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CONSOLATION IN CHRIST.

A Sermon

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“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies.” Philippians ii. 1.

THE language of man has received a new coinage of words since the time of his perfection in Eden. Adam could scarce have understood the word consolation, for the simple reason that he did not understand in Eden the meaning of the word sorrow. O how has our language been swollen through the floods of our griefs and tribulations! It was not sufficiently wide and wild for man when he was driven out of the garden into the wide, wide world. After he had once eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as his knowledge was extended so must the language be by which he could express his thoughts and feelings. But, my hearers, when Adam first needed the word consolation, there was a time when he could not find the fair jewel itself. Until that hour when the first promise was uttered, when the seed of the woman was declared as being the coming man who should bruise the serpent's head, Adam might masticate and digest the word sorrow, but he could never season and flavour it with the hope or thought of consolation, or if the hope and thought might sometimes flit across his mind like a lightning flash in the midst of the tempest's dire darkness, yet it must have been too transient, too unsubstantial, to have made glad his heart, or to soothe his sorrows. Consolation is the dropping of a gentle dew from heaven on desert hearts beneath. True consolation, such as can reach the heart, must be one of the choicest gifts of divine mercy; and surely we are not erring from sacred Scripture when we avow that in its full meaning, consolation can be found nowhere save in Christ, who has come down from heaven, and who has again ascended to heaven, to provide strong and everlasting consolation for those whom he has bought with his blood.

You will remember, my dear friends, that the Holy Spirit, during the present dispensation, is revealed to us as the Comforter. It is the Spirit's business

to console and cheer the hearts of God's people. He does convince of sin; he does illuminate and instruct; but still the main part of his business lies in making glad the hearts of the renewed, in confirming the weak, and lifting up all those that be bowed down. Whatever the Holy Ghost may not be, he is evermore the Comforter to the Church; and this age is peculiarly the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which Christ cheers us not by his personal presence, as he shall do by-and-bye, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Now, mark you, as the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, Christ is the comfort. The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ *is the consolation*. If I may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Christ is the medicine. *He* heals the wound, but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's name and grace. He takes not of his own things, but of the things of Christ. We are not consoled today by new revelations, but by the old revelation explained, enforced, and lit up with new splendour by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. If we give to the Holy Spirit the Greek name of *Paraclete*, as we sometimes do, then our heart confers on our blessed Lord Jesus the title of the *Paraclesis*. If the one be the Comforter, the other is the comfort.

I shall try this morning, first, to show how *Christ in his varied positions is the consolation of the children of God in their varied trials*; then we shall pass on, secondly, to observe that *Christ in his unchanging nature is a consolation to the children of God in their continual sorrows*; and lastly, I shall close by dwelling awhile upon the question as to *whether Christ is a consolation to us*—putting it personally, “Is Christ a present and available consolation for me.”

I. First, CHRIST IN HIS VARIED POSITIONS IS A CONSOLATION FOR THE DIVERS ILLS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Our Master's history is a long and eventful one; but every step of it may yield abundant comfort to the children of God. If we track him from the highest throne of glory to the cross of deepest woe, and then through the grave, up again the shining steeps of heaven, and onward through his mediatorial kingdom, on to the day when he shall deliver up the throne to God, even our Father, throughout every part of that wondrous pathway there may be found the flowers of consolation growing plenteously, and the children of God have but to stoop and gather them. “*All his paths drop fatness, all his garments which he wears in his different offices, smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby he makes his people glad.*”

To begin at the beginning, there are times when we look upon the past with the deepest grief. The withering of Eden's flowers has often caused a fading in the garden of our souls. We have mourned exceedingly that we have been driven out to till the ground with the sweat of our brow—that the curse should have glanced on us through the sin of our first parent, and we

