

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PLANTER OF THE EAR MUST HEAR.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?”—Psalm xciv. 9.

THE character of a man hinges upon his relation to God. You may know what manner of man he is, and what are his communications, if you find out how he stands towards God. With the many God is a mere name: a word to be pronounced more or less reverently; but nothing more. He is not a force operating upon their daily lives. His glory is no motive of action, no object of desire, no joy of their heart. “God is not in all their thoughts”; and in consequence their lives are not conformed to his holy law. Blessed be the Most High, there are a few to whom God is everything: the first and last, the centre and circumference of their being. To them the Lord is the great trust and treasure of their spirit; he is the rock of their confidence, the well-spring of their delight. Such men as they delight in God, will seek after holiness, and aim at perfection. God has shined upon them, and their faces will be bright. God dwells within them, and as from a kindled lamp light will stream forth.

Among the ungodly there are many whose lives prove that they know nothing about God. Indeed, their ignorance of God is their support in their present behaviour. They comfort themselves with the notion, “The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.” To them God is out of the world as to observation or practical interference. They do not care whether he sees them or not; for their belief is, that if he does see he cares nothing what men may think or do. He is too far off to be concerned about human affairs. He will neither grow angry with the sin of the wicked, nor take pleasure in the holiness of the godly. Of this practical atheism I am going to speak at this time, pleading against that frame of mind by the argument of the text. “He that planted the ear, shall he not

hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" May the Holy Spirit help me in my endeavour, and may all my hearers believe in the living, hearing, seeing Jehovah!

I. Our first observation will be, THE NOTION THAT GOD CANNOT HEAR OR SEE IS PERNICIOUS. In judging it, we will follow the line of the psalm which now lies open before us.

We perceive that *men who talked in this godless fashion were proud*. Hence the prayer, "Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud." The man who thinks that God is not in the world, or is not at all concerned in its affairs, thinks that he is, himself, about the greatest person in existence. There may be some other poor creatures about; but he is, in many respects, the most deserving of esteem. He who thinks little of God, thinks much of himself. "Who is the Lord," saith he, "that I should obey his voice?" Who talks like this but Pharaoh, the king, the potent one, accustomed to have his own will in everything? Those speak exceeding proudly who have no knowledge of the Most High. Measuring themselves by others like themselves, they are not wise. The worm exalts itself above its meaner fellow worms, and dreams not of the great Eternal One who filleth all things. Pride is very apt to grow great when knowledge is small, and reverence is absent. Proud language usually goes with profane talk and blasphemous ideas; for it comes of the same kindred. "How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?" If there be no God, or no God to care about, then straightway men delight in uttering things which make the blood of the godly to curdle. They render no praise to God; since they seek all glory for themselves. Because of their own conceit, they question his wisdom, cavil at his Word, doubt his justice, impugn the sentences of his bar, and speak evil of him even as they list. Give a man of proud heart a fluent tongue, and opportunity enough to speak of God, and then take away from him the idea that God hears him, and there is no telling to what lengths of profanity he will hasten. His tongue is set on fire of hell, and it burns with a fury inconceivable. If you have ever been forced to hear or read the expressions of renowned infidels, you can form some idea of how completely Satan works his will with godless men. Take God away, and the brakes are taken off, and the train dashes down hill at terrific speed. "Their tongue walketh through the earth," saith David. No bounds can be set to the evil perambulations of an atheistic tongue. Not even heaven itself is free from the assaults of its pride: "They set their mouth against the heavens." They slander God himself, because they imagine that he does not hear.

Nor is this the end of the mischief. When the fear of God is taken away from men, *they frequently proceed to persecute his servants*. The prophet complains, "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage." As they hate God, so they manifest their hate against his people. If they cannot get at the leader, if they cannot smite the shepherd, they will at least worry the flock. Read the long and cruel story of human malice against the church of God: it mingles with the record of every nation: it is an awful history, written in tears and gore. The sacramental host of God's

