IN this psalm our text stands in contrast with the evil of the age. The Psalmist complains that the “godly man ceases. The faithful fail from among the children of men.” It was a great grief to him and he found no consolation except in the words of the Lord. What if men fail—the Word of the Lord abides! What a comfort it is to quit the arena of controversy for the green pastures of revelation! One feels like Noah, when shut within the ark—he saw no longer the death and desolation which reigned outside. Live in communion with the Word of God and even in the absence of Christian friends you will not lack for company. Furthermore, the verse stands in fuller contrast still with the words of the ungodly when they rebel against God and oppress His people. They said, “With our tongue will we prevail. Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?” They boasted, they domineered, and they threatened. The Psalmist turned away from the voice of the boaster to the words of the Lord. He saw the promise, the precept and the doctrine of pure truth and these consoled him while others spoke every man vanity with his neighbor. He had not so many of the words of the Lord as we have—but what he had made his own by meditation, he prized above the finest gold.

In the good company of those who had spoken under divine direction he was able to bear the threats of those who surrounded him. So, dear friends, if at any time your lot is cast where the truths you love so well are despised, get back to the prophets and apostles and hear through them what God the Lord will speak. The voices of earth are full of falsehood but the word from heaven is very pure. There is a good practical lesson in the position of the text—learn it well. Make the Word of God your daily companion and then whatever may grieve you in the false doctrine of the hour; you will not be too much cast down. For the words of the Lord will sustain your spirit.

Looking at the text, does it not strike you as a marvel of condescension that Jehovah, the Infinite, should use words? He has arranged for us, in His wisdom, this way of communicating with one another. But as for Himself, He is pure spirit and boundless—shall He contract His glorious thoughts into the narrow channel of sound and ear and nerve? Must the eternal mind use human words? The glorious Jehovah spoke worlds! The heavens and the earth were the utterances of His lips. To Him it seems more in accordance with His nature to speak tempests and thunders than to stoop to the humble vowels and consonants of a creature of the dust. Will He in very deed communicate with man in man’s own way? Yes, He stoops to speak to us by words. We bless the Lord for verbal inspiration, of which we can say, “I have esteemed the words of Your mouth more than my necessary food.” I do not know of any other inspiration, neither am I able to conceive of any which can be of true service to us. We need a plain revelation upon which we can exercise faith. If the Lord had spoken to us by a method in which His meaning was infallible, but His words were questionable, we should have been rather puzzled than edified. For it is a task, indeed, to separate the true sense from the doubtful words. We would always be afraid that the prophet or apostle had not, after all, given us the divine sense. It is easy to hear and to repeat words. But it is not easy to convey the meaning of another into perfectly independent words of your own.

We believe that holy men of old, though using their own language, were led by the Spirit of God to use words which were also the words of God. The divine Spirit so operated upon the spirit of the inspired writer that he wrote the words of the Lord, and we, therefore, treasure up every one of them. To us “every Word of God is pure,” and full of soul nutriment. “Man does not live by bread, only, but by
“Tell someone today how much you love Jesus Christ.”
Above all, do not drop into the semi-blasphemy of some who think the New Testament vastly superior to the Old. I would not err by saying that in the Old Testament you have more of the bullion of truth than in the New—for therein I should be falling into the evil which I condemn. But this I will say—they are of equal authority—and that they cast such light upon each other that we could not spare either of them. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” In the whole Book, from Genesis to Revelation, the words of Jehovah are found and they are always pure words.

Neither is it right for any to say, “Thus spoke Christ Himself. But such-and-such a teaching is Pauline.” No! It is not Pauline! If it is recorded here, it is of the Holy Spirit. Whether the Holy Spirit speaks by Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or John, or James, or Paul, the authority is still the same. Even concerning Jesus Christ our Lord this is true, for He says of Himself, “The word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s which sent Me.” In this matter He puts Himself upon the level of others who were as the mouth of God. He says again, “For I have not spoken of Myself. But the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.” We accept the words of the apostles as the words of the Lord, remembering what John said—“We are of God: he that knows God hears us. He that is not of God hears us not. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6). A solemn judgment is thus pronounced upon those who would set the Spirit of Jesus against the Spirit which dwelt in the apostles. The words of the Lord are not affected in their value by the medium through which they came. The revealed truth is all of the same quality even when the portions of it are not of the same weight of metal.

