

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE DAWN OF REVIVAL, OR PRAYER SPEEDILY ANSWERED.

A Sermon

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“At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved.”—Daniel ix. 23.

PRAYER is useful in a thousand ways. It is spiritually what the old physicians sought after naturally, namely, a catholicon—a remedy of universal application. There is no case of need, distress, or dilemma, in which prayer will not be found to be a very present help. In the case before us Daniel had been studying the book of Jeremiah, and had learned that God would accomplish seventy weeks in the desolation of Jerusalem, but he felt that there was still more to be learned, and he set his face to learn it. His was a noble and acute mind, and with all its energies he sought to pry into the prophetic meaning; but he did not rely upon his own judgment; he betook himself at once to prayer. Prayer is that great key which opens mysteries. To whom should we go for an explanation if we cannot understand a writing, but to the author of the book? Daniel appealed at once to the Great Author, in whose hand Jeremiah had been the pen. In lonely retirement the prophet knelt upon his knees, and cried unto God that he would open up to him the mystery of the prophecy, that he might know the full meaning of the seventy weeks, and what God intended to do at the end thereof, and how he would have his people behave themselves to obtain deliverance from their captivity. Daniel made his suit unto the Lord to unloose the seals and open the volume of the book, and he was heard and favoured with the knowledge which he might have sought for in vain by any other means. Luther used to say that some of his best understandings of Holy Scripture were not so much the result of meditation as of prayer; and all students of the word will tell you that when the hammers of learning and biblical criticism have failed to break open a flinty text, oftentimes prayer has done it, and nuggets of gold have been found

concealed therein. To every student of the word of God who would become a well-instructed scribe we would say, with all the means which you employ, with all your searchings of the commentaries, with all your diggings into the original, with all your researches among learned divines, mingle much fervent prayer. As the Lord said to Israel, “With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt,” so does wisdom say to us, “With all thy searchings, and with all thy studyings, offer much prayer.” Rest assured that the old maxim, “To have prayed well is to have studied well,” is worthy to be written not only upon the walls of our studies, but upon the tablets of our hearts. If thou wilt place the book of inspiration before thine attentive eye, and ask the Lord to open up its meaning to thee, the exercise of prayer itself shall be blessed by God to put thy soul into the best state in which to get at the hidden meaning, which lies concealed from the eye of the worldly wise, but which is clearly manifested to meek and lowly souls, when they reverently seek the guidance of their heavenly Father.

The particular point in the text to which I would direct your attention this morning, is that Daniel’s prayer was answered *at once*, while he was yet speaking, ay, and at the beginning of his supplication. It is not always so. Prayer sometimes tarrieth like a petitioner at the gate until the king cometh forth to fill her bosom with the blessings which she seeketh. The Lord when he hath given great faith, has been known to try it by long delayings. He has suffered his servants’ voices to echo in their ears as from a brazen sky. They have knocked at the golden gate, but it has remained immovable, as though it were rusted upon its hinges. Like Jeremiah they have cried, “Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.” Thus have true saints continued in patient waiting for months, and there have been instances in which their prayers have even waited years without reply, not because they were not vehement, nor because they were unaccepted, but because so it pleased him who is a sovereign, and who gives according to his own pleasure. If it pleases him to bid our patience exercise itself, shall he not do as he wills with his own? Beggars must not be choosers either as to time, place, or form. Brethren, we must not take delays in prayer for denial: God’s long-dated bills will be punctually honoured; we must not suffer Satan to shake our confidence in the God of truth by pointing to our unanswered prayers. We are dealing with a being whose years are without end, to whom one day is as a thousand years: far be it from us to count him slack, by measuring his doings by the standard of our little hour. Unanswered petitions are not unheard. God keeps a file for our prayers, they are not blown away by the wind, they are treasured in the king’s archives. There is a registry in the court of heaven wherein every prayer is recorded. O tried believer, thy sighs and thy tears are not fruitless; God hath a tear-bottle in which the costly drops of sacred grief are put away, and a book in which thy holy groanings are

numbered; and by and bye thy suit shall prevail. Canst thou not be content to wait a little? Will not thy Lord's time be better than thy time? By and bye he will comfortably appear, to thy soul's joy, and make thee put away thy sackcloth and ashes of long waiting, and put on the scarlet and fine linen of full fruition.

