

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SALVATION BY FAITH AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

A Sermon

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“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”—Galatians v. 5.

IT may seem remarkable that Paul, who was once the strictest of Pharisees, should become the most ardent champion of the doctrines of salvation by grace and justification by faith. How large a portion of the New Testament is given up to his writings, and the most prominent subject in all that falls from his pen is righteousness by faith. Did not the Lord show great wisdom in selecting as the chief advocate of this truth a man who knew the other side, who had wrought diligently under the law, who had practised every ceremony, who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and had profited above many under the Jews' religion, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers? He would know right well the bondage of the old system, and having felt its iron enter into his soul, he would the more highly prize the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. Paul also was a man of great learning; he was at home in every part of the Old Testament, and consequently the quotations which he makes from it are almost innumerable: he also understood the Rabbinical method of spiritualising, and used it against his old associates, turning the Old Testament allegories into a battery in defence of New Testament principles. He knew how to take the story, as we have seen, of Hagar and Sarah, and to find in it an argument for the doctrine which he desired to defend. It was well that a man who had been in spirit a Pharisee, and in education equal to the most learned of the Jewish doctors, should be engaged by the Spirit of God to defend the glorious principles of salvation by grace. Moreover, Paul was a man of very powerful mind. Has the Christian church ever had in her midst a man whose arguments are so keen, so

subtle, so profound, and yet so clear? He dives to the very bottom of things, but he never darkens counsel by mysticism. Like the eagle, he soared aloft, and his piercing eye did not fail him as he gazed on the sun: he was amazed by the revelations he beheld, but he was not dazzled and perplexed. He spoke some things hard to be understood, which the foolish have wrested to their destruction, but they had to do his teaching great violence before they could thus pervert it. His intimate acquaintance with divine things, and the logical conformation of his mind, combined with an immovable decision of character and a flaming ardour of soul, made him in the hands of God the fittest conceivable instrument for the divine purpose; he was wisely chosen and set for the defence of the gospel.

But why, my brethren, such care in selecting an advocate whose previous education, and whose formation of mind, so well enabled him to do battle for the cause? Why was the choice so carefully made? Why such a display of divine wisdom? I reply, because this is the point which above all others has been, is, and always will be most assailed by the enemies, of our holy religion. Justification by faith is the Thermopylæ of Christianity. It is there that the battle must be decided by hand-to-hand fight; if that narrow pass be once carried by the enemy, then the whole of our bulwarks may be stormed; but as long as that fort is held fast the rest of the truths of the gospel will be maintained. The Lord, therefore, sent this mighty man of valour, this Saul the Benjamite, head and shoulders taller than his fellows, of sound heart and decided purpose and devout spirit, to wage war with the adversaries of free grace.

I have said that the truth has always been assailed, and is it not the case? It was the clouding of this light, the almost quenching of it, which occasioned the darkness of the mediæval period. It was Luther's clear sight of this truth, and the astonishing thunders with which he uttered it, which brought about the Reformation; and though there are other truths of great importance, and we would not depreciate their value for a single moment, yet this one, whenever it has flashed forth with brilliance before the eyes of men, has always been the means of restoring evangelical doctrines, and at the same time it has exercised a powerful influence over men's hearts and brought much glory to the Saviour. Despite this fact, or perhaps because of it, it is still resisted, and at the present day it is opposed as much as ever, for you hear continually the remark that the preaching up of salvation by immediate faith in Christ is very dangerous, and opposed to the interests of morality. It is asserted that it cannot be supposed to make men any better, and it will only create in them a false confidence, and add to their other faults the pride and presumption which grow out of an assured security. We hear such observations continually. The present revival has set all the owls hooting, and you know their note—good works are in peril, and virtue in jeopardy. However well meant,

I believe that at the bottom of these wonderful objections you will discover the old Popery of reliance upon good works. Human nature always did kick against salvation by grace alone, and it always will. Even professing Christians raise the same objection, but they word it cautiously. They say that the preaching up of Jesus Christ as saving men immediately upon their believing in him ignores too much the work of the Holy Spirit; and they affirm that a great deal more ought to be said about the preparation of the heart, the humbling and abasing of the soul, the law work, and the inward sense of need, and so on. There may be some truth in this as seen from a certain point, and I should be disposed to hear such criticisms patiently, but I fear that in not a few instances the remarks are suggested by a measure of departure from the simplicity of the gospel, the very essence of which lies in the words “believe and live.” There is a danger of meaning “salvation by works” while we use the phrase “the work of the Spirit;” zeal for the inner life may only be a convenient method for covering up pure legalism. I will, therefore, avow it boldly that salvation by feelings is as unscriptural as salvation by works, and that Paul did not cry out against those who trusted in works with greater vehemence than he would now have called out against any who rely upon their terrors and convictions, or who imagine that their feelings, any more than their doings, may be joined on to the finished work of Christ as a ground of trust. Jesus Christ alone is a complete and all-sufficient foundation for faith, and it is by believing in him that men are justified, and in no degree by anything else.

