

POSSESSING POSSESSIONS

NO. 2136

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 23, 1890,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness;
 and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.
 Obadiah 1:17.*

THIS is a remarkable passage. Its wording is singular. It begins with a, “but,” because the previous verses have been denouncing judgments upon Edom. When God comes forth to punish His enemies He also comes forth to bless His friends. When Pharaoh is overthrown in the Red Sea, it is that Israel may pass onward to Canaan. When Amalek is overcome, it is that Israel may be at peace. There is a black cloud as well as the silvery rain. The acceptable year of the Lord is the day of vengeance of our God. This combination so constantly occurs that the psalmist said, “I will sing of mercy and judgment.” The sword of vengeance is displayed at the same time as the scepter of divine grace. In that last great day—that coming of the Lord which is the joy and expectation of His people—there will be confusion to His adversaries. To the ungodly, “the day of the Lord will be darkness, and not light.” When He comes forth there will as surely be a curse to the left hand as a blessing to the right—and both will be everlasting. Hell is as deep as heaven is high, for God, who delights in mercy, also hates iniquity, and will put away the wicked of the earth like dross. God grant to you, and to me, that we may know on which side we stand, and may be found in Christ, wearing His righteousness, and accepted in the Beloved so that whenever the Lord comes forth with plagues for His adversaries, He may have favor towards us. When, in the words of verse 16, His foes, “shall be as though they had not been,” may the full force of the present text be revealed in our case: “But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.”

I have no doubt that this promise has been fulfilled already, and that there was a time when the house of Israel, restored from captivity, came back to Zion, and Edom was utterly consumed. “The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord has spoken it.” But the former fulfillment of a promise does not make it useless like a cashed check—the promise may be presented again, and it will again be honored. God’s rules of action are *immutable*, and therefore what He did to one company of His people He will do to others of them. God is sovereign, but yet He acts according to His unchanging nature so that from one of His proceedings we may infer the rest. The temporary restoration of the captives to Jerusalem can only have fulfilled the promise upon a very small scale—it has a wider meaning than such an event could exhaust. The Lord is prepared to do the same on a larger scale, for all those who put their trust in Him. Taking the text as containing a general principle, I shall use it for our own encouragement, and edification, praying God the Holy Spirit to make it truly useful.

I notice, in the text, first, *a privilege to be desired*—“The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” Secondly, *a favor to be remembered*—“Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance.” And, thirdly, *a character to be conspicuous*—“And there shall be holiness.”

I. First of all, consider A PRIVILEGE TO BE DESIRED. The land of Canaan had been granted to Israel by the Lord of all. Each family had a lot and portion which belonged to it forever, being entailed upon it by a covenant of salt. Through their sins the tribes were carried into captivity; the land was taken from them by their conquerors, and they could no longer possess their possessions. Now, the promise comes to them by the prophet Obadiah: “The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” A property may be my lawful possession, and yet, for different reasons, I may not be able to get at it; it may be in

the hands of one who defrauded me of it, or I may be far away, and unable to reach it. The words are singular, but their meaning is distinct—"They shall possess their possessions."

Let us use the words as applicable to *souls who shall be led to take what is promised to believers*. "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." We set before many of you, every Lord's-Day, the great possessions of eternal life, of pardon, of justification, of the new birth, sanctification, and all the other treasures of the covenant of grace. But though they are set before you, and you long after them, many of you feel unable to grasp them as your own. You know that the tenure of these possessions is *faith*, but either you do not understand what faith is, or you, for some other reason, fail to exercise it, and so you do not appropriate what the gospel freely gives to you. You are either confused by ignorance, dazed by fear as to your sin, or held back by the temptations of the devil. I pray that you may be granted divine grace speedily to take what Jesus freely gives, so that you may come to possess your possessions. If you have the power given you today, by faith, to take the Lord Jesus Christ as yours; and if you now trust in His most precious blood; you need not be afraid that you will be taking possession of what does not belong to you, for every believing soul may know that what he takes by faith was bestowed upon him in the covenant of grace from before the foundation of the world! If you believe in Christ, you were chosen of God before the world began!

