

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FACING THE WIND.

A Sermon

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"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing."—2 Thessalonians iii. 13.

THE Christian church ought to be an assembly of holy men. Its members should all of them be eminently peaceable, honest, upright, gracious, and Christlike. In the main, and in spite of all our failures, I trust these characteristics may be seen in the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, still, from the beginning there has been a mixture. Judas in the sacred college of the twelve apostles seemed to be a prophecy to us that there would be troubles in Israel evermore. It was so in the church at Thessalonica, to which Paul wrote two epistles, part of the last of which we have just now been reading; there was evidently then a class of people who, because the charity of the church was very large, imposed upon it, and, under pretence of great spirituality, refused to work, busying themselves instead in doing mischief according to the old adage that

"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do."

We sometimes complain of our churches now. I very greatly question whether an average church of Christ in modern times is not considerably superior to any church that we have read of in the New Testament—certainly very superior to some of them. In the church at Corinth they tolerated a brother who lived in incest. I trust there is no Christian church, at least in our own denomination, that would endure such a thing for an hour. And when this man had been put out by Paul's command, and proved penitent, then the church at Corinth, which was a church that did not believe in ministry, you know, (there is a class of Christians of that sort now, which resembles greatly these Corinthians,) because they had once put him out, refused to receive him again though he was penitent and wanted to return. I scarcely know a Christian church

that would refuse to receive into its membership again a brother who had erred if he showed signs of true repentance. The churches of to-day, compared with the early churches of Christ, can say that the grace of God has been extended to us, even as unto them; and we have no right to be continually crying down the operations of the Holy Spirit in the churches now, by making unfair comparisons between them and the churches of old. They had their faults, as we have ours. They came short in many respects, even as we do. Instead of bringing a railing accusation against churches as they are, the best thing is for everyone of us to do his best in the sight of God to make them what they should be, by seeking our own personal sanctification and endeavouring that the influence of a holy life shall, in our case, help to leaven the rest of the mass.

Paul turns from the consideration of those who had grieved him in the church to speak to the rest of the brethren, and he says to them, "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing." In expounding these words we shall, first, notice that our text contains a summary of Christian life; it is called "well doing." Secondly, we shall see it gives out a very distinct warning against weariness; and it hints at some of the causes of weariness in the Christian life. In the third place, I shall close the discourse by giving some arguments to meet the reasoning of our soul when, at times, it seems to plead its own weariness as an excuse.

I. First, then, brethren, our text contains A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. It is "well doing." This is all you have to do—you that have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and renewed in the spirit of your minds. You have to spend your lives in well doing.

Now this is a very comprehensive term, and we are certain that it includes *the common acts of daily life*. You perceive the apostle had been speaking of some who would not work—"working not at all" he says; and he commands them that they should labour and should eat their own bread. It is clear, then, from the connection, that the work by which a man earns his daily bread is a part of the well doing to which he is called. It is not alone preaching and praying and going to meetings that are to be commended. These are useful in their place. But well doing consists in taking down the shutters and selling your goods; tucking up your shirt sleeves and doing a good day's work; sweeping the carpets and dusting the chairs, if you happen to be a domestic servant. Well doing is attending to the duties that arise out of our relationships in life—attending carefully to them, and seeing that in nothing we are eye-servers and men-pleasers, but in everything are seeking to serve God. I know it is difficult to make people feel that such simple and ordinary things as these are well doing. Sometimes stopping at home and mending the children's clothes does not seem to a mother quite so much "well doing" as going to a prayer-meeting, and yet it may be that the going to a prayer-meeting would be ill-doing if the other duty had to be neglected. It still is a sort of superstition among men that the cobbler's lapstone and the carpenter's adze are not sacred things, and that you cannot serve God with them, but that you must get a Bible and break its back at a revival

meeting, or give out a hymn and sing it lustily in order to serve God. Now, far am I from speaking even half a word against all the zeal and earnestness that can be expended in religious engagements. These things ought ye to have done, but the other things are not to be left undone, or to be depreciated in any way whatever. When Peter saw the sheet come down from heaven, you remember, it contained all manner of beasts and creeping things; God said even of the creeping things that he had cleansed them, and they were not to be counted common; from which I gather, among a great many other things, that even the most menial of the forms of service—even the commonest actions of life—if they be done as unto the Lord, are cleansed and become holy things, and are by no means to be despised. Do not cry down your church, but make your house also your church. Find fault as you like with vestments, but make your ordinary smock-frock your vestment, and be a priest in it to the living God. Away with superstition! Kill it, by counting every place to be holy, and every day to be holy, and every action that you perform to be a part of the high priesthood to which the Lord Jesus Christ has called every soul that he has washed in his precious blood.

