

BY THE FOUNTAIN
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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well;
whose branches run over the wall.”*
Genesis 49:22.

*“And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things
of heaven, for the dew and for the deep that couches beneath”*
Deuteronomy 32:13.

DEAR friends, we long to have many converts. We count that church happy to which God adds daily of such as are being saved; but we are very much concerned about the quality of our converts. We do not wish to make up a church with a number of shallow professors, whose religion lies upon the surface, and is of a doubtful character. We are very anxious that we should have those in our fellowship who are thoroughly converted, richly experienced, and fully instructed in the deep things of God. We would have as our associates people who are established by principle rather than moved by passion. We would earnestly pray to have a company of believers added to the church who shall be like Joseph in character—fruitful trees growing by the well, whose branches run over the wall. Jacob describes Joseph as a fruitful offshoot, and he explains his fruitfulness by his position—he is fruitful “by a well.” When a vine grows near a well which is always full, and when it is able to send its roots down to drink of the unfailing spring, it may very well be fruitful and send forth many branches. The point is, to get by the well; or to use our second text, to tap “the deep that couches beneath.” If we can reach the secret fountains, and say to God, with the Psalmist, “All my fresh springs are in You,” then shall we find nourishment for our branches, and our fruit and leaf will never fail. “Dwell deep” is a prophetic word of much value to Christians. To live upon land-drainage and casual rains may suffice for ordinary plants; but the trees of the Lord which bring forth much fruit need to penetrate below the topsoil, and reach the secret fountains of divine grace.

Upon that subject I am going to talk this morning. Our desire is that we may each one of us abide in Christ Jesus, and be in constant fellowship with the Father through the Holy Spirit, so that we may, in very truth, be rooted by the well, and may drink from “the deep that lies under.” We would be grounded and settled by living and lasting union and communion with the Eternal God. We would know the secret of the hidden life, and be filled with its fundamental principles, its constraining influences, its spiritual powers. We would drink in such supplies, by secret contact with God, that our outward life would bear ample testimony to our private communion with heaven.

May the Holy Spirit graciously aid us in our meditations while we first notice that this figure describes Joseph's character—he was all that Jacob styled him; secondly, that this in itself was a great blessing, for it was used as such by Moses in after years; and thirdly, that it brings with it many other choice favors.

I. First, THIS DESCRIBES JOSEPH'S CHARACTER. He flourished near to God. He was an offshoot of the old tree, and he was rooted deep by a well which always watered him. From his childhood until he died, the main point in Joseph's character was that he was in clear and constant fellowship with God—and therefore God blessed him greatly. He lived *to* God, and was God's servant. He lived *with* God and was God's child. He looked up to heaven for daily teaching and comfort; and God was with him so as not only to bless him, but to bless others for his sake—as, for instance, the house of Potiphar, first—and afterwards Pharaoh, and all the land of Egypt, and all the famishing nations. In this respect his branches ran over the wall in scattering blessings far and wide—and all this was the result of living in constant communion with God. My dear hearer, you profess to be a Christian, but have you really had

dealings with God? I know you have been baptized, and you come to the communion table; but have you pressed beyond the *signs* to the Lord Himself? Is there a root in your religion, and has that root struck deep into spiritual truth? And have you received the life and power which come from the spiritual fountain? Can you say with David, “My soul, wait you only upon God; for my expectation is from Him”? The first blessing in the Book of Psalms is that the godly man should be, “like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” The great matter is being rooted by the *well*—the drawing of supplies from the eternal storehouse of Christ Jesus the Lord—in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. How can we fail to be fruitful if we draw our life and all its vigor from the Lord Jesus?

Because Joseph lived near to God, he received and retained gracious principles. There is a great difference between religious principle and religious passion. Many persons are religious by starts and fits—according to their company, their feelings, or their whims. According to the influences under which they come, certain people become good, bad, or indifferent; but when a man lives in the presence of the Lord, he has fixed principles which rule his heart, and guide his life. He fears God, not because others fear Him, but because God is “to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.” He believes the revealed truths of God, not because others believe them, but because he is sure that the Lord has spoken them, and therefore he knows them to be true. If anybody denies the faith, he stands up to it, for it is precious to his heart. His moral conduct, and his spiritual life are upright, true, sincere and reverent—not because of the prejudices of education, or the force of example—but because the Lord has placed within him a new heart, and a right spirit. He does not resort to another man’s religious cistern; for there is within him “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” He discerns between the truth of God and error; for he has learned the gospel for himself by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He follows after holiness because he walks with the God of holiness and the law of the Lord is written upon the tablets of his heart. The gospel of the Lord Jesus he receives by the witness of the Spirit. It is true to him, whether others receive it or reject it—he could part with anything and everything sooner than quit his hold upon the everlasting truth of God. This it is to be a tree by a well, to have a religion based upon principles, to live by vital contact with the Lord.

