

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE VITAL FORCE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now, the just shall live by faith.”—Hebrews x. 38.

SEE here the germ of the Christian's life! See, too, how it blooms, blossoms, and bears! But observe it is not said the just shall live *for* his faith, or because of the merit of his believing in God. This were to place the Christian virtually under the old covenant of law. To confound faith with works, would be indeed to bring us back to the old bondage of the first dispensation. It is no more true that the righteous man is saved because of the excellency of his faith, than that any man can be saved because of the excellency of his works.

Neither doth it say in the text that the just shall live *upon* his faith. Faith would make poor food for his soul. Small consolation may a man fetch from his faith itself. It was said of Esau, “By thy sword shalt thou live;” and every one knows that the intention of that sentence was—“By that which thy sword shall capture and subdue.” He could not feed on the sword itself, that was mere hard, barren steel. So faith in itself could not feed a soul. It is that which faith brings, that which faith taketh of the things of God, and maketh the soul's own. I know it is very easy for us to degenerate into a congratulation of ourselves because of some quality of our faith. We may as easily make an Antichrist of our faith as of anything else, but this will never do. The believer never stays upon his faith; it is in the object of his faith that he finds rest. It is not the telescope which delights me, but the star which I see through it. It is not the mere hand of faith which feeds me, but the heavenly bread which faith's hand uplifts and brings spiritually to my mouth.

The text doth say this, however, that the just shall live by his faith; and it seems to me that, without any straining of the text, we might find in it, first, *a doctrine*, secondly, *a promise*, and, thirdly, *an indication of practice*—I might almost have said *a precept*.

I. First, then, we descry here A DOCTRINE. “The just shall live by faith;” and that doctrine may be drawn out into distinct branches.

Doth not the text plainly teach us that *faith is the continued act of*
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the Christian? Some people seem to imagine that there is a kind of finality in each stage of religious experience, as though we are to repent in the first dawn of our spiritual life, but afterwards we may leave off repenting, and account henceforth that this bitter cup of gall is emptied, no more to sting the conscience with remorse, or move the heart to godly sorrow; whereas, I suppose, we shall pass through the pearly gates brushing away the last tear of repentance, always till then having need to mourn past sins and grieve for present frailties in penitential showers of grief. So it seems to have been the fancy of others, that we are to stand as sinners once for all at the foot of the cross, look to Jesus, and be lightened; but after that, we are to press to something higher—something yet beyond, a repose calm and undisturbed, free from rough winds and rude alarms. Beloved, surely such people do not know what the Christian's inner life is. Depend upon it, that as much at the last as at the first "the just shall live by faith." He that is ripest and nearest heaven has no more ground of confidence than he who but five minutes ago, like the dying thief, received the assurance of his pardon. The ground of the sinner's acceptance in the first moment of his faith is the finished work of Christ, and, after fifty years of earnest service, that must still be the sole cause of his acceptance with God, and the only rock upon which his soul must dare to build. The act of simple faith, looking out of self, and looking alone to Christ, is a thing for your penitent publican when first he smiteth on his breast; but it is also for your dying David, when he knows that the covenant is ordered in all things and sure. Thus well it becometh the maturest saint, with his last breath, to express his confidence in the God that pardoneth sin, through the application of the precious blood. Never imagine that the publican is to ripen into a Pharisee. Yet such would be our course, were we to get off the rock of Christ's finished work, and rely with a foolish dependence upon our own graces and our attainments. Faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, then, is the continual act of the believer's life. Just as long as he lives here below, if he doth live to God at all, he lives by faith.

We may further learn from hence that *faith is a great practical virtue*. The text does not say that the just man shall study the doctrine of faith in his retirement, and be able to frame a correct definition of what faith is. It is true that the just man should be meditative, contemplative, studious, a man well instructed in the history of revelation and the mystery of the kingdom of God; but that is not what the text saith. It doth not say that the just man shall converse about faith, and make the object of faith the constant theme of his discourse. It will be so: what is in the heart will be sure to come out in the tongue. But that is not the truth taught here. In plain English, it is this—the righteous man will carry his faith into his ordinary life. He will live by faith. All the actions of his life, such as have in them any degree of moral or spiritual aspect—all of these shall be conspicuously ruled by his confidence in God, and even the lowliest and commonest affairs in which he takes a part, shall be subdued and elevated by the dignity of his trust and the fidelity of his adherence. He shall live by faith. Not alone in the study and in the closet, not alone in the

assembly of the saints and at the table of fellowship, but in the market and on the exchange, in the shop and the counting-house, in the parlour or the drawing-room, at the plough-tail or at the carpenter's bench, in the senate-house or at the judgment-hall; the just man, wherever his life is cast, shall carry his faith with him; nay, his faith shall be in him as part of his life; he shall live there by faith.

