

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A DOOR OF HOPE

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“The valley of Achor for a door of hope.”—Hoses ii. 15.

A CHRISTIAN must walk by faith; not by sight. The way to heaven is not one which is to be trodden by the carnal foot of the man who must see before he can believe. It is a dark way to those who have not the eyes of faith; it is a way through the air, utterly inaccessible to those who have not faith's wings; it is a way upward, quite impassable to the man who has not faith's ladder. The way through this world, under the guardianship of God, and upward to the eternal home of the faithful, is by faith, and not by sight. Yet, nevertheless, the Lord is pleased to humour our weakness and our frailties,—albeit that we should be quite as safe if we had to walk in the dark, by faith, as we are when we walk in the light of the supernatural inward sight of faith, still seeing a light brighter than that which glistens around us;—yet it does please God to give us, in this wilderness, comfortable tokens and sure evidences, by which we are enabled to understand, even by reason, and judgment, and sense, that we are his reconciled people. When God withholds the presence of his comforting Spirit, or when the sunlight of his countenance is taken from us, we are, nevertheless, quite safe, for then we are enabled to cling to Christ in the dark with the arms of faith; but God often gives us more than is absolutely necessary; he gives us glimpses of heaven while here below, and rich spiritual enjoyment while we are in this otherwise barren land.

Now, on the present occasion, we have to speak, not of the meal on which faith necessarily feeds, but of a luxury, a dainty, a kind of celestial dessert which faith feeds upon, not so much for her nourishing, as for her delight. If the children of Israel in the wilderness had manna for their necessities, they also had quails for their satisfaction and delight. Now God gives us, in the presence of his Son, the manna of heaven; in the finished work and spotless righteousness of Jesus, he gives our faith its solid and substantial food; but here, in these vineyards,—in these gardens which we enter

through the doors of hope,—he gives to faith its fragrant spices and its clusters of grapes of Eshcol, which, as they come in contact with the spiritual palate, cause faith to leap for very joy.

What is this which, in our text, is called “a door of hope”? I think it may be understood in four ways. There is, sometimes, a greater embarrassment in the richness of Scripture than in its poverty. In fact, there can be no poverty in any text. I have sometimes heard a complaint made, by one who was studying a sermon, that there was not much in the text. I have generally to complain that there is far more in the text than I can possibly bring out; and so, in this one, there seem to be four interpretations, each of which has a host of commentators to back it; and, as I am incapable of judging which is the best, I will give you all four, and you shall take your choice.

If you read attentively the history of the coming of the children of Israel into Canaan, you will see that the valley of Achor was the first spot on which they settled. Just at the time when they were close to Jericho, they pitched their tents in the valley of Achor. It was there for the first time that they ate the old corn of the land, and it was in that plain that the manna ceased to fall, because there was no further necessity for it. They had entered into Canaan itself, and this valley was their first possession.

I. Now I take it that, by the valley of Achor, in this text, you and I may understand OUR FIRST SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS.

We remember—and we can never forget—the time when we were going through the wilderness, seeking rest, and finding none; looking after some substantial city which had foundations, in which our unquiet spirits might find repose; cheered now and then, in that season of conviction of sin, by heavenly manna secretly given,—not to feed us by the lips of enjoyment, but secretly given simply for our support, while we were seeking something higher, something better,—even our heavenly inheritance. We remember well how, with weary feet, we trod the hot sand, with the scorching sun above us, and found no place where we might rest, and permanently take shelter. Well do we recollect the hour when we passed through Jordan, when the Spirit of God led us to the blood of Christ; we were brought to see his finished work upon the cross, his spotless righteousness in his glorious life, and then, laying hold upon him, and believing in him, we understood the meaning of the apostle’s declaration, “We which have believed do enter into rest.” We had come to Canaan,—to the goodly land which flowed with milk and honey.

