

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

IDOLS FOUND WANTING, BUT JEHOVAH FOUND
FAITHFUL.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

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“Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”—Isaiah xli. 1—4.

THE confidence of Babylon is buried among her heaps of rubbish, for her gods have fallen from their thrones. “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth.” As for us, beloved, our trust is in the living God, who lives to bear and carry his chosen, even in Jehovah, the only true Lord. We begin our spiritual life by faith in him, for till faith comes we have no power to become the sons of God. Our spiritual life will have to be continued in the same way of trust in the Lord, “for the just shall live by faith.” We live by faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. We rejoice that we shall never have to change our confidence, for our God will never be carried into captivity, nor torn from his throne. Our faith is built upon a rock that can never be moved. Nothing in the past has shaken the foundation of our faith; nothing in the present can move it; nothing in the future will undermine it. Whatever may occur in the ages to come, there will always be good reason for believing in Jehovah and his faithful word. The great truths which he has revealed will never be disproved; the great promises he has made will never be retracted; the great purposes he has devised will never be abandoned. So long as we live, so long shall we have a refuge, a hope, a confidence, that can never be removed.

His sovereign mercy knows no end,
His faithfulness shall still endure;
And those who on his word depend
Shall find his word for ever sure.

That part of our text which says, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you," may seem to be a promise made to old age. So, indeed, it is. Many a hoary saint has made a soft pillow of this precious promise, and has rested upon it with delight in the days of his decay. But yet the text, if it be rightly read, is a promise to the people of God at any and every period between their birth and their death. While the Lord does say that he will carry us to hoar hairs, yet he begins by telling us that he has carried us from the womb, and that he will carry us still. All tenses meet in these verses: "Hearken, O house of Jacob, which are borne by me; which are carried from the womb. Even to your old age I am he; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." The Lord is good to us in all tenses, and in all ways. We shall not, alone, consider in our discourse the mercy of God to those who are near the end of their pilgrimage, but that same mercy to his people throughout their wilderness journey, from the day when they first ate of the Paschal Lamb, and quitted Egypt, even to that hour when the Jordan was dried up, and they took possession of the land which floweth with milk and honey. Our experimental dealings with God make us know that he is our gracious Helper from the first to the last. When we begin with the Alpha of our life's spelling, we find him good; and when we come to the Omega, and faintly pronounce the last letter of life, we know still better how gracious he is. Bel and Nebo disappoint their votaries, but Jehovah is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our guide even unto death.

I. I shall begin my sermon by calling your attention, first, to the set-off and background, which are placed behind the brilliant promise which is herein given to the Lord's people.

Observe that FALSE CONFIDENCES PASS AWAY.

The Lord has made a full end of *false gods and their worship*. "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy laden: they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity." Bel and Nebo were two great gods of Babylon. You get the name of Bel in the name of king Belshazzar; and the name of Nebo in the name of Nebuchadnezzar. They were esteemed to be such great deities that their kings were named after them, and professed to be their servants. Bel and Nebo stood in Babylon supreme. The Babylonian empire which served these deities was so strong as to be invincible: it carried its cruel sword into all nations, and piled up the dead bodies of men in heaps: it was therefore dreaded in every part of the world; and not without cause. What kingdom or empire could stand against it? If you had gone to Babylon, and seen its mighty walls, its lofty towers, its engines of war, its wonders of art, its multitudes of heroes, you would have thought that the worship of Bel would endure for ever, and that the image of Nebo would stand there to be adored of mortals while the world existed. But these idols—always a mere deceit—proved themselves powerless in the day of trial. Cyrus came, the Euphrates was dried up, the empire of Babylon ended, and the gods were discredited for all ages. In the ruin of

Babylon the gods became a prey. The golden images themselves were too precious to be left standing in Babylon, and too little venerated to be treated with respect. They were taken off to Persia as a spoil, and became a burden to the weary beasts. Huge images of less costly material were dragged down with ropes, dashed in pieces, or buried beneath heaps of ruins. Ah me! what a melancholy fate for things which were called gods, and received the reverence of great nations! Even in these latter days, we have had an illustration of "Bel boweth down, and Nebo stoopeth," when Mr. Layard went to the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh, and dragged out those huge bulls, which stand to-day in the British Museum, objects of our curiosity, but certainly not of our worship. "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth." The false gods that reigned supreme over so many myriads of men were made contemptible. The prophet cries, "They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, but themselves have gone into captivity." Not only concerning Bel and Nebo, but concerning many a set of heathen deities, a note of exultant derision may be taken up. "The idols he shall utterly abolish." As potters' vessels are broken, so are the gods of the heathen ground into dust and treated as nothing.