To advance a little farther. Not only is faith the continuous act of the Christian life, interweaving itself into all the various offices and exercises of the Christian's existence, but *faith hath a great quickening power over all the faculties of the spiritual man*. He lives—how? What is the grace which, as it were, magnetises his entire system? What is that sacred conductor which brings down life from him in whom life is? What is that connecting-link between the great I AM, the sole, essential, independent Life, and the life that comes into our dead spirits, even the life divine? The text tells us, that faith is that great intermedium. This is the Prometheus that stole the heavenly flame, and brought it down to men made of clay, and made them live the lives of the immortals. This it is that brings immortality to us through Jesus, who brought life and immortality to light. Whenever faith rules in a man it quickens all his graces. The believer is the man to love—to love his God, his neighbour, his enemy. The believer is the man to hope—to hope for deliverance out of present affliction; to hope for the eternal outgoing of the issues of all this life's battle and strife. If there be any patience, if there be any forgiveness, if there be any generosity, if there be any lovingkindness, if there be any zeal, if there be anything lovely and of good repute, all these are quickened and brought out into their life and force according to the life, and power, and energy of the faith which a man possesses. So then, the just shall live by faith. Faith shall, under God, be a means of quickening to the soul, bringing the Holy Ghost's divine flame to burn upon the altar of the heart.

Turning this doctrine over in rather a different form, but still keeping to it, let me say that the believer lives *only* by faith. All other kinds of living are to him spiritual death. Some, I know, try to live by experience. What they have felt to-day, what they did feel yesterday—these are their sorry comforts. Such must be starved. At the best, what are our own experiences if we come to feed upon them? And at the worst, do not those who live upon mere feeling, dwell in a salt land that is not inhabited? I am sure if I lived by feeling, I could at one moment persuade myself that I was on the borders of heaven, and I could quite as readily, within an hour, be sure that I was in the very jaws of hell. Our feelings are fickle as the wind. He that liveth by feeling, is very much like the mariner at sea when he mounts up to heaven and then comes down again into the deep; he has nothing at all stable to depend upon. We may say of the man who lives by feeling, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." "Human experience," said a certain philosopher, "like the stern lights of a ship at sea, illuminates only the path which we have passed over." But he that believeth God, and knoweth that the Almighty God fainteth not, neither is weary, and that the ever-blessed God changeth not, neither doth he forsake his people, he it is who truly lives, and he only lives in

proportion as he believes. The believer lives, I say, only by faith, for that which we have in present possession, my brethren, such as this world's goods and creature comforts, ministereth not to spiritual life. These things ought to be used by us unto God's glory, and they should excite in us gratitude to him who gives us them to enjoy, but they are not our life. You can no more feed a soul with gold than you could satisfy your natural hunger for food with the pebbles of the sea. Your soul's life dependeth, not upon the multitude of things which you may profess. Still it is faith which, by laying hold upon the promises of God and the person of Christ, alone gives life unto the soul of the just.

The righteous live by faith *ordinarily*, as I have already said on this subject. But let me just give a point of serious admonition to you. I believe that we fail to bring little troubles to God, and perhaps on account of their being so little, we fancy that we must not mention them to the Most High. This is but the fruit of our pride, for how know we that our great things are so great as we think them to be? and are not our little things, after all, but the fractions of a considerable sum to such little creatures as ourselves? These little, little, little things are of momentous concern to such little ones as we are; and the God that stoops to us at all has already brought himself down in condescension so low that we need not fear that we shall bring him lower. No, you may go to him if you like about that lost key; or about that child's swelling finger, or about that word that irritated you just now. There is nothing little to a father in the thing that troubles his little child; and your great God, having once condescended to observe and care for you, numbering the very hairs of your head, and not suffering a sparrow to fall to the ground without his purpose and decree, will not think that you intrude upon him if you bring your daily troubles to him. Let the righteous live by faith *ordinarily* in the common affairs of life.

