

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHY AM I THUS?

A Sermon

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“I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”—Romans vii. 22, 23.

LAST Thursday evening,¹ as many of you will remember, I addressed you upon the final perseverance of the saints. I have been greatly surprised and gratified during the week to learn how many persons found comfort and cheer from the simple explanation of that doctrine, which I then gave you. In fact, on the two past Thursday evenings we have been handling a *precept* and a *promise* both relating to the same matter, though each putting it in a different light. The one admonished us to *perseverance* by holding fast; the other assured us of *preservation* because we are fast held. The welcome you gave to these familiar expositions has led me to think it would be acceptable, specially, to such of you as have been lately brought into the sacred household, and who may not even know the rudiments of religious experience, were I tonight to follow up those two elementary discourses with some little account of the great inward conflict to which the believer's life is exposed.

The passage before us tells a portion of the experience of the Apostle Paul. We all of us concede that he was a most eminent saint. Indeed, we place him in the front rank. For this reason his experience is the more valuable to us. If the greatest saints have their inward struggles, how much more should we expect to have them who have not attained the same degree of grace the apostle did. If he who was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles yet had to say, “When I would do good evil is present with me,” then you and I, who can only take the position of babes in grace, or of ordinary disciples of Jesus Christ, must not be surprised if we have to bear

¹ Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,056. “Perseverance without Presumption.”

assaults that surprise us and enter into struggles that distress us, and often are fain by stress of emotion to cry out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

I shall ask you, therefore, for your personal consolation to notice, first of all, that the ruling power in the Christian’s mind is a strong affection, and, therefore, an intense pleasure in that which is pure and holy,—“I delight in the law of God after the inward man;” secondly, that there are passions and propensities within the breast of a man which come into direct conflict with this holy principle,—“I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind;” and, thirdly, that the discipline involved in this constant hostility, despite all the fretfulness and irritation it causes, is not without true and satisfactory evidence of our spiritual welfare. “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

I. It may be said of every true Christian that the ruling power in him delights in the law of God. The new nature which God has created in every believer cannot sin because it is born of God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, and as such without guile, unblemished, incorruptible. We are made partakers of the divine nature. The divine nature, so far as it is communicable, is given to us when we are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are born not of the flesh, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God. We receive from God a new nature at the time of our regeneration. This new nature, though it is the younger, compels the older nature within us to submit to it. It has a struggle, but it gets the victory; that significant augury, “The elder shall serve the younger,” is abundantly fulfilled in the little kingdom within our souls. It has a long struggling trial before the full subjugation; there are many harassing rebellions to encounter, but at length that which is born of the Spirit shall overcome that which is born of the flesh, and the divine nature within us shall vanquish the sensual nature. The Christian man because of this new nature implanted in him delights in the law of God. He has no desire to change that law in any way whatever. When we read the ten commandments, our conscience approves the ordinances of God while it reproves our own culpable shortcomings; yea, we feel that only God could have drawn up so complete, so perfect a code. We would not wish to have one single iota, word, or syllable of that law altered, though it condemns us. Though we know, apart from the precious blood of Christ, it would have cast us into hell, and most justly so, yet with holy instinct, pure taste, and righteous judgment we consent unto the law that it is good. It expresses God’s mind on the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood, harmony and discord, and our mind agrees with God’s mind. We perceive it not as truth established by investigation, but as truth all radiant, shining in its own majesty. We would willingly take our place on Mount

Ebal or Mount Gerizim to give our tremulous Amen to the curses pronounced on disobedience, or to hail with solemn joy the blessings avouched to those who observe and do his commandments. Nor, beloved, would the Christian man wish to have the spirituality of the law in any degree compromised. He is not only pleased with the law as he reads it, though, as I have said, it condemns him, but he is pleased with the very spirit of the law. What if the law condemns in him an unchaste look as well as an unchaste action? He condemns that unchaste look in himself. What if the law reaches to the heart and says, "Thou shouldst not even desire thy neighbour's goods, much less shouldst thou steal them?" He feels in his soul that it is sin, and that it is a bitter thing in him even to covet where he does not defraud. He never thinks that God is too exacting. He never for a moment says, "I knew that thou wast an austere man, gathering where thou hadst not strewed," but he consents to the law though it be high and broad, exceedingly broad. Though the thunderings, the lightnings, and the voices which usher in that law do terrify him, yet the wisdom, the equity, and the benevolence which ordained it resolves this awe into admiration. Being born from above, in fellowship with Christ, at peace with God, his very constitution is in unison with the law of the Lord. Is the law spiritual, so is he. The pact is unbroken, the concord perfect. I trust full many of you, my hearers, can endorse this; for, doubtless, as many of us as have been born again can bear witness that we delight in the law of God after the inward man.

