

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

COVENANT BLESSINGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 14TH, 1872, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”—Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 27.

LUTHER has well said that the experience of the minister is the best book in his library. I am persuaded it is so, and that God often leads his servants through peculiar states of mind, not so much for their own benefit as for the sake of those to whom they may afterwards minister. It is not long ago since I felt myself, when engaged in devotion, cold and dead, and in looking into my own heart I saw no ground of comfortable assurance as to my being a possessor of the grace of God: my feelings towards the great Father in heaven were not, as far as I could judge, those of a child: my love towards Jesus Christ for his redemption was almost extinct. I thought over the story of his cross without emotion, and I recalled to my mind the history of his everlasting love without gratitude. My soul was not, as it sometimes is, like the crystal lake which is ruffled with every passing breath of the breeze, but like some northern sea hardened into iron by the fierce reign of endless winter; the sublime truths of infinite grace stirred not my soul. My heart sank within me for a moment, but only for a moment, for there flashed across me this thought,—“The Holy Spirit can produce within your heart all those emotions you are seeking for, all those desires you fain would feel, all the meltings, and the movings, and the yearnings, and the rejoicings, which are significant of the grace of God.” Under the influence of that truth, as in a moment, my deadness and coldness were driven away, and I was filled with adoring love. Then I wondered greatly that the Lord should deign to handle such coarse material as our nature, that he should condescend to work upon such gross spirits, such grovelling minds, such

carnal understandings as ours. And when, by faith, I perceived that he could not only there and then give me to feel spiritual life, but could maintain it against all hazards, and perfect it beyond all imperfections, and bring me safe into his eternal kingdom and glory; an act of faith exerted upon the Holy Spirit through the cross of Christ made my soul eager for prayer, and my joy and peace in believing were more than restored to me. Then, I said within myself, there may be others in a like case, and especially there may be seeking souls who, seeing what must be wrought in them before they can hope to be partakers of the eternal rest, may despair that such a work should ever be done, and looking only to themselves, may be inclined to give up all hope, and conclude that within the pearly gates they can never enter. Perhaps, I thought, if I remind them that “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,” that Jesus Christ’s bequest to us, in virtue of his having gone to heaven, is an Omnipotent One, who can work all our works in us, causing us to will and to do of his own good pleasure,—the thought may encourage their hearts, and enable them to look with restful confidence to him who works all our works in us.

Our text is a portion of that delightful rendering of the covenant of grace which is given us by Ezekiel, and we will, for a single moment, ask you to remember the persons with whom the covenant of grace was made. An early version of the covenant of grace was given to Abraham, and this in Ezekiel is a repetition, expansion, or explanation of the same. This covenant, and that form of it made with Abraham, concern the same individuals. Let us then remind ourselves that the covenant was not made with the fleshly seed of Abraham. If it had been, it would have run in the line of Ishmael as well as that of Isaac; but it was not made with Ishmael, for what saith the Scriptures, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.” The covenant of grace was not made with the children who are born after the flesh as was Ishmael, but with those who are born according to the promise as was Isaac, who was not born by virtue of the energy of the flesh, for of Abraham it was said that he was as good as dead, and as for Sarah that she was long past bearing; but Isaac, the child of laughter, the child of joy, the heir of the promise, was born according to the power of God, and not after the energy of nature. Isaac evidently typifies not the man of works but the man of faith. The man of works is born after the flesh, he has reformed himself, he has done his best, he continues to do his best, he is the child of his own energy, he is the result of human power, he is under the law, for he tries to save himself by the law, he is, therefore, the son of Hagar the bond-woman, and he is under bondage, and his destiny may be learned from the words, “Cast forth the son of the bondwoman, he shall not be heir with my son.” But the man of faith has received his faith supernaturally, it has been

wrought in him by the Holy Spirit; it is not the fruit of the creature's power, it is the gift of God: it is the child of promise, and it is the child of joy and laughter to him; it is a fresh spring of joy within his soul. The man of faith, therefore, is the heir of the promise, and the partaker of the covenant, since he believes in Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. The man who rests upon the grace of God, and believes in God as holy Abraham did, he is a faithful man, and, consequently, he is one of the sons of the father of the faithful.