For believers, redemption was specially offered by our Lord upon the cross—He bought for them the covenant heritage, and He has made it over to them so that it shall be theirs forever. You cannot know this before you believe! But faith reveals the divine choice and gift. You who now believe were once strangers to such an extraordinary joy as that which comes by faith. You wandered up and down in sin, knowing nothing of what free grace and dying love had done for you—but now you have come to God, and you have ventured by faith to take possession of what the Lord so freely offers in the gospel; and behold, it is revealed to you that these things were yours in the purpose of God, even from everlasting! Now is it fulfilled to you: "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." God gave you all covenant blessings in Christ Jesus according as He chose you, in Him, from before the foundation of the world. God saw you in Christ as His elect, His beloved, His redeemed, and therefore for you He prepared a kingdom which you inherit through His grace. If you have now the confidence to believe in Christ Jesus, and to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," then you shall know that in grasping gracious blessings, you do but come to your own! You possess your possessions! Let it be the prayer of everyone here who by faith has entered into rest, that others may now be brought in that so the number of the elect may be accomplished, and that all covenant provisions may be received by those for whom they are prepared. Oh, for the bringing home to their God, and to their own possessions those who are now prodigals, starving in the far-off country!

Let us go a step further. Beloved friends, many by faith have laid hold upon the covenant possessions, but yet they do not *fully* possess them. The text leads me to pray that *believers may enjoy fully what they have grasped by faith*. Christ is mine, but, beloved, who among us knows all that is ours in Christ? He is a case which is all ours, but we do not open its doors, and take out all its treasures! Our possessions in Christ are very wide, but we need to be bid, like Abraham, to lift up our eyes to the north and to the south, and to the east and to the west, that we may form a clearer idea of the goodly land which the Lord our God has given us! We *see* the blessings of the covenant, but do we *feed* on them as we might! Do we drink deep into them, and is our soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness by them? I fear we do not by enjoyment possess our possessions! Alas, with many believers, times of actual realization and enjoyment are rare—they can talk about the blessing, but they do not habitually rejoice in it themselves. "Oh, yes," they say, "it is a very delightful thing to be washed in the blood of the Lamb." But do they enjoy the peace which flows from cleansing? Have they "received the atonement," and with it that peace with God which follows upon justification by faith? Do they delight in "the peace of God which passes all understanding"? You know, dear brothers and sisters, that it is your high privilege to have access to the mercy seat; but do you *use* that access, and come often and boldly to the throne of grace? Do you avail yourselves of your opportunities? Do you make the utmost use of prayer? In other holy matters do you really stand where God would have you stand? Are you as rich as Christ has made you? A man may have large possessions, and yet be practically poor because he is miserly in his expenditure. Is it not so with many a child of God? All things are ours, and yet we live as if nothing

were ours! Like a horse shut out of the pastures, we nibble round the hedges—better far for us to be like sheep which enter in and lie down in green pastures. Oh, for grace to appropriate by enjoyment those treasures of the covenant which make the soul to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

I pray that we may not look in at the windows of the banqueting hall, but may sit at the table, and possess our possessions. Why should we be hungry and thirsty when Christ has given us His flesh to be meat, indeed, and His blood to be drink, indeed? Why should we be hanging down our heads like bulrushes when the Lord loves us, and would have His joy to be in us that our joy may be full? Why are we so dispirited by our infirmities when we know that Jehovah is our strength, and our song—He also has become our salvation? I tell you, brothers and sisters, we do not possess our possessions! We are like an Israelite who should say, “Yes, those terraces of land are mine. Those vineyards, olives, figs, and pomegranates are mine. Those fields of wheat, and barley are mine, yet I am starving.” Why do you not drink the blood of the grapes? He answers, “I can scarcely tell you why, but so it is—I walk through the vineyards, and I admire the clusters, but I never taste them. I gather the harvest, and I thrash it on the barn floor, but I never grind it into corn, nor comfort my heart with a morsel of bread.” Surely this is wretched work! Is it not folly carried to an extreme? I trust the children of God will not copy this madness! Let our prayer be that we may use and enjoy to the utmost all that the Lord has given us by His grace, and so possess our possessions!