The like thing has happened unto *false systems of teaching*. They have risen, and they have dominated over the minds of men: but, like Bel and Nebo, they have tottered and fallen. They seemed to be established beyond all hope of confutation and overthrow, and yet they have passed away! If you are at all readers of the history of religious thought, you will know that systems of philosophy, and philosophical religions, have come up, and have been generally accepted as indisputable, and have done serious injury to true religion for a time; and yet they have vanished like the mirage of the desert. When at their best, they have withered: the grass has flowered, the flower has come to its full, and has fallen beneath the scythe. The gourds have come up in a night, and have perished in a night. Even those of us who are not aged, yet remember two or three different forms of philosophical divinity which preceded this new dreaming, which is just now so loudly cried up. Many modern thoughts have come up, and have gone down again. Bel has bowed down, and Nebo has stooped. The boastful "thinkers" carried up their elaborate systems into their places with great labour, and then they carried them away again, and buried them with equal labour. What philosophers prove one year, philosophers disprove another year. We, old-fashioned Christians, have remained unchanged in our fidelity to revealed truth, and we have seen Bel go up and Bel go down, and Nebo go up and Nebo go down. Yes, we have seen rubbish venerated as a precious thing, and anon the precious thing carted away as so much lumber. Like a child's merry-go-round at a fair, heresy is a revolution of the old things over and over again; yet people think it new. The present idols of the mind are just as worthless as those of former times. The god of modern thought is a monkey. If those who believed in evolution said their prayers rightly, they would begin them with, "Our Father, which art up a tree." Did they not all come from a monkey, according to their own statement? They came by "development," from the

basest of material, and they do not belie their original. If you are not well acquainted with this new gospel, I would not advise you to be acquainted with it; it is a sheer, clear waste of time to know anything about it at all. The moderns are able to believe anything except their Bibles. They credulously receive any statement, so long as it is not in the Scriptures; but if it is founded on Scripture, they are, of course, prepared to doubt and quibble and cavil straight away. The credulity of the new theologians is as amazing as their scepticism. But we shall see the monkey-god go down yet, and evolution will be ridiculed as it deserves to be. The philosophy of the present, whose aim is to get rid of God, has nothing to support it in fact or in nature. It will fly as chaff before the wind, and in fifty years nobody will own that he ever thought of believing it. The new religion will be regarded as a craze, an emanation from Bedlam; and every man will be ashamed to think that he stopped to hear or read anything about it. So idiotic is it from beginning to end, that it will become a standing jest for ages to come, a proverb and a byword to mankind. Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth already; and, as the Lord Jehovah liveth, the whole of this thing, which has been so cunningly and carefully devised to dethrone him, and cast down his gospel, shall be had in derision. These new gods, newly come up, shall not deliver themselves, or their worshippers, any more than did the idols of Babylon.

But now, beloved, it will be just the same with us if we trust in *false confidences* of any sort; such, for instance, as our experiences, or our attainments, or our services, or our orthodox belief, or aught else.

