

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A BRIGHT LIGHT IN DEEP SHADES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MAY 12TH, 1872, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”
—Isaiah li. 1.

THE Israelites were commanded to remember all the way which the Lord their God had led them in the wilderness. That precept was not given without reason. The remembrance of God's mercy in the past is helpful to us in many ways. To look back upon our past condition and upon the manner in which God befriended us at such times as we were reduced to sore straits, will often prove salutary and bracing to our souls. For one thing, it tends to bring forth in us the meekness of wisdom. Should we become rich and increased in goods spiritually, it will humble us and keep us in our right place, if we remember that once we were naked, and poor, and miserable. Are we to-day rejoicing in the Lord, sitting down at our Father's table, enjoying the privileges of sonship?—it will prevent our being proud, if we recollect that not long ago we fain would have filled our belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and all in our rags and filth we were led to say, “I will arise, and go to my Father.” Whenever, O child of God, thou becomest self-complacent through beholding the excellence of thy present estate, it will do thee good to remember what thou once wast, how thou hast now become what thou art, and to whom the glory of it is due; it will cool thy hot blood, calm thy feverish pulse, and constrain thee to bow in the dust of adoration before him to whom thy well-being, like thy being, exclusively is due. A recollection of the past also will be sure to excite our thankfulness. God's people are always happy when they are grateful. We should be ten times more full of bliss if we were proportionately more full of thankfulness. We bury God's mercies, and then sigh for his comforts. Did we recollect how near to death's dark door we once laid, and how the gates of hell were opened for us, and fain would have closed upon us for ever, we should bless that mighty arm which plucked us like brands from the burning, and adore that matchless atonement which has delivered us from going down into the pit

No. 1,050.

because a ransom has been found. If no other results came from a retrospect of our past condition, but humility and thankfulness, these would be sufficient to justify the prophet in bidding us look to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged.

But, in this particular instance, Isaiah had not in his mind's eye the cultivation either of humility or of gratitude. He was led by the Spirit of God to admonish the Israelites to look back for quite another reason, though one of equal importance. It was this, that they might be cheered and encouraged in a time of gloom and sadness, and that they might be animated with fresh confidence in God's power to bring them up again from their sad condition, as they thought of all that he had done for them in times past, when they were equally low, or when, peradventure, they were even in a worse plight than they were at present.

Give ear, then, beloved ; hearken to this appeal, all ye that follow after righteousness. There is a cheerful view for you, if you will but look back ; and brighter scenes will yet open up before you as you go forward. It is a great thing for people to be encouraged. Sometimes Satan makes the pendulum vibrate in one direction, and sometimes in another direction. If it swing this way, men become presumptuous in sin ; or, if he make it swing that way, they become desponding as to the pardon of their sin and the renewal of their heart. Quite as many souls are ruined by the latter as by the former. I desire, this morning, so to speak that every one of you that follows after righteousness, and desires the Lord, may say, "There is hope for me, then ; there is good cheer for me," and with his face turned towards his Father's house, may quicken his footsteps towards the place where pardon and love are awaiting him.

I. First, WE SHALL EXPOUND THE TEXT WITH GREAT BREVITY IN ITS APPLICATION TO ISRAEL LITERALLY. They are bidden to look back to the origin of their nation, in order that they may be comforted.

Abraham was the stock out of which the nation of Israel came. He was only one man. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you, for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." He was a single individual ; his wife and himself made up but one family ; one tent enclosed them ; and yet the Lord said to him, "I will make of thee a great nation ; and I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Yea, more, the Lord said to him, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting covenant." And God bade Abraham look towards heaven and count the stars, and he said, "So shall thy seed be." A progeny that should be like the sand upon the sea shore innumerable was assured to the patriarch and Sarah his wife. Moreover, the man was old, well stricken in years, and we read concerning him that his body was now dead—that is to say, he was too far advanced in years to be likely to become the progenitor of a race. As for his wife, she also, it is said, was barren, and yet from these two, who seemed the least likely of all flesh and blood, God was pleased to create a people countless as the stars. Abraham was not a man in a commanding position, with large armies at his feet, who could make a

