

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE COVENANTER.

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## A Sermon

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"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."—Psalm xxv. 10.

THIS Psalm is intensely earnest. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." The sentences are ingots of gold. Every word is exceeding weighty with sense and sincerity. I take it that one reason for this weight is the fact that David was in affliction. He says, "I am desolate and afflicted. Look upon mine affliction and my pain." Pain is a great disenchanter. Flowery speeches suit the summer-tide of our health, but we find them not in the winter of our grief. Pain kills fine phrases as a mighty frost kills butterflies and moths. You can play with religion until you are laid low, and then it becomes serious work. The romance of religion is one thing; the reality of it is another. It would be a great blessing to some if they were shrivelled with a little pain, else will they grow unbearable in their pride. The frog drinks, and drinks, and thinks he will soon swell into an ox; one single bitter drop is mingled with the stream, and he is back into a frog again. It is often the best thing that can happen to us that we should be reduced to our true selves, and not be left to strut about as noble somebodies. May our meditations this morning be solid, and leave on our minds no savour of unreality!

Mixed also with David's suffering there was a sense of sin. Read verse eleven, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." And again, in verse eighteen, "Forgive all my sins." No man need have a worse trouble than conviction of sin. A thorn in the flesh is nothing to a thorn in the conscience. A sense of sin is another great disenchanter. This bursts the bubbles of conceit by thousands. When the heart is awakened, and sin is laid bare by the Spirit of God, so that we are truly humbled by it, life ceases to be sport, and an awful earnestness pervades our being. To carry burning coals in the bosom is nothing compared with bearing sin in an awakened conscience. There is no cheating your soul when sin lies hard on it; and no attempt is then made at dealing with God in a dishonest manner; but, crushed into the dust, we pine for a real atonement, and

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a real faith in it, and the true seal of the Spirit to make our pardon sure. When sin is truly felt, we come before the great Father, not with mimic sorrow, but with downright soul-weeping and heart-breaking, we cry to him, "God be merciful to me a sinner." If we feel either of these two things, pain or sin—and who among us can hope to be without them at all times?—then shall we see the solemn side of life, and look for those sure consolations by which we may be sustained. I hope that our subject of discourse to-day may help in that direction.

One other thing is notable about David in writing this Psalm: whatever his trouble might be, and however deep his sense of sin, he looked Godward always. He cries, "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." "Remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord." In our text his mind dwells upon "the paths of the Lord." The ungodly fly away from God when he chastens them, but the saints kiss the chastening rod. The child of God goes home when it grows dark. We seek our healing from the hand which has wounded us. Which way dost thou look in a storm? If the Lord be now thy haven, thou shalt fly to him in the last dread storm; for that way thine eye has turned these many years. If thou lookest for everything to God thou art looking out of the right window. When thine eyes look towards the great sea of divine all-sufficiency thou shalt not look in vain. Thou mayest have to come again seven times ere thou seest thy deliverance, and when thou dost see it, it may seem no bigger than a man's hand; but thou shalt not be ashamed in the end. I trust this mark and evidence of a child of God is upon many of you this morning; and if it be so, you are among the Lord's host whom I would call to the battle. With your eyes looking right on, and your eyelids straight before you, come with me to the rallying-place of the Lord of hosts.

In my text I see two things worth talking about. The first is, *the spiritual covenant*—"such as keep his covenant and his testimonies"; and, secondly, here is *his notable experience*—"all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant."

I. Observe in the text the footprint of **THE SPIRITUAL COVENANTER**. You have all heard of the old Covenanters of Scotland, their decision of mind and force of character. Their theory of government for the kingdom of Scotland was quaintly unpractical, but it grew out of true and deep fear of the Lord. The Old Testament spirit in them was not enough tintured with the meekness of the Lord Jesus, or they would not have touched the weapon of steel; but in this mistake they were very far from being alone. In my bedroom I have hung up the picture of an old Covenanter. He sits in a wild glen with his Bible open before him on a huge stone. He leans on his great broadsword, and his horse stands quietly at his side. Evidently he smelleth the battle afar off, and is preparing for it by drinking in some mighty promise. As you look into the old man's face you can almost hear him saying to himself, "For the crown of Christ and the covenant, I would gladly lay down my life this day." They did lay down their lives, too, right gloriously, and Scotland owes to her covenanting fathers far more than she knows. It was a grand day that in which they spread the Solemn League and the Covenant upon the tombstones of the old