If we set up any confidences apart from our God, we shall soon see the end of them. Imagine that any Christian here should be so foolish as to rely upon his own works. God forbid we should! But what an airy nothing our confidence would be! Before long that Bel would bow down, and that Nebo would stoop, for the hope would be too flimsy to bear the least weight. Or, if we should begin to rely upon our own enjoyments—if frames and feelings should become our confidence—all would come down, and our boast would become our burden, our glory our shame. “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth”: sooner or later this will be the end of all false trusts. Placing confidence in our inward feelings is like building upon a bog, or leaning upon a rush, or feeding upon wind. The idols of our feeling are like the mud-gods of India—they are utterly worthless, and they turn to mere clay almost as soon as they are formed. If in our daily life we look to an arm of flesh, or practise self-reliance instead of God-reliance, or if we trust to friends instead of leaning upon the one great Invisible, we shall yet learn with tears the terror of that sentence, “Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth”: anything that you make your confidence, instead of God, will fail to bear your burden, and will itself become a burden to you. Instead of its carrying you, you will have to carry *it*. Instead of its taking your load, it will increase your load, and become at last an intolerable curse. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Beloved in the Lord, think not that this is an unnecessary warning even for you, for you may as easily set up an idol in your heart as other men may set up a false system of philosophy, or an idol god.

Guard against setting up a rival trust to rob the Lord of even a small part of your confidence. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." None but Jesus is the ground of salvation: none but the Eternal God is the disposer of providence. Trust thou wholly in him who loves to be trusted. Let us lean upon our God with all our weight, and lean nowhere else; for if we put our confidence elsewhere, our idolatry will come home to us, and we shall hear the voice of disappointment, wailing bitterly, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together."

II. Let that stand as the black cloud on which God will paint his bright rainbow, while I notice in the second place, that OUR GOD ABIDES ALWAYS THE SAME.

"Even to your old age I am he." He is always the same in himself, and always the same to his people. If you are indeed a believer in the Lord, and resting in Christ Jesus, he says to you at this time with regard to all the future unknown, and, perhaps greatly dreaded, "Be not afraid, for I am the Lord your God; even to your old age I am he."

Dear friends, we rightly expect *trials* between here and heaven; and the ordinary wear and tear of life, even if life should not be clouded by an extreme trial, will gradually wear us out. We shall come, by-and-by, if life be spared, to that bottom of the hill where the eye grows dim, and the ear is heavy, and the arms are trembling, and the strong men bow themselves. Well, what then? What saith our God concerning the days of decline and decay? He says to us, "I AM HE." He will not grow weak. His eye will not be dim. His ear will not be heavy. His arm will not be shortened that he cannot help us, nor his hand palsied that he cannot deliver us. Change is written across the countenance of every mortal, but there are no furrows on the brow of the Eternal.

If life should flow never so smoothly, yet there are *the rapids of old age*, and the broken waters of infirmity, and the cataract of disease; and these we are apt to dread; but why? Is not the Lord our trust? Is it not sure that the Lord changes not? Make this your strong confidence. As for you, ye youths, ye are strong, but boast not of your strength; the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song. As for you in the midst of life—tremble not because of your difficulties; "is anything too hard for the Lord?" As for you that are sinking into the decline of life, and know that very soon your tabernacle will be taken down, be not afraid, for the Lord has not altered. Hath he not said, "I am the Lord, I change not"? Let this be your delight.

In the course of years, not only do we change, but *our circumstances change*. Many look forward to trying circumstances in the declining days of life. "When I cannot earn my livelihood; when I cannot go out to the farm, or stand at the counter, or work on the bench, what will become of me then?" Hearken, my brother, if you are where you ought to be, your confidence is in God *now*, and you will have the same God *then*, and he will still be your guardian and provider. He will be under no decay from age, nor decline from weakness. His bank will not break, nor his treasury fail. His

granary will not be exhausted, and his bounty will not be worn out. Trust in him for that which is written between the folded leaves of destiny, as well as for the page which lies open before you. If the infirmities of the body scare you, trust him; and if the changing circumstances of your life alarm you, trust him; for *he* must be the same though heaven and earth should be dissolved. He says, "Even to your old age I am he."

"Ah!" say you, "but what I most mourn is *the death of friends.*" Yes; that calamity is a daily sorrow to men who are getting into years. A new-made grave is with us every day. How many of those whom I dearly loved are now with God? When we near sixty, or pass onward towards seventy, we lament the multitude of dear friends that have fallen like the innumerable leaves of autumn. Some of us have now more friends in heaven than we have on earth. The best are going, still going: the messengers with heavy tidings follow close upon each other's heels. One of these days we think that some friend will cry, "I only am left." Ah, yes! But the Lord says, "I AM HE," as much as to say, "I am left to you, and will not fail you." Jehovah dies not, but still abides the same. If you have only viewed your friends as loans from him, but himself as your ultimate confidence, then you have acted wisely. When your friends are gone, you have not lost the source of all your strength, and help, and comfort; wherefore, be not afraid, for the Lord saith, "Even to your old age I am he."