show in the world. He was a dweller in tents, a Bedouin sheik, wandering through the plains of Palestine, yet was he never injured; for God had sent forth a secret mandate, which fell, though they knew it not, upon men's hearts, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;" and, though in many cases it seemed as if this embryo of a race might have been crushed, and become extinct, yet Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, must live on, they must survive, because God's promise was that he would make a great nation out of these few men and women. Now, the prophet turns to the Israelites, and he says, "You say God can never restore us, we have been thinned out by innumerable invasions, the sword of war hath slain the tribes, Judah and Israel can never rise again. But are there not more left of you than there were at first? There were but two, Abraham and Sarah, that bare you, and yet God made you a people. Can he not make you a people again? You are not lower now than you were then. You say that you are in poverty; true, but these your progenitors were not great in the earth. You say that you have no strength, that the men of valour have ceased, and that you are not skilful in the use of arms. Be it so, neither were your first ancestors expert in war; they were but few and feeble in the land, yet God preserved them, wrought great deliverances for them, and brought the country to great strength and power; and cannot he who did this for them do the same again for you, now that he promises to visit you and to restore you?"

I think you see that the thoughts which would be awakened in the heart of a Jew by these reflections would be eminently consolatory. They ought to be consolatory to us now with regard to the Jewish people. They are scattered: behold them wandering on the face of the earth without a country of their own; they are a people who have been oppressed and downtrodden almost beyond belief: the hand of the heathen and the hand of the so-called Christian hath been very heavy upon them; they have been jeered and hooted at for ages, though they are in truth the very nobles of God, and their ancient lineage is like that of kings. Let us not, however, despair for them. Abraham, their father, was but a heathen when God called him out of a family that had worshipped the teraphs and made him to be a witness of the living and true God, and honoured his faith with exceeding great reward. Doubt not, then, that he can call Israel again from all her wanderings, cleanse her from all her profane traditions and her unbelief, and separate her unto himself to be a holy people, in whom once again his power shall be made known, and made known in such a way that they shall not speak of the ark of the Lord, or the redemption out of Egypt as the chief symbol of their national glory, or the grandest theme of their patriotic song, for a greater redemption and a greater manifestation of the Divine presence shall be in the midst of Israel than the wilderness of Sinai had ever known, or the mountains round about Jerusalem had ever witnessed. God grant it to them, and hasten the fulfilment of the promises, in which he has made us to hope. We are encouraged from the very origin of Israel to hope that great things shall yet be done for her.

II. But now, secondly, our text may be used in reference to the **CONDITION OF THE CHURCH, THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE WORLD.**

Let us look back to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence Christ's church was digged. We shall see great encouragement under present discouragements if we do so.

I know many of the people of God who scarcely dare look for brighter times, because they say the people of God are few. Nominal professors abound, but vital godliness, say they, where shall we find it? Behold, the faithful servants of the Most High are become like the gleanings of the grapes when the vintage is over. The spirit of Elias in some Christians, while it makes them very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, makes them very uncharitable towards his people, and they say, "I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Do I hear the bitter complaint of some brother who is afflicted with the belief that there are very few good and gracious people now; perhaps, he may have sound reasons for his apprehensions in the church with which he is connected, seeing that through many circumstances it may have been thinned and brought very low in numbers. My dear brother, hope thou in thy God, trust in Christ, cry mightily for the Spirit, work heartily for a revival, and have confidence in the power of the gospel, for was not the church very small at the first? It could all be contained in one upper room. Has it not been very small many times since then? Had you looked well all over the Continent of Europe and been able to read all men's hearts, how very few of the faithful would you have found in the days of Huss, or Jerome of Prague! Here and there a godly monk in his cell had found the Saviour, here and there simple-minded men and women had heard the good tidings of the cross, as it were by chance, and rejoiced therein. But the people of God were very scant, so few, a little child might count them, like the trees of the wood when the axe has passed through and through the forest. But did not the Lord strengthen his church in the apostolic times! How speedily did the 120 grow to 3,000! How soon had the 3,000 been scattered over the world and multiplied a hundredfold! How soon had all nations felt the growing power of the church! And, in the dark ages, how very speedily did the time of the singing of birds come? How sweetly was the voice of the turtle heard in our land, and in all lands! God had but to speak by his servant Luther, and brave men came to his side, and right soon his church sprang up. Though she be built of costly stones and hewn stones, and abideth for the ages, yet she sprang up as though she had been the offspring of a dream, and like the gourd which cometh up in a night, for the Lord was with her and he wrought marvellously. Look back, then, if discouraged with the fewness of God's people, to the rock whence the church was hewn.