have been ready to cry, “Woe worth the day!” in which our parent stretched forth his hand to touch the forbidden fruit. Would to God that he had rested in unsullied purity, that we his sons and daughters might have lived beneath an unclouded sky, might never have mourned the ills of bodily pain or of spiritual distress. To meet this very natural source of grief, I bid you consider Christ in old eternity. Open now the eye of thy faith, believer, and see Christ as thine Eternal Covenant-head stipulating to redeem thee even before thou hadst become a bond-slave, bound to deliver even before thou hadst worn the chain. Think, I pray thee, of the eternal council in which thy restoration was planned and declared even before thy fall, and in which thou wast established in an eternal salvation even before the necessity of that salvation had begun. O, my brethren, how it cheers our hearts to think of the anticipating mercies of God! He anticipated our fall, foreknew the ills which it would bring upon us, and provided in his eternal decree of predestinating love an effectual remedy for all our diseases, a certain deliverance from all our sorrows. I see thee, thou fellow of the Eternal, thou equal of the Almighty God! Thy goings forth were of old. I see thee lift thy right hand and engage thyself to fulfil thy Father’s will—“In the volume of the book it is written of me, ‘I delight to do thy will, O God.’” I see thee forming, signing, and sealing that eternal covenant by which the souls of all the redeemed were there and then delivered from the curse, and made sure and certain inheritors of thy kingdom and of thy glory. In this respect Christ shines out as the consolation of his people.

Again, if ever your minds dwell with sadness upon the fact that we are at this day absent from the Lord, because we are present in the body, think of the great truth that Jesus Christ of old had delights with the sons of men, and he delights to commune and have fellowship with his people now. Remember that your Lord and Master appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre under the disguise of a pilgrim. Abraham was a pilgrim, and Christ to show his sympathy with his servant, became a pilgrim too. Did he not appear also to Jacob at the brook Jabbok? Jacob was a wrestler, and Jesus appears there as a wrestler too. Did he not stand before Moses under the guise and figure of a flame in the midst of a bush? Was not Moses at the very time the representative of a people who were like a bush burning with fire and yet not consumed? Did he not stand before Joshua—Joshua the leader of Israel’s troops, and did he not appear to him as the captain of the Lord’s host? And do you not well remember that when the three holy children walked in the midst of the fiery furnace, *he* was in the midst of the fire too, not as a king, but as one in the fire with them? Cheer then thy heart with this consoling inference. If Christ appeared to his servants in the olden time, and manifested himself to them as bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, in all their trials and their troubles, he will do no less to thee today; he will be with thee

in passing through the fire; he will be thy rock, thy shield, and thy high tower; he will be thy song, thy banner, and thy crown of rejoicing. Fear not, he who visited his saints of old will surely not be long absent from his children today; his delights are still with his people, and still will he walk with us through this weary wilderness. Surely this makes Christ a most blessed consolation for his Israel.

And now to pursue the Master's footsteps, as he comes out of the invisible glories of Deity, and wears the visible garment of humanity. Let us view the babe of Bethlehem, the child of Nazareth, the Son of Man. See him, he is in every respect a man. "Of the substance of his mother" is he made; in the substance of our flesh he suffers; in the trials of our flesh he bows his head; under the weakness of our flesh he prays, and in the temptation of our flesh he is kept and maintained by the grace within. *You* today are tried and troubled, and you ask for consolation. What better can be afforded you than what is presented to you in the fact that Jesus Christ is one with you in your nature—that he has suffered all that you are now suffering—that your pathway has been aforetime trodden by his sacred foot—that the cup of which you drink is a cup which he has drained to the very bottom—that the river through which you pass is one through which he swam, and every wave and billow which rolls over your head did in old time roll over him. Come! art thou ashamed to suffer what thy Master suffered? Shall the disciple be above his Master, and the servant above his Lord? Shall he die upon a cross, and wilt not thou bear the cross? Must he be crowned with thorns, and shalt thou be crowned with laurel? Is he to be pierced in hands and feet, and are thy members to feel no pain? O cast away the fond delusion I pray thee, and look to him who "endured the cross, despising the shame," and be ready to endure and to suffer even as he did.

And now behold our Master's humanity clothed even as ours has been since the fall. He comes not before us in the purple of a king, in the garb of the rich and the respectable, but he wears a dress in keeping with his apparent origin; he is a carpenter's son, and he wears a dress which becomes his station. View him, ye sons of poverty, as he stands before you in his seamless garment, the common dress of the peasant; and if you have felt this week the load of want—if you have suffered and are suffering this very day the ills connected with poverty, pluck up courage, and find a consolation in the fact that Christ was poorer than you are—that he knew more of the bitterness of want than you ever yet can guess. You cannot say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I have not where to lay my head;" or if you could go as far as that, yet have you never known a forty-day's fast. You have *some* comforts left to you; you do know at least the sweet taste of bread to the hungry man, and of rest to the weary; but these things were often

denied to him. Look at him, then, and see if there be not to you comfort in Christ.

