, but not more gracious. At night they fastened up their boat in a little creek of the river, and when the tide ran out they waited and waited until close to the end of its running, and then they went down a little way with the tide; very soon the stream ceased to turn, and so they drifted back with the flood, and hitched up near the same muddy shore as before. Like a pendulum they travel far but get no farther. Growth, progress, advancement—none of these can they know, for they are double-minded, and so run to and fro in the earth and wear themselves out with vanity. Multitudes of people are doing this. They make such progress one Sunday that they resolve henceforth to live unto God. They begin at a steam engine rate, they plough the sea of life in their eagerness; they are like a vessel which has had new boilers put into her; but by to-morrow where are they? They have burst their boilers, or they have allowed the fires to go out, and henceforth they are without spiritual life or motion, and lie like logs upon the stream. This will not do; we must have one way of uniform vitality. I do not say that we can always make apparent progress at the same rate, for powerful under-currents affect our life, and a man may be doing much who is successfully overcoming adverse influences. When a fierce wind is blowing a captain may know that he will be driven on shore if he does not steam right into the teeth of the hurricane: if he does this is he not making the surest real progress if he manages to keep where he is and avoid the fatal danger? I say, then, that if we do not seem to advance we may, nevertheless, in the judgment of God be making true progress if we resist the mighty impulses which would otherwise hurry us on to destruction: but if we have two ways, and steer this way and that way and every way by turns, with the view of pleasing men and making things easy all round, we cannot speed towards the desired haven.

We must choose and keep to one way, or we cannot attain to *usefulness*. What influence has a double-minded man? If a man speak for God to-day, and so lives to-morrow that he virtually speaks for the devil, what power has he over those around him? How can he lead who has no way of his own? If your actions play fast and loose with truth; if your life is a chequer-work of black and white; if you are everything by turns and nothing long, what force for good can you possibly exert? Consistency and unity of life are necessary to usefulness.

And I am sure it is necessary for anything like *assurance*. The best of believers may through holy anxiety question their own state; but the man who has two ways may well sing:—

“’Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his or am I not?”

O you who are inconsistent in life I must make bold to tell you that many of your friends are even more in doubt about you than you are about yourself. ’Tis a point we also long to know; for we cannot tell whether you love the Lord or no, whether you are his or not.

Sometimes we see happy signs about you, and our charity hopeth all things; but when we see you again falling into evil ways, we are distressed, and even our charity weeps over you. How can we be assured of your change of heart when we see so little change of life? What a pity to lead such a life that it puzzles those who love you best to form any judgment as to your condition. If you were to die as you are we should not know which way you would go, for your present path is dubious and intricate. Would you go to heaven or hell? Common judgment would depend upon whether you died in one of your good fits or in one of your bad ones. Is this a pleasant way of putting it? O ye who blow hot and cold, ye are strange beings, you seem to the common observer to be too good for hell, and not good enough for heaven. You cannot be divided at last, and therefore you may rest assured that the powers of evil will seize you as their own.

No person can come to any true personal assurance while his life is of a double character. But if I know that I have one heart, and that my heart belongs to my Lord, and that I have one way, a way of obedience to him, then may I be assured that I am his. If I cannot make such progress as I would, yet if I follow my Lord and keep my face steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, then I know where I am, and what I am, and whither I am going. Holiness of life proves our faith, and faith ensures our salvation, and salvation begets joy, and peace, and confidence. "Hereby we know that we know him if we keep his commandments." A plain way will make our condition plain. This unity of way is a covenant blessing: it comes not of man neither by man, but God gives it to his own elect as one of the choice favours of his grace,—“I will give them one heart and one way.”

III. Briefly we notice, in the third place, the next covenant blessing, STEADFASTNESS OF PRINCIPLE—“That they may fear me for ever.” Get the heart and the way right, and then the spiritual force of the fear of God will abide in us in all days to come.