But, is it possible, you say, while the church of God in these days possesses so few men of influence, so few of the nobility throughout the land? Those that follow after Christ are for the most part recruited from the poor or the middle classes. The men of literary repute, where are they? are they not opposed to the gospel? Men of station and of rank, do they not look down with contempt upon the followers of the simple faith of Christ? There are no kings, nor princes, nor great ones of the earth to hold the standard and unfurl the banner of the cross. But, dry your tears; ay, let them not even spring to your eyes, for this is small matter of regret; was it not said that it should be so of old?

Did not inspiration say, "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty have been called, but God hath chosen the poor of this world"? Do ye suppose that God has changed his plans, or that men's hearts have changed their bias? It will be so to the end of the chapter; nor must we expect otherwise; albeit, when the gospel spreads broadly and grows mightily, there will be more of all classes comprehended in it. Yet God looketh not to the greatness of men, neither shall the triumph of the gospel ever owe aught of its good speed to the prowess of man, the wealth of his intellect, the spell of his eloquence, or the multitude of his possessions. The Lord alone is to be exalted, and he will establish his right by multiplying his people from a class that shall not be able to claim eminence among the sons of men. Look then to the rock from whence ye were hewn, and ye will no longer sorrow for lack of men of great influence and high standing.

But alas, saith one, I see grave cause for sorrow, even for sorrow like the lamentation of Jeremiah at the gates of Jerusalem, for in these days many have departed from the faith, and truth lies in the streets bespattered. Alas, it is to be confessed that it is even so. False teaching is varnished with fair words; lies long exploded are brought into the church again; error is taught in our pulpits, covered over with new phrases; and heresies that were once slain have had a resurrection and are living among us. You see in one church popery rampant, popery maintained by men who eat the bread of a Protestant church; you see in another place every doctrine of our holy faith practically denied by men who occupy the pulpits of the old Puritans. We have fallen certainly upon evil days in this respect, nor do I think it would be possible for a man to be too censorious in the statement of this fact. The times are dark and ominous, and thick clouds are gathering: but for all this there is no room for fear; ay, there is no place for trembling. Put not thine hand upon the ark of the Lord, like Uzzah, for God will preserve it; it is safe in his keeping. Look back to the pit whence we have been digged.

There have been eras and epochs in which gross heresies spread a contagion through the entire church. The period at which Arianism was so prominent comes at once to our recollection. That Christ was merely a man was almost the universal belief of Christendom. Only a few faithful ones maintained his Godhead at all hazards. But yet, to-day, where is Arianism? It has gone among the moles and the bats; the few that held the truth survived the deadly epidemic, and won the victory after all. God was with them, and in his name they became triumphant, and it will be so again. Error is like a hydra, as quickly as we cut off one of its heads another comes up in its place; but we must keep on killing till the last be slain. In the dark ages, Romanism was not only predominant, but it seemed to be and it really was all but universal: yet by the bright shining of his revealed word, did not God soon chase away the dense shades of ignorance and superstition? Once was the sound heard, "By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God," and the rolling thunder of that gospel sound shook the Vatican, and very soon its power over the nations had passed away never to be predominant again. So will it be again. Let

us not fear, we have the same God, we have the same gospel, we have the same Holy Spirit to make the gospel effectual against error—we may say, the virgin daughter of Zion hath shaken her head at thee, and laughed thee to scorn; for the Lord of Hosts is with her, the God of Jacob is her refuge, therefore shall she not fear.

