The Door Of Salvation

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"The Door of Salvation"
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John x. 9.—"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

To a man who is in any measure duly alive to the state of guilt and misery in which he comes into the world, and in which if he leaves it, he shall eternally wish that he had never been born, it must appear a question of the greatest magnitude, how he may be delivered from it, and brought into a state of peace and happiness. When this question is raised by an individual thus affected, it is not every answer that will meet and settle it. An enquiry into the matter, that is proposed merely to gain information, to avoid the reproach of being ignorant of that which everybody ought to know, or to serve some present or merely worldly purpose, is very easily put to rest. But when a man is under the pressure of conscious guilt, when he is grieved with the deprivation of fellowship with God, when he is bowed down and afflicted with the views that rise up before him, and the corruptions that rankle within him, and in these circumstances puts the question, how he may escape the wrath which is to come, it needs an Interpreter one of a thousand, to solve his enquiries, and to allay his fears. He feels it is with God he has to do, it is against Him he has sinned, from Him he is banished, and by Him he is condemned. And, therefore, does he judge, that no plan of escape can be trusted to, which does not bear upon it the seal of His approbation, and that no way of safety ought to be entered upon, which has not been opened by the power of His grace. To such a man, the words of the text are fraught
with the most welcome intelligence, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

In the text, there are some things evidently presupposed, to which, in the first place, it is needful that we turn our attention.

And first, it is presupposed, that men are in a state of danger. Were you to pass the Asylum for the Blind, and read on the gate-way the inscription which bears the name of that Institution, you would at once conclude that in our city there were individuals destitute of the sense of sight. In like manner, when we read, as in the text, of a door of salvation, what can be plainer than that there must be some who are in danger? And, brethren, is not this fact recorded and illustrated on every page of the Word of God? In our world there are men in danger, and most imminent danger, not only of temporal calamities, and bodily sufferings, but of eternal destruction, and spiritual plagues. But where are they? They are here, in our city, in our assembly, we, we are the men: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," and "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

But, secondly, it is presupposed in the text that an asylum has been provided for those who are in danger. A door is the entrance to some enclosure, be it a temple, a house, or a sheep-fold; and this is fully taught in the Holy Scriptures: indeed, this is the burden of these invaluable writings, and from Genesis to Revelation the theme for substance is, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and goodwill to men." The law indeed is there promulgated in its holy requirements, and its fiery sanctions. The regions of woe are described in their eternal darkness, their undying worm, and their unquenchable flame; the corruptions of men are depicted in their native malignity, and their restless activity—the glory of the Highest is unfolded in its peerless majesty, in its awful purity, in its winning grace: but all, brethren, is designed to illustrate and commend the salvation of God, or to leave men inexcusable if they neglect it. The message of Moses, of the prophets, of
Christ and His apostles, is, "We bring you glad tidings of great joy. Unto you is born in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

But, thirdly, it is presupposed that the Asylum is the peculiar property of God. A door is uniformly an appendage of houses or lands that are appropriated, and not left open and free to all. And is not a state of salvation, in the strictest sense of the word, private property? What are the images under which it is set forth in the Scriptures? It is in one place called a kingdom, in another a city, in a third a temple, in a fourth a house, in a fifth a vineyard, in a sixth a sheepfold, every one of which involves the idea of private property. But how can it be otherwise? Who but God could contrive an asylum for sinners? Man has found out many inventions, but never could he have hit upon the invention of a secure refuge for a guilty soul. Who but God could have constructed this Asylum? The power of man is great: he can raise Babels, build cities, erect palaces, but a city of salvation lies beyond his strength: "none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Who but God can bring men into this asylum? The children of men will go anywhere, at the impulse of their own ambition, or at the nod of the god of the world, but unto the city of God's salvation, if left to their own wills, they never will go. The Bible says of Israel what it says of all; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," but neither of Israel nor of any other does it say, "Thou hast saved thyself." Who but God can keep men in this asylum? When men are once settled in a comfortable dwelling, they are loth to leave it, but strange to say, no sooner do men enter the city of God, and taste of its joys, than their old man begins to hanker after the world, and infallibly would they turn back, if the Lord did not keep them. Hence we read, "who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." In every view you can take of it, the state of salvation is God's peculiar property: "The Lord hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for His habitation."