However, in the case of Daniel, the man greatly beloved, there was no waiting at all. In Daniel's case the promise was true, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." The man Gabriel was made to fly very swiftly, as though even the flight of an angel was hardly swift enough for God's mercy. Oh, how fast the mercy of God travels, and how long his anger lingers! "Fly," said he, "bright spirit, try thine utmost power of wing! Descend to my waiting servant and fulfil his desire." Brethren, my heart's desires and earnest longings are, that at the commencement of our supplication we may have an answer from the throne. This is the commencement of our prayers only in a certain sense, for prayer has never ceased here—for the last few months the public meeting for prayer every morning and every night has been sustained by earnest brethren and sisters—but we are now at the commencement of a month of more special prayer, and I pant for an early visitation of grace. It will be a very blessed encouragement to us, a stimulus to more intense ardour, an argument for greater confidence in God, if we should be favoured, with Daniel, to receive gracious answers to our supplications at their very commencement.

In speaking of such a mercy, two points press for consideration: first, *reasons for justly expecting so early a blessing*; and secondly, *forms in which we earnestly desire and hopefully expect it*.

I. First, have we any REASONS TO EXPECT THAT AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF OUR SUPPLICATIONS THE COMMANDMENT OF MERCY WILL COME FORTH? Best assured that we have, if we are found in the same posture as Daniel, for God acts towards his servants by a fixed rule. Let self-examination be now in vigilant exercise while we compare ourselves with the successful prophet.

God will hear his people at the commencement of their prayers if the condition of the supplicant be fitted for it. The nature of such fitness we may gather from the state of Daniel's mind and the mode of his procedure. Upon this our first noteworthy observation is, that Daniel was *determined to obtain the blessing which he was seeking*. Note carefully the expression which he has used in the third verse—"I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication." That setting of the face is expressive of resolute purpose, firm determination, undivided attention, fixed resolute perseverance. "I set my face towards the Lord." We never do anything in this world until we set our faces thoroughly to it. The warriors who win battles are those who are resolved to conquer or die. The heroes who emancipate nations are those who count no hazards and reckon no odds, but are resolved that the

yoke shall be broken from the neck of their country. The merchants who prosper in this world are those who do their business with all their hearts, and watch for wealth with eagerness. The half-hearted man is nowhere in the race of life; he is usually contemptible in the sight of others, and a misery to himself. If a thing be worth doing, it is worth doing well; and if it be not worth doing thoroughly, wise men let it alone. Especially is this a truth in the spiritual life. Wonders are not done for God and for the truth by men upon their beds asleep, or out of their beds, but still asleep. Souls are not saved by men who scarcely know or care whether they are saved themselves. Errors are not dashed from their pedestals by those who are careless concerning truth and count it of little value. Reformations have not been wrought in this world by men of lukewarm spirit and temporising policy. One fiery Luther is of more value than twenty like the half-hearted Erasmus who knew infinitely more than he felt, and perhaps felt more than he dared to express. A man if he would do anything for God, for the truth, for the cross of Christ, must set his face and with the whole force of his will resolve to serve his God. The soldier of Christ must set his face like a flint against all opposition, and at the same moment set his face towards the Lord with the attentive eye of the handmaiden looking towards her mistress. If called to suffer for the truth, we must set our face towards this conflict as Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem. He who would conquer in this glorious war, and overcome the Lord at the mercy-seat, must be resolved! resolved with his whole soul—resolved after matured thought—resolved for reasons which are too weighty for him to escape—resolved that from the throne of grace he will not depart without the blessing. Never, never shall a man be unsuccessful in prayer who sets his face to win the promised mercy. Granted that you are seeking what you ought to seek for, that you are seeking it through Christ and by faith in Him, the one qualification to success that we recommend to you, brethren, is the setting of your faces towards the attaining of it. If there be but a dozen men in this, my church, who have set their faces for a revival, we shall surely have it: of this my heart knows no doubt. If there be but half-a-dozen, like Gideon's men that lapped—if, I say, there be but six who are unwavering, and will not be baulked by difficulties, or turned back by disappointments, as sure as God is God he will hear the prayers of such. Nay, if it came down to but two or three, the promise is to two of us who are agreed as touching one thing concerning the kingdom; yea, more, if two could not be found, if there were but one faithful saint left, provided that he were endowed with the spirit and ardour of Daniel, he would yet prevail as Daniel did of old. We must not fail in the setting of our face towards the Lord. I humbly but devoutly ask God, the Holy Ghost, to give you, my beloved in the Lord Jesus, both men and women, members of this church, a solemn resolution that in the work in which we are engaged for God, you will not be satisfied unless