We pass now, O Jesus, from thy robe of poverty to that scene of shame in which thy garments were rent from thee, and thou didst hang naked before the sun. Children of God, if there be one place more than another where Christ becomes the joy and comfort of his people, it is where he plunged deepest into the depths of woe. Come, see him, I pray you, in the garden of Gethsemane; behold him, as his heart is so full of love that he cannot hold it in—so full of sorrow that it must find a vent. Behold the bloody sweat as it distils from every pore of his body, and falls in goutts of gore upon the frozen ground. See him as all red with his own blood, wrapped in a bloody mantle of his own gore, he is brought before Herod and Pilate and the Sanhedrim. See him now as they scourge him with their knotted whips, and afresh encrimson him, as though it were not enough for him to be dyed once in scarlet, but he must again be enwrapped in purple. See him, I say, now that they have stripped him naked. Behold him as they drive the nails into his hand and into his feet. Look up and see the sorrowful image of your dolorous Lord. O mark him, as the ruby drops stand on the thorn-crown, and make it the blood-red diadem of the King of misery. O see him as his bones are out of joint, and he is poured out like water and brought into the dust of death. “Behold and see, was there ever sorrow like unto his sorrow that is done unto him?” All ye that pass by, draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief. Behold the Emperor of woe who never had an equal or a rival in his agonies! Come and see him; and if I read not the words of consolation written in lines of blood all down his side, then these eyes have never read a word in any book; for if there be not consolation in a murdered Christ, there is no joy, no peace to any heart. If in that finished ransom piece, if in that efficacious blood, if in that all-accepted sacrifice, there be not joy, ye harpers of heaven, there is no joy in you, and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures for evermore. I am persuaded, men and brethren, that we have only to sit more at the Cross to be less troubled with our doubts, and our fears, and our woes. We have but to see *his* sorrows, and lose *our* sorrows; we have but to see his wounds, and heal our own. If we would live, it must be by contemplation of his death; if we would rise to dignity it must be by considering his humiliation and his sorrow.

“Lord, thy death and passion give
Strength and comfort in my need,
Every hour while here I live,
On thy love my soul shall feed.”

But come now, troubled heart, and follow the dead body of thy Master, for though dead, it is as full of consolation as when alive. It is now no more naked; the loving hands of Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and the Magdalene and the other Mary, have wrapped it in cerements, and have laid it in the new tomb. Come, saints, not to weep, but to dry your tears. You have been all your lifetime subject to fear of death: come, break your bonds asunder; be free from this fear. Where your Master sleeps, you may surely find an easy couch. What more could you desire than to lie upon the bed of your royal Solomon? The grave is now no more a charnel-house or a dark prison; *his* having entered it makes it a blessed retiring-room, a sacred bath in which the King's Esthers purify their bodies, to make them fit for the embraces of their Lord. It becomes now not the gate of annihilation, but the portal of eternal bliss,—a joy to be anticipated, a privilege to be desired. “Fearless we lay us in the tomb, and sleep the night away, for thou art here to break the gloom, and call us back to day.”

I am certain, brethren, that all the consolations which wise men can ever afford in a dying hour will never be equal to that which is afforded by the record, that Jesus Christ ascended from the tomb. The maxims of philosophy, the endearments of affection, and the music of hope, will be a very poor compensation for the light of Jesus' grave. Death is the only mourner at Jesus' tomb, and while the whole earth rejoices at the sorrow of its last enemy, I would be all too glad to die, that I might know him, and the power of his resurrection. Heir of heaven! if thou wouldst be rid once for all of every doubting thought about the hour of thy dissolution, look, I pray thee, to Christ risen from the dead. Put thy finger into the print of the nails, and thrust thy hand into his side, and be not faithless but believing. He *is* risen; he saw no corruption; the worms could not devour him; and as Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, he has become the first fruits of them that slept. Inasmuch as he has risen, thou shalt rise. He has rolled the stone away, not for himself alone, but for thee also. He has unwrapped the grave-clothes, not for his own sake, but for thy sake too, and thou shalt surely stand in the latter day upon the earth, when *he* shall be here, and in thy flesh thou shalt see God.