kirkyard in Edinburgh, and all sorts of men came forward to set their names to it. Glorious was that roll of worthies. There were the lords of the Covenant and the common men of the Covenant; and some pricked a vein and dipped the pen into their blood, that they might write their names with the very fluid of their hearts. All over England also there were men who entered into a like solemn league and covenant, and met together to worship God according to their light, and not according to human order-books. They were resolved upon this one thing—that Rome should not come back to place and power while they could lift a hand against her; neither should any other power in throne or Parliament prevent the free exercise of their consciences for Christ's cause and covenant. These stern old men, with their stiff notions, have gone. And what have we in their places? Indifference and frivolity. We have no Roundheads and Puritans; but then we have scientific dress-making, and we play lawn-tennis! We have no contentions for the faith; but then our amusements occupy all our time. This wonderful nineteenth century has become a child, and put away manly things. Self-contained men, men in whom is the true grit, are now few and far between as compared with the old covenanting days.

But I want to speak this morning, not of the old covenanters, but of those who at this day keep the covenant of the Lord. Would to God we had among us great companies of "such as keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them"! *The true covenanter is one who has found out God*, and therein has made the greatest discovery that was ever made. He has discovered, not only a God, but *the* living and true God; and he is resolved to be on living terms with him for time and for eternity. He will henceforth never shut his eyes to God, for his longing is to see more and more of him. He is determined to be right with God; for he feels that if he were right with all his fellow-creatures and everything about him, yet if he were wrong with God he would be out of order in the main point. He has settled in his own soul that he will know the Lord, be right with him, at peace with him, yea, and in league with him. It is not natural to men thus to cling to God, and seek after him; but it has become natural to this man, so that he hungers and thirsts for the living God. By this very fact the man is ennobled: he is lifted up above the brutes that perish. A man capable of the idea of covenant with God, and taken up with a passion for it, must surely be born from above. There must be a divine nature within him, or he would not be drawn towards the divine One above him. It is even so: the Spirit of God has been working here.

Already, too, *this man has discovered another covenant, whose ruins lay between him and God, and block the road*. Turning to his Bible, the believer discovers that we were from the first under covenant towards God. He reads of the first covenant, the covenant with our first father, Adam, which was broken by his disobedience, whose fatal breach has brought upon us losses and woes unnumbered. This covenant the believer has not ignored, for he has felt his share in its failure, and come under the condemnation of it. His very desire to be right with God has brought home to him the judgment of the law; he has smarted

under the lash of it; he has seen the Lord arrayed in robes of justice avenging the quarrel of his covenant, and he has said to himself, "What shall I do? The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Brethren, we are condemned under the first covenant, not only by the act of our representative, but also through our personal endorsement of his rebellion by our own actual sin. That covenant, which should have been a covenant of life, has become a covenant of death unto us. You know what I mean; for I speak to many who know, by deep personal experience, what it is to be the prisoners of the Covenant, shut up in soul despair, and numbered for destruction. You could not keep the law, you felt you could not, though you wished you could: the future was against you. As for former violations of the law, you could make no amends for them: the past was against you. Even then your inward corruptions were gnawing at your heart like the worm that never dies and the horseleech that is never satisfied: the present was against you. Yet despite all this, you still followed after the Lord, and could not live without him.

*This covenanter of whom I speak is one who has, through divine enlightenment, perceived a better covenant, and sure salvation therein.* He has seen in the Lord Jesus a second Adam, greater than the first, and he has heard the glorious Lord exclaim, "I have given him as a covenant for the people." He has seen Jesus pledged unto God to make good the breaches of the broken covenant. The believer has seen the Son of God arrayed in blood-stained garments coming from Gethsemane; he has seen him answering at the bar for the broken law, scourged with the chastisement of our peace, and bound with the bands of our condemnation. I say the believer has seen the beloved Surety of the New Covenant meeting the law's demands at Calvary, surrendering his hands to be nailed for our ill-doings, his feet to be fastened up for our wanderings, and his heart to be pierced for our wantonness. O my soul, hast thou not seen thy Lord bareheaded amid the tempest of divine wrath for sin? Hast thou not heard him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"? If so, thou hast seen how out of the old covenant the new was born, like life from between the ribs of death. Our soul has stood in the midst of the horrible tempest, half-blinded by the lightning, and deafened by the thunder: at last there has been a rent in the black mantle, and a shower of wondrous love has followed the black tempest, and a voice has been heard, sweeter than the harps of angels, saying, "It is finished." Thus have the Lord's covenanted ones come forth from under the old covenant into a covenant of grace, in which peace and joy abound. Now are we in happy league with God. Now we would think, and feel, and act, in harmony with God. Our covenant with him shall compass all our life: we are his, and he is ours. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul"; and, on the other hand, "The Lord's portion is his people." Henceforth we would have no life except for the living God: he is our ambition and our expectation, our end and our way, our desire and our delight. He rejoices over us to do us good, and we rejoice ourselves in him, and seek his glory.

