

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

STAND FAST.

A Sermon

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“Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”—Colossians i. 23.

I THINK this morning we showed pretty plainly that many a soul has a great struggle to attain to the hope of the gospel.* Not without hand-to-hand fighting do many hearts lay hold on Christ and eternal life. Conscience often sets up a *chevaux de frise* around the hill of Calvary, and thus cuts off the convinced sinner from approaching his Saviour. Doubts and fears, the Black Watch of evil, drive back the coming ones, and worry those who would fain hide in the Rock of Ages. Satan summons all his hosts to push men back from the cross that they may not come to Christ and live. But, brethren, the battle does not end when by a desperate rush a man has come to Christ. In many it assumes a new form; the enemy now attempts to drag the trembler from his refuge, and eject him from his stronghold. It is difficult to get at the hope of the gospel; but quite as difficult to keep it so as not to be moved away from it. If Satan spends great power in keeping us from the hope, he uses equal force in endeavouring to drag us away from it, and equal cunning in endeavouring to allure us from it. Hence the apostle tells us not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel: the exhortation is needful in presence of an imminent danger. Do not think that in the moment when you believe in Christ the conflict is over, or you will be bitterly disappointed. It is then that the battle renews itself, and every inch of the road swarms with foemen. Between here and heaven you will always have to fight more or less, and frequently the severest struggle will be at a time when you are least prepared for it. There may be smooth passages in your career, and you may for a while be like your Saviour in the wilderness, of whom it is said, “Then the devil departed from him, and angels came and ministered unto him”; but you may not therefore cry, “My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved”; for fair weather may not outlast a single day. Do not grow secure, or carnally presumptuous. There is but a short space between one battle and another in this world. It is a series of skirmishes even

* See “Despair denounced and Grace glorified.” No. 1676.

when it does not assume the form of a pitched battle. He that would win heaven must fight for it. He that would take the new Jerusalem must scale it, and if he has the wit to take Jacob's ladder and set it against the wall and climb up that way, he will win the city. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." At this time our subject is not the winning, but the wearing; not the taking, but the holding of the fort: "Be not moved away," you that have come to it, "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."

I. First, BE NOT MOVED AWAY FROM THE SUBJECT OF THAT HOPE so as to give up any part of the hope which is revealed to you by the gospel. What is your hope?

First, it is the hope of *full salvation*—the hope that, inasmuch as you have believed in Jesus Christ, you are free from all condemnation at the present moment, and shall be free from all condemnation in the future as to all your sins; and that, in addition to this, he that takes away the condemnation of sin will also destroy the power of it over you. You have this hope—that being made to love righteousness you shall be enabled to walk in obedience, and "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." Your hope is that one day you shall be presented holy, unblamable, and unprovable in the sight of the great Father. You shall one day be presented "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," cleansed from all guilt, and cleansed from all tendency to sin and to corruption, and made like unto the perfect creature of God when first it comes from his hands. Oh, this is a blessed hope! "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure." We hope that we shall be like unto Christ himself, and that the glory of his holiness shall be our glory, and we shall see his face, and his name shall be in our foreheads, and we shall be without fault before the throne of God. Now, never give that up: never allow a particle of it to be diminished. God means all that he has said, and more rather than less. Let no man debase the currency of heaven or clip the coin of the realm of the Great King. The first part of it—hold to it, that the Lord Jesus Christ has cleansed you from all the guilt and penalty of sin, so that not a speck remains to accuse or condemn you. Hold to it, moreover, that if he has once washed you, you shall not need to wash again in that fountain filled with blood, for "he that is washed needeth not except to wash his feet"; and that washing shall be given to him by the condescending hands of Christ. The water shall be a second cure of that which the blood has already cleansed and removed. The blood-washing has removed all guilt, and prevented all possibility that sin shall have dominion over you. Complete forgiveness and full justification are proofs that through your Lord's endurance of the death-penalty you are no more under the law, but under grace. My soul rejoices to-night in perfect pardon. I will not take off a corner of it, so as to allow that the smallest charge can lie against us. We are complete in Christ. He that believeth in him is justified from all things.