We shall use our text this morning with the view of dealing with that class of objections which are founded upon the work of the Holy Spirit. It would be a grievous fault in any preaching if it did not ascribe honour to the Holy Ghost; nor could we too severely rebuke any ministry which ignored his divine working; but on the other hand it is no less a fault to misrepresent the Spirit’s work, and set it up in a kind of competition with the work of the Lord Jesus. Faith is not opposed to the Spirit, but is the child of it:—“We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

Two things I shall try to do; may the Holy Spirit enable me, for on his mysterious teachings my mind relies for guidance into truth. First I shall labour to *declare the Christian’s hope*; and then, secondly, I shall endeavour to *show the relation of that hope to the Holy Spirit*.

I. Let me DECLARE THE CHRISTIAN’S HOPE. “We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” Concerning the Christian’s hope, let us notice first *its singularity*. The Jews had a hope founded upon their descent. “We have Abraham for our father,” said they; “we were free born, we were never in bondage to any man. The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we.” They looked down upon Gentiles as uncircumcised, and despised them. Brethren, we have no such hope. We do not expect to be saved

by virtue of our parentage. We could not boast of fleshly descent from Abraham, neither do we rest upon the fact that we are, some of us, the children of godly parents, and that from generation to generation saintly names occur in our pedigree. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and no more, however pure the flesh may be. The children of God are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. Carnal descent leaves us heirs of wrath even as others. We have no belief in a pretended Abrahamic covenant made with the seed of believers according to the flesh; we have no reliance upon anything that comes to us by the way of the natural birth, for that would make us like that son of the bondwoman who was born after the flesh. Those who glory in their birth may do so at their leisure, we have no sympathy with their glorying. Our hope is altogether distinct from the hope of the Jew.

Neither have we any confidence in outward rites and ceremonies. Paul has said, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision," and we hold that if you put any other rite in the place of circumcision the same statement is true. No infant baptism, no immersion, no mass, no sacrament, no confirmation, no ceremony of any kind, can in any measure or degree be rested upon as the soul's righteousness. What if the rites which we believe that God himself had given were authenticated to us by a voice out of the excellent glory, yet on those rites we dare not build, no, not for an instant. No blood of bullocks or of goats after the old law, and no unbloody sacrifice of the mass after the modern legality of Popery can we rest upon; the beggarly elements of a risible external religion we have left behind as childish garments, unfitted for men in Christ Jesus. No, brethren, we are wide as the poles asunder from all who rest upon outward forms and ceremonial religiousness; we hope to be saved, not because we attend a place of worship, nor because we have made a profession of religion, but because we have obtained righteousness by faith.

We differ also from those who place reliance upon moral virtues and spiritual excellencies, and even from those who would have us found our hope upon certain graces supposed to be the works of the Holy Spirit. Had we been the most courageously honest, had we been the most chastely pure, had we never offended against the law of man in any respect whatever, if we could say with the apostle "as touching the law blameless," and if, like the young man in the gospel narrative, we could say of the commandments, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," yet would we count our virtues and obediences to be but dross that we might win Christ and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. We dare not hope to be acceptable with God because of anything good that is in us by nature, or may be infused into us by grace: we are accepted in the Beloved, and apart from him we look not to be found acceptable. Even what

the Holy Ghost works with us does not furnish us with any merit which we can plead, for it is a gift of grace, and no part of our justifying righteousness. We rest upon Jesus Christ crucified, and not upon our faith, our repentance, our prayers, our conquests of sin, our likeness to Christ. Right away from anything that comes from us or to us we look to Jesus, who is all our salvation, the Alpha and Omega, the author and the finisher of faith. Our faith is singular, then, because it differs from that of the Jew who boasts in his carnal descent, from that of the religionist who rests upon outward forms, and that of the self-righteous man who depends upon his own doings in whole or in part. These three forms of dependence we renounce from the very depth of our hearts, and any other form of dependence upon aught that can be done by man is equally detestable to us. We know that if we are saved it must be upon quite another ground than that of the merit of works of any sort or kind. "We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