So, too, let me add, the righteous live by faith *extraordinarily*. I mean that if they are cast upon troubles that are new to them, and even new to others, they will live there by faith, for faith makes the believer like the fabled salamander, that could live in the midst of fire. If the furnace be heated like Nebuchadnezzar's, seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated, faith gets seven times more power from God, and laughs the heat of the flame to scorn. Should you be called to some great bodily suffering, should weakness long and dreary ensue, and your soul faint, yet underneath you are the everlasting arms; and if you are enabled to exercise faith upon him who makes the beds of his people in their sickness, you shall find it blessed living, triumphant suffering. Should the just man be called to banishment, should he be made to endure persecution, should he lie in prison and be called to die for his Lord and Master, in every place the just shall live by faith. Though the edge of the sword threaten him with death, though the jaws of wild beasts were to tear him to pieces, though he were to be cast into the fire, yet the life which faith gives is such a life as to triumph over all these. In ordinary and in extraordinary seasons, then, the Christian is still to wear his shield upon his arm, and never cast away his confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

The Christian lives by faith *essentially*. Faith touches the very essence of his life. Some of the other graces are like limbs to the body, and he could live, though it were a sorry life, without them. But faith lives in the heart. It is the heart of the Christian's vital system. Take away the Christian's faith, and the vitality of his religion has departed. Oh! many will get to heaven whose patience was very maimed, and some whose eye of hope was very dim; and there be some saints, I doubt not, entering into life halt and maimed, destitute of bright graces which ought to have adorned them, but not a soul ever lived to God here or obtained admission into the everlasting kingdom without faith. This is the *sine quâ non*. This must be possessed. Without this a man is an unbeliever, and his end is to be destroyed. So, beloved, to live by faith is the very essence of the Christian life. Because of its deep importance, we must watch with the greater care that we have the faith of God's elect.

To live by faith *is to live gloriously, and in the very highest degree*. "The just shall live by faith." Oh, as yet we hardly know the meaning of this resplendent truth! There is a life, and a life, and a life, and another life. Life spiritual is all the same as to its essence, but not as to its degree. There is the life of the soul that feebly hopes; it is like the life of the man just recovered from the deep; he breathes, and 'tis all. There is the life of the man who sometimes reads his calling and election, and knows them to be clear, but who at other times is dull of vision and full of doubting. 'Tis the life of the sick man, who sometimes enjoys rest, opens the window and breathes the fresh air, but anon is ready to faint and die. But there is a life beyond this, the life of the man who is strong in the Lord and the power of his might, who staggers not at the promise through unbelief; the life of the man who puts his foot upon temptation, and lays his hand on Christian service; who, with a warm heart and loins girt about, casting aside every impediment, gives himself body and soul and spirit, to his Master's glory. This is the life of the warrior; comparable unto the first three in David's band, the life of the man who will go down and take the lion by the beard in the pit in the time of snow, or will lift up his spear against three thousand, whom he will slay at one time. Whence comes this highest life, life gigantic, like the life of the angels of God, like the life of Christ—nay, as the very life of God itself? Whence has this man this power that he doth chase a thousand, and that he can put ten thousand to flight? What made this man so bold, so strong, so heavenly-minded, so living above the world? It was his faith that did it for him, for the just shall live in the highest degree of life, and they shall go on thus living until they come to the glory-life, till they come to the perfect life, the life of bliss, of which this present spiritual life is but the bud, and it shall all be through faith until they enter into the rest, and know even as they are known. Oh, for a stronger faith! I pant for it as one that panteth for life—more life. We prophecy in part, ye believe in part. When shall that which is perfect come? "I do believe! help thou my unbelief," is the last great utterance of the soul.

II. Now, secondly, the text appears to me, as I read it, to contain A PROMISE.

“The just shall live by faith.” My faith shall ensure my life. If I do indeed believe in Jesus, and rest my soul humbly, but simply and confidently, upon the promise of God, as revealed to me in his dear Son, I shall not die, but live; and O brethren, this is great joy, great joy indeed, to have a faith that will make us live, that will make us live while we die, make us live when men say that we are dead, make us live when they have buried our bodies; a faith that shall even secure that our bodies shall rise again; a faith that shall be to us a guarantee to-day that soul and body united shall live even amidst the blaze of God’s glory. Oh, ’tis joy to have faith that makes you immortal! The faith of the just shall constrain them to live. They cannot die; they must not die. God himself shall as soon die as they shall. The just *shall* live by faith.

