

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SATANIC HINDRANCES.

A Sermon

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“Satan hindered us.”—1 Thessalonians ii. 18.

PAUL, and Silas, and Timothy, were very desirous to visit the Church at Thessalonica, but they were unable to do so for the singular reason announced in the text, namely, “Satan hindered us.” *It was not from want of will*, for they had a very great attachment to the Thessalonian brethren, and they longed to look them in the face again. They said of the Thessalonians, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers: remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” Their will was overruled as to visiting the Church together, but being anxious for its welfare, they sent Timothy alone to minister for a time in its midst. It was not want of will which hindered them, but want of power. *They were not prevented by God’s special providence.* We find on certain occasions that Paul was not allowed to go precisely where his heart would have led him. “They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.” “They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,” but their course was directed towards Troas that they might preach in Europe the unsearchable riches of Christ. They could not, however, trace their absence from Thessalonica to any divine interposition; it appeared to them to proceed from the great adversary: “Satan hindered them.” How Satan did so it would be useless to affirm dogmatically, but we may form a reasonable conjecture. I find in the margin of my pulpit Bible by Bagster, this note, which may probably be correct. “Satan hindered Paul by raising such a storm of persecution against him at Berea, and other places, that it was deemed prudent to delay his visit till the storm was somewhat allayed.” Yet I can hardly allow this to have been the only hindrance, for Paul was very courageous, and having a strong desire to visit Thessalonica, no fear of opposition would have kept him away. He did not shun the hottest part of the battle, but like a truly valiant champion, delighted most to be found in the thick of his foes. Possibly the antagonism of the various philosophers whom he met with at Athens, and the heresies at Corinth, from which it seems that this epistle was written, may have called

for his presence on the scene of action. He felt that he could not leave struggling Churches to their enemies; he must contend with the grievous wolves, and unmask the evil ones who wore the garb of angels of light. Satan had moved the enemies of the truth to industrious opposition, and thus the apostle and his companions were hindered from going to Thessalonica. Or it may be that Satan had excited dissensions and discords in the Churches which Paul was visiting, and therefore he was obliged to stop first in one and then in another to settle their differences; to bring to bear the weight of his own spiritual influence upon the various divided sections of the Church to restore them to unity. Well, whether persecution, or philosophic heresy, or the divisions of the Church, were the outward instruments we cannot tell, but Satan was assuredly the prime mover. You will perhaps wonder why the devil should care so much about Paul and his whereabouts. Why should he take so much interest in keeping these three men from that particular Church? This leads us to observe what wonderful importance is attached to the action of Christian ministers. Here is the master of all evil, the prince of the power of the air, intently watching the journeying of three humble men; and apparently far more concerned about their movements than about the doings of Nero or Tiberius. These despised heralds of mercy were his most dreaded foes; they preached that name which makes hell tremble; they declared that righteousness against which Satanic hate always vents itself with its utmost power. With malicious glance the arch-enemy watched their daily path, and with cunning hand hindered them at all points. It strikes us that Satan was desirous to keep these apostolic men from the Church of Thessalonica because the Church was young and weak, and he thought that if it was not fostered and succoured by the preaching and presence of Paul he might yet slay the young child. Moreover, he has of old a fierce hatred of the preaching of the gospel, and possibly there had been no public declaration of the truth throughout Thessalonica since Paul had gone, and he was afraid lest the fire-brands of gospel truth should be again flung in among the masses, and a gracious conflagration should take place. Besides, Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly intercourse than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation: and so he would keep Paul away from these brethren who might have gladdened his heart, and whose hearts he might have cheered; he would hinder their fraternal intercourse that they might miss the strength which always flows from Christian communion and Christian sympathy.

This is not the only occasion in which Satan has hindered good men: indeed this has been his practice in all ages, and we have selected this one particular incident that some who are hindered by Satan may draw comfort from it, and that we may have an opportunity (if the Spirit of God shall enable us) of saying a good and forceful word to any who count it strange because this fiery trial has happened unto them.