Many nowadays belong to this denomination or to that by pure accident of birth or position. They have never weighed their opinions in the balances of Scripture. Indeed, many have no idea what their principles are. We have Protestants nowadays who never protest against anything, and Nonconformists who conform to everything which is in fashion. All this is bad. Ignorance in reference to divine truth is a very fruitful evil. We need an instructed people, if we are to have a fruitful people. Unless we get hold upon the truth of God by the right hand of clear apprehension, and hold it as our heart’s treasure, we shall neither know the joy of it in days of calm, nor be held by it in nights of storm. From where came martyrs in times of persecution, but from those who were in living union with God? From where shall come bold confessors in these apostatizing days, if not from among persons of like character? Unless we get men and women into the church who, like Joseph, take root in the deep truth of God’s Word, we shall never see the church in full health and glory.

Joseph showed his character throughout the whole of his life. As a child, his father loved him, as our translators say, “Because he was the son of his old age.” It would be better to understand the words as meaning because he was a son of old age. He was old and wise in his ways. He was a youth of great thoughtfulness and his thoughts were much with God. You may judge your waking thoughts by those which come to you in your dreams. Joseph had dreams at night from God, because in the day he thought of God. No doubt they were supernatural and prophetic dreams; but I now speak after the manner of men—a dream is often the reflection of the wakeful thought. Joseph, as a youth, dwelt very near to God, and therefore he was forced to enter his protest against the evil conduct of his brothers. “Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.” Soon he became a marked young man—his brothers felt he was not one of themselves, and they hated him—called him a dreamer—and took the first occasion to get rid of him. Jacob’s household was in a very sad condition—even the grossest vice was found among his sons; and young Joseph was a speckled bird among them. By their malice he was sold for a slave into Egypt; but no sooner is he there, than we read, “And the Lord was with Joseph.” Potiphar bought him, but the Lord made all that he did to prosper. It is difficult for a slave to become the steward of a great man; but Joseph did so. His master took no account of anything—he left it all absolutely in Joseph’s hands, and God

blessed the house for Joseph's sake; and then there came in his way that great temptation; and you remember his gracious answer, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" God was evidently with him, keeping him in the way of innocence—he could not grieve his God, for his God was his delight. By false accusation he was cast into prison; but we read that "the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Soon he became the under-jailer and was helpful to the prisoners. His branches were always running over the wall in the form of usefulness to others.

The prison was brightened by his presence. And as soon as he was prepared for the position, a straight path was opened for him from the prison to the court of Pharaoh. In the hour of his elevation he did not forget God. When about to interpret the royal dreams, he said, "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." He is a young man greatly gifted, and he may miss preferment if he mentions his religion—but this does not daunt him—again and again he says, "God has showed Pharaoh what He is about to do." On the throne his God is still with him and guides him in all things and he exclaims, "God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

When he sees his aged father, their talk is concerning the Lord God. When he comes to die, he says to his brethren, "I die, but God will be with you." He gave commandment concerning his bones, that he should not be buried in Egypt, for he was no Egyptian, though he had been lord of the land. He would be carried away to the land of promise in the day when Israel should quit the stranger's land. Always the Lord his God is the star of Joseph. This is his character—he is in the fear of God all day long. He was a fruitful bough by a well, and that well was his God.

This abiding near to God made Joseph independent of externals. His resources were within, and therefore he was not to be injured by things without. His springs were deep, and therefore not affected by circumstances.