Secondly, consider *the speciality* of our hope. Taking our text in connection with the fourth verse, we remark that our hope is in grace alone. According to Paul, any man who tries to be justified by the law has altogether given up salvation by grace; therefore we trust for righteousness to Christ alone, and look entirely to the free mercy of God. If ever I get to heaven it will be in no measure because I deserve to come there, but because God willed it that I should enter glory by his abounding grace. No man has any claim upon God whatever. If God gives man what he may claim in justice he will award him eternal destruction from the glory of his power: that is all man has a right to; he is an undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinner. If any good thing therefore comes to us it must be entirely on the ground of goodness freely given to the undeserving, pardon extended to the guilty, infinite compassion looking upon our misery and determining to reveal itself in a free gift, not to be won by effort not to be deserved nor purchased, but bestowed solely because he "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." Our hope stands on pure grace, sovereign grace, grace unqualified. God blesses us because *he* is good, not because we are so, and saves us because he is gracious, not because he sees any grace inherent in us. He blesses us according to his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins; and therefore grace must ever be the subject of our praise. We can never endure the preaching of any other confidence, for we know it to be a delusion and a snare.

Thirdly, consider *the ground* of our hope. A groundless hope is a wretched thing, but our hope has a firm foundation. It is founded upon right, and is called "the hope of righteousness by faith." Righteousness is a solid basis for hope. If we had a hope which disturbed or destroyed or diminished the lustre of the righteousness of God, the sooner we were rid of it the better;

but we need not detract in any degree from the severity of divine justice in order to sustain our hope. We expect to be saved by an act of justice as well as by a deed of mercy. A strong expression to use, but we use it advisedly. We reckon that by faith we are saved by a method which as much vindicates the justice of God as if he had cast us into hell, a plan by which the divine rectitude is manifested rather than obscured. Observe that our hope is the hope “of righteousness,” that is to say, a hope arising out of the fact that we are righteous, and therefore God will treat us as such. “Strange hope,” says one, “for we are guilty.” That we admit with deepest shame, and we disown all reliance upon our own righteousness, which we know to be but filthy rags; but still we have a glorious hope based upon the fact that we are at this moment actually righteous before God. By faith we are as righteous as if we had never sinned. Those eyes which can discern the slightest flaw gaze upon us, and discern our inmost thoughts, but they discover no flaw in our righteousness; like burning suns they search us through and through, but our righteousness endures the search, and comes forth unscathed from the heat of that consuming fire. This day, having believed in Jesus Christ, “there is therefore now no condemnation to us;” “being justified by faith we have peace through Jesus Christ our Lord.” We have a righteousness which we dare present before God, for it is perfect, in it there is no omission, and no excess; we are righteous before God, and without fault before his throne. Bold words, but not bolder than the apostle used when he said, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again.” Now, brethren, if we have a hope founded upon righteousness it is well sustained, for where justice lends its aid to bless we are sure that all the other divine attributes will cooperate. But is it indeed the fact that we are righteous? According to Holy Scripture it is undoubtedly so. We are not righteous in ourselves. Have we not with detestation flung away that thought? But we know that it is written, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” When we put our trust in Christ Jesus his blood cleanseth us from all sin. Does divine perfection want us to be more clean than that? Cleansed from all sin! When we trust in Jesus Christ he is made of God unto us righteousness: do we require a more perfect and glorious righteousness? Our Redeemer finished transgression and made an end of sin. What remains of that of which an end is made? What more do we need than everlasting righteousness? What more does God himself require? Wot ye not, beloved, how the Lord himself has said concerning his church—“this is the name wherewith she shall be

called, The Lord our righteousness?" I said that clothed in the righteousness of Christ we are as accepted as if we had never sinned: I do correct myself,—had we never sinned we could only have stood in the righteousness of man, but this day by faith we stand in the righteousness of God himself; the doings and the dying of our Lord Jesus Christ make up for us a wedding dress more glorious than human merit could have spun, even if unfallen Adam had been the spinner.

"With my Surety's vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

Here is the footing of our hope, then, that we are righteous in the righteousness of Christ, accepted in the Beloved, complete in him, and perfect in Christ Jesus.

This righteousness we have not obtained by any process which has occupied a great deal of time and exhibited our ability and tried our strength, but it is the righteousness of faith. We have believed, and we are righteous. "Strange doctrine," says one. Not at all. It is the way by which Abraham became righteous, for it is written, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" Along this path all the ancient saints travelled and sang, "Surely in the Lord Jehovah have we righteousness and strength." This is the only possible way to righteousness, and blessed is the man who follows it, and knows that by faith **in** the great substitutionary sacrifice he is righteous before God.

