

HOW A MAN'S CONDUCT COMES HOME TO HIM

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A SERMON
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*“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways:
and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.”*
Proverbs 14:14.

A COMMON principle is laid down here and declared to be equally true in reference to two characters, who in other respects are a contrast. Men are affected by the course which they pursue, for good or bad their own conduct comes home to them. The backslider and the good man are very different, but in each of them the same rule is exemplified—they are both filled by the result of their lives. The backslider becomes filled by that which is within him, as seen in his life, and the good man, also, is filled by that which grace implants within his soul. The evil leaven in the backslider leavens his entire being and sours his existence, while the gracious fountain in the sanctified believer saturates his whole manhood and baptizes his entire life. In each case, the fullness arises from that which is within the man and is in its nature like the man's character. The fullness of the backslider's misery will come out of his own ways and the fullness of the good man's content will spring out of the love of God which is shed abroad in his heart.

The meaning of this passage will come out better if we begin with an illustration. Here are two pieces of sponge and we wish to fill them—if you place one of them in a pool of foul water, it will be filled, and filled with that which it lies in. If you put the other sponge into a pure crystal stream, it will, also, become full—full of the element in which it is placed. The backslider lies soaked in the dead sea of his own ways and the brine fills him. The good man is plunged like a pitcher into “Siloah's brook, which flows hard by the oracle of God,” and the river of the water of life fills him to the brim. A wandering heart will be filled with sorrow, but a heart confiding in the Lord will be satisfied with joy and peace. Or take two farms. One farmer sows tares in his field, and in due time, his barns are filled therewith. Another sows wheat and his garners are stored with precious grain. Or follow out our Lord's parable—one builder places his frail dwelling on the sand, and when the tempest rages, he is swept away in it, naturally enough. Another lays deep the foundations of his house and sets it fast on a rock—and as an equally natural consequence, he smiles upon the storm, protected by his well-founded dwelling place. What a man is by sin or by grace will be the cause of his sorrow or of his satisfaction.

I. I shall take the two characters without further preface. First, let us speak awhile about THE BACKSLIDER. This is a very solemn subject, but one which it is needful to bring before the present audience, since we all have some share in it. I trust there may not be many present who are backsliders in the worst sense of the term, but very, very few among us are quite free from the charge of having backslidden, in some measure, at some time or other since conversion. Even those who sincerely love the Master sometimes wander—and we all need to take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

There are several kinds of persons who may, with more or less propriety, be comprehended under the term, “backsliders,” and these will, each in his own measure, be filled with his own ways. There are, first, *apostates*, those who unite themselves with the church of Christ, and for a time, act as if they were subjects of a real change of heart. These persons are frequently very zealous for a season and may become prominent, if not eminent, in the church of God. They did run well, like those mentioned by the apostle, but by some means they are, first of all, hindered and slacken their pace. After that, they linger and loiter and leave the crown of the causeway for the side of the road. By-and-by, in their hearts they go back into Egypt, and at last, finding an opportunity to return, they break loose from all the restraints of their profession and openly forsake the Lord. Truly, the last end of such men is worse than the first. Judas is the great type of these pre-eminent backsliders. Judas was a professed believer in Jesus, a fol-

lower of the Lord, a minister of the gospel, an apostle of Christ. He was the trusted treasurer of the college of the apostles, and after all, turned out to be the “son of perdition,” who sold his Master for 30 pieces of silver. He, before long, was filled with his own ways, for tormented with remorse, he threw down the blood-money he had so dearly earned, hanged himself, and went to his own place. The story of Judas has been written over and over again in the lives of other traitors. We have heard of Judas as a deacon and as an elder. We have heard Judas preach. We have read the works of Judas, the bishop, and seen Judas the Missionary. Judas sometimes continues in his profession for many years, but sooner or later, the true character of the man is discovered. His sin returns upon his own head, and if he does not make an end of himself, I do not doubt but what, even in this life, he often lives in such horrible remorse that his soul would choose strangling rather than life. He has gathered the grapes of Gomorrah and he has to drink the wine. He has planted a bitter tree and he must eat its fruit. Oh sirs, may none of you betray your Lord and Master. God grant I never may. “*Traitor! Traitor!*” Shall that ever be written across your brow? You have been baptized into the name of the adorable Trinity. You have eaten the tokens of the Redeemer's body and blood. You have sung the songs of Zion. You have stood forward to pray in the midst of the people of God and will you act so base a part as to betray your Lord? Shall it ever be said of you, “Take him to the place from where he came, for he is a traitor”? I cannot conceive of anything more disgraceful than for a soldier to be drummed out of a regiment of Her Majesty's soldiers. But what must it be to be cast out of the host of God! What must it be to be set up as the target of eternal shame and everlasting contempt for having crucified the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame! How shameful will it be to be branded as an apostate from truth and holiness, from Christ and His ways? Better never to have made a profession than to have belied it so wretchedly and to have it said of us, “It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Of such John has said, “They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us.”