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And, oh! my soul, with wonder view:
For sins to come here's pardon too!"

All pardon is provided in the one great sacrifice offered by our bleeding

Lord, who has now gone into the heavens to plead the merit of his blood. Never take off a fraction from that other part of full salvation, namely, the possibility and the absolute certainty that every sinful tendency now in your nature shall be utterly destroyed. There shall remain in you no root of bitterness, no scar of evil, no footprint of iniquity. There shall be no tinder in your soul upon which the sparks of temptation can fall, so as to live and make a flame; and when the Prince of this world cometh he shall find nothing in you. Then you shall enter into your rest eternal; for God keeps not his ripe wheat in the field, but takes it home when it is once fit to be gathered into the garner. This is your hope through the gospel: be not moved away from it.

In connection with this there is the hope of *final perseverance*. I confess that to me it is one of the most attractive doctrines of God's word, that "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." For I am "confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "He that believeth in him is not condemned." "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." There are many assurances to this effect, and if anything definite is taught in Scripture, I am confident that this is among the plainest of such teachings. I beseech you, do not shun this doctrine as though it would lead you into the least presumption if properly understood. Its legitimate effect is the very reverse of carelessness. If it be true that, once enlisted in this army of the Lord, you must and shall fight until you are a conqueror, then there is no temptation to lay down the sword for a while in the hope of taking it up again at a more convenient season. If, as some say, you may be Christ's soldier to-day and desert to-morrow, and then be enlisted again,—if it be indeed true that a man may be regenerated and then lose the divine life, and upon repentance be re-regenerated and re-re-re-re-regenerated I know not how many times, I am not aware that this novelty is hinted at in my unrevised New Testament. There I read of being "born again," but not of being born again and again and again and again and again—I say I cannot find a trace of this in the Bible. On the other hand, I find that if the one regeneration fails, which is impossible, there would remain nothing else to be done. God's best work is broken down, and he will never try it again. He has said, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." You cannot re-salt the salt if it has once lost its savour. If, then, grace does utterly depart, which I believe to be impossible, there remains no hope for such a one. God's supreme effort, according to that theory, has been made and failed. Now, there is nothing for it but that the land which has received the dew of

heaven, and brought forth no fruit, is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." We have but made the supposition to show you the danger, upon whose brink you stand, and over whose verge you would slide if grace did not prevent. If you indeed believe in Christ Jesus, set this to your seal, that he will keep you to the end. Whatsoever happens, "I am persuaded that neither things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." For dear life hold on to the hope of final preservation; for there is a purifying, encouraging, stimulating power about that precious truth. "He keepeth the feet of his saints:" "be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."

We have a hope beyond this; for we believe that we shall experience *the resurrection*. Though they fall down and men call them corpses, they are precious in the sight of the Lord, and the grave shall be a refining pot, out of which the pure metal of our purified body shall come forth. At the word of the Lord the dry bones shall live; they shall be clothed with flesh, and skin shall come upon them, if after that fashion the body is to be raised. But, if not—if the body is to assume another form, and we are to be made like unto a glory which as yet we cannot comprehend, then we may be sure of this—that we shall so rise that mortality shall put on immortality, and corruption shall give place to incorruption. In any case, our bodies shall rise again. The grace of God secures the bodies as well as the souls of the saints. Christ bought not the half of a man, but the whole trinity of our manhood is his redeemed inheritance: spirit, soul, and body shall dwell for ever with him, for he has redeemed our undivided manhood. Never give up that hope either concerning yourselves or your friends. Let nothing shake your confidence in the resurrection; let no philosophical explanation fritter it away. No other historical fact is so well attested as the resurrection of Christ, and that is the very corner-stone of our confidence. "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." Often and often when I am sore beset with devilish temptations and insinuations as to the eternal hope of my soul and body, I fly to this,—Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, and, inasmuch as he rose from the dead, he has come back to tell us that there is another world, and that not only our souls but our bodies shall inherit a far more blessed condition than this present one. Hold on to this hope of the gospel, and never let it go.