He was not dependent upon family surroundings. At home, the society of his father would nourish his early piety, but he was just as gracious in the house of Potiphar. The degrading idolatries of Egypt did not make him unfaithful to the unseen God. Some of you young people not only owe your religious impressions to your parents, but I fear that if you were removed from them you would have no religion of your own. Are my fears correct? It is an anxious time when a lad leaves his home to be apprenticed, or to take his first place. If he has nothing but borrowed religion, he will soon yield to ill company; but if he lives in God, for himself, he will stand. If he has lived upon his parents as mistletoe lives on the oak, it will be bad for him; but if he has root in himself, and has lived upon God, all will be well. Hereditary religion is hopeful when it is also personal religion, but not else; if you are not living in God on your own account, your religion may as well fail you at once; for it will ultimately do so.

Many professing Christians are, I fear, very much dependent upon revival excitement, and the currents of godly society, which are often sufficiently strong to bear with them those who have no living principle. If religion seems to prosper, if many press into the congregation, if large numbers throng the inquiry room, these people are very happy and very earnest; but after the summer-tide is over, where are they? This is the great burden which every earnest evangelist has to bear—so many seem born for God in the heat of a revival who, nevertheless, die away when the warmth of zeal is gone. Oh, that you, my brethren, may be planted by a well, so that you may never be dried up by drought! Bless God for revivals, and never speak against them; but do not live upon them, nor cause your spiritual health to depend upon them. Those who grow upon hotbeds will not be far from dung. There are evil tendencies connected with fanaticism which are to be dreaded. Get down to the well, and let your roots drink up the fresh nourishment, which is essential to the sap of your life, and to the fruit of your usefulness. Touching the cool spring, you will know where you are when others are so carried away as not to know what they hear or do. Say to yourselves, each one of you, "I want Christ in my own heart. I want the love of God shed abroad in my own soul. I want not only to talk about heavenly things, but to *know* and *experience* them. I desire to be possessed by the Spirit of truth, and to know His power." Be not content to live by the casual shower or by the artificial watering-pot of special means, or by the mechanical irrigation of routine; but send down the roots of your being into the deep things of God till you tap the great deep of divine all-sufficiency.

Beloved friend, I pray you will seek after a spiritual life which is never dependent on outward ordinances. It is a great comfort to be able to hear the Word faithfully preached; and if you hear it, but do not

hear it, you miss a great blessing, and incur grievous loss. But suppose you are placed where there is no preaching of the Word? Then it will be a happy circumstance if your godliness can survive such a deprivation. If you were away on some cattle ranch in South America, far from all religious worship—it would be a grand thing to be able to go to your Bible, and to your knees, and draw near to God alone—and so grow strong enough to send your branches over the wall, by blessing others and beginning to teach or preach for Christ! This is the true way in which vigorous life shows itself. I know that the Lord's Supper is a sacred ordinance, and I would have you come to the Lord's Table as often as you can, for He has said, "This do in remembrance of Me"; but if it shall come to pass that you are where no Christian is near with whom you could break bread—may you have divine grace to feed on Jesus Himself! When the tokens of His flesh and blood are denied you, may you be driven to Jesus Himself! Spiritual life loves the outward ordinances, but if it is deprived of them, it survives their absence; for in very deed, heavenly life draws its food from heaven. Get to God. Oh, get to God through Jesus Christ! An hour's communion with Him means renewed life. Surely, the cluster of Eshcol must have grown near waters which were ever running. If you would glorify God, live upon God.

I believe—and I am very sorry to have to say it—that a great many nominal Christians live very much upon the minister. I have seen it to be so beyond all question! I have noticed a church flourish and increase while a certain good man has lived and preached; but when that servant of God has departed, then they have grown cold, and have been thinned out, and sadly scattered. The weaker sort were drawn and held together by the good man's preaching; and as they cannot hear him, they will hear no one else, and their seats are empty. May this calamity never happen to this congregation; but yet I fear it would be so with many. In the days of the Judges, the people seemed wonderfully good while the judge lived; but as soon as he was gone they wandered after idols. O my beloved people, may you become so indoctrinated with the truth of God that you will never leave it! Be it your resolve that you will never hear anything but the gospel! Love Christ so well that you will never follow any pretended shepherd who would lead you away from Him! Keep to Christ and Him crucified, and live on the doctrines of grace when your present leader lies asleep in his grave. Keep to the great Lord of love, whoever the preacher may be. Let it be seen that you have struck your roots too deep, and are fed by supplies too permanent, for you to be dependent upon any man—however much esteemed that man may be.