Let every man, therefore, who believes in Jesus Christ this morning know assuredly that every word of this text belongs to him, and shall be fulfilled to him. I earnestly pray that many a poor sinner may put in his claim and say, "I have no works, but I believe in Jesus Christ; I come now and rest myself upon the bloody sacrifice offered upon Calvary, and I humbly receive the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, by simply depending on him." To every one who exercises faith in God, even though it be but a weak and struggling faith, the precious promise we are about to expound is a heritage which cannot be taken away from him.

The main promise of the text before us is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; but observe that the text divides itself thus: first, it contains *an assured promise of preparation for the Spirit's indwelling*; secondly, *a plain promise of that indwelling*; and, thirdly, *the blessed results which flow therefrom*.

I. Observe, first, we have here to all God's covenanted people, or in other words, to all believers, a promise of PREPARATION FOR THE SPIRIT'S INDWELLING. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." This promise is as a cluster of nuts, or a bough with many golden apples. Like the cherubim of Ezekiel it has four faces, all smiling upon the heirs of salvation. Like the new Jerusalem it lieth four-square. It is a quadruple treasure worthy of four-fold consideration.

The first of the four blessings is *the gift of a new heart*. "A new heart also will I give you." The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in the old heart; it is a filthy place, devoid of all good, and full of enmity to God. His very first operation upon our nature is to pull down the old house and build himself a new one, that he may be able to inhabit us consistently with his holy spiritual nature. A new heart is absolutely essential, we must be born again or the Spirit of truth cannot abide within us.

Observe where the inward work of grace begins. All man's attempts at the betterment of human nature begin from without, and the theory is that the work will deepen till it reaches that which is within. They profess to emancipate the man from the grosser vices, trusting that the reform will go further, that he will be brought under superior influences, and so be elevat-

ed in mind and heart. Theirs is an outward ointment for an inward disease, a bandage upon the skin to stay the bleeding of the heart. Miserable physicians are they all. Their remedies fail to eradicate the deep-seated maladies of humanity. God's way of dealing with men is the reverse. He begins within and works towards the exterior in due course. He is a mere quack who, seeing in a man the signs of disease, operates upon the symptoms, but never looks to the root of the mischief. It is very possible that by potent poisons an empiric may check unpleasing indications, and he may kill the man in doing so; but the wise physician looks to the fountain of the disease, and if it be possible to touch the core and centre of it, he leaves the symptoms to right themselves. If your watch be out of order the watchmaker does not consider it sufficient to clean the silver case, or to remove dust from the face; but he looks within and discovers that this wheel is broken, this cog out of order, or the main spring needing to be renewed; he is not much concerned about setting the hands accurately at first, for he knows that the external manifestations of the correct time will follow from the setting to rights the time-keeping machinery within. Look at our brooks and rivulets which have been by a lax legislature so long delivered over to the tormentors to be blackened into pestiferous sewers; if we want to have them purged it is of small avail to cast chloride of lime and other chemicals into the stream; the only remedy is to forbid the pollution, to demand that manufactories shall not poison us wholesale, but shall in some other manner consume their useless products. The voice of common sense bids us go to the original cause of the defilement and deal with it at its sources. That is just what God does when he saves a sinner, he begins at the origin of the sinner's sin and deals with his heart.

My brethren, what a difficult work this is: "A new heart also will I give you." If it had been said, "A new garment will I give you," many of us could have conferred the same boon. If it had been said, "A new speech will I teach you," this also, with a little skill, might have been arranged; and, if the promise had been, "new habits will I create in you," this also we could have attempted, and perhaps successfully, to imitate, for habits are to be engendered: but a new heart—ah, here human power and wit are non-plussed. Jannes and Jambres in Egypt could imitate some of the miracles, they "did so with their enchantment," and there is much in true religion which men can successfully counterfeit; but, as in Egypt, a point was reached wherein the magicians were foiled, so that they confessed, "This is the finger of God," so in the regeneration of our nature, in the changing the heart, the Lord alone is seen. Who shall pretend to give another a new heart? Go, boaster, and suspend the laws of gravitation, recall the thunderbolt, reverse the chariot of the sun, transform the Atlantic to a lake of fire, and then attempt to change the nature of the heart of man. This God alone

