

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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DECIDED UNGODLINESS.

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## A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 31ST, 1899,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

*On Lord's-day Evening, August 20th, 1882.*

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“They have refused to return.”—Jeremiah v. 3.

THERE is, in the heart of every one of us, the primary evil of sin; we have all transgressed against the Lord. So far, so bad; but that natural sin of ours may be greatly increased by a refusal to turn from it. It is bad enough to have violated God's righteous law, but to refuse to repent, and to continue presumptuously in our iniquity, must greatly increase our guilt in the sight of God. This guilt may also be still further increased if we refuse to return unto the Lord when we are earnestly and affectionately invited to yield submission to him. If gracious terms of peace are presented to us, and matchless promises of blessing are made to us on condition that we do return,—and if we are often warned, and often entreated, and often threatened, and yet we still refuse to return, then we continue to pile sin upon sin, till we make our first transgression to be incredibly great. If I were now to preach to men as simply sinners, it would be a weighty message for me to have to tell them that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” but, alas! I have to preach to impenitent sinners, to those who, as our text puts it, “have refused to return,” ay, and to some who have given that refusal with great deliberation, after having been long entreated and persuaded to turn from the error of their ways. Some have been addressed in such tender, pleading language as this, “Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” or this: “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” If we have heard such language as that, and yet have persisted in refusing to return, we have heaped guilt upon guilt, and the wrath of God will be in proportion to our sin.

No. 2,655.

I. My first object, at this time, is to try to find out who are the persons to whom our text refers; and, to do so, I ask this question, **WHO HAVE REFUSED TO RETURN?** Peradventure, I am addressing some persons who say, "You speak of those who have refused to return, who are they? We have done no such thing." Listen, and let conscience be at work while I am answering the question.

First, *there are some who have refused to return, and who have said as much.* Perhaps not many of you, who are in this house of prayer, have gone as far as that, but certainly many people in the great world have actually declared that they will not yield to God. Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" and there are many who talk in the same fashion to-day. You may cry to them, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" but they will not turn, they will rather die. They will sooner burn than turn, they will rather perish in their iniquities than be pardoned after repenting of their sins. And some even accompany their refusal with many a jest and gibe; they sneer at the majesty of divine mercy, and ridicule that which is their only hope of safety. Concerning sinners of this type, the Lord says, "They have refused to return."

Others there are, *who have promised to return, but they have spoken falsely.* They have uttered fair words and pretty speeches, but there the matter has ended. When the Lord has said, "Go work to-day in my vineyard," they have promptly answered, "Yes, we will go," but they have not gone. In a very emphatic sense, "they have refused to return," because they have promised to do so, and then have not done it. He who says, "I will repent," and then does not turn from his evil ways, is certainly no better than the man who said that he would not repent. As a matter of fact, he is even worse, for there is an honesty of outspokenness about the other man who says, "I will not," while there is the falseness of gross hypocrisy in the one who says, "I go, sir," but who does not go. I fear I have a large number of this order of persons in my congregation; they have never flatly refused the gospel invitation, as some have openly done, yet they have practically refused it.

There is many a man who has said to the preacher, by his actions if not in words, what Felix said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;" but the convenient season has not arrived yet, and in all probability it never will, for they have no more idea of receiving the gospel message to-day than they had ten years ago. With all their friendly appearance and flattering words, they must be put down among those who "have refused to return." I am sure that, when I say this, I do but speak the words of truth and justice.

There are some others who "have refused to return," and who have tried to palliate their offence, and quiet their conscience, by *offering something else to God instead of really returning to him.* They will not turn from sin, but they will "take the sacrament," as they call the ordinance of the Lord's supper. They will not leave their lusts, but they will go to a place of worship. They will not cease from their wicked ways, but they will go on giving to various charities. They will not leave off lying, or committing other offences

against God, but they will assume a pious appearance, they will sing a hymn, they will spend half an hour in reading the Scriptures and a form of prayer, though such an occupation is a great burden to them; but all that is utterly useless. The Lord has said that he will have mercy, and not sacrifice; he desires us to turn from our wicked ways, and to return to him; and if we will not, any sacrifices that we may bring to him will be but vain oblations, and God will put them away from him as things that are abhorred and detestable in his sight. Solomon tells us of three things that are an abomination unto the Lord, "the sacrifice of the wicked," "the way of the wicked," and even "the thoughts of the wicked." We may do, or say, or give anything we like, but nothing will please God except our turning from our sin, and trusting in the atoning sacrifice of his dear Son. We may pray till our knees grow hard as iron, and weep our eyes away till their sockets are empty, but we shall never obtain the great blessing of salvation while we link our arm with sin, and go on delighting in iniquity. Alas! the Lord still has to say of many who make some sort of profession of being religious, "they have refused to return." They are willing to do almost anything except that; they will repeat the creed, be confirmed, "take the sacrament," go to chapel, go to church, go anywhere you like, but they will not leave their sin, they will not turn from their evil way. They will be content to put upon themselves all manner of external religiousness, but they will not be cleansed from their iniquity.