Again, I hear the voice of lamentation from some brother who cries, “It is not merely that error spreads in the land, but the church is lukewarm in these times. Jesus does not seem to be loved as once he was. The heroic spirit, the martyr spirit, has departed from us. Christians seek to get gain, and wrap themselves up in garments of fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day. They are as earthly and as carnal as the rest of mankind. How is the fine gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed!” Here, again, the warmest advocate for the church must confess that the indictment is true. This is a lukewarm age. “I would thou wert either cold or hot,” might be addressed to the churches of this day as justly as to the church of Laodicea. We will neither insist upon it, nor bring proofs about it, nor will we argue against it, but we will admit the charge just as the accuser brings it, and what then? Though I see much cause for our feeling grieved, still I see no cause for our being dispirited. The church has been in a like listless state before, and out of that languid condition God has roused her up and brought her forth. I am sure I need not unroll a page of history and ask you to glance your eye down it except for a second; for again and again you will see it has occurred that the church has fallen asleep, and her ministers have become as mute inglorious neuters, destitute of zeal, having no ardent passion, and giving themselves up to no arduous enterprise. But it is only needed once more for God to make bare his arm, and his church has been full of life and of power, renewing the vigour of youth, abounding in hope, and intrepid in courage. Must you have a modern instance? think of the days of Wesley and Whitefield. When they began to preach, gross darkness had covered this land. They did not appear to be the men who were likely to remove the veil that covered the nation, yet God used their very feebleness and eccentricity, he used everything about the men to be the means of restoring the church, reinforcing her ranks, and augmenting her energies. Therefore, be of good cheer; though the church should slip and slide again, and disgrace herself by her want of zeal, yet she is the spouse of Christ, and he will not divorce her, he will turn to her in mercy yet again.

There is a complaint made by some, and I fear there is some truth in it, that we have not many valiant ministers nowadays. Godly men will say, if we had a Luther that then we might hope; if anywhere within the horizon we could find a man like Howe or Baxter, then we might be of good courage. But where are the champions for the gospel now? We are a race of pigmies, say they, and the time of the giants has long since gone by. Perhaps so; it is likely enough; but, for all that, there have been periods in the church's history when she lacked for men of valour, and God has found them. Why should he not find them again? The apostles were certainly eminent, but their fame was, to a great extent, posthumous, they were not eminent in the judgment of their own generation. There seemed to be in the early church no

very remarkable person who was all on fire to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth, when one who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a persecutor of the church, a man of great learning, a man of mighty reasoning faculties, an extraordinary man, one of the greatest of men that God ever endowed with gifts, was summoned into the field of service. In a moment the Lord arrested that man, for he had need of him, and at the gates of Damascus he converted him by grace and called him to be an apostle; nor was he a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, and he became renowned among the sons of men for the brightness of the revelation he received, for the magnitude of the labour he performed, and for the intensity of the sufferings he endured. The Lord can work as extraordinary a miracle of grace at this very hour. If he willed it, he could take from amongst the cardinals a man who should preach Christ's gospel; he could find among the priests that now abhor him men that should be henceforth so full of faith and power that their adversaries could not resist the wisdom and spirit by which they speak; ay, and not from thence only, but in the slums of Whitechapel and the dark corners of the Seven Dials God could find a Paul and a Barnabas. From the very highest of the population, or from the lowest, whichever he willed, he could raise up men that should defend the truth, and carry the banner of the cross into the very heart of the foe. Let us not fear. He that made the earth, and man that is upon it, can make men for his church. There are live coals upon the altar still, and there are seraphs still to bring them to touch stammering lips, and say to men who hitherto had been silent, "Lo! this hath touched thy lips; go and preach the gospel in Jehovah's name, and the signs of his grace shall follow."

Brethren, I see nothing whatever to discourage us when I look back upon the past—I see the days of the present at once transmuted into signs of hope. I know there is much to deplore, but so there always has been. I know there are hills to be levelled, but levelled they shall be. I know there are valleys to be filled up, but filled up they shall be. I know there are crooked things, but they shall be made straight; and there are rough places, but they shall be made plain. If the gospel's progress were always smooth and easy, where were the glory of it? but, inasmuch as the church meets with opposition at her every step, this mighty maid that God has sent into the world armed from head to foot shall fight her way through the midst of all her enemies, and truth and righteousness her sisters shall go with her even to that throne that shall be set up above the hills, on which she shall reign as queen in the midst of the people.

III. I leave that point, because I am anxious to dwell upon another. OUR TEXT MAY BE VIEWED AS INSTRUCTIVE TO OURSELVES. Beloved brethren and sisters, our experience varies. Probably some of you may not be able to sympathise with an experience I am about to describe. I am sorry to say I am very cognisant of it, and I am afraid that there are many here who know as much about it as I do, perhaps more.