Time would fail us, if we should attempt to track the Master in his glorious pathway after his resurrection. Let it suffice us briefly to observe that, having led his disciples out unto a mountain, where he had delighted often to commune with them, he was suddenly taken up from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight. We think we may conjecture, by the help of Scripture, what transpired after that cloud had covered him. Did not the angels

“Bring his chariot from on high
To bear him to his throne,

Clap their triumphant wings and cry,
His glorious work is done?"

Do you not see him, as he mounts his triumphal chariot,

"And angels chant the solemn lay,
Lift up your heads, ye golden gates,
Ye everlasting doors give way?"

Behold angels gazing from the battlements of heaven, replying to their comrades who escort the ascending Son of Man. "Who is the King of Glory?" And this time those who accompany the Master sing more sweetly and more loudly than before, while they cry, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in." And now the doors

"Loose all their bars of massy light,
And wide untold the radiant scene,"

and he enters. "He claims those mansions as his right," and all the angels rise to "receive the King of Glory in." Behold him, as he rides in triumph through heaven's streets; see Death and Hell bound at his chariot wheels. Hark to the "Hosannas "of the spirits of the just made perfect! Hear how cherubim and seraphim roll out in thunders their everlasting song—"Glory be unto thee; glory be unto thee, thou Son of God, for thou wast slain and thou hast redeemed the world by thy blood." See him as he mounts his throne and near his Father sits. Behold the benignant complacency of the paternal Deity. Hear him as he accepts him and gives him a name which is above every name. And I say, my brethren, in the midst of your tremblings, and doubtings, and fearings, anticipate the joy which you shall have, when you shall share in this triumph, for know you not that you ascended up on high in him? He went not up to heaven alone, but as the representative of all the blood-bought throng. *You* rode in that triumphal chariot with him; you were exalted on high, and made to sit far above principalities and powers in him; for we are risen in him, we are exalted in Christ. Even at this very day in Christ that Psalm is true—"Thou hast put all things under his feet; thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands." Come, poor trembler, thou art little in thine own esteem, and but a worm and no man! Rise, I say, to the height of thy nobility; for thou art in Christ greater than angels be, more magnified and glorified by far. God give you grace, ye who have faith, that ye may now, in the fact of Jesus Christ's exaltation, find consolation for yourself!

But now today methinks I see the Master, as he stands before his Father's throne, dressed in the garments of a priest; upon his breast I see the Urim and

Thummim glittering with the bejewelled remembrances of his people. In his hand I see still the remembrance of his sacrifice, the nail mark; and there I see still upon his feet the impress of the laver of blood in which he washed himself, not as the priest of old with water, but with his own gore. I hear him plead with authority before his Father's face, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." O my poor prayers, ye shall be heard! O my faint groans, ye shall be answered! Oh, my poor troubled soul, thou art safe, for

"Jesus pleads and must prevail,
His cause can never, never fail."

Come, my poor heart, lift up thyself now from the dunghill; shake thyself from the dust; ungird thy sackcloth and put on thy beautiful garments. *He* is our advocate today, our eloquent and earnest pleader, and he prevails with God. The Father smiles—he smiles on Christ; he smiles on us in answer to Jesus Christ's intercession. Is he not here also the consolation of Israel?

I only remark once more that he who has gone up into heaven shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go up into heaven. He ascended in clouds, "Behold he cometh with clouds." He went up on high with sound of trumpet and with shout of angels. Behold he cometh! The silver trumpet shall soon sound. 'Tis midnight: the hours are rolling wearily along; the virgins wise and foolish are all asleep. But the cry shall soon be heard—"Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him." That same Jesus who was crucified shall come in glory. The hand that was pierced shall grasp the sceptre. Beneath his arm he shall gather up all the sceptres of all kings; monarchies shall be the sheaves, and *he* shall be the kingly reaper. On his head there shall be the many crowns of universal undisputed dominion. "He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth." His feet shall tread on the mount of Olivet, and his people shall be gathered in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Lo, the world's great battle is almost begun; the trumpet sounds the beginning of the battle of Armageddon. To the fight, ye warriors of Christ, to the fight; for it is your last conflict, and over the bodies of your foes ye shall rush to meet your Lord—he fighting on the one side by his coming, you on the other side by drawing near to him. You shall meet him in the solemn hour of victory. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and you that are alive and remain shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last triumphant sounding of the dread, tremendous trump. *Then* shall you know to the full how Christ can console you for all your sorrows, all your shame, and all your neglect which you have received from the hand of men. Ay, today bethink you, there awaits the recompense of an earthly splendour for your earthly poverty; there awaits you earthly dignity for your earthly shame. You shall