We are thus brought to consider in the second place, the entrance to this asylum, "I am the door." The
speaker here is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Blessed, who is of one essence with Him, and equal to Him in the glory and majesty of the Divine nature. He did, however, in amazing condescension, become incarnate, and by a mystery of wisdom, and power, and love, which we cannot fathom, did assume the nature of man into personal union with Himself. In this wondrous constitution of Person, did He stand, and with a majesty and grace peculiar to Himself, declare, “I am the door.” The honour He thus wears is very high, the office He fills is arduous; but when we reflect on the dignity of His person and the variety of His endowments, we cannot doubt that He is perfectly equal to the work assigned to Him: He is the “Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” But why is this glorious One called the door?

In seeking the answer to this question, let it be observed, that the state of salvation into which sinners are to be brought is a state of covenant love with God, of federal union to the Lord Christ, of fellowship with the Holy Ghost, of communion with all saints, and of true and eternal purity and blessedness. Now, Christ is called the door, because it is through Him, and for His sake, that any of the children of men are introduced to this privileged condition. Why was it, brethren, that Adam, and in him the whole of his seed was shut out from God, from holiness, and bliss? Why, but for their sin. And if sin required that they should be once shut out, it required that they should always be shut out, till it was removed. For, do you look at the guilt of sin? It, in its own nature, and by the just sentence of God, deserved eternal damnation. And so long as guilt lies upon a creature, so long is it impossible in the nature of things, that he can deserve admission to the favour of God, and all its attendant blessings: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” But look again at the influence of sin, and you see that it renders men incapable of the enjoyment of God. Now, were we to yield to the pride of men, what they presumptuously claim, that they are entitled to the friendship of God, what would they be the better of it? No more than a blind man, were you to set him down in a beautiful palace, or a deaf man,
might return to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls; and not only so, but that you who are by nature shut up in corruption and servitude, might go in and out in holy liberty and spiritual peace. And not this only, but that you who are ready to perish, no man caring for your souls, might enter into a land flowing with milk and honey, and be filled even as with marrow and fatness. We entreat you brethren, to walk as became a people so highly favoured of the Lord. O, keep close to Christ. Live by the faith of Him as the door to Divine favour and fellowship, to righteousness and strength, to peace and joy. And take His word, that entering by the door, ye shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

2. To burdened and distressed souls, the text speaks in accents of the richest grace, and tenderest love. We shall not dwell on the suitableness of these benefits to meet your case and to supply your souls. Of that you are perhaps in a measure already convinced. But what you have difficulty in believing is, that all this may be yours. Now, look at the words of the Faithful and True Witness: read and ponder them. And what is it they say? "If any man enter." He does not say, If a man be contrite and broken-hearted—if he be melted into humility and sorrow for sin—if he be full of spiritual desires and good resolutions—if he have not been guilty of flagrant sins or of abuse of privileges,—but if any man, be he what he may, of any character, in any condition,—if any man enter, he shall be saved. What more can you desire than this? O say, it is enough, "Behold we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God."

3. Let the self-righteous take warning from this subject. You know some little of your danger, and some little too of salvation. You feel that if something be not done, you must perish. But ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish your own righteousness, you do not submit to the righteousness of God. Not that you leave Christ out of your creed altogether: this were too gross an error to be committed by the professed members of the church. But then He is not the door, but your prayers, your church-goings, were you to admit him to the sweetest music, or a dead man, were you to place him at a royal banquet. Nay, he would be worse. Were the depraved sinner taken to the palace of the Great King, with its nameless beauties and delights, he would be intolerably miserable, and would long to make his escape, though it were to descend to the sides of the bottomless pit. Why, there are men on whom you could not inflict a severer penance than to compel them to mingle with the saints here for a whole day. Oh, how dismal to them must be the prospect of an eternity of such scenes, immeasurably heightened and magnified! The wicked say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Now, Christ is the door, because by His Surety work He hath taken away sin, and thus obtained a good and valid title to eternal life. He did come under the law, in its precept, and never was He discouraged, deep as was the conflict, and severe as were the labours, till He said, "It is finished." In consequence of this glorious work, which will be the wonder and study of saints and angels through eternal ages, He was Himself exalted into ineffable glory: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." The everlasting doors of the heavenly glory were opened to Him, because He appeared with His own blood, the shedding of which was the consummation of His work; just as the High Priest passed through the veil of the temple, once a year, with the blood of sacrifices, so is Christ's blood and the righteousness which it completed, made that on the ground of which sinful men are admitted to a state of grace here and of glory hereafter: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities."