elect has left behind it in its marches a trail of blood and ashes, filling up, in the persons of the persecuted, that which was behind of the sufferings of the Lord; for all that grief was meant for him if his enemies could but have poured it on his head. At times it has seemed as if God had given up his people, and caused the rod of the wicked to rest upon his heritage. No wonder that it was so with them; for thus it pleased him to deal with his Only-begotten Son. He delivered him up to the world to do with him as it listed. The Father did not interpose, though they spat in his face, though they scourged him, though they blindfolded him and buffeted him, and made nothing of him. Yea, though they nailed him to the accursed tree, and stood to gloat their cruel eyes upon his agonies, the great God did not interfere to save the Beloved of his soul. A greater force than almighty power held omnipotence itself in check, that it should not lift its finger to rescue the Lord's anointed. If he was to save others, he could not be saved himself. Though he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet Jehovah left his own Son to die in the hands of the ungodly. You know the reason why; but, apart from that, it was a strange procedure. The Lord may deal thus with his own church and his own cause, till his people cry, "How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger!" The truth may appear to be wounded, slain, dead, and even buried. But yet, as Jesus rose again, so shall his true church and cause rise again, though they be laid in the grave, and the stone is sealed, and the watch is set. Truth, though entombed, must rise again; for her Lord arose, and God is with his cause as he was with his Son. But, beloved, when men think that there is no God, and speak evil of the Most High, we need not wonder that they take liberty to persecute the chosen of God. There is no telling to what lengths of cruelty men will go when unhindered by a sense of God's presence. The psalm says, "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless." Take God away, and what a place this world would be! Without religion our earth would soon become a huge Aceldama, a field of blood. Ah, dear friends! men little know what they owe to the presence of God's people even in a city like this. There is no reason but religion why London should not become like Paris during the Reign of Terror. If it were not that God has respect to the faithful that dwell in the midst of the city, he might give it over to the ungodly; and no greater plague could come upon it. When men say, "Doth God see? Doth God know?" then they seek every man his own; and, if they can, they turn like tigers upon each other; society is torn to pieces, and the weak are devoured. If the Lord had not left us a remnant who fear his name, we had been as Sedoma, and had been made like unto Gomorrah. There is no telling how far the evil one may be let loose to excite men to evil; but, in any case, the chosen means of the devil will be the spread of atheistic principles among the masses. A world without God is a world without fear, without law, without order, without hope.

Note well, that if we were persuaded that God did not hear, and did not see, *there would be an end of worship*. Would there not? Could you worship a deaf God? I must confess that such a being would not be

God to me. If he could not hear, and hear all things, I should see at once a limit to his nature; and a being of limited nature is not God, since God is, and must be, of necessity, infinite, to be God at all. Though it is hard to conceive what infinity must be, we must predicate it of Godhead; and, if it be gone, Godhead is gone with it, and *there is an end of belief in God*. The idea of a deaf God is absurd. Does not Jehovah see me? then he does not see all things—he is blind to something. Could you worship a blind God? If you could, you are on a par with those to whom you talk of sending missionaries; for their gods “have eyes, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not”; and they that make them are like unto them. He is an idolater, and not a worshipper of the living and true God, who worships a being of whom he entertains the notion that he cannot hear or see. There is clearly an end of worship when there is an end of belief in a hearing and observing God.

Nor is this all: *it seems to me that there is, to a large extent, an end of the moral sense*. If there be no God to punish sin, then every man will do as seemeth right in his own eyes; and why should he not? By what consideration will he be hindered? If there be no reward for righteousness, and righteousness involves self-denial, why should he deny himself? If there is to be no punishment for sin, and sin is pleasurable, why should he not seize the pleasure? Take away all thought that God sees and hears, and you have removed the underlying basis upon which morality itself is to be built up. A godless world is a lawless world. Anarchy comes in when the fear of God goes out; and all the mischiefs that you can imagine, and much more, rush in like a flood. Without God, or even with a god that does not see and does not hear, where is the hope of the despairing? To-night she will go home with a broken heart, for, alas! her last friend is dead. She will cover her face and sit astonished in her sorrow; and now what can she do? Poor woman, with no helper upon earth, where will you look? If she can bow by the side of that poor bed, and cast her care on God, that loves and cares for her, she will rise out of the deep of her distress. But if there be none in heaven to note her misery, the help of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, is taken away. What now remains? And he that is full of disease, and near to die, upon whom the physician has looked down as he lies in the hospital, and has shaken his head, and he knows that his doom is sealed, and that he will never quit that bed except to exchange it for the grave—if he has no God, how will he turn his face to the wall in the gall of bitterness, and moan in anguish never to be assuaged. But if God sees and hears, the widow is not without a helper, and the dying man, in all his agony, is not without a hope. O cruel unbelief, put not out our one sun, take not from the mourner his one consolation. Let me lose myself, but not my God, who is more than life to me. Yes, if you can, you may blot the glory out of heaven, and silence every angel's harp, and quench in endless night the sevenfold lustre of the celestial light; but leave me my God, and I shall have all heaven back again in him, and somewhat more. Oh, yes, a God that hears and sees—we must have him, or else we are orphaned indeed!

