

CHAPTER XXIX.

First Sermons at New Park Street Chapel.

Let every man, called of God to preach the Word, be as his Maker has fashioned him. Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas is to be imitated by John; nor are John's ways, habits, and modes of utterance to be the basis for a condemnation of any one or all of the other three. As God gives to every seed its own body as it rises from the soil, so to each man will He grant his own appropriate development, if he will but be content to let his inner self reveal itself in its true form. The good and the evil in men of eminence are both of them mischievous when they become objects of servile imitation; the good when slavishly copied is exaggerated into formality, and the evil becomes wholly intolerable. In each teacher of others went himself to the school of our one only Master, a thousand errors might be avoided.—C. H. S.



HE text of Mr. Spurgeon's first sermon in London has long been well known; but, until now, there does not appear to have been any printed record of the opening discourse in that marvellous Metropolitan ministry which was destined to exercise such a mighty influence, not only throughout London, and the United Kingdom, but "unto the uttermost part of the earth." Happily, the young preacher had written at considerable length the message he felt called to deliver on that occasion in his Master's name, and now, after a whole generation has passed away, his long-forgotten words will speak to a far larger audience than he addressed that winter's morning (December 18th, 1853,) in New Park Street Chapel. It may interest some readers to know that the sermon was the 673rd that Mr. Spurgeon had preached. The evening discourse appears to have been re-delivered at a later period, taken down in shorthand, and afterwards revised by Mr. Spurgeon for publication in *The Baptist Messenger*.

MORNING SERMON.

THE FATHER OF LIGHT.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—James i. 17.

Some sciences and subjects of study are to us inexhaustible. We might ever find in them fresh matter for instruction, wonder, and research. If we were to descend into the depths of the earth, with the geologist, and bring up the skeletons

of extinct monsters, and note the signs of great convulsions, and study the old and new formations and strata; or if we were to soar aloft, with the astronomer, and attempt to measure the heavens, and count the stars; we should ever be lost in the new discoveries which we should make. The same may be said of all the natural sciences. Whatever the subject of his study may be, it does not seem possible that man should ever be able to say, "I have nothing more to learn; I am master of it all."

But should it one day happen that our race has so progressed in knowledge, and become so well informed as to leave nothing unknown,—should nature be stripped of all her mystery, and the heavens, the sea, and the earth be all perfectly understood,—there will yet remain one subject upon which the sons of men may meditate, dispute, and ponder; but it shall still be unknown. That subject is,—GOD, of whom, with humble reverence, I am now to speak. May it please the great Spirit of wisdom to enlarge our minds, and guide our hearts into an understanding of that portion of truth concerning Him which is revealed in the text! We have, here,—

- I. A MAJESTIC FIGURE.
- II. A GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTE.
- III. A GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

I. A MAJESTIC FIGURE.

God is here called "the Father of lights,"—comparing Him to the sun. It is most true that this lower world is the reflection of the upper one. In it, once, the face of God might have been seen as on some glassy lake; but sin has ruffled the surface of the waters, so that the portrait is broken, and presented only in pieces. Yet there are the pieces,—the wrecks of the picture,—and we will not throw them aside. Let us lift up our eyes on high, and behold the only object which is worthy to be called an emblem of Deity. We think we can see several ideas couched in the figure used in our text by the apostle.

I. *Independence; or, Self-existence.*

God is the only self-existent Being. The sun is not really so; but he is far more independent than any other object we know of. All else of nature is continually borrowing; vegetables draw their nourishment from the soil, animals from them, or from one another, man from all;—he is the greatest beggar in the universe. The moon lights her nightly torch at the sun's lamp, the planets rekindle theirs in his bright storehouse. Mother Earth is greatly dependent on the sun; despite the pride of her children, what is she but a tiny globule dancing in the rays of that majestic orb? The sun gives, but takes not; bestows on all, receives from none, leans on none; but lives alone, in his own solemn grandeur and glory.

Such is God, the great I AM, who sits on no borrowed throne, and begs no

leave to be. All things are of Him, and by Him. He needs them not ; were they all annihilated, it would not injure Him. He could exist, as He has from eternity existed, alone. He has in Himself all that is worth having. On Him all things lean ; He leans on none. But we can scarcely speak of Him,—

“ Who, light Himself, in uncreated light,
Invested deep, dwells awfully retired
From mortal eye, or angel's purer ken.
Whose single smile has, from the first of time,
Fill'd overflowing all those lamps of heaven
That beam for ever through the boundless sky ;
But should He hide His face, th' astonish'd sun
And all th' extinguish'd stars would loosening reel
Wide from their spheres, and chaos come again.”