Some trouble themselves more than there is need concerning *prophetic crises* which are threatened. One would think from their perpetual alarms that the prophets wrote to afflict us rather than to comfort us. "Oh, what shall I do," says one, "if there should be wars and rumours of wars, and earthquakes in divers places, and so forth?" What would you wish to do but trust in the Lord even as you do now? I know some good people who are much distressed with political prospects, with the evident tokens of social disorder, with the increasing tendency to break up everything, and with the stealthy progress of the superstition of Rome. Well, you may sit and look out of your windows till you see nothing but clouds and darkness, for fancy and fear together can fashion out of clouds monsters, and portents, and alarms. We know so little of the future that to worry about it will be the height of unwisdom. Our view of the near future may be incorrect; why fret over that which will never happen? Certainly, we only see part of the Lord's ways; and if we could see the whole we should most probably rejoice where now we grieve. Why, then, are we cast down? The Lord himself says to us, "Even to your old age I am he." In our days of palsy Jehovah trembles not. The Lord took care of the world before we were here to help him, and he will do it just as well when we are gone. We can leave politics, religion, trade, morals, and everything else with him. What we have to do is to obey him, and trust him, and rejoice in him, and go on our way rejoicing. He knows the end from the beginning, and will not allow the flood of human iniquity to swell beyond the control of his supreme will. His purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Not even to the extent of the small dust of the balance shall the event vary from the decree, or the decree vary from the rule of unmingled love.

“Still,” says one, “there are such *evil tokens in the Church itself* as must cause serious apprehension to godly men.” Yes, I know it. I have had to know it to my personal sorrow. The Church grows old: grey hairs are upon her here and there, and she knoweth it not. But never despair of the Church of God, for of her it is true, “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you; to your old age I am he.” The Head of the Church never alters. His choice of his Church is not reversed. His purpose for his Church is not shaken. The Holy Ghost, as indwelling in the Church, has not returned to his rest: once given, he still abides in his Church, and works mightily. Beloved, fear not. We shall see better days and brighter times yet, if we have but faith in God and importunity in prayer. Let us not be afraid, though clouds should come, for it is written, “Behold he cometh with clouds.” God is the same; there is the corner-stone of our comfort.

If you are depending upon anything or any person beside your God, woe unto you! “Oh,” say you, “I used to hear a dear old minister in my early days; but I find none like him now. He has gone home; and I feel as if I could cry, ‘My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!’” I could make some of you weep if I were to go through the list of those holy men who fed you with food convenient for you in your younger days. Their very names are like music to our ear, and honey in our mouth. Remember Joseph Irons, and Harrington Evans, and Watts Wilkinson, and Rowland Hill, and men of that order. Where are the teachers and fathers now? But then the point is, the God of these saints is not dead. The Great Shepherd of Israel still lives, and he leads us still, and feeds us still, and guards us still; and he will guard his flock, and guide his flock, till he makes us to lie down in the green pastures on the hill-tops of glory. Oh, let us bless and praise his name to-night, that he gives us this rich comfort, “I am he.” Jehovah, eternally the same, is the rock of our salvation.