Go a step further. We possess our possessions *when we hold firmly what we enjoy*. Too many Christians hold their blessings with a feeble hand—they *expect* where they ought to *enjoy*—and *think* where they ought to *know*! They are never sure, and thus they do not “possess their possessions.” They are not sufficiently at home with spiritual things to be said to possess them. At times they rise into rapturous joy—I think I heard one of them sing the other day—

*“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”*

But the brother very soon came down from that mountain; the sister soon quit Tabor, and made her way to the place of wailing. Why this fickleness? Some do not stay long enough in the garden of assurance to see a single fruit ripen—they do not possess their possessions! It is a grand thing when the grace of God enables a man to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” When happy feelings vanish, faith abides the same. Be it night or be it day, our soul waits only upon God, for our expectation is from Him! When you have such a grip of the everlasting covenant, that if all the devils in hell were to try to drag it from you, you would defy their efforts; for it is well with you! We know, *then*, that we have passed from death unto life! We know that Christ is ours, and that we are His. We are resting in Him, and are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord? When we are thus assured, we then *really* possess our possessions—our title deeds are before us, and the inheritance is within sight of our faith. If a man is living in a house which does not belong to him, he can hardly be said to possess it. He may be at any moment disturbed, if not ejected altogether. If one who can prove his claim comes that way, out he must go! Beloved, our God has given us a covenant right in Christ Jesus to the blessings of His grace—we cannot be ejected! Justice is on our side as well as grace since Jesus died. Our tenure is not uncertain; because Jesus lives we shall live, also. Blessed is he who, having believed in the Lord Jesus, is able to sing—

*“Now I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.”*

May this be the lot of all the members of *this* church, and of all my Lord’s servants in *every* place!

I have not come to the end of my tether yet. I will fix another meaning upon these words, and apply them to *souls realizing things to come*. Brothers and sisters, we have possessions which we have not yet seen, and cannot as yet enter upon—

*“I have a heritage of joy
Which yet I must not see.*

***The hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me.***

We believe in the Second Coming of our Lord from heaven, and in the glory that shall follow. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal bliss of the godly in heaven. We believe that we shall dwell with Christ forever and ever. Can we possess these possessions even now? We cannot now rise from the dead, for we are not yet buried. We cannot yet walk the golden streets, for we have not passed through the gate of pearl. Yet, by the realizations of *faith*, we may make these things to be so near that we may measurably enjoy them even now—and so already possess our possessions! “He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Though we are not actually in heaven, yet in union with our Lord we are virtually there. We have been buried and risen with Him in baptism. We have been raised from spiritual death into newness of life, and we have gone up above all earthly things into the heavenlies, where we dwell. Yes, Beloved, faith has a strange realizing faculty—imagination can do much in this direction—but faith can do far more. By imagination a man can make fiction appear fact; faith has nothing to do with fiction, but it makes the sure hopes of the future to be the pleasures of the present. Earth can become the vestibule of heaven! Life here may be the rehearsal of the glory-life above. Even here we may possess our possessions by enjoying a period of rest, “as the days of heaven upon the earth.” Already we have the earnest of the inheritance in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and we have obtained that inheritance in Christ—

***“The men and women of grace
Have found glory begun below
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope do grow.”***

More and more may we enjoy the peace, the rest, the purity, the victory of heaven—and thus possess our possessions!