Notice the basis of true religion,—it is the fear of God: it is not said that they shall join a church and make a profession, and speak holy words for ever; but that “They may *fear me* for ever.” Oh brothers and sisters, our religion must have the Lord in the very heart of it. We must be in constant contact with God, and possess in our souls the true fear of God; for as this is the beginning of wisdom so is it the only security of perseverance. When God has given us a true spiritual fear of him it will abide all tests. Outward religion depends upon the *excitement* which created it; but the fear of the Lord lives on when all around it is frost-bitten. What happens to many converts? The revivalists have gone, and they have gone too. But if God has given us one heart to love and obey him, and his fear is in us, we do not depend upon the mental thermometer. Like salamanders, we can live in the fire; but like seals we can live in Arctic ice. We are not dependent upon special services, and warm-hearted exhortations; for we have a springing well within. We live upon the Master, and not upon the servants: the Spirit of God does not leave us because certain good men have gone elsewhere. No, God has given us to fear him for ever.

Persecution comes, Christians are ridiculed in the workshop, they are pointed out in the street, and an opprobrious name is hooted at them;

now we shall know who are God's elect and who are not. Persecution acts as a winnowing fan, and those who are light as chaff are driven away by its blast ; but those who are true corn remain and are purified. Careless of man's esteem, the truly God-fearing man with one heart holds on his one way and fears the Lord for ever.

Then, perhaps, comes a more serious test, the trial of *prosperity*. A man grows rich, he rises into another class of society. If he is not a real Christian he will forsake the Lord, but if he be a true-born heir of the kingdom he will fear the Lord for ever, and consecrate his substance to him. A heart wholly given to God will stand the wear and tear of life in all conditions, whether in honour or in contempt. *Poverty* is a severe test to many, and I have known numbers of professors forsake the house of God because, as they said, their clothes were not fit to come in ; but that is a poor excuse ; I fear their hearts were not fit to come in. The fear of God would make the godly man swallow his pride and follow Christ in rags : he will bear a famine of bread and a famine of water, but he cannot endure a famine of the word of God. His soul must be fed, and so he must and will be found where the Lord's table is spread with the bread of heaven. When God stripped Job of all his riches, it was then that his integrity was seen and proved.

With some of you *old age* is creeping on ; but I rejoice to know that your grace is not decaying. You are becoming deaf, eyesight is failing you, and your limbs are trembling ; but you can still hear the voice of the Lord, and behold the beauties of his word, and run in the ways of his statutes. If God has given the young man one heart and one way, he will fear God for ever, and will not forsake the Lord when infirmities multiply upon him. He will bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright. If our soul is wholly Christ's, we can never go back unto perdition : " Who shall separate us from the love of God ? " The Lord has cast such cords of love about us that he holds us fast. We can lose father and mother, yea, and our own lives also, but we cannot forsake the Lord whose blood has bought us from the lowest hell. We are bound for the kingdom ; who shall keep us out of it ? We have been shot like arrows from the bow of God, and we must speed onward till we rest in the target of eternal bliss. Oh what a mercy it is to have within us a fear of God, which is not to last for a period of years, but *for ever !*

IV. Very hurriedly I mention the next thing, which is PERSONAL BLESSEDNESS, " for the good of them. " Where God gives us one heart and one way, and steadfast principle, it must be for our good in the highest sense. Tell me who are the happiest Christians. They will be found to be whole-hearted Christians. When heart and life are divided happiness leaks through the crack. We must be steady in the pursuit of righteousness if we would abide in the enjoyment of peace. Brothers, if you want to know the sweetness of religion you must know the depth of it. The foam upon the top of the sacred cup is often bitter, but at the bottom lies the essence of sweetness. I will not say, drink deep or drink not at all, but I will say this, that those who are content with superficial godliness have no idea of the delights which dwell in the deep places of communion with God. Plunge into the river of life ; let body, soul, and spirit be immersed into its floods, and you shall

swim in joy unspeakable. Lose sight of the shores of worldliness and you shall see God's wonders in the deeps. In intense devotion to the Lord you will find the rare jewel satisfaction. "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord!" Sweet content never dwells with half-heartedness.