There are others who, practically, "have refused to return," because *they have only returned in part*. They have given up some forms of sin, but their heart is not right in the sight of God. Yet a man cannot truly turn in part; he must turn altogether, or not at all. If I am walking along a certain road, I cannot send one of my legs backward and the other one forward; and, in like manner, I cannot send half my soul in one direction, and the other half another way, though a great many try to do so. They will give up the grosser sins to which they have been accustomed; but the smaller sins, the more respectable sort of sins, these they will keep on committing; yet God is not pleased by their changing the form of their guilt. You say that you do not worship Baal; but, if you bow down to Ashtaroth, or any other false god, you are an idolater; and if there be any sin to which you cling, you are a sinner in God's sight. You read, sometimes, a dreadful story of a man being entangled in machinery; perhaps it was only one cog of a wheel that caught a corner of his coat, but it gradually drew him in between the works, and rent him limb from limb till he was utterly destroyed. Oh, if that piece of cloth could but have given way, so that the man's life might have been spared! But it did not; and though he was only held by the tiniest part of his garment, yet that was sufficient to drag him in where the death-dealing wheels revolved. And it is just so with sin; you cannot get in between the wheels of iniquity, and say, "I shall go just so far, but no farther." No; if you once get in there, you will be ground to pieces as certainly as you are now alive! There is no way of escape but to turn yourself right away from the evil thing that God hates.

There must be no union between our heart and that which God abhors, but we must have a clean bill of divorcement separating us once for all from the love of sin.

"Well," says one, "I have given up strong drink, I am no longer a drunkard." That is well, but you may go to hell as a sober man. "I have given up Sabbath-breaking," says another. I am very glad to hear it, my friend, but you may perish by dishonesty. "Oh, but I am no thief; I am as honest as the day!" Yes, that may be true, and yet you may perish through pride. "But I am not proud," you say. But you may go to perdition through your lust, or even through your self-righteousness; any one sin harboured, and indulged in by the soul, will be the means of your everlasting ruin. Any single poison may suffice to kill a man; he need not take fifty different drugs, one will be enough to destroy him. So, if there be but one sin that is loved, that one sin will be as deadly poison to the soul; and as long as you cling to even one sin, I lay this charge at your door, that you "have refused to return." God grant that you may not continue any longer this fatal folly and guilt!

I will only mention one more class of those who "have refused to return." It is *those who return to God only in appearance, yet not in heart*. What a very long way a man may go towards being a Christian, and yet miss the mark! He may give up all outward sin, such as his fellow-men condemn, and yet he may be lost. Very solemnly would I say to you, my friend, that you may even be a professed disciple of Christ, but so was Judas. You may preach; so did Judas. You may work miracles; so did Judas. And you may keep with Christ under much opposition and persecution; so did Judas. It was only at a certain point, when the glitter of the pieces of silver was too much for him, that he at last betrayed his Lord and Master. Many covetous persons are the most respectable people we know; yet covetousness is idolatry. They are not likely to give way to sinful lusts; that form of iniquity is too expensive for them. They are too mean even to spend anything on themselves; they are not generally the men who drink to excess, and waste their substance in riotous living. Oh, no! they are in the shop from early morning till late at night; see how they work in their shirt sleeves, doing all they can to get money, and perhaps doing it all honestly; but, still, covetousness is the master-thought with them, and to be rich is the end and aim of their whole life; that is the one thing for which they are striving. If it be covetousness that remains in the soul, there may be great outward reformations even through that very covetousness, for one sin will often sweep away another. There are very many sins that are like sharks, that swallow up other devouring monsters. A man may devote himself to some one evil in such a way that he denies himself all the rest, and yet that one will bore such a hole in the vessel of his life that the water will get in, and sink it, just as surely as if there had been a thousand augers doing their desperate work.