Again, no Christian desires to have any dispensation to exempt him from complying with any one of the Lord's commands. His old nature may desire it, but the inner man saith, "No; I do not wish to get or to give any concession to the flesh, to have an allowance or make an excuse for sin in any point whatever. The flesh craves for liberty, and asks to have provision made for it. But, does any believer here want liberty to sin? My brother, if it were possible to conceive without blasphemy that the Lord should say to you, "My child, if there be one sin that you love, you may continue in it," would you desire any sin? Would you not rather say, "Oh, that I may be purged from every sin, for sin to me is misery, it is but another term for sorrow. Moral evil is its own curse; a plague, a pest, at the thought of which I shudder." It is thought a blessing in the Church of Rome, that a dispensation be given to men from certain religious duties. We ask no such favour; we value not their boon. Liberty to sin would mean putting double fetters upon us. A license even for a moment to relax our obedience to Christ would be but a license to leave the paths of light and the way of peace to wander awhile in darkness and danger; to exchange the glow of health for sore distemper and smarting pain. Brethren, I am sure you never did, and never will, if you be believers, ask the Lord for permission to transgress his statutes. You may have taken leave to do what you did not know was sinful

at the time. There may have been a desire in your heart after something that was wrong. I grant you that. But the new-born nature, the moment it discovers its culpability, recoils at it and turns from it; it could do no otherwise. It cannot sin, for it is born of God. The new nature that is in you shudders at sin; it is not its element; it cannot endure it, whereas before you could riot in it and take pleasure in it, and drink iniquity like water. You ask no dispensation that you may escape from the law. You delight in it after the inward man.

The new-born nature of the Christian also laboriously desires to keep the holy law according to the mind of God. If it were proposed to any one of us that we should have whatever we would ask for,—if in a vision of the night the Lord should appear to us, and say to us as he did to Solomon, “Ask what I shall give you,” I do not think any of us would hesitate. I cannot imagine myself asking for riches or honour, or even for wisdom, unless it were wisdom of a far higher order than is commonly esteemed among the sons of men. But the gift which I feel I should crave beyond every other boon is holiness, pure and immaculate holiness. Possessing now an interest in Christ, knowing that my sins are forgiven me for his name’s sake, the one thing I desire beyond everything else is to be perfectly free from sin, and to lead an unblemished life without sin of omission or sin of commission. Now, every Christian that has that desire within his soul will never be satisfied until that desire is fulfilled; and this shows that we delight in the law of God after the inward man. Nor is it long ere that desire will be fulfilled. Why, we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is; and until we do see him as he is and are like him, we shall always have restlessness of spirit, and always be crying out for more grace, and labouring against the evil that is in us, if by any means we may subdue it. O yes, beloved, in the fact that this is what we hope for, this is what we pray for, this is what we fight for, this is what we would be willing to die for, that we might be entirely conformed to the mind and will of God, there is evidence that we see that the law of God is good and delight in it after the inward man.

This, however, is proved in a more practical way to onlookers when the Christian shows that the life of God is enabling him to overcome many of the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Oftentimes in striving to be holy he has to put himself to much stern self-denial; but he does it cheerfully. For instance, should it happen in business that by using a very common trick in trade he might gain more profit, he will not do it if he is a Christian; he feels he cannot do this evil and sin against his God. Or should the young convert find that a little divergence from the right path would please the worldly people with whom he is obliged to associate, he may, perhaps, turn aside in his weakness, but the new life within him will never be easy if he does. The inner life, when it is in its vigour, will make him say, “Though I