2. *Sublimity* is another idea suggested by the figure in the text. The sun is one of the most magnificent of created things ; when he shows himself, the moon and stars conceal their blushing faces. Seen in any part of his course, he is a grand object. When first he tinges the Eastern sky with his rising beams, when he sits serenely in mid-heaven at noon, or when he retires in splendour at eventide, grandeur is always one of his characteristics. He is too bright for our eyes to gaze upon, although we are at such a vast distance from him.

Far more sublime is God. Who shall describe Him ? His angelic servants are glorious, the starry floor of His throne is glorious ; what must He Himself be ?

“ Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away.”

Well may angels veil their faces, for even their eyes could not endure His brightness. No man can see Him. His train was all that Moses saw. Borrow the eagle's eye and wing, soar on and on until the glory overcomes you, and you fall reeling back to the earth ; do it again and again, and you will find that man cannot see God. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, for He may truly have it said to Him,—

“ Dark with excessive bright Thy skirts appear.”

3. *Power* also seems a prominent idea in this expression of the apostle : “ The Father of lights.” The sun is as a giant coming out of his chamber ; and, like a strong man, he rejoices to run a race. He drags the whole immense solar system along in his majestic course, nor can any oppose him. How mightily he still moves on in his appointed course !

So is our God glorious in His power. No one knows His might ; it is like Himself, infinite. He speaketh, and His Word is with power. He willeth, and His will is omnipotent. Who can thwart His purposes ? Shall nature ? No ; the hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord. They skipped before Him like rams. By His power, the waters are divided ; fire sings not His servants ; wild beasts are tamed. He lifteth His finger, and the flood ariseth ; He droppeth it, and

the waters assuage. In vain could mountains, torrents, stars, and all the elements war against Him. Who can conquer Him in battle? Shall man? No; He counteth all men but as a drop in a bucket. He that sitteth in Heaven hath His enemies in derision. Shall the devils in hell withstand Him? No; once have they fallen from the battlements of Heaven, and in vain is their loudest roar. Satan is chained, and led as a conquer'd monarch to grace God's victory over him. He is God's slave, and unwillingly doth his Master's will. O beloved, what a God is here revealed to us! Put this thought under thy pillow; and when troubles arise, still calmly sleep on, for His power protecteth thee from all evil!

4. But *Beneficence* seems even more the leading idea of the text. The sun is absolutely necessary to our being; there would be no light, no heat, no life, no rain, nothing without him. He is necessary also to our well-being; the sun is indeed the great philanthropist; he visits every land, he gives freely, and gives to all, to the peasant as well as to the prince. Curse him, or bless him, he is the same; he does not refuse his light even to the felon, but he visits the prisoner in his cell.

Such also is God, the good, the greatly-good. Should He withdraw His face, Heaven would not be Heaven. Without God, the whole universe would be a valley full of dry bones, a horrible charnel-house. Oh, how good is our God! He confines not His mercies to any one race; the Hottentots are as welcome to His love as are any of us. The sinful receive His grace, and lose their former evil nature. He gives to sinners, and to the unthankful; and if men were not by nature blind, they would see by His light; the defect is in them, and not in Him.

Yon sun has shone on my cradle, it will beam on my death-bed, and cast a gleam into my grave. So doth God, the Beneficent, gild our path with sunshine. Earth were a gloomy vault without Him; with Him, it is light and joyous, the porch of a still more blissful state.

II. A GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTE.

The apostle, having thus introduced the sun as a figure to represent the Father of lights, finding that it did not bear the full resemblance of the invisible God, seems constrained to amend it by a remark that, *unlike the sun, our Father has no turning, or variableness.*

The sun has *parallax*; or, variation; he rises at a different time each day, and he sets at various hours in the course of the year. He moves into other parts of the heavens. He is clouded, eclipsed, and even suffers a diminution of light from some mysterious decrease of the luminiferous ether which surrounds him. He also has *tropic*; or, turning. He turns his chariot to the South, until, at the solstice, God bids him reverse his rein, and then he visits us once more. But God is superior to all figures or emblems. He is immutable. The sun changes,

mountains crumble, the ocean shall be dried up, the stars shall wither from the vault of night ; but God, and God alone, remains ever the same. Were I to enter into a full discourse on the subject of immutability, my time, if multiplied by a high number, would fail me. But reminding you that there is no change in His power, justice, knowledge, oath, threatening, or decree, I will confine myself to the fact that His love to us knows no variation. How often it is called *unchangeable*, everlasting love ! He loves me now as much as He did when first He inscribed my name in His eternal book of election. He has not repented of His choice. He has not blotted out one of His chosen ; there are no erasures in that book ; all whose names are written in it are safe for ever. Nor does God love me less now than when He gave that grand proof of love, His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for me. Even now, He loves me with the same intensity as when He poured out the vials of justice on His darling to save rebel worms. We have all had times which we considered times of special love, when His candle shone round about us, and we basked in the light of His smiling face ; but let us not suppose that He really loved us more then than now. Oh, no ! He then discovered His love in a way pleasing to flesh and blood ; but trials are equally proofs of His love. In the fight with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, or in Vanity Fair, He will be ever the same, and will love us neither more nor less than when we sing with seraphic voices the songs of Heaven.