the largest answers be vouchsafed. This was the first proof that God might safely give Daniel the blessing at once, for the prophet's heart was fixed in immutable resolve, and there was no turning him from the point; now, if a beggar be resolved to have his request you may as well give at once, it is wasting both his time and yours to put him off with delays. We think it best to give at once to him, and so doth our heavenly Father with us.

Next, Daniel *felt deeply the misery of the people for whom he pleaded*. Read that expression, "under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem." The condition of that city, lying in ruins, her inhabitants captives, her choicest sons banished to the ends of the earth, afflicted him very sorely. He had not a light superficial acquaintance with the sorrows of his people, but his inmost heart was embittered with the wormwood and the gall of their cup. Brethren, if God intends to give us souls he will prepare us for the honour by causing us to feel the deep ruin of our fellow-creatures, and the fearful doom which that ruin will involve unless they shall escape from it. I would have you school yourselves till you obtain a horror of the sinner's sin: surely not so strange a task if you remember your own former estate and present tendencies! How fiery was that oven through which your spirit passed when the hand of God was heavy upon you both by day and night! I want you, my brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus, to get a clear view of the wrath of God which threatens your own children, your own friends, your fellow-seatholders, your neighbours, your kinsfolk, unless they be saved. If you could get into your heart as well as into your creed the sincere belief that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God;" if you could recollect that even those who hear the gospel have no way of escape if they remain impenitent, and that if they reject Christ there remains nothing for them but "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation;" if your soul could be made to melt for heaviness because of the woes of lost spirits, and because so many of your fellow-men will within a little while be lost, lost as these others are, past all recall, beyond all hope, or all dream of alleviation, surely you would become awfully earnest about souls. We should hear praying of a mighty sort if believers sympathised with men in their ruin; then groans and tears would not be so scarce; then the soul pouring out itself in groanings which cannot be uttered would be but an ordinary thing. Then shall we prevail with God, through the precious blood of Jesus when we feel intensely the sinner's need. If there be some here who really feel the terrors of the world to come and are bound under those terrors, and moved to wait and wrestle at the mercy-seat till souls are rescued from their sins, there is no fear but what at the very commencement of our supplication the commandment to bless us will go forth.

In the next place, Daniel was ready to receive the blessing, because *he felt deeply his own unworthiness of it*. I do not know that even the fifty-first

Psalm is more penitential than the chapter which contains our text. I bade you remark, while we were reading it, how the prophet confesses the people's sin, and styles it by three, four, five, or more descriptive epithets, all expressive of his deep sense of its blackness. Read the chapter, and note how he humbly acknowledges sins of commission, sins of omission, and especially sins against the warnings of God's word and the entreaties of God's servants. The prophet is very explicit. He lays bare his heart before the Lord; he tears off every film from the corruption of the people; he exposes the wound to the inspection of the Great Surgeon, and asks him to send it health and cure. I believe that the Lord is about to bless that man personally, to whom he has given a deep sense of sin; and certainly that church which is willing to make confession of its own sinfulness and unworthiness is on the eve of a visitation of love. Let us go, then, to our God—I pray that the Holy Ghost may enable us to go to him—each man and woman making confession for himself apart. Individual confession is needed. I have sins, which perhaps you might not discover in me, sins which it were not possible for you to commit, because you are not placed in my station. You, too, have in your families, in your business, in your private and public lives, sins with which I am not acquainted. Each man has a point of sin wherein he is separated from his fellows; and each man must therefore make his own confession, apart, with the fullest honesty, with the deepest humiliation; and each one must add to his acknowledgements the humble prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts!" My dear fellow-members, are you conscious each one, of your own personal iniquity towards the Lord your God? Then let not this day pass over till a full confession has been made; and should there remain, dear brethren, in us as a church any transgression unconfessed, I hope the Lord may lead us to confess it. If we have been proud of our numbers; if we have been exalted by success; if there should be any bickerings among us; if any Christian here has any ill feeling towards another, let not this day go down till all such evil be removed. I am very conscious that, in the midst of so large a church, much sin may remain undetected. O for great searchings of heart! Beloved, you will certainly spoil our hopes and cause us to miss the blessing unless every evil thing be put away. Let this be a day for purging out the old leaven, that we may keep the feast not with the leaven of malice, but in holiness as becometh the disciples of Jesus. The idols must be utterly abolished; and till we put them all away, we cannot expect to receive a blessing from the Lord our God. "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Let us bless his name for his exceeding great goodness to us as a church, and sing of all his loving-kindness which he has shown to us these thirteen years. Let us confess our unworthiness, our coldness, and deadness, and lethargy, and wanderings of heart, and the backsliding of many among us, and then, having

