

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF.

A Sermon

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“Jesus Christ himself.”—Ephesians ii. 20.

“JESUS CHRIST himself” is to occupy all our thoughts this morning. What an ocean opens up before me! Here is sea-room for the largest barque! In which direction shall I turn your thoughts? I am embarrassed with riches. I know not where to begin: and when I once begin where shall I end? Assuredly we need not go abroad for joys this morning, for we have a feast at home. The words are few, but the meaning vast—“Jesus Christ himself.”

Beloved, the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ contains in it nothing so wonderful as himself. It is a mass of *marvels*, but he is THE miracle of it; the wonder of wonders is “The Wonderful” himself. If *proof* be asked of the truth which he proclaimed, we point men to Jesus Christ himself. His character is unique. We defy unbelievers to imagine another like him. He is God and yet man, and we challenge them to compose a narrative in which the two apparently incongruous characters shall be so harmoniously blended,—in which the human and divine shall be so marvellously apparent, without the one overshadowing the other. They question the authenticity of the four Gospels; will they try and write a fifth? Will they even attempt to add a few incidents to the life which shall be worthy of the sacred biography, and congruous with those facts which are already described? If it be all a forgery, will they be so good as to show us how it is done? Will they find a novelist who will write another biography of a man of any century they choose, of any nationality, or of any degree of experience, or any rank or station, and let us see if they can describe in that imaginary life a devotion, a self-sacrifice, a truthfulness, a completeness of character at all comparable to that of Jesus Christ himself? Can they invent another perfect character even if the divine element be left out? They must of necessity fail, for there is none like unto Jesus himself.

The character of Jesus has commanded respect even from those who

have abhorred his teaching. It has been a stumbling-stone to all objectors who have preserved a shade of candour. Jesus' doctrine they could refute, they say; his precepts they could improve, so they boast; his system is narrow and outworn, so they assert: but himself—what can they do with him? They must admire him even if they will not adore him; and having done so they have admired a personage who must be divine, or else he wilfully left his disciples to believe a lie. How will they surmount this difficulty? They cannot do so by railing at him, for they have no material for accusation. Jesus Christ himself silences their cavillings. This is a file at which these asps do bite, but break their teeth. Beyond all argument or miracle, Jesus Christ himself is the proof of his own gospel.

And as he is the proof of it, so, beloved, he is the *marrow* and essence of it. When the apostle Paul meant that the gospel was preached he said, "Christ is preached," for the gospel is Christ himself. If you want to know what Jesus taught, know himself. He is the incarnation of that truth which by him and in him is revealed to the sons of men. Did he not himself say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"? You have not to take down innumerable tomes, nor to pore over mysterious sentences of double meaning in order to know what our great teacher has revealed, you have but to turn and gaze upon his countenance, behold his actions, and note his spirit, and you know his teaching. He lived what he taught. If we wish to know him, we may hear his gentle voice saying "Come and see." Study his wounds, and you understand his innermost philosophy. "To know him and the power of his resurrection" is the highest degree of spiritual learning. He is the end of the law and the soul of the gospel, and when we have preached his word to the full, we may close by saying, "Now, of the things which we have spoken this is the sum,—we have an high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens."

Nor is he alone the proof of his gospel and the substance of it, but he is the *power* and force by which it spreads. When a heart is truly broken for sin, it is by him that it is bound up. If a man is converted, it is by Christ, the power of God. If we enter into peace and salvation it is by the gracious manifestation of Jesus himself. If men have enthusiastically loved Christianity, it is because first of all they loved Christ: for him apostles laboured, and for him confessors were brave; for him saints have suffered the loss of all things, and for him martyrs have died. The power which creates heroic consecration is "Jesus Christ himself." The memories stirred by his name have more influence over men's hearts than all things else in earth or heaven. The enthusiasm which is the very life of our holy cause comes from himself. They who know not Jesus know not the life of truth, but those who dwell in him are filled with power, and overflow so that out of the midst of them streams forth living water. Nor is it only so, beloved; for the power which propagates the gospel is Jesus himself. In heaven he pleads, and therefore does his kingdom come. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." It is from heaven that he rules all things so as to promote the advance of the truth. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and therefore are we to proclaim his life-giving word with full assurance of success. He causes the wheel of providence to