This title of backslider applies, also, to another class, not so desperate but still most sad, of which not Judas but David may serve as the type. We refer to backsliders *who go into open sin*. These are men who descend from purity to careless living. And from careless living to indulgence of the flesh—and from indulgence of the flesh in little matters into known sin—and from one sin to another till they plunge into uncleanness. They have been born again, and therefore, the trembling and almost extinct life within must and shall revive and bring them to repentance. They will come back weary, weeping, humbled, and brokenhearted, and they will be restored, but they will never be what they were before. Their voices will be hoarse, like that of David after his crime, for he never again sung so jubilantly as in his former days. Life will be more full of trembling and trial and manifest less of buoyancy and joy of spirit. Broken bones make hard traveling and even when they are set, they are subject to shooting pains when ill weathers are abroad. I may be addressing some of this sort this morning, and if so, I would speak with much faithful love. Dear brother, dear sister, if you are now following Jesus afar off you will, before long, like Peter, deny Him. Even though you will obtain mercy of the Lord, yet the text will certainly be fulfilled in you and you will be “filled with your own ways.” As certainly as Moses took the golden calf and ground it into powder—and then mixed it with the water which the sinful Israelites had to drink till they all tasted the grit in their mouths—so will the Lord do with you if you are, indeed, His child. He will take your idol of sin and grind it to powder—and your life shall be made bitter with it for years to come. When the gall and wormwood are most manifest in the cup of life, it will be a mournful thing to feel, “I procured this unto myself by my shameful folly.” O Lord, hold us up and keep us from falling little by little, lest we plunge into overt sin and continue in it for a season, for surely the anguish which comes of such an evil is terrible as death itself. If David could rise from his grave and appear before you with his face seamed with sorrow and his brow wrinkled with his many griefs, he would say to you, “Keep your hearts with all diligence, lest you bring woe upon yourselves. Watch unto prayer and guard against the beginnings of sin lest your bones wax old through your roarings, and your moisture be turned into the drought of summer.” O beware of a wandering heart, for it will be an awful thing to be filled with your own backslidings.

But there is a third sort of backsliding and I am afraid a very large number of us have, at times, come under the title—I mean those *who in any measure or degree, even for a very little time, decline from the*

point which they have reached. Perhaps such a man hardly ought to be called a backslider, because it is not his predominant character, yet he backslides. If he does not believe as firmly, love as intensely and serve as zealously as he formerly did, he has, in a measure, backslidden. And any measure of backsliding, be it less or be it more, is sinful, and will, in proportion as it is real backsliding, fill us with our own ways. If you only sow two or three seeds of the thistle, there will not be so many of the ill weeds on your farm as if you had emptied out a whole sack, but still there will be enough and more than enough. Every little backsliding, as men call it, is a great mischief. Every little going back, even *in heart*, from God; if it never comes to words or deeds, yet will involve us in some measure of sorrow. If sin were clean removed from us, sorrow would be removed also—in fact, we would be in heaven—since a state of perfect holiness must involve perfect blessedness. Sin, in any degree, will bear its own fruit, and that fruit will be sure to set our teeth on edge. It is evil, therefore, to be a backslider even in the smallest degree.

Having said so much let me now continue to think of the last two kinds of backsliders, and leave out the apostate. Let us first *read his name*, and then let us read his history—we have both in our text.