III. And now, thirdly, I want to call your attention, in the words before us, to the fact that, while false confidences pass away, God WILL FOR EVER BE THE SAME. His former mercies guarantee to us future mercies. Read the passage before us: he says, “I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

First, you see, he says, “*I have made.*” The Lord, who is your helper, is he that created you: you certainly could not have created yourself. It is well to remember the mercy of God to us in our formation, and in the first days of our birth and infancy. David was not ashamed to say to his God, “Thou art he that took me out of the womb.” The Lord gave us birth, or we had never seen the light. When we were born, we could not help ourselves in the least degree. Poor helpless, shiftless creatures, all we could do was to cry! We shall never again be so weak as we were at our birth. Great decrepitude may fall upon us, but we shall never be so little, so feeble, so puling, so dependent, as we were when we could not speak, and make known our wants, except by a cry. We were entirely dependent upon others for everything, we were quite helpless, and yet we survived. We did not starve then; yet for years we never earned a crust. We did not

want for clothing then; and yet we could not have fingered a needle if we had been offered a thousand pounds. We were taken care of then, and surely God will take care of us for all the rest of our lives. We have been nursed through our first childhood, and we shall be nurtured through our second childhood, should it come upon us. We know very little indeed about those first three or four years, yet the Lord fed us, and led us, and here we are in proof of it. Wherefore, when he says, "I have made," he takes us back to those early days, and makes us feel that he that made us to grow, and gave us one by one the powers of manhood, will not leave us to moulder away in old age, nor to break up like a wreck upon the rocks of disease.

But think, beloved! God made us in another sense. He new-made us. Blessed is the man that has been twice born, and thus twice made! The Lord God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus. He has made us to be his children: we have been "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." If he has done all this, he does not intend to leave us till he has finished the work of grace with power. A statue thinks nothing of the man that made it; but the man who has fashioned a thing of beauty of that sort takes a great interest in his handiwork. You that are made do not take such interest in your Maker as your Maker takes in you. "I have made," saith he, "I have made." What he has done to you, in making you anew, should breathe into your heart the conviction that he will do yet more for you. That is, if there is a true heart in the world, God made it, and thinks of it: if there is a true church in the world, God made it, and keeps it. Every church that is a church in the Scriptural sense, God has gathered to himself; and of it he says, "I have made." He called the people out, and knit them together, and built them up as a house for himself to dwell in. If he has made either heart or church, he will keep it: he will not forsake the work of his own hands. He has used both thought and skill, and has exercised both power and care for it, and he will not desert that which has cost him dear. God's past mercy in the making of us encourages us to believe that he will put forth all his might to bear us on even to the end.

And then, he also tells us, in the next place, that *he has carried us*; and if we have been carried by him, he will carry us the rest of the way. There is a quaint saying of Bishop Hall, that God has a very large family, and not one of his children can run alone. In a certain sense, that is true. You know what an armful you have when you have two or three children that cannot run alone. What a great care has our gracious God, since none of his children can run alone without his power, his love, his grace! The Lord has to carry every one of us every moment of our lives. The beginning of a Christian's life is very like the latter part of it! As to the natural man, we begin with being carried, and if we live long enough, we have to end with being carried. So, with the spiritual man, we begin with a simple trust; and as we grow in grace, we feel more and more our own weakness, and come a second time to a trust as simple as at first. But whether we have one childhood or fifty childhoods, here is a Father who is ready

to carry us, from the first even to the last. "I have made, and I will bear; even to hoar hairs will I carry you." Of this I am convinced, God will not begin to make and carry us, and then leave the work unfinished. It shall never be said of him that he began to build, and was not able to finish. God will not redeem us with the blood of his Son, and then lose us; he will not suffer Calvary to become a mistake, and the Cross to be frustrated in its divine purpose. God will not prepare us for heaven, and prepare heaven for us, and not bring us there. He will not store up the blessings of the covenant, and then refuse to bestow them, or cast off those for whom they were provided. He who hath begun a good work in us will carry it on, and perfect it unto the day of Christ. The past guarantees the future, since we have to do with a God who can never change.

But I must not linger on any point, as our time flies; I must notice next that, *practically, God's mercies through life are always the same.* If you will look at the text carefully, you will not fail to see that it is so. God may be said to begin in regeneration the work which we experience from his hands—therein he *makes* us. But all through life he is still making us. We are perpetually revolving on the wheel; and he is continually fashioning us. He has not yet perfected in us the image of Christ. He has only to keep on doing what he has been doing, and we shall be perfected. His first work in us was resurrection work; and is he not daily quickening us, constantly raising us from the dead? It was new creation, and he is daily creating us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. No new form of mercy is ever wanted; all we need is the old mercy repeated, and adapted to our case. My dear friend, you will never want anything of God but what you have already had. The grace that saves the young man will save the old man. The patience that bore with your follies in youth will bear with your weakness in age. Depend upon it, you will require nothing but what you have already received the like. In this matter, the thing that has been, is the thing that shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun.