revolve in such a manner as to help his cause ; he abridges the power of tyrants, overrules the scourge of war, establishes liberty in nations, opens the mysteries of continents long unknown, breaks down systems of error, and guides the current of human thought. He works by a thousand means, preparing the way of the Lord. It is from heaven that he shall shortly come, and when he cometh, when Christ himself shall put forth all his might, then shall the wilderness rejoice and the solitary place be glad. The reserve force of the gospel is Christ Jesus himself. The latent power which shall at last break every bond, and win universal dominion, is the energy, the life, the omnipotence of Jesus himself. He sleeps in the vessel now, but when he arises and chides the storm there will be a deep calm. He now for awhile concealeth himself in the ivory palaces of glory, but when he is manifested in *that day* his chariot wheels shall bring victory to his church militant.

If these things be so, I have a theme before me which I cannot compass. I forbear the impossible task, and I shall but briefly note some few apparent matters which lie upon the surface of the subject.

Brethren, "Jesus Christ himself" should always be the prominent thought of our minds as Christians. Our theology should be framed upon the fact that he is the Centre and Head of all. We must remember that "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Some of our brethren are mainly taken up with the doctrines of the gospel, and are somewhat bitter in their narrow orthodoxy. We are to love every word of our Lord Jesus and his apostles, and are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints, but yet it is well always to hold truth in connection with Jesus and not as in itself alone the sum of all things. Truth isolated from the person of Jesus grows hard and cold. We know some in whom the slightest variation from their system arouses their indignation, even though they admit that the brother is full of the Spirit of Christ. It is with them doctrine, doctrine, doctrine : with us, I trust, it is Christ himself. True doctrine is to us priceless as a throne for our living Lord, but our chief delight is not in the vacant throne, but in the King's presence thereon. Give me not his garments, though I prize every thread, but the blessed wearer whose sacred energy made even the hem thereof to heal with a touch.

There are others of our brethren who delight above measure in what they call experimental preaching, which sets forth the inner life of the believer, both the rage of depravity and the triumph of grace : this is well in due proportion, according to the analogy of faith : but still Jesus himself should be more conspicuous than our frames and feelings, doubts and fears, struggles and victories. We may get to study the action of our own hearts so much that we fall into despondency and despair. "Looking unto Jesus" is better than looking unto our own progress : self-examination has its necessary uses, but to have done with self and live by faith in Jesus Christ himself is the best course for a Christian.

Then, there are others who rightly admire the precepts of the gospel, and are never so happy as when they are hearing them enforced, as, indeed, they ought to be ; but after all the commands of our Lord are not our Lord himself, and they derive their value to us and their power over our obedience from the fact that they are *his* words, and that

he said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." We know the truth of his declaration, "If a man love me he will keep my sayings," but there must be the personal love to begin with. Brethren, all the benefits of these three schools will be ours if we live upon Jesus himself. They gather each a flower, but our divine "plant of renown" has all the beauty, and all the fragrance, of all that they can gather; and without the thorns which are so apt to grow on their peculiar roses. Jesus Christ himself is to us precept, for he is the way: he is to us doctrine, for he is the truth: he is to us experience, for he is the life. Let us make him the pole star of our religious life in all things. Let him be first, last, and midst; yea, let us say, "He is all my salvation and all my desire." And yet do not, I beseech you, disdain the doctrine, lest in marring the doctrine you should be guilty of insult to Jesus himself. To trifle with truth is to despise Jesus as our Prophet. Do not for a moment underrate experience, lest in neglecting the inner self you also despise your Lord himself as your cleansing Priest; and never for a moment forget his commandments lest if ye break them ye transgress against Jesus himself as your King. All things which touch upon his kingdom are to be treated reverently by us for the sake of himself: his book, his day, his church, his ordinances, must all be precious to us, because they have to do with him; but in the front of all must ever stand "Jesus Christ himself," the personal, living, loving Jesus; Christ in us the hope of glory, Christ for us our full redemption, Christ with us our guide and our solace, and Christ above us pleading and preparing our place in heaven. Jesus Christ himself is our captain, our armour, our strength, and our victory. We inscribe his name upon our banner, for it is hell's terror, heaven's delight, and earth's hope. We bear this upon our hearts in the heat of the conflict, for this is our breastplate and coat of mail.