The first part of his name is, “*backslider.*” He is not a back runner, nor a back leaper, but a *backslider*. That is to say he slides back with an easy, effortless motion—softly, quietly—perhaps unsuspected by himself or anybody else. The Christian life is very much like climbing a hill of ice. You cannot slide up, no, you have to cut every step with an ice axe—only with incessant labor in cutting and chipping can you make any progress. You need a guide to help you and you are not safe unless you are fastened to the guide, for you may slip into a crevasse. Nobody ever slides *up*, and if great care is not taken, they will slide down, slide back, or in other words, backslide. This is very easily done. If you want to know how to backslide, the answer is leave off going forward and you will slide backward. Cease going upward and you will go downward of necessity, for stand still you never can. To lead us to backslide, Satan acts with us as engineers do with a road down the mountain's side. If they desire to carry the road from yonder alp right down into the valley far below, they never think of making the road plunge over a precipice, or straight down the face of the rock, for nobody would ever use such a road. But the road makers wind and twist. See, the track descends very gently to the right—you can hardly see that it runs downwards. And soon it turns to the left with a small incline, and so, by turning this way and then that, the traveler finds himself in the valley below. Thus, the crafty enemy of souls fetches saints down from their high places. Whenever he gets a good man down it is usually by slow degrees. Now and then, by sudden opportunity and strong temptation, the Christian man has been plunged right from the pinnacle of the temple into the dungeon of despair in a moment—but it is not often the case—the gentle decline is the devil's favorite piece of engineering and he manages it with amazing skill. The soul scarcely knows it is going down, it seems to be maintaining the even tenor of its way, but before long it is far below the line of peace and consecration. Our dear brother, Dr. Arnot of the Free Church, illustrates this very beautifully by supposing a balance. This is the heavy scale loaded with seeds and the other is high in the air. One morning, you are very much surprised to find that what had been the heavier scale is aloft, while the other has descended. You do not understand it till you discover that certain little insects had silently transferred the seeds one by one. At first they made no apparent change, but by-and-by there was a little motion—one more little seed was laid in the scales and the balance turned in a moment. Thus silently, the balance of a man's soul may be affected, and everything made ready for that one temptation by which the fatal turn is made and the man becomes an open transgressor. Apparently insignificant agencies may gradually convey our strength from the right side to the wrong, by grains and half-grains, till at last the balance is turned in the actual life and we are no more fit to be numbered with the visible saints of God.

Think again of this man's name. He is a “backslider,” but what from? He is a man who knows the sweetness of the things of God and yet leaves off feeding upon them. He is one who has been favored to wait at the Lord's own table and yet he deserts his honorable post, backslides from the things which he has known, felt, tasted, handled and rejoiced in—things that are the priceless gifts of God. He is a backslider from the condition in which he has enjoyed a heaven below. He is a backslider from the love of Him who bought him with His blood. He slides back from the wounds of Christ, from the works of the Eternal Spirit, from the crown of life which hangs over his head, and from a familiar communion with God which angels might envy him. Had he not been so highly favored he could not have been so basely wicked. O fool and slow of heart, to slide from wealth to poverty, from health to disease, from liberty to

bondage, from light to darkness, from the love of God, from abiding in Christ and from the fellowship of the Holy Spirit into lukewarmness, worldliness, and sin.

The text, however, gives the man's name at greater length, "*The backslider in heart.*" Now the heart is the fountain of evil. A man need not be a backslider in action to get the text fulfilled in him. He need only be a backslider in *heart*. All backsliding begins within—begins with the heart's growing lukewarm—begins with the love of Christ being less powerful in the soul. Perhaps you think that so long as backsliding is confined to the heart, it does not matter much. But consider, for a minute, and you will confess your error. If you went to your physician and said, "Sir, I feel a severe pain in my body," would you feel comforted if he replied, "There is no local cause for your suffering. It arises entirely from disease of the heart"? Would you not be far more alarmed than before? A case is serious, indeed, when it involves the heart. The heart is hard to reach and difficult to understand, and moreover, it is so powerful over the rest of the system and has such power to injure all the members of the body, that a disease in the heart is an injury to a vital organ, a pollution of the springs of life. A wound there is a thousand wounds, a complicated wounding of all the members at a stroke. Look well, then, to your hearts, and pray, "O Lord cleanse the secret parts of our spirit and preserve us to Your eternal kingdom and glory!"