That these common things are well doing is very evident, if you will only think of the result of their being left undone. There is a father, and he thinks that to go to his work—such common work as his—cannot be specially pleasing in God's sight. He means to serve God, and so he stops at home, and he is upstairs in prayer when the factory bell is ringing and he ought to be there. He hears that there is a conference in the morning, so he attends that; and then he has another period of prayer; he spends all the week like that; and then on Saturday night there is nothing for his wife. Now, you see, directly, that he has been ill doing, because it was his duty to provide for his own household; and if a man, being a husband and a father, neglects to find daily food for his wife and little children, all the world cries shame on him. Does not nature itself say, "This man cannot be engaged in well doing"? It cannot possibly be so. Though at first sight the ordinary toil for daily bread looks to be a very commonplace thing, yet, if you only suppose it to be neglected, the leaving of it out is no commonplace thing, but brings all manner of mischief. Suppose, on the other hand, that the Christian woman were to become so very devout—so ashamed to be like Martha—so certain not to be cumbered with much serving that she would not serve at all in Martha's direction, but always sat still and read and prayed, and meditated, leaving the children unwashed, and nothing done for the household. The husband—perhaps a worldly man—may be driven away from the house by the want of comfort in it, and sent into ill company. He may, indeed, be ruined. You can all see that whatever pretence there might be of well doing about the wife's conduct, it would not, it could not really, be well doing, for the first business of the Christian woman placed in that position is to see to it that her household be ordered aright, even as Jesus Christ would have it. Oh, dear friends, it is an art to balance duties so as never to

sacrifice to God one duty stained red with the blood of another duty that you have destroyed in getting this one ready for the sacrifice. Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's, and unto God the things that be God's. Give to husband and child and to the household the share that is due, and then—I will not say give God the rest, but give God that service and all beside. He would not have you bring robbery for burnt offering, and he will accept that as done to him which you have as a matter of duty done to others. So, then, common life is included in the term "well doing."

I think also, from the connection, that any one would conclude that *attending to the poor, and doing good to all that are in need*, is included in the term "well doing." The connection seems to say that there were certain persons in the Thessalonian church who had abused Christian charity, living upon it, instead of working and eating their own bread. Now, the apostle says, "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing." Do not say, as some do, "There are really so many impostors that I shall give nothing at all; I have been deceived so many times, and have given to persons who have only made a bad use of my gift, that I do not intend to open my purse-strings any more, but shall keep what I have, or lay it out in some other way." "No," says the apostle, "you must not do that; be not weary in well doing." It is the part of a Christian man to seek as much as lieth in him to do good unto all men, especially to those that are of the household of faith. It is one of Christ's precepts, "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." A general spirit of generosity to those in need is congruous with the gospel; the reverse may be suitable to the law with its rigour, but not to the gospel with its noble-hearted love. Christian brother, you must look on the things of others as well as your own things. You must remember those that are in necessity as being yourself also a part of the body of Christ. As much as lieth in you "comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men." So we see that within the range of "well doing" is included a kind and tender consideration of all those who are in need.

But, brethren, the circle of "well doing" which is to be the Christian's life, though it makes a wide sweep, includes *the things that are nearer the centre*. "Well doing" means that I love the Lord my God with all my heart,—that I commune with him,—that I dedicate myself to him and give all that I have to the extension of his kingdom and to the honouring of his glorious name.

If you want to know what well doing is, I will give you just a few hints and tests. *Everything is well doing that is done in obedience to the divine command*. If thou hast God's word for it, it is well doing. Some may call thee imprudent, but it is well doing if thou doest what God bids thee, and it is prudent doing too. In the long run thou shalt find it so. When God says, "Do this," let it be done at once; that is well doing. And if he say, "Thou shalt not," then well doing will flee from the accursed thing. Let not thine own wisdom and prudence ever fly in the teeth of a positive command of God. When thou art doing what God bids thee, thou art doing

well, and thou needest have no difficulty in defending thyself. God will not suffer that man ever to be confounded who makes the will of God to be the law of his life. So may it always be with us.