And, my brethren, if the wilderness is still fresh in our memory, even more so is that valley of Achor, where we did feed and lie down. Oh, the raptures of that season when I first knew the Lord! My lips will utterly fail to tell out the bliss of that hour when my spirit first cast itself upon Christ. John Bunyan describes his pilgrim as giving three leaps at the cross; but I must claim at least three hundred for my share. How did I leap for joy of heart and lightness of spirit! My sins were gone, buried in the sepulchre of Christ, washed away by the river of his blood; and I stood “accepted in the

Beloved." Was I not like the prodigal in that hour when his father's arms were about his neck, when the sound of music and dancing was in his ears, and the fatted calf was spread before him as a dainty feast,—the token of his father's affection? Surely, at that day, we went out with joy, and were led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills did break forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the field did clap their hands. Do you not remember how sweet your Sabbaths were then, how rich was every hymn, how precious was every prayer? There was not a text of Scripture which was not helpful to you. As for your times of seclusion, your hours of private prayer, were they not as the days of heaven upon earth? No human penman can describe the heavenly rapture; no banqueting-house could equal that, except it be that heavenly banquet of which the spouse singeth so sweetly in her song of love.

"But," you say, "in what way can these early enjoyments be considered to be a door of hope? They are like the valley of Achor, it is true; but how are they a door of hope?" Why, they are a door of hope to us in the time when we are enjoying them, for then it is we can exclaim, "Surely I am reconciled to God, or else he would not treat me thus. Would he put his lips to my lips, and kiss me with the kisses of his love, if I were not reconciled to him? Is it possible I should feel his arms about my neck, and sit at his table, and be called his child, if I were still his enemy, and my sins were still uncanceled?" The first transports of bliss, the first enjoyments after conversion, are like golden doors of hope to those who have just escaped from under the lash of the law, and have been delivered from their sins. Surely, all of you, who are in that state, can say they are doors of hope to you; for, looking back upon your past misery, you say to yourself, "If I were not one of his children, could I be thus? If he had not accepted me in the Beloved, if he had not taken me to himself for ever, whence could come this rapture, this transport, this delight?"

They are, therefore, truly doors of hope to you, in this sense, that as, when the children of Israel took possession of the valley of Achor, they did, virtually, take possession of the whole promised land, so you may have had some first enjoyments, which are, in truth, but an earnest of complete and unspeakable felicity. There was an old English custom by which a man took possession of an estate "by turf and twig." A sod of the turf and a twig from a tree were given to him. It was a token that the whole estate, with everything which grew upon it, was his property. And so, when Jesus whispered into your ear, and gave you the assurance of reconciliation with the Father, and fellowship with himself, he did, as it were, give you the whole land of promise. The richest enjoyment of the believer is yours. You have the foretaste, and that is the pledge that you shall yet enter into the possession of the whole. However great the promise, however rich may be its treasure, it is all yours. You have not yet fed upon the clusters of its vineyards, but it is all yours; because, in taking possession of your first enjoyment, you have virtually claimed the whole. It was said of Cæsar, when he

landed here, that he stumbled; but, clutching a handful of earth, he hailed it as a happy omen, saying that, in taking possession of that handful of earth, he had taken all England for his own. And you, who, on your bended knees fell prostrate before God, in that first rich treasure of joy, which came into your souls, you took possession of all the inheritance of the saints on earth, and of their inheritance in heaven, too.

Further, I must add that, in looking back to these first enjoyments, they are a door of hope to you, ye aged ones, who can talk of these days long gone by; and to others of us, who can look back some ten, twelve, or twenty years, when first we were quickened by the Spirit, and taught to know the Saviour's preciousness. To all such, these early enjoyments are still doors of hope. I would not have you feed on experience long gone by; such bread may be mouldy; but yet, methinks, sometimes, there is a way of storing up that old manna, in the golden pot of recollection, in such a way that it remaineth sweet even to this day. I know that I have, sometimes, when doubting my interest in Christ, been led to look back to that first season of fellowship with Jesus, and to say,—

“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!”

And though this stale provision would not do to feed upon constantly, yet, as an old Puritan says, “When there is nothing else in the cupboard, this cold meat, that has been left from yesternight, must satisfy us for a little while, until we get some fresh food direct from heaven.” We may get some new experience from past enjoyments. You see the lightermen and bargemen; they lean backwards to press forwards. Some lazy people lean backwards, and never come forward at all; but we may use our experience as the long poles of these men are used; and as we walk backwards and push backwards in recollection, we may be really going forward in faith, and in hope, and in love. This we may do, and so these early experiences—these loves of our espousals—these early breakfastings in the vineyard with our Beloved—these days of early fellowship and sweet acquaintance—may become as doors of hope to our poor troubled spirits. I have thus endeavoured to explain the first meaning of the text; may God make your early spiritual enjoyments to be doors of hope to you!