confessed our faults, we may expect that at the very commencement God will visit us. When the vessel is empty, heaven's fountain will fill it; when the ground is dried and chapped, and begins to open her mouth with thirst, down shall come the rain to make fat the soil. When we feel a sense of need, deep and crushing, then shall a blessing shine forth from the presence of the Most High. "At the beginning of the supplication the commandment came."

But again, dear friends, we have not exhausted the points in Daniel which deserve our imitation; you will notice that Daniel had *a clear conviction of God's power to help his people* in their distress, his lively sense of divine power being based upon what God had done in the olden time. One is interested to note in the history of the Jews, how in every dark and stormy hour their minds reverted to one particular point of their history! Just as the Greek, in the days when Greece was living Greece, would remember Thermopylae and Marathon, and feel his eyes sparkle and every sinew grow strong at the thought of the heroic day when his fathers slew the Persians, and broke the yoke of the great king, so with nobler emotions, because more heavenly, the Israelite always thought of the Red Sea, and what the Lord did to Egypt when he divided the waters, and they stood upright as a heap, that his people might pass through. Daniel in the prayer says, "Thou hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day." He lays hold upon that deed of ancient prowess, and pleads in effect after this fashion; "Thou canst do the like, O God, and glorify thy name anew, and send deliverance to thy people." My brethren and sisters in the bonds of the Lord Jesus, you and I may at this moment draw comfort from the fact that this God who divided the Red Sea is our God for ever and ever, and is at this hour as mighty as when he overthrew the horse and his rider in the mighty waters. We worship the God who loves his chosen now even as he did of old. It is written, "But as for his people, he led them forth like sheep," and so he leadeth us. He led them through the wilderness and brought them to the promised rest; and even thus will he bring us to our eternal home. O God, thou that wentest forth before thy people, go forth before *us* after the same fashion! Though doubts and fears roll before us like a sea, remove them, we beseech thee! Though our iniquities clamour behind us, swallow them up in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood! Though we march through the wilderness, yet give us heaven's manna, and let the rock distil with living streams! Though we deserve not to be visited by thy love, yet are we not thy people and the sheep of thy pasture? Are we not called by thy name? Hast thou not bought us with thy blood? Bring us into the promised land! Give us the heritage of thy people, and bless us with the blessings of thy chosen. We too, if we are sensible of past mercies to the Church of God, and to ourselves personally, shall then be ready to receive present mercy.