I shall not endeavour to say anything this morning which will strike you as beautiful in language, for to endeavour to decorate the altogether Lovely One would be blasphemy. To hang flowers upon the cross is ridiculous, and to endeavour to adorn him whose head is as the most fine gold, and whose person is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires, would be profane. I shall but tell you simple things in simple language: yet are these the most precious and soul-satisfying of the truths of revelation.

I. With Jesus Christ himself we begin by saying, first, that Jesus himself is THE ESSENCE OF HIS OWN WORK, and therefore *how readily we ought to trust him*. Jesus himself is the soul of his own salvation. How does the apostle describe it? "He loved me, and gave *himself* for me." He gave his crown, his throne, and his joys in heaven for us, but that was not all—he gave himself. He gave his life on earth, and renounced all the comforts of existence, and bore all its woes; he gave his body, he gave his agony, he gave his heart's blood: but the summary of it is, he gave himself for me. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." No proxy service here! No sacrifice which runs as far as his own person and there stops! There was no limit to the grief of Jesus like that set upon the suffering of Job,—“Only on himself lay not thine hand,” or “Only spare his life.” No, every reserve was taken down, for he gave himself. “He saved others; himself he could not save,” because he

himself was the very essence of his own sacrifice on our behalf. It is because he is what he is that he was able to redeem us: the dignity of his person imparted efficacy to his atonement. He is divine, God over all, blessed for ever, and therefore infinite virtue is found in him; he is human, and perfect in that humanity, and therefore capable of obedience and suffering in man's place and stead. He is able to save us because he is Immanuel—"God with us." If it were conceivable that an angel could have suffered the same agonies, and have performed the same labours, as our Lord, yet it is not conceivable that the same result would have followed. The pre-eminence of his person imparted weight to his work. Always think then when you view the atonement, that it is Jesus himself who is the soul of it. Indeed the efficacy of his sacrifice lies there; hence the apostle in the Hebrews speaks of him as having "by himself purged our sins." This purging was wrought by his sacrifice, but the sacrifice was himself. Paul says, "he offered up himself." He stood as a priest at the altar offering a bloody sacrifice, but the offering was neither bullock, nor ram, nor turtle dove; it was himself. "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The sole reason why we are well-pleasing with God is because of him, for he is our sweet savour-offering; and the only cause for the putting away of our sin is found in him because he is our sin-offering. The cleansing by the blood, and the washing by the water, are the result, not of the blood and the water in and of themselves and separate from him, but because they were the essentials of himself. You see this, I am persuaded, without my enlarging upon it.

Now, because of this, *the Lord Jesus Christ himself is the object of our faith.* Is he not always so described in Scripture? "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth,"—not "look to my cross," nor "look to my life," nor "to my death," much less "to my sacraments or to my servants," but "look unto me." From his own lips the words sound forth, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In fact, it is the Christian's life motto, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." May I not go further and say, *how very simple and how very easy and natural ought faith to be henceforth?* I might be puzzled with various theories of the atonement, but I can believe in Jesus himself: I might be staggered by the divers mysteries which concern theology, and overpower even master-minds, but I can confide in Jesus himself. He is one whom it is difficult to distrust: his goodness, gentleness, and truth command our confidence. We can and do trust in Jesus himself. If he be proposed to me as my Saviour, and if faith in him be that which saves me, then at his dear feet I cast myself unreservedly, and feel myself secure while he looks down on me. He who bled that sinners might be saved cannot be doubted any more: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Now you who have been looking to your faith, I want you to look to Jesus himself rather than at your poor feeble faith. Now you who have been studying the results of faith in yourselves and are dissatisfied, I beseech you turn your eyes away from yourselves and look to Jesus himself. Now you who cannot understand this and cannot understand that, give up wanting to understand for the while, and come and look at Jesus Christ himself, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of

glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." The Lord grant us grace to view Jesus Christ himself in the matter of our salvation as all in all, so that we may have personal dealings with him, and no more think of him as a mere idea, or as an historical personage, but as a personal Saviour standing in the midst of us, and bidding us enter into peace through him.

