

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JONAH'S RESOLVE, OR "LOOK AGAIN!"

A Sermon

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"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."—Jonah ii. 4.

WHAT a complex creature is man! Those who fancy that they can fully describe him do not understand him. He is a riddle and a contradiction. As says Ralph Erskine—

"I'm in mine own and others' eyes
A labyrinth of mysteries."

Here, for instance, is a confession from David. "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand:" (Ps. lxxiii. 22, 23). Paul saith, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord:" (Rom. vii. 24, 25). He is strengthened with all might by the Spirit of God in the inner man, and yet is he weakness itself. In the text Jonah appears to be in a despairing condition,—“I am cast out of thy sight”; and still he has hope, for he resolves, “Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.” Everything seems lost, and yet as long as a man can look to God nothing is lost. God cannot see him, so he thinks; yet he talks about looking towards God,—this is singular, is it not? It is as if he said, “I am cast out of thy sight, and yet thou art the object of my sight.” I do not know of a more gloomy sentence that human lips can speak than this,—“I am cast out of thy sight”: I do not know of a more hopeful resolution that the human heart can determine upon than this,—“Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.” Oh, untried and inexperienced brother, be not at all disconcerted when you cannot comprehend yourself; on the contrary, take it as one of the evidences that there is a divine life within you when you become a mystery to yourself. If, like a schoolboy, you can draw your own likeness on a slate with a piece of pencil, and can say, “This is all myself,” why, then you will be rubbed out, and your image will be forgotten; but an immortal and divinely-inhabited spirit which is to survive sun, moon, and stars is not so readily sketched. While you are brother to the worm, and akin to corruption, you are

nevertheless nearly related to him that sitteth on the eternal throne. Vast regions of wonder-land lie between your condition as the abject prey of death and your portion as an heir of God by Christ Jesus. Manhood is a great deep. I set it not side by side with the fathomless abyss of Godhead, but I know of nothing else which surpasses it.

Our text next leads me to observe that *faith in the child of God, whatever may be his circumstances, still comes to the front.* Here is Jonah in such a wretched condition that he says, "I am cast out of thy sight;" and yet, despite this, he declares, "Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." The huge Atlantic wave comes rolling on, it sweeps not only over the feet and breast of faith, but it rises far above her head, and for the moment faith seems to be drowned. Wait an instant, and with her face ruddy from the wave and her locks streaming from the flood, faith lifts up her head again and cries, "Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Write faith's motto,—*INVICTA*; she ever rides forth upon the white horse, conquering and to conquer. Faith is the child of the Omnipotent, and shares in his omnipotence; it is born of the Eternal, and it possesses his immortality. You may crush and grind it, but every fragment lives; you may cast it into the fire, but it cannot be burned, neither can the smell of fire pass upon it; you may hurl it into the great deeps but it is bound to rise again. Faith has an eye that was made to drink in the sunlight, and so long as God is a sun, there will be eyes of faith to rejoice in him. If we have faith, there is that in us which overcomes the world, baffles Satan, conquers sin, rules life, and abolishes death. All things are possible to him that believeth. Faith triumphs in every place notwithstanding that her life is one of continued trial. Sense is broken like a potter's vessel, and reason is frail as a spider's web; but faith abideth, and groweth, and reigneth in the power of the Most High.

Please observe, for it may be for the comfort of some here present, that Jonah was in a position altogether unique and yet faith stood him in good stead. You have read of Joseph in the dungeon; but his imprisonment was nothing compared with the entombment of Jonah in the belly of a fish. You have read of Job on a dunghill in utter misery,—it is a sorry plight; but there are many Jobs in one Jonah if we reckon by present misery and distress. To lie as a living man in a living sepulchre was horrible. Jonah, no doubt, suffered from those inconveniences which, apart from miracle, would have ended his life right speedily. A dark, stifling, pestilential cell would have been preferable to the maw of a shark, or whatever great fish it may have been which had swallowed him. The singular thing of it is that he was aware of his position, and knew when the monster dived into the sea-bottom, when it passed through a meadow of sea-weed, when it neared some great mountain, and when again it rose to the surface. This makes the miracle all the more striking; for one is apt to imagine that the man must have lain dormant, or at least must, in a measure, have been unconscious while in such singular hiding. His position was such as never mortal man had known before or since. Now, it sometimes happens that singularity gives a sting to sorrow. When a man believes that nobody ever suffered as he is doing, he concludes his case