Taking the first condition for granted, in the next place *everything is well doing that is done in faith*. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." That is to say, even though the thing you do is right, if you do not believe it to be right it is not right to you. There are many things that I may do that you must not do, because you do not think it would be right to do them. Therefore you must refrain. Even, I say again, if the thing be not in itself a wrong thing, yet if it *seem* wrong to you, it *will* be wrong to you: therefore do it not. Paul could eat the meat that had been offered to idols without being troubled in his conscience; but there were some who thought that if they ate it they would be partakers with the idol. Paul did not think so, and, moreover, he said, "An idol is nothing in the world. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles I eat asking no question for conscience sake." Still "he that doubteth is condemned if he eat"; if he has his doubts about it, and thinks it should not be, it must not be. He will not be practising the art of well doing if he does that concerning which his conscience raises any scruple. If thou canst say with Scripture warrant, "God permits this and I can do it, feeling that he does permit it," thou art doing well in so doing, not else.

Again, *everything that is done out of love to God is well doing*. Ah, this is a motive that sways no man till he is born again; but when God, who is love, hath begotten us into his own likeness, then we love God, and love becomes the motive of all our actions. I hope, beloved, this is the mainspring of our doings and goings,—that you would be God's servants or God's ministers because you love God,—that you seek to bear up under poverty or to use with discretion and liberality the riches with which you are entrusted because you love God. If a man love not God, how little there can be of well doing about him, yea, he lacks the very root of it all if he hath not love to God.

Well doing includes doing what we do in the name of the Lord Jesus. How this would stop some professors in a great many actions. Have we not the exhortation, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." If there is anything you cannot do in the name of the Lord Jesus, do it not, for to you it will not be well doing. In the name of the Lord Jesus you may go to your daily labour, for he went to his for thirty years, and worked in the carpenter's shop. In the name of the Lord Jesus you may undertake all the duties of your calling, if that calling be a right one; and if it be not you have no right to be in it at all, but should get out of it directly. You may do in the name of the Lord Jesus all that men should do if you are a saved soul and your heart be right towards him.

Still further, *well doing includes that which we do in divine strength*. There is no well doing except we get power to do it from the Holy One of Israel. The Spirit of God is the author of all true fruit in the Christian life. Except we abide in Christ and receive

the sap of the sacred Spirit from him, we cannot bring forth fruit, for "without me," says he, "ye can do nothing." But to work in the divine strength is well doing. Poor and feeble though it be, if I do it out of love to Christ and with the little strength I have, owning that I would not have even that but for His grace, my act is an act of well doing. Even though I have to mourn my failures and mistakes, nevertheless I may feel that with a true heart I am striving to glorify God and that I am surrendering myself to the divine impulses so as to be ready to do everything as unto my Master. Then am I living as a Christian should live in well doing.

Brethren, we are very great at well-wishing, and "if wishes were horses beggars might ride": if well-wishing meant anything there would be some very great saints about; but the practice of a Christian should be to do what he knows should be done—well doing. Well-resolving is a very common habit. Well-suggesting and well-criticizing are tempers of mind familiar to most of us. Some of you could take a high degree in criticizing admirably everybody else that does anything, and putting your own hands into your pockets and keeping them there. Well-talking also is a great deal more common than well doing. But the Christian life lieth in none of these things. If God has given thee the life of the Spirit, thou wilt not bring forth only buds and blossoms and flowers, but there will be fruit: the fruit of well doing.

So much then concerning that first point.

II. Now let us turn to the second point, which is this. There is A WARNING AGAINST WEARINESS IN WELL DOING. "Is it possible," you say, "that a child of God can ever grow weary of doing well?" I suppose so, for I remember another text which says, "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not," and the marginal reading of this text itself is "Faint not." I suppose that, blessed as it is to be doing good and to be living unto God, yet while the spirit is willing the flesh is weak, and there is a danger of our getting weary in the most happy exercise.

The first danger is mentioned in the context. There is a tendency to cease from well doing *because of the unworthy receivers of our good deeds*. As I have already said, there were those in the Thessalonian church who received the gifts of the faithful, and who sat still and did nothing that was of any good, but became a pest and nuisance to their neighbours. Now, the natural tendency of others in the church would be to say, "Well, I do not know what others think about it, but I shall give no more." "No," says the apostle, "be not weary in well doing." It is bad that that man should make a bad use of thy gifts, but it will be worse still if he should induce thee to harden thy heart. It is a loss, perhaps, to give to a man who wastes, but it will be a greater loss not to give at all. I remember one who spoke on the missionary question one day saying, "The great question is not, 'Will not the heathen be saved if we do not send them the gospel?' but 'are we saved ourselves if we do not send them the gospel?'" And so it is with regard to Christian gifts. It is not so much a question how far this or that man is benefited or hurt by what we give; but what about ourselves if we