It sometimes happens to men who are truly saved and resting upon Christ, that they fall from the condition which they occupied when they were in their first love, and they get into a state of which I must give you

some particulars. They will say, "I have lost all enjoyment of religion, I could once sing for joy of heart in the precious love of Christ; when I went to the house of God the word was like music to my ears; when I bowed the knee in prayer it was delightful to speak with my heavenly Father.

‘What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still.’

But I do not enjoy these sacred exercises now. I follow after them. God forbid I should ever give them up. Still I am afraid there is very much that is mechanical in my devotion. Certainly I have not much inward peace. Alas, that I must confess it, my feelings seem to have become dull and blunt. At one time I wept if I thought I had sinned. The least touch of sin grieved me, I was like a sensitive plant, the very brush of evil I felt, but now, sir, I cannot feel. Oh, what would I give for the tenderness of years gone by! I sometimes think

‘If aught is felt, ’tis only pain,
To think I cannot feel.’

I read the story of Christ's death without a tear, and I think of sinners perishing without the shudder that used to thrill every nerve of my body. At one time it would have broken my heart, but now I treat it as a matter of course. Not only is the joy gone, but other graces which were wont to bloom, now droop as if there were a blight among all the flowers in the garden of my soul." Such a one may say, "I do not doubt the faithfulness of God, but I am afraid I have no interest in it; I do not doubt the power of Jesus' precious blood to cleanse from sin, but I am afraid I never had any faith in that precious blood, and that I cannot be one of his disciples. I feel, oh, I cannot tell you how—it is like a dead calm in my spirit:—

‘No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The ship was as still as a ship might be.

And so is my soul, till it seems to be like the deep described in Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner':—

‘The very deep did rot,’

Alas, that ever this should be! My soul seems in that awful calm, as though every good thing were rotting within her, and I cannot help myself." Well, dear friend, I want you to follow the counsel of my text, "Look to the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the pit whence ye were digged." I want you to look back to what you once were. Time was when you were all you are now, but you did not know the wretchedness thereof. You then loved sin, and the wages of it, and you found a pleasure in your evil pursuits. It is not so with you now. Then you were an enemy to God by wicked works, and far off from him. There were no heavings within your spirit, no desire for better things. Not only had you no feeling, but you did not want to have any feeling; you would rather not have had any, whereas now you would be glad enough if the Spirit of God would visit you again and rekindle the fire which has almost gone out. Why,

in those days, your sins had never been acknowledged nor confessed, and were not pardoned, they were heaped upon you then with all their aggravations ; but you were brought by the precious power of grace to wash in the "fountain filled with blood." My dear brother, why cannot you be washed again? What reason is there why the Lord should not bring you a second time to himself and make you stand and weep again at the cross—weep for very joy, because your sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus, and were put to death in his death? Your state is bad, but it is not what it was. Oh, blessed be God, if I cannot feel, at least I want to feel; and if I cannot pray as I would, at any rate, I long to pray; and, if I cannot clasp Christ in my arms and say, "I have seen thy salvation," I may say I shall never be happy till I do; if I cannot every day sit at his table, yet I know I cannot feel at home anywhere else. If Jesus be not mine, yet will I never be content till he shall be mine, for I will seek him, and if I perish I will perish still crying to him, "God be merciful to me." Your present condition is not what your past one was, and yet the Lord visited you when in your lost estate. Beloved, there is the same God to-day as there was when first you sought him. Your Father did welcome you with abounding love when first you came to him confessing your sin. His heart is not hardened towards you, return to him, for he will receive you yet again. There is the same purpose in God's heart now as there was then. Then he resolved to save you, and he did. He never changes his resolve to save you. You are under the same covenant as you were, it was not a covenant of works but of pure grace. He loved you because he would love you, and he saved you not because there was any good in you, for there was none; and he will place you now upon the same terms, he will receive you graciously and love you freely, for his anger is turned away from you. There is the same Saviour to-day as there was then. Jesus revealed himself to you as having bled in your stead; his blood has not lost its efficacy, neither hath he cast away the people whom he has redeemed. And remember there is the same Spirit now that there was then. It melted you then, it can melt you now; it wounded you then, it can wound you now; it healed you then, it can heal you now. The Spirit has not lost his might nor lost his love. He still can work upon you according to the wonders of his grace. "If," says the apostle, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If the enemy was brought in shall not the child be kept in? If when I had no thought of God he had thought of me, will he not think of me now? If when I strove against his grace he constrained me with his sweet attractions, will he not visit me now? If I feel dead to-day, yet when I was dead as the dry bones of the valley years ago, the breath of his Spirit came upon me and made me to live, why should I dispute the power, the grace of my Heavenly Father? My dear brethren and sisters, when the Lord first looked upon you in love, and you had not even a trace of any goodness in you, was not it all grace? Did not he deal with you just on this footing—"I mean to save this undeserving wretch just because I will, and for no other reason"? Will you listen to me for one minute? God will deal with you to-day just

