

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD PLEADING FOR SAINTS, AND SAINTS PLEADING FOR GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 10TH, 1864, BY THE

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.”—

Lamentations iii. 58.

THE prophet speaks *experimentally* as of a matter which he had proved for himself in his own case. There is no true understanding of the truths of God except by a personal experience of them. We have heard of men sitting in their drawing-rooms, and writing volumes of voyages and travels; but such books always bear the marks of fiction upon their title-page, they can never vie in interest and freshness with the adventures of men who have actually traversed lands unknown. The botanist who shall never have seen a flower must necessarily be a mere pretender to the science; and the soldier who has never shouldered a gun is nothing but a raw recruit; so the man who knows the truth of God only in the letter of it, by what he has heard with his ears, but does not know it by what “he has tasted and his hands have handled, and his eyes have looked upon of the word of life,” knows indeed nothing to any purpose, and it were well for him to confess his ignorance. Our prophet puts it, not “Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of another man’s soul,” but, “Thou hast pleaded the causes of *my* soul.” At the opening of this discourse I invite you to ask yourselves whether you have an interest in this pleading. Has the Lord pleaded the causes of *your* soul? Such a suggestion may be of great service to you. That eminent Puritan preacher, Mr. Thomas Dolittle, was once teaching the catechism to the children of the congregation, as was the wont of the titans on the Sabbath day; he came to the question, “What is effectual calling?” The answer was given, as it stands in our admirable catechism, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.” The good man stopped, and said to the lads around him, “Let us use the personal pronoun in the singular: are any

among you who can say that all this is yours?" To his great joy, there stood up one who with many tears and many sobs, said, "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing *me* of *my* sin and misery, enlightening *my* mind in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing *my* will, he hath persuaded and enabled *me* to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to *me* in the gospel." Now, this is the true way to understand any doctrine as set forth in the Word of God, by being able to feel that in your own personal case God has wrought upon *your* soul, has brought *you* into reconciliation with himself, and enabled *you* to rejoice in his gracious promise. You are greatly blessed if like the prophet you can speak experimentally.

You must not fail to observe how *positively* he speaks. He doth not say, "I hope, I trust, I sometimes think, that God hath pleaded the causes of my soul;" but he speaks of it as a matter of fact not to be disputed. "Thou *hast* pleaded the causes of my soul." Let us, brethren, by the aid of the gracious Comforter, shake off those doubts and fears which so much mar our peace and comfort. Be this our prayer today, that we may have done with the harsh croaking voice of surmise and suspicion, and may be able to speak with the clear, melodious voice of full assurance, "I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." I like to hear a Christian, when he tells out his own experience, speak of these things as one who knows what he is at; not as though it were all guess-work with him, but as one who with infallible certainty, the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit, knows that he is speaking the truth. "Thou *hast* pleaded the causes of my soul."

Here I must bid you observe how *gratefully* the prophet speaks, ascribing all the glory to God alone. You perceive there is not a word concerning himself or his own pleadings. He doth not ascribe his deliverance in any measure to any man, much less to his own merit; but it is "*thou*"—"Thou, O Lord, hast pleaded the causes of my soul; *thou* hast redeemed my life." A grateful spirit should ever be cultivated by the Christian; and especially after deliverances we should prepare a song for our God. O believers, wake up your hearts, and tune your tongues, to vie with angels before the throne. Earth should be a temple filled with the songs of grateful saints, and every day should be a censer smoking with the sweet incense of thanksgiving.

How *joyful* Jeremiah seems to be while he records the Lord's mercy! How triumphantly he lifts up the strain! He has been in the low dungeon, and is even now no other than the weeping prophet, poor Jeremiah; and yet in the very book which is called, "Lamentations," clear as the voice of Miriam when she dashed her fingers against the tabour, shrill as the note of Deborah when she met Barak with shouts of victory, we hear the voice of Jeremy going up to heaven—"Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life." O children of God, seek after a vital experience of the

Lord's lovingkindness, and when you have it, speak positively of it; sing gratefully; shout triumphantly; and let none of your enemies stop you of your glorying this side heaven, for on the other side the river the free-grace of God shall be your glory for ever and ever, and you shall sing eternally, "Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life."