I. Let us open our discourse by observing that **IT HAS BEEN SATAN'S PRACTICE OF OLD TO HINDER, WHEREVER HE COULD, THE WORK OF GOD.** "Satan hindered us" is the testimony which all the saints in

heaven will bear against the arch enemy. This is the witness of all who have written a holy line on the historic page, or carved a consecrated name on the rock of immortality, "Satan hindered us."

In sacred writ, we find Satan interfering to hinder the completeness of *the personal character of individual saints*. The man of Uz was perfect and upright before God, and to all appearance, would persevere in producing a finished picture of what the believer in God should be fault with his actions, and only dared to impute wrong motives to him. Indeed so had he been enabled to live that the arch-fiend could find no He had considered Job, and he could find no mischief in him; but then he hinted "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Satan sought to turn the life-blessing which Job was giving to God into a curse, and therefore he buffeted him sorely. He stripped him of all his substance. The evil messengers trod upon one another's heels: and their tidings of woe only ceased when his goods were all destroyed and his children had all perished. The poor afflicted parent was then smitten in his bone and in his flesh, till he was fain to sit upon a dunghill and scrape himself with a potsherd. Even then the picture had no blot of sin upon it, the pencil was held with a steady hand by the patient one; and therefore Satan made another attempt to hinder his retaining his holy character; he excited his wife to say, "Wherefore dost thou hold fast thy integrity? Curse God, and die." This was a great and grievous hindrance to the completion of Job's marvellous career, but, glory be unto God, the man of patience not only overcame Satan, but he made him a stepping-stone to a yet greater height of illustrious virtue; for ye know the patience of Job, and ye would not have known it if Satan had not illuminated it with the blaze of flaming afflictions. Had not the vessel been burnt in the furnace, the bright colours had not been so fixed and abiding. The trial through which Job passed, brought out the lustre of his matchless endurance in submission and resignation to God. Now, just as the enemy of old waylaid and beset the patriarch to hinder his perseverance in the fair path of excellence, so will he do with us. You may be congratulating yourself this morning, "I have hitherto walked consistently; no man can challenge my integrity." Beware of boasting, for your virtue will yet be tried; Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been hitherto a firm believer, your faith will ere long be attacked; if up till now you have been meek as Moses, expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your ripest fruit, and the wild boar will dash his tusks at your choicest vines. O that we had among us more eminence of piety, more generosity of character, more fidelity of behaviour! In all these respects, I doubt not, many have set out with the highest aims and intentions, but alas! how often have they had to cry, "Satan hindered us!"

This is not the enemy's only business; for he is very earnest in endeavouring to hinder *the emancipation of the Lord's redeemed ones*. Ye know the memorable story of Moses: when the children of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, God's servant stood before their haughty oppressor with his rod in his hand, and in Jehovah's name he declared, "Thus

saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me." A sign was required. The rod was cast upon the ground, and it became a serpent. At this point, Satan hindered. Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses. We read that the magicians did so with their enchantments, whether by devilish arts or by sleight of hand, we need not now enquire: in either case they did the devil service, and they did it well—for Pharaoh's heart was hardened when he saw that the magicians wrought, in appearance, the self-same miracles as Moses. Brethren, take this as a type of Satan's hindrances to the word of the Lord. Christ's servants came forth to preach the gospel; their ministry was attended with signs and wonders. "My kingdom is shaken," said the prince of evil, "I must bestir myself;" and straightway he sent magicians to work lying signs and wonders without number. Apocryphal wonders were and are as plentiful as the frogs of Egypt. Did the apostles preach the sacrifice of Christ?—the devil's apostles preached the sacrifice of the mass. Did the saints uplift the cross?—the devil's servants upheld the crucifix. Did God's ministers speak of Jesus as the one infallible Head of the Church?—the devil's servants proclaimed the false priest of Rome as standing in the self-same place. Romanism is a most ingenious imitation of the gospel: it is the magicians "doing so with their enchantments." If you study well the spirit and genius of the great Antichrist, you will see that its great power lies in its being an exceedingly clever counterfeit of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as tinsel could counterfeit gold, and paste could simulate the gem, and candle-light could rival the sun in its glory, and a drop in the bucket could imitate the sea in its strength, it has copied God's great masterpiece, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and to this day, as God's servants scatter the pure gold of truth, their worst enemies are those who utter base coin, on which they have feloniously stamped the image and superscription of the King of kings.

