

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH'S SURE FOUNDATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 18TH, 1878, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”—1 Peter ii. 6.

MY sermon last Sabbath morning was upon the true position of the witness within, and I then tried to show that the warrant and ground of our believing in Christ unto eternal life is the witness which God himself has borne concerning his Son. Not our feelings, or experience, but the testimony of God, is to stand to us as the reason for our believing. I tried to set forth that doctrine very clearly, and I have been greatly delighted to find that the blessing of God rendered it effectual. I have met with five young men, who have each one said, “If this believing in Christ because God has set him forth, and borne witness to him, is really the way of salvation, then we are saved, and we come forward to declare that we are on the Lord’s side.” When a fisher fills his basket in one place he is glad to fish there again; and, therefore, close to the former spot, upon a subject near akin to it, I cast in my lines a second time. I do so the more readily in the hope that those who have been brought to Christ may be established in the present faith, and may see yet more clearly what is the basis of their salvation. As I tried on last Sabbath morning to show *why* they should believe, it shall now be my business to explain *what* they should believe. We will think not so much of the reason for believing as of the object of faith, the facts which are to be received, and the person who is to be trusted. We saw the Lord God laying the foundation upon which faith is to rest, we shall now consider the foundation itself.

The passage before us is a very favourite quotation with the apostles. If you turn to the Epistle to the Romans you will find Paul quoting it again and again in rapid succession. The last verse of the ninth chapter is, “Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed;” and in the eleventh verse of the tenth chapter he repeats the quotation. It is a quotation from Isaiah xxviii. 16, where we find it written thus: “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a

stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste," which Paul interprets, "shall not be ashamed," and Peter renders, "shall not be confounded." From the variation of the translations we obtain two or three different shades of meaning, all amounting to the same thing. That must be a very important part of God's word which even the Holy Ghost himself has quoted so frequently. He is prolific of thought, and is ever able to create new ideas; he abounds in language, and cannot be straitened for expression, and yet he quotes himself in these three instances which I have given you: therefore we may be quite sure it is because no other expression would be more suitable. This sentence seemed to the divine author to be so full, so complete, and so forcible that he repeated it often. The harp is a choice one, let us play upon it, and let our ears drink in the melody—"He that believeth on him shall not be confounded."

I. I shall first of all this morning consider THE FOUNDATION OF THE BELIEVER'S FAITH, this being the main subject of our discourse, "He that believeth *on him*." The foundation of the believer's faith is Christ Jesus himself. The believer receives doctrine because Christ has taught it; but still it is not a doctrine which is the foundation of his confidence; it is a person, "He that believeth *on him*." The Lord Jesus himself, as the Son of God, is the object of our faith: it is upon him that we lean. The apostle doth not say in the Epistle to Timothy, "I know *what* I have believed," though that would be true, but "I know *whom* I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." The faith which saves the soul is confidence in a person, reliance upon one who will certainly effect the salvation of those who trust him.

But in what sense am I to believe in Jesus Christ? Under what aspects does the believer rest in Christ? I reply, first, *as God's appointed Saviour of men*. Mark how the text runs in Isaiah. The Lord saith, "Behold *I lay* in Zion a sure foundation." We trust in Christ Jesus because God has set him forth to be the propitiation for sin. When sin first came into the world God in tender mercy gave our parents the first promise concerning the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head: we believe Jesus of Nazareth to be that seed of the woman, and we trust in him to bruise the serpent's head on our behalf. Promises were multiplied as the ages went on, and Jesus was set forth under various types and figures, but always as the Messiah, one whom God would send, who would undo the mischief of the fall, remove the guilt of sin, deliver ruined souls, and give them to partake of the mercy of God. Now, all those promises and prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and therefore we rest in him. Since God appoints him as a Saviour, we accept him as a Saviour. Since he comes authorised and empowered from the court of heaven to be the ambassador of peace we joyfully receive him, and find peace with God. We are glad to see the marks and seals upon him by which God the Father has certified him to be his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. We believe the apostolic witness by the mouth of John, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This is the great stronghold of our confidence.