Above all, it is a great blessing to be so rooted and watered that you can live graciously and uprightly, despite personal interest. There was a time when it seemed the loss of everything for Joseph to keep close to God. A young man can get on well with elder brothers if he will please them by dropping into their habits; but if he opposes them, he will have a sorry time of it. "Joseph, if you want to be happy with Reuben, and Simeon, and Levi, you must hold your tongue when you see them making free in their morals, or you will bring a hornets' nest about your head." If you would be happy at home, you must remember the old proverb that when you are at Rome you must do as Rome does. This is the wisdom of this world; but Joseph scorns it. No, he cannot help it; he must abide with God and with holiness. What is the result? The Ishmaelites carry him away for a slave; poor encouragement this for holy youth! In the house of Potiphar, compliance with his mistress seemed an easy way to honor and pleasure; but he could not yield to her base suggestion. He had rather bear the consequences of her hate; she falsely charges him. He comes under his master's anger, loses his place, and is put in prison; but he cannot help it, he must obey his God. Are you of this true kind? Many will gladly walk with Christ when He wears silver sandals, and a golden girdle; but if He walks barefoot through the mire, they seek other company. Oh, for that godliness which will strengthen you to quit your situation, to lose your wealth, to sacrifice your credit, and to part with your friends sooner than grieve your Lord! Oh, that you may never be unstable as water; for, if so, you will not excel! Your bow will only abide in strength if, like Joseph, the arms of your hands are made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. You must draw your soul's nourishment from secret fountains, and wait upon the Lord where no eye sees you, or you will soon prove barren and unfruitful. To follow your Savior wherever He goes, you must daily derive your life from Him.

I cannot close this first head without saying that while Joseph thus was placed in a position of very high independence of all outward things, he was very conscious of his entire dependence upon God. Take the well away, and where was the fruitful bough? Remove "the deep that lies under," and then the resources even of so great a character as that of the prime minister of Egypt would have been dried up. We can stand alone with God; but we fall without Him—we can bear the brunt of the battle without a

friend or an armor-bearer; but if the Lord does not cover our head we are undone. Like Samson, we can slay the Philistines—

*“But if the Lord is once withdrawn,
And we attempt the work alone,
When new temptations spring and rise,
We find how great our weakness is.”*

Dear young friends, I exhort you to think for yourselves, and judge for yourselves, and act for yourselves with a holy independence of others; yet never forget where your strength lies, and never rely upon yourselves. Never resolve to do anything apart from the Lord; never say, “I am sufficient,” but always, in conscious insufficiency, fall back upon that divine grace which never fails. Self is a mocker, pride is raging, and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise. All your usefulness and all your faithfulness will come to an end unless you fix your entire dependence upon Jehovah, the beginning and the end of all that is good. Keep by the deep well of boundless love; draw from the fountain of all-sufficiency, and may the Lord bless you from now on and forever!

II. This brings me now to notice, under my second head, that THIS IS OF ITSELF A GREAT BLESSING. Moses, in my second text, mentions “the deep that couches beneath,” as having its own form of blessing. This was for Joseph’s race a blessing. It is a high favor to know the deep things of God, and to enjoy the far-down securities, enjoyments, and privileges of the children of heaven.

In deep union to God are to be found the very truth and life of godliness. As for outward religion, what is it? You may practice all the ordinances without fault, and yet you will be godless unless your spirit has had converse with the Lord. A good man in Scripture is said to be a *godly* man; he is a man of God—God’s man—he lives for God, he lives with God, he lives on God. If you do not believe in God, love God, glorify God—all the outward forms on earth, all the rites that God has given—cannot make up a religion for you that is worth a single penny! You may be orthodox in creed, as I hope you will be; but unless you really grasp and apprehend the things of orthodoxy, and so come to the God of truth, and the Holy Spirit of truth, you have a set of words and nothing more. A man may possess the catalog of a library, and yet be without a book; and so may you know a list of doctrines, and yet be a stranger to the truth of God. You may have in your hand a map of a fine estate and a list of all the treasures in the mansion—yet you may not have a place where to set your foot. Knowledge of the technicalities of theology is of small use unless you enjoy the truths of God to which they refer; you must know the Lord, and abide in Christ. Do not say, “I have joined the church, sir, and attend the prayer meetings, and take my share among the workers.” Yes, I know. But true religion is more than this. It is repentance towards God. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. “Dear sir,” cries one, “I accept what you say; and dispute none of your teaching.” That may be; but this does not content me. If you receive my teaching as the truth of God, I am sorry. I desire you to receive it as the Word of God. Go to the Bible for yourself. Seek to be taught by the Spirit of God. Ask to have the truth of God written upon your heart by the Holy Spirit. You have not received the truth of God rightly unless it comes to you with power as the Word of the living God.