“The Lord is risen: he liveth,
 The First-born from the dead,
 To him the Father giveth
 To be creation's Head.
 O'er all for ever reigning,
 Of death he holds the keys;
 And hell—his might constraining—
 Obeys his high decrees.

Flies now the gloom that shaded
 The vale of death to me ;
 The terrors that invaded
 Are lost, O Christ, in Thee !
 The grave, no more appalling,
 Invites me to repose ;
 Asleep in Jesus falling,
 To rise as Jesus rose."

Then, remember, you have the hope of *the second advent* ; if Jesus comes before you die you will meet him—gladly meet and welcome the Son of God upon this earth. You shall be changed so that you shall be fit to inherit the incorruptible glories of the skies. You shall see your Redeemer when he stands in the latter day upon the earth. As Job said, "In my flesh shall I see God, whom my eyes shall see for myself, and not another." Have joy, then, at every thought of your Master's coming. Do not put it among dark prophecies or doubtful dreams. It is a clearly revealed truth that Jesus will come again and take his people up to their eternal home ; "Wherefore comfort one another with these words," and be not moved away from that hope of the gospel, which lies so sweetly in the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, once more, we have this hope—that when we have passed through all that concerns time and are in eternity, that shoreless, bottomless sea, there remains for us no fear or dread ; but we shall be "*for ever with the Lord.*" I notice that certain of those who deny the eternity of future punishment are ready, for the sake of their notion, to pull down the battlements of heaven itself, and to make the joy of saints to be as short as the misery of sinners. I, for one, will not pawn heaven in that fashion, to make sin cheap for the wilfully impenitent. Once landed on that eternal shore, there are no storms to dread or hurricanes to fear for these frail barques of ours. There shall not a wave of trouble roll across our peaceful spirits when once we cast anchor in the "Fair Havens," in the port of peace for ever. Be not dismayed as though there would be an after-probation, or a purgatory, or a *limbus patrum*, or any of those pretty places that have filled priests' pockets so long, and are now being newly vamped and produced by our proud thinkers as an aid to their pretty speculations. We will have no purgatory under any form, it is the larder of priests, and the refuge of heresy-mongers ; but there is not a word of it in God's book. We stand to the text—"So shall we be for ever with the Lord." "The righteous shall go away into life eternal." There is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and I will write upon him my new name." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel," as to the objects of that hope.

II. But now, secondly, I charge you, beloved, before God, that ye BE NOT MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL, AS TO THE GROUND OF THAT HOPE. And what is the ground of that hope?

The ground of that hope is, first, *the rich, free, sovereign grace of God*, because he has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The Lord claims for himself the prerogative of mercy, and as he can exercise it without the violation of his justice through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, we joy and rejoice in the fact that men are not saved because of any natural goodness of disposition, or because of anything that they have done, or ever shall do. The children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, the divine decree stood fast fixed in the sovereign will and immutable counsels of Jehovah, and it is a good ground of hope for the very chief of sinners. If he has saved the dying thief,—if he has saved the adulterer,—if he has saved even the murderer, why should he not save me? He can if he will, and he is exceeding gracious, and infinite in compassion, willing not the death of any, but that all should come to repentance. It is in the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin, and the cause of that mercy is itself. The reason of divine love is divine love. Because God is gracious therefore he bestows his grace upon the undeserving and the lost. Be not moved away from this.