So, you see, dear friends, that there are many, many persons who "have refused to return" to God; and in telling you about them I have answered my first question.

II. Here is a second one. WHAT DOES THIS REFUSAL TO RETURN TO GOD UNVEIL?

Well, I think that it shows, first, that there is, in the heart of such a person, *an intense love of sin*. The man not only sins, but he loves to sin; and therefore he will not return unto the Lord. The paths of sin are pleasant to him, so, if you cry to him, "Return, return, return," he heeds you not because he loves both the way and the wages of iniquity.

This refusal to return also unveils *a great want of love to God*. The prodigal son did at last return home because, with all his failings and wickedness, he remembered his father, and his father's house; and there was some sort of love still lingering in his heart, so he said, "I will arise and go to my father." But many have no such love in their souls, and, consequently, the word "Return" has no power over them. They love their sin, but they love not God, so "they have refused to return."

In many people, there can be no doubt whatever that this refusal to return unveils *a disbelief in God*,—perhaps not a disbelief in the existence of God so much as a denial of the evil of sin. These refusers of God's mercy say to themselves, "Sin is not half so bad as God makes it out to be, and it will not bring such consequences as he threatens." When we read to them what the apostle says about those who "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," they do not believe that such a sentence as that will ever be executed upon them, so they harden their faces like flints, and go on in their sin, and refuse to return unto the Lord. Even when he tells them that, unless they turn to him, he will shut them out of heaven at last, they seem to fancy that it does not matter much. Heaven is no very wonderful and desirable place, after all; so they dream, and again they harden their hearts, and continue in their evil ways. There is, in the heart of every unconverted man, a real atheism; he would be ashamed to be called an atheist, yet he acts like one, and he is one practically. He may not be such a fool as to say with his mouth, "There is no God;" but in his heart he is all the while saying, "No God for me! I wish there were none; I would fain escape from the belief even in his existence."

But, oh! this is a dreadful thing, for a man to love sin, and not to love God, and not even to believe that God speaks the truth; yet is there a worse evil still. This refusal to return is really *a despising of God*; it is as if a man said, "I will not submit to him; I defy him to do his worst! Let him smite me if he can. I am not afraid of his hell, and I do not want his heaven. I would sooner have the pleasures of sin for a season than dwell with God, and behold the glory of Christ, to all eternity." Perhaps you think that I am putting the matter too strongly, but I am not. I am only speaking the truth, and I wish to speak it in love to the souls of those of you who are refusing to return unto the Lord. You have not that reverence and fear of God which he deserves from you, else you would turn at his reproof, and he would pour out his Spirit upon you.

Yet once more, I am afraid that this refusal to return shows that there is, in your heart, *a secret resolve to continue in sin*. If you "have refused to return," and done so for years, I fear that you are fixed in your evil course, and that your mind is made up to remain as you are. I would to God that you would think a little of what the end of such a life must be. As you read of the eternal doom of others, you may hear the Lord saying to you, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." There is no way of salvation for a man who perseveres in the way of evil. Then, "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways," for only by turning from sin, and unto God, can you find salvation; yet, alas! many have resolved not to turn unto the Lord.

There are some who regard their refusal to return *as a trifling matter*. They trifle with everything. Heaven and hell seem to them to be of no more worth than a boy's battledore and shuttlecock; their soul appears to be, at least in their estimation, the merest trifle. I verily believe that some people think more of their fingernails than they do of their souls, and there is many a man who spends more on the blacking of his boots than he does on the cleansing of his soul from sin. Thus are these all-important things despised by those who "have refused to return." They make mirth about those matters which have been upon God's heart from all eternity; and, whereas he has given his well-beloved Son to be the Saviour of sinners, many sinners act as if salvation were not worth the having, or as if it were merely a thing to be talked about for a while, and then to be forgotten for ever. O sirs, surely, these are the mischiefs of the heart which the refusal to return manifestly sets before you!

III. I must not say more upon this point, for I want to answer a third question. **WHAT IS IT THAT DEEPENS THE SIN OF REFUSING TO RETURN?**

Well, first, it is *when correction does not lead to repentance*. Let me read the sentences that precede our text: "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." This passage may be applied to any of you who have been very ill, and who then made promises of repentance, all of which you have forgotten. It may also be pressed home upon the consciences of some of you who, perhaps through your own fault, have been thrown out of a situation, and cast adrift in the world; you have been corrected by poverty, and, possibly, you have also been stricken by affliction, but all that has not touched your heart, and you "have refused to return." I have known some, who have lost child after child, and friend after friend. Those bereavements have been God's method of correcting them, so as to bring them to their senses; yet they have not turned to him; nay, they have even grown all the harder the more they have been chastened. They have stood out, like Pharaoh, against God's sternest plagues, and still have said, "Who is Jehovah that we should obey his voice?" If they have not said so in words, they have said it in their acts, which have spoken louder than words.