worketh, for he only doeth wondrous things. The affections are the most powerful part of our nature, they to a great extent mould even the understanding itself, and if the heart be defiled all the mental faculties become disturbed in their balance. God, therefore, commences at the heart, and therein begins a work in which man cannot compete with him, nor can he even help him. God must do it. The same God who made men must new make them, if the new-making is to begin with a change of heart. Blessed be God, he is omnipotent enough to give us new hearts, he has wisdom enough to renew us, he has purity sufficient to cleanse us, he has abounding mercy to bear with us. Mark, he gives us “a *new heart*,” not an old heart touched-up and mended; not an old heart a little purified and improved; but a new heart which enters into a new life, receives new inspirations, feeds on new food, longs for new happiness, performs new actions, and is, in fact, an inhabitant of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Brethren, I will read this sentence over again, “A new heart also will I give you;” and I would call your attention to the style of the language. It is “I will,” and yet again, “I will.” Jehovah’s Ego is the great word. It is not “I will if,” or “I will perhaps,” or “I will upon certain conditions,” but—“*I will give*.” He speaks in a Godlike tone. It is royal language, the very word of Him who of old said, “Light be,” and light was. He who spoke the world into being now speaks the new world of grace into being in the self-same majestic voice.

Turn, now, to the second blessing—“*A new spirit will I put within you*.” Perhaps this clause may be explained as an interpretation of the former one. It may be that the new heart and the new spirit are intended to represent the same thing. But, I conceive there is more than this. “A new spirit,”—does not the term indicate that a new vital principle is implanted in men? We have often explained to you that the natural man is correctly and strictly speaking a compound of soul and body only. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; and, as we bear the image of the first Adam, we are body and soul only. It is our own belief that in regeneration something more is done than the mere rectifying of what was there: there is in the new birth infused and implanted in man a third and more elevated principle,—a spirit is begotten in him; and, as the second Adam was made a quickening spirit, so in the new birth we are transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus, who is the second Adam. The implantation, infusion, and putting into our nature the third and higher principle is, we believe, the being born again. Regarded in this light, the words before us may be regarded as an absolute and unconditional promise of the covenant of grace to all the seed that a new spirit shall be put within them. But, if we view it as some do, we shall then read it thus—the ruling spirit of man’s nature shall be changed.

The spirit which rules and reigns in Godless, Christless men, is the spirit of a rebellious slave, the spirit of self. Every natural man's main motive is himself, even in his religion he only seeks self. If he be attentive to prayers and sermons, it is that he himself may be saved; and if he fears God, and dreads the terrors of his law, it is on his own account—not that he cares for God's glory, God's honour, or the rights of God—not one whit; he has no more interest in God than a rebellious slave has in the property of his master. He wears the yoke, but he groans under it; he would gladly enough escape from it if he could; he is only happy when he is breaking his master's laws and fulfilling his own selfish will. But, when the Spirit of God comes upon us, to make our spirit a fit place for his residence, he takes away the spirit of the slave, and gives us the spirit of a child, and from that moment the service of God becomes a different thing: we do not serve him now because we are afraid of the whip, but nobler motives move us; gratitude binds us to the Lord's service, and love gives wings to the feet of obedience. Now the Lord is no more regarded as a tyrant, but as a wise and loving parent. Whatever he may do with us, we rejoice in his wisdom and goodness. We view him no longer with suspicion and dread, but with confidence and joy. No more do we ask "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" but we desire to come near to him, and in our sorrows our cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat." It is a revolution indeed, when the hatred and dread of a slave are exchanged for the loving subjection of a son. This is one of the precious privileges of the covenant of grace, which I trust, beloved, many of you have already received, and which I hope others who have not received it will seek after. If they have believed in Jesus, a new spirit, a spirit of sonship is their privilege; let them not be content unless they have it now.

