

# The New Park Street Pulpit.

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PRAYER ANSWERED, LOVE NOURISHED.

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## A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 27TH, 1859, BY THE

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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

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“I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication.”—Psalm cxvi. 1.

IN the Christian pilgrimage it is well for the most part to be looking forward. Whether it be for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love, the future after all must be the grand object of the eye of faith. Looking into the future we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And looking further yet, the believer's soul can see Death's river passed, the gloomy stream forded; he can behold the hills of light on which standeth the celestial city; he seeth himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than a conqueror—crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with him, made to sit together with him on his throne, even as *he* has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon his throne. The sight of the future may well relieve the darkness of the past; the hopes of the world to come may banish all the doubtings of the present. Hush, my fears! this world is but a narrow span, and thou shalt soon have passed it. Hush, hush, my doubts! death is but a narrow stream, and thou shalt soon have forded it. Time, how short—eternity, how long! Death, how brief—immortality, how endless!

“Oh the transporting, rapturous scene  
That rises to my sight!  
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,  
And rivers of delight.  
Filled with delight my raptured soul  
Would here no longer stay,  
Though Jordan's waves around me roll,  
Fearless I'd launch away.”

Yet nevertheless the Christian may do well sometimes to look backward; he may look back to the hole of the pit and the miry clay whence he was digged—the retrospect will help him to be humble, it will urge him to be faithful. He may look back with satisfaction to the glorious hour when first he saw the Lord, when spiritual life for the first time quickened his dead soul. Then he may look back through all the changes of his life, to his troubles and his joys, to his Pisgahs and to his Engedis, to the land of the Hermonites and the hill Mizar. He must not keep his eye always backward, for the fairest scene lies beyond; it will not benefit him to be always considering the past, for the future is more glorious far; but nevertheless at times a retrospect may be as useful as a prospect; and memory may be as good a teacher as even faith itself. This morning I bid you stand upon the hill-top of your present experience and look back upon the past, and find therein motives for love to God; and may the Holy Spirit so help me in preaching and you in hearing, that your love may be inflamed, and that you may retire from this hall, declaring in the language of the Psalmist, “I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication.”

The particular objects which you are now to look back upon are the manifold and manifest answers to prayer, which God has given you. I want you now to take up a book which you ought often to read, the book of remembrance which God has written in your heart of his great goodness and continued mercies; and I want you to turn to that golden page wherein are recorded the instances of God's grace in having listened to your voice and having answered your supplications. I shall give you seven reflections, each of which shall stir up your hearts to love our God whose memorial is that he hears and answers prayers.

I. And the first thing I would have you recollect is, *YOUR OWN PRAYERS*. If you look at them with an honest eye, you will be struck with wonder that ever God should have heard them. There may be some men who think their prayers worthy of acceptance: I dare say the Pharisee did. But all such men shall find that however worthy they may esteem their prayers, God will not answer them at all. The true Christian in looking back weeps over his prayers, and if he could retrace his steps he would desire to pray better, for he sees that all his attempts at prayer in the past have been rather blundering attempts than actual successes. Look back now Christian upon thy prayers, and remember what *cold* things they have been. Thou hast been on thy knees in the closet, and there thou oughtest to have wrestled as Jacob did, but instead of that thy hands have fallen down, and thou hast forgotten to strive with God. Thy desires have been but faint, and they have been expressed in such sorry language, that the desire itself seemed to freeze upon the lips that uttered it. And yet, strange to say, God has heard those cold prayers, and has answered them too, though they have been such that we have come out of our closets and have wept over them. At other times our hearts have been broken, because we felt as if we could not feel, and our only prayer was, "God forgive us that we cannot pray." Yet, notwithstanding, God has heard this inward groaning of spirit. The feeble prayer which we ourselves despised, and which we thought would have died at the gate of mercy, has been nursed, and nurtured, and fostered, and accepted, and it has come back to us a full grown blessing, bearing mercy in both its hands.