We shall occupy the time allotted to the sermon this morning, first, *by considering divine pleading as the Christian's joy*; and then by talking about the *Christian's pleading the causes of his Cod as his duty and delight*. God pleads my cause: this is my joy. I must plead God's cause: this is at once my privilege and my reasonable service.

I. First, then, let us come with heart-felt joy to the consideration of DIVINE PLEADING.

1. The Lord pleads our cause *in the Court of Providence*. Jeremiah was confined in the low dungeon. He was cast into a wet, damp hole—a pit; and here he would have been left to rot, for no one spoke a word for him except Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch, in the service of the king, who went into Zedekiah and pleaded on the behalf of poor Jeremiah. The king gave Ebed-melech leave to fetch up Jeremiah out of the pit. Now, you observe, Jeremiah was never ungrateful to Ebed-melech; Ebed-melech had a blessing in return for what he did; yet Jeremiah ascribes his deliverance not to the eunuch, but to God: "Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul." The Christian may expect that in the course of providence, when he meets with trouble, God will raise up for him at different times, and in unexpected quarters, persons who will take an interest in him, and be the means of working out his deliverance. God sits at the helm of providence, and when the vessel is almost on the rock, he can pilot it into the deep waters again; and when his servants have been obliged by the tempest to reef their sails, he knows how, as the Master of the seas, to change the winds to a gale so favourable, that with all sails spread, they can fly before the gale to the desired haven.

Sometimes God pleads the cause of his people *by silencing their enemies*. What a remarkable instance you have of this in the case of Jacob! His sons had most cruelly and basely killed the Shechemites. Having betrayed them by false promises, they then slew them in cold blood. Jacob said, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." How strange was it, that he suffered no molestation; surely the Lord had cast a solemn awe upon the hearts of the Canaanites round about. His all-commanding voice was heard in their hearts, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm;" so that though Jacob's family was grossly in the wrong, and his sons had committed a foul deed, yet nevertheless, the Lord pleaded the cause of his chosen servant, and his enemies were

as still as stones. It will often be so with the Lord's peculiar ones. When your foot has slipped—when you have spoken unadvisedly with your lips, if you have deeply repented of the sin, you may leave the matter before God, for he will either silence every dog's tongue, or turn their barkings to his glory.

At other times our God has pleaded the cause of his people, *by raising up friends for them*. Take the instance of Joseph. Reuben pleads for him when his brethren intend to kill him: when in Egypt, he is put into the dungeon, through a false charge brought by the wife of Potiphar; he is not treated as a common criminal, for even in the dungeon God finds him friends. He behaves himself so discreetly, that the master of the prison makes him one of the keepers of the ward. The Lord gave him favour in the eyes of men. Observe another case. Here comes a poor maiden from Moab, with her mother-in-law. God will plead the cause of her soul. She goes, as many another maid had done, to the field to glean. Providence guides her to the estate of an unknown kinsman. Boaz looks upon her, and ere long she becomes the joy of his house and the mistress of his fields. Take a yet more remarkable case. Moses is put into the ark of bulrushes. What can the child say for itself? Among the crocodiles it lies exposed to imminent hazard. Pharaoh's daughter comes. What was that mysterious influence which softened her heart when she looked upon that comely child as it wept in that little cradle which might soon have been its coffin? Why was it that she said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children . . . take it and nurse it for me." Why, it could only have been because God has a way of touching human hearts and making them friendly to his own people. He pleads the cause of his servants. He does not violate the wills of their enemies, but he wisely turns those wills into the channel of friendship. It was very remarkable that David, when he so much needed a friend through Saul's hostility to him, should have found one near to the throne—the heir-apparent to the kingdom. Strange that Jonathan, who naturally would have taken his father's part, and would have hated David as a supplanter, should, nevertheless, have his soul so knit to the heart of David that he gives up his crown cheerfully, and makes a covenant with David.