II. But, again, the valley of Achor is declared by the Rabbis to have been a most fertile plain. Some commentators, of great judgment and discernment, declare that the valley of Achor is identical with the valley of Eshcol, while they are all agreed upon this point,—that Achor was one of the richest and fattest valleys of the whole promised land. Wherever you might walk within it, there was not a single barren spot. It was all fertile, bringing forth vines and grapes of the very richest kind, so that the wine that came therefrom was noted above every other.

And, my brethren, may not the valley of Achor represent to you and me, not only our early enjoyments, but **THOSE VERY SWEET AND MEMORABLE SEASONS WHICH WE HAVE HAD SINCE THEN?** For Christians,

though they have long Lents, do have happy *Easters*. They may sometimes have forty days of fasting; but one day of such feasting as God's children have is quite enough to make them forget all this, and go fasting forty days more, and yet not hunger. There are some days when God's children are satisfied with fatness, and so satisfied that they have not only all that heart could wish, but their cup runneth over; and they can do nothing but sit down in astonishment, in a very repletion of satisfaction,—content to sing, and so to pour out their souls in gratitude before God. Oh, ye who think that religion is a dull, dry, dreary thing, whence have you got this idea? Perhaps you have derived it from the long-visaged Pharisee; it may be that you have acquired this falsehood from the hypocrite; but from the real Christian, I trow that ye have had very little that will lead to such a conclusion as that.

We are a tried people; we have our troubles, and griefs, and woes; but we are a happy people, and never spake prophet more truly than when he said, "Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." We have not only times of quiet calm and deep serenity, when our peace is like a river, and our righteousness is like the waves of the sea; but we have times when our joy exceedeth all description, when the river swelleth to its utmost bank, and, running over, covers the green pastures of our life, and fattens them for many a future day with its rich deposits of grace. We have sometimes had very tempests of delight, when our leaping spirits could scarcely stay within our body, and when, in a very transport, we have said, with Paul, "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth." In the breaking of bread at the communion table, in coming together in our frequent meetings for prayer, in our silent meditations, and in the reading of the Scriptures, our Master has appeared to us; he has taken us by the hand, and our hearts have burned within us while he has talked with us by the way. At such moments, we have been full of heaven; and if not actually inside the pearly gates, we have certainly stood just this side of them, and the gates have seemed to be wide open, and nothing to divide us from heaven except the infirmity and weakness of our nature.

Think it not a fable I am telling you, it is a sober fact; there are red-letter days in our diary. Some among us, who appear frequently with mournful faces, nevertheless could tell you of days when the light of the sun has been as the light of seven days; and as for the light of the moon, it has been as the light of the sun to them. Their meditation concerning Christ has been sweet and rapturous. He has taken them, as on eagle's wings, and carried them up to the very heaven of delight, where they have beheld Christ, and have been able to say, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me."

These enjoyments are doors of hope. The fat valley of Achor is a door of hope, but in these respects certainly you will perceive it is so. The believer, after his joyous frames of mind, often has a season of sadness; and then these bright experiences become doors of hope, for he says, "I am sadly changed, but God has not. Did he manifest himself to me yesterday? He is just the same to-day as he was

then." The faithfulness of God, combined with our recollection of his kindness to us, compels us to draw the inference that he is still good, that he is still rich in mercy and full of lovingkindness. And so the old experiences, coupled with our belief in God's immutability, become doors of hope to us.

Besides, they are doors of hope in this respect; for we argue thus,—Did he once shine upon me? Then he is mine for ever, and he will shine upon me again. 'Tis true, I have not seen the sun for many days; but he did shine once, and he is shining now, and I shall see him yet again. 'Tis true, I see no sun, nor moon, nor stars; but the sun and moon and stars are not quenched by the tempest of our trouble, I shall see them again. Yes, I shall behold his face in righteousness. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God?" Though he give trouble, yet will he give peace; though he kill, he will yet make alive; the third day he will raise me up, and I shall again live in his sight.