This refusal to return also leads to deepening sin *when conscience is violated*. If I were to put the question to any one of you who have not turned to God, "Ought you not to repent of sin, and trust the Saviour?" I feel sure that your answer would be, "Of course I ought. Do you think that I am so ignorant as not to know that it is right to forsake sin, and to follow that which is good and holy?" Then, mark you, if you know this, yet do it not, your doom will be terrible, according to our Lord's words, "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." It is an awful thing, a dreadful thing, to know what you ought to do, to feel that it is right that you should do it, and yet still to remain stubborn and disobedient.

All this adds greatly to a man's guilt in refusing to return unto the Lord. So it does *when he knows that it would be the best thing for him*. I have often heard a man say, "Oh, yes, sir! I know that, if I repented of sin, if I believed in Jesus, if I became right with God, I should be much happier than I am now; indeed, I cannot rest as I am, I want to find something better." Then why do you not find it? You cannot have peace with God all the while that you keep your sins; then why do you not give them up? Why not turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart? But when you know that it would be for your present and eternal good, when you know that you would be happier and holier, and yet you continue as you are, who shall be found to plead for you? Where is the advocate, in heaven or on earth, who will take up the cause of a man who knows the right, and yet will not do it; who is well aware that turning to God will save him, and yet acts in direct opposition to his own highest interests? It seems incredible that anyone should be so foolish, yet multitudes are.

It greatly adds to a man's sin, also, *if this refusal to return to the Lord has been long continued*; and I am afraid, in the case of some here,—and, oh! how tenderly would I grasp their hands if I could, and ask them whether it is not so,—that this refusal has gone on for many years. Is it not so, my dear friend? You had a tender conscience in your childhood, and you have not quite lost it yet. You have often been moved to tears under earnest, faithful preaching; and, to-night, you hardly know how to sit on your seat. You are ready to cry out to me, "Leave off urging me thus, for I cannot bear it." And do you expect that God will spare you for another ten years, or another twenty years? You cannot tell that he will; you have no right to think that he will; and, if he does, will you fling the sins of those additional years on to the heap of your past and present iniquities? Will you make the millstone of your guilt bigger, and yet bigger, till at last it sinks you into the lowest hell? Take heed, I pray you. It is a great blessing to turn to God in youth, for early piety often becomes eminent piety; but it is terrible to be living year after year without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. Turn unto the Lord speedily, I pray you. Let the time past suffice for you to have refused the mercy of your God; and, now, this very hour, I charge you, ere you dare to go from under this roof, turn unto your God,

and seek and find pardon and salvation through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his Son.

There is one other thing which sometimes makes this refusal to return to God become even greater sin, and that is, *when there is some vile reason at the bottom of it*. I cannot pry into the hearts of my hearers, but I did know a man, once, and he was very fair to look upon, and I often wondered why he did not become a decided Christian. He was respected by all who knew him, until they found out his awful secret,—he had another family in addition to his own family at home. How could he turn unto God when he was living in sin? I have known others who seemed to be sure of salvation, but they were drinking in private;—I mean women as well as men;—but how could they turn to God when they were secretly indulging in excess? Perhaps it is a very mean and contemptible thing that is keeping you from the Saviour. You would turn to God, but you have an old friend who would laugh at you if you became a Christian. Possibly, it is your own father who would despise you; or, perhaps, dear wife, it is your husband who would oppress you if you gave yourself up to the Lord. But shall any of these be allowed to ruin your soul? They may laugh you into hell, but they cannot laugh you out again. They may put cruel pressure upon you till your fear of them drives you away from God; but it would be well if your fear of them could be slain by a greater fear, for it is infinitely better to dread the wrath of God than to fear the anger of man. For what can man do, after all, even if he should kill the body? Remember the words of our Lord Jesus upon this matter, “I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” Be not such cowards as to be lost for ever through indulging your cowardice. Pluck up courage enough to seek your own salvation, for “what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Oh, flee ye, flee ye, from the wrath to come! Whatever the ribald crowd may say, what will it matter to you in the tremendous day when you stand before the great white throne? How can you then escape from the wrath of the Lamb if you do not fly to him now that you are exposed to the wrath of ungodly men?