You have another case farther on in history—and all Old Testament history is typical of what is going on around us now. God was about to give a most wonderful system of instruction to Israel and to the human race, by way of type and ceremony, in the wilderness. Aaron and his sons were selected to represent the great High Priest of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. In every garment which they wore there was a symbolical significance: every vessel of that sanctuary in which they ministered taught a lesson: every single act of worship, whether it were the sprinkling of blood or the burning of incense, was made to teach precious and important truths to the sons of men. What a noble roll was that volume of the book which was unfolded in the wilderness, at the foot of Sinai! How God declared himself and the glory of the coming Messiah in the persons of Aaron and his sons! What then? With this Satan interfered. Moses and Aaron could say, "Satan hindered us." Korah, Dathan, and Abiram arrogantly claimed a right to the priesthood; and on a certain day they stood forth with brazen censers in their hands, thrusting themselves impertinently into the office which the Lord had assigned to Aaron and to his sons. The earth opened and swallowed them up alive: true prophecy of what shall become of those who thrust themselves into the office of the priesthood where none but Jesus Christ can stand. You may see the parallel this

day. Christ Jesus is the only priest who offers sacrifice of blood, and he brings that sacrifice no more, for having once offered it he has perfected for ever those who are set apart. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Paul, with the strongest force of logic, proves that Christ does not offer a continual sacrifice, but that, having offered it once for all, his work is finished, and he sits down at the right hand of the Father. Now, this doctrine of a finished atonement and a completed sacrifice seemed likely to overrun the world—it was such a gracious unfolding of the divine mind, that Satan could not look upon it without desiring to hinder it; and, therefore, look ye on every hand, and you can see Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, in those Churches which are branches of Antichrist, I mean the Anglican and the Roman. Men to this very day, call themselves "priests," and read prayers from a book in which the rubric runs, "Then shall the priest say ———." These arrogate to themselves a priesthood other than that which is common to all the saints: some of them even claim to offer a daily sacrifice, to celebrate an unbloody sacrifice at the thing which they call an altar; and they claim to have power to forgive sin, saying to sick and dying persons, "By authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins." This in England, and this throughout Europe, is the great hindrance to the propagation of the gospel—the priestly pretensions of a set of men who are no priests of God, though they may be priests of Baal. Thus the ministers of Jesus are made to cry, "Satan hindereth us."

Take another instance of Satanic hatred. When Joshua had led the tribes across the Jordan, they were to attack the various cities which God had given them for a heritage, and from Dan to Beersheba the whole land was to be theirs. After the taking of Jericho, the first contact into which they came with the heathen Canaanites, ended in a disastrous defeat to the servants of God. "They fled," it is written, "before the men of Ai." Here again you hear the cry, "Satan hindered us." Joshua might have gone from city to city exterminating the nations, as they justly deserved to be, but Achan had taken of the accursed thing and hidden it in his tent, therefore no victory could be won by Israel till his theft and sacrilege had been put away. Beloved, this is symbolic of the Christian Church. We might go from victory to victory; our home mission operations might be successful, and our foreign agencies might be crowned with triumph, if it were not that we have Achans in the camp at home. When Churches have no conversions, it is more than probable that hypocrites concealed among them have turned away the Lord's blessing. You who are inconsistent, who make the profession of religion the means of getting wealth, you who unite yourselves with God's people, but at the same time covet the goodly Babylonish garment, and the wedge of gold, you are those who cut the sinews of Zion's strength; you prevent the Israel of God from going forth to victory. Ah! little do we know, beloved, how Satan has hindered us. We, as a Church, have had much reason to thank God, but how many more might within these walls have been added to the number of this Church if it had not been for the coldness of some, the indifference of others, the inconsistency of a few, and the worldliness of many more!

Satan hinders us not merely by direct opposition, but by sending Achans into the midst of our camp.

I will give you one more picture. View the building of Jerusalem after it had been destroyed by the Babylonians. When Ezra and Nehemiah were found to build, the devil was sure to stir up Sanballat and Tobiah to cast down. There was never a revival of religion without a revival of the old enmity. If ever the Church of God is to be built, it will be in troublous times. When God's servants are active, Satan is not without vigilant myrmidons who seek to counteract their efforts.