This is not true of any other but those who have faith. Observe the self-righteous! Well, they live after a sort, but it is always a timorous life, like the life of the hare that is watching for the baying of the dogs. They are always afraid; their conscience is fluttered and confused with an indistinct sense that, after all, their righteousness will not suffice for the justice of God; and at last, when they get into the swellings of Jordan, in most cases those who have rested upon sacraments, and ceremonies, and self-righteousness, have found their props all giving way, and their refuges of lies all falling to the ground. They have been daubed with untempered mortar; they have heard the syren cry, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace, and now, when they most want comfort, they find they cannot live by their self-righteousness. They have to die, and a dreadful death it is to the soul to die to all hope, to fall into the sepulchre of despair, and there to perish.

No man lives by his self-righteousness. There are some who are not boasting of what they have done, but whose confidence for time and for eternity lies in the belief of what they can do. I do not know anything that is less comfortable than this paltry conceit, if looked at rightly. Some person who believed much in human ability, once called upon my distinguished predecessor, Dr. Gill, and said to him, “Sir, I heard you preaching that men were unable to repent and believe, and do spiritual acts of themselves; I do not believe a word of it, I think you are mistaken.” Dr. Gill very properly said, “Sir, do you believe that you can repent and believe without the Holy Spirit?” “Certainly, I believe I can.” Said the Doctor, “Have you believed and repented?” “No, I have not, sir.” And then Dr. Gill said, “Sir, you are condemned already, and if you are not damned eternally, you are in imminent peril, beyond all others; for on your own confession *you* are guilty, even if others should not be equally culpable in this respect;” and he sent his friend away, I hope, not quite so conceited of himself as he was when he entered the vestry. I do not see any

comfort there can be in assuming that men have a moral power, which they nevertheless have no disposition to exert. It seems to me that ability in yourselves becomes a very solemn argument against any peace of conscience, it should rather make us bestir ourselves than be used as a pillow for our heads. Mark you, I know there are thousands who think they will be able to perform every spiritual act necessary to salvation just when they are coming to die; and their reliance is that they have within them the sacred talisman that shall bring them faith in their expiring moments. Is not that the secret belief of many of you? Ah, sirs, in that day when you shall look for consolation and look in vain, when you shall even call upon God, and discover to your horror, that, having neglected him long, your prayer comes back without an answer, you shall find then that no man can live by his self-righteousness. But the poor heart that casteth itself upon the power, and merit, and grace, and promise of Christ, shall find in the darkest hour of life, when heart and flesh are failing, that Christ is able to help, that the promise still stands good, and that the eternal Father smiles serenely upon him. You know the story I have told you sometimes, of the good old soul whose minister called to see her when she was dying, and amongst other things he said to her, "My sister, you are very weak; don't you feel yourself sinking?" She looked at him, and gave no answer, but said, "Did I understand you, minister? Please tell me what you said; I hope you didn't say what I thought I heard?" "Why," said he, "my dear sister, I said to you, don't you feel yourself sinking?" And then she said, "I did not think my minister would ever ask me such a question as that! Sinking? Did you ever know a sinner sink through a rock? I am believing in Jesus Christ; if I were resting anywhere else I might sink, but as I am resting upon him, did you ever know a sinner sink through a rock? Yes, and that is just the very point. It is so. God does in the very words of our text seem to assure us that if we believe, we have got on a rock, that if we believe, we shall live. We shall live by our faith under all circumstances and difficulties. This shall be the living thing:

"When mortal strength shall droop and die,
And human vigour cease,"

then the soul, like the eagle, shall stretch its wings and mount higher, and higher, and higher, by the dint of its sacred immortality. "The just shall live by faith."

We may expect between this place and heaven a fair share of trouble. If we write down for ourselves pleasant things, it may probably happen that we have written other than the book of the divine purpose. Many trials will befall us between this and the fair haven; but there is no

killing one in them all, for the just shall live through them all by his faith. We may also reckon upon many temptations. Satan, however old he may be, has not yet come to years of decay. Our old evil nature, too, though it may have lost some of its strength, yet is capable of wonderful outbursts of power, and the world outside of us is full of grief. We must expect to be tempted in many fresh ways between here and the celestial city; but there is no lulling temptation in them all, for the just shall live by his faith. Empty thy quiver, O enemy of souls, but this divine shield shall catch every arrow and quench its fire, and blunt those points, and save and deliver us from them all.