should lose the goodwill of these people, let me serve my Lord and Master. I must forfeit my situation if it come to that sooner than I can do wrong. I must be put even in peril of my daily bread sooner than I will be found wilfully breaking a commandment of Christ. I cannot do it." Now, I know many of God's children who have often suffered very severely, and have passed through a great many trials and troubles because they would not flinch from following their Lord. This is one of the proofs that they delight in the law of God after the inner man. When a man is willing to bear reproach, to be scoffed at, to be ridiculed, and taunted as mad for righteousness sake, when he is willing that men should sneer at him as a hypocrite and yclept [call] him a Pharisee, when he braves the cold shoulder from those whose company he would otherwise have enjoyed, and all because he must and will follow the mind and direction of God's Spirit, I say then it is that the man gives proof that he delights in the law of God. I thank God there are in this Church those who have given that proof, and I pray that you and I, all of us who have received the divine nature, may give constant evidence by using the good art at all hazards, and taking up the cross at all risks, that our soul, even if it cannot be perfect in action, at any rate, would be perfect in aim, and determined by God's help to cherish a love and desire in all things to do Jehovah's will. Is there any one here who is obliged to say, "Well, I do not consent to the law of God: I do not delight in it. When I hear it said, 'Thou shall not covet,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;' I wish it were not evil to do those things that are forbidden. Pity 'tis our pleasure and our profit, our duty and our delight, should be so much at variance. I would rather there were less law and more license. Those commandments, especially, that touch our thoughts, and trench on the freedom of our will, are harsh and unpalatable. I am not content to be bound by them. I would rather live as I like." Well, my dear friend. I will say nothing more severe to you than this, you have no part or lot in this matter at all. If you had, if your heart had been renewed, you would talk after a very different matter. Whenever you hear persons commending a low standard of religion, a low standard of morality, whenever you find them vindicating lax views of right and wrong, you may rest assured that the spirit that is in them is not the spirit of the holy God, but it is the spirit of their sinful nature; yea, the spirit of Satan may have come in to make the human spirit even worse than it was before. But, does your heart delight in God's law? Is there a charm in that which is right to your soul? Is there a beauty in that which is virtuous to your Spirit's eye? Do you especially admire the character of Jesus because "in his life the law appears drawn out in living characters?" If so, then I trust, dear friends, you give evidence that you have been made partakers of the divine nature, that you are regenerate, and though there is evil in you still, yet

there is the life of God in you which will resist the evil and subdue it, till you are brought safely to his right hand.

II. Now, secondly, we come to the conflict. Where there is this delight in the law of God, yet there is another law in the members. So Paul says, and he seems to me to speak of it in three different stages. He could see it first, and then he had to encounter it, and at length to some extent he was enthralled by it; for he says, "bringing me into captivity."

There is in each one of us a law of sin. It may always be seen even when it is not in active operation, if our eyes are lightened. Whenever I hear a man say he has no propensity to sin, I infer at once that he does not live at home. I should think he must live a long way from home, or else he has never been anywhere except in the front parlour of his house where he keeps his profession. He cannot have gone through all the chambers and searched them thoroughly, or he would somewhere have discovered that there is an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. This is true of the believer; he has to cry out against another nature, and say, "Help thou mine unbelief." It is always in the man. Sometimes it is dormant. I do not know whether the devil ever goes to sleep, but our sinful nature seems for a time to do so: not, indeed, that it is any the less sinful when asleep than when it is awake. It is just as bad as it can be. Gunpowder is not always exploding, but it is always explosive. Bring but the spark to it and anon it bursts out, as though it had been ready and waiting to exert its powers of explosion. The viper may be coiled up doing no damage; but it hath a deadly virus beneath its fangs. It is still a viper even when it is not putting forth its poisonous tooth. There is within our nature that which would send the best saint to hell if sovereign grace did not prevent. There is a little hell within the heart of every child of God, and only the great God of heaven can overmaster that mischievous indwelling sin. This sin will crop up when it is least expected, generally it breaks forth suddenly, taking us by surprise. I have known it to my sorrow. I am not going to stand here and make many confessions with regard to myself. Howbeit I did know a man once who, in attending a prayer-meeting felt his heart much lifted up in the ways of God, drew very near to his heavenly Father, held sweet communication with Christ, and enjoyed much of the fellowship of the Spirit. Little did he think that the moment the prayer-meeting was over somebody in the congregation would insult and bitterly affront him. Because he was taken unawares his anger was roused, and he spake unadvisedly with his tongue. He had better have held his peace. Now, I believe, that man if he had been met at any other time, for he was of a tolerably quiet temper, would have taken the insult without resenting it or making any reply whatever; but he had been unwarned, therefore he was unguarded. The very love shed abroad in his heart caused the animosity he encountered to shock his feelings the more.