One other meaning and upon this I am going to lay emphasis—we long to see *souls winning others for Jesus*. I think when it says, “The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions,” it may also mean the possessions of their enemies, for, in the 19th and 20th verses, we read—“They of the south shall possess the Mount of Esau, and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Zarephath, shall possess the cities of the south.” The saints annex the territories of their enemies which are theirs in Christ Jesus. The whole world belongs to Christ, and in His name we are to possess it for Him. As yet we see not all things put under Him—the enemy abides in His strongholds. Ah, how terribly does the enemy keep his hold on London! Beloved, we long that this text may prove true to us, by our achieving the capture of this great city! “There is very much land yet to be possessed,” and we must press on our conquest in the name of Jesus! We must carry the war into the enemy’s country, and storm fort after fort for Jesus! This land is a part of Christ’s own kingdom; let us take it! Is this to be done? It *must* be done! We must not be satisfied till millions bow at our Lord’s feet; until Jesus, by the grace of God, possesses the east and the west, the north and the south. I regard this as a promise to us—“The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” Drunkenness must come down like Jericho before the trumpets of Israel! Sin and lechery, like the iron chariots of the Canaanites, must be broken in pieces before our holy faith! Unbelief and superstition, like the hosts of Jabin, must give way before the everlasting gospel which *must* and *shall* conquer! Oh that the whole church would be up and doing for the Lord our King! Oh, for a dauntless faith to go up and possess the gates of our enemies! This is one of God’s great designs. He has chosen us, and brought us to Zion that there we may find deliverance for ourselves, and then may lead others to the Deliverer! Is it not written in the 21st verse, “And saviors shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s”? If we have been chosen of God, we have been chosen with this objective—that we gather out from the world the rest of the Lord’s redeemed—and win for our King the nations now in revolt against Him. Many of us are, just now, praying day and night that this may be our best year—that we may have a larger increase than ever before. I invite you all to join with me in this continual supplication, and may

it come to pass before our own eyes, that, in this Tabernacle, “the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.”

II. So much upon the main part of our discourse. There are two other things to be handled, and, first, comes this—A FAVOR TO BE REMEMBERED—“Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance.” This fact should help us to possess our possessions! See what God has done for us! What can He not do? Is anything too hard for the Lord? That you may see the force of the passage, let me work out its meaning.

We have been saved; for, “Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance” and we have found it so. In Christ Jesus we have been saved! The Revised Version has it, “In Mount Zion there shall be those that escape.” We have escaped from sin, death, and hell. One of the greatest expositors of the Minor prophets reads it, “Upon Mount Zion there shall be an escaped remnant,” which indicates a people small and weak, but effectually rescued—and such are we! This rendering reminds us of that other prophet who said, “In Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call” (Joel 2:32). Glory be to God! We are saved! Delitzsch reads it, “Upon Mount Zion will be that which has been saved.” Yes, we have been saved—saved from spiritual death, saved from punishment, saved from *sin* itself, saved unto the glory of our God! We have been saved, not on Mount Sinai, for there the law thunders terribly—but on Mount Zion where the blood of sprinkling speaks better things than that of Abel! Because of this deliverance, let us go up and publish salvation, and proclaim the name of our Deliverer! Listen to His voice, you captives, that you, also, may be delivered! Look to Him, you perishing, that you also may be saved! Now may we cheerfully possess our possessions, since we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

We are daily saved, for the text says, “Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance.” Salvation abides there at *all* times. Not only have we *been* saved, but we *are* saved continually from all evil. If we fall into trouble at any time, we fly to Jesus. If we have hourly temptations, we look to Jesus for hourly succor. We have present salvation. Let us not think of our salvation as a matter which was finished in us on a certain day, and then and there ended. Conversion is the beginning of sanctification, and sanctification is the life-long working out of salvation. Grace will always be needed from day to day until we enter into glory. In Mount Zion, in Christ Jesus, in the Word, and in the church of God there is a fountain of salvation which never dries up. If it is so, let us enjoy it, without stint, now and always! Let us be rich in abiding treasure. Let us be happy in never-failing safety, and let us seek to bring this deliverance to others.