We also believe in the Lord Jesus because of *the excellency of his person*. I began by saying that our faith was in a person, and so it is. We trust Christ to save us because we perceive him in every way to be adapted by the nature and constitution of his person to be the Saviour of mankind. It was needful that the Saviour of men should be a man. A man had broken the law, and a man must keep it; for only the obedience of man could answer the requirements of the law. By the sin of a man we became subject to punishment, and only by the penal sufferings of a man could the law be vindicated. It is with gladness that we perceive that the Son of God became a partaker of flesh and blood, and came under the law. Born of a virgin, he was wrapped in swaddling clothes like any other child: he grew in stature as other children do, and abode with his parents till the time of his showing to the world. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." He laboured, he suffered, he died among us. He was really a man; but all the while a perfect man, without trace of fault; and thus he was able to fulfil the perfect law of God on our behalf. We rejoice as we see that Jesus is our next of kin to whom the right of redemption belongs, the perfect man, the second Adam of our race.

But yet more confident are we because we see that his manhood is in union with deity. We subscribe to that ancient confession, "He is very God of very God." In no diminished sense, but with the strongest emphasis which can be laid upon words, we believe him to be "God over all, blessed for ever." He is "Immanuel, God with us," and we each one salute him as "My Lord and my God." We perceive, that his deity must have put an infinite merit into the sufferings of his humanity, that because he was God he was able to undertake the stupendous labour of our redemption, and that his holy life and suffering death are, because of his godhead, fully equal to the redemption of the vast multitudes who by him do believe in God who raised him from the dead. My brethren, there is something here to rest upon. Surely we can trust him who is "the true God and eternal life." We see Jesus to be completely equipped for his work; divinely strong yet humanly compassionate, eternally existing as God, and yet capable of death because he was encompassed with a human body. O thou glorious One, whose name is fitly called Wonderful, my soul cannot imagine a Saviour in whom she could confide with so much ease. Jesus is worthy of all confidence. It seems now but natural to us who are believers to rest in such a person as he, who can with one hand touch the Godhead, and yet with the other hand embrace our nature, who is the Son of the Highest and yet the Son of Mary; "the mighty God, the everlasting Father," and yet a child born unto us, the Son of man. We trust Jesus because we see him to be first ordained of God, and then to be in himself fitly constituted to achieve our redemption.

Nor is this all. Another ground of our reliance upon Christ is *that he has actually finished the work of our redemption*. There were two things to be done. The first was the keeping of the law on our behalf: that he has performed to the uttermost, even as he said to his Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." The very best "Life of Christ" is the four gospels. We read them with delight; and we perceive the exceeding beauties of his

matchless character, and are fully agreed that he is "fairer than the children of men." Righteousness was the girdle of his loins, and he was clad with zeal as with a cloak. For innocence, he is spotless as the lily; for zeal he is red as the rose. There is no fault in our Beloved; in his character there is no redundancy and no deficiency; he is a lamb without blemish and without spot. His character is rounded with perfection. He fulfils both tables of the law, and presents unto God a perfect righteousness on our behalf. When the Lord presents that righteousness to us that it may be set to our account we feel the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, and we are exceeding glad.

We see our Lord also doing the other part of his work, namely, suffering in consequence of our sin, and our faith becomes fully established. I do not know a more delightful exercise—I hope you are familiar with its delights—than to accompany our blessed Lord to the garden of Gethsemane. There every drop of blood pleads with us that we should trust him. There his sighs, and cries, and throes of anguish while he wrestles with his God all plead with us that we should rely upon him. Recollect who and what he was. Regarding him as the Son of the Highest we see an overwhelming argument for faith, for who can doubt the merit of that work which begins with the holy Son of God lying prostrate in Gethsemane, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death? We can surely trust our souls with a divine Saviour who suffered thus. Then, rising from the ground, we trace him as he is seized by his captors and hurried to the high priest, to Herod, and to Pilate. How they pour contempt upon him! How the smiters scourge him! How the abjects mock him! Now, indeed, he seems to be "a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." His lowest shame, his worst desertion, his bitterest griefs, his dying pangs all say to us, "Cannot you trust him? When you see the Lord of angels derided, and his glorious name made into a by-word and a proverb, can you not trust in the merits of his substitutionary woes?" Then comes the death-scene: with tears in our eyes we stand at the cross and see those blessed hands and feet nailed to the tree that he might be made a curse for us. Can unbelief live after this? Ere his heart is opened by the spear-thrust we see it bleeding in every part of his body and soul, for he is a mass of anguish. Of his sufferings we do not dare to speak, for they are of a depth which no plumb line can ever fathom. O Son of God, if ever it were treason to doubt thy power to save, it must be so when we see thee hanging upon the cross. Thou hast triumphed over our unbelief upon the bloody tree. Now, thou dost lead our captivity captive, and we bow before thee, fully assured that thou art mighty to save. We feel constrained to cry, "I must believe. Those nails have crucified my unbelief, that spear has slain my doubts. I trust thee, O thou everlasting Son of God, when thus I see thee made a curse for me." It is upon the sufferings of our Lord Jesus that we rely for our cleansing: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