to be well-nigh hopeless. Dear tried friend, you cannot say this with any certainty, I am sure; for you have comrades with you in your every grief; but Jonah could say it with absolute truthfulness: he was where never man had been before, and where never man has been since, to be alive. His trial was all his own; no stranger intermeddled in it: in his affliction he had no predecessor, and no successor; he was the first and the last that for three days and nights had dwelt in the belly of a fish. He was singular to the last degree, and yet—here is the blessedness of it—his faith was equal to his position. You cannot banish faith, her home is everywhere. You have seen upon the Manx penny the three legs which must always stand, turn the coin whichever way you please: such is faith,—throw it wherever you may, it always falls on its feet. If faith be in a little child, it gives the child wisdom beyond its years; if it be in a decrepit old man, it makes him strong out of feebleness; if it be faith in solitude, it blesses a man with the best of company; if it be faith in the midst of adversaries, it brings to a man the best of friends. Faith in weakness makes us strong, in poverty makes us rich, and in death makes us live. Get a firm confidence in God, and you need not enquire what is going to happen,—all must be well with you. Winding or straight, up hill or down dale, or through the fire or through the sea, if thou believest, thy road is the King's highway. If faith does not fail, nothing fails. Faith arms a man from head to foot with mail through which neither sword, nor spear, nor poisoned arrow can ever pierce. Though it be forged upon the anvil of the devil's greatest subtlety, no weapon can prosper against thee, O true believer! Thou art as safe as he in whom thou believest; for "he shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler."

If I might at this time help any child of God who is in trouble into a solid rest in God, I should be indeed delighted. Oh that the ever blessed Spirit would help me to that end!

Carefully note, first, *the verdict of sense*—"I am cast out of thy sight"; and, secondly, *the resolve of faith*—"Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." These, remember, were both found in one man at one time.

I. First, here is THE VERDICT OF SENSE.

Please notice that *it comes first in the text*. Sense hurriedly decides, "I am cast out of thy sight." It is noteworthy that unbelief is always first to speak. Whenever David observes, "I said in my haste," you will notice that something is to be confessed which was unwise and untrue. Unbelief cannot wait, it must have its say; it blabs out all its silly soul at its earliest opportunity. In your own case, if you can be calm and patient you will speak to God's glory; but if you are hasty and petulant, and must needs talk as soon as ever the trial comes upon you, it is almost an absolute certainty that you will say what you will be glad to unsay. Our hasty words are often dipped in wormwood and handed back to us that we may eat them. Hold thee still a while, my brother, or, if thou must speak, speak to thy God and not against him; speak to thy God and not to thyself. Soliloquies are frequently an increase of woe. The heart ferments and heats itself, creating an inward fever which parches the soul. If a vessel wanteth vent it is not helped by

being stirred within itself; yet such is the case when we say with David, "I pour out my soul in me." Better is that word, "Ye people, pour out your heart before him," even before the living God. Brother, speak thou not to thyself, lest thou seem to be a madman: thou mayest vex thy soul exceedingly by those lone maunderings; speak thou to thy God. Even if thou utter hasty words, and words of unbelief, they are better uttered in his presence than muttered within thine own heart. He will hear them in any case; but when he perceives that in thy spirit there is no guile, though much impatience, he will freely forgive thee all thy childish error of too hasty speech, and help thee to bear up under thy woe. Speak, for silence slays; but speak to God, for he is full of compassion. Take the warning of the text, however, and be slow to murmur, remembering that the carnal nature is ever swift to speak and sure to speak amiss.

This verdict of sense, in the next place, was apparently very correct. "I said, I am cast out of thy sight." Did it not seem so? Jonah had tried to get away from God, and God had pursued him with a tempest, and almost broken the ship to pieces in order to be at him. As the result of the tempest he had been hurled into the sea, and in the sea a great fish had swallowed him, and he had been carried down till the floods compassed him about. Did not all his surroundings confirm his suspicion that he was a castaway? Could he expect ever again that the word of the Lord would come to Jonah the son of Amittai? Could he hope ever again to stand with the joyful multitude that kept holy day in the courts of the Lord's house, or to present his sacrifice of thanksgiving upon Jehovah's altar? No; if he judged by his feelings, he was shut up to the conclusion which he expressed. There remained nothing to him but bare life, and that in such a condition that one could hardly desire to have it continued. He reckoned with abundant show of reason that he must be cast out of God's sight. Yet it was not so; and therefore I invite those of you who have begun to judge your God by what you feel, and by what you see, to revise your judgment, and in future to be very diffident as to your power to come to any just conclusion as to God's dealings with you. Thank God, you will be wrong if you despair. It is much better for you to show your faith by relying on your God than to display your folly by saying, "I am cast out."