have no bowels of compassion for a brother that is in need? What about the hardening influence on our own soul if we get at last into this condition, that we say, "I am weary in having done what I have done, because I see to what an ill use it is turned"? I believe that to be a common temptation of the present age, and I see that all the political economists and the newspaper men almost as good as tell us that it is one of the wickedest things we can ever do to help the poor at all—it is indeed a dreadful thing, unless we do it through that blessed machinery of the poor law, which seems to be the next thing to the kingdom of heaven in their estimation. There seems to me to be, however, a very long distance between them, and I trust that Christian men will continually by their actions bear their protest against the steeling of the believing, Christian, renewed heart against their fellow-men because they seem to pervert the well doing into evil.

We have need of warning again *because idle examples tempt others to idleness*. If there were in the church at Thessalonica some who did not work, well there would no doubt be others who would say, "We will do the same. Since that fellow never does a hand's-turn, but only goes about and talks, and makes a good thing of it, why should not I do likewise?" "No," says the apostle, "be not weary in well doing. Do not give up your daily work: do not give up any form of service, because others have done so, for you can see, if you look at them, that they turn out to be busybodies. You do not want to become mischief-makers, such as they are: therefore shun their conduct; avoid it with all your might; and be not weary in well doing even if you see others, who, apparently, prosper by doing nothing at all."

Again, I think, the apostle would say to us, "Be not weary in well doing *because of unreasonable and wicked men*." We read about them just now, and I made a remark about them. Whenever anybody gets very earnest for Christ, and lays himself out for God's glory, there is sure to be a little lot of unreasonable and wicked men who get round him. The birds go flying through the orchard, and they do not say a word to one another till they come to a cherry tree where the cherries are very sweet and ripe. Then they all fall to at once and begin to peck away with all their might. So of an ordinary Christian who is doing little for his Master, nobody says much, except, perhaps, "He is a very good respectable man. Never bothers anybody with his religion." But let him become earnest—let his fruit be ripe and sweet before the Lord, and, believe me, more birds than you ever thought were about will come, and they will peck at the ripest fruit; that which God approves most will be just that which they most violently condemn. If you get into such a case as that, my brother, be not weary of well doing because of your critics. Does it matter, after all, what men think of us? Are we their servants? Do we live on the breath of their nostrils? Do they think that their praises inflate and exalt us? Do they dream that their censures can make us sleep a wink the less or even ruffle our spirits? I trust, if we know the Lord aright, we are of the mind of Ann Askew, who, after she had been racked, sat up

with every bone out of joint, and, as full of pain as she could live, said to her tormentors,

“ I am not she that list
My anchor to let fall,
For every drizzling mist,
My ship's substantial.”

And she bore out the storm, and did not intend to cast anchor because of her persecutors. Glory be to God when he shall have delivered you altogether from the bleating of the sheep and from the howling of the wolves too, and make you willing to let your enemies say their say, and say it over again as long as it pleases them, but as for you, your heart is fixed to go on in what you know to be well doing, till thy Master himself shall say to thee, “ Well done!”

Once more. There is a temptation to cease from well doing, not only because of unreasonable and wicked men outside the church, but, according to the context,—and I am keeping to that,—*because of busybodies inside the church*. Some of these are men: some of them are not. Busybodies there are about everywhere. They do not speak out very distinctly; they whisper, and they do it with a sigh. Perhaps nothing is said, but there is a shrug of the shoulders. “ So and so is an excellent woman. What a wonderful work she is doing for Christ!” “ Well—yes, but—” “ Such and such a man! How greatly God honours him in the winning of souls.” “ Yes—ah, yes—I *suppose* it is so.” That is the style. And then straightway there are ambiguous voices sounding abroad, and depreciating things said; and I have known some of tender heart that have suffered—I dare not think how much—from the insinuations of idle people who, I hope, did not know the suffering they were causing, or they would have run to give help instead. But there is so much of this thoughtless babbling of innuendoes even among those who, we trust, are God's people, that if any such are here I would earnestly entreat them to give up that bad business; and if any brother or sister here has suffered from such people, do not suffer more than you can help, for this idle chatter is not worth a thought. Do not let it prey upon your mind, because—well, there is nothing in it. All the dirt that people can fling will brush off when it is dry. You do not expect, do you, to go to heaven on a grassy path that is mowed and rolled for you every morning, with all the dew swept off? If you expect that, you will be mistaken. You may even learn something from what these busybodies say about you. It is not true, of course. But, brother, if they had known you better they might have said something worse that was true. They picked a fault where there was none. Well, but you know there are some faults that they do not know, and had not you better amend them lest they should pick those next time? The eagle eye of envy and malice should even be sanctified to our good, to keep us the more watchful, and to make us the more earnestly seek to be diligent in well doing. Courage! faint heart; it will all be over by and by, and we shall be before that judgment-seat where the talk of friends and the threats of foes will go for nothing. We are being examined