Abiding by the text, we observe next the purity of the words of the Lord—“The words of the Lord are pure words.” In commerce there is silver and silver, as you all know—silver with alloy and silver free from baser metal. The Word of God is the silver without the dross. It is as silver which has been purified seven times in a crucible of earth in the furnace till every worthless particle has been removed—it is absolutely pure. David said truly, “Your word is truth.” It is truth in the form of goodness, without mixture of evil. The commandments of the Lord are just and right. We have occasionally heard opponents carp at certain coarse expressions used in our translation of the Old Testament. But the coarseness of translators is not to be set to the account of the Holy Spirit, but to the fact that the force of the English language has changed and modes of expression which were current at one period become too gross for another. But I will assert this—I have never yet met with a single person to whom the words of God have of themselves suggested any evil thing. I have heard a great many horrible things said, but I have never met with a case in which any man has been led into sin by a passage of Scripture. Perversions are possible and probable—but the Book itself is absolutely pure. Details are given of very gross acts of criminality, but they leave no injurious impression upon the mind. The saddest story of Holy Scripture is a beacon and never a lure. This is the cleanest, clearest, purest Book extant among men. No, it is not to be mentioned in the same hour with the fabulous records which pass for holy books. It comes from God and every word is pure.

It is also a book pure in the sense of truth, being without mixture of error. I do not hesitate to say that I believe that there is no mistake whatever in the original Holy Scriptures from beginning to end. There may be, and there are mistakes of translation. For translators are not inspired—but even the historical facts are correct. Doubt has been cast upon them here and there and at times with great show of reason—doubt which it has been impossible to meet for a season. But only give space enough and search enough and the stones buried in the earth cry out to confirm each letter of Scripture! Old manuscripts, coins, and inscriptions are on the side of the Bible, and against it there are nothing but theories and the fact that many an event in history has no other record but that which the Bible affords us. The Book has been of late in the furnace of criticism, but much of that furnace has grown cold from the fact that the criticism is beneath contempt. “The words of the Lord are pure words”—there is not an error of any sort in the whole compass of them. These words come from Him who can make no mistake and who can have no wish to deceive His creatures. If I did not believe in the infallibility of the Bible, I would rather be without it. If I am to judge the Book, it is no judge of me. If I am to sift it, like the heap on the threshing floor, and lay this aside and only accept that, according to my own judgment, then I have no guidance whatever unless I have conceit enough to trust my own heart. The new theory denies infallibility to the
words of God but practically imputes it to the judgments of men. At least this is all the infallibility
which they can get at. I protest that I will rather risk my soul with a guide inspired from heaven than
with the differing leaders who arise from the earth at the call of “modern thought.”

Again, this Book is pure in the sense of reliability—it has in its promises no mixture of failure. Mark
this—no prediction of Scripture has failed. No promise that God has given will turn out to be mere
verbiage. “Has He said and shall He not do it?” Take the promise as the Lord gave it and you will find
Him faithful to every jot and title of it. Some of us are not yet entitled to be called “old and gray-
headed,” though the iron-gray is pretty conspicuous upon our heads. But up to now we have believed
the promises of God and tested and tried them. And what is our verdict? I bear my solemn testimony that I
have not found one word of the Lord fall to the ground. The fulfillment of a promise has been delayed
sometimes beyond the period which my impatience would have desired, but to the right instant the
promise has been kept—not to the ear only—but in deed and in truth. You may lean your whole weight
upon any of the words of God, and they will bear you up. In your darkest hour you may have no candle
but a single promise, and yet that lone light shall make high noon of your midnight. Glory be to His
name! The words of the Lord are without evil, without error and without failure.

Furthermore, on this first head the text not only speaks of the uniform character of God’s Words and
of their purity but of their preciousness. David compares them to refined silver and silver is a precious
metal—in other places he has likened these words to pure gold. The words of the Lord might have
seemed comparable to paper money, such as our own bank notes. But no, they are the metal itself. I
remember the time when a friend of ours used to go into the western counties, from one farm to another,
buying cheese and he was in the habit of taking quite a weight of coin with him. He had found that the
farmers of that period did not care for bank notes and would not look at checks. They were more ready
to sell when they saw that they would be paid in metal, down on the nail. In the words of God you have
the solid money of truth—it is not fiction but the substance of truth. God’s Words are as bullion. When
you have them in the grip of faith you have the substance of things hoped for. Faith finds in the promis
of God the reality of what she looks for—the promise of God is as good as the performance itself. God’s
Words—whether of doctrine, of practice, of comfort—are solid metal to the man of God who knows
how to put them in the purse of personal faith. As we use silver in many articles within our houses, so do
we use God’s Word in daily life; it has a thousand uses. As silver is the current coin of the merchant, so
are the promises of God a currency both for heaven and earth—we deal with God by His promises, and
so He deals with us.