As this verdict of sense seemed to be correct, Jonah must have felt that *it was assuredly deserved*. If the Lord had dealt with Jonah according to his sins, he would have been a castaway. He had hurried to Joppa, and taken a passage in a ship to go to Tarshish, or anywhere else, to flee from the presence of God. Now, what was a fitter punishment for him than that he should be cast out from the sight of God? Had not this been his inquiry at Joppa, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" Was not this his demand, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Now, he has his answer,—he is carried down till the depth closed him round about. His waywardness had come home to him: he had been paid in his own coin; and what could Jonah feel but that he was filled with his own ways? Had he died in the sea he could not have doubted the Lord's justice. If he had been driven away as an outcast, it had but been righteous retribution to a runaway who refused his Master's service. This must have made him doubly sorrowful; a guilty

conscience is the sourest ingredient of all. When each wave howled in Jonah's ear, "You deserve it," he was in an evil plight indeed.

One sharp part of Jonah's misery was that *God's hand was so evidently in his misery*. He sees it and trembles. Observe how he ascribes all to God,—"*Thou* hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about; all *thy* billows and *thy* waves passed over me." We can bear a blow from an enemy, but a wound from our best friend is hard. If the Lord himself go forth against us, the war is one to tremble at. If the messenger of grief be commissioned by Jehovah himself, and we know it, mere carnal reason concludes that all is over finally, and that henceforth all we can do is to sit down and die. Faith thinketh not so; but this is after the manner of flesh and sense.

Observe that this verdict of sense, "I am cast out from God," *was very bitter to Jonah*. You can see by the way in which he speaks that it is a heavy burden to him, and yet it seems strange that it should be so. Here is a man who, when he was in a wrong state of heart, sought to flee from the presence of the Lord, and therefore went to the sea-coast on purpose, rejoiced to find a ship bound for a distant and almost unknown land, and paid the fare to sail therein of set purpose that he might get away from God; and now that he thinks he is away from God, he is filled with horror and dismay. By this we know the children of God even at their worst estate. Oh, you that are the people of God, you may sometimes in your wilfulness wish that you could get away from the all-searching eye; but if you could do so it would be hell to you. If you are a child of God you must dwell in the presence of God; it is your life, and you cannot be happy anywhere else. Oh, redeemed, regenerate man, it is impossible now for thy once renewed spirit ever to be happy in the beggarly elements of thy former condition: except in the divine atmosphere of heavenly love there is no rest for thee. Thou art spoilt for this world, O heir of the world to come! There was a time when its dainties would have been sweet to thy taste, and thy soul could have been filled therewith; but that day is over now: thou must eat the bread of heaven or starve. If thou art not happy in thy God thou art doomed to be happy nowhere. There is no choice left for thee. Thy very nature is so affected now that as the needle rests not save as it points to the pole, so can thy heart never be quiet except in Jesus. The light of his countenance must be light to thee, or thou must walk in darkness; thy music must come from Jesus' lips, or else there is nought for thee but wailing and gnashing of teeth; thy heaven must be in his embrace, there is no heaven elsewhere for thee. Nor would we wish to have it different. I am sure I can say from my very soul that if God could leave me it would be to me a hell worse than Dante or Milton could imagine. What if I still had to pursue my holy calling, and to preach! What woe to preach without him! What a hollow mockery! If I were bound to continue still the outward form of prayer and of a moral life, what vanity of vanities would it all be without my Lord! Without God! brothers, sisters, can you bear the thought? It is not the pang of hell, nor its fires, nor its undying worm, nor aught else that can be pictured of amazing terror that causes such alarm as the bare thought of being severed from God. To be cast out

from his sight were hell indeed ! Now, I should think that if Jonah had been in a calm state of mind, and had been able to consider things in the light of truth, it ought to have given him some ground of hope that he was not cast out from God after all, because he was so unhappy at the idea of being so cast out. Will the Lord leave a soul that is distressed by such leaving ? No spirit is wholly cast off from God if it longs after God. If thou canst be content without God thou art indeed a lost one ; but if there be in thee a wretched rankling discontent at the very thought of being severed from thy God, then thou art his, and he is thine, and no eternal division shall come between thee and him.