The history of the Old Testament Church is a history of Satan endeavouring to hinder the work of the Lord. I am sure you will admit it has been the same since the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he was on earth Satan hindered him. He dared to attack him to his face personally; and when that failed, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and men of all sorts hindered him. When the apostles began their ministry, Herod and the Jews sought to hinder them; and when persecution availed not, then all sorts of heresies and schisms broke out in the Christian Church: Satan still hindered them. A very short time after the taking up of our Lord, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, had become like earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter; the glory had departed, and the lustre of truth was gone, because by false doctrine, lukewarmness, and worldliness, Satan hindered them. When the Reformation dawned, if God raised up a Luther, the devil brought out an Ignatius Loyola to hinder him. Here in England, if God had his Latimers and his Wickliffes, the devil had his Gardiners and Bonners. When in the modern reformation Whitfield and Wesley thundered like the voice of God, there were ordained reprobates found to hinder them, to hold them up to opprobrium and shame. Never, since the first hour struck in which goodness came into conflict with evil, has it ceased to be true that Satan hindered us. From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle, in the vanguard and in the rear, at the dawn of day and in the midnight, Satan hindered us. If we toil in the field he seeks to break the ploughshare; if we build the walls he labours to cast down the stones; if we would serve God in suffering or in conflict—everywhere Satan hinders us.

II. We shall now, in the second place, INDICATE MANY WAYS IN WHICH SATAN HAS HINDERED US.

The prince of evil is very busy in hindering *those who are just coming to Jesus Christ*. Here he spends the main part of his skill. Some of us who know the Saviour recollect the fierce conflicts which we had with Satan when we first looked to the cross and lived. Others of you, here this morning, are just passing through that trying season: I will address myself to you. Beloved friends, you long to be saved, but ever since you have given any attention to these eternal things you have been the victim of deep distress of mind. Do not marvel at this. This is usual, so usual as to be almost universal. I should not wonder if you are perplexed with the doctrine of election. It will be suggested to you that you are not one of the chosen of God, although your common sense will teach you that it might just as well be suggested to you that

you are, since you know neither the one nor the other, nor indeed can know until you have believed in Jesus; your present business is with the precept which is revealed, not with election which is concealed. Your business is with that exhortation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is possible that the great fighting-ground between predestination and free-will may be the dry and desert place in which your soul is wandering: now you will never find any comfort there. The wisest of men have despaired of ever solving the mystery of those two matters, and it is not at all probable that you will find peace in puzzling yourself about it. Your business is not with metaphysical difficulty, but with faith in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is simple and plain enough. It is possible that your sins now come to your remembrance, and though once you thought little enough of them, now it is hinted to you by Satanic malice that they are too great to be pardoned; to which, I pray you, give the lie, by telling Satan this truth, that "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." It is very likely that the sin against the Holy Ghost much molests you. You read that whosoever shall speak a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him. In this, too, you may be greatly tried; and I wonder not that you are, for this is a most painfully difficult subject. One fact may cheer you—if you repent of your sins, you have not committed the unpardonable offence, since that sin necessitates hardness of heart for ever; and so long as a man has any tenderness of conscience, and any softness of spirit, he has not so renounced the Holy Spirit as to have lost his presence. It may be that you are the victim of blasphemous thoughts. This very morning, since you have been sitting here, torrents of the filth of hell have been pouring through your soul. At this be not astonished, for there are some of us who delight in holiness and are pure in heart, who nevertheless, have been at times sorely tried with thoughts which were never born in our hearts, but which were injected into them—suggestions born in hell, not in our spirits; to be hated, and to be loathed, but cast into our minds that they might hinder and trouble us. Now though Satan may hinder thee as he did the child who was brought to Jesus, of whom we read that as he was "a coming, the devil threw him down and tare him," yet do thou come notwithstanding; for though seven devils were in him, Jesus would not cast the coming sinner out. Even though thou shouldst feel a conviction that the unpardonable sin has fallen to thy lot, yet dare to trust in Jesus; and, if thou dost do that, I warrant thee there shall be a joy and a peace in believing which shall overcome him of whom we read, that he hath "hindered us."