As men and women deck themselves with silver by way of ornament, so are the words of the Lord
our jewels and our glory. The promises are things of beauty which are a joy forever. When we love the
Word of God and keep it, the beauty of holiness is upon us. This is the true ornament of character and
life and we receive it as a love-gift from the Bridegroom of our souls. Beloved, I need not enlarge in
your presence upon the preciousness of the Word of God. You have, many of you, prized it long and
have proved its value. I have read of a German Christian woman who was accustomed to mark her Bible
whenever she met with a passage which was especially precious to her. But towards the end of her life
she ceased from the habit, for she said, “I find it unnecessary, for the whole of the Scripture has now
become most precious to me.” To some of us the priceless volume is marked from beginning to end by
our experience. It is all precious and altogether precious—

“No treasures so enrich the mind,
Nor shall Your word be sold
For loads of silver well refined,
Nor heaps of choicest gold.”

Furthermore, this text sets before us not only the purity and preciousness of the Lord’s words but the
permanence of them. They are as silver which has passed through the hottest fires. Truly, the Word of
God has for ages stood the fire—and fire applied in its fiercest heat—“tried in a furnace of earth”—that
is to say in that furnace which refiners regard as their last resort. If the devil could have destroyed the
Bible he would have brought up the hottest coals from the center of hell. He has not been able to destroy
one single line! Fire, according to the text, was applied in a skillful way—silver is placed in a crucible of
earth that the fire may get at it thoroughly. The refiner is quite sure to employ his heat in the best manner

Tell someone today how much you love Jesus Christ.
known to him so as to melt away the dross—so have men with diabolical skill endeavored, by the
cleverest criticism, to destroy the words of God. Their object is not purification—it is the purity of
Scripture which annoys them—they aim at consuming the divine testimony. Their labor is in vain. For
the sacred Book remains still what it always was—the pure word of the Lord.

But some of our misconceptions of its meaning have happily perished in the fires. The words of the
Lord have been tried frequently, yes, they have been tried perfectly—“purified seven times.” What more
remains, I cannot guess, but assuredly the processes have already been many and severe. It abides
unchanged. The comfort of our fathers is our comfort. The words which cheered our youth are our
support in age. “The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand forever.” These
words of God are a firm foundation and our eternal hopes are wisely built on them. We cannot permit
anyone to deprive us of this basis of hope. In the olden time men were burned rather than cease to read
their Bibles. We endure less brutal oppositions but they are far more subtle and difficult to resist. Still let
us always abide by the everlasting words, for they will always abide by us. Unchanged, unchangeable
are the words of the Ever Blessed. They are as silver without dross which will continue from age to age.
This we do believe and in this we do rejoice. Nor is it a tax upon our faith to believe in the permanence
of Holy Scripture—for these words were spoken by Him who is Omniscient and knows everything.
Therefore there can be in them no mistake. They were spoken by Him who is Omnipotent and can do
everything. And therefore His words will be carried out. Spoken by Him who is immutable, these words
will never change. The words which God spoke thousands of years ago are true at this hour, for they
come from Him who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

He that spoke these words is infallible and therefore they are infallible. When did He ever err? Could
He err and yet be God? “Has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it
good?” Rest you sure of this—“The words of the Lord are pure words.” But time hastens me on to the
next point.

II. Secondly and carefully let us consider THE TRIALS OF THE WORDS OF GOD. They are said
to be as silver, which has been tried in a furnace. The words of God have been tested by blasphemy, by
ridicule, by persecution, by criticism, and by candid observation. I shall not attempt an oratorical flight
while describing the historical tests of the precious metal of divine revelation—but I shall mention trials
of a commonplace order which have come under my own notice and probably under yours also. This
may be more homely but it will be more edifying. The Lord help us!