Thus I have brought out somewhat the force of this verdict of sense, —“ I am cast out of thy sight ” ; but I want you further to notice that *it was not true*. There was ground for grief, but not for this despairing inference. The verdict was not sustained by sufficient evidence. It was a great deal more than Jonah should have said, “ I am cast out of thy sight.” What, alive in the sea, Jonah ; alive in the deep ! alive in the belly of a fish ! and say that you are cast out from God’s sight ! Surely if God was anywhere in the world, it was in that great fish. Where else could there have been surer proofs of his present power and Godhead than in keeping a man alive in a living charnel ? There was a constant standing miracle for three days and nights ; and where there is a miracle, there is God most visibly seen. If Jonah could have asked the seas and asked the deep places of the earth, they would have told him that the Lord was not far away. If he could have asked the fish itself, it would have owned that God was there. If those who go down to the sea in ships see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep, much more might he have seen them who went into the sea in a fish’s belly. There is a text that Jonah could never have heard, which I commend to you against the time when you get to be where Jonah was. I do not suppose you ever will be buried alive in a fish literally ; but you may spiritually sink as deep as the prophet did. What is that text ? “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Jonah said, “ I am cast out ” : but that was not true. Poor Jonah ! the mariners cast him out, but God did not ; he was cast out of the ship, but not out of the sight of God. The Lord of old was faithful, and it was his rule never to cast away his people ; even as David saith, “ For the Lord will not cast off for ever : but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies.” Mark the text I quoted from our Lord’s own lips : “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Never question this sacred word. He will never, never cast out a single one that trusts him. So that if ever you should be in a condition which seems to you quite as forlorn as that of this prophet in the midst of the sea, you may yet be sure that you are not cast off, nor cast out. He who says he is cast out, says more than can possibly be true ; since the infallible promise is, “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” It is not for us to forge a lie against the God of the whole earth. He does not speak that which is false, but out of his mouth proceedeth verity. Even if all things in earth and hell should swear that the Lord has cast away one of his own believing people, it will be our duty to disbelieve them all ; for it is impossible that he should cast out any believer, in any wise, for any reason or motive whatsoever.

II. Follow me, dear friends, and may the Lord make it profitable to you, while I dwell during the rest of my time upon THE RESOLVE OF FAITH. Oh that the Holy Ghost may work in us "like precious faith" with Jonah. "Yet," says Jonah, "even if I be cast out, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

Jonah was a man of God when he was in his worst state of mind; at no time was the eternal life quite extinct within him. An ugly kind of saint this Jonah, when he was in the sulks! A proud, self-conscious, wilful, and morose being, hard to love! Yet, as an oyster may bear a precious pearl within its rough shell, so did the harsh prophet contain, within his being, a priceless jewel of faith—faith eminent, prevalent, triumphant, faith of the highest degree.

This faith put him upon prayer. The chapter begins, "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." Jonah had not prayed when he went down to Joppa. He had taken the management of himself into his own hands, and referred nothing to God as to that rash voyage. How could he pray in such a temper? He paid his fare to go to Tarshish; he did not pray God's blessing on that expenditure, I am quite sure. When the sea began to work, and was tempestuous, he was in the sides of the ship, but he did not pray; no, he went to sleep. His conscience had become stupid, and seared as with a hot iron; there was no prayer in him, but a certain numbness of mind and lethargy of heart. And now he gets into the fish's belly, a very close, dead place, where one would think he would lie in a state of coma, or in a sort of fainting fit, if it were possible for him to live at all; yet there he begins to pray. You will find God's children praying where you thought they would despair; and, on the other hand, you may discover that they do not pray where you thought they would abound in supplication. "Oh," says one man, "if I could have my time all to myself, and had not the worry of this family and this business, what a deal of time I would spend in prayer!" Would you? I would not guarantee your abundant devotion. Some of those who have least time for prayer pray most, and those who have most opportunity and everything congenial, are too often found to be most slack in their petitions. Jonah's oratory was narrow, and this pressed the prayer out of him. He did not pray in the sides of the ship, where he had room enough and to spare; but he prayed where he could not get upon his knees, or hear his own voice. Laid out in his living coffin, he began his pleadings. One would think it hard to make the belly of hell the gate of heaven, but Jonah did so. He prays, and one of the surest evidences of a living faith is prayer. If thou canst not do anything else, thou canst pray, and if thou be a child of God thou wilt as surely pray as a man breathes or as a child cries: thou canst not help it. Prayer is thy vital breath, thy native air. Whether on the land or in the sea, prayer is thy life, and thou canst not exist without it if thou be indeed born from on high. Answer, dear hearer, is it not so? It is not the prayer-book, but the prayer-faith that we must have. Hast thou such faith?