As for this "*carrying*" of which the text speaks, assuredly that is no new thing. As I have already said, the Lord carried us in our infancy. Our first spiritual blessing came of our being carried: we were sheep going astray, and the Shepherd came after us; and, when he found us, he carried us upon his shoulders rejoicing, and brought us home. After that we were lambs in the fold, and he gathered the lambs in his bosom, and carried us. Many a rough place have I encountered in my life's pilgrimage, and I have wondered how I should ever get over it; but I have been carried over the rocky way so happily that the passage has made one of the most charming memories of my heart. I begin to like rough places, even as Rutherford fell in love with the cross he had to carry. When the road is smooth, I have to walk; but when it is very rough, I am carried. Therefore, I feel somewhat like the little boy I saw the other night. His father had been carrying him up-hill; but when he reached a piece of level road, the boy was a great lump to carry, and his father set him down, and let him walk. Then the little gentleman began to pull at his father's coat, and I heard him say, "Carry me, father! Carry me, father. Carry me

again!" Just so. Any sensible child of God will still say, "Carry me, father! Carry me still, I pray thee!" The father's answer is, "I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry you." Therefore call upon him, and ask that when the road is rough, or miry, he will carry you; and he will carry you.

The promise closes with the words, "*And I will deliver you.*" That is no new mercy. Have you not been delivered many times already? "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine"—so David trusted, and so do we. Oh, the deliverances of God's people! Time out of mind he hath appeared for us. "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!" We have overcome through the power of the Lord, and have escaped even from between the jaws of death. Still he will save us in life, and when we come to die he will deliver us gloriously. It will only be the same mercy again—a repetition of the covenant guardianship in another form. See how Paul puts it, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." See! it is a note from the same trumpet, a voice from the same mouth. Wherefore, beloved, as you will only want the same mercy repeated, be confident, be joyful. Do not dread to-morrow. Do not fear next year. Do not pine because of the coming of old age. Do not dread that painful operation which seems needful. Do not dread even death itself. He that made you will make you to endure; he that has carried you, will carry you; he that has delivered you will deliver you to the end. If it were possible, when we get to heaven, one of the things that we should do would be to sit down and laugh at our fears. Surely we should laugh and cry too. Shall we not say, "How could I ever doubt my God? How could I ever have mistrusted my faithful Lord? Here I am, after all, sitting among the thrones of the glorified! Why did I doubt my God?" That poor old woman in the almshouse, that poor man who was bedridden, how different they will be, and how they will wonder that ever they were so timorous! Hear the sick one say, "I feared I should perish in my trouble; but here I am, as bright and glorious, as alert and nimble, as any of them." Hear the poor man from his cottage shouting, "Hallelujah! I will sing aloud unto the Lord all the more because of the weakness and the poverty through which I have triumphantly passed." Blessed be God, we only want a continuance of the same mercy as we have already experienced, and that the Lord promises to us.

And now, to close, notice in the text *two things which are always here—the same God and the same mercy.* There is nobody else here but the Lord alone with his people. Will you note that? There is nobody else here but you and your God; and you are nobody, but a poor thing that has to be carried. "Even to your old age *I* am he. Even to hoar hairs will *I* carry you. *I* have made, and *I* will bear; even *I* will carry, and will deliver you." We have great admiration of angels, but we are very pleased to see that they are not mentioned in this promise. We have many kind-hearted friends, but we are glad to see that they are not brought in here. God's great *I*,