We have said, however, that another effectual barrier to the admission of sinners to a state of favour with God, is the corruption which has been wrought in their
entertained that the word shall fail or be frustrated. In the language made use of, however, it is clearly implied that a believer must seek pasture; and this he cannot but do in virtue of the new nature that is given him: for just as a new-born babe seeks its mother's milk, so does a child of God desire the unadulterated milk of the word, that he may grow thereby. And as he seeks it, so he has the word of Christ that he shall find it. He may sometimes be brought to great straits: he may have to undergo much toil: he may, like our forefathers, have to seek pasture in glens and caves, and at the peril of his life, but he shall assuredly find it, and that too in the manner and measure which Divine wisdom judges most suitable. The Lord may give him a faithful and devoted ministry, that will feed him with knowledge and understanding: or he may send him a ministry that is like wells without water, and clouds without rain: or he may take from him altogether these public ordinances, and cause the ways of Zion to mourn, because none go to the solemn feast; but in this case, He "will open up springs in the desert, and pools in the wilderness;" He will feed them by His own word, and the throne of His grace, or the fellowship of His saints. But even though the word should be taken away, and the enemy should prevail, so far as not only to burn up all the synagogues in the land, but to destroy all the bibles, still the Lord will supply the flock with pasture. He that fed Elijah by ravens, and Samson from the carcass of a lion, with the meat that perisheth, will not suffer His poor people to want for the bread that endureth to everlasting life: "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want;" "The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

**Application.**

1. What cause, believing brethren, have you this day to magnify the Lord, and extol His name! He that is mighty hath indeed done for you great things, whereof your hearts may well be glad. Oh, look at the door that has been opened in His incarnate Son, that you houseless wanderers might enter into secure abode; that you, pursued by the avenger of blood, might have a city of refuge; that you who were as sheep going astray
Jeremiah, "and I did eat them, and they were the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." There is farther, the exercise of meditation. What a believer does not find in simply reading the word, he finds from settling down upon it in holy meditation. When the thoughts are fixed upon some particular passage, or employed in tracing out some delightful view, then one ray of light follows upon another, till the whole soul is lighted up, and the heart filled with ecstasy: "Oh, how love I thy law: it is my meditation all the day." The godly man's "delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night, and what is the effect? "He is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." There is secret prayer. This, brethren, is the most effectual means of pasturing the soul: because in it the soul obtains the nearest access to the blessed God: and, as we have already remarked, it is in communion with Him that spiritual nourishment doth essentially consist. Oh, what glorious views has a believer obtained of the Divine character, of the fulness of covenant blessings, of the grandeur of eternal glory, while bending before the throne of mercy! And what delight and strength have thereby been imparted to his soul! "It is good for me that I draw near to God."

The last ordinance that we mention is the communion of saints—godly conversation—social prayer, with union in works of faith and labours of love. As "iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." "I long," say the Apostle, to the Romans, "to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." And in another part of the same Epistle he says, "I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherby by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company."

We might dilate on the rich, the abundant, the suitable, and the satisfying nature of the pasture, but time forbids. The text says, he who entereth "shall find pasture." Let it be remarked, that this is the word of Him who hath all power in heaven and on earth committed to Him, and therefore no fear needs to be from the imbecility, and depravity, which sin hath wrought in the whole nature of man, body and soul, in all their powers, and principles, and affections. By many, it is deemed a sufficient reason why they should dismiss from their minds all concern on the subject, and resign themselves to the most perfect indulgence and ease, that it is not in them to enter the door. But is it not an awful perversion of truth and decency, to make your very sin a reason, why you should be regardless of that which alone can deliver from it? Why, it is because you are so blind, that like the men of Sodom, though you grope ever so long, you cannot find the door: it is because you are so corrupt, that like idolatrous Israel, though you be entreated ever so earnestly, you say "No: we have loved idols, and after them will we go:" it is because you are so rebellious, that like the same people, you have made your neck stiff as iron, your brow bold as brass: it is because of all this, that the illuminating and life giving Spirit of Christ, must take of that which is His, and shew it unto you, before you will understand, or receive, or submit to Him. The Lord Christ is here exhibited to you in a glory, and beauty, and sufficiency that eclipse the brightness of meridian sun. His great work of mediation is unfolded in type and ceremony, in promise and prophecy, in narrative and doctrine, and that too, with a minuteness and richness, which leave nothing to be supplied. And to crown the whole, the God of love, of holiness, of truth, condescends to address you, and says, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" "Behold, I have set before you an open door." It is wide enough to admit you: it is sure enough to sustain you. Why then, oh why, will you die? My brethren, there is not a reason which consistently with truth you can give for not responding to this appeal, which will not prove the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Ghost. And oh, how gracious is it to provide not only a door of hope and a way of salvation, but a Spirit to guide to it, a Spirit to dispose for it, a Spirit to strengthen to enter it! "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask Him!"
The pasture is formally, the exceeding great and precious promises of the New Covenant. We find in this matter everything arranged with a beautiful and nice adaptation to the wants and condition of believers; and, therefore, that they might know what is the provision made for their souls, and might be assured of its permanency and sufficiency, the Lord has been pleased to set it before them in a system of the richest promises. And hence it is that you will often hear them say, they fed upon the promises: they were nourished by the words of His mouth; “whereby,” says the Apostle, “are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature.”