One other truth must be mentioned, seeing that our Lord is now no longer dead, we feel it more easy to place our confidence in him because *he ever liveth to see to the completion of our salvation.* A living faith delights in a living Saviour. This is the seal of all that went before.

He must have finished the transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, or else he would not be sitting at the right hand of the Father, crowned with glory and honour. Beloved, that one sacrifice which our High Priest offered upon Calvary has put away all the sin of his people for ever : there is, therefore, no need of a repetition of it. It is blasphemous to talk of the "unbloody sacrifice of the mass" as a continuation of the one sacrifice, for it is finished. There is no continuation wanted, for "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."

The righteousness with which we are clothed is completely woven, the fountain in which we are washed is completely filled, and now none can condemn those for whom Jesus died ; neither shall any soul be charged with sin whose sin he bore upon the accursed tree ; for "it is finished" hath ended every accusation. He liveth to take possession of heaven for his people, and he has entered it as our forerunner. He is our representative by whom we are in actual possession of heaven to-day. As a man holds a farm or other land by his agent, who is upon it to keep possession for him, so all the Lord's people have possession of heaven to-day by their representative. Being there, in our name, our Lord is preparing everything for us, that when the time shall come for us to climb to our thrones nothing may be lacking to complete our joys. Meanwhile he is pleading the merit of his blood on behalf of all those who trust him ; and he is also working by his unseen Spirit to preserve his own in every day of temptation, and keep them and perfect them that they may be presented faultless at the last before his presence with exceeding great joy. "Wherefore also he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

So then, our faith rests on this : God has set forth Christ to save us, Christ is in his constitution and person such a one as we can trust to do the deed, he hath already virtually accomplished it by his life and death, and he liveth to secure unto himself the result of what he hath done. For these most sufficient reasons we trust ourselves with the Redeemer, that he may save us from our sins. Into his hands we commit our spirits as unto a faithful Creator. This we do with all sincerity and deliberation, believing that these reasons will bear examination, and are such as none need to be ashamed of.

II. Secondly, let us consider THE MANNER OF THIS BELIEVING. How do we believe in Jesus Christ ? Now, we have not to go a single inch to find an instructive illustration of what faith in Jesus is. The verse before us is connected with building. "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scriptures, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious : and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." Now, if we were to carry out the figure it would run thus : "He that is built upon him shall not be removed." So I take it that we can most naturally understand the laying of a stone upon the foundation to be suggested as a description of faith. If, then, you want to know what it is to believe on Jesus, it is to *lie upon him as a stone lies upon a foundation* when the mason puts it there. There is the foundation firm and strong, a precious corner-stone, tried and sure. Here is a smaller stone, quarried from the pit, and the builder places it upon the foundation. Its lying

on the foundation represents faith. Our souls' eternal interests are laid on Christ. The foundation bears up the stone, and holds it in its place; so Christ bears up our souls, and holds them in their position, so that they fall not to the ground. The stone presses with all its weight upon the foundation, and that is what the believer does with his Lord; he casts all his care upon him. Faith is leaning, depending, relying. As the key hangs on the nail, so hang we on Jesus. Faith is the giving up of self-reliance and self-dependence, and the resting of the soul upon him whom God has laid in Zion for a foundation. A stone thrown about from hand to hand is self-contained and independent, but when the mason puts it on the foundation it is dependent, it leans on the corner-stone upon which it is placed. Poor tempted soul. That is just what you have to do: you must not be a loose stone resting on yourself, and tossed hither and thither upon the earth, but you must lie still upon Christ, and let him bear your whole weight upon himself.