He had been so near heaven that he expected everybody present had thoughts in harmony with his own; he had not reckoned upon being assailed then. When there is most money in the house, then is the likeliest time for thieves to break in; and when there is most grace in the soul the devil will try, if he can, to assault it. Pirates were not accustomed to attack vessels when they went out to fetch gold from the Indies: they always way-laid them when they were coming home, with a view of getting rich spoil worth the capture. If you have enjoyed a sermon, if you have got near to God in prayer, if the Scriptures have been very precious to you, you may expect just then that the dragon that sleeps within will wake up and disturb the peaceful calm of your soul:

“We should expect some danger nigh,
When we receive too much delight.”

Let us be the more watchful then in seasons of tranquillity. This evil nature, you see, will sometimes be excited, as if by jealousy, when we are being refreshed with good. It will certainly be developed when we are exposed to evil. The man who congratulates himself because he feels no sinful proclivities, no unholy thoughts, no impure imaginations, no conceited ideas, no turbulent passions had need be reminded of that saying of old Rutherford—“When the temptation sleepeth the madman is wise, the harlot is chaste; but when the vessel is pierced out cometh that which is within, be it wine or water.” O my soul, thou hast only been at rest awhile, because there was not any exciting cause for a time. Put into the company of godly people and the mind occupied with good things continually, the bad instincts may sleep; but cast into other society, it only needs a slight provocation, and oh, how soon the evil that always was within manifests itself abundantly. There are weeds in almost every soil. If you throw up the soil from ten or twenty feet deep there will be found the seeds from which they grow. Now, those seeds cannot germinate until they are put in a convenient place; then let the sun shine and the dews fall, and the weeds begin to show themselves. There may be many weeds in our nature, deep down, out of sight, but should they be thrown up by some change of circumstances, we shall find in ourselves evils we never dreamt of. Oh, let no man boast; let no man say, “I should never fall into that particular sin.” How knowest thou, my brother? thou mayst never have been in that position in which such a sin would have allured you? Beware! perhaps where thou thinkest thou art iron, thou art clay; and when thou thinkest that the gates are closed with bars of brass it may be but rotten wood. With respect to none of us, even the holiest, is there reason to trust his best faculties, his best desires, his best resolutions; we are utter weakness through and through, and to transgressions prone, notwithstanding all that God’s grace has done for us. The sin which is in us as a taint in our constitution, might easily break out

as a loathsome distemper, spreading over the entire man from head to foot, and spoiling all the character. I pray God it never may.

It is remarkable how sin will show itself in the Christian, even in the holiest of his duties. Suppose it is prayer. When you feel that you ought to pray, and would draw near to God, do you not find sometimes an unwillingness as if the knees were stiff and the heart was hard. In prayer, when your soul is led away with thoughts of things divine, straight across your soul like some carrion crow flying across a landscape, there comes a bad thought and you cannot get rid of it, or perhaps you get through your devotion with much delight in God; but you have not got out of your little room before an alien pleasure steals over your mind, a self-satisfaction that you have prayed so well that you are growing in grace; that you are rising to the fulness of the stature of a man in Christ. Is it so, that you come from the chamber of reverent worship musing on your own importance; meditating your fitness to occupy a place above the common rank and file of the soldiers of Christ—or that you might very well take a lieutenant's rank in the church of God. Perhaps, again, you did not feel any liberty in prayer, and then with a peevish fretful temper you will inwardly murmur, if you do not actually say, you might as well give up praying such prayers as those, there can be no use in them. So do what you may, or leave undone what you may, yet still the evil that is within will rise; it will intrude upon you at some time or other to let you know of its existence. You may bolt the door, and you may fancy that no thief can get in, and begin to take off your clothes and go to rest, while yet the thief is under the bed. So many a man has thought "I have barred the door against those temptations," and, lo, they have been hidden in his soul like the images which Rachel took that were concealed under the camel's furniture. Somewhere or other they were secreted where he had not discovered them. Take it for granted, dear friends, and do not doubt it. The Apostle Paul saw it, so you may if you choose to look. He said, "I see another law in my members."