IV. Now I must close with my last question. WHAT IS THE REAL REASON OF THIS REFUSAL TO RETURN?

Well, first, *it may be ignorance*. I hope it is, for then Christ can pray, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Notice how the prophet put it: “Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.” He hoped that it was downright ignorance that kept some of them from yielding their hearts to God, but he said that he would go and try the rich ones: “I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God.” But he fared no better there: “These have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.” It is very much the same still; rich and poor alike refuse to return unto the Lord their God.

Then, next, while there are some who are kept away from Christ through ignorance, there are many others who fail to come to him *through self-conceit*. Perhaps,—though it is but a choice of evils,—it is better not to know the way of salvation, than to know it, and yet not to walk in it. Some poor soul says, “I cannot come to Christ, for I do not know the way.” He is the way; trust him, and you have already come to him. But some great man says, “I do not want to go to Christ; I am good enough, I have always been religious.” Ah, poor deluded creature! You are defying God by setting up your own righteousness in the place of Christ’s righteousness; and so your “sacraments”, and your hearing of sermons, and your few miserable good works, are to stand instead of yonder amazing sacrifice upon the cross where there hangs the Son of God in agonies and blood! You set up your filthy rags to compete with the spotless robe of his matchless righteousness! This is an atrocity which, even if you had committed no other sin, would sink you to the lowest hell.

But, to tell you the real reason of this refusal to return, I must say that *men do not turn to Christ because they do not want to be made holy*. An eminent man of God said, “To some sinners, the gospel comes as a threatening from God that it will make them holy.” Is it not a dreadful thing, that men should actually turn what is the greatest of all blessings, the being made holy, into a thing of which they are afraid? They do not want to be true, they do not want to be good, they do not want to be right in God’s sight; they prefer their own ways, they choose to follow their own devices. That is the top and bottom of the mischief; now I have laid my finger upon the very core of the evil. If you willed to be saved, you would be saved; if you really desired to be made holy, you would be made holy. It is because your heart’s longings still go after that which is evil, that therefore you do not turn unto the Lord. O mighty Spirit of God, change the very nature of men, and bring them to desire the holiness which they now despise; for then wilt thou work it in them, and they shall be saved!

The fact is, and this is the last reason for refusing to return, *there is, in most men, a preference for present joy above future blessing*. “Heaven” they say,—“well, heaven—heaven—we do not know where it is; it is a long way off, and we cannot tell when we shall get there; but here is an opportunity of spending an evening in pleasurable sin, and we prefer that. ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.’” O foolish men! Your poor little bird in the hand is not worth one of the birds in the paradise of God. Others cry, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” What! are you no better than the brute beasts that perish,—the cattle in the pasture, fattening for the slaughter? What! has God given us immortal souls, and yet are we never to look beyond the present life? Has he adapted us to live with him at his right hand, and yet is the dim horizon of this little life to shut in all that we care to know? Is it so that, when you are in your coffin, you will have had your all? “I have no fear,” says one. But have you any hope, sir? That is the point; for, many a man has so drugged his soul with the opiate of self-deception that fear, which was meant to be

like a watchman, has been lulled into deadly slumber. So hark again,—Have you any hope? “No,” you answer. Then you are in a desperate condition; but why are you without hope? Because you are without God. I would not change places with you, even to get rid of all fear as you have done, for I have a good hope that, through grace, though my spirit must be parted for a while from this flesh, yet it will never be divided from Christ my Lord, and it shall be my delight to be—

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

God bless you, dear friend! Believe in Jesus, and you live at once. Believe in him this moment, and this moment you are saved. Trust Christ now, as soon as this word reaches your ear, and your sin is forgiven, you are justified and accepted, and you may go your way, a sinner saved,—saved to all eternity. God give you that blessed privilege, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

## Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

### HEBREWS II.

*Verse 1. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*

It is well to give heed to what you are now hearing, but it is also important to give heed to what you have heard. Oh, how much have we heard, but have forgotten! How much have we heard, which we still remember, but do not practise! Let us therefore listen to the words of the apostle here: “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip;”—as it were, slipping through our fingers, and flowing down the stream of time to be carried away into the ocean of oblivion.