So, you see, the rich enjoyments, the transports, the raptures, the delights, the ecstasies of believers become doors of hope to them, when many other doors are shut. Now, believer, turn back to your experience, and see if you cannot make it to be a door of hope to you. Are you now distrustful and desponding? Then, think of "his love in time past;" and, surely, it will—

"Forbid you to think
He'll leave you at last in trouble to sink."

Turn back to your Ebenezers, those golden waymarks on the road to heaven. Canst thou, believer, sit down by the side of one of those stones of help, and then despair? Or canst thou remember the days of old, the years of former times, when thy God sent from above, and took thee, and brought thee up out of many waters; and dost thou believe that he has brought thee thus far to put thee to shame? If he had intended to destroy thee, would he have shown such kindness to thee as this? Would all these banquets have been given to a foe? Would the King have brought thee to his house of wine if he had not intended to bring thee in to the marriage supper of the Lamb? Thus may past experiences be doors of hope; but do not depend upon them, for Christ must still come through them to you; and though it be a door of hope, what is the good of that door if it be fast locked? You must get at Christ through the door; it must be your door of consolation, for it is through this that you are helped to find him.

III. So far the matter has been simple enough; but now, in the third place, the valley of Achor, you will all recollect as a matter of history, was the place where Achan was stoned. All the spoils of Jericho were dedicated to the Lord, but Achan had taken a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and had hidden them in his tent. He was discovered by God's providence, and was brought out, and stoned to death and burned in the valley of Achor, and therefore it is called by that name to this day.

Now, do you not see how this may be turned to spiritual account? THE PLACE WHERE THE CHRISTIAN MORTIFIES HIS SIN SHALL BECOME TO HIM A VALLEY OF HOPE. You and I have our Achans in the camp. I have had to stone a host of them already, and I lament that the evil family is not yet cut in pieces; there still remain some of the sons of Achan. Would to God I could burn them all! There was a time, my brother, when your Achan was so strong that you would not give heed to that gospel which lays the sinner low, and gives all the glory to God. But you were compelled to bring it out, and you did; you cast it out, you stoned it, you burned it with fire, and now you are to be numbered among the humble in Zion. But this day you are still distressed, and you say, "How is it I am still afflicted? I have been trying to do good; I can do but little for my Master; truly, there must still be some accursed thing in my camp."

Perhaps it may be worldliness,—the common Achan of our churches. Possibly, it is covetousness; a common sin, that is seldom admitted. It is a singular thing that Francis de Sales, a noted confessor of the Romish Church, said he had met with many who confessed to the commission of the most abominable sins, but not one who ever confessed covetousness. It is an Achan hard to find out, for the man, who is worldly, says he is industrious; and he who is griping, and who grinds the poor, says he is only diligent in business, and, doubtless, fervent in spirit somewhere or other, but you cannot find out where it is. Look and see whether this is your Achan; if so, bring it out, and stone it. By your contributions to the poor, drain the life-blood from your avarice, and make it turn sickly and pale; let it die, and burn it, and bury it. And if that be not the sin, seek it out, whatever it is, and bring it out, and let it die; for, depend upon it, the place of mortification of sin is the place of the comfort of the soul. If thou wilt be at friendship with but one traitor, God will not give thee the comforting light of his countenance. Bring forth the idol out of thine house; make Rachel rise, and search even the camel's furniture, lest the idol be hidden there. Bring it out, and let it be utterly destroyed before the face of the Lord thy God, for he is a jealous God, and he will not let thee serve another, nor give thy love unto strangers; or else he will hedge up thy way with thorns, and chastise thee with whips of scorpions, till he brings thee back to the simplicity of thy consecration to him.