as he dealt with you the first day. You fancy that you have got under a covenant of works, some of you. You think the Lord will not love you except you are faithful. The old Hagar covenant, which gendereth bondage is enthralling you. The fact is, he did not see anything good in you at first, and he does not discern any merit in you now. That has nothing to do with his eternal purpose to save you; he saves you because he will do it; because he will love you he loves you, and not for anything else. If I thought the Lord only loved me because he saw some beauty in me, I should know it was only he who had put it there, and I should fear that it would fade in an hour or two, and then he would despise my image. But, when I know that he has chosen us in Christ Jesus, and that the beauty he sees in us is the beauty of Christ, and not any natural charm of our own, then I see his love stands on a stable foundation that cannot be shaken, even the covenant of grace, which will stand when yon sky and this poor earth shall both have gone. The Lord our God will rest in his love, because he loves us on the blessed terms of his own will and his own grace.

When the Lord first saved you was there anything in you to help or assist? A poor man once told his minister that the Holy Spirit did much for him and he did the rest. "And pray what did you do," said the minister? "Why," said he, "the Holy Spirit did it all, and I stood in his way, that was all I did." And I can truly say, that was all I could do in my own salvation; he did it all from first to last, there was nothing in me to help him. Suppose there is nothing in me to help now, even then I am not in a worse plight than then I was, and so, as I look to the hole of the pit whence I was digged, my soul takes comfort; it was a dead lift then, it is a dead lift now. Grace had to do it all then and grace must do it all now; and, if the eternal and ever-blessed God could save a dead sinner, a hateful sinner, a hard-hearted, loathesome sinner that despised Christ, and could bring him to the foot of the cross, why, then, blessed be his name, it can save him now that he stands at the same hallowed spot, and says, "Jesus, my all, I trust in thee." There is much comfort to be had in looking to the rock whence we were hewn.

IV. But now, to close, I think OUR TEXT MAY BE FITTINGLY USED TO ENCOURAGE OUR HOPE FOR OTHERS. I thank God that I have a working church about me, and that the most of you are engaged in soul-winning. Brethren, this afternoon launch into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. Let not this day pass over your heads till you have lovingly sought to introduce to the Saviour some one who has been a stranger to him. Suffer not any thoughts about the character of the person you are brought in contact with to damp your ardour. Do you say of some sinner, "I am afraid his is a hopeless case." My dear brother, look unto the rock whence *you* were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence *ye* were digged. Where is that sinner? I will tell you. He is where the whole race is naturally. What sort of a sinner is he? I have his likeness drawn here; if you like to turn to Romans iii., you will see the photograph of the man you are intended to bless, "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no,

not one." That poor sinner is where all other sinners are. He is without any goodness; the imagination of the thoughts of his heart are evil, only evil, and that continually, and there is nothing in the individual that you are sent to this afternoon that is at all unusual; he is just in the same fall where our father Adam left him; he was born in the same corruption, there is the same evil in his heart, no more, no less, and therefore you must go to him with that upon your mind. Recollect, too, that the sinner is where you were. You look down and see him in a horrible pit; it looks a long way down, and the pit is full of mud and mire and dirt; he is not deeper down than you were—at least the sinner who is further gone than I was, must be an extraordinary one. Though not in outward actions, yet in my inward soul I was as far from God as a man could be not to be actually in hell; and yet his grace has brought me nigh. Since the Lord saved me I never despair of anybody; and I think there are some of you who in your olden times, before you knew the Lord, were perhaps given to actual vice and sin, and have been reclaimed, and I am sure when you go out to talk to sinners that are now what you were, you may very well feel, "The Lord that saved me can save them; the gospel that came with power to my soul can come with power to their souls, and therefore will I go to them remembering the hole of the pit whence I was digged, and feel encouraged concerning them."