A stone rests wholly on the foundation. If a wall is well built it is not shored up with timber so that the stones have two supports, but the whole structure rests on a common basis. There is a good foundation, and each stone lies upon it. It can do no more, for it could not keep its place for an instant if the foundation were removed. If the foundation fails the stone falls, but while the foundation stands the stone remains secure. That is faith: resting upon Christ wholly and entirely, looking to him for everything that has to do with our salvation. Genuine faith in Christ does not trust *him* to pardon sin, and then trust *itself* to overcome sin. No, it trusts Christ both for the conquest of evil and for the forgiveness of it. Some of our friends make a great muddle here. They say they believe that the Lord Jesus will keep them as long as they are faithful to him. That is true; but where do you rely for your being faithful to him? Do you depend upon yourself for faithfulness? If so, there is a very weak spot in your confidence. That stone is not lying square upon the foundation, push it more home; it must not stand out of the line, or it will be over directly. Personally I do as much depend upon my Lord to keep me to the end as to pardon the past; and I feel that I need him as much for to-morrow as for to-day. I could not rejoice in him as a Saviour if he would only promise to keep me as long as I kept myself; for I need a keeper to keep me that I may keep myself. If his promise was that he would keep me "*if*"—alas! that "*if*" would spoil it all. There must be no reliance upon anybody else but Christ for anything that has to do with your salvation, or you are not laid square on the foundation. Whether it be as to your regeneration by which you enter into life, or your ultimate perfection by which that life shall come to its complete maturity, there must be no reliance for you but upon Christ. Dear friends, see to it that for everything, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, you lie plumb and straight with Christ. See no man save Jesus only. Ye are complete in him: add not to perfection. It is the not getting down to the foundation and resting nakedly upon Christ which makes the most of our soul-trouble. There used to be on the top of Snowdon a raised platform for certain people to stand upon who wanted to see a little further than others. Now, if you get upon that platform, it may shake and tremble,

but the mountain never does. I have known brethren build up a pretty little wooden platform of their own experience; some of them have built it so high that they talk about being perfect, or very near it. These wooden affairs shake with a little extra weight, and make people tremble. Get down upon the Rock; stand on *terra firma*, rest on the everlasting love of Jesus, and you will be safe. Take care to lie flat on the promise; get as low as you can, and grasp the Rock. Lie flat on Christ as a stone lies on the foundation; for that is the proper and natural position of all the living stones that are built up in him.

The stone laid on the foundation comes closer to that foundation every day. "To whom coming," says Peter, "as unto a living stone." When a house is finished there still goes on a measure of settlement, and you are glad if it settles all in a piece together. Every day the stone is brought by its own weight a little closer to the foundation; may every day's pressure bring you and me closer to Christ, Oh, that the pressure of our joys and griefs may press us nearer to our Lord!

A well-built stone gets to be one with the foundation. In the old Roman walls the mortar seems to be as hard as the stones, and the whole is like one piece; you must blow it to atoms before you can get the wall away. So is it with the true believer: he rests upon his Lord till he grows up into him, till he is one with Jesus by a living union, so that you scarce know where the foundation ends and where the up-building begins; for the believer becometh all in Christ, even as Christ is all in all to him.

I hardly know any illustration that would better explain faith. It is none of mine, you see; it is taken from the text itself. The Lord help you to lie upon Christ for all that concerns your eternal interests. "But," saith one, "I thought I had to do something for my own salvation?" Does the stone do anything to maintain its position beyond lying in its place? Your strength is to sit still. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, for your expectation is from him. There is plenty for you to do for your Lord, to show your love to him, and to glorify his name; but you cannot add to the foundation of your confidence, nor should you dream of doing so. How could you improve what your Lord declares to be finished? Is not his work all-sufficient? Do you want to move the foundation? Does it not stand fast for ever? Lean on it steadily, and let this be your chief concern. O poor fainting believer, the more thou canst lean upon Jesus the better he will be pleased. "Lean hard," he cries, "and prove thy love to me." Trust Jesus for everything, and trust him at all times; trust him in life, and in death, and to eternity, and thou shalt not be ashamed or confounded, world without end.