It is a high and noble thing when a man knows how to mortify sin. The old Romish pretended saints had a very curious way of doing this. For instance, they mortified their bodies by not cleaning and washing themselves, and by wearing their garments till they were full of vermin; they thus thought themselves holy. I am sorry to say we have many such saints in our time; I wish we could find them out, and spoil them by a good bath. A thorough washing would not be discreditable to God, while it would be exceedingly healthful to man. Moreover, we have read of some other saints, who would eat nothing but dry bread sprinkled with ashes, during Lent. They thought that, while they mortified their bodies, they pleased God, and did not understand that their lusts and pride might be fattening while their poor bodies might be starving; for what they

lose in one way they gain in the other, until their souls are like Jeshurun, they wax fat and kick. It is in mortifying our evil passions, our lustful desires, our wrong thoughts, our intemperance, our seeking too much after the things of this world, our abstaining even from pleasure which we think allowable in itself, and a humbling of our pride before God,—it is this which is such a valley of Achor as shall be a door of hope to us.

I believe many of our distresses, many of our doubts and fears, arise from our Achans. I may be giving you the most comforting advice if I urge you to search yourselves, and examine yourselves, and turn out the accursed thing. Let it die, destroy it; seek to be conformed to the image of Christ. Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds; put away every evil thing from you, and then put on, as the elect of God, bowels of compassion, humbleness of mind, and all those things whereby the child of God shall be adorned and beautified; so shall the valley of Achor become a door of hope to you. I shall not explain how it will be so; you will find that out for yourselves better than I can tell you. Go and try it, and you will soon discover that the mortification of sin is the gladdening of the soul.

IV. The last interpretation is one closely connected with this. The valley of Achor was so called from a word which signifies TROUBLE, doubtless because Achan there troubled Israel. "Why hast thou troubled us?" asked Joshua; "the Lord shall trouble thee this day;" and therefore they called it the valley of Achor, that is, the valley of trouble.

"Oh!" says one, "I am glad the valley of trouble is a door of hope." But stop! What trouble was it? It was trouble on account of sin. There is some trouble which is not a door of hope at all. There are some troubles into which men thrust themselves, and they may get out of them as best they can. Trials do not prove a man to be a Christian. There is a way to hell "through much tribulation," as well as a way to heaven through "the strait gate." We may go to hell in the sweat of our brow. We may go from one evil to a greater, from the sparks into the midst of the fire. The trouble here intended is trouble on account of sin, and that valley of trouble is a door of hope. My friends, I speak earnestly and pointedly. There are some, here present, in whose hearts the Lord has been at work. You are now in great trouble on account of your sins. You were once peaceable and happy enough in your own hearts; you loved the ways of sin, and you little thought of the wages that would follow. You were delighted enough to dance your merry round with the poor foolish worldlings; but now you are startled and amazed to discover your mistake. You find yourself to be a lost soul; sin follows behind you with terrible howling. You discover that you can by no means quiet your clamorous iniquities, which have been demanding your death. You have been lately crying to God for mercy, but the mercy has not as yet come; at least, you are not conscious of it. Your trouble has been waxing worse and worse, and, as David said, your sore runs in the night, and it ceaseth not; you make your very bed to swim, while your

tears become your meat day and night. If any should ask you if you are a child of God, you would say, "Certainly not,—would that I were!" You are told to believe in Christ, and you say, "Oh, could I but believe! But it seemeth impossible that there shall be salvation for such a sinner as I am. I am the very chief of sinners; and the worst of my case is, that I do not feel this as I ought to feel it. I am hardened and careless, although I mourn my hardness and carelessness of sin."

My friend, I am glad to see thee in trouble on account of sin, for this trouble is a door of hope; let me show thee how it is so. It is, in the first place, a door of hope, *because it shows that thou art one whom Christ invites to come to him*. Christ invites the heavy laden,—thou art such an one, so come to him. Thou art one for whom Jesus died; for Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now, thou art consciously a sinner, and rest assured that those he came to save he will save, or else his mission would be a frustrated one. If he came to save sinners, he will save them, and thou art consciously such. I know thou canst set thy hand and seal to this declaration,—

"I a sinner surely am;
Then Jesus died for me."