We will now dwell a minute upon *the substance of this hope*. Suppose you were all perfectly righteous, what would you expect from God? For you cannot expect more, at any rate, than we do who have the righteousness of faith. We expect to die triumphantly, glorying in our exalted Head; we expect as soon as our breath has left our body to be with him where he is, that we may behold his glory; we expect to sit at the right hand of God, even the Father, because Christ is there; we expect to rise again at the blast of the archangel's trumpet, when the Lord, who is our righteousness, shall descend upon the earth; we expect then to be manifested, because he will be manifested, for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is;" we expect to share in all the glories of his millennial reign; and when cometh the end, and he delivereth up the kingdom to the Father, we expect to be there, and for ever in the perfection of bliss and glory to dwell with him, singing always "Worthy is the Lamb," never singing "Worthy am I;" saying ever, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," never claiming that our robes were not defiled, or that we cleansed them ourselves. We reckon upon this, and we reckon upon it because we are righteous. See

ye this? No man has a right to expect a reward if he has not a righteousness to which it is due; but lo, he who is all in all to us, our covenant head, deserves the reward, and he has transferred that reward to us who are members of his body, and so are one with him. We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Once more upon this point, notice *the posture which our hope takes up*. We are *waiting* for this hope,—waiting. Would it not have been better to have said “We are working”? No, it would have spoiled the sense altogether. To complete the foundation of our hope of righteousness by faith we have nothing more to do except to wait for the reward of what is done. To the garment which covers us we dare not think of adding a single thread. Why should we? To the acceptance in which we stand before God we cannot hope to add a single jewel. Why attempt it? Has not Jesus said “It is finished”? As far as justifying righteousness is concerned, we are as righteous as we shall be when robed in light we shall cast our crowns before the throne of God. We are at rest, waiting in peace. It is true we are working for other reasons and other purposes, but as far as the righteousness of faith is concerned we are waiting, not working. Waiting,—that is the posture of confidence. We are not hurrying, bustling, and running about in anxiety, but we are at rest, knowing that the reward will come. As the workman when his six days’ work is over goes up to his master’s pay table and waits for his wage, we believe that the meritorious work by which heaven is procured for us is all done, and therefore we are waiting, in the name of Jesus to take the reward which as a matter of justice is due to him, and has been by his dying testament transferred to us.

Waiting implies continuance. The Galatians wanted to be more sure than faith could make them, and so they ran off to getting circumcised, and observing days, and weeks, and months, and all sorts of carnal ordinances, but the apostle says “We through the Spirit wait.” We ask no touch of priests, or charm of magic rites; we are thoroughly furnished in our blessed Lord, and are content to abide in him. Our faith is not for today and tomorrow only, but for time and eternity. We are rooted and grounded in faith in Christ

“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King.”

“I thought it was a race,” says one, “a combat.” Oh, yes, we will tell you about that another time, but that has nothing to do with our righteousness, nothing to do with the ground of our acceptance before God, and that is what we are speaking about just now; as far as that is concerned “It is finished”

sounded from the tree of Calvary, and that “It is finished” brings the righteous to perfect peace, and there they sit and wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. I have said enough upon the first point, and must hasten to the second.

II. THE RELATION OF THIS MATTER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. We may be quite sure that the doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ cannot be opposed to the work of the Spirit of God, for never without blasphemy can we imagine anything like a division in the purposes and works of the sacred persons of the adorable Trinity. The will of the Father, the will of the Son, and the will of the Spirit must be one; it is a perverse forgetfulness of the unity of the Godhead to suppose otherwise. That which glorifies Jesus cannot dishonour the Holy Ghost, we may be quite sure of that.

But observe, brethren, it is the Spirit’s work to destroy the pride of man. All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. All the vaunted comeliness of the natural man is to be destroyed by the Holy Ghost: and does not the doctrine of righteousness by faith wither up the glory of man? What can do it more effectually? I have seen the proud Pharisee leer with a scornful hatred when he has heard this doctrine. “What!” says he, “After all I have done for years, am I to come to Christ just as if I had been a thief or a harlot, and be saved by charity?” He cannot bear it, he will not have it. Now the Spirit of God designs to stain the pride of all glorying, and to bring into contempt all the excellency of the earth, and this doctrine is the appropriate instrument for his work, and is therefore consistent with the mind of the Spirit.