But once more, the most apparent point about Daniel's prayer is *peculiar earnestness*. To multiply expressions such as "O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!" may not always be right. There may be much sin in such repetitions, amounting to taking God's name in vain. But it is not so with Daniel. His repetitions are forced from the depths of his soul, "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do!" These are the fiery volcanic eruptions of a soul on fire, heaving terribly. It is just the man's soul wanting vent. Jesus himself, when he prayed most vehemently, prayed three times, using the same words. Variety of expression sometimes shows that the mind is not altogether absorbed in the object, but is still able to consider the mode of its utterance; but when the heart becomes entirely swallowed up in the desire it cannot stay to polish and fashion its words, it seizes upon any expressions nearest to hand, and with these it continues its entreaties. So long as God understands it, the troubled mind has no anxiety about its modes of speech. Daniel here, with what the old divines would have called multiplied ingeminations, groans himself upward till he gains the summit of his desires. To what shall I liken the pleadings of the man greatly beloved? It seems to me as though he thundered and lightened at the gate of heaven. He stood there before God and said to him, "O thou Most High, thou hast brought me to this Ulai as thou didst Jacob to the Jabbok, and with thee all night I mean to stay and wrestle till the break of day. I cannot, will not let thee go except thou bless me." No prayer is at all likely to bring down an immediate answer if it be not a fervent prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;" but if it be not fervent we cannot expect to find it effectual or prevalent. We must get rid of the icicles that hang about our lips. We must ask the Lord to thaw the ice-caves of our soul and to make our hearts like a furnace of fire heated seven times hotter. If our hearts do not burn within us we may well question whether Jesus is with us. Those who are neither cold nor hot he has threatened to spew out of his mouth: how can we expect his favour if we fall into a condition so obnoxious to him? Our God is a consuming fire, and he will not have communion with us until our souls grow to be like consuming fires too. Unless we are warm with love to God we cannot expect the love of God to manifest itself in us to its highest degree. Now I know some of you are cold enough. I thank God we have a great many very warm-hearted earnest Christians in connexion with this church, Christians I will here make bold to say, that I never expected to live to see, such true and lovely saints. I have seen in this church apostolical piety revived; I will say it before the throne of God, I have seen as earnest and as true a piety as Paul or Peter ever witnessed. I have seen in some here present such godly zeal, such holiness, such devotion to the Master's business, as Christ himself would look upon with joy and satisfaction. But there are others who are members of the church, who never enter heartily into our projects of labour, nor yet unite with our solemn

assemblies of prayer. What shall I say of them? If I were to speak sharply they would only say that I scolded them with severity, and that might not serve my turn, for I desire their best interests. Shall I not rather say to them, “My dear brethren and sisters, if you are indeed with us, if you have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ, we do beseech you ask the Lord to make you more earnest than the most earnest of us have ever been, and to make you, if you have been laggards, now to take the front place. If you have been slow either in the generosity of your giving, or in the earnestness of your pleading, ask the Lord that you may henceforth double your pace, and do more in the time that remains for you in this life than others might be expected to do who have not aforetime been so backward as you have been.

Of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum—if the whole church in this place shall be brought to set its face, to be conscious of the deep need of sinners, to confess its own sin, to be mindful of God’s mercy, and to be vehemently, passionately in earnest for a blessing, I cannot for my own part see the slightest reason why at the commencement of the supplication the commandment should not go forth.

“Let us pray! the Lord is willing,
Ever waiting, prayer to hear;
Ready, His kind words fulfilling,
Loving hearts to help and cheer.”

Thus much upon that first reason. We may expect a speedy answer to prayer when the condition of the suppliant is as God would have it.

Secondly, I believe we have every reason to expect a blessing when we consider *the mercy itself*. That which we as a church are seeking is, if I understand your hearts and my own, just this: we want to see our own personal piety deepened and revived, and we want to see sinners saved. Well, is not that in itself so good a thing that we may expect the giver of every good and perfect gift to give it to us? We need not ask the sun to shine: is it not its very office as a sun to do so? We ask God to give us this good thing: is it not according to the nature of the Father of lights to bestow on us such mercies? We seek that which is for the good of his church—the church which he has purchased with his own blood. A brother once remarked in prayer that none of us would let our spouse ask again and again for any good thing and refuse her; if it were in our power to give her anything under heaven we would feel it our greatest delight to do so; and shall the bride, the Lamb’s wife, find her husband less kind than we poor evil mortals are to our wives? No. If Christ’s church pleads with her own Husband, she cannot be refused. Depend upon it, her royal Husband will give her according to his infinite fulness.

What we ask is for God's glory. We are not seeking a boon which may glorify *us* or may exalt some one of our fellow-men. We crave not victory for the arms of a warrior; we ask not success for the researches of a philosopher; we seek nothing which can bring honour to human prowess or to human wisdom; we seek that which will put crowns upon the head of our gracious God, and we seek it with the one pure desire that he may be glorified. Above all, we ask that which is dear to the heart of Christ. He is the friend of sinners: for sinners he lived, for sinners he died, for sinners he rose, for sinners he pleads, for sinners he reigns in glory; and if we come to God and say to Him, "By the blood and wounds of Jesus, by the griefs of Gethsemane, and by the groans of Calvary, hear us!" how can it be that we shall be kept waiting? No, I gather that if such be the burden of the prayer, at the beginning we shall receive it.