*The spiritual covenanter has the covenant with God written on the tablets of his heart.* I have known believers when first converted, follow

a hint given them by Dr. Doddridge, in his "Rise and Progress of Religion," where he draws up a covenant which he invites the reader to sign. Some have executed a deed with great solemnity, and have also observed the day of its signature from year to year. Very proper, no doubt, to some natures, but I fear that to the more timid and conscientious such covenants are apt to cause bondage. When they find that they have not, in all things, lived up to their own pledges, they are apt to cut themselves off from all part and lot in the matter: this is the covenant of works, and not of grace; a covenant on paper, and not the covenant written upon the heart and mind. The true covenanter wills the will of God. It is not merely that God commands him to do right, but he longs to do it. God's law is his love. That which is pleasing to God is pleasing to his people, because their hearts are made like his own. The divine likeness is restored by the Spirit of grace, and hence the will of the Lord is written out upon the new-born nature. Holiness is the passion of a true believer. He consents and assents to the law that it is good, and the divine life within him delights itself in the law of the Lord. This is the surest sort of covenant—this divine writing in the nature, according to that gracious promise—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." O happy man whose covenant with God is the covenant of his own desire, who wills and wishes and longs and labours to yield himself fully and wholly unto the law of his God!

*This covenanting man does not regard himself any more as one by himself*, for he is joined unto the Lord, and has entered into the closest fellowship with him. None can separate him from God—the union is vital and complete. He has thrown his little all into God's great all, and taken God's great all unto himself to be his heritage for ever; and now henceforth he is in God and God in him. You ask me what it is which thus binds the man to God. I answer: he feels that he is henceforth joined unto the Lord for many reasons, and among the rest because the Lord has *chosen him* to be his own. He is old-fashioned enough to believe that God has a choice in the salvation of men, and he perceives, because faith has been granted him, that the Lord has evidently chosen him unto salvation. He often cries, "Why me? Why me?" and yet knowing that those whom the Lord calls by grace he first predestinated thereto, he is not ashamed to believe in his election. Now the man that believes that God has chosen him, that is the man to enter into covenant with God, and to keep that covenant. He that is chosen of God chooses God, and chooses him because he is chosen. The vows of God are upon him. Such amazing grace compels him to a consecrated life.

Moreover, in addition to the choice of God this covenanter sees a blood-mark upon his body, soul, and spirit. The *redemption* made on the cross, whatever its other bearings, is seen by the believer to be specially for him. He cries, "For me the bloody sweat; for me the spitting and the scourging; for me the nails and the spear. Truly I am not my own, I am bought with a price." This blood-bought man feels that he cannot be as other men are, he must subscribe with his hand unto the God of Jacob, and own and confess that he belongs alone

to the Lord. Others may be their own lords; but as for us, we have been redeemed, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God. O sirs, if you know your election and your redemption, you must and will dedicate yourselves unto the Lord by a covenant which cannot be broken. If the choice of the Father and the redemption of the Son do not supply us with a potent force towards holiness, what can do so? Well may we be the covenanted ones of God when we are thus distinguished.