When a man like Joseph can be compared to a fruitful tree by a well because he is rooted in fellowship with God, he has the blessedness of drawing his supplies from secret, but real, sources. His life is hid, and the support of his life is hidden, too. The world knows him not; but the secret of the Lord is with him. There is the tree, and there is the fruit—these can be seen by all—but none can see the *roots* which are the cause of the clusters, nor the deep that lies under, from which those roots derive their supply. God’s hidden ones are a wonder unto many. Oh, to dwell with Him who is invisible, and so to become ourselves partakers of an unseen life! The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Oh, to have eternal life, and to be heirs of an eternal heritage! It is a great thing to cultivate the inner life, for it is the true life; but unless a man dwells with God in secret, he forgets the inward life—he is so taken up with washing the outside of the cup, and the platter, that his inward part remains very wickedness. This will never do, for the Lord looks at the *heart*. We must see to the *inward*; and we shall fail to do so unless we abide near to God.

The supplies of such a man are inexhaustible. The well is not drawn dry, and the deep that lies under is never emptied. Plants dependent upon irrigation may pine in the drought of summer; but a tree that strikes its roots into the well does not see when heat comes, but its leaf is green. It can never exhaust the

great fountains. It may drink on and on, and yet never diminish its supplies. “God all-sufficient” is a glorious name. Infinite mercy is a storehouse for a starving world. The Lord’s own word is, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

The man who dwells near to God has supplies which can never be cut off. We have heard of cities which have been surrounded by armies, and were never captured by assault, but were compelled to surrender because the besiegers cut off the water supply—broke down the aqueducts—and so subdued them by thirst. Jerusalem was never thus captured, for there were deep wells within the city itself which never ceased to flow. Ah, my brethren, he that has a well of living water within him is beyond the enemy’s power! We can go to God when we are not allowed to go to the service. The priest took away the boy’s Bible. “Yes,” said the child, “but you cannot take away those twelve chapters of John which I have learned.” The malice of man may deny us a place of worship, but it cannot prevent our worshipping the Lord, wherever we may be. Every means of divine grace may be denied the believer, but the grace of the means will still come to him. God grant that neither sickness, nor traveling, nor watching at the bedside may keep us away from the assembly of His people; but if ever it should so happen, may we then so dwell in God that the upper springs may flow freely, and feed the very roots of our spirit!

Supplies gained by nearness to God Himself are constant. Grace is not intermittent. It is not a land spring, but a well. Joseph had divine grace as an old man, even as he had it as a youth. A religion that ebbs and flows is a poor thing. We should desire the constancy of the sun, and not the changing of the moon. We may have grace day by day, every day and all day. If yours is a spring from off the deep that lies under, it will be so. I do not say that your root can always take in the same measure of water from the well of life; but I do say that it will always be there for you to take. And I think, also, that to a large extent, you will be able to partake of it with constancy. Your root will be always in the well, and so you may always drink to the full. It is wonderful how trees will grow if planted close by abundant water. I hope to see, before long, a palm which was planted in my presence some years ago. It was one of a number of palms which make a long line in a friend’s garden. They were all of one size when I saw them brought from the nursery, and the next year they all seemed pretty much equal in size; but very soon this particular palm outstripped its fellows, and now it towers high above all the rest, till you might suppose it to be many years older. My very good friend, the owner of the garden, said to me, “You know why this palm has so far outgrown the rest? It has sent its roots down below, into that large reservoir and so its life is powerful.” The Arabs say that the palm tree loves to have its roots in the water and its head in the fire—it would have a flowing river below, and the burning sun above! Ah, beloved, may we also grow as the palm tree; and if we get our roots down into the divine fountains, and can sun ourselves in the love of the Lord, we shall grow rapidly and surely.