The ground of our salvation is, next, *the merit of Christ*—what Christ is—what Christ has done—what Christ has suffered. This is the ground upon which God saves the sons of men. Even Cardinal Bellarmin, the mighty opponent of Luther—perhaps the best opponent that he had, whose eyes saw much of gospel light, once said this, that albeit that good works are necessary unto salvation, yet, inasmuch as no man can be sure that he has performed as many good works as will save him, it is, upon the whole, safest to trust alone in the merits and sufferings of Christ. Cardinal! the safest way suits me. If that be the best and safest, what better do any of us want? Where is the rest for our soul if the ground of our hope is to be what we are, or what we do, or what we feel? But when we fall back upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, and believe in him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world,—I say, when we fall back on him, then we have something solid to rest upon. Our eyes cannot bear to look into eternity so long as we cling in the least degree to human merit; but when it is all put aside, and we look to him bleeding yonder on the cross, then is there a "peace that passeth all understanding," filling our hearts by Christ Jesus. Brethren, if a man were to live in good works without a single sin for ten thousand years, he would be well recompensed for that by half-an-hour of heaven. How, then, can we expect to merit eternal bliss by any works of ours? Ah, no; the hope were vanity. Heaven is too precious a thing to be purchased by anything that we can by any possibility do; but it is not too great to be purchased by the blood of Christ; and when we come to his atonement our anchor holds abidingly. "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel."

Another ground of our hope is this,—that *God has solemnly pledged* that "whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." If, then, we do really and in very deed believe in Jesus Christ and rest on him, we cannot perish, for God cannot contradict

himself. Thus it is written: hear it and accept it,—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Those of us, then, who do trust the Saviour, and him only, and have made confession of that trust in his own appointed way, know of a surety that God’s eternal veracity is staked upon our salvation. It is not possible that the Lord should cast away a believer. Is it not written, “The just shall live by faith”? We live because we believe in the ever living One. “He that believeth in him hath everlasting life.” Be not moved away from this gospel hope, which God that cannot lie has set before us.

“The covenant of the King of kings
Shall stand for ever sure;
Beneath the shadow of his wings
His saints repose secure.”

Another ground of our hope is *the immutability of God*. God changes not, and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. The immutability of Christ also confirms our hope; for he is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” The unchanging power of his blood is a tower of strength to our faith.

“Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”

If God be immutable, then those that believe in him have an immutable hope: be sure that you never cast it away.

But, once again, our hope of the gospel is grounded in *the infallibility of Scripture*. The Papist has an infallible pope, but we have an infallible Bible. If that which is spoken in this Book be not true, neither is our hope sure. If these things be questionable, our confidence is questionable; but if this word of God abides fast for ever and ever, though heaven and earth should pass away, then he that believes and builds on this infallible truth may rejoice and stand fast. I beseech you, “be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.”

III. So far have I come with all my heart and soul, and I believe that you, dear friends, the members of this church at any rate, have accompanied me therein. Now let us consider HOW WE MAY BE MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL unless grace be given to prevent us.

We may be moved from the hope of the gospel in the following ways. Sometimes by *a conceit of ourselves*. You may get off the ground of confidence in free grace to think, “Now I am somebody. Have not I prayed at the prayer-meeting? Did not friends say that they were edified by it? Have not I preached a wonderful sermon? Am I not generous? Have not I given large sums to the church and to the poor? Am I not somebody?” Ah! you and the devil together can make a fine tale about that, and I have no doubt that all he tells you you will very greedily suck in, for we like to be praised, and, though the praise comes from Satan himself, it is welcome to our proud flesh. Well, whenever we get to think we are somebody, we are moved away from the hope of the gospel. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Somebody says, “But I am not one.” Ah! then he did not come to save you. “Do you say I was a sinner once, but I have grown so perfect that

I do not sin now." Don't you? Then you are removed from that hope which belongs to those who confess and lament their sins. You un-Christianize yourself as soon as you strike your name out of the list of sinners who are saved by the Saviour's grace. You are a sinner and Christ died to save you, but do not be moved away from the hope of the gospel by a vain notion that you are no longer sinful. Christ came not to heal the whole, but those who are sick.