Then again, believer, *how unfrequent and few are your prayers, and yet how numerous and how great have God's blessings been*. Ye have prayed in times of difficulty very earnestly, but when God has delivered you, where was your former fervency? In the day of trouble you besieged his throne with all your might and in the hour of your prosperity, you could not wholly cease from supplication, but oh! how faint was the prayer compared with that which was wrung out of your soul by the rough hand of your agony. Yet, notwithstanding that, though you have ceased to pray as you once did, God has not ceased to bless. When you have forgotten your closet, he has not forgotten your house, nor your heart. When you have neglected the mercy-seat, God has not left it empty, but the bright light of the Shekinah has always been visible between the wings of the cherubim. Oh! I marvel that the Lord should regard those intermittent spasms of importunity which come and go with our necessities. Oh! what a God is he that he should hear the prayers of men who come to him when they have wants, but who neglect him when they have received a mercy, who approach him when they are forced to come, but who almost forget to go to him when mercies are plentiful and sorrows are few.

Look at your prayers, again, in another aspect. *How unbelieving have they often been!* You and I have gone to the mercy-seat, and we have asked God to bless us, but we have not believed that he would do so. He has said, "Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believe that ye shall have it, and ye shall have it." Oh! how I could smite myself this morning, when I think how on my knees I have doubted my God! What would you think of a man who came before you with a petition, and said, "Sir, you have promised to give me such-and-such a thing if I asked for it; I ask for it, but I do not believe you will give it me." You would say "Get you gone until you believe me better. I will give nothing to a man who doubts my word." Often might the Lord have spurned us from his mercy-seat, when we have come to him, not believing the very promises which we were pretending to plead.

*How small, too, the faith of our most faithful prayers!* When we believe the most, how little do we trust; how full of doubting is our heart, even when our faith has grown to its greatest extent! What Christian is there here who is not ashamed of himself for having so often doubted a God who never yet denied himself, who was never once untrue, nor once unfaithful to his word? Yet, strange to tell, God

has heard our prayers; though we believed not, he abode faithful. He has said "Poor heart, thy weakness makes thee doubt me, but my love compels me to fulfil the promise, even though thou doubttest." He has heard us in the day of our trouble; he has brought us sweet deliverance, even when we dishonoured him by trembling at his mercy-seat. I say again, look back upon your prayers, and wonder that God should ever have heard them. Often, when we awake in the morning, and find our house and family all secure, and remember what a poor family-prayer we uttered the night before, we must wonder the house was not burnt and all in it. And you in the church, after you have been to the prayer-meeting and prayed there, and God has actually listened to you, and multiplied the church and blessed the minister, do you not say afterwards, "I wonder that he should have heard such poor prayers as those that were uttered at the prayer-meeting?" I am sure, beloved, we shall find much reason to love God, if we only think of those pitiful abortions of prayer, those unripe figs, those stringless bows, those headless arrows, which we call prayers, and which he has borne with in his long-suffering. The fact is, that sincere prayer may often be very feeble to us, but it is always acceptable to God. It is like some of those one-pound notes, which they use in Scotland—dirty, ragged bits of paper; one would hardly look at them, one seems always glad to get rid of them for something that looks a little more like money. But still, when they are taken to the bank, they are always acknowledged and accepted as being genuine, however rotten and old they may be. So with our prayers: they are foul with unbelief, decayed with imbecility, and worm-eaten with wandering thoughts; but nevertheless, God accepts them at heaven's own bank, and gives us rich and ready blessings, in return for our supplications.