If God does not see and hear, *we are shipwrecked upon the rock of*

blank atheism. I do not care a bit what men believe in, whether it be pantheism, or agnosticism, or theism; if they have no personal God that hears and sees, they have, in fact, no God at all. "There is a power that makes for righteousness," said one; but if that power is insensible, and never communicates with man, and never notices him, there is nothing in the forced admission of any use to him who makes it or hears it. It is big talk, such as men call "bosh," and nothing more. Though it be veiled in the language of philosophy, the scientific jargon which makes God into insensible force is covert atheism. I must have a God that hears and sees, and comes into the arena of my daily life, and helps me because he loves me, or else I have no God. My God dwells with me, and works for me, or else I have no God. Fine words, pretty phrases, and magnificent definitions, are so many wind-bags, and go for nothing: there cannot be a deaf God,¹ nor a blind God, nor an insensible God. If any of you so believe, go you to Bedlam, and find there your fit associates. As for us, we know that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is the living God, and his memorial is that he heareth prayer.

So much for that first point.

II. But, secondly, THE NOTION THAT GOD CANNOT SEE AND HEAR IS AN ABSURD NOTION. According to our text, it is proved to be unreasonable. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" Think of that argument for a little. Here is a creature which has ears, and can hear. The God who created that being, can he not hear? Has he given to his creature more than he has himself? Has he made a creature which excels himself in essential faculties? Has he bestowed a sense which he himself never had? How can it be? The God that makes a man with ears to hear, must possess hearing himself.

The very idea of hearing seems to me to necessitate that he who conceived the idea, was himself able to hear. He could not have borrowed the idea, for there was no other being but himself in the beginning: whence took he the thought, but from his own being? That the mind of man should be reached by the gate of the ear, by an impression upon an auditory nerve, is a wonderful conception. If you do not think so, because you are so used to it, I would like you to tell me whether you could invent a sixth sense. You have hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, seeing. Will you invent another? You have not the power to invent another sense; and the idea of any sense which now exists must have been equally a feat of boundless wisdom, impossible to a being who could not hear and see.

He that invented the idea, also *planned the way* by which hearing would become possible. What an intellect was that which forged the link between matter and mind, so that the movements of particles of air, and the impression made by these upon the drum of the ear should turn into impressions upon mind and heart! God must have every power in perfection, or he could not have contrived and constructed such an admirable instrument as the ear. I should not think the time ill-spent if I were able to give you a lecture upon the human ear. We know far less about it than we do concerning the eye; and my own knowledge of it is so scant that I can only

glance at the subject. That outer portion which we commonly call the ear, is only the vestibule of curious, intricate, winding passages, which communicate with chambers of bone and vaults of ivory. Curtains are stretched along these passages, membranes which tremble as the head of a drum, or vibrate like a tambourine. Between two of these parchment curtains a chain of very small bones is extended. Have you never heard of the stirrup-bone? Rows of fine threads, or nerves, convey the motion, or the sound, into the brain, and there the souls sit waiting for the news. It is all wonderful. Nor must I forget to remind you that the ear is "planted." The important parts—the real ear—are so deeply seated in the head, as to be beyond a mere external inspection. The lobe of the ear is like a leaf above ground, but the hearing organ is "planted" in the skull; it is placed very near the brain, and operates on both sides of it, so as to keep the whole mind in communication with sounds from every quarter. The ear is set deep, and its chambers—some filled with air, and some filled with liquid—are thus protected from much harm, which might otherwise come to them from the outer world.