Thirdly, there is another thing which encourages me, namely, *the nature of the relations which exist between God and us*. Is not that a choice word, "O man greatly beloved"? "Yes," you will perhaps say, "it is easy to understand why God should send so swift an answer to Daniel, because he was a man greatly beloved." Ah! has your unbelief made you forget that *you* are greatly beloved too? You, my dear brother, as a believer in Jesus Christ, will not be at all presumptuous if you apply to yourself the title of "Man, greatly beloved." I will ask you a few questions which will prove your title. Must you not have been greatly beloved, to have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot? When God spared not his own Son, but gave him up for you, must you not have been greatly beloved? Let me ask you about your experience. You lived in sin, and rioted in it. Must you not have been greatly beloved, for God to have had patience with you? You were called by grace and led to a Saviour, and made a child of God and an heir of heaven. Why, that proves, does it not, a very great and super abounding love? Since that time, whether your path has been rough with troubles, or smooth with goodness, I have no doubt it has been full of proofs that you are a man greatly beloved. If the Lord has chastened you, yet not in anger; if he has made you poor, you have been greatly beloved in your poverty. I know this, when I look back upon my own life, I must confess my unworthiness, and acknowledge my sin most sincerely, and yet I dare to feel and to say that I am a man greatly beloved of my God; for he has given me such distinguished mercies to enjoy, when I have deserved not even the least of them, that I cannot help saying, "He crowneth me with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies." I make my boast in the tender mercy of my God all the more freely because I am sure that you, my beloved, also are specially beloved of heaven. The more unworthy you feel yourselves to be, why, the more evidence have you that nothing but unspeakable love could have led the Lord Jesus to save such a soul as yours. The more unworthiness

the saint feels, the more proof of the great love of God in having chosen him and called him and made him an heir of bliss. Now, if there be such love between God and us, let us ask very boldly. Do not let us go to God as though we were strangers, or as though he were unwilling to give—we are greatly beloved. “If he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.” Come boldly, brother; come boldly, sister; for despite the whisperings of Satan and the doubtings of thine own heart, thou art greatly beloved; and Jesus says, “Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee.” Who will refuse to ask when such encouragements are suggested to our minds?

But enough. I am afraid I shall weary you on that point, and I wanted a long time on the second. But time has gone, therefore a few minutes must suffice. O swift-winged time, I could fain delay thee when such a theme is on hand.

II. If we are to gain the blessing at the commencement, IN WHAT FORM SHOULD WE PREFER TO HAVE IT?

Could I have my heart’s desire, I would crave a blessing *for every one of you*. I wish the blessing would come on me at the commencement, that I might preach with more power and pray with more fervour, and that my own spiritual life might be of a more healthy and vigorous character. I wish the blessing might come on you, my dear brethren, deacons and elders, for in the management of such a church as this you need much more grace than falls to the lot of ordinary men. I pray that you may be made ensamples to this flock, true guides in this our Israel. I wish that the Holy Spirit may fall on all of you workers for Christ, who will be here this afternoon. The Lord bless you Sabbath-school teachers. May you weep in your classes today! Pray for your children before you begin to talk with them! May my dear friends who teach our great classes of men and women have a rich blessing this afternoon! May it be seen in Mrs. Bartlett’s class and Mr. Hanks’ class, and the others, that the Lord is with you indeed, and of a truth. It would be a great token for good if this very day we felt the first waves of a great revival. I wish the Lord’s power would come upon some of his people who do nothing, that they may be dreadfully miserable this afternoon, that they may be so unhappy that they cannot keep at home, but be compelled to start out and do good. You who are working, may God help you to work with heart and soul, not doing it officially as of routine, but doing it with your very life, as though your heart’s blood warmed in the work, and your soul’s breath were in every word you spoke. You who do so little, O may the Master constrain you to amend your ways. It would be a very blessed sign of grace if every one of us felt this day, “Perhaps there is something more I could do for Christ; I shall do it at once. Perhaps there is something I might give to Christ, some department of Christian labour shall have a special donation from me. Perhaps I have a talent