And this law in his members, he goes on to tell us, was "warring against the law of his mind." It strove to get the mastery, and the new nature, on the other hand, resisted and would not let it get the mastery. The old lusts fight and then the new life fights too, for there must be two sides to a war. Such is the warfare going on within the renewed soul. We have known this warfare take different shapes. At times it has been on this wise. A wrong desire has come into a Christian, and he has loathed it, utterly loathed it, but that desire has followed him again and again. He has cried to God against it; he has wept over it; he has not consented to it; he fears lest he may have found it sweet or palatable to him for the moment, but when he has had time for reflection he shudders at the very thought of giving way to that temptation; and yet by the restiveness of his own flesh and by the reprisals of Satan that

hateful desire will come up and up and up again. He will hear it baying behind him like a bloodhound following his prey, and sometimes it will take a leap and grip him by the throat and cast him down. It will be as much as that poor man can do to keep down that ferocious temptation that has arisen in his spirit. I can bear witness that such warfare is a very terrible ordeal, for it sometimes lasts for days, and weeks, and months together. I have known thoughtful Christians who have been harassed with doubts which have been suggested about the inspiration of Scripture, about the deity of our Lord, about the sureness of the covenant of grace, or some other fundamental doctrine of our most holy faith; or, even it may be the temptation has been to blasphemies, which the believer has abhorred from his very soul. Yet the more bitterly he has detested it the more relentlessly it has pursued him. Would he drive it away, it returned with redoubled force. "Is it true?" "Is it so?" Mayhap, that a hideous sentiment is wrapped up in a neat epigram, and then it will haunt the memory, and he will strive in vain to dislodge it. He would gladly hurl the thought and the words that clothe the thought into the bottomless pit. Out, cursed spectre, he will cry. Back, like the ghost of one's own crimes, it comes. Whence these evils? May they sometimes be traced to Satan? Ay, but most commonly temptation derives its strength, as well as its opportunity, from the moods or habits to which our own constitution is prone. In the discharge of public duties, when straining every nerve to serve the Lord, we may meet with men whose temper acts on our temper to stir up the bile and make us think evil of those to whom we are bent on doing good. In the peaceful shades of retirement which wise men seek out as a relief from the distractions of society, what strange fancies and monstrous vagaries will often come into the heart and confuse the brain. Or, sad to tell, in the walks of study where thoughtful men set out reverently to enquire into the counsels of God, how frequently have they been lured from the open paths to trespass on dangerous ground, to lose themselves in labyrinths, to leave the footsteps of the flock; and so to become giddy and high minded. Anywhere, everywhere, we are challenged to fight, and we must give battle to the sin that besets us.

But, the war carried on by this evil nature is not always by the continual besieging of the soul, at times it tries to take us by assault. This is a favourite mode of warfare with our own corrupt heart. When we are off our guard up it will come and attack us, and as I have said before, we are apt to be off our guard when we have been brought up into the high mountain apart, when we have been near the Lord. In that exalted sphere of communion we have not thought of the devil, his existence has not come across our mind; but when we go down again into the plain, we soon find that he is still living, still distressing our brethren, still lying in wait to ensnare us. For this cause, our experience should quicken our sympathy. Full many a Christian