not only have spiritual, but you shall have temporal bite sings. He who takes away the curse will take it away not only from your soul, but from the very ground on which you tread. He who redeems you shall redeem not only your spirit, but your body. Your eyes shall see your Redeemer; your hands shall be lifted up in acclamation, and your feet shall bear your leaping joys in the procession of his glory, in your very body in which you have suffered for him you shall sit with him upon the throne and judge the nations of the earth. These things, I say, are all full of the purest and highest consolation to the children of God.

II. Having taken nearly all my time upon the first point, I can only say a word or two upon the second and on the third. The second point was to be this—CHRIST IN HIS UNCHANGING NATURE; a consolation for our continual sorrows.

Christ is to his people a *surpassing* consolation. Talk of the consolations of philosophy? We have all the philosopher can pretend to; but we have it in a higher degree. Speak of the charms of music which can lull our sorrows to a blessed sleep?

“Sweeter sounds than music knows,
Charm us in our Saviour’s name.”

“Jesus, the very thought of thee,
With rapture fills my breast.”

Speak we of the joys of friendship? and sweet they are indeed; but “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”—“a brother born for adversity.” There is one who is better than all friends, more able to cheer than those who are dearest and nearest to our hearts. Or, speak we of the joys of hope? and certainly hope can console us when nothing else can do it. *He* is our hope. We cast the anchor of our hope into that which is within the veil, whither the forerunner hath for us entered. The consolations of Christ are unrivalled by any which can be offered by wit, by wisdom, by mirth, by hope itself; they are incomparable, and can never be surpassed.

Again, the consolations of Christ, from the fact of his unchanging nature, are *unfailing*.

“When every earthly prop gives way,
He still is all our strength and stay.”

Look you at Job, and see the picture of how Christ can console. The messenger rushes in—“The Sabeans have taken away the oxen and the asses!” “Well, well,” Job might console himself and say, “but the sheep are left.” “But the fire of God hath fallen on the sheep! and the Chaldeans have carried

away the camels and slain the servants!" "Alas!" the good man might say, "but my children are left, and if they be spared, then I can still have joy." "The wind has come from the wilderness, and smitten the four corners of the house, and all thy sons and daughters are dead!" Ah! well-a-day, penniless and childless, the patriarch might weep; but, looking on his wife, he would say, "There still remaineth one sweet comforter, my well-beloved spouse." *She* bids him "curse God and die;" "speaking as one of the foolish women speaketh." Yet might Job say, "Though my wife hath failed me, there remaineth at least three friends; there they sit with me on the dunghill, and *they* will console me." But they speak bitterness, till he cries, "Miserable comforters are ye all." Well, but at least he has his own body in health, has he not? No, he sits down upon a dunghill, and scrapes himself with a potsherd, for his sores have become intolerable. Well, well, "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." He may at least cheer himself with the fact, that he lives. "Why should a living man complain?" Yes, but he fears he is about to die. And now comes out the grandeur of his hope: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." All the other windows are darkened; but the sun shines in at the oriel window of redemption. All the other doors are shut; but this great door of hope and joy still stands wide open. All other wells are dry; but this flows with an unceasing stream. Brothers and sisters, when all things else depart, an unchanging Christ shall be your unchanging joy.

Furthermore, the consolations of Christ are *all powerful* consolations. When a poor soul is so deep in the mire that you cannot lift it with the lever of eloquence, nor draw it up with the bands of sympathy, nor raise it with wings of hope, *he* can touch it with his finger and it can spring up from the mire, and put its feet upon a rock, and feel the new song in its mouth and its goings well established. There is no form of melancholy which will not yield before the grace of God; there is no shape of distress, which will not give way before the divine energy of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, when he uses Christ as the consolation.