III. We have, thirdly, to consider THE EVIL WHICH WILL NEVER COME UPON THE MAN WHO BELIEVETH ON JESUS. The text says, "He shall not be confounded," and the meaning of it is, first, that he shall never be *disappointed*. All that Christ has promised to be he will be to those who trust him. If the Father set forth Christ to save the believing sinner depend upon it he will be as good as his Father's word. He does not begin to build and then leave off from want of means. He will keep the believer, he will support the believer, he will perfect the believer. You shall never have to say of Christ at last, "Well, there is

much good in him, but not so much as I expected." You will never have to lament, "Alas, I placed too implicit a reliance upon the Christ of God, and I am deceived," No, never! but, on the contrary, you will exclaim with the Queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told me." Even inspiration itself could not tell us, so that we could fully understand it, how sweet, how excellent, how sure, how full our Lord is. We know his love, but yet it "passeth knowledge." When you know more of your Lord you will say, "I wish I had never doubted him, for I never had a cause. Oh that I had trusted him more fully, for he has never disappointed me, but far exceeded my largest hopes." In consequence of our not being disappointed in our hope we shall never be *ashamed* of having indulged it. Alas! some Christians are at times ashamed to own their Master, but that is not what is meant in the text: what is intended here is the grand truth that they shall never have any cause to be ashamed of Jesus upon whom they believe. They shall never be driven to confess that they made a mistake in trusting him, and are, therefore, ashamed at having been so miserably duped. No believer will ever say, "I came with a child-like reliance and did cast myself upon him, because he promised so fairly, but I was taken in a snare. I ought to have known better, and I am quite ashamed of my credulity." No, no; the most childlike confidence in God in Christ Jesus is nothing more than he deserves. Credulity towards Jesus is the purest reason. You are always most prudent when you cast away all caution, and throw yourself upon Jesus, sink or swim. It can never be prudent to doubt him who is "the truth," but it is always the highest wisdom to place all in his hands, and leave it there for time and for eternity. To risk all with Jesus is to end all risk. Our hymn saith—

"Venture on him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."

But, indeed, there is no venturing in it; it is safe as the throne of the Eternal; may the Holy Ghost lead you to make speedy trial of it.

And then comes the next rendering—you shall never be *confounded*. When a man gets to be ashamed of his hope because he is disappointed in it, he casts about for another anchorage, and, not knowing where to look, he is in a troubled state, and greatly perplexed. If the Lord Jesus Christ were to fall through, my brethren, what should we do? It is a supposition which we need not indulge, but if he be not true there remains no other person in whom we may confide. There are many religions on the face of the earth, but no one of them bears as much comparison with our holy faith as a candle to the sun; they are all hollow mockeries, offering nothing which can satisfy a hungry heart. Lord, to whom should we go if we should turn from thee? Whither could we fly? If wisdom be not in thee, where shall we search for it? "The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me." There remains no hiding place for man if this cleft of the rock be closed; no ransom from wrath if this redemption price be null and void. No, Jesus, we shall not be confounded, for we shall never be disappointed in thee, nor made ashamed of our hope!

According to Isaiah's version we shall not be obliged to *make haste*; we shall not be driven to our wit's end and hurried to and fro. We shall

not hurry and worry, and fret, and fume, trying this and trying that, running from pillar to post to seek a hope; but he that believeth shall be quiet, calm, collected, assured, confident. He awaits the future with equanimity, as he endures the present with patience. Beloved, see what a blessed promise this is to those of you who are believing on Jesus.

Now, the times of our special danger of being confounded are many; but in none of these shall we be confounded. Let us just turn them over in our minds. There are times when a man's sins all come up before him like exceeding great armies. It is a mighty easy thing to think that you are believing in Christ when you are not conscious of any great sin; but true faith is not confounded, even when it groans under a grievous sense of sin, conscious that it is the chief of sinners. Nay, though sin rolled over the believer's head, he would still believe; as David did when he cried, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head." Have you never had times in which all the ghosts of your dead and buried sins rise again, and come marching upon you armed to the teeth? If you have never experienced such a visitation, I hope you may, for it is good for us to be driven to our Lord Jesus by distress of soul. All your thoughts, words, and deeds, your bad tempers and rebellions against God—suppose they were all to rise at once, what would become of you? Why, even then, my brethren, "he that believeth on him shall not be confounded"—not even by a sense of horrible sin, for after he has seen the whole horde of his sins march by, he cries, "they are all gone into the tomb where Jesus slept, the blood of Jesus has cleansed me from them. The depths have covered them, there is not one of them left; they sank like lead in the mighty waters, for God hath cast them all into the depths of the sea." He that believeth on the pardoning Saviour shall not be confounded, though all his sins should accuse him at once.