Death, sometimes, in the prospect, is very trying to flesh and blood ; but if this truth of God's unchanging love were well remembered, death would not be such a trial to us as it has been to many. We should know that He who helped Jacob to gather up his feet, and die,—that He who enabled David to say, “ Although my house be not so with God ; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure : for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow,”—and that He who permitted Stephen to fall asleep amid a shower of stones, will be the Deliverer of all who trust in Him. Throughout eternity, there shall be no jars, not a breath of strife ; but the same uninterrupted, blessed unity shall prevail for ever, and God will continue to bestow upon us His unchanging love. Thanks be unto Him for loving us so !

III. A GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

The apostle, having introduced God as the Father of lights, and qualified the figure, now proceeds to ascribe all good gifts to Him alone : “ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” If it seemed perfectly reasonable that, at the rising of the sun, nature should welcome it with song, is it not even more reasonable that, at the name of *the* Father of lights, we should lift up a song ? What is said here, is what angels can sing in Heaven ; it is what Adam

could have hymned in Paradise ; it is what every Christian feels heartily willing to confess.

Ever since the Fall, this verse has had an added emphasis of meaning, since in us, by nature, there dwells no good thing, and by our sin we have forfeited every right to any favour from God. So that our *natural gifts*, such as beauty, eloquence, health, life, and happiness, all come from Him equally with our *graces*. We have nothing which we have not received. Earth, one day, shall make this song thrill through infinity ; Heaven shall join the chorus ; the region of chaos and old night shall shout aloud, and even hell's unwilling voice shall growl out an acknowledgment of the fact that "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*"

I have succeeded in my object if, with me, you can from your hearts say, at the contemplation of Jehovah,—“Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end ! AMEN.”

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EVENING SERMON.

THE FAULTLESS ASSEMBLY.

“*They are without fault before the throne of God.*”—Revelation xiv. 5.

It is well, beloved, sometimes to get aside from the worry of business, to have a little conversation concerning that future world to which we are tending. We will, therefore, indulge in a brief contemplation of Heaven, and will speak concerning those things which, if we are the Lord's people, we are soon to realize when we shall be—

“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,”

to live with Him for ever.

There are three things in these words ; first, *the character of the people in Heaven* : “they are *without fault* ;” secondly, *who they are* : “they are without fault ;” and then, thirdly, *where they are* : “they are without fault *before the throne of God.*”

I. THE PEOPLE IN HEAVEN ARE OF A CERTAIN PECULIAR CHARACTER : “without fault.”

I have never discovered such creatures living upon earth, and do not suppose I ever shall. I might travel many a weary journey before I could find a man in the three kingdoms that would be “without fault ;” yea, if an angel were to be sent

down to the world for this purpose, he might fly round it many a time, till his wings were weary, yet never find a man "without fault." I knew a man, once, who told me that he was perfect; but he soon got very cross when I began to speak, and I saw that he was perfect only in one thing,—he was perfect in weakness; that was the only perfection he had. It is only now and then that you meet with a man who has the impudence to tell you that he is perfect; but you can soon see, from the very look of him, that he is not perfect, for at any rate he is not perfect in humility; he seems to glory in his perfection, and all the while his very mouth betrayeth him. That eye of pride, and that lip of lust with which he speaks, as he lusteth for the praise of men, tell you that he is far from being perfect. A faultless creature,—where is there such a being on earth? Fly, Gabriel, fly! enter thou the loftiest palace, and then go to the humblest cottage, go to the most remote realm, to the most civilized, polite, and educated people, and thou shalt find no perfect being; nay, go into the church, go into the pulpit, thou wilt ne'er find a perfect man nor a perfect minister. Imperfection is stamped upon all things; and, save the completeness that is in Christ Jesus, and the perfection we have in Him, perfection is nowhere to be found beneath the skies; nor in Heaven itself could it be found unless God were there, for He alone can make a creature perfect. But there, beloved, is perfection; despite the faults of men on earth, when they shall have been fitted for the skies by God's most precious grace, they shall stand before God "without fault."

We will, first, look at our own faults, and then admire those glorious beings above, and the grace of God in them, that they are "without fault." I think there are three great faults in the Church of God at large, as a body, from which those who are in Heaven are entirely free. Those three are,—a want of love to one another; a want of love to souls; and a want of love to Jesus Christ.