Now let us *read this man's history*—"He shall be filled with his own ways." From which it is clear that he falls into ways of his own. When he was in his right state, he followed the Lord's ways, he delighted himself in the law of the Lord, and He gave him the desire of his heart. But now he has ways of his own, which he prefers to the ways of God. And what comes of this perverseness? Does he prosper? No. He is, before long, filled with his own ways. We will see what that means.

The first kind of fullness with his own ways is absorption in his carnal pursuits. He has not much time to spend upon religion—he has other things to attend to. If you speak to him of the deep things of God he is weary of you and even of the daily necessities of godliness, he has no care to hear, except at service time. He has his business to see to, or he has to go out to a dinner party, or a few friends are coming to spend the evening. In any case, his answer to you is, "I pray you have me excused." Now, this preoccupation with trifles is always mischievous, for when the soul is filled with chaff, there is no room left for wheat. When your entire mind is taken up with frivolities, the weighty matters of eternity cannot enter. Many professed Christians spend far too much time in amusements, which they call recreation, but which, I fear, is far rather a restruction than a recreation. The pleasures, cares, pursuits, and ambitions of the world swell in the heart when they once enter, and by-and-by, they fill it completely. Like the young cuckoo in the sparrow's nest, worldliness grows and grows and tries its best to cast out the true owner of the heart. Whatever your soul is full of, if it is not full of Christ, it is in an evil case.

Then backsliders generally proceed a stage further and become full of their own ways by beginning to pride themselves upon their condition and to glory in their shame. Not that they really are satisfied at heart—on the contrary, they have a suspicion that things are not quite as they ought to be, and therefore, they put on a bold front and try to deceive themselves and others. It is rather dangerous to tell them of their faults, for they will not accept your rebuke. They will defend themselves and even carry the war into your camp. They will say, "Ah, you are puritanical, strict, and straight-laced, and your manners and ways do mischief rather than good." They would not bring up their children as you do yours, so they say. Their mouths are very full, because their hearts are empty, and they talk very loudly in defense of themselves, because their conscience has been making a great stir within them. They call sinful pleasure a little unbending of the bow, greed is prudence, covetousness is economy, and dishonesty is cleverness. It is dreadful to think that men who know better should attempt, thus, to excuse themselves. Generally, the warmest defender of a sinful practice is the man who has the most qualms of conscience about it. He himself knows that he is not living as he should, but he does not intend to cave in just yet, nor at all if he can help it. He is filled with his ways in a boasted self-content as to them.

Before long this fullness reaches another stage, for if the backslider is a gracious man at all, he encounters chastisement and that from a rod of his own making. A considerable time elapses before you can eat bread of your own growing. You have to first prepare the ground—it must be plowed and sown. Then the wheat has to come up to ripen and to be reaped—and threshed and ground in the mill—and the flour must be kneaded and baked in the oven. But the bread comes to the table and is eaten at last. Even so, the backslider must eat of the fruit of his own ways. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Now look at the backslider eating the fruit of his ways. He neglect-

ed prayer, and when he tries to pray, he cannot. His powers of desire, emotion, faith, and entreaty have failed. He kneels, awhile, but he cannot pray. The Spirit of supplications is grieved and no longer helps his infirmities. He reaches down for his Bible. He commences to read a chapter, but he has disregarded the Word of God so long that he finds it to be more like a dead letter than a living voice, though it used to be a sweet book before he became a backslider. The minister, too, is altered. He used to hear him with delight, but now the poor preacher has lost all his early power, so the backslider thinks. Other people do not think so, the place is just as crowded—there are as many saints edified and sinners saved as before—but the wanderer in heart began criticizing, and now he is entangled in the habit. He criticizes everything and never feeds upon the truth at all. Like a madman at table, he puts his fork into the morsel and holds it up, looks at it, finds fault with it, and throws it on the floor. Nor does he act better towards the saints in whose company he once delighted—they are dull society and he shuns them. Of all the things which bear upon his spiritual life, he is weary. He has trifled with them and now he cannot enjoy them. Hear him sing, or rather sigh—

*“Your saints are comforted, I know,
And love Your house of prayer.
I sometimes go where others go,
But find no comfort there.”*

How can it be otherwise? He is drinking water out of his own cistern and eating the bread of which he sowed the corn some years ago. His ways have come home to him.