The unbelieving world outside labours to create confusion. The gentlemen of the higher criticism, the scientific discoverers, the possessors of boastful culture, and all the other braggers of this marvellously enlightened nineteenth century are up in arms against the believers in Jesus. When I think of how this century has been befooled by its statesmen and philosophers, I, for one, feel small reverence for it. Perhaps it has the most light, but it has not the best eyes. Well, let all this wisdom of the world assail us! Let proud pretenders point their finger at us and say, "You trust in Christ; you rely upon Jesus of Nazareth alone for your salvation; you are old-fashioned, and as much out of place as the extinct animals would be if they could come back again." I protest that if all the sages of the world were to utter one thundering sarcasm, if they concentrated all their scorn into one universal sneer of contempt, I do not think it would now affect me the turn of a hair, so sure am I that my Lord will justify my confidence. "I know whom I have believed," and I know also that my Lord Jesus Christ "sitteth above the floods; the Lord sitteth King for ever." "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" He can save me, and I trust him to perform all that which concerneth me. Faith in Jesus can be justified before a synagogue of *savans*, it deserves the respect of a parliament of philosophers. To trust the Son of God incarnate, whose advent into this world is a fact better proved by history than any other that was ever on record—to trust oneself upon his atoning sacrifice

is the most reasonable thing that a man can do. There is nothing illogical about it, nothing which demands apology. We fling back in the teeth of the scoffers the charge of unreasoning dogmatism—ours is the most reasonable of all beliefs. O ye mighty thinkers and sceptics, you are more credulous than we are. We may seem fools to you; but we are not judged of your judgment. Ye shall see your own folly when he cometh whose name is Faithful and True—when he cometh to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. He that believeth on him shall not be confounded by human wisdom, for God hath long ago confounded it and turned it into foolishness.

But the world has done more than sneer; it has imitated Cain and sought to slay the faithful. The enemies of the gospel have raged fiercely against the church of God. What opportunities has God given to them to conquer if they could! Christ has seemed to say, "Come on, world; here are my poor disciples whom you despise; come and see if you can conquer them! I give you a fair opportunity. There is the Colosseum; heap up tier upon tier of men and women with cruel eyes and savage hearts. Bring out the saints. Cry, 'Christians, to the lions!'" There they stand. The lions are loose upon them. Do they cry for mercy, and treacherously deny Christ? They are feeble men and women; do they recant and leave their Master? Not they. They die as bravely as ever soldier fell in battle. The enemy resolves to try them with torture, with rack, and rod, and fire; let us see what will come of it. Blandina shall be tossed upon the horns of bulls, and then shall be placed in a hot iron chair. Does her womanly nature flinch? Ah, no; she is more than a conqueror. They try every kind of torment with the saints, but they fail in every case. Recollect Marcus Arethusa, smeared with honey and a hive of bees put upon him, yet never for a single moment relenting. Every form of possible cruelty has in later persecutions been tried by the familiars of Rome's infernal inquisition; but believers have not been confounded. Fiends in human form have glutted themselves with blood till they have turned away from Christian destruction as from a hopeless task: they saw that they could not overcome the true people of God, for "he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." They tried persecution in this land in the days of Queen Mary, but their defeat was self-evident. Weavers and ploughmen defied bishops and cardinals, and held their own. Even women laughed to scorn the wretched sophistries of their tormentors. Tompkins trusted in God and stood firm when Bonner held his hand in the candle, and equally well did he play the man at the stake. What notable stories Foxe has preserved for us of how the saints of the Lord clapped their burning hands, and cried, "None but Christ!" while the flames were devouring them. The enemy could not confound them. If persecution should revive we shall conquer again, for "he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." We cannot strike our adversaries, but by bearing their blows we shall, like the anvil, break the hammers. As it hath been until now so shall it be unto the end, we shall not be ashamed of our hope.