II. Again: I hope we shall be led to love God for having heard our prayers, if we consider THE GREAT VARIETY OF MERCIES WHICH WE HAVE ASKED IN PRAYER, AND THE LONG LIST OF ANSWERS WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED. Now, Christian, again—be thine own preacher. It is impossible for me to depict thine experience as well as thou canst read it thyself. What multitudes of prayers have you and I put up from the first moment when we learnt to pray! The first prayer was a prayer for ourselves; we asked that God would have mercy upon us, and blot out our sin. He heard that. But when he had blotted out our sins like a cloud, then we had more prayers for ourselves. We have had to pray for sanctifying grace, for constraining and restraining grace; we have been led to ask for a fresh assurance of faith, for the comfortable application of the promise, for deliverance in the hour of temptation, for help in the time of duty, and for succour in the day of trial. We have been compelled to go to God for our souls, as constant beggars asking for everything. Bear witness, children of God, you have never been able to get anything for your souls elsewhere. All the bread your soul has eaten has come down from heaven, and all the water of which it has drunk has come out of that living rock,—Christ Jesus the Lord. Your soul has never grown rich in itself; it has always been a pensioner upon the daily bounty of God; and hence your prayers have had to ascend to heaven for a range of spiritual mercies all but infinite. Your wants were innumerable, and, therefore, the supplies have been innumerable, and your prayers have been as varied as the mercies have been countless.

But it is not for your *soul* alone that you have pleaded, your *body* has had its cries. You have been poor, and you have asked for food and raiment. How frequently have they been given to you. Not by miracles it is true. The ravens do not bring you bread and meat, but bread and meat comes without the ravens, which is a greater miracle still. It is true your raiment has waxed old, and therefore you have not realised the miracle of the children of Israel in the wilderness, whose clothes never grew old, nevertheless you have had a greater miracle still, for you have had new ones when you wanted them. All your necessities have been provided for as they have arisen. How often have these necessities come upon you? So great have they been at times, that you have said, "Surely the Lord will forsake me and deliver me over; I shall not have my bread given me, nor shall my water be sure." But hitherto God has fed you; you are not starved yet, and by the grace of God you won't be. You have been told many a time by unbelief that you would die in the workhouse; but you are out of it even now, though it seems as if a thousand miracles had been put together to keep you from it.

Then again; how often sickness has laid hold upon you, and like Hezekiah, you

have turned your face to the wall, and cried, "Lord, spare thy servant, and let him not go down to the grave in the midst of his days:" and here you are, the living, the living to praise God. Recollect the fever and the cholera, and all those other fierce diseases which have laid you low; remember those prayers you uttered, and those vows you made. Oh! do not you love the Lord because he hath heard your voice and your supplication? How frequently too have you prayed for journeying mercies, and he has protected you in the midst of accidents. You have asked for blessings in your going out and your coming in; blessings of the day and of the night, and of the sun and of the moon; and all these have been vouchsafed to you. Your prayers were innumerable; you asked for countless mercies, and they have all been given. Only look at yourself: are not you adorned and bejewelled with mercies as thickly as the sky with stars. Think how you have prayed for your family. When you first knew the Lord your husband feared him not; but how you wrestled for your husband's soul! and now the tear is in your eye while you see your husband sitting by your side in the house of God, and recollect, it is not many months ago since he would have been in the tavern. Your children too have through your prayers been brought to God. Mothers, you wrestled with God that your children might be God's children, and you have lived to see them converted. How great the mercy to see our offspring called in early youth. Oh! love the Lord, because in this respect too he has heard your voice and your supplication. How often have you presented before God your business, and he has helped you in that matter. How frequently have you laid your household sorrows before him, and he has delivered you in that case. And some of us can sing of blessings given to us in the service of God in his church. We have lived to see the empty sanctuary crowded to the full; we have seen our largest attempts successful beyond our most sanguine hopes; we have prayed for sinners, and seen them saved; we have asked for backsliders, and have seen them restored; we have cried for a Pentecost, and we have had it; and by God's grace we are crying for it again, and we shall have it once more. O minister, deacon, elder, church-member, father, mother, man of business, hast thou not indeed cause to say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications?" I am afraid the very fact that God hears our prayers so constantly, leads us to forget the greatness of his mercy. Let it not be so, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Let this to-day be brought to mind, and let me raise a song to the God who hath heard the voice of my supplication.