Dear friends, you see thus, that either by silencing enemies, or else by raising up friends, God can, in providence, plead the cause of your soul; or if men should seem to have even less than this to do with it, he knows how, *by special providences*, to bring you out of the depth of your difficulties. You see this again in the case of Joseph. He was put in prison; the butler promised to speak for him, but forgot him. Well, what shall happen? The king must dream a dream. Pharaoh cannot sleep while Joseph is in a dungeon. Seven years of plenty must come, and seven years of famine, in order that Joseph, falsely accused, might have his "righteousness brought forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Such cases will commonly occur. No Christian man, methinks, can look back through many years of his

life without observing some strange and singular workings of the divine hand, by which, in an unexpected manner, God has wrought his deliverance.

Come then, if this be so, let us be of good cheer this morning. We need not fret and worry ourselves about worldly things, for our heavenly Father pleads our cause. Tried soul, he knows what you want this morning; you have not told anybody your distress, and you need not, for he “knoweth that you have need of these things.” He knows when it will be best for you to receive help; and if he keeps you a little time in poverty, he knows it is good for you to be left in the shade. He understands providence better than you do, and he can make the great world a broad work to bless the little world of your heart. There is not a single wheel by which the machinery of providence is affected which is not turned by his hand. You know his love to be as infinite as his wisdom, and his power to be as great as his love; then go where your Master went when he was in the storm—into the hinder part of the ship, and fall to sleep upon the pillow of the providence of God. You have done your best; you have worked hard; you have striven to provide things honestly in the sight of all men; and yet things do not prosper with you as you wish they would; you are content to be poor; you are willing to be in just such a place as God would put you, and yet your straits and your difficulties seem just now to be too many for you: *now* is the time to exercise faith upon a living God. Your God is not worth having if he cannot help you when you want help. Surely your religion must be a lie if it cannot buoy you up under troubles which, after all, are not the heaviest which fall to the lot of men. Come, cast your burden on your God: he careth for you. Ere many days are past, you shall come up to this house, if not with these words upon your tongue, yet with this sentiment in your heart, “Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.”

2. Our text may be read with great comfort if we think upon *the Court of Divine Law*. You and I may picture ourselves this morning, without exaggeration or untruth, as being led into the Court of the Law. The law at once arraigns us upon the charge of having positively broken the commands of God. “He hath broken every one of them,” saith the law, “either in deed, or word, or thought. There is not a single precept which this man has not most distinctly set at defiance.” The witnesses appear. The devil willingly bears witness, and adds many falsehoods to the accusation. The omniscience of God stands as a swift witness against us; and our own conscience is compelled to bear testimony that we have indeed sinned, and that we have “gone astray from the womb, speaking lies.” What is now to be done? We are asked if we have anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced upon us. We are silent. Well may we hold down our heads, for what reason is there why we should not be punished for the sins which we have committed. There was a time when we would have pleaded “*Not guilty*,” but we know better