and that alone, fills up the whole space. And oh, what a blessing it is when we trust in the Lord alone! Look ye, beloved, when ye were made, it was God that made you; when you were new-made it was God that new-made you. It was *his* grace, *his* power, *his* love, *his* wisdom, *his* life. Nobody else was there. Up to this time, he alone has carried you, and no other hand has sustained you. He has always been sufficient for the task, to bear you, and your own weight, and your divinely appointed burden. The Lord has borne you up, and he has borne you through, and he has borne you on. He has borne you to this day. He alone has done it. Do you not think that he can do it in the future? His own right hand and his holy arm have hitherto gotten him the victory; can you not trust him for to-morrow? He alone has delivered you, and he alone can repeat the deliverance. You have been, perhaps, as I have often been, in a cleft-stick, where nobody could tell you how to get out, but yet the Lord found a way of escape for you. You were shut up, and you could not come forth, and then God cleared the way in a moment. What a great Maker of ways is the Lord God! His way has been in the sea, and his path through the deep waters; and there have you rejoiced in him. He alone dried up the sea and made a path for his chosen; but ten thousand hands could not have done it better. God alone is greater than a whole universe of creatures.

Come, brethren, let us hear the voice of our experience. O ye who have known the Lord and his grace, trust your God, the lonely champion of the righteous, the sole Saviour of the sinner, the all-sufficient deliverer of those that cast themselves upon him.

You young people, oh, how earnestly I wish that you would begin with my Lord Jesus Christ—begin with the great and blessed Father, and trust him, for he will take care of you to hoar hairs! What may happen between your youth and your age I cannot tell. You may never see old age. I cannot look into the palm of your hand and read your destiny; but come and trust my Lord, and all will be right, for your destiny will be in his hand for time and for eternity. You in middle life, with your children about you, and hard times to struggle with; your God whom you trusted in your youth will not leave you now. All between your birth and your death the God of our Lord Jesus guarantees; and he promises to remember your seed after you. Trust him. Play the man. Do not mistrust your heavenly Father. Doubt yourself as much as you like, but do not distrust the Lord who cannot lie. Did you come here with a heavy heart to-night? Leave the heaviness behind. Many a time a friend has come in on a Thursday evening, I mean a friend who does not generally worship here on the Sabbath; he has come in from the Exchange, or from the shop, having been a heavy loser in the day, and he has found such rest of mind at this service that he has been no more sad, but has gone home nerved for the conflict. How often friends have sent in help for different works because of the encouragement they have had while listening to the preaching of the Word here! By faith they have been delivered, and they have offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord God. O my brothers, do trust my God! Do not let the world say, God's own people cannot trust him!" Surely they will

think that he is not to be depended on if *you* begin to doubt him. Trust him as he deserves to be trusted, and rest in him with all your souls.

“Trust him, ye saints, in all your ways,
Pour out your hearts before his face;
When helpers fail, and foes invade,
God is our all-sufficient aid.”

And you, my aged brethren and sisters, to whom I speak with much reverence, show to us who are younger where your joy and your peace are, that we also may rest in God. He has brought you through seventy years of trial! Do you think that he will now forsake you? You are eighty, you say, or even getting on to ninety. Well, you have at least eighty reasons why you should not distrust your God and Saviour. If you will read your own diaries you will see that there are eighty million reasons why you should trust him, and yet you cannot find one solitary reason why you should not do so. Wherefore, “rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him,” and may he bless you evermore, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah xlvii.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—732, 193, 745.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,—Although we have had two days of rainy and tempestuous weather, I have improved so greatly that I feel like the man who is described in Scripture as “walking, and leaping, and praising God.” As I cannot quite manage the two former exercises, I desire to be doubly abundant in the third. Watts says,

“When we are raised from deep distress,
Our God demands a song;
We take the pattern of our praise
From Hezekiah’s tongue.”

That man of God, on his recovery, said, “The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day.” In that spirit I have prepared the sermon to which this note is appended; and I have borne therein my willing testimony to the faithfulness of God, and to the certainty that he honours the faith of his people.

From the Tabernacle I have joyful news of a meeting at which four or five hundred persons came together to confess that they had found mercy during the late services. What a cordial to one’s heart! “Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.” Blessed be his name!

With my heart’s best wishes for all my hearers and readers,

Their servant for Christ’s sake,

Mentone, Dec. 1, 1888.

C. H. SPURGEON.