II. "Jesus Christ himself" is as we have said THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GOSPEL, *and therefore how closely should we study him.* While he was here he taught his disciples, and *the object of his teaching was that they might know himself,* and through him might know the Father. They did not learn very fast, but you see what he meant them to learn by the observation he made to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known *me*, Philip?" He meant them to know himself; and when he had risen from the dead the same object was still before him. As he walked with the two disciples to Emmaus they had wide choice of subjects for conversation, but he chose the old theme, and "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." No topic was one half so important or profitable. No mere man may come to teach himself, but this divine One can have nothing better to reveal, for he himself, the incarnate God, is the chief of all truth. Hence our Lord was concerned to be known to his people, and therefore again and again we read that "Jesus showed himself unto his disciples." Whatever else they may be ignorant of, it is essential to disciples that they know their Lord. His nature, his character, his mind, his spirit, his object, his power, we must know—in a word, we must know Jesus himself.

This also, beloved, is the work of the Holy Spirit. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." The Holy Ghost reveals Christ to us and in us. Whatsoever things Christ hath spoken while he was here, the Holy Ghost opens to the mind and to the understanding, and thus by speaking of Christ within us he carries on the work which our Lord began when here below. The Comforter is the instructor and Jesus is the lesson. I dare say you long to know a thousand things, but the main point of knowledge to be desired is Jesus himself. This was his teaching, and this is the Holy Spirit's teaching, and *this is the end and object of the Bible.* Moses, Esaias, and all the prophets spake of him, and the things which are recorded in this book were written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name. Precious is this book, but its main preciousness lies in its revealing Jesus himself, it is the field which contains the pearl of great price, the casket which encloses heaven's brightest jewel. We have missed our way in the Bible if its silken clue has not led us to the central chamber where we see Jesus himself. We have never been truly taught of the Holy Ghost, and we have missed the teaching of the life of Christ, unless we have come to abide in Jesus himself. To know him is our beginning of wisdom and our crown of wisdom. To know him is our first lesson on the stool of penitence and our last attainment as we enter heaven. Our ambition is that we may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Here is our life study, and we have good associates in it, for these things the angels desire to look into. May the Lord grant that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that we

may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

Beloved, because Jesus is the sum of the gospel *he must be our constant theme*. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." So spake men of old, and so say we. When we have done preaching Christ we had better have done preaching; when you have done teaching in your classes Jesus Christ himself, give up Sunday school work, for nothing else is worthy of your pains. Put out the sun, and light is gone, life is gone, all is gone. When Jesus is pushed into the background or left out of a minister's teaching, the darkness is darkness that might be felt, and the people escape from it into gospel light as soon as they can. A sermon without Jesus in it is savourless, and worthless to God's tried saints, and they soon seek other food. The more of Christ in our testimony the more of light and life and power to save. Some preachers are guilty of the most wearisome tautology, but this is not laid to their charge when their theme is Jesus. I have heard hearers declare that their minister appeared to have bought a barrel organ on which he could grind five or six tunes and no more, and these he ground out for ever and ever, amen. They have been weary, very weary, of such vain repetitions; but to this day I never heard of anybody against whom the complaint was urged that he preached Christ too much, too often, too earnestly, or too joyfully. I never recollect seeing a single Christian man coming out of a congregation with a sorrowful face saying, "He extolled the Redeemer too highly: he grossly exaggerated the praises of our Saviour." I do not remember ever meeting with a case in which the sick upon the bed of languishing have complained that thoughts of Jesus were burdensome to them. I never recollect that a single book has been denounced by earnest Christian men because it spoke too highly of the Lord, and made him too prominent. No, my brethren, he who is the study of the saints must be the daily theme of ministers if they would feed the flock of God. No theme so moves the heart, so arouses the conscience, so satisfies the desires, and so calms the fears. God forbid we should ever fail to preach Jesus himself. There is no fear of exhausting the subject, nor of our driving away our hearers, for his words are still true, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