Chastisement also comes out of his conduct in other ways. He was very worldly and gave lively parties—and his daughters have grown up and grieved him by their conduct. He, himself, went into sin, and now that his sons outdo his example, what can he say? Can he wonder at anything? Look at David's case. David fell into a gross sin and soon Amnon, his son, rivaled him in iniquity. He murdered Uriah the Hittite, and Absalom murdered his brother, Amnon. He rebelled against God, and lo, Absalom lifted up the standard of revolt against him. He disturbed the relationships of another man's family in a disgraceful manner, and behold, his own family was torn in pieces and never restored to peace—so that even when he lay a-dying, he had to say, “My house is not so with God.” He was filled with his own ways, and it always will be so, even if the sin is forgotten. If you have sent forth a dove or a raven from the ark of your soul, it will come back to you just as you sent it out. May God save us from being backsliders, lest the smooth current of our life should turn into a raging torrent of woe.

The fourth stage, blessed be God, is at length reached by gracious men and women, and what a mercy it is they ever do reach it! At last, they become filled with their own ways in another sense, namely, satiated and dissatisfied, miserable and discontent. They sought the world and they gained it, but now it has lost all charms to them. They went after other lovers, but these deceivers have been false to them, and they wring their hands and say, “Oh that I could return to my first husband for it was better with me, then, than now.” Many have lived at a distance from Jesus Christ, but now they can bear it no longer—they cannot be happy till they return. Hear them cry in the language of the 51st Psalm, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit.” But, I tell you, they cannot get back very easily. It is hard to retrace your steps from backsliding, even if it is but a small measure of it. And to get back from great wanderings is hard, indeed—much harder than going over the road the first time. I believe that if the mental sufferings of some returning backsliders could be written and faithfully published, they would astound you, and be a more horrible story to read than all the torments of the Inquisition. What racks a man is stretched upon who has been unfaithful to his covenant with God! What fires have burned within the souls of those men and women who have been untrue to Christ and His cause! What dungeons, what grim and dark prisons have saints of God lain in who have gone aside into By-Path meadow instead of keeping to the King's Highway. Their sighs and cries, for which, after all they have learned to be thankful, are sorrowful and terrible to listen to, and make us learn that he who sins must smart, and especially if he is a child of God, for the Lord has said of His people, “You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” Whoever may go unchastened, a child of God never shall—the Lord will let His adversaries do a thousand things and not punish them in this life, since He reserves vengeance for them in the life to come. But as for His own children, they cannot sin without being visited with stripes.

Beloved friends, let us all go straight away to the cross at once for fear we should be backsliders—

“Come, let us to the Lord our God

*With contrite hearts return.
Our God is gracious, nor will leave
The penitent to mourn."*

Let us confess every degree and form of backsliding, every wandering of heart, every decline of love, every wavering of faith, every flagging of zeal, every dullness of desire, every failure of confidence. Behold, the Lord says unto us, "Return." Therefore, let us return. Even if we are not backsliders, it will do us no harm to come to the cross as penitents. Indeed, it is well to abide there forevermore. O Spirit of the living God, preserve us in believing penitence all our days.

II. I have but little time for the second part of my text. Excuse me, therefore, if I do not attempt to go into it very deeply. As it is true of the backslider, that he grows, at last, full of that which is within him, and his wickedness, it is true, also, of THE CHRISTIAN, that in pursuing the paths of righteousness and the way of faith, he becomes filled and content, too. That which grace has placed within him fills him in due time.

Here, then, we have the good man's name and history.

Notice first, *his name*. It is a very remarkable thing that as a backslider, if you call out his name, he will not, as a rule, answer to it. Even so, a good man will not acknowledge the title here assigned him. Where is the good man? Know that every man here who is right before God will pass the question on, saying, "There is none good, save One, that is God." The good man will also question my text and say, "I cannot feel satisfied with myself." No, dear friend, but mind you, read the words correctly. It does not say, "satisfied *with* himself." No truly good man ever was self-satisfied, and when any talk as if they are self-satisfied, it is time to doubt whether they know much about the matter. All the good men I have ever met with have always wanted to be better—they have longed for something higher than as yet they have reached. They would not own to it that they were satisfied and they certainly were, by no means, satisfied with themselves. The text does not say that they are, but it says something that reads so much like it that care is needed. Now, if I should seem to say, this morning, that a good man looks within and is quite satisfied with what he finds there, please let me say at once, I mean nothing of the sort. I should like to say exactly what the text means, but I do not know quite whether I shall manage to do it, except you will help me by not misunderstanding me, even if there should be a strong temptation to do so. Here is the good man's history—he is "satisfied *from* himself"—but first I must read his name again, though he does not own to it, what is he good for?