A third and further blessing of the text is the *removal of the stony heart*. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." I do not think the Lord removes at once the *evil* heart out of any man's flesh; there it remains to be fought with, like the Canaanites in Canaan when Israel had entered there, to prove us and to try us, but he does take away the stony heart at once. The stony heart is a hard heart. The moment anything strikes a stone it repels the blow; when the gospel is heard by a hard heart it throws it off again, it is not moved by it, it is not affected by it. You might as well throw feathers at a wall as preach gospel sermons to hard hearts, if your confidence be in the sermon itself; only God's power can make the feather-like sermon to penetrate the heart of stone. The Lord can do it, but the thing itself cannot be done by nature. The natural heart is an impenetrable heart; you may make scratches upon the surface, but you cannot enter within it to reach its inner core. What a marble heart by nature each one of us has. Till grace visits us the truth cannot enter us any more than light can shine into a stone. A

stony heart is unfeeling, you can make no impression upon it: it cannot smart, it cannot breathe, it cannot sigh, it cannot groan,—a stony thing because a dead thing. Bruise it, and that which would make flesh black and blue does not affect the stone. Cut it, and that which would cause an agony to living flesh makes no disturbance in its granite mass. A cold, insensible thing, not to be warmed even by the rehearsal of the love of Calvary, such is our heart by nature. Dear hearers, such is the heart of every one of you till God deals with you,—just a lump of stone. Of course we speak not literally but spiritually, yet what we assert is a solemn fact. God says, “I will take away the stony heart.” What a wonderful operation to take a stone out of the heart. How much more wonderful to take the stony heart itself right away and create a fleshy heart in its stead.

I would ask you again, though it may look like a repetition, to notice how royally the Lord speaks. He does not say, “Perhaps I will.” He does not say, “If you are willing I will,” but, “*I will*,” saith he. Oh, it is gloriously worded, “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.” The Lord’s omnipotence can accomplish it. We have heard of many expedients for softening hard hearts, but none of them are of any avail. I know preachers who delight in talking of a mother’s tears, and a father’s grey hairs, of dying children and consumptive sisters, and I believe these are all legitimate topics; but, no hearts are ever turned from stone to flesh merely by natural emotion. You may make a man weep over his dead child or his dead wife, till his eyes are red, but his heart will be black for all that. Men’s hearts are changed by quite another agency than oratorical or rhetorical appeals to the natural affections. I readily admit that such appeals have their own sphere, but for the renewing of the heart something much more effectual is wanted than natural emotion. It is written, “I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh,” and there is the secret of the matter.

The fourth promise of the preparation of the heart for the indwelling of the Spirit is this: “*I will give you a heart of flesh*,” by which is meant a soft heart, an impressible heart, a sensitive heart, a heart which can feel, can be moved to shame, to repentance, to loathing of sin, to desiring, to seeking, to panting, to longing after God; a tender heart, a heart that does not require a thousand blows to move it, but, like flesh with its skin broken, feels the very faintest touch,—such is the heart which the Holy Spirit creates in the children of God. It is a teachable heart, a heart willing to be guided, moulded, governed by the divine will: a heart which, like young Samuel, cries, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth”:—an obedient heart, ready to be run into the mould, plastic beneath the sacred hand, anxious to be conformed to the heavenly pattern. This is an early work of grace in the soul, for as soon as ever the gospel is heard in power, and the Spirit of God comes upon a man, long before he enters into the liberty wherewith Christ makes men

free, he ceases to have a heart of stone: long before he can say, "Christ is mine," he becomes tender and impressible under the truth, and it is a great mercy it is so; it is a blessed sign of a work begun which will be effectually carried on, where the heart trembles at God's word, where there are earnest desires towards Christ, and the man is no longer a braggart rebel, but a trembling child come back to his father, and longing to cry, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee."