Besides, the covenanting believer feels that he has been the subject of a *special call*. Whatever God may have done with others, he knows that he has dealt specially with him in a way of grace and mercy. The Lord hath said to him, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." A voice has called him from his kindred and from his father's house as surely as Abraham was called. The Lord himself has brought him out of darkness into marvellous light. Whatever the gospel may be to the congregation at large, it has been the power of God to him; for in it he has felt the touch of a hand unfelt before, and heard the sound of a voice unheard in all the days gone by. Omnipotent grace has aroused the echoes of his soul. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." This special and effectual call is another mighty reason for entering into league and covenant with God. By that call omnipotent, O Lord, I render up myself to thee. Let the world do as it wills, we cannot account for its folly; but as for us and our house, we will serve the Lord. Our bonds of amity with the world are broken: let it do and say what it will; but to the Lord are we bound for ever by that same power which has fetched us out of our former slavery. What with election, redemption, and calling, what more can we say?

Yes, I can say something more, for this true covenanter feels that he is now *united to God in Christ Jesus*. Matchless doctrine, unity with God through Jesus Christ! No man knoweth all the name and nature of the man quickened of the Spirit. Thou canst not tell whence he cometh, nor whither he goeth. We talk of aristocrats, but believers are the aristocrats of heaven and earth. We often hear the words "royalty" and "blood royal"; the blood royal of the universe is in the man that believes in Jesus. He hath made us unto our God, kings and priests. By virtue of our union with Christ we are one with God and partakers of the divine nature. The day shall come when all the gewgaws and trappings of courts shall be laid aside as faded tawdriness, but then the true dignity and honour of the twice-born, the quickened by the Holy Ghost, shall be truly seen. To be members of the body of Christ—this means glory indeed. To be married unto the King's Son, even to the Lord Jesus—this means such bliss as angels cannot reach. Do you wonder that because of such immeasurable privilege we make a sure covenant with God?

There are three or four things I would say briefly about this true covenanter: the Lord make each one of us to be of his stamp! You may know him by his attachment to the Lord Jesus, who is the sum, substance, surety, and seal of the covenant; as also by his *zeal for the gospel* through which the covenant is revealed to the sons of men. He will not hear anything which is not according to the old gospel, for he

counts another gospel to be a pestilent evil. He is very fond of the word "*grace*"; and with the thing itself he is altogether enamoured. The man that is in covenant with God cannot bear the idea of human merit—he loathes it, it raises his indignation. Have I not known some Christian people come out from hearing certain sermons with their souls on fire with holy wrath? I feel, in casting my eye over many modern writings, as if I had breathed poisonous gas, and was like to die. We cannot endure the smell of sacramentarianism, and priestism, and human righteousness. Others may feed on philosophical morality, but nothing but the grace of God will do for us. Cats and dogs may feed on any rubbish, but men of God must live on the grace of God, and nothing else. Our keeping the covenant and the testimonies binds us to a firm adherence to the inspired gospel, and the grace of God which is the glory of it.

He who is indeed in covenant with God is known by his continual regard to the life, walk, and triumph of *faith*. He has faith, and by that faith he lives and grows. He is, and has, and does all things by faith; and you cannot tempt him away from that faith wherein he stands. Carnal sense and fleshly feeling are not able to tempt him from believing. The highest enjoyment proffered by a fancied perfection cannot charm him from standing by faith. "No," he says, "I must trust, or else it is all over with me. My element is faith; and as a fish out of water dies, so do I die, and all my covenanting with God dies too, unless I cling by faith to the promise of a faithful God." Though all men should live by sight and feeling, yet will not the true covenanter quit the hallowed way of faith in the Lord.

This covenanting man will also be known by his stern resolve to preserve the gospel in its purity, and hand it on to others. When the truth of God was made known to Abraham, it was committed to him and to his descendants as a sacred deposit, of which they were to be the guardians and trustees. It was theirs to keep that lamp burning by which the rest of the world would, in due time, be saved from darkness. At this hour the eternal truths of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ are given over to certain chosen men and women, to be preserved by them till the coming of the Lord. This keeping is to be accompanied with a constant proclamation, so that the truth may spread as well as live, and may go on conquering and to conquer. O ye who are the covenanted ones of God, let not his gospel suffer damage. I charge you that love the Lord to bind the gospel about you more firmly than ever. Bear aloft the standard of our grand army. The blood-stained colours of the cross, bear them to the front; spread them to every wind; uplift them on every hill! And if you cannot spread the truth, and are shut up to defend it, then do so even to the death. Wrap the colours about your heart; be wrapped in them as in your shroud, if you cannot live bearing them as your flag! A true covenanter says, "Sooner death than false of faith." The crown of our Lord Jesus shall never suffer loss. We will do everything for Jesus. We will for his sake bear reproach, and for his sake labour to win souls unto God. We vow that he shall be glorified in our mortal bodies, and that by some means his great name shall be made known to the ends of the earth. O my comrades! I am revived by the very thought of you. God hath

yet his faithful covenanters who have not bowed the knee to Baal, to whom the Lord is God and King for ever and ever.