here by this and that, but what matters the result of the examination? The Lord weigheth the spirits, and if in those great scales at last we shall, by divine grace, escape from having the sentence pronounced, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting," it will be a theme for everlasting joy. Let us look to that verdict and not care for the praise or blame of men.

III. Now I am going to close by bringing up A FEW ARGUMENTS TO KEEP MY DEAR BRETHERN WITH THEIR FACE TO THE WIND. I want you that are going up hill for Christ, and find the wind blowing very sharp, to set a hard face against a strong wind, and to go right straight on all the same. If you have to fight your way to heaven through every inch of your life, I would encourage you still to keep on. May God's Spirit give you strength to do so!

And, first, you say, "Oh, but this service—keeping your garments always white—is hard work. *Well doing needs so much effort.* I am afraid I shall be weary." Now, I would ask you to remember that when you had just begun business, and you wanted to make a little money, how early you rose in the morning, how many hours you worked in the day! Why, you that are getting grey now knew that in those days everybody wondered at you, because you threw such strength into everything, you did the work of two or three men. What was all that effort for? For yourself, was it not? My dear brother, can you put all those exertions forth for yourself, and cannot you put out as much effort for Christ? That was only for the worldly things; shall there not be something like that in the spiritual things? It is enough to shame some people—the way they toil to get on in business, and then the little energy they show in the things of Christ. I used to tell a story of a brother I once knew who, at the prayer-meeting, was accustomed to pray in such a way that I was always sorry when he got up, for nobody could hear him; and I always thought that he had a very feeble voice. I had indistinctly heard the brother mutter something to God, and I felt that we had better not ask him again, for his voice was so thin. But I stepped into his shop one day; he did not know that I was there, and I heard him call, "John, bring that half hundredweight." "Oh," I thought, "there is a very different tone in the business from what there is in the prayer-meeting." It is symbolical of a great many people. They have one voice for the world, and another voice for Christ. What weight they throw into the ordinary engagements, and what little force and weight there is when they come to the things of God! If that should touch any brother here, I hope he will carefully take it to himself. I am afraid it has to do with a great many of us, and I put it thus—if for the poor things of this world we have often manifested so much vigour, what ought to be expected of us—of us who are under such obligations to divine grace—in the service of such a Master in reference to eternal things.

"But," says one, "*such well doing requires so much self-denial.* I trust I am a Christian, but I sometimes flag because to deny one's self again and again and again, and to lead a life of constant self-denial is, I am afraid, too much for me." Yes, but, dear brother, recollect what Paul bids you remember. He was thinking of the men

that went to the boxing matches, and the men that went to the races among the Greeks, how they had to contend for a crown that was only of parsley or laurel; but weeks and months before they ran they kept under their body, and brought it into subjection, and denied themselves all sorts of things they would have rejoiced in, till they got the muscles well out and by degrees pulled the flesh off their bones to get them into right condition to enter into the arena. Now, saith the apostle, they do it for a corruptible crown, but we for an incorruptible. I am sure the hardships to which some of those champions in the public games put themselves were enough to make the cheek of professors mantle with crimson when they think that the little self-denials of their life are often too severe for them. May God in infinite mercy help us not to be weary in well doing since these stand before us as examples.

"Ay," says one, "but I grow weary because, though I could deny myself, continued *well doing brings such persecution*. I am surrounded by people who have no sympathy with me. On the contrary, if they could stamp out the little spark of spiritual religion that I have in me they would be glad to do it." Now, my dear brethren, be not weary in well doing because of this, but look up yonder. I can see in vision a white-robed throng. Each one bears a palm branch, and together they sing an exultant song of triumph. Who are these that thus wear a ruby crown?

"These are they who bore the cross,
Faithful to their Master died,
Suffered in his righteous cause,
Followers of the Crucified."

Take down Master Fox's Book of Martyrs, and read a dozen pages; and after that see whether you are able to put yourselves on a par with the saints of old. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Your persecution is only a silly joke or two against you, a bit of frivolous jesting—that is all. These things break no bones. O sirs, ask grace to enable you to rejoice and be exceeding glad when they say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's sake. For so persecuted they the prophets that were before you: therefore be not dismayed.