The supplies of the believer who dwells deep are pure, as well as full. Grace through the means is apt to be diluted; but when we receive it from God alone, it is grace, indeed. The best of pipes are apt to mar the water’s taste. All common watercourses mix earth with the water; but “the deep that lies under” is out of reach of defilement. If you can draw from the pure well of the undefiled gospel, you will do well. Among the Alps how often have I wished to drink! And the guide has forbidden me, and told me to wait a little; and then we have come to a leaping fount, most cool and delicious—far better than the streams which, as they ran along, had gathered earth, and decay and evil life. Did you ever know a stream in England that ran for half a mile without someone turning it into a sewer? And so it would seem at this time, as if God’s own truth could not be found in the teachings of the pulpit—pure and undefiled as given forth in Scripture by His Spirit. Do we not fear, lest with all our care, we should tincture the infallible revelation with our thoughts? O believer, go at once to your God for teaching! Again I remind you of David’s words—“My soul, wait you only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.” Draw your supplies at first hand. Do as he did who had been made ill with impure milk—he kept a cow of his own. Instead of expositors, read the Bible for yourself! In Bible light the Bible is best seen. If the human water pot fails, it will not matter if you are “a fruitful bough by a well.”

III. Lastly, I would remind you that THIS BRINGS WITH IT OTHER BLESSINGS. If you are by the well, sending your roots into its waters, you will obtain fruitfulness. A fruitful tree is one which is well sustained at the root. Dear friends, it is by no means wisdom to cry, “I will work hard, and try to bear fruit.” Fruit is not produced by *work*; no vine toils to produce grapes. It buds and blossoms and bears fruit in the order of its *nature*. We have a great deal of fruitless working nowadays. Religion is

pumped up. Devotion is too often mechanical; godliness is supplanted by artificial excitement; and love to God by perpetual fussiness. Zeal for God is counterfeited by “much ado about nothing.” If the inner, secret life is in good order, precious fruit is brought forth both by sun and moon. The gardener never says, “It is time for me to go and work a hundredweight of grapes out of my vine.” Oh dear, no! Beginning early in the year he spies a shoot, and by-and-by there is a tiny flower; and then leaves appear, and so on, in regular order—and only at last can he hope to gather the rich cluster from the vine. There is no noise in the production of the vintage; you never heard a vine groaning, nor saw it sweating, nor noticed it straining a single shoot. If vines get their roots down into good soil, they bring forth fruit, as it were, naturally. May the Lord make us bring forth holiness through the force of the new nature! May He put into us immortal principles, and may He sustain them by His own personal power! And then, naturally and joyfully, in its season, we shall bring forth fruit to His praise and glory.

The next blessing that came with this was unselfishness. Joseph was a bough whose “branches ran over the wall.” He extended his influence beyond his own family. We shall bear but little fruit if our branches are kept within the narrow space of self and relatives. Cultivate godliness for the sole sake of yourself, and you will never be very godly; but abound in it for God’s sake, and for love of those whom Jesus has redeemed, and you will be godly, indeed. Live to love; for to love is to live when the love is set upon God. You should go over the wall to your ungodly neighbor, to the infidel without Christ, to the heathen, and the castaway; you should extend your usefulness where none expected it to grow; then you will be a blessing to many who were far off from you and your God. I heard of one whose last petition was that God would bury his influence with him. An awful prayer! It was good only so far that it evidenced recognition of his life’s mistakes, and some sort of repentance for it. But he was asking for that which could not be granted; for not even God Himself ever kills a man’s influence. The world’s poet truly says, “The evil that men do lives after them.” Most surely the evil lives, even if the good expires. Yet, when we are dead and buried, if we have lived *unto* God, and lived *upon* God, our branches will run over the wall of the cemetery, and our voices will be heard from amid the silence of the sepulcher. Is it not written, “He being dead yet speaks”?