Remember again, that that poor sinner whose soul you are going to seek this afternoon is where the best and brightest of the saints were. Peter was there, Paul was there; they were all in the same condemnation. By nature they were all heirs of wrath such as that sinner is. In all the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of the martyrs, and the goodly fellowship of the prophets, there is never one that was not born in sin as that sinner is, and prone to break God's laws, and all alike needed the eternal power and Godhead of Christ to put forth all its strength, or else none of them would have been saved.

And, recollect, that that sinner you are going to speak with this afternoon, perhaps a child in your class, perhaps a drunkard in the street, is, to-day, where those that are in heaven once were. Their robes are white, but they washed them in the blood of the Lamb; they are without fault, but they were once under condemnation. There is nothing to prevent the Lord taking the drunkard, the blasphemer, the adulterer, ay, and the murderer, and washing such in the fountain that is open for sin and uncleanness, and robing them in the immaculate garment, and making them to take their place amongst the host of the blessed, at the right hand of the eternal throne. Be of good comfort, and if you ever do despair of any, look to the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged.

Of all the saints that ever were saved there was nothing in their human nature, physical or mental, that aided their salvation—nothing. Some of them were more moral than others, but their whole head was sick and their whole heart faint; they were all lost, utterly lost, utterly undone. It was the work of the Spirit in every case and of the Spirit alone. But, on the other hand, in the case of no soul has there ever been found any evil power which has absolutely been able to defeat the Spirit of God when he has put forth his omnipotence. It

is impossible to conceive of anything that can resist the Spirit of God when he operates on the heart with purpose and with power. His ordinary ministrations are resisted, and effectually too; but when he puts forth his might to quicken the dead, in that regenerating operation he works like a God, and what is there that can stand against him? In the case of every soul that was saved, God's alone revealed motive was his grace; he saved the man not because he deserved it, not because it would be any advantage to God to save him, but simply because he delighteth in mercy, and he has put it on record, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Now, in bad cases, there is the same room for divine grace, and when the man is deeply sunk in sin, it will glorify the mercy of God all the more to save him; and, therefore, I would rather expect that man to be saved than gather from his sin that he was unlikely to be blessed of God. I would go with confidence to the chief of sinners if I knew him, preach to him the Saviour, Christ the Lord, and bid him look to him, and I would hope that God would bless that word to him none the less because he had become so sodden in sin and so rank in corruption.

Brethren and sisters, I am sure it will be a great help to you in working for God at any time, if you keep in recollection what the Lord has done for you. Have it fresh on your own mind. Oh, we never teach so well as when we teach from the heart; we never preach so well as when we preach about what we ourselves have experienced, dipping every word in gratitude to God for what we have known and received from him. I have heard of a lady who on one occasion was out in the street walking. The frost was severe, the snow was deep, and she felt so keenly for the poor that she resolved that when she got home she would write a cheque and have the money distributed to provide them with food and fuel. After a short time she reached her home, and sat down by the fireside, and she felt so extremely warm and comfortable, that she thought after all it would be a pity to waste money on the poor, for she had no doubt whatever if they kept by the fire the cold was not so severe as she had imagined. Now, there are some of us who have got to be very comfortable in our religion: we sit down in it; it would be a great mercy for us, and probably a mercy for thousands of others, if we were made to go out and feel the old discomfort, and to know once again what we were and where we were before the Lord brought us into the house of his mercy, and sat us down before the fire of his love. Oh, it is a dreadful thing because one feels happy himself to have no care for the souls of others. I earnestly pray you to live to-day as if you were only saved to-day, to go and try to bring others to Christ, as if your own conversion had only been accomplished five minutes before, with the blood fresh upon you, just fallen warm from those dear wounds, with the sin just gone, and your soul astonished at the miraculous change wrought in you, with the love of God just newly shed abroad in your own soul, in all the freshness of new-found love, and all the recollection of the sorrow and the sin from which you have just escaped. Oh, if you went so, God would bless you, and many souls would be saved to the praise of the glory of his grace. Amen.