now. We know our guilt; it stares us in the face. We cannot plead the force of temptation, for we know that often we have tempted ourselves, and have, without any incentive beyond our own hearts, run greedily after sin. The law sits upon its throne of judgment, and since we cannot plead, it makes proclamation, "Is there anyone in court who will act as advocate for this rebel whose silence and shame witness to his guilt? If there be none to show cause to the contrary, I will open the great book and read his sentence; I will put on the black cap, and he shall be taken to doom." Up stands the bleeding Saviour, the great Advocate for sinners. What does Jesus plead? "O Justice," saith he, "I plead not that these men have not sinned: I do confess on their behalf that they have grievously erred; but I plead for them that their sin has been punished—punished in *me*. All the curse of their sin was laid on *me*. I loved them from before the foundations of the world; and having loved them I took their sin upon myself, and therefore it is not on them. I suffered in their stead, and therefore, Justice, thou canst not punish two for one offence; having smitten me for them, thou canst not now smite them. I plead my blood—these wounds of mine, once opened by the cruel nails—this side of mine, once rent with the spear: I plead these—my groans, my tears, my agony, my death, for these I suffered on their account. Their sin was punished in me: let them go free!" Thus he pleads right gloriously. Who shall answer him? What more is wanted? But the law brings another charge. It says, "Granted that sin is condoned by the atonement; allowed that through thy sacrifice, most glorious Redeemer, thy people are free from sin, yet I demand on the behalf of God that the law should be kept. These men were bound not merely to be negatively without sin, but they were bound positively to serve God with all their heart, and soul, and strength; and inasmuch as they have not done it, they cannot enter heaven. How shall they be rewarded for service never performed—how shall they win the crown without having kept the command?" Here, too, we are silent, for what have we ever done?—what righteousness have we? Are not our righteousnesses filthy rags, the very best of them? We dare not say, "Lord, my prayers entitle me to heaven; my preachings, my doings, my almsgivings." Nay, we know better than this. We feel that we are vile and full of sin, and therefore put our finger on our lips, and confess that we deserve to be shut out of heaven. Again the Saviour rises, and he pleads, "I was appointed of God to be their substitute, and being such I kept the law on their behalf. The whole of the ten commands I have carried out to the fullest extent both in the letter and in the spirit. I have served God with all my soul and strength; I have loved my neighbour as myself; I have been obedient to death, even to the death of the cross. Have I not magnified the law and made it honourable?" The law bows its awful head and confesses, "Thou hast, O Jesus, rendered better obedience than these men could have rendered, for thou art divine. Thou hast brought the righteousness of God

instead of the righteousness of man; thou hast brought thine own perfection, glorified and exalted by the splendour of thy nature, and laid it down in the stead of the perfection of man which he could not bring; thou hast, indeed, paid the debt; thou hast pleaded well, and the culprit is free." Beloved, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." My soul, triumph thou in thy God! This day rejoice thou with all thy might, for Christ hath prevalently pleaded thy cause, and thou art acquitted—nay, thou art brought in as meritorious, and accepted in the sight of God through the plea of the Beloved. Let us rejoice that in the court of heaven's justice we can say, "Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul." O, can we all say it? Has Christ pleaded for *you*? Has *your* faith put *your* soul into Christ's hands? If not, I pity you; and let every child of God pity and pray for you. But if Jesus pleads for you we will rejoice together and be glad this morning.

3. In the third place, Jesus pleads the cause of my soul in the *Court of conscience*, which is a minor imitation of the great Court of Heaven. Let me talk to your hearts now, brethren and sisters, as the Lord helps me. Sometimes you have doubts and fears springing up, and conscience assists them, for it says, "Thou knowest what a guilty worm thou art: what! thou a saved soul? It was but the other day that thou was murmuring at God, and doubting his faithfulness. Look at thy prayers: what cold things they are! See thy daily life: what inconsistencies mingle with it. Mark thy temper: how quick! how fierce! see thyself as to spiritual things: was there even a more poverty-stricken soul than thou art? Why, thou art as black as the tents of Kedar, and quite as filthy. Canst thou see any good thing in thyself? Why, art thou not a very sink of corruption, a walking dunghill, a mass of abominations? and yet thou sayest, 'I am a child of God.' How can it be?" And now when these thoughts arise, you and I find it sometimes rather hard to answer them; and if we go upon the common logic of human reason, and begin to argue, "But I do find in myself some humblings of soul; I have some melting desires towards the Lord God; I find this and that, and therefore I have some evidence," it is ten to one that conscience and the devil together will beat us, and we shall be ready to lie down in despair. But, oh! how sweet it is when our soul tells of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! Then—I hope that I am now talking what you all do know, and many of you know sweetly—then as you turn to Jesus Christ, and see the precious person of the perfect Saviour pouring out streams of cleansing blood, there is a voice which speaks to you, and pleads the cause of your soul; you feel, "Let conscience say what he may, this blood hath answered him; let the devil suggest what he will," this complete atonement shall shut his mouth." "I will," says Rutherford, in one of his sweet letters, "I will hold to Christ under water, and