III. Let us note again THE FREQUENCY OF HIS ANSWERS TO OUR FREQUENT PRAYERS. If a beggar comes to your house, and you give him alms, you will be greatly annoyed if within a month he shall come again; and if you then discover that he has made it a rule to wait upon you monthly for a contribution, you will say to him, "I gave you something once, but I did not mean to establish it as a rule." Suppose, however, that the beggar should be so impudent and impertinent that he should say, "But I intend sir, to wait upon you every morning and every evening:" then you would say, "I intend to keep my gate locked that you shall not trouble me." And suppose he should then look you in the face and add still more, "Sir, I intend waiting upon you every hour, nor can I promise that I won't come to you sixty times in an hour; but I just vow and declare that as often as I want anything so often will I come to you: if I only have a wish I will come and tell it to you; the least thing and the greatest thing shall drive me to you; I will always be at the post of your door." You would soon be tired of such importunity as that, and wish the beggar anywhere, rather than that he should come and tease you so. Yet recollect, this is just what you have done to God, and he has never complained of you for doing it; but rather he has complained of you the other way. He has said, "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob." He has never murmured at the frequency of your prayers, but has complained that you have not come to him enough. Every morning when you have risen your cry has gone up to him; again with the family you have cried to the God of Jacob; at eventide you have gathered together and have prayed to him, and whenever ye have a trial, or a want, or a doubt, or a fear, ye have, if ye have done rightly, sped away swiftly to his throne and told him all. Speak now, saint, has he once said to you "Get you gone, thou weariest me?" Has he ever said, "Mine ear is heavy that it cannot hear, my arm is shortened that I cannot save?" Has he said, "Away with thee, I want not thus to be perpetually hearing thee? What is thy harsh grating voice, that I should always give mine ear to it? Am I not hearkening to the songs of angels, to the

shouts of cherubim? Away with thee, teaze me not. At certain seasons thou mayest come, on the Sabbath-day thou mayest pray, but I want not to hear thee in the week?" No, no; he has sweetly embraced us every time, he has always bowed the heaven and come down to listen to our feeble cries; he has never denied a promise, never broken his word, even when we have pleaded a thousand times a day. Oh! I will love the name of such a patient God as this, who bears with my prayers though they be as a cloud of hornets in the air.

IV. Go a little further and you will have another thought arising. Think of THE GREATNESS OF THE MERCY FOR WHICH YOU HAVE OFTEN ASKED HIM. We never know the greatness of our mercies till we get into trouble and want them. I talk to-day of pardoned sin, but I confess I do not feel its preciousness as once I did. There was a time when my sins lay heavy on me; conscience accused me, and the law condemned me, and I thought if God would but pardon me, it would be the greatest thing he ever did. The creating of a world seemed to me to be but little compared with the taking away of my desperately evil sins. Oh, how I cried, how I groaned before him; and he has pardoned me, and blessed be his name for it. But I cannot estimate the value of his pardon to-day so well as I could when I was seeking it—almost driven to despair. Oh, remember soul, when thou didst ask for pardon thou wast asking for that which worlds could not buy; thou wast asking for that which could only be procured through the life-blood of the Son of God. Oh! what a boon was that! And yet he did not look thee in the face and say, "Thou hast asked too much." No, but he gave it freely. He upbraided not; he blotted out all thy sins, and washed thee at once in the river of the Saviour's blood. Since that time what large things hast thou asked! Thou wast in trouble once; it seemed as if bankruptcy must overtake thee, and thou didst cry to him. If the world heard it it would have said, "What a fool art thou to ask this of thy God—he will never deliver thee!" Unbelief, like Rabshekeh, wrote a blasphemous letter, and thou didst lay it before the Lord; but even when thou wast in prayer, thy heart said, "The Lord will not deliver thee this time. The lion will surely devour thee. The furnace will most certainly burn thee up." But you did put up a poor, groaning prayer, and you dared to ask great things, namely, that God would put his hand out of heaven and save you from the waters, that the flood might not overflow you. Are you not surprised at this time that you dared to ask so much! You would not dare to ask so largely of any of your friends; you would not have gone to one and said, "I must have a thousand pounds by such and such a day, will you lend it to me?"—you knew you would not get it. Yet you asked it of your God. It came, and here you are, the living to praise his name; and if this were the right place you would stand up and testify that God did hear you, that in the day of sorrow and tribulation he delivered you. Now do you not love him for giving you such great things as these? God's mercies are so great that they cannot be magnified; they are so numerous they cannot be multiplied, so precious they cannot be over-estimated. I say, look back to-day upon these great mercies with which the Lord has favoured thee in answer to thy great desires, and wilt thou not say, "I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications?"