Again: this consolation is *everlasting* consolation. It consoled you, O aged sire, when as a youth you gave your heart to Christ; it was your joy in the mid-winter of your manhood; it has become your strength and your song in the days of your old age; when tottering on your staff you shall go down to Jordan's brink, he will be your consolation then. In the prospect of your coming dissolution, yea, when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you shall fear no evil, for he is with you; his rod and his staff shall comfort you. All other things shall pass away as a dream when one awaketh; but this substantial support shall abide with you in the midst of the swellings of Jordan, in the hour of the departure of your spirit from your body.

And then remember that this is a consolation which is always within the believer's reach. He is "a very present help in time of trouble." Ye may always cheer your heart with Christ when other things are far away. When friend visits you not, and your chamber becomes lonely—when spouse has forgotten to speak the kind word to you, and children have become ungrateful, he will make your bed in your sickness, he will be your never-failing friend and abide with you in every dark and gloomy hour, till he brings you into his dear arms, where you will be emparadised for ever and ever.

III. I close now with my last point—the grave and serious question, IS CHRIST AN AVAILABLE CONSOLATION FOR ME?

Who art thou, friend? Art thou one who needs no consolation? Hast thou a righteousness of thine own? Let me put it in thine own words. You are a *good* man, kind to the poor, charitable, upright, generous, holy. You believe there may be *some* faults in yourself, but they must be very few, and you trust that what with your own merits and with God's mercy you may enter heaven. In the name of God, I do solemnly assure you, that Christ is not an available consolation for *you*. Christ will have nothing to do with you, so long as you have anything to do with yourself. If you are trusting in any measure whatever upon aught that you have ever done or hope to do, you are trusting in a lie, and Christ will never be friends with a lie. He will never help *you* to do what he came to do himself. If you will take his work as it is, as a finished work, well and good; but if you must needs add to it your own, God shall add unto you the plagues which are written in this Book, but he shall by no means give to you any of the promises and the comforts which Christ can afford.

But instead thereof, I will suppose that I address myself this morning to a man who says, "I was once, I think, a believer in Christ; I made a profession of religion, but I fell from it, and I have lost for years all the hope and joy I ever had; I think I was a presumptuous man, that I pretended to have what I never had, and yet at the time I really thought I had it. May I think that there is consolation in Christ for a backslider and a traitor like me? Often, sir, do I feel as if the doom of Judas must be mine—as if I must perish miserably, like Demas, who loved this present world." Ah! backslider, backslider, God speaks to thee this morning, and he says, "Return ye backsliding children of men, for I am married to you and if married, there has never been a divorce between Christ and you. Has he put you away? Unto which of his creditors has he sold you? Where do you read in his Word, that he has divided from the affection of his heart one whose name was ever written in his Book? Come, come, backslider, come again to the cross. He who received you once will receive you again. Come where the blood is flowing; the blood that washed you once, can wash you yet once more. Come, come, thou art naked, and poor, and miserable; the raiment which was given to thee once, shall

array thee again with beauty. The unsearchable riches which were opened up to thee aforetime, shall be thine again.

“To thy Father’s bosom press’d,
Once again a child confess’d,
From his hand no more to roam,
Come, backsliding sinner, come.”