We are few, comparatively. I reminded you of that reading of the text—“Upon Mount Zion shall be an escaped remnant.” I will not make guesses as to what the number of God’s chosen will be in the end. But at present, taking the most charitable view of things, the saved ones are as a handful of corn on the top of the mountains, or as the gleanings of the vintage. The world lies in the wicked one, and those who are in Christ Jesus are a small remnant; that cheering word, “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” is still applicable to the church! When we accept the most enlarged notion of the numbers making up the church of God at the present day, and compare that slender company with the population of the globe, it is like comparing a drop in a bucket to the favor of the temple. Ah, me! Let us not despair—if God has saved us, though we are but few, He will accomplish His purposes by us. He saves not by many, nor by few: His own right arm gets unto Him the victory! You are able to possess the land, few as you are! Only go forth in the same spirit as the 12 did when the Holy Spirit rested upon them at Pentecost—and few as you may be, you can yet subdue the nations for Christ.

We are chosen by divine grace. In Mount Zion the escaped remnant are men chosen by grace, and ordained unto this deliverance. If you believe that God has chosen you, nothing should daunt you. More courage comes into the heart through a grip of the doctrine of election, than by any other truth of God. Let a man believe that God has ordained him to this or that, and he goes forward with irresistible resolve! The man impressed with his election crashes through every difficulty as though he were a bolt of iron shot from some tremendous cannon by a master marksman. Who shall hinder my accomplishing that to which God has appointed me? I shall fulfill my destiny! Who shall hinder me? In this there is a mighty motive for pressing on to possess our possessions, and win for Christ the purchase of His blood. “The remnant has obtained it.” The victory remains with the people whom the Lord has chosen!

Notice this, that we are *set for the deliverance of others*. The Lord's purpose of grace to any man does not end with that one man. He chooses one man with a view to others. When God chooses a company of men to eternal life, it is that they may be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. Jehovah chose Israel that the favored nation might receive the oracles of God, and preserve them for the ages to come. If He has chosen us, and brought us to His Mount Zion, it is that, finding deliverance for ourselves, we may go forth and bear the tidings of it to the ends of the earth! Is it not written, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"? Brothers and sisters, we ought to go in and possess the land, and win the people for Jesus, for that is why we are chosen! Has He saved you? Has He taken you out from among the fallen mass of mankind? Has He chosen you by His discriminating grace? Oh, then you are not your own—you are His forever, and you are not to live for yourselves, but for His glory, and for the making known of His salvation among your fellow men! Beloved, take heart and courage, and let your souls be big with high enterprise and noble purpose! Say to yourselves, "It shall be true, 'the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions,' for we know of a truth that there is deliverance upon Mount Zion."

III. Our final word is perhaps the most important of all. I call your attention to a third matter, namely, **THE CHARACTER TO BE CONSPICUOUS**. "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and *there shall be holiness*." It is through *holiness* that the house of Jacob shall enter into that possession of which I have spoken at so great length. If there is no holiness, then there has been no deliverance—and there shall be no possessing of possessions. Holiness is a link which is essential to the golden chain of blessings. If we are without holiness, we shall not see the Lord on our side.

To give you the bearing of the words before us, I remark, first, that it might be translated, "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and *there shall be a sanctuary*," or, "a holy place"—an inviolate sanctuary of God. The people of God are the temple of God. The church of God should be God's peculiar dwelling place where He walks as King in His own palace. The temple of the Godhead, is, first of all, the person of Christ, and next the church of the living God. "This is My rest; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." With what dignity is the church invested, when it is, in very deed, the temple of God! When we come together in our solemn gatherings, and especially when we surround the communion table, and are visibly seen as a church, let us be filled with solemn awe and holy trembling—for the Lord is among us as He was in Sinai; or, better still, as He was in the holy of holies in the Tabernacle of old. True saints are living stones of the living temple where the Lord Jehovah deigns to make Himself known! Unless we can realize this, we shall not possess our possessions. If your church membership is a mere trifle to you; if you think that a church is simply a community of people who meet together for religious purposes, you miss the mark. The church must be the sanctuary of God—the place where God reveals Himself—and if it is not so, the men and women who make up that church have never tasted the divine deliverance, and neither will they possess their possessions! Without the presence of God in the church, it has no power to subdue the world to the faith.