Beloved friends, we have to expect, in addition to our trials and to our temptations, that which seems to me to be the heaviest ordeal of all, namely, *the test* of long endurance. I look with admiration upon brethren who have remained faithful to God for sixty or seventy years. It seems to me that the length of the Christian's life is, in itself, oftentimes a very severe trial. A man might stand at the stake and burn for a few minutes, but it is hanging up over a slow fire—who can bear that? To do one brave and generous action, this seems simple enough; but to stand on the watch-tower day and night, always vigilant; watching, lest the foe surprise us; watching, lest our hearts betray us; watching unto prayer, that we may keep ourselves in the love of God. Oh! this is a work, this is a labour which only grace can help us to perform. But here is the comfort. No length of days can exhaust the believer's patience or peril his spiritual life, because the just shall live by faith. If he were here so long, that like Rowland Hill he was inclined to send a message up to heaven, for fear they should forget "Old Rowly" down below, yet depend upon it he could not outlive the divine energy that vitalised his soul, or lose the spiritual fervour of the just; still would faith preserve the sacred spark and fan it to a flame.

'This is a promise, then, and under shelter of this promise let us go forward.

Ah! brethren, every now and then we come to a dead stand, we reach a new era in life, a new trial, the like of which we never knew before, confronted us. At such times we almost wish we could go back, or turn to the right, or to the left; but we are like Israel, there is but one way open, and that way is not at once apparent. It is only open to faith, but it is closed to sense. There is that Red Sea. Ah! my God, what will become of me? Oh, that Red Sea! Thou hast laid this trial upon me; thou hast forced me to bear this burden; thou hast called me to go through this suffering; I must pass through, but oh! I shall never be able to bear it; there will be an end of me now; how shall I be sustained?" Thus unbelief will talk, but faith remembers that the just shall still live by faith,

and she saith within herself, "If my God command me to go on the sea, or under the sea, or through the sea, I know that he will give me the power to do what he bids, and he that puts the difficulty in my path will bear me through it towards the Canaan to which I press." Let us, then, pluck up courage; let there be no standing still, no lingering with chill reluctance, no shivering on the brink with timorous fear. Your Captain waves his hand and bids you advance. Go on, trembler, go on, for there is goodness and there is mercy prepared to go before you, and to follow after you all the days of your life. Yea, even when you come to the very brink of death, then, even then, it will be a blessed thing to play the man by faith; to gather up one's feet in the bed; to compose one's self to deliver the last testimony, and without so much as a sign of trepidation or a thrill of fear, to pass the iron gate, conscious that Jesus will come to meet and crown with glory the spirit that hath trusted in him.

Thus much, I think, is in the text clearly enough as a matter of promise.

III. Now, lastly, the text seems to me to be A KIND OF PRECEPT, and to contain much of practical instruction.

"The just shall live by faith." Very well, then, dear friends, is it not clear that as life is the main thing for us to look to, nature itself having taught us by its instincts to guard with all care our life, *therefore our faith*, upon which our life so evidently depends by virtue of our union to Christ, *ought to be the object of our most sedulous care*. Anything which comes in the way of our faith we should strive against, while the promotion of our faith should be our first endeavour. I believe, my dear brethren, that self-examination is a very great blessing, but I have known self-examination carried on in a most unbelieving, legal, and self-righteous manner; in fact, I have so carried it on myself. Time was when I used to think a vast deal more of marks, and signs, and evidences, for my own comfort, than I do now, for I find that I cannot be a match for the devil when I begin dealing in these things. I am obliged to go day by day with this cry—

"I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

While I can believe the promise of God, because it is his promise, and because he is my God, and while I can trust my Saviour because he is God, and therefore mighty to save, all goes well with me; but I do find, when I begin questioning myself about this and that perplexity, thus taking my eye off Christ, that every virtue of my life seems oozing out at every pore. I think, brethren, that any practice that detracts from faith is an evil practice, but especially that kind of self-examination which would take us away from the cross-foot, proceeds in a wrong

direction. Do I want to know what is the condition of my evil nature? I need not enquire; it is rottenness through and through. Do I want to know what is the quality of my new-born nature? I scarcely need enquire, for it is the seed of God, incorruptible, and cannot sin. The main enquiry I ought at all times to make is this: Am I hanging on the cross alone, and depending on Jesus wholly? If so, there must be a produce of fruits unto righteousness, and I am not always the best judge of those fruits for myself. Most probably the less fruit I have, the more I shall think I have, and the more I am abounding in every good word and work, the higher will my standard of perfection be, and the less likely shall I be to be satisfied with myself or my own attainments. I do verily believe that those who draw comfort from their own doings and feelings, are the very people that ought to have no comfort, while those Christians who abound most in holiness to the praise of God, are the very people who bemoan everything that comes from themselves, and turn away from themselves utterly, crying, "Christ is my salvation; I depend alone on him." It would be as well if we were to give up sorting over good works and bad works, for they are so wonderfully much alike, that if we threw them all into the sea together, and just rested upon Christ Jesus alone, it would be a consummation of the most desirable kind. Keep your faith right, then, brethren; keep your faith right. It is by God's Holy Spirit keeping that faith strong and vigorous you live safe and secure.