But I must not stop long on any one point where there are so many. Satan is sure to hinder Christians *when they are earnest in prayer*. Have you not frequently found, dear friends, when you have been most earnest in supplication, that something or other will start across your mind to make you cease from the exercise? It appears to me that we shake the tree and no fruit drops from it; and just when one more shake would bring down the luscious fruit, the devil touches us on the shoulder and tells us it is time to be gone, and so we miss the blessing we might have attained. I mean that just when prayer would be the most successful we are tempted to abstain from it. When my spirit has sometimes laid

hold upon the angel, I have been painfully conscious of a counter influence urging me to cease from such importunity, and let the Lord alone, for his will would be done; or if the temptation did not come in that shape yet in some other, to cease to pray because prayer after all could not avail. O brethren, I know if you are much in prayer you can sing Cowper's hymn—

“What various hindrances we meet
In coming to the mercy seat.”

The same is true of *Christians when under the promptings of the Spirit of God, or when planning any good work*. You have been prompted sometimes to speak to such a one. “Run, speak to that young man,” has been the message in your ear. You have not done it—Satan has hindered you. You have been told on a certain occasion—you do not know how, (but believe me we ought to pay great respect to these inward whispers) to visit such-and-such a person and help him. You have not done it—Satan hindered you. You have been sitting down by the fire one evening reading a missionary report concerning Hindostan, or some district destitute of the truth, and you have thought “Now I have a little money which I might give to this object;” but then it has come across you that there is another way of spending it more profitably to your family—so Satan has hindered you. Or you yourself thought of doing a little in a certain district by way of preaching, and teaching, or commencing some new Ragged School, or some other form of Christian effort, but as sure as ever you began to plan it something or other arose, and Satan hindered you. If he possibly can, he will come upon God's people in those times when they are full of thought and ardour, and ready for Christian effort, that he may murder their infant plans and cast these suggestions of the Holy Spirit out of their minds. How often too has Satan hindered us *when we have entered into the work!* In fact, beloved, we never ought to expect a success unless we hear the devil making a noise. I have taken it as a certain sign that I am doing little good when the devil is quiet. It is generally a sign that Christ's kingdom is coming when men begin to lie against you, and slander you, and the world is in an uproar, casting out your name as evil. Oh! those blessed tempests! Do not give me calm weather when the air is still and heavy, and when lethargy is creeping over one's spirit. Lord, send a hurricane, give us a little stormy weather: when the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls, then God's servants know that the Lord is abroad and that his right hand is no longer in his bosom, that the moral atmosphere will get clear, that God's kingdom will come, and his will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven. “Peace, peace, peace,” that is the flap of the dragon's wings; the stern voice which proclaims perpetual war is the voice of the Captain of our salvation. You say, how is this? “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.” Peace, physical, Christ does make; there is to be no strife with the fist, no blow with the sword, but peace, moral, and peace, spiritual,

can never be in this world where Jesus Christ is, so long as error is there. But, you know, beloved, that you cannot do any good thing but what the devil will be sure to hinder you. What then? up and at him! coward looks and faint counsels are not for warriors of the cross. Expect fightings and you will not be disappointed. Whitfield used to say that some divines would go from the first of January to the end of December with a perfectly whole skin; the devil never thought them worth while attacking; but, said he, let us begin to preach with all our might, and soul, and strength, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and men will soon put a fool's cap on our heads, and begin laughing at us, and ridiculing us: but if so, so much the better. We are not alarmed because Satan hindereth us.

Nor will he only hinder us in working; he will hinder us *in seeking to unite with one another*. We are about to make an effort, as Christian Churches in London, to come closer together, and I am happy to find indications of success; but I should not wonder but what Satan will hinder us, and I would ask your prayers that Satan may be put to the rout in this matter, and that the union of our Churches may be accomplished. As a Church ourselves, we have walked together in peace for a long time, but I should not marvel if Satan should try to thrust in the cloven foot to hinder our walking in love, and peace, and unity.