1. We need not go far without seeing that there is, among Christians, *a want of love to one another*. There is not too much love in our churches; certainly, we have none to give away. We have heard that—

"Whatever brawls disturb the street,
There should be peace at home;"

but it is not always as it *should* be. We have known churches where the members can scarcely sit down at the Lord's table without some disagreement. There are people who are always finding fault with the minister, and there are ministers finding fault with the people; there is among them "a spirit that lusteth to envy," and "where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." We have met with people among whom it would be misery to place ourselves, because we love not war; we love peace and charity. Alas! how continually do we hear accounts of disputings and variance in churches! O beloved, there is too little love in the churches! If Jesus were to come amongst us, might He not say to us, "This is My

commandment, that ye love one another ; but how have you kept it when you have been always finding fault with one another ? and how ready you have been to turn your sword against your brother ! ” ?

But, beloved, “ they are without fault before the throne of God. ” Those who on earth could not agree, are sure to agree when they get to Heaven. There are some who have crossed swords on earth, but who have held the faith, and have been numbered amongst the saints in glory everlasting. There is no fighting amongst them now ; “ they are without fault before the throne of God. ” There are many, who would never sit at the same table with each other when they were upon earth, though they were the children of God ; but now, side by side, they are standing and singing to the same tune, “ Glory be to God and to the Lamb ! ” We discover, by reading the records of distinguished men, that there has scarcely been one eminent man who could walk side by side with his fellow. Like great mountains, they touch at their foundations ; certainly, they unite nowhere else. But in Heaven all stand side by side, and there is no disunion amongst them. We know that, in many churches, some of the richer members will scarcely notice the poorer ; but it will not be so above, there is true love there. We hear of church-members who have been sick for months, yet no brother or sister-member has ministered to them ; but in Heaven it is not so, there is no neglect there. They cannot suffer there ; but if it were possible that they could suffer, so sweet would be the love displayed towards each other, that suffering would be removed in a moment. Ask the cherubim if they ever knew a jar in Christ's glorified Church above ; and they would say, “ Nay. ” And if you could make all the blessed ones pass in review, and ask them if they love one another, “ Yes, ” they would say, “ with a pure heart, fervently ; and though we had brawls and disputings on earth, they are all forgotten now, for the blood of Christ, that covers a multitude of sins, has ended all our disagreements ; and that holy mantle of a Saviour's love, that He casts over all our faults, has ended all our wars with one another. We are all one in Christ Jesus ; would to God we had seen more of this oneness when below ! ” They are “ without fault ” in that respect, beloved, above. There is no harshness there ; there is no ill humour there ; there is no bitterness there ; there is no envy, no evil-speaking, no spite, no uncharitableness, there ; “ they are without fault before the throne of God. ” Oh, how my wearied spirit longs to be there ! I wish not to live with men of strife ; the lions' den is not for me, nor the house of leopards. Give me the quiet place where the oil runneth down from the head even to the skirts of the garments. Let me live in peace with all Christ's Church ; let me not find fault with anyone. Sooner will I allow them to sheath their daggers in my heart than I would draw mine in angry contest. Thank God ! there are some of us who can say, “ There is not a man living with whom we are at arm's length any more than the infant that is just born. ” There are some of

us who can give our hand very readily to anyone in whom we see anything that is pleasing to the Spirit of God ; but when we see anything that is contrary to the Spirit, we say, " Oh ! that I had wings—not like an eagle to fly at my brother,—oh ! that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest." That happy time shall soon come, beloved, when we, like those above, shall be " without fault before the throne of God."

2. A second fault is, that there is a *great want of love to souls*. John Bunyan gives the portrait of a man whom God intended to be a guide to Heaven ; have you ever noticed how beautiful that portrait is ? He has a crown of life over his head, he has the earth beneath his feet, he stands as if he pleaded with men, and he has the Best of Books in his hand. Oh ! I would that I were, for one moment, like that pattern preacher ; that I could plead with men as John Bunyan describeth. We are all of us ambassadors for Christ, and we are told that, as ambassadors, we are to beseech men as though God besought them by us. How I do love to see a tearful preacher ! How I love to see the man who can weep over sinners ; whose soul yearns over the ungodly, as if he would, by any means, and by all means, bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ ! I cannot understand a man who stands up and delivers a discourse in a cold indifferent manner, as if he cared not for the souls of his hearers. I think the true gospel minister will have a real yearning after souls, something like Rachel when she cried, " Give me children, or else I die ;" so will he cry to God, that He may have His elect born, and brought home to Him. And, methinks, every true Christian should be exceedingly earnest in prayer concerning the souls of the ungodly ; and when they are so, how abundantly God blesses them, and how the church prospers ! But, beloved, souls may be damned, yet how few of you care about them ! Sinners may sink into the gulf of perdition, yet how few tears are shed over them ! The whole world may be swept away by a torrent down the precipice of woe, yet how few really cry to God on its behalf ! How few men say, " Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people !" We do not lament before God the loss of men's souls, as it well becomes Christians to do.