if I must needs drown, I will not let go my hold of him;” and so the believer can say: he has got such a grip of Jesus—such a hand-hold of the Saviour, that though ten thousand times ten thousand fears should roll over his head, he sings—

“I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me.”

Sometimes after stern conflicts, a sweet peace pervades your mind. I cannot describe it better than by the calm which succeeds the tempest and its heavy showers. The whole earth appears to put on a greener dress than before; the flowers pour out their fragrance; the birds sing, and men rejoice in the clear shining after the rain. So is it with us. “The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land,” because Jesus Christ applies with divine power his own merits and his own blood to our conscience, and all is well. I do not know whether you know what this means, but if any of you do not, you have lost a joy worth a thousand worlds; for out of heaven I know of no peace like that which pervades the conscience when Jesus pleads within. Guilty we are in ourselves, but we are “complete in him.” Foul and vile I am, and yet I am perfect in Christ Jesus: lost, ruined, and undone in the first Adam, but saved and redeemed—made to sit in heavenly places, in the second Adam. Ah! doubts and fears! Where are ye now, when Jesus pleads in my soul? Memory may come and tell me all the past; fear may haunt me with black visions of the future; my powers may be perverted to the service of despair; yet if my soul can keep her hold upon the finished work of my Redeemer, I shall yet come off more than conqueror, singing, “Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life?”

4. We have thus been to three courts—the Court of Providence, the Court of Justice, and the Court of Conscience; and now, pausing awhile, I would not have you forget how Jesus Christ pleads our cause in the *Court of Heaven*.

To a true-hearted man who lives a life of prayer, it is ever a rich consolation that his prayers do not go up to heaven alone. Jesus our great High Priest never ceases to intercede for his saints. A poor man once wished to have a favour of a great one. This great lord had a son—a very kind and condescending one, who spoke to the poor man, and said, “If you will write a petition to my father, he is very gracious, and he will be sure to grant it; but that you may have no doubts about the success of your petition, give it to me, and I will take it in my own hand up to my father’s house for you, and make your case my own. I will say to him, “My father, hear this poor man’s petition, not for his own sake, but consider it as mine; do me the personal favour and kindness of hearing this man’s prayer, as though it were my prayer; for, indeed, I make it mine?” The poor man wrote out his petition, but when he