V. Another aspect of this case, perhaps, will reach our hearts more closely still. HOW TRIVIAL HAVE BEEN THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE OFTEN TAKEN BEFORE GOD, AND YET HOW KINDLY HAS HE CONDESCENDED TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS. It is a singular thing, that our hearts are often more affected by little than by great things. You may feed a child all the year round, and never get its thanks, but give it a sweetmeat or an orange, and you may have its heart and its gratitude. Strange that the bounties of a whole year should seem to be lost, while the gift of a moment is greatly prized. A little thing, I say, may often touch the heart more than a great thing. Now, how often have we, if we have acted rightly, taken little things before the Lord. I believe it is the Christian's privilege to take all his sorrows to his God, be they little or be they great. I have often prayed to God about a matter at which you would laugh if I should mention it. In looking back I can only say it was a little thing, but it seemed great at the time. It was like a little thorn in the finger; it caused much pain, and might have brought forth, at last, a great wound. I learned to lay my little troubles at the feet of Jesus. Why should we not? Are not our great ones little? and is there, after all, much difference between great troubles and little ones in the sight of God? The queen will stand at one hour listening to her ministers, who talk with her about

public business, but does she seem less a queen when, afterwards, her little child runs to her as its mother, because a gnat has stung it? Is there any great condescension in the matter? She who was a right royal queen when she stood in the privy chamber is as right royal a queen and as well-beloved a mother of the nation, when she takes the little child upon her knee, and gives it a maternal kiss. Her ministers must not present trifling petitions, but her children may. So the worldling may say this morning, "How absurd to think of taking little troubles to God." Ah! it might be absurd to you, but to God's children it is not. Though you were God's prime minister, if you were not his child, you would have no right to take your private troubles to him; but God's meanest child has the privilege of casting his care upon his Father, and he may rest assured that his Father's heart will not disdain to consider even his mean affairs. Now let me think of the innumerable little things God has done for me. In looking back, my unbelief compels me to wonder at myself, that I should have prayed for such little things. My gratitude compels me to say, "I love the Lord, because he has heard those little prayers, and answered my little supplications, and made me blessed, even in little things which, after all, make up the life of man."

VI. Once more, let me remind you, in the sixth place, of THE TIMELY ANSWERS WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TO YOUR PRAYERS, and this should compel you to love him. God's answers have never come too soon nor yet too late. If the Lord had given you his blessing one day before it did come, it might have been a curse, and there have been times when if he had withheld it an hour longer it would have been quite useless, because it would have come too late. In the life of Mr. Charles Wesley, there occurs a memorable scene at Devizes. When he went there to preach, the curate of the parish assembled a great mob of people, who determined to throw him into the horse-pond, and if he would not promise that he would never come into the town again they would kill him. He escaped into the house and hid himself upstairs. They besieged the house for hours, battering at the doors, breaking every pane of glass in the windows, and at last to his consternation, they climbed the roof, and began to throw the tiles down into the street, so as to enter the house from above. He had been in prayer to God to deliver him, and he said, "I believe my God will deliver me;" but when he saw the heads of the people over the top of the room in which he was concealed, and when they were just about to leap down, he very nearly gave up all hope, and he thought surely God would not deliver him, when in rushed one of the leaders of the mob, a gentleman of the town who did not wish to incur the guilt of murder, and proposed to him that he would get him away if he would only promise that he would never come back again. "No," said he, "I will never promise that. "But," said the man, "Is it your intention that you will not return immediately?" "Well," he said, "I do not say I shall come back just yet, I do not see any use in it. As you drive me away, therefore I shall shake off the dust of my feet against you, but I mean to come back again before I die." "Well," said the man, that will do, if you only promise you will not come back directly I will get you away." And so, by a great deliverance, he was saved from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. His prayer was answered at the right time. Five minutes afterwards he would have been dead. Now cannot you say that the answer has come to you punctually at the very tick of the clock of wisdom; not before nor after.