II. Under our second head let us now study THE COVENANTER'S NOTABLE EXPERIENCE. The text says, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."

Observe, first, that *the Lord makes many approaches to covenanting men*. He does not leave them alone, but he comes to them, and manifests himself to them. By the expression, "All the paths of the Lord," I learn that the Lord has many ways of drawing near to his chosen. Not in the public highways of grace only doth he meet those with whom he is on terms of peace, but in many private and secret paths. In a grass-field a path is made by constant treading, and God makes paths to his people by continually drawing nigh unto their souls, and communing with them. The Lord has many paths, for he comes to them from different points of the compass, according as their experience requires. He uses sometimes this way and sometimes another, that he may commune with us. He will never leave his covenanted ones long alone. Often does he say, "Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

I like the word "paths," as we have it in our English version: for it seems to say that the Lord has walks of his own. He makes ways for himself, and comes along them quietly, taking his people at unawares. On a sudden he whispers a word of heavenly promise, and then is away again. But he is not long gone: he makes another path, and comes to us with new unction and fresh revealings. His visits to us have been many and gracious. O my hearer, if thou wilt give thyself to God, God will give himself to thee. Young man, I invite you to the grand destiny of one that shall henceforth live with God, to whom God shall manifest himself. Will not this be a distinguished honour? Do not think it unattainable. God may be reached: if thou wilt consecrate thyself to him this day by a covenant of salt through Jesus Christ the ever-blessed sacrifice, thou shalt know the visitations of the Almighty; thou shalt, like Enoch, walk with God. Believe me, I speak truth and soberness. Between this place and the pearly gates the Lord will come unto thee, yea, he will take up his abode with thee. When thou canst not get to him, he will come to thee; for he is a great pathmaker. His ways are in the sea, and he leaps over the mountains. He has a desire to the work of his hands, and that desire will break through stone walls to reach thee. What a life is that to which the Lord makes innumerable paths! Happy shall he be who shall attain to it!

Note, next, that *all the dealings of God with his people are in a way of mercy*. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy." This is well, for the best of the saints will always need mercy. Those who keep his covenant are still kept by his mercy. When they grow in grace and come to be fully developed Christians, they still need mercy for their sins, their weaknesses, their necessities. The Lord exercises mercy to the most highly instructed believer, as well as to the babe in grace, mercy to the most useful worker as much as to the most weary sufferer. Thank God that his mercy towards us is for ever.

That mercy will always be "tender mercy," abiding mercy, and



abounding mercy. His mercy is constant as the day, fresh as the hour, new every morning. Mercy covers all. In every gift of providence and in every way of predestination mercy may be seen. It would be greatly to our advantage to think more of the mercy of God to us. So much of his mercy comes and goes without our noticing it. Shame that the Lord should thus be deprived of the revenues of his praise!

In the Hebrew I find the word here used is "wheel tracks," such ruts as wagons make when they go down our green roads in wet weather and sink in up to the axles. God's ways are at times like heavy wagon-tracks, and they cut deep into our souls; yet they are all of them mercy. Whether our days trip along like the angels mounting on Jacob's ladder to heaven, or grind along like the wagons which Joseph sent for Jacob, they are in each case ordered in mercy. I stand by the happy memories of a tried past, as in summer weather I walk down a green lane, and as I look at the deep ruts which God's providence made long ago, I see flowers of mercies growing in them. All the crushing and the crashing was in goodness. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. Yes, "all the days of my life," the dark and cloudy, the stormy and the wintry, as surely as in "the days of heaven upon the earth." Brethren, we may sing a song of unmingled mercy. The paths of God have been to us nothing else but mercy. Mercy, mercy, mercy, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever."