I beg you to notice, however, that this faith of Jonah showed itself not in prayer to God in general, but the passage runs, "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord HIS God." There is a mint of meaning here!

If you go upstairs and pray to God, as everybody's God, you have done what every Jack, Tom, and Harry may do ; but to go to your closet and cry to the Lord as your own God, is what none but an heir of grace can do. Oh to cry—"My Father and my Friend! My God in covenant. My God to whom I have spoken years ago, and from whom I have heard full many a time. Thou whom I love. Thou who lovest me, Jehovah, my God." This laying hold upon God as our own God is a business which the outer-court worshipper knows nothing of. Have some of you got a God at all? "Oh," you say, "I know there is a God." Yes, I know there is a bank ; but that does not make me rich. What is your God to me? I want to say "my God," or I cannot be happy. Have you a God to yourself, all to yourself ; for if it be so, you will pray the prayer of faith when you draw near to him, and this will prove that whatever your condition may be, you are not cast out from the sight of the Most High.

There is one thing about Jonah I want you particularly to notice, that as his faith made him pray, and made him pray to the Lord his God, *his faith made him deal familiarly with holy Scripture*. "What!" say you: "how know you that?" He had but a small Bible compared with ours, but he had laid much of it up in his memory. Evidently he loved the Book of Psalms, for his prayer is full of David's expressions. Kindly look at Jonah's prayer. I think I am right in saying that there are no less than seven extracts from the Psalms in that prayer and its preface. It was Jonah's own prayer, and no man compiled it for him, for he was far away from the haunts of men ; yet his heart led him to his former readings, and his memory came to his aid with expressions most suitable, and forcible, borrowed from a former much tried servant of the Lord. A deep experience is bound to resort to Scripture for its expression. Human compositions suffice for surface work, but when all God's waves and billows have gone over us, we quote a Psalm. When our soul fainteth within us, we are not to be revived by human songs, but we turn to the grave sweet melodies of inspiration. When a true child of God is in trouble, it is wonderful how dear the Bible becomes to him,—aye, the very words of it. I say, the very words of it; for I care nothing about the scorn which attaches to a belief in "Verbal Inspiration." If the words are not inspired, neither is the sense, since there can be no sense apart from the words. My soul doth know what it is to hang her hope upon a single word of God ; and to find her trust accepted. I would not even change the expression of our translation in many a place : not that I am bound by a translation, for God's original is that which we accept as infallible ; but yet there are translations which are evidently accurate, for the Lord's own Spirit has made them unutterably dear to his saints. There are circumstances connected with the very words of many a text, and with God's dealing with us through those words, and in such instances we cling even to the English text with all our might. I think you will find that tried saints are the most biblical saints. In summer weather we delight in hymns, but in winter's storms we fly to psalms. Your frothy professors quote Dickens or George Eliot, but God's afflicted quote David or Job. Those Psalms are marvellous. David seems to have lived for us all : he was not so much one man as all men in one. Somewhere or other, the great circle of his experience touches yours and mine,

and the Holy Ghost by David has furnished us with the best expressions which we can utter before the Lord in prayer. Give me the faith which loves the Scriptures. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, and true faith always loves the Word from which it sprang; it feeds thereon, and grows thereby. In proportion as people begin to criticize the Scriptures, and to doubt the authenticity of this and that, in that proportion they move out of the latitude of faith: the region of criticism is cold as the polar seas; faith loves a warmer atmosphere. The faith of God's elect clings to God and reverences his word. By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live, and upon such meat Jonah lived where others must have died.