This shall be for your good every way—for your guidance in business, for your direction in devotion, for the good of your mind here, for the good of your spirit hereafter. To be endowed by grace with one heart and one way is to be rendered fit to live and fit to die. I am sure if you read the biographies of men, if they are fairly written, you will find that the good, the true, the great, the noble, were single-minded. Those who have the clearest sight of God are the pure in heart and the undivided in heart; and those who enjoy a heaven below are those whose hearts and lives are engrossed with heavenly things. The blessed life is that of fervent love and thorough consecration. Do these things abound among you, brethren? I believe that in this assembly there are more whole-hearted Christian men than I am likely to meet with in any other gathering: and yet, for all that, I cannot help fearing that even here there are professing Christians who never knew what it was to give their hearts perfectly to God's work, or to the love of Jesus. When these people come to the hour of trouble they are dispirited and rebellious; would it be so if they were perfectly resigned to God's will? These people are often short of spiritual comforts; would they be short of them if they had made a clean and clear surrender to their God? I believe they would not. Men who will not eat are starved and weak, and many a disease finds soil within them through the weakness of their constitution; but those who feed on Christ, the Bread of Heaven, are nourished and strong, and are preserved from a thousand ills by that very fact. O God the Holy Spirit, I cannot talk to Christ's servants as I wish to do, but thou canst move them now to aspire after a complete giving up of themselves to thee, for this shall be for their good!

V. The last is a RELATIVE BLESSING: "And for their children after them." Whole-hearted Christians are usually blessed with a posterity of a like kind. Consecrated men and women live to see their children following in their steps. When sons and daughters forsake the ways of godliness do you wonder when you spy out the home life of their parents? If religion is a sham, do you expect frank young men to respect it? If the father was hollow-hearted in his profession, will not the children despise it? The genuine, thoroughbred Christian is often hated, but he is never the object of contempt. Men may ridicule him, and say that he is a fool, but they cannot help admitting that he is happy, and the wiser sort among them wish that they were such fools themselves. Be thorough and true, and your family will respect your faith. The almost inevitable consequence of respect in a child towards his parent is a desire to imitate him. It is not always so, but as a rule it is so: if the parents live unto God in a thorough-hearted way, their sons and daughters aspire to the same thing. They see the beauty of religion at home around the fireside, and their conscience being quickened they are led to pray to God that they may have the like piety, so that when they themselves commence a household they may enjoy the like

happiness. Certainly if any of you are the children of eminently godly parents, and are living in sin, your parents' lives condemn you. Are they in heaven? Dare you go to their grave, and sit upon the grassy hillock, and think of how you are living? It will force tears to your eyes to contrast yourself with them. You may well tremble to think that you neglect your mother's Saviour, that you forget your father's God. It will go hard with those who leap into hell-fire over a father's prayers and a mother's entreaties; yet some seem desperately resolved on such suicide. I hope these are comparatively few, and that still it is true, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Blessings temporal and spiritual come upon households where the heads of the family are completely consecrated to God. Try it! try it! I will be bound that you will find it profitable. If at the last great day you shall find that consecration to Christ is an error, I will be willing to bear the blame for ever. I am not afraid that any one among you will ever censure me for having excited you into a zeal too fervent, or a life too devoted. Brothers, I am afraid of those of you who go ankle deep into religion and never venture further; I am afraid lest you should by-and-by return to the shore; but as for you who plunge into the centre of the stream, and find waters to swim in, I have no fears; you shall be borne onward by a current ever increasing in strength till in the ocean of eternal love you lose yourselves in heaven above. I can wish you no greater blessing than that the Holy Spirit may make you whole-hearted, consistent, persistent, ardent, established, and persevering in the things of God. On you and on your household my heart pronounces this benediction,—the Lord give you one heart and one way that you may fear him for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—45 (Vers. I.),
116 (Song II.), 654.