An aurist who explained to you the mechanism of the ear should make you feel that an undevout aurist is mad. The infinite wisdom of God is seen in this gate of sense; and it is there in far greater measure than we can perceive. And can you believe that this marvellous instrument for hearing was made by a deaf God, or a dead God, or an impersonal power; or that it came into existence through "a fortuitous concourse of atoms"? I know not the precise terms in which they now attempt to describe creation without a Creator, design without a designer; but I can only say that those who believe in ears created by an unhearing force or being, have more faith than I can muster. Nay, I venture to say that their faith has overleaped itself, has climbed to the top of the ladder and gone down on the other side; so that, instead of being great faith, it has rotted into gross credulity. To fly from the difficulties of faith to the impossibilities of unbelief, is a singular infatuation. I prefer to believe in a personal, intelligent First Cause.

But even if you had an ear made—and I suppose that it would be no very great difficulty to fashion, in wax or some other substance, an exact resemblance to an ear—could you produce hearing then? *God alone gives the life which hears.* That particular point in which motion is translated into audible sound—where is that? That thing which hears—I mean not the vibrating parchment, nor the telephonic nerves, but that living something which is informed by the nerves, and reads their message—where and what is that something? The surgeon searches with his knife, but he declares that he cannot find it. No, he cannot find it: it has fled before his instrument of search. But this much is sure—once gone he cannot restore it. He could not make it at the first, nor renew it when once departed. Not the whole troop of surgeons and physicians of all the hospitals could suffice to create a soul. There is a spiritual something—the true man, and this it is which God makes. Do you know yourself? Could you put your finger on yourself? Oh, no; that mystic being, that strange, half Godlike existence, the soul, is not within the range of our senses. He

that made the soul, has he no soul? Can he not hear? O sirs, the argument is plain enough! It needs no elaboration. It carries conviction at first sight.

To imagine that the Creator of life does not see and hear is absurd; and yet the devil tempts gracious people, the best of people, at times to think that the Lord does not observe them in their trials. "Oh," say they, "God is too great, surely, to hear me, a poor sinful woman, or a frail, ignorant man. His greatness must prevent his hearing *me*." Yet, surely, you would not think the Lord deaf because you are unworthy. You would not attribute to him a greatness which would really involve littleness. If you make him so great that he is deaf, or so grand that he is blind, you have dishonoured him. "No," say you, "but, surely, God does not see and hear everything. Look at my great sorrow; why does he allow it to grow and deepen? What keen miseries are caused by my thoughts! As George Herbert puts it, 'My thoughts are all a case of knives.'" Just so; and yet the Lord knows and permits it all in love to your soul. He does not forget you; but, "like as a father pitieth his children," so doth he pity you. Do not be led astray by the idea that you are passed over and forgotten by your God. "He telleth the number of the stars, he calleth them all by their names"; and he knows you, also, specially and individually. I marked a floweret in the centre of a beech-wood in the New Forest. Surrounded by the princely trees of the wood, it smiled from the sod a modest beauty. I thought to myself, "When do you see the sun? Does his light and glory ever cheer you?" I tarried in that forest, and watched the sunbeams smiling through the interlacing branches of the trees; and while I lingered I marked how, ever and anon, the sun found out a way to pour his golden glory direct into the centre of that flower, which glowed and smiled as heaven thus communed with its littleness. Rest assured that God, who is our sun, thinks of the least of us. We are not neglected weeds of the moorland. The Lord sees us. We do not waste our sweetness on the desert air; for God is there. Those valleys among the mountains virgin of the foot of man, are trodden by the great Husbandman. Those are his holy places, his private gardens, his secret haunts; and the flowers which bloom in them are as plants of a royal garden, which make glad the heart of the King. So too, ye hidden ones, your God does not forget you; nay, though you may be tempted to think that he does not hear and see everything, for men are so vile, and error is so rampant, and he puts up with their provocations; yet he considers all. I have been inclined to cry out myself, as the Psalmist did, "Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom." That the Lord letteth evil doctrine have so long a day is a great disquietude to a lover of truth. Ah! but the Lord hears every blasphemy, and marks it, and the day will come, as surely as he lives, when he will lift his right hand to smite down the edifices of error, and they shall be before him as a bowing wall and a tottering fence. "The way of the wicked he turneth upside down." "Trust ye in the Lord for ever." In the cloudy and dark day look for the light. He does see: he does hear: he must work for truth and righteousness. Shall he that made the ear not hear? Shall he that formed the eye not see? Be not

guilty of so absurd a thought as to fancy that these evil days are not watched over of the Lord.