III. Jesus Christ himself is THE OBJECT OF OUR LOVE, and *how dear he should be*. We can all of us who are really saved declare that "We love him because he first loved us." We have an intense affection for his blessed person as well gratitude for his salvation. The personality of Christ is a fact always to be kept prominently in our thoughts. The love of a truth is all very well, but the love of a person has far more power in it. We have heard of men dying for an idea, but it is infinitely more easy to awaken enthusiasm for a person. When an idea becomes embodied in a man it has a force which in its abstract form it never wielded. Jesus Christ is loved by us as the embodiment of everything that is lovely, and true, and pure, and of good report. He himself is incarnate perfection, inspired by love. We love his offices, we love the types which describe him, we love the ordinances by which he is set forth, but we love

himself best of all. He himself is our beloved ; our heart rests only in him.

Because we love him we love his people, and through him we enter into union with them. Our text is taken from a verse which says, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." He is the binder at the corner, joining Jew and Gentile in one temple. In Jesus those ancient differences cease, for he "hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." We are at one with every man who is at one with Christ. Only let our Lord say, "I love that man," and we love him at once ; let us only hope that our friend can say, "I love Jesus," and we hasten to respond, "And I love you for Jesus' sake." So warm is the fire of our love to Jesus that all his friends may sit at it, and welcome. Our circle of affection comprehends all who in any shape or way have truly to do with Jesus himself.

Because we love himself we delight to render service to him. Whatever service we do for his church, and for his truth, we do for his sake, even if we can only render it to the least of his brethren we do it unto him. The woman with the alabaster box of precious ointment is a type which we greatly prize, for she would only break the precious box *for him*, and every drop of its delicious contents must be poured only upon his head. The bystanders complained of waste, but there can be no waste in anything that is done for Jesus. If the whole world, and the heavens, and the heaven of heavens were all one great alabaster box, and if all the sweets which can be conceived were hived within it, we would wish to see the whole broken, that every drop of the sweetness might be poured out for Jesus Christ himself.

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honour and power divine ;
And blessings more than we can give,
Be Lord, for ever thine."

Oh our Beloved, if we can do anything for thee, we are charmed at possessing such a privilege. If we are allowed to wash thy disciples' feet, or to care for the poorest of thy poor, or the least lamb of thy flock, we accept the office as a high honour, for we love thee with all our hearts. Our love to Jesus should be as much a matter of fact as our affection for our husband, wife, or child, and it should be far more influential upon our lives. Love to our Lord is, I trust, moving all of you to personal service. You might have paid a subscription and allowed others to work, but you cannot do it when you see that Jesus gave himself for you. Jesus himself demands that I myself should be consecrated to his praise. Personal service is due to a personal Christ, who personally loved and personally died for us. When nothing moves us to zeal, when the jaded spirit cannot follow up its industries, let but Jesus himself appear, and straightway our passions are all in a blaze, and the fiery spirit compels the flesh to warm to its work again. We even glory in infirmity when Jesus is near, and venture upon works which else had seemed impossible. We can do anything and everything for "Jesus Christ himself."

IV. Fourthly, our Lord Jesus Christ himself is **THE SOURCE OF ALL**

OUR JOY. *How ought we to rejoice when we have such a springing well of blessedness.* In times of sorrow our solace is Jesus himself. It is no small ground of comfort to a mourner that Jesus himself is a man. How cheering to read, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same." The humanity of Christ has a charm about it which the quietly sorrowful alone discover. I have known what it is to gaze upon the incarnation with calm repose of heart when my brain has seemed to be on fire with anguish. If Jesus be indeed my brother man, there is hope at all times. This is better balm than that of Gilead, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses"; "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able also to succour them that are tempted." Pain, hunger, thirst, desertion, scorn, and agony Jesus himself has borne. Tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin, he has become the chief Comforter of the sorrowful. Many and many a sufferer in the lone watches of the night has thought of him and felt his strength renewed. Our patience revives when we see the Man of Sorrows silent before his accusers. Who can refuse to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism?