Another office of the Holy Spirit is to exalt Christ. “He shall glorify me,” said Jesus; and does not this doctrine glorify Jesus, since it makes him the head and front, the all in all of a sinner’s hope, by informing him that nothing but faith in Jesus will save him? Is not this according to the mind of the Spirit? O beloved, the Holy Ghost is no rival to the Redeemer, but a glorious co-worker, delighting to honour the Son.

We know, beloved, that the Spirit of God works under the economy of grace only. The apostle says, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law?” Nobody ever received the Spirit by his own works, or as a matter of merit. Since, then, the Spirit only comes to men in connection with the great principle of grace, and justification by faith is the essential doctrine of grace, it must be perfectly consistent with his mind, and you may be sure of this, poor sinner, that there is no deep, mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit which can, if rightly understood, stand in conflict with the gospel announcements that “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God,” and “whosoever believeth in him is not condemned,” and “whosoever will, let

him come and take of the water of life freely.” Salvation by grace through faith and the operations of the Holy Ghost must be consistent.

Carefully note that this righteousness by faith must be consistent with the work of the Spirit, because the faith which brings this righteousness is *never exercised by any but those who are born of the Spirit*. The flesh relies upon works. It is a somewhat remarkable circumstance, perhaps, but so it is, that sinful flesh, which is barren of all real excellence, always clings to merit. The natural man persists in the belief that he has something to do, and yet he can do nothing. He grasps with all his might the sword which cuts him. You cannot get him to see that—

“Till to Jesus Christ you cling
By a simple faith,
'Doing' is a deadly thing,
'Doing ' ends in death.”

He cavils at it, he cannot bear it. Of course he cannot: Ishmael is the bond-woman's son, and has the nature of his mother in him. That which is born of the Spirit instinctively clutches the promise, even as Isaac did, for Isaac knew that he had no right to the inheritance except according to the promise, for, according to the flesh, Ishmael was the first born. The new-born life in every man runs instinctively to grace, and lives by frith. You shall never find simple faith in Jesus exercised by any life, except the life that is born of divine seed in the new birth. Here, then, simple faith and the Holy Ghost are related, for the new heart which the Spirit creates is the only soil in which faith will grow.

Again, faith for righteousness is *based on the testimony of the Holy Spirit*. My brethren, why do we believe that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ? On the ground that the Spirit in the Holy Scripture has borne witness that it is so. The witness which God gave concerning his Son is the basis for our belief; we accept the witness of the Holy Ghost as contained in these pages. The Bible cannot be anywhere contrary to the mind of the Spirit, because it is inspired by the Spirit; so you may rest certain that faith in Jesus Christ as the ground of salvation cannot be opposed to the Spirit's work, because that faith is based upon the Spirit's own testimony concerning Christ.

Moreover, *simple faith is always the work of the Spirit*. No man did ever believe in Jesus Christ for righteousness, except the Spirit of God led him to it. He can never be brought to it, except the Holy Ghost shall lead him there. Faith is as much the gift of God as Jesus Christ himself. Nature never did produce a grain of saving frith, and it never will.

When a man has believed, *he obtains a great increase to his faith in Jesus by the work of the Spirit*. The Spirit never takes a man off from Jesus Christ

as he grows in grace, but it establishes him in his confidence in the righteousness of Christ. The witness of the Spirit in us is a testimony to the faith that Jesus is the propitiation for sin. He never leads us to rest upon the work within, but points us still to Jesus. When he works in us mightily our faith becomes even more simple and childlike; we sink in our own esteem, and rise higher in confidence in Jesus. The Holy Spirit could not be supposed to do this if salvation by faith were an imperfect matter, or dangerous, or dishonouring to himself.

It is *by the Spirit that we continue to exercise faith*. Notice my text. I will quote it emphatically: “*We through the Spirit wait for the righteousness by faith.*” It is not because of any other influence but the influence of the Spirit that we come to rest, and continue to rest, and wait while we rest, for the hope of the righteousness by faith. The Spirit of God works it all, and therefore he is not in conflict with it; it is that which he plants, waters, fosters, and brings to perfection, and he cannot but love it. Idle, then, absurdly idle, is the attempt to make out that the preaching of justification by faith is derogatory to the ministry and deity of the Holy Spirit.