But I hear another say, “I am not a backslider, but simply one who desires to be saved. I can say honestly, I would give my right arm from its socket if I might but be saved. Why, sir, if I had ten thousand worlds I would freely cast them away as pebble stones, and worthless, if I might but find Christ.” Poor soul, and does the devil tell thee thou shalt never have Christ? Why, thou hast a warrant to lay hold on Christ today. “No,” sayest thou, “I have no right whatever.” The fact that thou sayest thou hast no right should at least comfort the minister in addressing himself freely to thee. The right of a sinner to come to Christ does not lie in the sinner, nor in any feelings which the sinner may have had; it lies in the fact that Christ commands him to come. If one of you should receive as you went out of yonder door a command to go at once to Windsor, and have an interview with the Queen, as soon as you had received the order and were sure it came from her, you might say, “Well, but if I had known this, I should have put on other clothes;” but the order is peremptory, “Come now; come just as you are;” you would, I think, without any very great doubt, though greatly wondering, take your place and ride there at once. When you came to the gate, some tall grenadier might ask you what you were at. “Why,” he might say, “you are not fit to come and see Her Majesty; you are not a gentleman; you have not so many hundreds a year; how can you expect to be admitted?” You show the command, and he lets you pass on. You come to another door, and there is an usher there. “You are not in a court dress,” says he; you are not properly robed for the occasion.” You show the command, and he lets you pass on. But suppose when at last you should come into the ante room you should say, “Now I dare not go in; I am not fit; I feel I shall not know how to behave myself.” Suppose you are silly enough not to go, you would be disobedient and ten times more foolish in disobeying than you could have been by any blunders in behaviour if you had obeyed. Now it is just so with you today. Christ says, “Come unto me.” He does not merely invite you, because he knows you would think you did not deserve the invitation; but he gives the *command*, and he bids me say to you, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you;” he bids me command you in his name, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Of his grace and mercy he puts it as a command. “*But*” you say. Ah! what right have you to say “*but*” to the Lord’s commands? Again, I say, away with your

“buts.” What right have you to be “butting” at his laws and his commands. “But,” you say, “do hear me for a moment.” I will hear you then. “Sir, I cannot imagine that if such a hard-hearted sinner as I am were really to trust Christ I should be saved.” The English of that is, that you give God the lie. He says you shall be, and do you think he speaks an untruth? “Ah!” says another, “but it is too good to be true. I cannot believe that just as I am, if I trust in Christ, my sin shall be forgiven.” Again, I say, the simple English of that is, that you think you know better than God: and so you do in fact stand up and say to his promise, “Thou art false.” He says, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” “Ah!” you say, “but that does not mean me?” Can any language speak more plainly? “*Him.*” What him? Why, any “him” in the world.

“Yes,” says one, “but the invitations are made to character—‘Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden;’ I am afraid I am not heavy laden enough?” Yes, but you will mark, while the invitation is given to character, yet the promise is not given to the character; it is given to those who come—“Come unto me, and I will give you rest and while that one invitation may be confined to the weary and heavy laden, yet there are scores of others that stand as wide and free as the very air we breathe. If you have that qualification, do not come even with it, because you are unqualified when you think you are qualified; you are unfit when you think you are fit; and if you have a sense of need, which you think makes you fit to come to Christ, it shows you are not fit and do not know your need; for no man knows his need till he thinks he does not know his need, and no man is in a right state to come to Christ till he thinks he is not in a right state to come to Christ. But he who feels that he has not one good thought or one good feeling to recommend him, he is the man who may come. He who says, “But I may not come,” is the very man that is bidden to come. Besides, my friends, it is not what you think, or what I think; it is what Christ says; and is it not written by the hand of the Apostle John, “This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?” Men who say it is not the duty of sinners to believe, I cannot think what they make out of such a text as that—“This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent;” and that one where God expressly says, “He that believeth not is condemned already, *because* he believeth not.” Why, I should think I was addressing heathens, if I addressed a company of men who thought that God did not command men to repent; for Scripture is so plain upon the point, and I say, if God commands thee to do it, thou mayest do it. Let the devil say “Nay,” but God says “Yea.” Let him stand and push you back; but say to him, “Nay, Satan, nay, I come here in God’s name and as devils fear and fly before the name of Christ, so will Satan and thy fears all fly before his command. He

commands thee to believe—that is, to trust him. Trust him, soul, trust him; right or wrong, trust him.

But some of you want a great temptation, and a great deal of despair, before you will trust him. Well, the Lord will send it to you, if you will not trust him without it. I remember John Bunyan says he had a black temptation, and it did him a great deal of good; for, said he, “Before I had the temptation I used always to be questioning a promise, and saying, ‘May I come, or may I not come?’” But at last he said, “Yea, often when I have been making to the promise, I have seen as if the Lord would refuse my soul for ever: I was often as if I had run upon the pike, and as if the Lord had thrust at me, to keep me from him as with a flaming sword.” Ah! and perhaps you may be driven to that. I pray you may; but I would infinitely rather that the sweet love and grace of God would entice you now to trust Jesus Christ just as you are. He will not deceive you, sinner; he will not fail you. Trusting him, you shall build on a sure foundation, and find him who is the consolation of Israel and the joy of all his saints.