He says, "Good for nothing," but in truth he is good for much when the Lord uses him. Remember that he is good because the Lord has made him over again by the Holy Spirit. Is not that good which God makes? When He created nature at first, He said of all things that they were very good. How could they be otherwise, since He made them? So in the new creation, a new heart and right spirit are from God and must be good. Where there is grace in the heart the grace is good and makes the heart good. A man who has the righteousness of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is good in the sight of God.

A good man is on the side of good. If I were to ask, who is on the side of good? We would not pass on that question. No, we would step out and say "I am. I am not all I ought to be, or wish to be, but I am on the side of justice, truth, and holiness. I would live to promote goodness and even die rather than become the advocate of evil." And what is the man who loves that which is good? Is he evil? I think not. He who truly loves that which is good must be, in a measure, good himself. Who is he that strives to be good and groans and sighs over his failures, yes, and rules his daily life by the laws of God? Is he not one of the world's best men? I trust, without self-righteousness, the grace of God has made some of us good in this sense, for what the Spirit of God has made is good, and if in Christ Jesus we are new creatures, we cannot contradict Solomon, nor criticize the Bible if it calls such persons good, though we dare not call ourselves good.

Now, a good man's history is this, "He is satisfied from himself."

That means, first, that he is independent of outward circumstances. He does not derive satisfaction from his birth, or honors, or properties. That which fills him with content is within himself. Our hymn puts it so truly—

*"I need not go abroad for joys,
I have a feast at home,
My sighs are turned into songs,*

*My heart has ceased to roam.
Down from above the blessed Dove
Is come into my breast,
To witness Your eternal love
And give my spirit rest."*

Other men must bring music from abroad if they have any, but in the gracious man's bosom there lives a little bird that sings sweetly to him. He has a flower in his own garden more sweet than any he could buy in the market or find in the king's palace. He may be poor, but he would not change his estate in the kingdom of heaven for all the grandeur of the rich. His joy and peace are not even dependent upon the health of his body—he is often well in soul when sick as to his flesh—he is frequently full of pain and yet perfectly satisfied. He may carry about with him an incurable disease, which he knows will shorten and eventually end his life, but he does not look to this poor life for satisfaction. He carries that within him that which creates immortal joy—the love of God shed abroad in his soul by the Holy Spirit yields a perfume sweeter than the flowers of Paradise. The fulfillment of the text is partly found in the fact that the good man is independent of his surroundings.

And he is also independent of the praise of others. The backslider is comfortable because the minister thinks well of him and Christian friends think well of him. But the genuine Christian who is living near to God thinks little of the verdict of men. What other people think of him is not his chief concern—he is sure that he is a child of God. He knows he can say, "Abba, Father." He glories that for him to live is Christ and to die is gain. And therefore, he does not need the approval of others to buoy up his confidence. He runs alone and does not need, like a weakly child, to be carried in arms. He knows whom he has believed and his heart rests in Jesus—thus, he is satisfied, not from other people and from their judgment—but "from himself."

Then, again, the Christian man is content with the well of upspringing water of life which the Lord has placed within him. There, my brethren, up on the everlasting hills is the divine reservoir of all-sufficient grace, and down here in our bosom is a spring which bubbles up unto everlasting life. It has been welling up in some of us these twenty-five years, but why is it so? The grand secret is that there is an unbroken connection between the little spring within the renewed breast and that vast unfathomed fountain of God—and because of this, the well-spring never fails—in summer and in winter, it still continues to flow. And now if you ask me if I am dissatisfied with the spring within my soul, which is fed by the all-sufficiency of God, I reply, no, I am not. If you could, by any possibility, cut the connection between my soul and my Lord, I should despair altogether. But as long as none can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, I am satisfied and at rest. Like Naphtali, we are, "satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord."