The Psalmist says, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." That is to say, God has always shown the truth of his word. He has never been false to his pledges. He has done according to his word. Moreover, the blessings which God has promised have always turned out to be as he represented them. We have followed no cunningly devised fables. The blessings of grace are not fancies or frenzies, exaggerations or mere sentiments. The Lord has never fallen short of his promise. He has never kept his word to the ear and broken it to the heart. All the ways of God have not only been merciful and true, but they have been essential "mercy and truth." We have had truth of mercy; verity of mercy; substantial, solid, essential mercy. I have found no delusion in trusting in God. I may have been a dreamer in some things; but when I have lived unto God I have then exercised the shrewdest common sense, and have walked after the rule of prudence. It is no vain thing to serve God, the vanity lies on the other side. I know that many of you think that Christian experience leans to the region of sentiment, if not of imagination; but indeed it is not so. The surest fact in a believer's life is God's nearness to him, care for him, love to him. Other things are shadows or shinings which come and go, but the goodness of God is the substance, the truth, the reality of life. How I wish I could persuade you of this! but, alas, the carnal mind will not receive spiritual things: I may bear witness of that which I taste and handle, but you will not believe me. Divine Spirit, come and open blinded eyes.

*To this rule there is no exception*—"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant." They say there is no rule without an exception, but there is an exception to that rule. All God's dealings with his people are gracious and faithful. Sometimes the ways

of God are full of truth and mercy manifestly—they have been so to me in many a notable instance. I hope I do not trouble you too often with personal experiences. I do not narrate them out of egotism, but because it seems to me that every Christian should add his own personal testimony to the heap of evidence which proves the truth of our God. If I tell you about John Newton, you answer, "He is dead"; but if I tell you of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, he stands before you. Some ten days ago I was called to bear a baptism of pain. I had a night of anguish, and the pangs ceased not in the morning. How gladly would I escape from these acute attacks, but it seems I may not hope it! I felt worn down and spent. Far on in the morning my ever-thoughtful secretary came by my bedside, and cheered me greatly by the news that the letters brought tidings of considerable help to the various enterprises; in fact, there was far more coming in than is at all usual at this season. A legacy was reported of £500 for the Orphanage, and £500 for the College. Another will was mentioned in which the Orphanage was made residuary legatee. Living friends had also sent large sums as by a kind of concert of liberality. They did not know that their poor friend was going to be very ill that morning, but their Lord knew, and he moved them to take away every care from his servant. It seemed to me as if my Lord said to me, "Now, you are not going to fret and worry while you are ill. You shall have no temptation to do so; for I will send you in so much help for all my work that you shall not dare to be cast down." Truly in this the paths of the Lord to me were mercy and truth. Many and many a time have I been lost in wonder at the Lord's mercy to his unworthy servant. I bow my head and bless the name of the Lord, and cry, "Whence is this to me?" Ah, brethren! one can bear rheumatism or gout when mercy flows in as a flood. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" Seeing it all comes from the same hand, we should receive it with equal cheerfulness. Now will I suffer with patience and endure with tranquillity, for the Lord has dealt graciously and tenderly with his servant. I have often found his consolations abound in proportion to my tribulations, insomuch that I am on the look-out for the mercy when I begin to feel the smart, even as a child looks for the sweet when he finds himself called upon to take physic. Those more closely around about me say, "Now that you have a bad time of personal suffering you will see the Lord doing wonderfully for you"; and they are not disappointed. Indeed, I serve a good Master: I can speak well of him at all times, and specially do I find him kind when the weather is rough around his pilgrim child! Have you not found it so in your way? Come, dear friends, you cannot speak this morning, for one at a time is enough for a public assembly; but you can speak when you have had your dinners, and your children are round about you. Tell them how gracious God has been to you in your times of trouble. Exceedingly utter the memory of his great goodness.

Mark you, when we cannot see it, the Lord is just as merciful in his ways to us. We may not expect to be indulged and pampered by being made to see the mercy of God, like silly children that will be in a pet and a fume unless their father stuffs their mouths with sweetmeats, and their hands with toys. God is as good when he denies as when

he grants; and though we often *see* the marvellous tenderness of our God, it is not necessary that we should *see* it to make it true. Our God is wise as a father, and tender as a mother, and when we cannot comprehend his methods we still believe in his love. This is not credulity, but a confidence to which the Lord is fully entitled; there can be no doubt about it, that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant."