In dealing with the sinner’s obstinacy we have tested the words of the Lord. There are men who
cannot be convinced or persuaded. They doubt everything and with closed teeth they resolve not to
believe though a man declare it to them. They are encased in the armor of prejudice and they cannot be
wounded with the sharpest arrows of argument though they profess great openness to conviction. What
is to be done with the numerous people who are related to Mr. Obstinate? You might as well argue with
an express-train as with Mr. Obstinate—he runs on and will not stop though a thousand should stand in
his way. Will the words of God convince him? There are some in this place today of whom I should
have said—if I had known them before their conversion—that it was a vain task to preach the gospel to
them. They so much loved sin and so utterly despised the things of God. Strangely enough, they were
among the first to receive the Word of God when they came under the sound of it. It came to them in its
native majesty, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It spoke with a commanding tone to their inmost heart.
It threw open the doors that had long been shut up and rusted on their hinges and Jesus entered to save
and reign! These who had defiantly brandished their weapons, threw them down and surrendered
unconditionally to almighty love, willing believers in the Lord Jesus. Brethren, we have only to have
faith in God’s Word and speak it out straight and we shall see proud rebels yielding. No mind is so
desperately set on mischief or so resolutely opposed to Christ that it cannot be made to bow before the
power of the words of God. Oh, that we used more the naked sword of the Spirit! I am afraid we keep
this two-edged sword in a scabbard and somewhat pride ourselves that the sheath is so elaborately
adorned. What is the use of the sheath? The sword must be made bare and we must fight with it without
attempting to garnish it.
Tell forth the words of God; omit neither the terrors of Sinai nor the love notes of Calvary. Proclaim the word with all fidelity as you know it and cry for the power of the Highest and the most obstinate sinner out of hell can be laid low by its means. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God—this is His one battering ram with which He casts down the strongholds of sin and self in those human hearts with which He effectually deals. The Word of God will bear the tests furnished by the hardness of the natural heart and it will, by its operations, prove its divine origin. But here begins another trial. When you have a man fairly broken down he has but come part of the way. A new difficulty arises. Will the words of the Lord overcome the penitent’s despair? The man is full of terror on account of sin and hell has begun to burn within his bosom. You may talk to him lovingly but his soul refuses to be comforted. Until you bring the words of the Lord to bear upon him “his soul abhors all manner of meat.” Tell him of a dying Savior. Dwell on free grace and full pardon. Speak of the reception of the prodigal son and of the Father’s changeless love. Attended by the power of the Spirit, and only by the Holy Spirit, these truths will bring light to those who sit in darkness. The worst forms of depression are cured when Holy Scripture is believed. Often have I been baffled when laboring with a soul convicted of sin and unable to see Jesus. But I have never had a doubt that in the end the words of the Lord would become a cup of consolation to the fainting heart. We may be baffled for a season but with the words of the Lord as our weapons, Giant Despair will not defeat us. O you that are in bondage under fear of punishment, you shall come forth to liberty yet—your chains shall be broken if you will accept the words of God. My Master’s word is a great opener of prison doors—He has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron asunder.

That is a most wonderful word, which, like a battle-ax smashes in the helmet of presumption and at the same time, like the finger of love, touches the tender wound of the bleeding and heals it in an instant! The words of the Lord—for breaking down or lifting up—are equally effective. In certain instances, the words of God are tried by the seeker’s singularity. How frequently have persons told us that they were sure there was nobody like themselves in the entire world! They were men up in a corner—strange fish, the like of which no sea could yield. Now, if these words are, indeed, of God, they—and nothing else—will be able to touch every case. The words of God have been put to that test and we are amazed at their universal adaptation. There is a text to meet every remarkable and out-of-the-way case. In certain instances we have heard of an odd text, concerning which we could not before see why it was written. Yet it has evidently a special fitness for a particular person to whom it has come with divine authority. The Bible may be compared to the locksmith’s bunch of keys. You handle them one by one and say of one—“That is a strange key, surely it will fit no lock that ever was made!” But one of these days the smith is sent to open a very peculiar lock. None of his keys open it. At last he selects that singular specimen. Look! It enters, shoots back the bolt and gives access to the treasure!

The words of this Book are proved to be the words of God because they have an infinite adaptation to the varied minds which the Lord has made. What a gathering of locks we have here this morning! I could not describe you all—Braham and Chubb and all the rest of them could not have devised such a variety—but I am sure that in this inspired volume there is a key in every way suited to each lock. Personally, when I have been in trouble, I have read the Bible until a text has seemed to stand out of the Book and salut me, saying, “I was written especially for you.” It has looked to me as if the story must have been in the mind of the writer when he penned that passage. And so it was in the mind of that divine Author who is at the back of all these inspired pages. Thus have the words of the Lord stood the test of adaptation to the singularities of individual men. We frequently meet with people of God who have tested the words of God in time of sore trouble. I make here an appeal to the experience of the people of God. You have lost a dear child. Was there not a word of the Lord to cheer you? You lost your property—was there a passage in the Scriptures to meet the disaster? You have been slandered—was there not a word to console you? You were very sick and depressed. Had not the Lord provided a comfort for you in that case? I will not multiply questions—the fact is that you never were high but the word of the Lord was up with you. And you never were low but what the Scripture was down with you. No child of God was ever in any ditch, pit, cave, or abyss—but the words of God found him out.