III. But now, thirdly and briefly, THAT GOD HEARS HIS OWN MUST BE ESPECIALLY CERTAIN, from the very argument of the text. "Why?" say you. Why, because they have new and spiritual ears, and they have God-given spiritual eyes; and he that planted the spiritual ear, shall he not hear? and he that formed the spiritual eye, shall he not see? It has come to pass, my brethren, that now when God speaks by his Spirit we hear him, blessed be his name! Time was when his threatenings spoke to us as with noise of thunder; but we would not hear them. Now we are humbled in the dust by his anger. He has given us ears which are joined to hearts of flesh. When he speaks by way of invitation, and says, "Seek ye my face," we answer, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Do you imagine that if God has given us the grace to hear his voice, he will not hear us when we lift up our voices to him? Rather let us each one say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints." Did he give you a new ear only that you might hear him chide you? Did he intend never to regard your answer to his rebukes? Does he convince you of sin without intending to grant you a Saviour? Does he bring you to hear the law and to confess sin, and ask for pardon; and can he not, will he not, hear you? Has he made you to hear of judgment to torment you before your time? Will he shut his ears to your humble prayers? I will not believe it. He that gave you those spiritual ears meant to say something worth your hearing, and he meant to hear you when you cried to him. He has spoken, and some of us are to-night full of ecstasy at what we have heard him say. Has he not said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me"? If you hear *him* speak, he will hear you speak. Oh, that you would sit at his feet and ask him to speak on; and then you may be sure that he has inclined his ear unto you!

He has created in the minds of some of you a sense of need, and will he not pity you? Perhaps you have not reached any farther than to know your wants and dangers; but he gave you this knowledge. You are hungry and thirsty; you had not these spiritual appetites once; he gave them to you. Why? Wherefore? You were not hungry for mercy; you were not thirsty for righteousness till his Spirit came and gave you life, and with that life the soul-hunger. Will he not satisfy the hunger he creates? Will he not fulfil the desire he has implanted? I never heard of such cruelty as for a man to gather together five hundred poor people from the street who had learned to draw tight their hunger-belts and bear privation, and on a sudden to excite a ravenous hunger in them, and then turn them adrift, and say, "Go your ways; I have made you feel your necessities most terribly; but I have nothing else for you. I have shown you your true condition; I have made you know what destitution you feel. Be off with you!" God will not treat you thus. It is not like him. He that planted holy longings, and hungry pinings, and spiritual appetites, must intend to supply them. He that has made you hear the voice of your need, will hear it himself. He is far quicker of hearing than you

can be, and your wants appeal to his heart before your heart is awake to them. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" He that gives spiritual life will live himself to sustain that life.

In addition to this, *he makes us long after holiness*; will he not work it in us? I might say of myself and many dear brothers and sisters here, that we habitually desire to be holy, and to be wholly free from sin. We cannot endure evil. A preacher once declared that when Paul cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" he was not a Christian. That shows how very little that preacher knew about the matter. No man but a true believer would have such anguish on account of sin. Just in proportion as he became a Christian of the highest order, would he cry out in an agony when he found evil thoughts and tendencies within his nature. It is when we begin to loathe sin, and any leaning towards sin, and when we grow wretched because of a single evil thought, that we have grown in grace, and are far advanced, and are reaching towards that other verse, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory." A true believer must hate sin with an intense hatred; and when the Lord has given him to do so, he may be sure that the same Lord will give deliverance from the power of evil. He who makes you hate sin will answer to that detestation, and deliver you from that which you so greatly loathe. Does he make you pine after holiness, and will he deny you holiness? Do you hear his voice of command, and will he not hear your prayer for help to obey? Does your child pine to be good, and can you help him to be good, and will you not do so? To the ear which God has enabled to hear his call the Lord will lend his own ear to hear prayer. Surely, the very holiness of God that puts into us a desire to be holy is a guarantee to us that he will help us to be holy. He that makes us long for purity will work it in us. It may be, he will put us in the furnace; but by some means he will purify us as silver is refined. He that planted the desire after holiness is himself holy, and will work holiness in his people.