A third blessing that comes with this is fixedness. A fruitful tree by a well, sending its roots down to the water is well-rooted, and cannot be torn from its place. It would not be fruitful if it were not stable. If a tree has no living root, you may pull it up, if you please; but if it is living and growing, and drawing up its nutriment from the depth, its roots will furnish it with mighty anchorage. Can you stir a man who has once received into his heart the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice? Not if he has found in it a refuge for despair. The logician may prove that the death of Christ did not mean substitution and propitiation. A fig for his logic—“we have received the atonement,” and know better. The doctrines of grace which I have preached to you have a hold upon the heart and intellect, like that of certain colors when the wool is dyed ingrain; but when these doctrines have not been sufficiently preached, people are easily carried away with every wind of doctrine. Brethren, the old evangelical doctrine of Luther and Calvin had about it power to create enthusiasm; see how the Huguenots mustered to a sermon when it was death to hear a reformed preacher! Geneva sent forth men who could gather crowds in regions crimsoned with the blood of their brethren. Why did the multitudes come together? Would any man jeopardize his life to hear a “modern-thought” sermon? My brethren, there is something in the old gospel worth hearing—there is an election of grace most precious, a redemption which *really* redeemed, and a work of divine grace within which assures final perseverance, and eternal glory. The wish-wash of today’s preaching would have gained the preacher in “the desert” no congregation; but when untold treasures are displayed, saints will come to hear of them! That truth of God which is a matter of life and death to you, will take hold of your heart and soul, and you will never part with it. I long to see a race of real men who will know the truth and believe it in real fashion: men who have received a kingdom which cannot be moved; palaces of God whose foundations are in the rock.

Another privilege of personal nearness to God—such men enjoy *safety*. Hear how Jacob puts it—“The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.” If you live near to God you will be the target of the ungodly, and the hatred of the world will cause you grief of heart. It cannot be avoided, for the seed of the serpent will nibble at the heel of the seed of the woman. Even to this day is Joseph sold into Egypt, and separated from his brethren—

“No slacker grows the fight,

No feebler is the foe.”

Keep close to God and His Word, and you will be counted a Nazarene among your brethren; but this shall not harm you; for it is added, “His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” Deriving his strength from God, Joseph lived above the rage of men. He who keeps His people neither slumbers nor sleeps. Only live upon God—let your expectations be from God only—and you cannot be overcome of adversaries. They that trust in princes will find them fickle. They that rely upon the multitude will find them lighter than vanity; but they that trust in the Lord shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end. Therefore, strike deep, and draw your life from the well.

Besides that, Joseph received enrichment. Notice how Moses puts it—he mentions quite a treasury of jewels. The best pearls come out of deep seas. He mentions the precious things of heaven, the precious fruit brought forth by the sun, the precious things put forth by the moon, the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the earth, and the fullness thereof, and the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush. All these blessings came upon the top of the head of him who was a fruitful bough by a well. Many of you religious people know nothing about precious things; many professors live on the mere skins and husks of divine truth; they have never tasted the sweet kernels. A little religion is a mournful thing—they that drink deep get down to the sweetness. Many people have religion enough to make them wretched; if they had seven times as much, they would be joyful. The restraints, and duties, and formalities of religion have in them none of the fat things full of marrow, nor of the wines on the lees well refined. The best wines in God’s house are in the cellar. Those who never go downstairs have no idea of the secret sweetness. A deep experience is a precious experience. The Lord fills certain of His people with pain and grief, that they may know His choicer consolations. We are too apt to let our roots run along just under the surface, and so we get no firm footage; but trouble comes, and then we grow downward, rooted in humility. *Then* we pierce the treasures of darkness, and know the deep things of God. If you want a rich Christian, find a man who lives with God in secret, and goes deep into divine truth. A shallow believer is a poor and weak believer; but the strong Christian is the man who lives on God, and will not be put off with anything short of fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This benediction, with which we close our public service, should be the perpetual benediction of every day.

Dear friends, I might add a thousand things but I will not. I will only say this—do, I pray you, dive into the depths. You that are beginning with holy things begin deep, and take sure root. See how soon buildings fall if they have insufficient foundations! Find your foundation in the rock. You that have long known the Lord, endeavor to know more and more of Him. Send out more roots into yet deeper and richer ground. Get more nearly to the very heart of God. In an evil time like this, take firm hold. You cannot overcome the drift of an ill current unless you let down your anchor. Yes, and at such a time you may be unusually careful, and let down four anchors from the stern, as well as the one in the proper place. We need to be anchored stem and stern in these days. We need to be held to Christ by hooks of steel. Heart, and head, and hand, and every other power had need take hold on the everlasting truths of God; for such are the winds that blow today, that we shall be carried about by them like thistle upon the hills, if we have nothing but our own strength to rely upon. God grant us to get closer to Him than ever, and to stay there; and may He grant us yet further to use all our opportunities for usefulness, and all our life for fruitfulness to His glory! Amen.

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