Beloved, it is meet here to add a word of caution to some of you. Do not mistake natural tenderness for that heart of flesh which God gives. There are many persons who are naturally very impressible, many amongst women, and some amongst men. For this characteristic they are rather to me admired than censured; but, let them not mistake this for a work of grace. A heart of wax is soft, but it is not a heart of flesh. The softness of nature is not the sensitiveness of grace. It is often the case that some persons who are religiously sensitive are equally sensitive the other way, and, while you can influence them for good, others can as easily influence them for evil. They happen to be just now religious because the associations surrounding them have that tendency, but were they under other influences they would be sceptical if not utterly irreligious. They would have been lovers of the pleasures which others pursue had not home habits sobered their minds, for their hearts are still unrenewed. Mere religious impressibility is not grace, it is nature alone, and I even fear that to some it is a temptation to be so extremely impressionable. I am not always sanguine concerning persons who are readily excited, for they so soon cool down again. Some are like india-rubber, and every time you put your finger on them you leave a mark, but it is wasted time, because they get back into the old shape again as soon as you have done with them. I was preaching once in a certain city, and a very worthy but worldly man went out of the congregation while I was in the middle of the sermon, the third sermon he had been hearing from me during the week. One who followed him out asked him why he left, and he frankly replied that he could not stand it any longer, "for," said he, "I must have become religious if I had heard that sermon through. I was nearly gone." "I have been," added he, "like an india-rubber doll under this man, but when he goes away I shall get back into the old shape again." Very many are of the same quality; they have so much natural amiability, good sense, and conscientiousness, that the gospel ministry has a power over them, and they feel its influence, though, alas, not so as to be saved by it. Beware, then, that you do not mistake the gilding of nature for the solid gold of grace. When God's grace helps the preacher to wield the gospel hammer, and it comes down with power upon a piece of flint, how speedily the stone flies to shivers, and what a glorious work of heart-breaking is done, and then the Lord comes in and gives, by his own almighty grace, a

heart of flesh. This is the change we want, the taking away of the stone, the giving of the heart of flesh.

Let us read these four promises again, and I hope they will reach any poor trembling soul who may be saying, "I would but cannot repent, I would but cannot feel; if ought is felt 'tis only pain to find I cannot feel. My heart is so bad, so hard, so cold, I can believe in Christ but I cannot change my nature." Poor soul, there is no need you should, for there is one who can do the work for you, and these are his absolute promises to you if you are now looking to Christ upon the cross and resting all your hopes in him. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

II. But time flies, and therefore let us consider, in the second place, THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST. When the Spirit has thus prepared his habitation, he comes to reside within the renewed man. I call your attention to each word of the text.

Observe first, that the Lord says, "I will put *my Spirit* within you." Now it does not say, "the influences of the Spirit shall come within you,"—note that: but, "I will put *my Spirit* within you." It is literally the fact that God himself, the Eternal Spirit *in propria persona*, in his own person, resides and dwells within the renewed heart. I again remark that it is not said, "I will put the grace of my Spirit, I will put the work of my Spirit," but, "I will put *my Spirit* within you." It is the Holy Ghost himself who in very deed lives in every heart of flesh, every new heart and right spirit. Can you get that thought? Simple as it is, it is one of the greatest marvels under the sun. An incarnate God is a mystery,—the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; but, here is another mystery, God dwells in every son of God. God dwelleth in us, and we in him. The mystery of the incarnation is not greater than that of the Holy Ghost's indwelling, nor does it appear to me to involve more condescension. I marvel at Christ's dwelling *with* sinners, and I marvel equally at the Holy Ghost's dwelling *in* sinners. God himself, for whom the universe is not too vast a temple, the ever blessed Spirit in whose presence the heavens are not clean, yet saith, "To this man will I look even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." The indwelling of the Holy Ghost within us implies the exercise of his influences, the bestowal of his gifts, and the implantation of his graces; and, moreover, it involves the exercise of all his sacred offices, for where the Holy Ghost indwells he acts as a teacher, an illuminator, a Comforter, a Creator, a strengthener, a preserver: all that he is in all his offices he will be according to his own will to every man in whom he takes up his abode.

Note a little word also in the text worthy of your attention. "I will put *my Spirit* within you." It is not the spirit of angels, it is not the spirit of

good men, it is God's own Spirit who takes up his residence in every sinner's heart when God renews it. "My Spirit." And, perhaps, this may allude to the fact that this is the self-same Spirit which abode without measure in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have a union of experience with Christ in the fact that the same oil which anointed him anoints us, the same dew which fell upon his branch refreshes ours, the same holy fire which burned in his breast is kindled in ours. "I will put *my* Spirit within you."