Do you not sometimes sit down and indulge a day-dream of what you had wished to be? Do you not wake up, and put down your foot, and say, "This is what I resolve to be, God helping me. I will endeavour to live nearer to my Lord, and to be more like my Lord Jesus." Then you feel a fire burning upon the altar of your heart. You feel that you must put forth all your energies in the divine life, and press forward after the highest degrees of grace. Be encouraged by this condition of desire, for your Lord will not deny it to you. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" He that planted in your heart the desire after this high ideal will hear you as you cry to him for aid in the sacred enterprise. The Creator answers to that which he has created: "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him."

Do you pray, brothers and sisters? I know you do; but do you really believe that God hears you? I cannot help thinking that a great mass of prayers are poured into a vacuum. I cannot shake off the thought that brethren seem often to be praying into the eternal emptinesses, pleading with an infinite nothing. They say the proper

words, but they mean little or nothing by them. Does God hear prayer? Do you answer, "Yes"? Then let us pray as if we truly believed that he did. When we have done praying, let us expect him to answer us. When we go into the bank with our cheques, we hand them in, take up the money, and are gone. Do we deal thus at the Bank of Faith? Do we plead the promise? If so, the Lord counts out the money; but do we take it up? I fear we leave it on the counter. The Lord might say, "Is that man gone? Gone without what he came for? He pleaded my promise, and has he gone away content without my reply?" Is it your habit to go to the throne of mercy and ask for the mere sake of asking? Do you grind at a mill for the mere pleasure of grinding? Surely he that asketh receiveth; and if he does not, he should enquire the reason why. A little time before prayer, to prepare the petition, would much help towards reality in prayer. A little time after prayer, to consider when and how the blessing is to be used when the Lord sends it, would be a further aid to faith. Sometimes the angels come to our letter-boxes and cannot put in the answers because the boxes are fastened down by unbelief. We are not prepared to receive what God is prepared to give. Let us pray, believing that as surely as God has given us an ear he has an ear himself, and will hear our pleadings. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?"

Brethren, we are at this time *greatly concerned about the Master's kingdom*. Some of us have no other trouble comparable to our anxiety about the cause of God and truth. We mourn as we see the evil leaven leavening the whole lump. Do you not think that the great Head of the church is as much concerned about it as we are? It is his own kingdom; it is, therefore, more upon his mind than it can be upon ours. It is God's own truth which is denied: it is his own Son that is dishonoured. The glorious doctrine of the atonement—when we hear it scoffed at we burn with indignation, and our heart breaks with grief. Does not the Lord's heart also burn with indignation when the precious blood is trampled on? Is he indifferent to all this apostasy and heresy? Depend upon it, he is not; for "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" and he that has sworn to glorify his Son, will he for ever stand still when that Son is dishonoured, even in his own church?

IV. I have done when I say just this one thing more: A BELIEF THAT GOD HEARS AND SEES HAS A VERY BENEFICIAL TENDENCY UPON THOSE WHO FIRMLY HOLD IT. It works good in a thousand ways. Time would fail me to recount a tithe of them. It may suffice to take a thought or two, and turn the matter over in our minds. If we feel that God sees and hears, what *an incentive it is to do right*, and to be valiant for the truth! Soldiers will play the man in the presence of their prince. If our Lord looks on, what will we not do and dare? The same sense of his presence will act as *a check to any and every deed of sin*. We cannot indulge the thought of evil when the Lord himself hears that thought. Does the Lord look on, and shall I sin in his divine presence? Shall I grieve Jesus when the Beloved of my soul is himself close to me, and watches, with regretful eye, each sinful movement? The solemn conviction that God hears is a check to evil, and a stimulus for good.