Then let that valley of Achor be a door of hope to thee. "But," says one, "I feel myself to be condemned, lost, and ruined." That is the reason that thou art to believe God means thee to be saved. Martin Luther used to argue from contradictions and apparent impossibilities. He says, "I will cut thine head off with thine own sword, O Satan! Thou sayest I am condemned; but I tell thee, for that very reason, I shall be saved. Christ came to clothe some; he could not have come to clothe those who were already clothed, he must have come to clothe the naked. I am such an one; then he came to clothe me. Jesus came to wash some; he could not have come to wash those who did not need it, but to wash the filthy. I am filthy, therefore he came to wash me. Christ came to forgive the sinful, to cleanse those who have many iniquities; I am such an one; I claim, therefore, to be one of those for whom his mission was undertaken, and that he came purposely and expressly to save me."

"Oh!" says one, "that is a very narrow door." Is it? Well, it is such a door as I have been content to creep through many and many a time; for when everything else has failed me, I have been obliged to come back to this, that if I am not a saint I am a sinner, and I do humbly confess it. Jesus saith he came to save sinners. I know that; then he came to save me. I clutch the precious truth; and joy and peace return at once.

Come, poor sinner. Dost thou not see this to be a door of hope? It is not *the* hope, but the *door* of it. Christ comes to thee through the door of thy felt necessity and thy conscious distress. If now thou knowest thyself to be lost, ruined, and undone,—if now thy heart grieves on account of its own hardness and obduracy, of which thou dost accuse thyself,—now cast thyself on him who is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

And, besides, there is another door of hope here. If the Lord hath brought thee to feel thy need of a Saviour, *then thou art not dead in trespasses and sins*. Dead men cannot feel. Prick them with a dagger, and they start not; blow out their very brains with a pistol, and there shall be no motion, for they cannot feel. Even though the vital part be touched, they cannot feel the pains and agonies of death; and if thou art conscious of sin,—if thou art seeking the Saviour, there is hope for thee. “But,” says one, “I am dead in sin, notwithstanding all.” Well, now, a king’s ransom for one tear that ever streamed from a dead man’s eye! Come now, I challenge thee; I will give thee all this world’s wealth if thou wilt bring me some signs of the pulsations of a dead man’s heart, or the moving of a dead man’s lips. If thou canst bring them to me, then I will give thee leave to despair; but such a thing cannot be. Thy sighs, thy groans, thy tears, thy silent prayers, prove that thou art spiritually alive. From this, take comfort, and make the valley of Achor a door of hope. Let this lead you to remember that, where God has begun a good work, he will carry it on. God always begins to work in a way that looks like undoing, and not doing. When we begin to build, we first dig out before we build up; and so, God digs deep with the spade of conviction, before using the trowel of his grace to build us up unto the edification of his people. We must, my brethren, first of all be slain before we can be made alive; first wounded before we can be healed; nay, we must be buried to self and all self-confidence before we can be quickened to enjoy a resurrection to a new life in Christ Jesus.

I may be speaking to one who says, “I am convinced that my affliction is a door of hope, but the door is shut.” “Ah!” says another, “and my experience is a door of hope, but I cannot open it.” “And,” says another, “all my mortification of sins should be a door of hope, certainly, but I do not find it a door of hope to me.” They are doors of hope, though not always open doors. What is your duty if the door be shut? Your first duty is to wait till it is open. “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.”

In the next place, while you are waiting at the door, worship. Wait with many prayers; wait with many tears; wait with anxiety; wait, believing that God is just and merciful. And while thou art thus waiting, and while the door is shut, let me give you another piece of advice. Cast thine eye up to the lintel, and mark well that this door of hope is a blood-besprinkled door. Look up to that sign that the sacrifice has been offered; and, perhaps, while thou art looking upon the blood on the lintel, the door itself will open. It is a master-key; many have found that, when they have learned to spell the blood, and trust in that, then the door has opened of itself.