Observe also carefully the words, "*within you*," "I will put my Spirit *within you*." We thank God that we come near to the Spirit of God when we devoutly read the Holy Scriptures, for he wrote them, and his mind is in them; but we have a greater privilege than this. We thank God when the Spirit acts upon us under a sermon, or under any form of Christian teaching, so that we feel the Spirit of God to be with us; but we have a richer privilege even than this. "I will put my Spirit," not with you, nor side by side with you, nor in a book, nor in an oracle, nor in a temple, nor in one of your fellow-men, but "I will put my Spirit *within* YOU," in your own souls, in your own renewed hearts. This is marvellous. Augustine, when reflecting upon the various glories which come to God, and the benefits which accrue to men through redemption, none of which could have been revealed without the fall of Adam, exclaimed, "O *beata culpa!*" "O happy fault;" and I have the self-same expression trembling on my lips. Where sin abounded grace has much more abounded. Sin, which laid man in the dust, and made him like a devil, has afforded an opportunity for mercy to step in, and lifted humanity higher than before. What was man in Eden compared with man in Christ? In Paradise he was perfect in beauty, but in Jesus he wears a radiance superlative, for the Holy Ghost is within him. In Adam man was made a living soul, but in Christ Jesus he has now risen to the dignity and majesty of a quickening spirit.

My brethren, where the Holy Spirit enters he is able to subdue all things unto himself. When the ark came unto the Philistine temple, down went Dagon; and when the Holy Ghost enters the soul, sin falls and is broken. If the Holy Spirit be within, we may rest assured he will tolerate no reigning sin. He is a spirit of burning, consuming our dross; a spirit of light, chasing away our darkness. When he makes a heart his temple, he will scourge out the buyers and sellers who pollute it. He is not only the purifier within but the protector too; from temptations that assail us from without he is as an unconquerable garrison to our soul, making us impregnable to all assaults. Treasonable sins lurk within us, but the omniscient eye of God discerns each evil ambush, and he lays his hand upon every sin which hides itself away in the dark recesses of our nature. With such an indweller we need not fear, but that this poor heart of ours will yet become perfect as God is perfect; and our nature through his indwelling shall rise into complete

meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh, what blessings are here, and in what royal language are they all promised! “I will put my Spirit within you.” How positive! How decisive! Suppose they will not accept the Spirit? Suppose they strive against the Spirit? Suppose their free-will should get the mastery? Suppose nonsense! When the Lord says, “I will,” nothing remains to be supposed. If he speaks to chaos, it is order. Do not say, “Suppose chaos refused to be arranged?” When Jehovah speaks to darkness, it becomes light. Do not say, “But, suppose the darkness resists?” “What shall resist his fiat? When the Lord comes forth in his omnipotence who shall stay his hand, or say unto him, “What doest thou?” When the Spirit comes to deal in sovereign grace with the hearts of men, without violating their wills he has the power to accomplish his divine purpose, and it shall be accomplished to the praise of the glory of his grace.

III. Lastly, we must ask you to give your thoughts a moment to THE BLESSED RESULTS which come from all this. The indwelling Spirit leads every man in whom he reigns into obedience to the ways of God. I said that the work of grace is commenced from within, but the work does not end there. Before we have considered the whole of the covenant promise we shall find that change of life is guaranteed, a change apparent in works and actions, “Ye shall keep my judgments and do them.” We do not begin with works, but we go on to works. Faith first receives the blessing, and then produces holy work. We will not allow the effect to take the place of the cause, but we are equally sure that the effect follows after the cause.

Now, observe the promise of the text before us: “I will cause you to walk in my statutes.” The soul that possesses the Spirit becomes active. It walks. It is not passive, as one carried by main force; it works because the Spirit works in it, “to will and to do of his own good pleasure.” The man who has no active godliness may fear whether he has any grace at all. If I am only a receiver, and have never brought forth fruit, I may fear that I am the ground that is “nigh unto cursing,” for if I were a field that the Lord has blessed, I should yield him a harvest. The Spirit *causes* us to walk, but yet *we* ourselves walk. He works in us to do, but the doing is actually our own. He does not repent, and he does not believe; he has nothing to repent of, and he has nothing to believe. Neither does the Spirit perform works for us—we are led to do these ourselves. We repent and we believe, and we do good works, because he causes us to do so. A willing walk with God is a sweet result of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling.