It acts grandly as a *preservative against the desire of applause and the fear of man*. He who knows assuredly that God hears him, will speak the truth though all the world should listen, or though no one but God should hear him. It was a beautiful word which was spoken by a soldier to an open-air preacher not long ago. A friend who was preaching in the street, had gathered a considerable audience; but as a troop of soldiers went by, with colours and martial music, the people were dispersed, and the preacher was left almost alone. A soldier, who for some reason was marching outside the ranks, called to him, "Go on, sir: God loves to hear you praising his Son Jesus." True; most true. God delights in the glories of Christ. What a grand audience you have if the Lord hearkens and hears you praising his Son! Do the despisers grind their teeth when they hear Jesus preached? Never mind. Let them wear out their hearts in wrath; they cannot rob Jesus of a beam of brightness. Keep on praising your Lord and Saviour; for if men who have ears to hear will not hear, yet be sure your heavenly Father will not fail to listen. We do not want applause from men, since God hears us. If the Queen were by, and a soldier performed a deed of valour, and a person were to say to him, "You did well, and you may be proud that Corporal Brown and Sergeant Smith saw you and approved of what you did." "Oh," says he, "I care nothing for corporals and other petty officers; Her Majesty herself looked at me, and said, 'Well done.' She will, with her own hands, put the Victoria Cross upon me in due time. That is the reward I seek."

If God sees me, it is a small matter who may or who may not see and approve. We need to grow thus healthily independent of human judgment; for he who fawns for smiles, or trembles at frowns, will never lead a noble life for long.

The assurance that God sees and hears, *is a wonderful care-killer*. Why should I be anxious? My heavenly Father knoweth that I have need of these things. What if I am in trouble? This my Father knows. Brethren, if the Lord knows our soul in adversity, and if his eye is ever upon us, are we not safe? Know that you serve one whose eyes are upon the righteous, and whose ears are open to their cry, and you will live above care.

And, oh, how this will tend to *promote your fellowship with God!* When your heart sings, "He leadeth me; he heareth me; he knoweth the way that I take"; then are you filled with a sense of fellowship with the Eternal God. How we love him who heareth us always! Since he is always seeing us, we learn to see him. "Thou God seest me" is a word which brightens up our sad hearts till we also see God. We pass through the trouble, and toil, and temptation, and turmoil, of this mortal life with serene spirit, since it is written, "Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there." Suffering is no mean thing, if we suffer in full submission to the will of him that heareth and seeth us. If he is but with us, all question is ended. We cheerfully say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." As long as his father was captain of the ship, his little son never knew a fear; for he was sure his father could steer the vessel safely to the haven. Be of good cheer, our Father who sees and hears us, is in the midst of his people,

and not so much as one of them shall perish. If the Lord were away, or asleep, or deaf, we might be in a trembling mood; but while his ear and eye are open to us, we cannot tolerate mistrust. A little altering the quaint poet's lines, we may say—

“Though winds and waves assault my keel,
He doth preserve it; he doth steer,
Even when the bark seems most to reel.
Storms are the triumph of his art,
He cannot hide his eyes, much less his heart.”

Go, speak with the wise Planter of the ear; for he will surely hear.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xciv.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—181, 211, 184.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED READERS,—From afar I greet you with hearty salutations. I am resting with the earnest desire that I may gain health and refreshment of mind for future service. I knew right well several well-beloved and useful brethren, who were weary and worn, but, humanly speaking, would have soon been restored if they could have rested. They kept on painfully for a while, and then died. Friends from all quarters have pointed to these beacons, and have bidden me take warning; and I feel that I am right in doing so. I hope to do more by attempting less.

You will be glad to know that the Special Services at the Tabernacle have been, in a memorable manner, attended with the divine blessing. May the printed sermons, in the absence of the Preacher, have an equally remarkable share in the sacred benediction!

It is in answer to many requests that this particular sermon has been selected. May it be as much enjoyed by the reader in the perusal, as by the preacher in its delivery! With it comes my hearty love in Christ Jesus to each one of the great host who, week by week, drink in the Word of God through the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

Yours very heartily,

Mentone, Dec. 7, 1889.

C. H. SPURGEON.