Let us draw an inference or two ere we close. From this subject the inference is that whoever has this hope of righteousness by faith has the Spirit of God. If your hope, beloved, is based upon your being righteous through faith in Jesus Christ you have been born again and renewed in heart by the Holy Ghost. Many are puzzled and say, “I wish I knew I had the Spirit.” They fancy that the Spirit of God would cause some singular excitement in them, very different from quiet penitence and humble trust: I have even known them suppose that it would cause some very astounding swoonings, palpitations, and I do not know what besides. The best evidence of your having the Spirit of God is your depending upon Christ as a little child depends upon its mother. Others may bring other evidence to prove that they are born from above: let them bring the evidence and be thankful that they can bring it, but if you have no other evidence but this, “Jesus Christ is my sole reliance, and on him do I depend,” that is enough: all the rest will follow in due course. He that believeth hath the witness in himself. He that believeth in him is not condemned.

Draw a second inference. Wherever there is any other hope, or a hope based upon anything else but this, the Spirit of God is not present. Much talk about him there may be, but the Spirit himself is not there, for “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ the righteous.” The Spirit will not bear witness to man’s home-born presumptuous hopes. He bears witness to the finished work of Jesus Christ, and if you are relying upon that you have the Spirit. If you are building upon sacraments, works, orthodoxies, feelings, or anything but Jesus Christ, you have not the Spirit of God, for the Spirit of God never taught a man to place his house

upon such sandy foundations. Beloved friend, you may, therefore, answer enquiries about what is within, so far as they cause you distress, by turning your eye to Jesus, the Lord, our righteousness. "Look unto me," saith Jesus, "and be ye saved." Look away from self to God's appointed propitiation. On yonder shameful tree hangs all your trust. Look up to Jesus upon his Father's throne, for there dwells your hope.

One further thought I want to leave upon every mind. Nothing should make us speak with bated breath when we are lifting up Christ crucified before the eyes of sinful men. There is no doctrine, there is no experience, there is no decree of the Father, there is no influence of the Spirit which need for a moment make us hesitate when we are extolling the Lord Jesus as an all-sufficient Saviour for the very chief of sinners. Here I stand this morning solemnly to avow before God, that I have not a shadow of a hope of seeing his face with acceptance, except that which lies in the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; in him I do unfeignedly trust, and in him alone. What if I have preached the Gospel these five-and-twenty years; what if I have brought souls to Jesus, not by hundreds but by thousands, through the divine blessing; what if I have been the means of founding and fostering works of usefulness on the right hand and on the left; truly, if these things were to be gloried in we might glory before men, but far from it, we ascribe them all to the Lord's grace, and before his presence we lie in the dust. We have no hope because of our works, no, nor a shadow of hope; we have no reliance upon our graces, no, nor a ghost of a reliance upon them. Jesus Christ stood in my stead; I, a guilty sinner, have taken shelter by faith, which he has given me, beneath his wings, and I hide myself in him. There is my hope, and that is the hope of every true believer in Christ here I do know.

"Not what these hands have done
Can save this guilty soul:
Not what this toiling flesh has borne
Can make my spirit whole.

"Not what I feel or do
Can give me peace with God;
Not all my prayers, and sighs, and tears,
Can bear my awful load.

"Thy work alone, O Christ,
Can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God,
Can give me peace within."

Now we preach the same hope to the ungodly. Hear ye what God's word says to you. You have broken his law and deserved his wrath, and he might

justly sweep you down to hell, but behold he addresses you in tones of grace. You have no claim upon him; you have no right to expect mercy at his hands because of anything in you that could move him to pity; but in the plenitude of his grace he has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins, and the apostle adds, "And not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." We preach Jesus Christ unto you this morning, and say in his own words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Come to Christ and trust in him, and ye shall be reconciled to God.

"Your sins shall vanish quite away,
Though black as hell before;
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea,
And shall be found no more."

Whoever thou mayest be, and in whatever condition of heart thou mayest be, if thou hast seven devils in thee, if thou art as vile as Lucifer himself in rebellion against God, if thou believest in the great atoning sacrifice thou shalt have instantaneous pardon and acceptance in the Beloved. Oh, hold not out against such free and boundless love. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," and "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Oh, yield thee, man. What are thy works but sin and death? What are thy boasted performances, thy virtues, and thine excellencies? All rottenness in the sight of the heart-searching God. Quit thou thy refuges of lies, I pray thee; quit them now, lest the avalanche of divine wrath should overwhelm both thee and thy refuges.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away,
Like doves to Jesus' wounds;
This is the accepted gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

Trust his Son Jesus; it is his command to you. In other words, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," for "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God save us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Galatians iv. v. 1–6.

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