But another says, "No, sir, I could bear anything for Christ, but, do you know, I have been trying to do good to my neighbours, to the children of my class, and to the others; and I really think that the more I try to do good to people the worse they are, *well doing is followed by so little result*. I have laboured in vain and spent my strength for naught; and you know, sir, that hope deferred maketh the heart sick. They seem to refuse and reject my message, though I put it very kindly." Now, listen to me, if ever you listened in your life. You must not—you dare not—complain of this, because—and I know you well, there came once to your door one who loved you better than you love these people; he knocked with a hand that had been pierced for you, and you refused him admission, He knocked and knocked again, and said, "Open to me for my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with

the drops of the night;" but you would not open to him. Then he went his way and you were much worse than before. Sometimes you said you would open, but you did not. And by the month together—ah, perhaps I do not exaggerate when I say, by the year together—"that man of love, the Crucified," came to you again and again and again, and pleaded his wounds and blood with you, and yet you did refuse him. You have admitted him now, but no thanks to you; you would never have done it if he had not put in his hand by the hole of the door, and then your bowels were moved for him; then he came in to your soul, and he is supping with you still. Now, after that, you must never say a word when they shut the door against you. You must say, "This is how I served my Master. It has come back to me again, good measure, but not pressed down or running over. And so I am well content to bear rebuffs for his sake; since he bore them from me, even from me."

"Still," says one, "I have gone on and on, trying to do good in my sphere; I have given much, and I desire still to do the same, but I do not appear to get much return, *well doing does not earn much gratitude*. If I had some thanks I would not so much mind. Indeed, I do not seem to be doing good either. If I saw some results I would not be weary." Once more I speak, and then I have done. Dost thou not know that there is one who thus every day bade the showers descend upon the earth; and when they fell he did not say to the rain-drops, "Fall ye on the root crops of the grateful farmers, and let the Christian men have all the benefit of the shower." No, he sent the clouds and they poured out the rain that fell on the churl's land, and watered his property. To-morrow morning, when the sun rises, it will light the blasphemer's bed, as well as the chamber of the saint, and to-night God lends his moon to those that break his laws with a high hand and defile themselves, as well as to those who go forth on ministries of mercy. He stops neither rain nor sun nor moon, nor makes a star the less to shine, nor sends less of oxygen into the atmosphere, or the less of health in the winds, because man sins. Yet are there whole nations where, when God gives his bounties, idols and images are thanked, and not the gracious Giver. There are other nations where, when God makes the vine to produce its fruit, the people turn it into drunkenness. And when he bids the corn be multiplied they turn it into gluttony and surfeit and pride. Yet doth not he restrain his gifts. Therefore do you keep on still, even as the great well-doer God continues unweariedly to work. He has done good to you and to thousands like you. If you were to stop doing good to men what would you be saying to God? "Lord, this race does not deserve that thou shouldest do it any good. Do not any more good." Your conduct in saying that your fellow creatures do not deserve that you should do them any good says, in the most emphatic manner, that you do not think God ought to do them any good; for, if God should do them good, much more should you who are so much less than he. And if you stop your hand, and say, "It is no use doing any more good," you in effect pray God never to do any more

good to your fellow men. That is an inhuman prayer and tempts God. I pray you let not the action which really incarnates such a prayer ever spring from us again.

Come, brother, the Lord Jesus Christ has blotted out our sins, he has bought us with his blood, we belong to him; and whatever service he gives us to do he will give us the strength to do it. So let us go back to our work with joy. If we have been grumbling,—if we have complained at all,—let us ask his forgiveness, and buckle our harness on anew, saying, “Master, thou shalt not find me skulking, but as long as the day lasts, and thou givest me strength, I will reap in thy fields, or work in thy vineyards, according to thy bidding, thankful for the great honour of being permitted to do anything for thee and even for having to put up with inconvenience for thy sake. Seeing that thou didst endure so much for me, why should I not bear something for thee?” You may have to face a gale of wind, but you may face it gaily in the strength of your Lord. Keep on, and keep on keeping on: you shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you, over all the oppositions of men. Wherefore, be comforted, beloved fellow labourers, and let no brother’s heart fail him because of anything that has happened to him. Let no sister’s hands hang down, but “be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” I pray God to lead many others to enlist in this service, but they must first believe in Jesus Christ. When they have so done, then may they also come and share in the blessed warfare, and they shall have their reward. The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake.