Tell someone today how much you love Jesus Christ.
often do the gracious promises lie in ambush to surprise us with their loving kindness! I adore the infinity of God’s goodness, as I see it mirrored in the glass of Scripture.

Again—the Word of God is tried and proved as a guide in perplexity. Have we not been forced, at times, to come to a pause and say, “I do not know what to think about this. What is the proper course?” This book is an oracle to the simple-hearted man in mental, moral and spiritual perplexity. Oh, that we used it more! Rest assured that you never will be in a labyrinth so complicated that this Book, blessed of the Spirit, will not help you through. This is the compass for all mariners upon the sea of life—by its use you will know where the pole lies. Abide by the words of the Lord, and your way will be clear.

Beloved, the words of God endure another test. They are our preservatives in times of temptation. You can write a book that may help a man when he is tempted in a certain direction—will the same volume strengthen him when he is attracted in the opposite direction? Can you conceive a book which shall be a complete fence encircling a man in all directions? Keeping him from the abyss yonder and from the gulf on the other side? Yet such is the Bible. The devil himself cannot invent a temptation which is not met in these pages. And all the devils in hell together, if they were to hold parliament and to call in the aid of all evil men, could not invent a device which is not met by this matchless Library of truth. It reaches the believer in every condition and position and preserves him from all evil. “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (Psa 119:9).

Lastly on this point, here is a grand test of the Book—it helps men to die. Believe me, it is no child’s play to die! You and I will find ourselves in that solemn article before we know it and then we shall need strong consolation. Nothing upon earth ever gives me so much encouragement in the faith as to visit members of this church when they are about to die. It is very sad to see them wasting away or racked with pain, but the chief effect produced upon the visitor is gladsome rather than gloomy. I have this week seen a sister well known to many of you, who has a cancer in her face and may, in all probability, soon be with her Lord. It is a dreadful affliction and one knows not what it may yet involve. But the gracious patient knows neither murmurs nor fears. No one in this place, though in the flush of health, could be calmer, more restful than our sister is! She spoke to me with full confidence that living or dying she is the Lord’s, and she had bright anticipations of being forever with the Lord. The little she could say with her voice was supplemented by a great deal which she expressed with her eyes and with her whole demeanor. Here was no excitement, no fanaticism, no action of drugs upon the brain—just a sweetly reasonable, quiet, and assured hope of eternal joy!

Brethren, it is not hard to pass out of this world when we are resting on that old and sure gospel which I have preached to you these many years. Personally, I can both live and die on the eternal truths which I have proclaimed to you. And this assurance makes me bold in preaching. Not long ago I sat by a brother who was near his end. I said to him, “You have no fear of death?” He replied cheerfully, “I should be ashamed of myself if I had. After all that I have learned of the glorious gospel from your lips these many years, it is a joy to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.”

Now, if this inspired volume with its wonderful record of the words of God helps us in the trials of life—directs us in our daily paths, and enables us to weather the last great storm—surely it is precious beyond description, “as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.”

III. Now thirdly, what are THE CLAIMS OF THESE WORDS OF THE LORD? The claims of these words are many. First, they deserve to be studied. Beloved, may I urge upon you the constant searching of inspired Scripture?

Here is the latest new novel! What shall I do with it? Cast it to the ground. Here is another piece of fiction which has been very popular! What shall I do with it? Throw it on one side, or thrust it between the bars of the grate. This sacred volume is the freshest of novels. It would be, to some of you, an entirely new book. We have a society for providing the Bible for readers but we greatly need readers of the Bible. I grieve that even to some who bear the Christian name, Holy Scripture is the least read book in their library. One said of a preacher, the other day, “How does he keep up the congregation? Does he always give the people something new?” “Yes,” said the other, “he gives them the gospel. And in these days that is the newest thing out.” It is truly so! The old, old gospel is always new. The modern doctrine is only new in name. It is, after all, nothing but a hash of stale heresies and moldy speculations. If God
The Bible Tried and Proved

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