I desire to come close up to my text, while I bid you note that *faith dares come to God with a "yet."* Jonah said, "Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Faith in her worst circumstances trusts to God. Clog her, load her, shut her up, yet she looks to God alone. O God, I trusted thee once when I was but young, and I felt my need of a Saviour; I came to thee then and I looked to Jesus, and I found peace at once; but then I did not know the evil of sin as I know it now. What then? Why, with this new knowledge yet will I look to Jesus. I did not know then the depravity of my heart as I know it now, but yet with this fresh sense of guilt I will look as at the first. I did not know then thy great and exceeding wrath against sin as I know it now; but yet with this fuller discovery I will look to thee. I did not know the burden of life then as I know it now; I did not know the power of Satan over me then as I know it now; yet will I look again unto thy holy temple. With all these new weights and fresh incumbrances I do to-day what I did many years ago; I throw myself on thee, my Lord, and trust in thy matchless plan of salvation through the precious blood of Christ. It charmed me once, it charms me yet again. This is the perseverance and determination of faith. She overleaps all walls, and dashes through all hedges with her "yet." Come what may, she has looked to Christ, and she means to do so whatever may arise to suggest some other course.

According to the Hebrew, the word should be rendered "only" instead of "yet,"—"only I will look again toward thy holy temple." *Faith looks to God only.* Faith comes alone to her God, and seeks no company to keep her in countenance. When we were first saved it was by faith only, and we must be saved in the same way still. In Jonah's case all props were knocked away; he had nothing to look to in the whale's belly at the bottom of the sea; but then and there he trusted God, and that was all. He could not think very clearly, nor confess before men, neither could he be or do anything; for he was packed away in quarters too close for action; but he could look again towards the temple of God, and this alone he did. He could give the faith-look when all looking with the eyes was far out of the question. How could he tell in which direction to look for the temple when all around him rolled the dark sea? His look was inward and spiritual, and he was content to do that, and that only. His state was looking, looking—only looking. Be it ours to believe, to believe, and yet again to believe. Jonah looked again to the place where God revealed himself, and we look to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He looked to the

mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice, where the Lord was wont to pardon and bless all suppliant sinners, and we also look to Jesus as the great Propitiation. To this look we will add nothing as a ground of trust. Jesus only is our hope, and only will we look to him. We will add nothing to our look, our look to Christ; he alone is our stay and our comfort. It is a blessed thing to get clear of all secondary hopes, and to live by faith alone. Mixtures will not do in the hour of trial. A single eye is what is needed: the least division in your trust is painful and dangerous. If you have lost some of your first light, look again; look toward his holy temple at once, and the light shall surely return to you.

Do you notice here that *faith is driven to do according to her first acts*—“Yet I will look again.” You know faith is described in other ways beside looking; it is taking, grasping, possessing, feeding; but faith first of all is looking; and so, whenever you fall into grievous trouble, it will be wise to resort to the beginning of your confidence, and hold it fast to the end. If you cannot grasp, yet look. There are several grades of faith; and when you cannot reach the higher grade it will be wise to enter fully into the lower one. Remember, the lowest form of faith will save, and even the smallest measure of faith is effectual for salvation, though not for consolation. Look! Look to Jesus! “There is life in a look.” There is heaven in a look. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Look! If thou canst not go forth to fight by faith, stand still and look by faith. If thou canst not declare the glory of the Lord, yet look. If thou canst not tell what God *hath* done for thee, yet keep thou still looking by faith to see what God *will* do for thee. Do thou thy first work, and as thy first work was a simple look at the Crucified One, look again to him.

With this I shall close, urging dear friends here present, even if they forget all the rest of my text, to remember those two words, “*Look again.*” If any of you are in sore trouble, I will bid you go home with only these two words ringing in your ears, “*Look again!*” If you did look once, but have fallen into new darkness, *look again.* I mean this morning, and I would ask you to follow me in it, to look to my Lord Jesus Christ again as I did at the first. It is frequently a great benefit to overhaul the foundations and begin again at the beginnings. I did look to Christ three and thirty years ago, or more; so did some of you. But the devil may say, “Your faith was fancy; your conversion was a delusion.” Be it so, O Satan; we will not dispute with you, but we will begin again from this moment. It is such a mercy that faith does not need to grow old before it saves us: the faith born this moment saves the soul in its very birth. Is it so, that your faith is not more than five minutes old, my brother? Have you only just begun to trust Christ? Well, thy faith hath saved thee quite as effectually as the faith of a man who has believed in Christ for fifty years. We must believe anew each day; yesterday’s believing will not do for to-day. Let us now look to Jesus Christ upon the cross, and trust him this morning as if we never trusted him before. “I will look again toward thy holy temple.” It will do each man good to look anew to that cross which is the sole hope of his soul. There is nothing more sweetening to the spirit than to confess sin and

accept mercy in the original style, and to go to Jesus anew just as we went at first. Let us do so at this moment.