*2. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;*

See, brethren, the punishment for disobeying the word spoken by angels was death; what, then, must be the penalty of neglecting the great salvation wrought by the Divine Redeemer himself? He who does not give earnest heed to the gospel treats with disdain the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will have to answer for that sin when the King shall sit upon the throne of judgment. Trifle not, therefore, with that salvation which cost Christ so much, and which he himself brings to you with bleeding hands. And, oh! if you have hitherto trifled with it, and let it slip, may you now be brought to a better mind, lest haply, despising Christ, the “just recompence of reward” should come upon you. And what will that be? I know of no punishment that can be too severe for the man who treats with contempt the Son of God, and tramples on his blood; and every individual who hears the gospel, and yet does not receive Christ as his Saviour, is committing that atrocious crime.

*3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation :*

If we neglect that salvation, is there any other way by which we can be rescued from destruction? Is there any other door of escape if we pass that one by? No, there is none.

3, 4. *Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

This gospel of ours is stamped with the seal of God; he has set his mark upon it, to attest its genuineness and authority. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were the seal that the gospel was no invention of man, but that it was indeed the message of God. Gifts of healing, gifts of tongues, gifts of miracles of divers kinds, were God's solemn declaration to man, "This is the gospel; this is my gospel which I send to you; therefore, refuse it not."

5. *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*

We have no angelic preachers; we sometimes speak of "the seraphic doctor;" but no seraph ever was a preacher of the gospel of the grace of God; that honour has been reserved for a lower order of beings.

6. *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

God speaks to men by men. He has made them to be the choice and chosen instruments of his wondrous works of grace upon earth. Oh, what a solemn thing it is to be a preacher of the everlasting gospel! It is an office so high that an angel might covet it, but one that is so responsible that even an angel might tremble to undertake it. Brethren, pray for us who preach, not merely to a few, but to many of our fellow-creatures, that we may be the means, in the hand of God, of blessing to our hearers.

7, 8. *Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.*

It was so with Adam in his measure. Before he fell, through his disobedience, all the animals which God had made were inferior to him, and owned him as their lord and master. It is infinitely more so in that second Adam who has restored to humanity its lost dignity, and, in his own person, has elevated man again to the head of creation: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet."

8. *For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.*

Man does not yet rule the world. Wild beasts defy him. Storms vanquish him. There are a thousand things not at present submissive to his control.

9. *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

Thus lifting man back into the place where he first stood so far as this matter of dominion is concerned.

10. *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

Is it not wonderful that the Christ, who is the head over all things, could not be perfected for this work of ruling, or for the work of saving, except by sufferings? He stooped to conquer. Not because there was any sin in him, but that he might be a sympathetic Ruler over his people, he must experience sufferings like those of his subjects; and that he might be a mighty Saviour, he must be himself compassed with infirmity, that he might "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the

way." Brothers and sisters, do you expect to be made perfect without sufferings? It will never be so with you.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

We shall never be fit for the Heavenly Canaan unless we first pass through the wilderness. There are certain things about us which require this, so thus it must be.

11. *For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: One family; one by nature with Christ our glorious Head.*

11. *For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,—*

Oh, this blessed condescension of Christ! We are often ashamed of ourselves; alas! we are sometimes so base as to be ashamed of him; but he is never ashamed to call us brethren.

12. *Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*

Christ, the centre of the celestial choirs, is also the centre of all the bands of true singers that are yet here below.

13. *And again, I will put my trust in him.*

This is our Lord Jesus Christ putting his trust in the Father, overcoming by faith, even as we do. Oh, what a marvellous oneness there is here between Christ and his people! Well might the apostle say that "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."

13, 14. *And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;*

We know what it is to be partakers of flesh and blood; we often wish that we did not. It is the flesh that drags us down; it is the flesh that brings us a thousand sorrows. I have a converted soul, but an unconverted body. Christ has healed my soul, but he has left my body still to a large extent in bondage, and therefore it has still to suffer; but the Lord will redeem even that. The redemption of the body is the adoption, and that is to come at the day of the resurrection.

But think of Christ, who was a partaker of the Eternal Godhead, condescending to make himself a partaker of flesh and blood;—the Godhead linked with materialism; the Infinite, an infant; the Eternal prepared to die, and actually dying! Oh, wondrous mystery, this union of Deity with humanity in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord! Why did he become a partaker of flesh and blood, and die upon the cross? Listen:—

14. *That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*

That, through dying, he might overthrow Satan's power for all who trust him.

15—18. *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Glory be to his holy name for ever and ever! Amen.