The great thing that makes God's people a holy people, is *the presence of God with them*. He sanctifies both the place of His abode, and those that come near to Him. It is holy ground where Jehovah reveals Himself, though it is but in a bush. God is everywhere, but He is not everywhere as He is in His church. There is a special, gracious presence of God in the midst of His chosen people, and this it is that makes them "holiness unto the Lord." Have you ever been forced to cry with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" and that because you had also cried, "Surely God was in this place!"? In a gathering of saints, when you have drawn near in solemn prayer to God, and have laid hold upon the covenant angel and prevailed, have you not felt that you were the Lord's? We are never as holy as when we are near to God! God's overshadowing presence sanctifies the man whom it covers! Beloved, we *must* have this or we cannot conquer the nations! If God is not with us, and the shout of a King is not in the camp, there will be no brave deeds done in the battle! The church needs reviving at home. We hear men talk of "getting up a revival." What idle talk is this! If the church of God becomes spiritually quickened, the revival will come—but no way else. Let *us* carefully see to our *holiness*, and *God* will see to our *success*.

Next to this, *there must be holy teaching*—"there shall be holiness." All the teaching that goes forth from us must be God's holy truth, and not the dream of human wisdom. If I hear of a ministry under

which there are no conversions, I usually find that it is not a holy ministry. If in the teaching there is nothing which is calculated to convert sinners, we cannot wonder that it is not used to that end. If I go fishing with a torn net, is it any wonder that I catch no fish? God will not convert souls by unholy sermons, for it would not be to His glory to do so. Instrumentality must be fitted for what it aims at, and soul-saving sermons must deal with *sin*, *salvation*, and with the *blood* of Jesus! What have we to do with themes which are foreign to our design? If I were to come here and talk to you about strikes, or Home Rule, or Socialism, and should you pray to God to convert souls by my discourse—would it not be a mockery or worse? I think so. Zion must have holy preaching if she is to have conquering power. Whatever our ministry lacks, it must be said of it, “There shall be holiness,” or there will be death in the pot. Oh that the preacher might always be holy! Unless we preach a holy God, a holy doctrine, a holy gospel, and holy practice, we sow the wind!

Beloved, we must maintain *holy ordinances*. God forbid that we should put a slight upon baptism and the Supper of the Lord! Some have rejected these sacred institutions—and how they will answer for it in the day when Christ shall come! If the Lord Jesus has ordained these institutions, how dare we set them aside? Surely this is presumptuously mounting to the throne of Christ, pushing Him from the seat of legislation, and daring to make laws for ourselves! No—there shall be *holiness*, and *then* we shall possess our possessions, and find in the ordinances means of instruction and usefulness.

There must be holiness in the form of *holy pleading*. If every member of this church, which has enjoyed so much of divine favor, could be aroused to mighty intercession for the souls of men, should we not see great things? If every member were in earnest in praying for the visitations of God, and if everyone pleaded day and night for the display of divine power—and added to his pleading that which would prove it to be sincere, namely, his own individual effort—what a day would break upon us! It would be a morning without clouds! I see no reason why it should not be so. I pray it may be realized at once. May our ideal become a fact! May God Himself fulfill the promise, “There shall be holiness”! Holiness will breed prayer, and prayer will bring power—and that power will work mightily for the glory of the Lord.

One thing more—*there must be holy living*. Prayer meetings—what are they if they are held by a number of people who do not serve the Lord at home? Preaching—what is that if the preacher preaches what he has never experienced, and is not prepared to practice? Teaching in Sunday schools—what is that if the children are taught by frivolous persons whose lives are destitute of piety? God will not bless us to the effecting of His purposes of salvation unless we are clothed with holiness as with a garment! Zion’s priests must put on their snow-white garments of holy living if they are to offer an acceptable sacrifice before Jehovah! If I might plead on my knees with tears in my eyes, I would beseech every brother and sister here to be holy! Hear how the Lord says, “Be you holy, for I am holy.” “Be you imitators of God as dear children.” “Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh.” “Let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ.” You cannot possess your possessions to your own joy unless your lives are holiness unto the Lord! You cannot have full assurance; you cannot rise to close communion with Christ; you cannot anticipate the joys of heaven—you cannot be useful to men unless you carefully obey the Lord, and walk in holiness before Him. Our hearts can truly pray—

***“Yet one thing we need,
More holiness grant,
For more of Your mind
And Your Spirit we pant.”***

If this panting is fulfilled, all things will go well with us.