I hear some say, "These things do not happen to me. I find myself struggling alone, and full of sorrow." Do you keep the covenant? Some of you professing Christian people live anyhow, and not by covenant rule. You do not live to God, you do not keep his covenant, you do not observe his testimonies, you are not living consecrated lives; therefore, if you do not enjoy his mercy and his truth, do not blame the Lord. The text says, that all his paths are mercy and truth "unto such as keep his covenant": remember the character, and do not expect the blessing apart from it. O child of God, be thou more careful to keep the way of the Lord, more concentrated in heart in seeking his glory, and thou shalt see the loving-kindness and the tender mercy of the Lord to thee. God bless this feeble testimony of mine to all who are assembled here this morning!

I have this much to add to it—What a bliss it is to have entered upon the spiritual life, and to be in covenant with God! If there were no mercy joined to it of a providential character, it would nevertheless be the grandest thing that ever could happen to any one of us to be living unto God. I call all short of this *death*, and I know no other name for it. What solidity we have in godliness! It puts eternal rock beneath our feet. There are fascinating things in life about which you are almost afraid to enquire, for fear they should not prove to be what they seem. All earthborn joys are of this kind: their charms are on the surface, their beauty is skin deep. But in regard to the life consecrated to God by covenant, and then enriched by his mercy, you may pry, and dig, and search, and the more you do so, the more will you be certified that now you are in the land of realities. Though we do not *see*, yet we perceive with a perception clearer than sight, and we shall so perceive through life; and when they fling back those golden gates, and we peer into the spirit land, then shall we value most of all the life which observes the covenant, and is surrounded with mercy and truth. What a wondrous thing the life of a consecrated man will seem to be when it shall be viewed in its completeness, in the light of the eternal throne! Then will the embroidery of love be seen in its beauty, and the fabric of life will be owned to be worthy of a God. Things not seen as yet will be seen then; and things known in part will be seen in all their bearings. I suppose that one of the engagements of heaven will be to observe how kindly our God has dealt with us upon the road. At any rate, when we come to the glory-land we shall only reckon that to have been true life which was spent in communion with God. Link us with God, and we live; divide us from him, and we are dead.

I hear worldlings mutter—"What is the man at? We know nothing and care nothing about being in covenant with God." Truly you despise the life I set before you; but it is your own way of life which

most deserves scorn, O you who live for gain or pleasure! I will sketch you with the pencil of truth. It is a country scene, and it passed under my own eye but a few hours ago. I sat by the rivulet, at a point where abundant springs poured forth new streams. It was a brook, wide but shallow, and the pure water glided along refreshingly under the overhanging boughs. Little children were there wading into the stream, and enjoying its cool waters. One of them was a true representative of your wealthy merchants. He went a-fishing with a bright green glass bottle, and his ventures were successful. Again and again I heard his voice ring out most joyously and impressively, "Look! Look! Here! Here! Such a big 'un! I have caught such a big 'un!" It was by no means a whale which he had taken, but a fish which might be half-an-inch long. How he exulted! "Such a big 'un!" To him the affairs of nations were as nothing compared with the great spoil which he had taken. That is the gentleman upon the Exchange, who has made that successful speculation. For the next few days he will astonish everybody as they hear that it was "such a big 'un!" Earth, and heaven, and hell, time and eternity, may all accept the go-by now that the glass bottle contains its prey. I confess I was not carried away with admiration for the child's fortune, neither did I envy him the fulness of his satisfaction.

His brother, not far off, varied my picture for me: he was less richly endowed, and yet he had a very serviceable tin can, with which he fished most diligently. Soon I heard his voice pitched in another key: "Nasty little things! They won't come here! I can't catch 'em! They're good for nothing! I won't try any more." Then the impetuous genius threw his tin can with a splash into the water, and his enterprise was ended. That is the gentleman whose company has been wound up, or whose goods will not command a market. Things will not come his way. He cannot get on. He has made a fail of it, and is in the *Gazette*. All society is out of order, or he would have been sure to succeed. He is sick of it all for the present. You smile at my boys! O worldlings, these are yourselves! You are those children, and your ambitions are their tittlebats.

"O happy man that lives on high,  
While men lie grovelling here."

Without God you are paddling in the brooklet of life, fishing for minnows. If you get a grip of God, because he has laid hold on you, O man there is then a soul in you; then have you come to be allied with angels and akin to seraphim. Apart from God you subside into shameful littleness. O Lord Jesus pity those who forget thee! Amen.

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxv.

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HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—116 (Song II.), 664, 663.