Do not be moved away, on the other hand, by *despondency*. Satan does not mind which way you get off the rock, whether it is by jumping up or by jumping down. It is all the same to him, so long as you leave the rock of your salvation. Many there are that go up in a balloon of conceit, while others are ready to roll down the steep of despondency and despair. But be not moved away from the hope of the gospel either one way or the other. The least sin ought to make you humble, but the greatest sin ought not to make you despair. If you are even now as big a sinner as any fifty men rolled into one, Christ can save you readily,— nay, has saved you if you put your trust in him. But, on the other hand, if you presume that you are not guilty, or despairingly say, "I am guilty, but I dare not believe that he can forgive me," you are in either case moved away from the hope of the gospel. May eternal mercy keep you hourly penitent and believing; for repentance and faith walk on either side of a Christian till he enters the pearly gate.

You may be moved away from the hope of the gospel also by *false teaching*. If, for instance, you do not believe Christ to be "Light of light, very God of very God," you have moved away from our hope, which depends upon his godhead. If you think that the priest can save you, you are moved away from the one only Priest before whom all other priests must let their censers die out into blackness. He alone can save you. If you listen to any teaching which puts your working or your doing into the place of Christ, you are drinking in error, and you will be removed from the hope of your calling, which is free grace, received by faith, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You can be removed from the hope of your calling by *hoping to live by feelings*. Ah! there are many Christians who get tempted that way. They feel so happy, and that is the reason why they believe that they are saved. That is not the reason why I believe I am saved. I am saved because I trust Christ, and if I were as miserable as misery itself I should be just as truly saved as if I were as happy as heaven itself. It is faith that does it, not feeling. Faith is precious, feeling is fickle. Believing, we stand firm; but by feeling we are tossed about. True feeling follows faith, and as such is valuable; but faith is the root, and the life of the tree lies there, and not in the boughs and leaves, which may be taken away, and yet the tree will survive. Some have very joyous feelings; they swim in trances and deliriums, and yet they are all wrong. Rest you on Christ, whether it is bright day or dark night with you: though he slay you, trust in him,—as much trust in him as if he pressed you to his bosom. Faith must abide, though joy depart. If your feelings are down in the dust,—if you feel as though you could not hold up your head or look towards heaven, never mind that, but cling to the promise, feel what you may. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners, and good feelings will follow by-and-by; but,

just now, your first business is this—"He that believeth in him is not condemned." "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." Stand you to that hope of the gospel.

Many are moved away from the hope of their calling by a *dazzle of intellect*. They are content simply to believe in Jesus till they meet some fine man, a thinker with a big forehead and a large box which ought to be full of brains. We have not been inside to see what is there, but the preacher talks much of his thought and culture. He tells you that you are behind the age,—that a faith which believes God might do very well for the times of Cromwell and the roundhead Puritans, but that, nowadays, we are far in advance of all that kind of thing. Whenever a brother dazzles you like that, let him dazzle. Let him shine as much as he likes; but, as for you, tell him that he who has once looked the sun in the face is not to be dazzled by a glow-worm. Go back to your bank, and dazzle your brother worms, but you cannot dazzle me! A man who once has come to know Christ experimentally, and lives by faith upon the Son of God, may, if he likes, read all your essays and reviews, and all the articles in your Quarterlies which ridicule the power of faith whether in living or in dying, and he will say when he has read them all through, "This is all they know about it." I daresay that if a horse were to write a book he would tell us that roast beef is exceedingly bad food to eat. "Well," we should say, "that is a very natural opinion for a horse. Let him keep to his oats and his hay." And when a man says that there is no power in prayer, he shows that he does not know anything about praying. Let him keep to what he does know and hold his tongue about what he does not know. He says that it cannot be so. "Ah," say we, "but it is so"; and when we have tasted and handled it and known it, there is no dazzling us out of it by a sense of the great man's superiority of mind. I have often thought that those who cry up their own learning must have wonderfully little of it, for I have jotted down in my pocket-book that I never saw the Bank of England send its bullion anywhere with a number of bells upon the cart to say, "Here is bullion coming along." But I have noticed that every dustman does that. When I hear the bells ringing so much about "culture," I say to myself, "Dust oh!" If they had real diamonds on board they would hold their tongues about them. At any rate, dust or diamonds, the load in these men's carts is nothing to us, we have a more sure word of testimony to which our experience has set its seal. We have believed in Christ Jesus and found salvation, and by God's grace we will not be moved away from the hope of our calling.