Obey the word of exhortation. As we so eagerly desire that we may have a great increase to this church through numerous conversions, let us lay this to our hearts, that we must be *holy*—for if we are *not* holy, we shall not be fit to be *blessed*. *The unholy worker is not really in earnest*. He may have a factitious or fictitious earnestness, but heart-passion for souls is not found in unholy men. Unless you are thoroughly consecrated to God, and then sanctified by the Spirit, you will not speak with that accent of conviction which carries the truth of God home to the hearer. Do you not know yourselves that when you have listened to a clever preacher who has no spirituality—but is a mere actor, and known to be of

worldly habits—his preaching has no power in it for you? What he said was all very well, but it fell flat—he was a clever and eloquent man, but he did not touch you. When I heard George Muller some years ago, there was nothing of oratory in what he said; but then there was George Muller behind it—and every syllable had weight! That blessed man spoke as one who had experienced what he said. His long life of faith in God made every word powerful with the heart and conscience. Teachers of Bible classes and schools; a holy life must be your power in your classes, or your words will be to your children as idle tales!

If they see your lives to be unholy, *the ungodly will reject your testimony*, and it will be no wonder that they do so! They *need* to reject it. They are looking for excuses to reject it, and they will gladly find an argument in your unhallowed conversation. They will say, “The man does not believe it, himself, or else he would not live as he does.” I heard of one who was asked by her minister whether she remembered last Sunday’s sermon. “No,” she said, “it is all gone.” “But you ought to remember it,” said the minister. “No,” she replied, “I am not to be expected to do so, for you did not remember it yourself—you read it all from a paper.” The argument is if the preacher does not remember his own preaching to put it into practice, how can he expect others to do so? Shall the taught excel the teacher? Brother, you lose your leverage of power if you fail in holiness!

What is more, *saints cannot pray for a blessing on a work which is not holy*. If you work for God in an unholy way, or work for God rightly, yet, nevertheless, are inconsistent in your ordinary life, the people of God will be grieved, and will find it impossible to pray for you. “Ah!” said one to me, talking of his minister of whom I was sorry that he should have so to speak, “*You* may well have a blessing, for God’s people love to pray for *you*, but as for our minister, he is a fine preacher, but there is nothing gracious about him, and none of the Lord’s people feel drawn to him.” This is a grievous loss to a man—a leak which will sink his ship. Can any good come of a ministry for which saints cannot pray? Unless the people of God see in a man downright consecration to God, and holiness of spirit and life, they cannot feel that union of heart which produces intercession.

Lastly, *God Himself will not honor a ministry which is not accompanied by holy character*. How can God set His seal to an unholy life? Ah, brothers! If we can go into the world, and sin as others do all the days of the week, it will be in vain to pull over us the garb of sanctity on Sunday, and say, “I am a witness for Christ.” What does God think of such conduct? Does He call on evil men to be His witnesses? He hates hypocrisy, and therefore He cannot append the “signs following” to a ministry which is impure! O my brothers, we desire honor from the Lord in conversions. We would not be as Saul, when he laid hold on Samuel, and cried, “Honor *me* before the people!” All the honor which rhetoric and oratory could bring would be nothing to us if we did not see souls saved!

O you that are not yet believers in Jesus, how much I wish that you were so! May you be led to believe at once in Him whose death must be your life; who must Himself be your salvation! Look to Him and live! And you that are Christ’s, I beg you to remember the remarkable expression of the text, and may you “possess your possessions”! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 44.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK”—90, 957, 999.

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