Satan will hinder us *in our communion with Jesus Christ*. When at his table we say to ourselves, "I shall have a sweet moment now," but just then vanity intrudes. Like Abraham, you offer the sacrifice, but the unclean birds come down upon it, and you have need to drive them away. "Satan hindered us." He is not omnipresent, but by his numerous servants he works in all kinds of places, and manages to distract the saints when they would serve the Lord.

III. In the third place THERE ARE TWO OR THREE RULES BY WHICH THESE HINDRANCES MAY BE DETECTED AS SATANIC.

I think I heard somebody saying to himself this morning, "Yes, I should have risen in the world, and have been a man of money now if it had not been that Satan hindered me." Do not you believe it, dear friend. I do not believe that Satan generally hinders people from getting rich. He would just as soon that they should be rich as poor. He delights to see God's servants set upon the pinnacle of the temple, for he knows the position to be dangerous. High places and God's praise do seldom well agree. If you have been hindered in growing rich, I should rather set that down to the good providence of God which would not place you where you could not have borne the temptation. "Yes," said another, "I had intended to have lived in a certain district and done good, and have not been able to go: perhaps that is the devil." Perhaps it was: perhaps it was not. God's providence will know best where to place us. We are not always choosers of our own locality: and so we are not always to conclude when we are hindered and disappointed in our own intentions that Satan has done it, for it may very often be the good providence of God.

But how may I tell when Satan hinders me? I think you may tell thus: first, *by the object*. Satan's object in hindering us is to prevent our glorifying God. If anything has happened to you which has prevented your growing holy, useful, humble, and sanctified, then

you may trace that to Satan. If the distinct object of the interference to the general current of your life has been that you may be turned from righteousness into sin, then from the object you may guess the author. It is not God who does this, but Satan. Yet know that God does sometimes put apparent hindrances in the way of his own people, even in reference to their usefulness and growth in grace, but then his object is still to be considered: it is to try his saints and so to strengthen them; while the object of Satan is to turn them out of the right road and make them take the crooked way.

You may tell the suggestions of Satan, again, by *the method* in which they come: God employs good motives, Satan bad ones. If that which has turned you away from your object has been a bad thought, a bad doctrine, bad teaching, a bad motive—that never came from God, that must be from Satan.

Again, you may tell them from *their nature*. Whenever an impediment to usefulness is pleasing, gratifying to you, consider that it came from Satan. Satan never brushes the feathers of his birds the wrong way; he generally deals with us according to our tastes and likings. He flavours his bait to his fish. He knows exactly how to deal with each man, and to put that motive which will fall in with the suggestions of poor carnal nature. Now, if the difficulty in your way is rather contrary to yourself than for yourself, then it comes from God; but if that which now is a hindrance brings you gain, or pleasure, or emolument in any way, rest assured it came from Satan.

We can tell the suggestions of Satan, once more, by their season. Hindrances to prayer, for instance, if they are Satanic, come *out of the natural course and relation of human thoughts*. It is a law of mental science that one thought suggests another, and the next the next, and so on, as the links of a chain draw one another. But Satanic temptations do not come in the regular order of thinking; they dash upon the mind at unawares. My soul is in prayer: it would be unnatural that I should then blaspheme, yet then the blasphemy comes; therefore it is clearly Satanic, and not from my own mind. If I am set upon doing my Master's will, and presently a recreant thought assails me, that being apart from the natural run of my mind and thoughts, may be at once ejected as not being mine, and may be set down to the account of the devil, who is the true father of it. By these means I think we may tell when Satan hinders, and when it is our own heart, or when it is of God. We ought carefully to watch that we do not put the saddle on the wrong horse. Do not blame the devil when it is yourself, and on the other hand, when the Lord puts a bar in your way, do not say, "That is Satan," and so go against the providence of God. It may be difficult at times to see the way of duty, but if you go to the throne of God in prayer you will soon discover it. "Bring hither the ephod," said David, when he was in difficulty. Say you the same? Go you to the great High Priest, whose business it is to give forth the oracle! Lo, upon his breast hangs the Urim and Thummim, and you shall from him find direction in every time of difficulty and dilemma.