The Holy Ghost leads us to holy habits, for, mark the phrase, “I will cause you to *walk* in my ways.” The figure does not represent us as taking a run now and then, or as leaping a step or two and then lying down, but as walking on and on, steadily and continuously. Mere excitement may pro-

duce momentary zeal, and transient morality, but habitual holiness is the fruit of the Spirit.

Note, next, the delight it implies. “I will cause you to *walk* in my ways,” not as a man who toils, but as one who walks at ease. The believer finds it as sweet to walk in God’s ways as Isaac felt it sweet to walk in the fields at eventide. We are not slaves sweating in sore bondage, but children serving with delight. His commandments are not grievous. His yoke is easy and his burden is light.

It implies, too, holy perseverance; the words have the meaning of continuing to follow after holiness. It is a small matter to begin, but to hold out to the end is the testing point.

The text promises to us a complete obedience,—“I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments.” A Christian man is obedient to God,—he minds the first table; he is just to man,—he does not despise the second table. Statutes and judgments are equally dear to believers. We are not willing to give a lame, one-sided obedience to God. The Holy Ghost, when he makes us devout Godward, makes us honest manward.

And the Holy Ghost also works a holy care for righteousness in the soul. “I will cause you to *keep* my judgments;”—that is, to have an exactness of obedience, a precision, a deliberation, a willingness to find out God’s will, and a care to attend to it in every jot and tittle. A man in whom dwells the Holy Ghost is careful not to yield himself to the traditions of men but to the commands of God. He pays no attention to the statutes of the great councils of the church, or the ordinances of popes, or the laws of priests, or the mandates of bishops; but he searches out the will of the Lord only. The knee of his conscience bows with lowly reverence before the Lord, but nowhere else. He who has bound us to his altar has loosed all other bonds, so that the traditions of men and the ordinances of priests are contemptible unto us. To God, and God alone, the renewed heart renders obedience, but that obedience he does render.

Now, to what a delightful consummation has our text conducted us. It began with a renewed heart, and it ends in a purified life. It commenced with taking away the stone and giving the flesh; now it gives us the life of Christ written out, in living characters in our daily practice. Glory be to God for this! O soul, if thou art a partaker of it, thou wilt join in this thanksgiving; and if thou art not renewed as yet, I beseech thee do not go about to find these good things anywhere but where they are. At the cross foot thou wilt find a change of heart; where fell the drops of blood from Jesus’ nailed hands and feet there is salvation. The Spirit of God will give you a right spirit, and, consequently, a pure life. Look not to your own efforts; rake not the dunghill of your own heart; to the Holy Ghost look you through the blood of the precious Saviour.

Now, to close. All this glorifies God doubly. It glorifies God that a man should walk in his ways; it glorifies God yet more that such obedience should be the result of divine power. The outward life honours God, but the inward, spiritual, gracious work which produced that life, honours him yet more abundantly.

While this glorifies God doubly, it ennobles the soul supremely. To be made holy is to receive a patent of nobility; to be made holy by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, oh, what shall we say to this! Bring hither the poorest peasant; let her if you will be an aged woman, wrinkled and haggard with labour and with years; let her be ignorant of all learning; but, let me know that in her there is faith in Christ and that consequently the Holy Ghost dwells in her; I will reverence her above all emperors and kings, for she is above them. What are these crowned ones but men who, perhaps, have waded through slaughter to a throne, while she has been uplifted by the righteousness of Jesus. Their dynasty is, after all, of mushroom growth, but she is of the blood royal of the skies. She hath God within her; Christ is waiting to receive her into his bliss; heaven's inhabitants without her could not be perfected, nor God's purpose be fulfilled, therefore is she noblest of the noble. Judge not after the sight of the eyes, but judge ye after the mind of God, and let saved sinners be precious in your sight. Honour also the Holy Spirit. Speak of him with lowly awe. Never take his name in vain. Take heed lest ye blaspheme it. Reverently seek his company, rejoice in his gifts, love him, quench him not, strive not against him, bow beneath his power, and may he dwell in you, and make you meet to dwell with him for ever, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Romans iv;

Ezekiel xxxvi. 24–32.