Lastly, be not moved away by *persecution*, or by *sneers*, or by *ridicule*. The persecution of this present day is a small thing compared with what our forefathers suffered. Look at that picture of the amphitheatre, by Doré. All is over. Every seat is empty. The stars, like the eyes of God, are looking down upon the arena. There lie the bodies of the saints, and there are the tigers and the lions prowling over the sanded floor, tearing the carcasses which they have slain. But the painter pictures a vision of angels, descending from over the uttermost parapet of the amphitheatre; they are tenderly watching over those precious bodies, for they have triumphed, and from the mouths of the beasts they have gone

to the thrones of the angels. Only hold you fast where the saints held fast at the first, "in nothing terrified by your adversaries." No more mind the advance of learning than they dreaded the universality of ignorance. We have to fight with both the ignorance of this world and the wisdom of it, too; "But the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man." How readily shall the divine wisdom and power make an end of learned babblings. Be not moved away from the hope of your calling. "Cast not away your confidence," which hath great recompense of reward. Be like the Grecian youth who took his shield to battle, let it be your glory and your defence. We would say to you what the Spartan mother said to her son: "Come back with your shield, or on it." Come back with the gospel well strapped upon your arm like a golden shield, or, if you die, may it become your bier, and may you be borne home upon it as a steadfast believer in Christ; but never be moved away from the hope of your calling, for so would your shield be vilely cast away.

III. Lastly, WHY IS IT THAT WE CANNOT BE MOVED AWAY FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL? What would follow if we were?

Well, first, we will not be moved away from the hope of our calling, for *there is nothing better to take its place*. A man would not think of going to Australia if he heard that the wages were less there than here, and the expense of living greater, and that the people were poorer. "No," he would say, "I shall not jump out of the frying-pan into the fire. I shall certainly stop where I am rather than go farther and fare worse." Well, we are just of that mind. We do not see how we could improve ourselves. Jonathan Edwards, in one of his treatises, speaks somewhat to this effect: "If any man can prove this form of the gospel to be untrue and a mere dream, the very best thing that he can do is to sit down and weep for ever to think that he has disproved the brightest hope that ever shone upon the eyes of men." And that is so. To have the glorious hope that, believing in Christ, we are saved, is such a blessedness and such a joy that nothing can compare with it. Where are the fields that can tempt away the sheep of Christ? Where is the shepherd that can vie with him? Where is the light that is brighter than this eternal sun? Oh! ye tempt us with your rattles like children, but having become men we despise them. What have you to offer of truth, of hope, of comfort, of joy, equal to what we possess? Let us each one sing our answer to the tempter,—

"Thou only Sovereign of my heart,
My refuge, my almighty Friend,
And can my soul from thee depart,
On whom alone my hopes depend?"

"Let earth's alluring joys combine,
While thou art near, in vain they call;
One smile, one blissful smile of thine,
My dearest Lord, outweighs them all.

"Thy name, my inmost powers adore,
Thou art my life, my joy, my care;
Depart from thee! 'tis death—'tis more,
'Tis endless ruin, deep despair!"