The pasture is instrumentally the ordinances of God’s grace. In this we see a farther condescension to the state and capacity of His people, and a bringing the spiritual nourishment still nearer to them. But let it be carefully observed, that ordinances, however lovely, and however useful, are but the instruments which God employs to communicate good to the soul: they are like fields in which the pasture grows, not the pasture itself: they are like the well that contains the water of life, not the water itself. In these, hence, we may say with the prophet; “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” Of these ordinances, there are the services of the Sanctuary, all of which, and especially the preaching of the word, are made instrumental in pasturing the flock. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” And in another Psalm, after pouring forth his ardent desires after God, he adds, “To see thy power, and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.” There are also the exercises of the family and of the closet. To advert to the latter only, there is the reading of the word. Oh, how often does a believer feed upon the sweetest pasture, as he reads of the glory of the Lord in Christ Jesus, of His covenant faithfulness and love, of the riches of His inheritance in the saints, of the fulness of grace, and the immensity of glory! “Thy words were found,” says
the Blessed God Himself, in the beauty of His majesty, the splendour of His glory, and the fulness of His grace. The soul of a believer cannot rest in any object short of this, as the source of his truest delight and highest satisfaction. And whatever view we take of the pasture in which he feeds, will derive its chief value from its relation to Him, and its fitness to manifest His glory: “Delight thyself in God, and He will give thee the desires of thine heart.” In accordance with this injunction the Psalmist exclaims, “O Lord, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.”

The pasture is mediatorially the Lord Christ, in His glorious person, and finished work. To us, brethren, there is no saving nor soul satisfying discovery of God, but in Christ Jesus. And as He has been pleased to communicate Himself through Christ, we must seek the enjoyment of Him through the same channel. Now, the Scripture is full of Christ, and in everything that is said of Him, may the believer see that of the blessed God which is fitted to nourish and refresh his soul: “I have manifested thy Name, unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world”: And what He thus manifested to them, the apostle John wrote he declared to their converts, “that ye also might have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” “And these things,” he adds, “write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

The pasture is efficiently, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. We have said there is no discovery of God to us but in Christ; and we now remark, that there is no application of Christ for the support and comfort of the soul, but by the Spirit. The treasures of Christ are indeed immense, and rich, and suitable, and the soul of a believer is poor, and needy, and desolate: but, brethren, it needeth the Spirit to take of these treasures, and shew them to the soul, and to bring the soul up to a participation and enjoyment of them. The apostle, accordingly, who implored for those to whom he wrote, “the love of the Father, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,” implored also, as essential to the possession of the other two, “the communion of the Holy Ghost.”

united to the Lord Christ, accepted as righteous in the sight of God, and constituted an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ Jesus. But we must look a little more closely into the benefits to which he is introduced. And first, says our Lord, “he shall be saved.” The moment he enters by the door in plain terms, that moment he believes in Christ, he is saved from the wrath of God. The Lord’s words to him are, “I was angry with thee, but now mine anger is turned away.” He is saved from the condemnation of the law: “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” He is safe from the dominion of sin: “Ye are now made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness.” He is safe from the servitude of the world: “I,” says Christ, “have chosen you out of the world.” He is safe from the tyranny of the devil: “The prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive is delivered.” He is safe from the fear of death; “He hath destroyed death, and him that hath the power of it, and delivered them who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.” In a word, he is safe from all the evils which sin has brought upon our race in time and throughout eternity: “He is saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation.”