had finished it, "Alas!" he said to himself, "this will never do to present before the great one; it is so full of errors; I have blotted it with my tears, and where I have tried to scratch out a word which I had spelt wrongly, I have made it worse, and have so badly worded the whole petition, that I am afraid the great one will throw it in the fire, or never notice it." "But," said his friend, "I will write it out in a fair clear hand for you, so that there shall be no blots and no blunders; and when I have done so, I will do as I have said—I will take it in my own hand, put my own name at the bottom of it with your name, and will offer it as our joint petition; and I will put it upon this footing, 'My father, do it for me; not for him, but for me.'" When the poor man saw his petition thus written out, and knew it was in such hands, he went his way, and made sure that the answer must come; and come it did. You know that story well. This is how Jesus Christ has done for you. He takes our poor unworthy prayers and amends them. He makes them perfect, and sprinkles his own blood upon them, and takes them up before his Father's throne, and says, "Father, for my sake hear this sinner; for my sake give him pardon, accept him, and preserve him;" and then the gracious Father, who can deny nothing to his beloved Son, bows his glad assent, and the blessing comes to you. This is a great mercy, but I will tell you of something which is a greater mercy still. It is transcendently encouraging that *when we pray, Jesus Christ prays*; but what is better still, is, that *when we do not pray, Jesus Christ prays*. Oh! my soul was ravished a little while ago when thinking over that passage about Peter—"Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but"—what? "But go and pray for yourself." Well, that were good advice, but it is not put so. He does not say, "But I will keep you watchful, and so you shall be preserved." That were a great blessing. No, but it is, "*But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.*" Oh! you do not know when Jesus Christ prays for you. We pass through unseen dangers, and we little know what are the dangers through which we pass. We are something like Christian, when Bunyan pictures him as going through the valley of the shadow of death. He could hear the howlings on the right hand and on the left, but he did not know—for it was very dark—how very bad the way was; but when the sun rose and he looked back and saw the pits, and the traps, and the gins, and the quagmires, and the fiends and evil spirits, then he could not but lift up his hands in astonishment that he had been brought through them all. When you and I get on the hill-tops of heaven, and look back upon all the way whereby the Lord our God hath led us, even the songs of heaven will not be loud enough for the gratitude we shall feel towards him who, before the eternal throne, undid the mischief which Satan was doing upon earth. O, how shall we thank him that he never held his peace—that day and night he pointed to the wounds upon his hands, and carried our names upon his breastplate? How we shall adore our great High Priest? With

what transport shall we kiss those dear feet of his when we remember that he did never cease to intercede, but that even before Satan had begun to tempt he had forestalled him and entered a plea in heaven. You know he does not say, "Satan hath sifted you, and therefore I will pray," but, "Satan hath desired to have you." He catches Satan even in his very desire—nips his desire in the bud—kills the cockatrice while it is yet in the shell. He does not say, "But I have desired to pray for you." No, but it is, "I *have* prayed for you; I have done it already; I have gone to court and entered a counterplea even before the charge is made; I have countermined even before the mine has been digged." O Jesus, what a comfort it is that thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul when I have been asleep! When I might have gone sleeping on down to hell thou wast awake pleading the causes of my soul! Here, then, is a cause of great joy and great gratitude.

5. Once more, Jesus Christ will plead the cause of his people, and our heavenly Father will do so too in the last great day of judgment. It is not a very pleasant thing for a man honestly to serve God, and then to find his character taken from him; and yet, beloved, this has been the lot of all true men in every age. The world never does permit a man to rebuke her follies, without replying with a volley of mud. If she cannot stop the man's mouth, she blackens the man's character. If you will turn to the lives of any of the saints of God, you will discover that they were the victims of slanders of the grossest kind. To this very day it is asserted by Romanists that Martin Luther was a drunkard. In his own day he was called the German beast, that for lust must needs marry Catharine. If you turn to the life of Whitefield—our great and mighty Whitefield—in more modern times, what was his character? Why, he was accused of every crime that even Sodom knew; and perjury stood up and swore that all was true. As for Wesley—I have heard that on one occasion he said that he had been charged with every crime in the calendar, except drunkenness; and when a woman stood up in the crowd and accused him of that, he then said, "Blessed God, I have now had all manner of evil spoken against me falsely, for Christ's name sake." You remember in the life of John Bunyan, that episode concerning Agnes Beaumont. The good man suffered this young woman to ride behind him on his horse to a meeting at Gamlingay, and for this his character was implicated in two charges, before a magistrate, which might have involved him in the crime of poisoning, and laid the foundation for villainous reports of uncleanness; yet John Bunyan was the purest and most heavenly-minded man who ever put his hand to paper; and he did put his hand to paper as no other man ever did who was not inspired. Now, this is not pleasant, but if you are a true Christian, and you are called to occupy a prominent post in the service of God, set your account for this; expect to lose your character; expect not to have the good opinion of any but your God, and those faithful ones, who like you, are

willing to bear contempt. But what joy it is for all these holy men, to know that at the last God will plead the cause of their souls!