IV. Supposing that we have ascertained that hindrances in our way really come from Satan, WHAT THEN?

I have but one piece of advice, and that is, *go on*, hindrance or no hindrance, in the path of duty as God the Holy Ghost enables you. If Satan hinders you, I have already hinted that this *opposition should cheer you*. "I did not expect," said a Christian minister, "to be easy in this particular pastorate, or else I would not have come here; for I always count it," said he, "to be my duty to show the devil that I am his enemy, and if I do that, I expect that he will show me that he is mine." If you are now opposed and you can trace that opposition distinctly to Satan, congratulate yourself upon it: do not sit down and fret. Why, it is a great thing that a poor creature like you can actually vex the great prince of darkness and win his hate. It makes the race of man the more noble that it comes in conflict with a race of spirits, and stands foot to foot even with the prince of darkness himself. It is a dreadful thing, doubtless, that you should be hindered by such an adversary, but it is most hopeful, for if he were your friend you might have cause to fear indeed. Stand out against him, because *you have now an opportunity of making a greater gain than you could have had had he been quiet*. You could never have had a victory over him if you had not engaged in conflict with him. The poor saint would go on his inglorious way to heaven if he were unmolested, but being molested, every step of his pathway becomes glorious. Our position to-day is like that described by Bunyan, when from the top of the palace the song was heard—

"Come in, come in,
Eternal glory thou shalt win."

Now merely to ascend the stairs of the palace, though safe work, would not have been very ennobling; but when the foemen crowded round the door, and blocked up every stair, and the hero came to the man with the ink-horn, who sat before the door and said, "Write my name down, sir;" then to get from the lowest step to the top where the bright ones were singing, every inch was glorious. If devils did not oppose my path from earth to heaven, I might travel joyously, peacefully, safely, but certainly without renown; but now, when every step is contested in winning our pathway to glory, every single step is covered with immortal fame. Press on then, Christian, the more opposition, the more honour.

Be in earnest against these hindrances when you consider, again, *what you lose if you do not resist him and overcome him*. To allow Satan to overcome me would be eternal ruin to my soul. Certainly it would for ever blast all hopes of my usefulness. If I retreat and turn my back in the day of battle what will the rest of God's servants say? What shouts of derision will ring over the battle-field! How will the banner of the covenant be trailed in the mire! Why, we must not, we dare not, play the coward; we dare not give way to the insinuation of Satan and turn from the Master, for the defeat were then too dreadful to be endured. Beloved, let me feed your courage with the recollection that *your Lord and Master has overcome*. See him there before you. He of the thorn-crown has fought the enemy and broken his head: Satan has been completely worsted by the Captain of your salvation; and that victory was representative—he fought and won it for you.

You have to contend with a defeated foe, and one who knows and feels his disgrace; and though he may fight with desperation, yet he fights not with true courage, for he is hopeless of ultimate victory. Strike, then, for Christ has smitten him. Down with him, for Jesus has had him under his foot. Thou, weakest of all the host, triumph thou, for the Captain has triumphed before thee.

Lastly, remember that *you have a promise* to make you gird up your loins and play the man this day. "Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you." Christian minister, resign not your situation; do not think of sending in your resignation because the Church is divided and because the enemy is making head. Resist the devil. Flee not, but make him flee. Christian young men, you who have begun to preach in the street, or distribute tracts, or visit from house to house, though Satan hinders you very much I pray you now redouble your efforts: it is because Satan is afraid of you that he resists you, because he would rob you of the great blessing which is now descending on your head. Resist him, and stand fast. Thou Christian pleading in prayer, let not go thy hold upon the covenant angel now; for now that Satan hinders thee, it is because the blessing is descending. Thou art seeking Christ, close not those eyes, turn not away thy face from Calvary's streaming tree: now that Satan hinders thee, it is because the night is almost over, and the day-star begins to shine. Brethren, ye who are most molested, most sorrowfully tried, most borne down, yours is the brighter hope: be now courageous; play the man for God, for Christ, for your own soul, and yet the day shall come when you with your Master shall ride triumphant through the streets of the New Jerusalem, sin, death, and hell, captive at your chariot wheels, and you with your Lord crowned as victor, having overcome through the blood of the Lamb. May God bless dear friends now present. I do not know to whom this sermon may be most suitable, but I believe it is sent especially to certain tried saints. The Lord enable them to find comfort in it. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter iv. 12 to end;
and chapter v.