By the faith of Christ, he enters a city of refuge, whither the avenger of blood may not pursue him, and where he cannot lay hands upon him. It is true that through presumption, or carelessness, or the allurements of the world, he may sometimes be induced to venture forth from his sanctuary; and then does sin assail him, and the law harass him, and the fear of wrath surround him; and hard may be the struggle to get back by the renewed exercise of faith to his hiding-place; but no sooner has he crossed the threshold, than his enemies fall back, and leave him in the enjoyment of perfect peace. For the safety which he has through Christ is sure, it is all-sufficient, and it is abiding. The believer may question its stability, and question his interest in it, but this cannot shake it, far less move it from its firm foundation. The sanctuary in which it is enjoyed is too high to be scaled by any foe: it is too strong to be carried by any assault: it is too stable to be overturned.
by any revolution: “On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” And as to the believer’s interest in it; “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”

The second benefit he enjoys is thus expressed, “He shall go in and out.” By this is meant in general a state of great freedom and tranquility, as opposed to one of restraint and peril. When men are cooped up in a city by a hostile army, or bound with chains in a prison, they cannot go in and out. Yea, this is the case too, when they are under the influence of very lively apprehensions, though no actual restraint be imposed on them. But there is evident allusion in the language here employed to the state of a flock that are in a place of perfect security, where they may go in to the fold, and go out to pasture, at the pleasure of the Shepherd. Now, just so is it with the true believer in Christ; he feels like a man liberated from confinement, and freed from an oppressive yoke, and his soul is lightened and enlarged to delight himself in the ways of the Lord: “And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord. Zec. x. 12. The state of guilt and sin in which he before lay, however lightly it may sit upon those whose consciences are seared, and whose hearts are blinded, was to him the most galling bondage. He was haunted with fears by day, and terrors by night: he was afraid to lie down, lest he should never arise: he trembled to appear before God, and he dared not remain at a distance from Him: his mind was thus enslaved, his affections were bound up: his hands were paralysed: “I am shut up,” says the Psalmist, in a state of deep distress, “and I cannot come forth. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.”

But, oh brethren, how happy the change that is wrought upon him, when he enters the door, and finds himself safe! He sees that he is in a large room, even the covenant of eternal love, its immeasurable compass, and its immense fulness. He discovers that by his reconciliation to God, he has obtained reconciliation with every thing; that he has made a covenant, so to speak, with the very beasts of the field; yea, that his very enemies are at peace with him. He learns that all danger is passed away: the heavens that thundered with Jehovah’s wrath now drop down salvation: the earth that brought forth only thorns and briers, now yields the lovely fruits of righteousness: the pit that yawned to devour him is now closed: the law which threatened him with vengeance is now completely satisfied, and conscience, which vexed him, is now pacified; his sins are mortified, the world subdued, the devil chained up, and all things are under the control of the wisdom and power of his covenant God, and made to work together for his good. And, therefore, he feels that he may go in and out, with safety and with comfort. He lives, it is true, in an enemy’s country, and in a sinful world, but it is a city, the walls of which are salvation, and the gates of praise. He walks forth amidst foes, visible and invisible, but it is attended by a host of angels, yea, surrounded by the Lord of angels: For “as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even for ever.” He sings therefore with the Psalmist, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.”

The last benefit here mentioned is “he shall find pasture.” To this, brethren, the previous privileges are only preparatory: for the Lord sets him free from the miseries of his fallen estate, and brings him to the possession of spiritual peace, and liberty, that he may enjoy the abundance of good which he hath provided for him. The pasture of the flock of Christ is very rich, exceedingly nourishing, and deeply satisfying. The most lovely and beautiful similitudes are employed in Scripture to set it forth, but after all we are given to understand its excellency cannot be expressed. We read of green pastures, and still waters, of the beauty of Sharon, and the glory of Carmel, of the finest of the wheat, and honey out of the rock—of blessings, yea showers of blessings, descending on the hill of Zion. But leaving these appropriate and interesting figures, let us glance at the glorious reality. The pasture then is essentially