Rest assured you will be more holy if you have more faith. You will have more confidence, and be more courageous in your testimony, if you have more faith in God. Every grace and every virtue will derive progress towards strength and perfection from the progress and perfection of your faith; but if anything shall make you doubt whether Christ can save you or not, the *tendon Achilles* is cut, and you cannot run. If anything make you mistrust the promise of God, who justifieth the ungodly, it has taken away from you the very source from which your spiritual life is to be refreshed. I hold it to be of the very first importance that we never doubt the promise of God. What if we be unworthy? Do we break our promises because the persons to whom they are made turn out to be unworthy? Are we mean enough to take such advantages? Is not the word of a man, good or bad, according to the character of him who utters it? And is it not so with God's word? He is faithful and true, and therefore his word is faithful and true, not because I am faithful and true, but because he is such. "If we believe not, God abideth faithful;" it does not alter the promise; the promise still stands in all its integrity. Brethren, we ought to pray more for faith. "Lord, increase our faith," ought to be our daily, our hourly prayer. We ought to think more of those truths which are the pillars of faith, such as the covenant of grace,

such as the fulness and freeness of the mercy of God, such as the efficacy of the atonement, the power of the resurrection, the prevalence of Jesus' plea. If we dwelt upon the promises more often, instead of looking at the providences, or consulting our changeful feelings, our faith would grow stronger, and then the whole of our life would receive vigorous tone and impulse.

I do not know how to speak as I would desire upon this point, but still let me press it upon every Christian here not to listen to that insinuation of the devil, that when he has sinned he ought then to give up the belief that he is a child of God. Oh! if the devil can persuade you to do that, then he has obtained an advantage over you, but if you feel that you have been walking contrary to God, of late, yet still come to Jesus; cast yourselves on him. Do not let the adversary say to you, "You must not come, because you have walked contrary to God." O poor backslider, although sin may hide God from thee, and take away thy comfortable sense of his love, yet if thou believest in him, his love is towards thee. He has not cast thee away, thou shalt live as long as there is faith in thee; and if there be so little faith that we have to rake up the ashes, and have to go down on our knees and blow that little spark, yet the Lord knows how to fan it, and to put the match to it, and to make a great blaze very speedily; so that before you hardly know it, you that were crawling along the road shall be like the chariots of Amminadib, flying along as on mighty wings. Never doubt God's power to lift you out of the ditch into which you have fallen. Still hold to it; "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; though I be black with sin, and ashamed of myself, and dare not look up, but feel that I deserve to be cast into the lowest hell," yet still do not doubt but that the precious blood can wash you, and make you whiter than snow. Is there a grander verse in the whole Bible, is there anything in the compass of Scripture that ever glorified God more, than that notable expression of David when he had been sinning with Bathsheba, and made himself as foul and as filthy as the very swine of hell? and yet he cries, "*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*" Ah! "Wash me," that is the cry, "wash me, the most scarlet and the blackest of hell-deserving sinners, do thou but wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Believe in the omnipotent power of the atonement. Still believe thou, and hold fast to Christ. Cling to his skirts, and if he even seem to frown upon thee, hold to him, like the woman whom he called a dog, and yet she said, "The dogs eat of the crumbs." Do not believe that which thou thinkest thou dost hear him say, for he cannot say otherwise than this, that whosoever believeth in him is not condemned; and he that believeth in him, though he were

dead yet shall he live. Out of thy very death believe him; from thy very hell of sin believe him. Wherever thou mayst be, still believe him. Never doubt him, for the just shall live by faith.

Oh! it is such a mercy that when we have nothing else to live by, we can, by God's grace, live by faith. When I cannot find anything in myself wherein I can find comfort, much less anything whereof I can glory, yet I do believe that Jesus died for me.

Does not this doctrine suit some poor trembling sinner here? I wish that one here would say, "Why, if that be so, then I, too, would come and believe in Jesus." Ah! heart, thou hast been asking, "What shall I do to be saved?" This is the work of God, the God-like work, the greatest of all doings, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Close in with Christ, and you shall live; you cannot die. The eternal ægis of the everlasting promise covers the head of every soul that has learned to trust in Christ.

May God bless you with this faith, and with more of it. Amen.