Well, but there will come other troubles to Christians besides these, and in them they shall not be confounded. They will be tried by the flesh; natural desires will break forth into vehement lustings, and

corruptions will seek to cast them down. Will believers perish then? No. He that believeth in Christ shall conquer himself, and overcome his easily besetting sins. There will come losses and crosses, business trials and domestic bereavements. What then? He shall not be confounded; his Lord will sustain him under every tribulation. At last death will come to us. They will wipe the cold sweat from our brows, and we shall gasp for breath; but we shall not be confounded then. We may not be able to shout "victory"; we may be too weak for triumphant hymns, but with our latest breath we will lisp the precious name. They that watch us shall know by our serenity that a Christian does not die, but only melts away into everlasting life. O beloved, we shall never be confounded, even amid the grandeurs of eternity. We shall pass into the next state, and after a while the trumpet shall sound, and these bodies shall rise, and we shall stand amidst the countless throng on that august day for which all other days were made. While other men who have other foundations to rest upon shall cry to the rocks to hide them we shall stand calmly and quietly, adoring our Lord the Judge. It will be a solemn day even for us. We shall not be able to see the rocks rending and stars falling, and creation itself passing away, without deep solemnity, yet assuredly the words of our hymn are true—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through his blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"

We will tell the Father in that day that we have rested on the salvation which he appointed, that we have confided in his own dear Son, and that we believed that the blood of Jesus did make atonement for our sin. We shall not find that he disowns his promise. Oh, if that foundation could fail us, how ashamed and confounded should we be! I do not know, but I sometimes seem to think that if the gospel could possibly be a mistake, we should have the consolation of being able to say, "Great God, it was through love of thee and trust in thee that we fell into this error"; and we should at least have as good a plea as the self-righteous can offer. But it shall not be so, our foundation cannot fail us; we shall not be confounded. The two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie are our strong consolation.

Now I close by saying that the reason of our knowing that we can never be confounded is just this, because the testimony we have received is true. It is God's testimony; there cannot be a lie in that. Next, the person on whom we lean is true; there can be no falsehood in Christ Jesus, nor failure in him. The Saviour in whom we trust is almighty, he cannot possibly be defeated, or too heavily loaded. The declarations of the word of God in which we trust are infallible and immutable; they cannot be altered one jot or tittle. The Father of lights is without variableness, and Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." No believer in Christ can ever be confounded—mark this word—till the godhead itself shall be undeified. I put it strongly. Until God the Father can break his word he cannot destroy a soul that believes in his Son; and if he were to break his word (the mere supposition borders on blasphemy) then he would

no longer be God, since truth is essential to deity. Until Christ himself shall fail he cannot refuse to save one that trusteth in him; and if he were to fail it would prove that he was not omnipotent, and could not therefore be God. And if the Spirit of God which hath wrought us to the selfsame thing, even to this day, were after all to deny his own witness, and suffer the new life which is in us to die out, then he were not the almighty, indwelling Quickener and Comforter of former days. No, beloved, everything hangs upon the divine fidelity. If believers are lost, God loses more than they do, for he loses his honour, he loses his character for truthfulness, and the glory of his name is tarnished. If I am a sheep and I am lost, I am a great loser certainly; but then I am not my own, but belong to the Great Shepherd, and he has lost me, and so is a loser too. If I am a member of Christ's body and I am lost, I am a great loser certainly, but my Head is a loser too, for henceforth his body is incomplete. The church is the fulness of Christ, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"; and, I venture to say it, Jesus Christ were not a perfect Christ if he lost the very least and meanest of those who put their trust in him. It would be hell's boast against him to all eternity that he could not keep his own. If the devil could get a believer in hell, what a noise he would make about him! "Jesus of Nazareth, here is one of thine own, one who trusted in thee, and yet he is in hell. Thou didst keep the strong because they kept themselves, but thou couldst not keep the weak, and therefore here is one, lost, lost for ever." How would hellish malice exult if such an occasion for scorn were given. But it shall never be. Because Jesus lives we shall live also, and shall not be confounded. Let us rest in our Lord's faithfulness, and accept the pledges of his eternal affection.

" His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.

" Nor death nor hell shall e'er remove
His fav'rites from his breast;
In the dear bosom of his love
They must for ever rest."

Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews vi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—395, 550, 397.