Remember, too, that if we are moved away from the hope of our calling *we shall soon be in bondage*. A man may be as merry as a lark if he believes in Christ for salvation; but let him leave that and before long he will be as dull as an owl. What is there that can give us joy apart from Christ? Are we not bound in chains of doubt when once we leave the way of sovereign grace through believing in Christ? If we are moved away from the hope of our calling we cannot grow. A tree that is frequently moved usually dies; but growth there cannot be; and a man who begins in the spirit, and hopes to be made perfect by the flesh,—begins in free grace and then gets tagging on his own works,—begins by trusting in Christ and then makes confession to a priest,—rests in the precious blood, and then dabbles in sacraments, and hopes to find salvation there: he can never grow in grace. He is wherried about with every oar. Every tide of doctrine puts him up stream or down stream. He can make no progress. And what good can such a man do? He cannot influence others beneficially, for he teaches one thing to-day, and another to-morrow. He says that God has saved him, and the next day he doubts it. He says that the atonement is full and free, and to-morrow he says that penance is to be performed. He cannot bless others, he does not himself know the way to blessing.

Besides, if we were moved away from the hope of our calling, what mean, miserable wretches we should be, for we should have *deserted our Saviour*. I wonder where I could hide my dishonourable head if I once came here to preach to you salvation by the works of the flesh and not by the grace of God. I hope that you would hiss me from the platform, and I hope that you will so serve everybody that shall succeed me when I am gone who shall preach to you any other gospel than that ye have received. Hold fast with all your might right solemnly to the grand old faith, for if you do not, in rejecting that way of salvation you reject yourselves. What did Christ die for, if we can be saved in some other way? Why did he pour out his blood if there is a cheaper method to win the skies? Why did he go down into the depths of death-shade, if you can force your way to heaven by your own endeavours without him? No, no: we will stand fast where we now are, resting only and alone upon Jesus Christ our Saviour.

For us to leave the plan of salvation—and with this I close—is something like a soldier entrenched in an impregnable fortress accepting an invitation to come out of it. You remember how the black monarch who has been so much run after in England, said that our soldiers ought to come out of the entrenchments. They were rats, he said, to hide behind earthworks. If they would only come out, he would destroy them; but our soldiers were wise enough not to venture into the open until the proper time. So the world, the flesh, the devil, and error say, “Come out! Come out: You talk about an infallible Scripture and an almighty Saviour, and a simple faith in him. Come out and fight us fairly on the level.” Yes, but we do not see it, and we shall never attempt it. We are like the little coney, of whom Solomon speaks. He hid himself among the rocks, and the sportsman, I have no doubt, said, “Why don’t you come out, little coney? Come, and let me be your friend.” But the coney, though he was feeble, was wise, and he hid himself in the rock all the more, because a stranger invited him out. Do you the same

when Satan cries, "Come away and be free. Be a man. Do not be always trusting in authority." "No," say you, "I shall keep where I am." As I was riding along in the south of France one day I saw a pair of fine birds overhead. The driver called out in the French tongue, "Eagles!" Yes; and there was a man below with a gun, who was wishful to get a nearer acquaintance with the eagles, but they did not come down to oblige him. He pointed his rifle at them, but his shots did not reach half way, for the royal birds kept above. The higher air is the fit dominion for eagles. Up there is the eagle's playground, where he plays with the callow lightnings. Up above the smoke and clouds he dwells. Keep there, eagles! Keep there! If men can get you within range, they mean no good to you. Keep up, Christians. Keep up in the higher element, resting in Jesus Christ, and do not come down to find a perch for yourself among the trees of philosophy.

Whatever we do let us never leave the way of truth, of peace, of safety. We are going along the king's highway, and the thieves on the side of the road say, "Come off the highway: it is so dull and monotonous. Come into the woods; we will show you fair flowers, and ferny dells, and quiet caves. Come, listen to the birds that sing all day and all night too. Come quick with us." We heed you not: he that travels along the king's highway is under the king's protection; but he that wanders into the dark mountains and lonesome woods may take care of himself. We shall do as we have done—follow the way that leads from the banishment—the way of trusting in the Saviour and in him alone.

As you hold to the faith, so may God bless and enrich you. As with simple heart you plod along the road that leads to heaven by the righteousness of the Son of God, may the Lord be with you and comfort you. But if you turn back, woe unto you! A curse will fall upon you in that day of shame and crime!

The Lord keep you that you may keep the faith. Amen.

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