There will be a resurrection of persons as they really were, not as they seemed to be and were misrepresented. At the last great day, there will be a resurrection of reputations—reputations which had been laid into the dark grave which calumny had digged, which had been covered with the sod of contempt, and over which there had been raised an epitaph of infamy. These reputations will all rise up. They have washed their robes and made them white; they are black no longer now. The men who were pointed at, and hooted, and despised, shall now go streaming up the shining way of fame and glory, amidst the loud shouts of praise which the great Avenger shall receive from assembled worlds. They shall awake to glory, while others rise to shame and everlasting contempt. Oh! what must it be to be in the last day plucked and stripped of your plumes? What will be the fate of the Pharisee?—of the hypocrite who will find all his fine feathers torn away, and himself left to hide his contemptible head in the caverns of the earth—but denied even that consolation—set out before the full blaze of day as an acknowledge liar before God and man? But how different the condition of the poor man who lived and died in undeserved contempt, but who wakes up to find himself a bright and shining spirit, and all his adversaries compelled to own that God has pleaded the causes of his soul, and has avenged him of his traducers.

Thus, you see, our text is not a small one: the words are few, but full of meaning; and I have but very poorly set forth what our soul, I trust, feels to be the truth—“Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.”

II. Now I want your solemn and earnest attention, while for a few minutes I plead for what is our reasonable service, namely, THAT IF THE LORD HATH PLEADED THE CAUSES OF OUR SOUL, WE SHOULD PLEAD HIS CAUSE WHILE WE HAVE ANY BREATH TO PRAY, OR A TONGUE WITH WHICH TO BEAR WITNESS FOR HIM.

Pleading the cause of Christ is the life-work of the Christian: it has to be done by some in the high places of the field. This age has given up all witness-bearing for Christ. We have grown so enamoured of that gilded idol called charity, that now-a-days truth is fallen in the streets. It has come to be, by general consent, allowed by all men that religion is all very well in its way—that every man must keep his own religion and not meddle with other people’s—that a lie may be a truth, or a truth may be a lie, and that whether a doctrine be a truth or a lie, does not matter a button—that, in fact, we are all of us to be agreed upon this one point, that God’s truth is not worthy our contending for. That which is of man’s invention, and that which is of God’s teaching, are now put side by side in alliance, and a compromise is effected in the name of brotherly love. I look upon Christendom at this present day as

too much like a putrid swamp, a stagnant pool: the calm is deep, but deadly. O for some holy wind to stir the rotting mass. Modern charity would gag the mouth of every advocate of truth, and send every faithful minister of God back to his bed, to sleep his time out until the millennium shall dawn. Brethren, I trust that an end shall come to this; and if bickering, and strife, and ill-will shall follow, though I shall lament these attendant evils, I shall rejoice that an earnest and healthy love of truth, and an earnest contention for it, have been revived in the land. Rutherford, whose name must be dear to every believer who knows his writings, says, "I thank God that I did never for a single moment put so much as a hoof, or a hair's breadth of Christ's truth into compromise; that I did take Christ sole, and only, and alone, and did never leave room for the Roman harlot, but only for Christ—for Christ only." Here was a man shut up in Aberdeen, driven away from Anworth, weeping because, as he said, he envied the very sparrows which flew around the old Kirk where he was wont to have such sweet visions of his Lord; and yet, he said, if the giving up of a jot of truth could have given him his liberty, and enabled him to go back to minister to his faithful flock, he would not give it up, for to him truth was dearer than liberty; nay, dearer than even life itself. He says, I am prepared for all consequences; and if even black-faced Death should knock at my door, I would bid him enter." Our spiritual forefathers, on both sides the Tweed, were not men to be wherried about at the caprice of every oarsman. They knew the truth, and they knew Christ, and they did not divide between Christ and truth, and say, "Love Christ, and then believe what you like." No, but they believed that Christ and truth were identical. They believed truth to be the Saviour's crown-jewels, and they would as soon think of loving a king and trampling on his crown, as of pretending to love Christ, and then trampling on his truth. What! shall I pluck the clothes from my neighbour's back, and tell him that I love him? Will you pluck the truth from Christ, and throw it away as though it were but old rags, and then say you love Christ? You cannot love Christ if you do not love truth; and you cannot have Jesus unless you are willing to take up your cross daily and follow him. For my part, God helping me, my soul is set on this, to court no more the good word of any man; to be no more a worshipper at the shrine of that false goddess, Charity; to have all the brotherly love I can, but to show it by an honest, outspoken declaration, that the day is come when Rome is not to stand in England unchallenged. Dressed in garments half Protestant and half Popish, the Church, as by law established, continues to make a mock of honesty by using language in an unnatural sense; juggling with men's souls; pampering Puseyites, indulging infidels, and yet claiming to be evangelical. An end must come to the infamy of teaching Popish doctrine in the Prayer-book, and then preaching evangelical doctrine in the pulpit. The day is come when we must shake our garments of such a Church, and when the best of