Ah ! but in Heaven, they love souls. Angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. As a good Puritan said, " Whenever a prodigal returns, they set all Heaven's bells ringing, because there is another sinner come back." O beloved, when you get a convert to bring to the church, you see some of the members look at him, through their spectacles, as if they would frighten the poor timid one ! Many do not, like angels, rejoice over him ; but they look at him as if they were afraid he was a hypocrite. The poor soul stands trembling before the church ; the hand of the Lord is mighty upon him, but they sit by as coldly as if they were on a judgment seat, and have neither love nor mercy for him. I know that,

when a church increases, there should be judgment and discretion shown, and I would rather have too much of what I am speaking against, than too little of it; but, sometimes, the members look at the converts, and say, "It cannot be possible; how should *they* be gathered in?" And when there is an addition to their numbers, they even go home with a heavy heart, as if the church were likely to come to harm by admitting them. Give me a church-meeting where they weep with joy over those who come in, and say, "Bless the Lord, there is another poor soul rescued from the world!" I think it is a sort of mark of the sheep, that they love to see the lambs; and I think it is a feature of the Lord's family, that they love to see another child born into it. When you see anyone brought to the Lord, do you not bless God for it? When you hear that such an one has received grace and mercy, do you not bless God for it? No, not half so much as you ought; we are not half thankful enough to our Father for it. But, up there, beloved, they are "without fault" in that matter, and they do rejoice, every one of them, when they see souls brought in. Methinks, young man, your pious mother will rejoice when God brings you to His feet; and those godly friends of yours shall lift up their notes high in Heaven, when they see those dear to them on earth united to the Church of God on high. Blessed be God's name for them, they are "without fault before the throne of God;" and especially in this matter of their love to souls.

3. The other fault I mentioned was, *want of love to Jesus Christ*. Yes, how little there is among us of love to Jesus Christ! When I think of myself, sometimes, and think of the Lord Jesus, it does appear as if I did not love Him at all. When I think of that "love so amazing, so Divine," which led Him to give Himself for me; when I remember that in me was no good thing, yet He loved me when I was dead in trespasses and sins; loved me when I hated Him, loved me when I spurned Him, loved me when I despised and rejected Him, and hid, as it were, my face from Him; for "He was despised and rejected of men, . . . He was despised, . . . and we esteemed Him not;"—when I think of all this, I cannot but wonder in my heart that I do not consecrate myself more entirely to Him. Oh, if we did but love that sweet Lord Jesus with more ardour and devotedness! He has love enough for us, but how little is our love for Him!

Methinks there is nothing over which a Christian should groan so much as the littleness of his love to the Saviour. When our faith is small, we often lament; but we should recollect that love is the flower of faith, and springs from faith; and when that is feeble, it is a sign that faith also is feeble. Rutherford somewhere beautifully says, "O Lord Jesus, let me love Thee, and that will be Heaven enough for me; for I find such sweetness in loving Thee that, if it were possible that Thou didst not love me, Thou canst not be so cruel as to prevent

me loving Thee ; and if Thou wouldst but let me have the presumption to love Thee, I think it would be Heaven enough." Rutherford felt it was so sweet to love his Lord, he found it was so delightful to have his heart go out to the Saviour, that so long as the Lord would let him love Him, he would be thankful for it, even though his Lord did not love him. Beloved, there is nought like the love of Jesus to make us happy ! I love the doctrines of grace as well as any mortal living does, but I love Jesus better ; I love Christ's people as much as anyone can, but I love Christ best. Oh, His sweet, glorious, exalted person ! that is the object of our love ; we look upon all else as the clothes of Jesus, the crown of Jesus. And we love the Lord Jesus, for His own blessed name's sake ; we love Him for what we know of Him ; still, the fault is that we do not know enough of Him, and we do not love Him enough. But up there, beloved, " they are without fault before the throne of God." Ask those bright spirits whether they know Jesus, and love Jesus, and how would they answer you ? Spirit immortal, dost thou love Jesus ? Hear his answer ! He stops not to tell you, but he repeats the song he sings in Heaven, " Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Ask him whether he loves Christ, he does not stay to tell you, but sweeps his fingers across the golden strings of his harp, and again lifts up his thrice-glorious voice in praise of the name of Jesus.

" ' Jesus ! my Lord ! ' their harps employs ;
 ' Jesus ! my Love ! ' they sing ;
 ' Jesus ! the life of all my joys ! '
 Sounds sweet from every string."

If there were nothing else to expect in Heaven but that we should know Christ better and love Him more, that is all the Heaven that any of us need desire. To touch with our finger His wounded side, to grasp His nail-pierced hands, to gaze on His benignant face, to look on those compassionate eyes which once were cold and glazed in the tomb,—to know Him, and to love Him perfectly,—that were Heaven enough ; and it shall be so, for " they are without fault before the throne of God," and so shall we be.