Faith is in the good man's heart and he is satisfied with what faith brings him, for it conveys to him the perfect pardon of his sin. Faith brings him nearer to Christ. Faith brings him adoption into the family of God. Faith secures him conquest over temptation. Faith procures for him everything he requires. He finds that by believing, he has all the blessings of the covenant to enjoy daily. Well may he be satisfied with such an enriching grace. The just shall live by faith.

In addition to faith, he has another filling grace called hope, which reveals to him the world to come and gives him assurance that when he falls asleep, he will sleep in Jesus—and that when he awakes he will arise in the likeness of Jesus. Hope delights him with the promise that his body shall rise and that in his flesh he shall see God. This hope of his sets the pearly gates wide open before him, reveals the streets of gold, and makes him hear the music of the celestial harpers. Surely a man may well be satisfied with this.

The godly heart is also satisfied with what love brings him, for love, though it seems but a gentle maid, is strong as a giant and becomes, in some respects, the most potent of all the graces. Love first opens wide herself like the flowers in the sunshine and drinks in the love of God, and then she joys in God and begins to sing—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me."

She loves Jesus, and there is such an interchange of delight between the love of her soul to Christ and the love of Christ to her that heaven itself can scarcely be sweeter. He who knows this deep mysterious love will be more than filled with it—he will need to be enlarged to hold the bliss which it creates. The

love of Jesus is known, but yet it passes knowledge. It fills the entire man so that he has no room for the idolatrous love of the creature. He is satisfied from himself and asks no other joy.

Beloved, when the good man is enabled, by divine grace, to live in obedience to God, he must, as a necessary consequence, enjoy peace of mind. His hope is alone fixed on Jesus, but a life which evidences his possession of salvation casts many a sweet ingredient into his cup. He who takes the yoke of Christ upon him and learns of Him finds rest unto his soul. When we keep His commandments, we consciously enjoy His love which we could not do if we walked in opposition to His will. To know that you have acted from a pure motive, to know that you have done the right is a grand means of full content. What matters the frown of foes or the prejudice of friends, if the testimony of a good conscience is heard within? We dare not rely upon our own works—neither have we had a desire or need to do so—for our Lord Jesus has saved us everlastingly. Still, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.”

The Christian needs to maintain unbroken fellowship with Jesus, his Lord, if he would be good as a soldier of Christ. If his communion is broken, his satisfaction will depart. If Jesus is within, we shall be satisfied from within, but no way else. If our fellowship with Him is kept up—and it may be from day to day, and month to month, and year to year, (and why should it ever be snapped at all?)—then the satisfaction will continue and the soul will continue to be full even to the brim with the bliss which God alone can give. If we are, by the Holy Spirit, made to be abundant in labor or patient in suffering—if, in a word—we resign ourselves fully up to God, we shall find a fullness of His grace placed within ourselves. An enemy compared some of us to cracked vessels, and we may humbly accept the description. We do find it difficult to retain good things—they run away from our leaking pitchers. But I will tell how a cracked pitcher can be kept continually full. Put it in the bottom of an ever-flowing river and it must be full. Even so, though we are leaking and broken, if we abide in the love of Christ, we shall be filled with His fullness. Such an experience is possible. We may be—

*“Plunged in the Godhead’s deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity,”*

Then we shall be full, full to running over as the Psalmist says, “My cup runs over.” The man who walks in God’s ways, obediently resting wholly upon Christ, looking for all His supplies to the great eternal deeps—that is the man who will be filled—filled with the very things which he has chosen for his own. He will be filled with those things which are his daily delight and desire. Well may the faithful believer be filled, for he has eternity to fill him. The Lord has loved him with an everlasting love—there is the eternity past. “The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My covenant shall not depart from you”—there is the eternity to come. He has infinity, yes, the infinite One Himself, for the Father is his Father, the Son is his Savior, the Spirit of God dwells within him—the Trinity may well fill the heart of man. The believer has omnipotence to fill him, for all power is given unto Christ, and of that power Christ will give to us according as we have need. Living in Christ and hanging upon Him from day to day, beloved, we shall have a “peace of God which passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” May we enjoy this peace and magnify the name of the Lord forever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 15:1-17.

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