her sons, though we have fraternised with them, must come out from her, or we can have no more communion with them, for the day of Babylon's destruction cometh; the cup is prepared, and her sons and her daughters shall drink of it; and only they shall be found clear in the day of account who shall come out and plead the cause of God's pure truth, and God's pure truth alone. I think my Master deserves this of those of us who stand upon the high places of the field; and of you who are less known, but love your Master none the less, march with us shoulder to shoulder; bear reproach with us as we have to bear it; be as willing to be rejected as we are willing to be rejected; be as willing to lose character, and name, and repute, and standing, as we are; and if you cannot speak with a voice which can be heard as far, yet proclaim with a voice as clear and plain that you love truth and Christ, and that for truth and Christ you will give up everything, but that you cannot give up these.

Beloved, there is a way of bearing witness for Christ which you must adopt—that of witnessing by your consistency of conduct. Holiness is, after all, the mightiest weapon which a Christian can wield. Be ye holy as Christ is holy. Let no man spatter mire upon your garments. Walk so that you never put us to grief. As a Church, be so pure and heavenly, that you may be called the Nazarites of God, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk; and then, though we have no wealth, and boast not gorgeous architecture and the swell of pealing music, yet we shall have this for our music—your holiness, your purity, your separation from all uncleanness; and this for our architecture—that ye are built up as a temple for the Lord.

Lastly, we can all plead for God in a private way. Oh! there is a great power in pleading for God with individuals. A man went to preach for seven summers on the village green, and good was done. Joseph sometimes listened to the preacher, but only to ridicule him. There were many souls converted, but he remained as hard as ever. A certain John who had felt the power of truth, worked with him in the barn, and one day, between the strokes of the flail, John spoke a word for truth and for God, but Joseph laughed at him, and hinted at hypocrisy and many other things. Now, John was very sensitive, and his whole soul was filled with grief at Joseph's banter; so after he had spoken, feeling a flush of emotion, he turned to the corner of the barn and hid his face, while a flood of tears came streaming from his eyes. He wiped them away with the corner of his smock-frock, and came back to his flail; but Joseph had noticed the tears though the other tried to hide them; and what argument could not do, and what preaching could not do, those tears through God the Holy Spirit did effectually, for Joseph thought to himself, "What! does John care for my soul, and weep for my soul? then it is time I should care and weep for it too." Beloved, witness thus for Christ! Be it mine to weep for the sins of the times, and prophecy against them. Be it yours in your own private walk and conversation to rebuke private sin; and by your

loving earnestness to make Jesus Christ dear to many souls! Tell them that Jesus Christ came to save sinners; that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to him, and that “whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life;” and in this way you shall plead the cause of God, who has pleaded the causes of your soul.