A person proudly said the other day that he could no longer sing,—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

He had got beyond that! Highty tighty, here's a fine fellow! He has just risen from the dunghill, and is come to be a grand gentleman all at once! Nothing will do for him but—

"See the conquering hero comes,
Sound the trumpets; beat the drums."

Alas, for the top-lofty hypocrite! Shame on the proud self-magnifier! If he did but know himself he would confess his nothingness with a deeper emphasis than ever, and he would, like the publican, cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I believe that as a child of God grows in sanctification he deepens in humility, and as he advances to perfection he sinks in his own esteem. Oh that men would give over that bladder-blowing which seems to be so much admired in certain quarters! We have had much occasion to mourn over the lower life of some professors; but the higher life of others is not a bit better; it is false, proud, censorious, and unpractical. Those who boast of perfection will have much to grieve over when once they come to their senses, and stand in truth before the living God. No man talks of living without sin till he is taken in the net of self-deception. I have walked with God for many years, and enjoyed the light of his countenance, but my experience is that I am this day obliged to take a far lower place before him than ever I took before, while—

"Less than nothing I can boast,
And vanity confess."

Brethren, whether *you* will do so or not, I flee to the cross again. In the Rock of Ages I again hide myself. Who among us dares to come forth from that divine shelter? "Jesus, lover of our soul, let us to thy bosom fly." Let all of us sing as though it were for the first time—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Dear friends, it is due to God, it is due to Christ, it is due to the gospel, that we should every day believe with like simplicity of undivided trust. Keep on believing in Christ, "to whom coming as unto a living stone." We are to live by faith. You may be quite sure that you are permitted to do this, for Christ is always a sinner's Saviour. If you cannot come to him as saints, come to him as sinners. If your unfitness for fellowship as a servant comes before your mind and breaks your heart, yet remember that you may always return as a prodigal son. If you cannot feed in green pastures as sheep of the fold, yet yield to the strong hand of him who seeketh the lost sheep. If you cannot come to Jesus as you should, yet come just as you are. If your garments are not clean,

as they should be, yet come and wash them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This ought to be done more readily by us every day, for it should be a growingly easy thing to believe our God as experience proves his faithfulness. When we are at our worst let us trust with unshaking faith. Recollect that then is the time when we can most glorify God by faith. To trust Christ when thou hast a shallow sense of sin, when thy heart is glad and thy face is bright, is but a slender trusting him ; but to believe that he can cleanse thee when thy heart is black as hell, when thou canst not see one good trait in all thy character, when thou seest nothing but fault and imperfection about thine entire life, when all thine outward circumstances seem to speak of an angry God, and all thine inward feelings threaten thee with doom from his right hand,—this is to believe indeed. Such faith the Lord deserves of thee. Oh, if thou be only a little sinner, a little Saviour and a little faith may serve thy turn; if thou hast but little fear, and a little burden, and little care, and little need, why then thou canst not greatly prove or trust thy Lord. But if thou be up to thy neck in sorrow, aye, if thou be drowned in it, as Jonah was, and be driven well nigh to despair, then thou hast a great God, and thou shouldst glorify him by greatly trusting him. If thou be tempted to lay violent hands upon thyself, or to do some other rash and evil deed, do thou no such thing, but trust thyself with thy God, and this will give him more glory than seraphim and cherubim can do. To believe in the promise of God, as you read it in his word, is a grand thing. To believe it, though you are sick and sorry, though ready to die, this is to glorify the Lord. Brethren, if I live I will believe the promise, if I die I will believe the promise, and when I rise again I will believe the promise. Let us resolve to believe though the world be in flames, and the pillars thereof are removed. Let us believe though the sun be turned into darkness and the moon into blood. Let us believe though all the powers of the earth be marshalled in fight, and Gog and Magog gather themselves together to battle. Let us believe though the trumpet sounds for judgment, and the great white throne is set in the open heaven! Wherefore should we doubt? The covenant confirmed by promise and by oath, and ratified with the blood of Jesus, places every believer under the broad shield of divine truth; and what cause can there be for fear? O my hearer, believest thou in Christ? Dost thou trust thy God? If thou canst stand to that, thou art not only a saved man, but thou already givest glory to God. So may he help thee to do. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jonah i. ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—90, 598, 533