We have thus described, beloved, the people in Heaven without fault before the throne. We have been necessarily brief, and we might have enlarged considerably, by observing how they are without fault *in the opinion of others*, and *in their own opinion*, for now they cannot see any fault in themselves. But, best of all, they are without fault *in God's opinion*, for even the scrutinizing eye of Jehovah sees no fault in them. He looks upon them, and beholds not the shadow of a stain. That God, who sees every little insect in the air, and every creeping thing at the bottom of the sea, can perceive nothing wrong in His people in Heaven ; no, nor even here, when He considers them in Christ. But more especially then, when we shall

be completely sanctified by the Spirit, there shall be no indwelling corruption, no original sin, all that is sinful in us shall be gone ; and God Himself upon His throne shall say, "They are without fault before Me." As He looks upon the living stones in the Heavenly Temple, perfectly joined together with the vermilion cement of Christ's blood, He will say of them all, "They are without fault."

II. Now, let us enquire, WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE THAT ARE WITHOUT FAULT?

"Oh!" says one, "they are the apostles." Certainly, they are "without fault." Another says, "They are some eminent saints such as Noah, Elijah, and Daniel." No ; not them exclusively, beloved. Another friend says, "They are some faithful ministers who preach the truth very boldly ; therefore they are without fault before the throne." No ; they are not the only ones who are without fault ; I will tell you who they are. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." These are the faultless people ; the chosen ones of God, the elect ; these are they who have the Father's name written in their foreheads ; those whom God selected out of the world to show forth His praise ; the hundred and forty-four thousand, and the multitude which no man could number who were redeemed from among men. It does not matter whether they have been great sinners or little sinners, they are all "without fault before the throne" now ; it matters not whether they have been swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, or what not, they are "without fault before the throne" if they are but amongst the number whom God hath chosen and sanctified. It matters not what they were ; it matters not whether men despised them, or found fault with them ; we care not whether they have been put in the pillory of scorn, and hooted and hissed at by mankind, all the elect are "without fault" in the person of Jesus Christ ; and they shall all be at the last bright and glorious day before the throne in person "without fault" in themselves, when God shall gather home His people, and glorify His ransomed ones. *They* are without fault ; they are without fault before the throne ; they are those whom God hath chosen, those who have their Father's name in their foreheads.

By reading the earlier part of this chapter, you will see that *they were all redeemed persons* : "The hundred and forty and four thousand, which were *redeemed from the earth*." "These were *redeemed from among men*, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." All who were redeemed shall stand before God without speck or blemish. We will not go into the doctrinal part of this subject, but simply speak of it as a matter of experience. "*They* are without fault." Do you ask,

beloved, "Am *I* one of the redeemed?" Canst thou say that the blood of the Lamb has been sprinkled upon thy lintel, and thy door post? Hast thou, by faith, sat down and fed on that Paschal Lamb? Is He thy rod, thy stay, thy all in all, thy very existence? Can thy faith lay her hand on that dear head of His, and there confess thy sin? Canst thou see traces of His blood on thy conscience? Hast thou marks of His blood on thy soul? Art thou blood-washed? Hast thou felt that Jesus Christ is thine? Canst thou say,—

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

Canst thou see the purchase price given for thee? Canst thou sing,—

"Oh! how sweet to feel the flowing
Of his sin-atoning blood!
With Divine assurance knowing
He hath made my peace with God"?

If so, though thou mayest be loaded with sin, though conscience may condemn thee, though Satan may bring all thy faults before thee, thou shalt be "without fault before the throne of God." Thou mayest have been a black and gross sinner, thou mayest have been a great backslider, thou mayest have been horribly wicked, almost as bad as the devil himself; thou mayest have had risings of corruption, so horrible that thou darest not reveal them to thy fellow-man; thou mayest be the subject of insinuations so vile and black that thou puttest thy hand to thy mouth to prevent their finding utterance; the flesh may be struggling so hard against the spirit that thou dost scarcely know which shall have the predominance, and thou art crying, "If it be so, why am I thus?"—it may be that thou art lying down, self-condemned and law-condemned, fearing that the sword of Justice will smite thy head from thy shoulders; and yet, with all this, thou shalt one day be "without fault before the throne of God," for thou hast been redeemed by Christ's atoning blood.