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine :
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

The darkness of Gethsemane has been light to many an agonized soul, and the passion even unto death has made the dying sing for joy of heart. Jesus himself is the solace of our soul in sorrow, and when we emerge from the storm of distress into the deep calm of peace, as we often do, blessed be his name, he is our peace. Peace he left us by legacy, and peace he creates in person. We never know deep peace of heart until we know the Lord Jesus himself. You remember that sweet word when the disciples were met together, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, "Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you." Jesus himself you see brought the message; for nothing but his presence could make it effectual. When we see him our spirit smells a sweet savour of rest. Where can an aching head find such another pillow as his bosom?

On high days and holidays our spirits soar beyond rest: we ascend into the heaven of joy and exultation; but then it is our Lord's joy which is in us making our joy full. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord," and then are we glad also. By faith we see Jesus himself enthroned, and this has filled us with delight, for his glorification is our satisfaction. "Him also hath God highly exalted, and given him a name which is above every name." I care not what becomes of me so long as he is glorified. The soldier dies happy when the shout of victory salutes his ear, and his failing sight beholds his prince triumphant. What a joy to think that Jesus is risen—risen to die no more: the joy of resurrection is superlative. What bliss to know that he has ascended, leading captivity captive, that he sitteth now enthroned in happy state, and that he will come in all the glory of the Father to break his enemies in pieces as with a rod of iron. Here lies the grandest joy of his expectant church. She has in reserve a mighty thunder of hosannahs for that auspicious day.

If there is any joy to be had, O Christian, that is both safe and sweet, a joy of which none can know too much, it is to be found in him whom as yet you see not, but in whom believing you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

We must tear ourselves away from that thought to turn to another, but assuredly it is rich in happy memories and in blessed expectations.

V. Fifthly, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE MODEL OF OUR LIFE, and therefore *how blessed it is to be like him*. As to our rule for life, we are like the disciples on the mount of transfiguration when Moses and Elias had vanished, for we see "no man save Jesus only." Every virtue found in other men we find in him in greater perfection; we admire the grace of God in them, but Jesus himself is our pattern. It was once said of Henry VIII., by a severe critic, that if the characteristics of all the tyrants that had ever lived had been forgotten, they might all have been seen to the life in that one king: we may more truly say of Jesus, if all graces, and virtues, and sweetnesses which have ever been seen in good men could all be forgotten, you might find them all in him: for in him dwells all that is good and great. We, therefore, desire to copy his character and put our feet into his footprints. Be it ours to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. What saith our Lord himself? "Follow me," and again, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Not Christ's apostle, but Christ himself, is our guide; we may not take a secondary model, but must imitate Jesus himself. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and his gracious operations we are developing into the image of Christ till Christ be formed in us; and we thus develop because the heavenly life in us is his own life. "I in them," said he, and again, "I am the life." For "we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." It is not passing through baptism, nor bearing the name of Christ, it is having Jesus himself in our hearts that makes us Christians, and in proportion as he is formed in us and the new life grows we become more and more like him. And this is our prospect for eternity, that we are to be with him and like him, for "when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Think of him, you that mourn your imperfectness to-day—think of Jesus Christ himself, and then be assured that you are to be like him. What a picture! Come, artist, bring your best skill here. What can you do? All pencils fail to depict *him*. It needs a poet's eye as well as an artist's hand to picture the Lovely One. But what can the poet do? Ah, you also fail; you cannot sing him any more than your friend can paint him. Fruitful conception and soaring imagination may come to your aid, but they cannot prevent your failure. He is too beautiful to be described—he must be seen. Yet here comes the marvel—"We shall be like him"—like Jesus Christ himself. O saint, when thou art risen from the dead how lovely thou wilt be! Wilt thou know thyself? To-day thou art wrinkled with old age, scarred with the marks of disease and pain, and perhaps deformed by accident, or blanched with consumption, but none of these shall blemish thee then. Thou wilt be without spot or wrinkle, faultless before the throne.

"O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God.'"