has been surprised into a sin for which he was to be greatly blamed, but for which he ought not to have been condemned by his fellow Christians with so much severity. They ought to condemn the sin, but to remember themselves lest they also should be tempted. Many a man has been good because he had not a chance of being bad, and, I believe, many a professing Christian has stood because the road did not happen to be very smooth, and there was not much to be gained by falling down. We do not judge each other as God does. He knows the infirmities of his dear children. While he does not make excuses for their sin—he is too pure and holy for that—yet, having blotted out their sins through the atonement of Christ Jesus, he does not cast them off and turn them out of fellowship, as sometimes his people do their poor brethren, who may, after all, be as true children as they are themselves, and have as much real love to their Father. This evil nature when it is warring, laughs at our own resolutions, and mocks our own attempts to put it down. It must be warred against by grace. No arm but the Almighty arm can overcome our natural corruption. Like a leviathan it laugheth at the spear: it counteth it but as rotten wood. You cannot come at a besetting sin as you would. At times you fancy, “I’ll wound it to its deadly hurt;” and in the very act of wounding one sin you are calling another into play. Many a man has tried to overcome his propensity to faintheartedness, and he has run into presumption. Some have tried to be less profuse in their expenditure, and they have become penurious. Some have said, “I will be no more proud, and then they have become mean-spirited. I have known some that were so stern for the truth, they became bigoted, who have afterwards become latitudinarian and hold the truth with so loose a hand that their constancy could hardly be relied on. Look straight on and “do the duty that next lies before you.” It is no easy thing, believe me, to defend yourself from the surprises of sin. It is a thing impossible, unless God who created the new nature shall come to its rescue, shall feed it with the bread of heaven, shall give it water out of the Rock of Ages, and lead it on its way to the goodly land where the Canaanite shall never be, and where our soul shall feast on milk and honey.

I must not linger on this point, but pass on to notice the next. It is a sadder one. The apostle said this warring brought him into captivity to the law of sin. What does he mean by this? I do not think he means he wandered into open flagrant immoralities. No observer may have noticed any fault in the apostle’s character. He could see it in himself, and he saw flaws in his life where we are not able to detect them, and probably that was a habit with the apostle. When I hear a good man lamenting his faults I know what the world will say: they will take him at his word and think that he is as they are, whereas with every godly man, if you knew him and marked his life and conversation you would be compelled, if you judged him candidly,

to say that he was like Job, perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil. Yet that very man would be the first to see spots in himself, because he has more light than others, because he has a higher idea of what holiness is than others, and chiefly because he lives nearer to God than others, and he knows that God is so infinitely holy that the heavens were not pure in his sight, and he charged his angels with folly; therefore, every one who sees himself in the glass of the law sees in himself a filthiness that he never saw before. As Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But I think the apostle was not referring here to acts of gross misdemeanour having brought him into captivity so far as he himself was concerned; though many who are God's children, get into sorry captivity because the law of sin and death in their members gets the mastery over them sometimes. Oh, watch against this: weep against this: I was about to say wrestle unto blood against this. Brethren, they that have committed great sins who have been God's children, though they have been saved, have been saved so as by fire; and if they could tell you how many times they were chastened, how sore the chastening was, how their very bones were broken, how the Lord made them see that he hated sin in his own family even more than anywhere else,—could you hear them confess how they lost the light of his countenance, lost enjoyments, lost the sweet savour of the promises, oh, it would make you say, "My God, be pleased not only to save me at the last but all the journey through. Hold up my footsteps in thy way that they slip not: make me to run in the way of thy commandments." It is a captivity like that of the Israelites in Babylon itself when a child of God is suffered to fall into some great sin. But, long before it comes to that pass, and I hope in your case it may never go so far, I think this law of sin brings us unto captivity in other respects. While you are fighting and contending against inbred sin doubts will invade your heart. "Am I a child of God? If it be so, why am I thus? I cannot pray as I would. Surely if I were a child of God I should not be hampered in devotion or go out to a place of worship and feel I have no enjoyment, while others feast and sing for joy of heart." Oh, what a captivity the soul is brought into when it allows inbred sin to cast any doubts upon its safety in Christ. We are saved because we are believers in Christ. Christ, having been all our confidence, is always in us the hope of glory. To as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name. If I have believed on his name, whatever my inward experience may be, or may not be in my own estimation, if I have believed on the name of Jesus I have the privilege to be a child of God. But sometimes doubts will come over us, and so we are brought into captivity. I have known those who were almost driven to despair. The child of God, has written bitter things against himself

and signed his own death-warrant. Thank God, if we sign our own death-warrant it does not stand for anything. Nobody can sign that but the King, and he will never sign it for any soul that believes in him, however feeble his love may be. We may be brought into captivity by a sense of sin, a temptation to sin, or a yielding to sin. If we ever come to that it will make us weak in serving, cold in prayer; restless when alone, and joyless in the society of the saints; nay, we shall feel almost lifeless. Oh, may God save us from it! Oh, may we wrestle hard; may we wrestle every day that we may keep sin down; may divine grace, even that grace which is treasured up in Christ Jesus, secure to us the victory.