O beloved, when I look back upon my past life, I am horrified at the thought of what I should have come to if God had left me to work out my own righteousness! I was the subject of black thoughts and sad feelings, I sinned against early warnings and pious training, against God, against my own soul and body; and yet I know that, notwithstanding all these sins, I shall one day be "without fault before the throne of God." Possibly I may be addressing some man who has been notoriously guilty of swearing, and drunkenness, and every filthy vice, yet he has come to be a believer in Christ; or perhaps he is saying, "I am condemned, there is nothing but hell for me; I know I cannot be pardoned." Nay, poor sinner, if thou art trusting in Jesus, God's law cannot condemn twice. If God's law has condemned thee, God's grace absolves thee, if thou tremblest at God's Word, and sayest, "I am a sinner, but I trust the Saviour." Recollect the apostle's message, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of

all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief ;"—as if Paul would say that you cannot go further in sin than the chief of sinners went. What sayest thou to this, O drunkard ? One day, the Lord having mercy on thee, thou shalt stand, white as driven snow, before the Majesty on high. What sayest thou to this, O thou whose mouth has been stained with black oaths ? If thou hast fled to Jesus to be saved, one day, unblemished and complete, thou shalt join in the hallelujahs of the glorified before the throne of God. O youth, though thou hast gone into the very kennel of sin, and raked up all that is vile and base ; though thou hast gone down, down, down, till it seemed impossible for thee to take another step into the hell of sin ; even thou shalt stand "without fault before the throne of God," if thou art a believer, trusting in the blood of Jesus, and hast that blood applied to thy soul. And thou, O woman, outcast, lost, ruined ; though thou dost hide thy face, ashamed to bear the gaze of man, and comest with stealthy steps into God's house, as if afraid to be seen, for thou knowest what thou hast been ; ay, but a woman, who was a sinner, once washed the Saviour's feet with her tears, and why ? Because He had washed her heart with blood ;—and, O thou poor, guilty Magdalene, there is blood that can wash even thee ! Though thou hast stains as black as hell upon thee, Christ's blood can wash them out ; that precious blood can take away all thy sins. His blood availed for me, and, having availed for me, where shall I find another whose guilt shall go beyond the merit of His sacrifice, whose crimes shall exceed His power to save ? Never shall I find such an one, for Christ has boundless grace. I always love that phrase of Hart's,—

"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost hath made him so."

Ah ! let me know that I am addressing such a sinner ! I will preach the gospel to real, *bona-fide*, actual, positive sinners ; and no flesh and blood shall stop me for evermore in all my sermons, as long as God gives me life and breath, preaching to those real sinners. As for your sham sinners, the people who talk very daintily of being sinners, I have no good opinion of them. John Berridge said that he kept a rod for sham beggars, and I will keep one for these pretenders. I love to see one who feels himself to be a real sinner ; not the one who says, just by way of compliment, that he is a sinner ; not the one who can read the Ten Commandments all through, and say that he has not broken any of them ; but the real sinner, the downright guilty man, the man who is a thorough sinner, and knows it, that is the man to whom I like to preach the gospel. O sinner,—you, *you*, *you*,—if you are trusting in Christ's name, and if His blood has been sprinkled on your conscience, shall yet stand before the throne of God "without fault." Or, as the good man in Yorkshire said, when he was dying, and someone told him he had been a great sinner, "Ah !" said he, "I have been a great sinner, but there is a crown in Heaven

which Gabriel cannot wear ; it will fit no head but mine, and I shall wear it, too, for I am bought and paid for by the blood of Christ ; and I shall be with Him soon." Bought and paid for by the blood of Christ, thou also, believing soul, shalt be "without fault before the throne of God."

Beloved, there is one thought that will suggest itself to some of you, and that is, *there are some of your relatives that are "without fault before the throne of God."* There is a dear, pious mother, on whose knees you sat in childhood, over whose grave you wept : and she is "without fault before the throne." You loved her, but when you look back, you can see that there was a little fault of some kind in her ; perhaps she loved her children too much, there was some fault or other that she had : but she has no fault now. And there, husband, is your beloved wife, who cheered you on your way ; you look back, and almost faultless as you in your fondness deemed her, yet you feel that she was not quite free from some little error : but she is "without fault before the throne " now. If you could behold her now, you would see her,—as the Interpreter described the pilgrims who had been washed,—"fair as the moon." Mother, there is your daughter ; and there are our brothers and sisters who have crossed the flood. When speaking on this subject of re-union with departed friends, we can say,—

"E'en now, by faith, we join our hands
With those that went before ;
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands,
On the eternal shore !"

The members of our churches have ascended up to our Father, and to their Father, and to Christ's Father, and now "they are without fault before the throne of God." Oh, to be "without fault"! If I might ask one thing of God, if it were not sinful to ask such a thing, methinks I would ask, "Let me die now, that I may go and be without fault before Thy throne !"

"O that the happy word were given,—
Loose me, and let me rise to Heaven,
And wrap myself in God !"

Why are we afraid to die ? What are the pains, the groans, the dying struggle ? It is the paying of a penny for a pound to go through them, that so we may get to Heaven.

"Oh ! if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed."