VII. Now, the seventh recollection with which I would inspire you is this—will you not love the Lord, when you recollect the special and great instances of his mercy to you? You have had seasons of special prayer and of special answer. Let me picture a man. There was one who feared not God, nor regarded man. He was engaged in business, and his affairs were not propitious, but rather everything went against him. He went against God, and kicked the more because God kicked against him. He had servants about him that feared God and worshipped him; but as for himself, he had no thought or regard for religion. His affairs became more and more perplexed and involved. One day he passed by the house of one of his workmen, where prayer was wont to be made, and listening, he heard words uttered in supplication that touched his heart. Though he was the master, he went inside and listened to his servant while he preached. God touched that man's heart, and made him feel his need of a Saviour. He went home, and he had now double cause for prayer. He went to the Lord, and told him he was a poor, wretched undone sinner, and that he wanted mercy; and then he told the Lord beside

though he did not make it very prominent, that he was a poor, almost broken merchant; and that if God did not appear for him, he knew not but that he must be driven out of house and home. These two cases were laid before God. First of all, God heard his prayer for his soul. He gave him joy and peace in believing; and poor as he was at that time, he found enough to assist in erecting a house where the gospel might be preached. The Lord who had delivered him spiritually, now came to his assistance temporally. His affairs took a different turn; floods of prosperity rolled in upon him, and he is at this very day a living witness of the power of God to answer man's prayer for spiritual and for temporal things too. And if it were needed, he could bear his willing witness of special answer in that special time of necessity. And does he not love his God? I know he does; for he delights to honour him, he delights to give of his substance to him. And there may be others of you here present whose characters have been pictured in this one which I have pourtrayed before you; who are saying, "Surely he means me." Oh, will you not then, at the recollection of what God did in that double mercy, say, "love him. What can I do for him? There is nothing too great for me to give; nothing too large for me to do. Only let me know my duty, and the recollection of his marvellous bounty shall lead me to give of my substance to him; to give my whole heart to him. I will be wholly his, and hope that in death he will receive me to himself." Men and women, my brethren and sisters in Christ,—will you look back a few short years, and recollect the time when you were on your knees before God, seeking him? I could fix my eye to-day upon many a man who has been a drunkard, a swearer, a breaker of God's holy day, a hater of everything good. I think I see you in that upper chamber of yours. Oh, how you cried, how you groaned! Oh, with what agony did you pour out your unutterable sighs! You rose up, and you thought God would not have mercy on you. You went to your business; but how wretched you were! You went back again to the chamber. And how the beam out of the wall could speak now, and tell you how you cried and cried, and cried again before his mercy-seat. Do you love him but a little to-day? has your love grown cold? Go home and look again upon the chair against which you kneeled. Look at the very walls, and see if they do not accuse you, saying, "I heard you pray to God for mercy, and he has heard you. Now I see your cold-heartedness; I mark your lukewarmness in his cause." Go home to your chamber, fall on your knees, and with tears of gratitude say—

"O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord;  
And all that in me is  
Be stirred up, his holy name  
To magnify and bless!"