III. It is some comfort when we feel a war within the soul, to remember that it is an interesting phase of Christian experience. Such as are dead in sin have never made proof of any of these things. Time was when we were self-righteous, lost, and ruined, and without the law, and sin was dead in us, so we thought. We were dead, in trespasses and sins, though we boasted of our own righteousness. These inward conflicts, show that we are alive. There is some life in the soul that hates sin, even though it cannot do as it would. I have known what it is to bless God for the times when my soul has felt inward war, and I would have been glad to feel the war renewed. Rest assured that the strong man of the soul while he keeps the house will keep it in peace. It is when a stronger than he comes to eject him, that there is a fight within your soul. I would suggest it therefore to you as a cause for consolation and thankfulness. Do not be depressed about it. Say—"after all, there is some life here." Where there is pain there is life. The best of God's saints have suffered in this very same manner. Your way to heaven is not a bad one. Some, I know, are not so troubled to any great extent, but the majority of God's saints have to endure fightings without and fears within. You read of Martin Luther. That great bold man became a master of theology, by being taught in the school of temptation. Even his last hours were full of stern conflict. He was a man of war from his youth up. How constantly did he have to contend against himself. We get the same testimony from this chapter of the life of Paul. Be not, therefore, downcast as though some strange thing had happened unto you. Look up yonder to those saints above in their white robes singing their unending song! Ask them whence their victory came? They will tell you that it did not come to them because they were sinless or perfect in themselves, but through the blood of Jesus.

"Once they were wrestling here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard as we do now.
With sins, and doubts, and fears."

The richest consolation comes from the last verse of the chapter. Paul having asked how he should be delivered, answers the question, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "They shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," not only from the guilt of their sins, but from the power of their sins. What a mercy it is that the Lord Jesus has struck a deadly blow at our sin. He has broken the head of it. It is a monster, and has immense vitality; but it is a broken-backed, broken-legged, broken-headed monster. There it is: it lies hissing and spitting, and writhing, capable of doing us much mischief, but he that has wounded it will smite it again and again, until at last it shall utterly die. Thank God it has not vitality enough to get across the river Jordan. No sinful desire shall ever swim on that stream. They are not molested there with tendencies and propensities to sin, and when they shall be restored to their bodies, and their bodies shall rise again, they shall have bodies not of flesh. Bodies of flesh shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, neither shall their bodies see corruption, but with bodies fit for celestial minds, they shall be eternally free from their former sin. Let us rejoice that Jesus Christ can do it all. He can save us from all sin. He who has bought us with his blood, he will not cheaply lose that which he has dearly bought. He will deliver us from all sin, and he will bring us into his eternal kingdom and glory without fail. So we fall back upon this sweet consolation. Though the fight may be long and arduous, the result is not doubtful. Remember the text of last Thursday night. That shall settle the point. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." You will have to get to heaven fighting for every inch of the way; but you will get there. Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, they all came safe to land in Paul's shipwreck, and so shall it be with the saints. When the sheep shall pass again under the hand of him that telleth them one by one, there shall not be one of them missing. They were all so weak that the wolf could have rent them in pieces; they were all so foolish that if left to themselves they would have wandered on the mountains and in the woods, and have been destroyed; but the eternal shepherd makes this a point of honour—"Of all them that thou hast given me, I have lost none. Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me." It ought to make you quite well now to know that you are sure of victory. Oh, by the lilies of the love of Christ, and by the strong right arm that once smote Rahab, and cut the dragons in twain, let every Christian be of good courage. The Omnipotent is with us; the Invincible is for us. Forward to the charge, onward to the conflict, though the fight wax warmer and sterner still, onward ever, onward without fear or a moment's hesitation. "He that hath loved us bears us through, and makes us more than conquer-

ors too.” “The breaker is come up before them; they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it, and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.” They have put to the route their foes. Thus shall it be spoken of all those that follow under the leadership of Christ; this is the heritage of the saints and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord. God grant us to be victors in this holy war, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Romans vii., viii.