which I have never used, like an old sword which hangs up unfurnished, and in this day of battle every weapon must be used, and I have not used mine. Now, before the Lord, lift I my hand to heaven, and I ask that if I have anything, even though it be the smallest talent, if I have not used it may he help me to use it at once." This is such a dark world that we must not waste the tiniest piece of candle. The night is so dark that even a glow worm must not refuse to give its feeble ray. Each one of us must give personal service to Christ. Do you not know that all God's people are priests. These lying priests nowadays, put on their gaudy trappings like the priests of Baal, and come forward and say, "We are priests." Priests of Dagon, priests of Baal, priests of hell, but not God's priests! God's priests are those who are alive from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit, and every man and every woman here who loves Jesus is a priest to God. O brethren, God would have you all act as priests, and not to say, "We have a minister, let him serve God for us." I will have nothing to do with your responsibilities. Serve God yourselves; it is as much as I can do to serve him; only by his grace am I upheld under my own load; in fact, my own responsibilities are so heavy that I cannot bear them; but as for being a proxy for any one of you, I cannot be anything of the kind. Personally, you were bought with blood; personally, you hope to enter heaven; personally, then, consecrate yourselves this day unto the Lord, and if you so do, oh, what a blessing it will be! May God send a new and quickened life into his people at the commencement of our supplication.

I was turning over in my mind, how early and sweet a blessing it would be if the Lord would give us today, this morning, this evening, this afternoon, some *conversions*. Who shall we especially plead for? What kind of conversions do we desire? What if the Lord would call by grace some of the children of the church members; what a blessing that would be! Oh for salvation for our sons and daughters! Pray for them, parents, pray for them; pray now, and the Lord will hear you.. Or suppose he were to give to some dear brother here, the soul of his wife for whom he has prayed so long; or to some of you, my sisters, your husbands who are still in the gall of bitterness. I would take it as a special favour if the Lord would give us our dearest friends. I look forward during this month with the hope that we may see some in our own households, our servants, our children, and our unconverted friends and acquaintances saved. But we are not selfish; we should think it a priceless blessing if some of you who have been seatholders for years were to yield to sovereign grace. I am afraid of many of you, because you have felt the power of the gospel in a measure, but there is some darling sin you cannot give up, which sin will be your everlasting ruin. I remember M'Cheyne says, "Christ gives last knocks." That is a very sorrowful thought. He knocks at the door, but there is such a thing as a last knock, and some of you will get your last knock before long; he will never knock again; you will never have another

warning nor another invitation, but he will say, "Let him alone, let him alone." You, perhaps, will feel all the easier, but ah! if you do not wake here, you will wake up in hell; and if before long God does not startle you into repentance, you will be startled into everlasting despair. O, may God give us your souls this day! It would be no small mercy if the Lord would give us many of the casual hearers who will be here tonight, or are now here this morning. I cannot understand why it is these aisles are always crowded, and why on the Sabbath night the doors have to be closed, and thousands shut out; why men rush into this house as eagerly as if they came here to get gold and treasure: they seem so earnest and so eager, and push and tread one upon another. Surely God must bless some of them. We never know who are here—men from the utmost ends of the earth—of all nations, kindreds, and tongues; crowds who never heard the gospel at all. I am so thankful to think of them, because when they do hear it, if they have never heard it before, they are, perhaps, more likely to be blessed by it than those who have grown hardened under the sound of it. O, for a mighty cry! a prevailing cry! a heaven-shaking cry! a cry that would make the gates of heaven open! a cry which God's arm could not resist; the cry of all the saints here, knit together in love, with holy vehemence, using the great plea of the atoning sacrifice, and making this the burden of their cry, "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years. In wrath remember mercy." Let the gracious visitation begin in this place if God so pleases, we shall be equally content if it begin anywhere else—let him but throw the stone into the stagnant pool of his church, and I can see the first circle going round these galleries and many of you saved; I can see the next circle enclosing the neighbouring churches; I can see it spread over London—I can see the widening amphitheatre taking in the whole of this United Kingdom; I can see it cross the Atlantic—till all round the world God's kingdom spreads, and days of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord. Now let us say in his sight, if he doth not please to hear us at the commencement of the supplication yet it is our desire to wait upon him until he doth. O thou our beloved, if the day do not break nor the shadows flee away, if thou wilt still remain hidden behind the mountains of separation, yet we wait for thee as they that wait for the morning, and watch and long as the warder watcheth for the rising of the sun. But make no tarrying, O our God! Make haste our Beloved; "Be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether," for thy name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel ix. 1–23.