Some of us can recollect other special seasons of prayer. Members of my church, I remind you of that solemn season, when, like a hurricane of desolation, the judgment of God swept through our midst. Standing in this pulpit this very morning, I recall to myself that evening of sorrow, when I saw my people scattered like sheep, without a shepherd, trodden upon, injured, and many of them killed. Do you recollect how you cried for your minister, that he might be restored to a reason that was then tottering? Can you recollect how ye prayed that out of evil God would bring forth good, that all the curses of the wicked might be rolled back upon themselves, and God would yet fill this place with his glory? And do you remember how long ago that is, and how God has been with us ever since, and how many of those who were injured that night, are now members of our church, and are praising God that they ever entered this house? Oh! shall we not love the Lord? There is not a church in London, that has had such answers to prayer as we have; there has not been a church that has had such cause to pray. We have had special work, special trial, special deliverance, and we ought pre-eminently to be a church, loving God, and spending and being spent in his service. Remember again the varied times of your sickness, when you have been sick, sore, and nigh unto death. Let me picture, my own experience that I may remind you of yours. I remember when I came to this pulpit in agony, and preached you a sermon which seemed to cost me my life's blood at every word I uttered. I was taken home to my bed full of grief and agony; I remember those weary nights, those doleful days, that burning brow, those roaming thoughts, those spectres that haunted my dreams, that sleep without sleep, that rest that knew

no rest, that torture, and that pain. Then I sought God, and cried that he would spare me to stand in this pulpit once again. Oh! I thought then, in my poor foolish way, that I would preach as I ne'er had preached before, as "a dying man to dying men." I hoped my ministry was not over; I trusted I might have another opportunity of freeing myself from the blood of hearers, if any of that blood were on my skirts. Here I stand, and I have to chide myself that I do not love him as I ought: yet nevertheless, in the recollection of his great mercy, saving my soul from death, and mine eyes from tears, I must love him, and I must praise him; and I must in reminding each of you of similar deliverances, beseech and entreat you to bless the Lord with me. O let us magnify his name together. We must do something fresh, something greater, something larger than we have done before.

Having thus delivered these thoughts, I shall want you now for about three minutes to listen to me while I teach you three lessons which ought to spring from this sevenfold retrospect. What shall I say then? God has heard my voice in my prayer. The first lesson, then, is this—He shall hear my voice in my praise. If he heard me pray, he shall hear me sing; if he listened to me when the tear was in mine eye, he shall listen to me when my eye is sparkling with delight. My piety shall not be that of the dungeon and sick bed; it shall be that also of deliverance and of health.

"I'll praise my Maker with my breath;  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life and thought and being last,  
Or immortality endures."

Another lesson. Has God heard my voice? Then I will hear his voice. If he heard me, I will hear him. Tell me, Lord, what wouldst thou have thy servant do, and I will do it; what wouldst thou have me believe, and I will believe it. If there be a labour which I have never attempted before, tell me to do it, and I will say, "Here am I; Lord, send me." Is there an ordinance to which I never attended? Dost thou say, "Do this in remembrance of me;" is it thy command? However non-essential it seems to be, I will do it, because thou hast told me to do it. If thou hast heard my feeble voice, I will hear thine, even though it be but a still small voice. Oh that you would learn that lesson!

The last lesson is, Lord, hast thou heard my voice? then I will tell others that thou wilt hear their voice too. Didst thou save me? O Lord, if thou savedst me thou canst save anybody. Didst thou hear my prayer?

"Then will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Saviour I have found;"

and I will bid them pray too. O you that never pray, I beseech you begin from this hour. May God the Spirit lead you to your chambers, to cry to him! Remember, if you ask through Jesus, you cannot ask in vain. I can prove that in a thousand instances God has heard my supplication. There was nothing more in me than there is in you. Go and plead the promise; plead the blood, and ask for the help of God's Spirit; and there is not one in this assembly who shall not receive the blessing, if God shall lead him to pray. Young man, young woman, go home; plead with God for yourself first; you that love him, plead for others. Let every one of us practice the second verse of this Psalm, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."