"They are without fault before the throne of God." Yes, they are there ; and perhaps we, too, shall be there in a few days. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet ; but it may be that one of us, who loves the Lord, will be with Him before long ; but whether it be so or not, whichever one of us is to depart, we

know that it is to be "without fault." So we are not afraid, whoever it may be; if we are of the Lord's family, we shall be "without fault before the throne of God."

III. We can only very briefly explain the third part of the subject, which is, to show WHERE THEY ARE WHO ARE WITHOUT FAULT: "They are without fault before the throne of God." "Before the throne of God." We know what it is to lie *beneath the throne*; for we sometimes sing,—

"We would no longer lie
Like slaves beneath the throne."

We know what it is, at times, to be *far off from the throne*. Satan stands blocking up the way to the throne. It is as much as we can do to push past him, and get a word from the Master. Have you not sometimes thought that you were *behind the throne*, and that God could not look at you,—that He could look at all His servants, but not at you, for you were behind the throne? The proud infidel wants to get *on the throne*, but even if it were possible for him to be in Heaven, he could not do that, for he would neither be beneath the throne, nor behind the throne, nor on the throne, but he would have to stand *before* it to be condemned.

But the saints of God are all before the throne. Why? Because *they can then always look at God, and God can always look at them*. They stand before the throne. That is all I want here, to stand before the throne of God. If I could always be before it, if I could always see the light of His countenance, always feel the comforting assurance of being safe in Jesus, always taste His love, always receive of His grace, that were enough for me. And if that is sweet here, how much sweeter shall it be to bow before the throne hereafter, and "unceasing sing His love"! At times, here, we are so far off the throne, that we can scarcely tell where it is; and if it were not a glorious high throne, being so far off, we should never be able to see it. But it is one that you can see a long way off; yet there "they are" immediately "before the throne," drinking in bliss with their eyes and ears, with their whole soul lost in Jesus, standing perpetually before the throne! That part of the verse needs so much illustration to explain it, that I am afraid, more briefly, to venture on it. I, therefore, must, for the present, leave it. "They are without fault before the throne of God." But, beloved, there is one serious question which I shall put to you, and that is, *Shall we be without fault before the throne hereafter?* The answer rests here; are we without fault before the throne of God now, through the justifying blood and righteousness of Christ? Are we able to say,—

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress"?

If so, the Christian cannot change his position in God's sight. He is now justified, and shall be so hereafter; there is now no condemnation, and he never can be condemned. "Ah!" says someone, "I cannot say as much as that." Well, then, are

you full of fault in your own eyes? Hath God the Spirit shown you your sin? Next to being shown the righteousness of Christ, one of the best evidences of His working is our being aware of our own sinfulness. Do you, then, see your own sinfulness? Have you been brought down till all that nature has set upon the throne has been cast in the dust, and that garment which you gloried in has been torn away, and you stand naked, and worse than naked; filthy, and worse than filthy; diseased, and worse than diseased; polluted in heart, worse than dead; worse than lying among the slain; like those that go down to the pit, those that have been long since dead;—nay, if possible, worse than that? Can you feel as if you have been brought down, down, down, till desperation seized you, and you had nothing to rest in? Can you feel that you have been stripped to the lowest degree, and all that you possessed and gloried in has been scattered to the winds? And can you now say, “Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord”? Well, if you have plenty of faults here, and have known them, and been taught them, and feel that you cannot overcome them of yourself, you shall be “without fault before the throne of God” by-and-by, for the Lord will not bring you to that state of soul-distress, and self-despair, without bringing you also to peace and liberty. O sinner, is not this glorious news to thee? Thou knowest thy sinnership, thou canst understand that thou art a sinner; that is the first thing thou needest to know. We sometimes sing,—

“All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him.”

But I love the next two lines of the verse,—

“This He gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.”

Good old Martin Luther used to say, “The devil comes to me, and says, ‘Martin, thou art an exceeding sinner.’” “I know that very well,” said Martin, “and I'll cut off thy head with thine own sword; for Christ died for sinners, and the more I feel I am a sinner, the more evidence I have that Christ died for me.” Oh! to know our sinnership! to recognize it in our inmost soul!—that is blessed! And there is only one more step, and that God shall lead us to,—to put us in Christ Jesus in our own feelings; for we are already in Him in the eternal covenant, if so be we are out of ourselves. Oh! trust Him, *trust Him*, TRUST HIM, TRUST HIM! He is a good Christ, and a great Christ. Ah, great sinner! trust thou to His blood and righteousness; and thou, even thou, the filthiest, the vilest, the off-cast, the undeserving, the ill-deserving, and hell-deserving sinner, even thou shalt yet wear a blood-washed robe, spotless and white; even thou shalt sing the perfect song, and be perfect thyself, for thou shalt be “without fault before the throne of God.”