But if this fail thee, what next shalt thou do? Why, knock, knock. “But,” says one, “I have knocked.” Knock again, and keep on knocking, and never cease; though thou art faint, still keep the knocker in thy hand, for to him that asketh it shall be given, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. But, while thou art

waiting outside, and knocking, let me give thee another piece of advice. Clear the door; for, perhaps, thou art like Cain, who was not accepted because sin was at the door. Give up all thy lusts; and when thou hast cleared the door, then knock again, and so continue to knock with a good clear door, and surely it shall soon open. But if it open not, let me bid thee once more comfort thyself by looking through the crevices and the key-hole; for I have known many a poor soul who, when the door has not opened, has looked through the key-hole, and has found comfort, and the door has opened immediately. If thou canst not get a whole promise, get half a promise; if thou canst not get full enjoyment of Christ, touch the hem of his garment; and if thou canst not get the children's bread, be like the Syrophenician woman, and be willing to be a little dog to eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table. Whist there! Gently! creep up; look down between the door-sill and the door itself; peep through the key-hole, and see if thou canst not find some comfort from what thou seest within.

But let me give you one more piece of advice,—Keep on knocking; and remember that there is One who has the key of that door. Who is he? The Prince of the house of David; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth. Who is he? He is nigh thee, wheresoever thou art. If thou wilt believe with all thy heart in the Lord Jesus, and trust him, and repose all thy confidence in him, thou shalt find yon door open straightway. Look not to the rusty key of reason, but to the golden key which he carries at his girdle. Look to him alone, and say to him, “Lord Jesus, I am content to stay here knocking if thou dost not open the door; but I beseech thee, for thy mercy's sake, to let thy poor prisoner in, and let me see the hope which thou hast prepared for thy children.”

May it come to pass that you and I, having stood on this side of the door, may soon be seated on the other side of it! While you are on this side, it is a door of hope; on the other side, it is a door of gratitude. If any of you have got inside the door, sing to the praise of him who opened this door, and let you in, and who has given you a feast of good things which he has prepared for all them that love him.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS V. 1—5.

Verse 1. *Therefore*—

The apostle Paul had the logical faculty largely developed, so his writings are full of “therefores.” And the Christian religion, as a whole, stands logically connected,—doctrine with doctrine, truth with truth. Error is inconsistent with itself, but truth is consistent, logical, and unerring. “Therefore”—

1. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Are you enjoying that peace, dear friend, at this moment? If you are, indeed, justified by faith, you are at peace with God. Therefore, know it,

and feel no inquietude. Draw near to God as a dear child might to a loving father. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ :"—

2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

When a man is at peace with God, then he has the desire to draw near to him. When he is justified, he has the right to draw near; so that, being justified, and having peace, we have "access by faith;" and this is not a transient privilege, but the grace into which we have access is a grace in which we stand. We abide in it; the Lord has given us, through our justification, a permanent standing near to himself. "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and this gives us joy,—the joy of sweet hope concerning the bright future that lies before us: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

3. *And not only so,—*

Whenever the apostle begins to talk of the Lord's bounties to his people, he abounds in "also's" and in "not only so's." As if he had not said enough already, when he had reminded us of the joy of hope in God's glory, he says, "And not only so." We have something in possession as well as something to hope for; we have a present glory as well as glory laid up in store: "And not only so,"—

3—5. *But we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

Beloved, it is a mark of great grace to be able to acquiesce in tribulation, and to accept it with patient resignation at the Lord's hands; but it is a sign of a still higher state of grace when we glory in tribulation,—when we welcome it, and say, "Now, the Lord is about to elevate me to the upper class in his school,—to teach me some deeper truths than I have hitherto learned,—to give me a closer acquaintance with some mystery of his kingdom than I have previously had,—to work in my heart some new grace which has never been there before.

"We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience." You cannot learn to swim on dry land, and you cannot learn to be patient without having something to endure. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience." There are some who think that they will get experience through tribulation. So they do, in a certain sense; but not experience of the right kind. There is a middle term,—patience,—which keeps its right place: "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience." I know some people, who have had a thousand troubles, but they have no more experience now than they had when they began; I mean, they are just as foolish,—just as untaught in the things of God,—just as ready as before to blunder into a fresh trouble, because they have lacked that middle term.

Then, further, Paul says, "and experience, hope." Our experience of the Lord's goodness in the past leads us on to hope for still greater things in the future; and, thus, experience worketh hope. I have seen some persons, who were called experienced Christians, in whom it seemed to me that experience had worked despair; for their faces were always very long and very sad, and their speech was as dolorous as it well could be. But here I find that true Christian experience worketh hope,—a hope that "maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."