And not in bodily form alone shall we be like unto him whose eyes are as the eyes of doves, and whose cheeks are as beds of spices ; but in spirit and in soul shall we be perfectly conformed to the Well-beloved. We shall be holy even as he is holy, and happy as he is happy. We shall enter into the joy of our Lord—the joy of Jesus himself. I say not that we can be divine—that cannot be ; but still, brothers to him that is the Son of God, we shall be very near the throne. O what rapture to know that my next of kin liveth, and when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth I shall not only see God in this my flesh, but I shall be like him, for I shall see him as he is. Christ himself then becomes to us unspeakably precious, as the model of our present life and the image of the perfection towards which the Holy Ghost is working us.

VI. Lastly, HE IS THE LORD OF OUR SOUL. *How sweet it will be to be with him.* We find to-day that his beloved company makes everything move pleasantly whether we run in the way of his commands, or traverse the valley of the shadow of death. Saints have lain in dungeons, and yet they have walked at liberty when he has been there ; they have been stretched on the rack, and even called it a bed of roses when he has stood by. One lay on a gridiron, with the hot fires beneath him ; but amidst the flames he challenged his tormentors to do their worst, and laughed them to scorn, for his Lord was there. Martyrs have been seen to clap their hands when every finger burned like a lighted candle, and they have been heard to cry, “ Christ is all,” “ Christ is all.” When the Fourth, like unto the Son of God, walks in the furnace, all the fire can do is but to snap their bonds and set the sufferers free. Oh, brethren, I am sure your only happiness that has been worth the having has been found in knowing that he loved you and was near you. If you have ever rejoiced in the abundance of your corn and wine and oil, it has been a sorry joy ; it has soon palled upon your taste, it never touched the great deeps of your spirit ; and anon it has gone and left you sore wearied in heart. If you have rejoiced in your children, and your kinsfolk, and your bodily health, how readily has God sent a blight upon them all. But when you have rejoiced in Jesus you have heard a voice bidding you proceed to further delights. That voice has cried, “ Drink, O friends, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved ;” for to be inebriated with such joy as this is to come to the best condition of mind, and to fix the soul where it should be. We are never right till we come out of ourselves and into Jesus ; but when the ecstatic state comes, and we stand right out of self, and stand in him, so that whether in the body or out of the body we can scarcely tell, God knoweth ; then are we getting back to where God meant man to have been when he walked with him in Eden, getting near to where God means we shall be when we shall see him face to face. Brethren, what must the unveiled vision be ! If the sight of him here be so sweet, what must it be to see him hereafter ! It may be we shall not live till he cometh, for the Master may tarry ; but if he doth not come, and we therefore are called to pass through the gate of death, we need not fear. I should not wonder if when we pass under the veil and come out in the disembodied state, one of our astonishments will be to find Jesus himself there waiting to receive us. The soul hoped that a convoy of ministering angels would be near the bed and would escort it across the stream and up the mountains to the Celestial

City ; but no : instead thereof the spirit will be saluted by the Lord himself. Will it be amazed and cry : " It is he, e'en he, my best Beloved, Jesus himself ; he has come to meet me. Heaven might have been too great a surprise ; even my disembodied spirit might have swooned away, but it is he, the man Christ Jesus whom I trusted down below, and who was the dear companion of my dying hours. I have changed my place and state, but I have not changed my Friend nor changed my joy, for here he is ! " What a glance of love will that be which he will give to us and which we shall return to him. Shall we ever take our eyes away from him ? Shall we ever wish to do so ? Will not the poet's words be true,

" Millions of years my wondering eyes,
Shall o'er thy beauties rove ;
And endless ages I'll adore
The glories of thy love."

Within a week it may be our meeting with Jesus himself may take place ; perhaps within an hour. A poor girl lying in the hospital was told by the doctor or the nurse that she could only live another hour ; she waited patiently, and when there remained only one quarter of an hour more, she exclaimed : " One more quarter of an hour, and then—— " she could not say what, neither can I ; only Jesus himself hath said, " Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory." And as he has prayed, so shall it be, and so let it be. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Song of Solomon
iv. 16 ; v. ; vi. 1, 2.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—422, 793, 872.
