

TWO CHOICE ASSURANCES

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“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”
Genesis 15:1

“And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”
Exodus 33:14

IN the splendid Psalm that sets forth the divine glory of the matchless Word of God as compared even with the greatest wonders of God’s visible creation—viz., in the nineteenth Psalm—we read in the tenth verse, “Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” This is applied to “the judgments of the LORD” which are “true and righteous altogether.” Of course, this expression sets forth David’s esteem of the law of God as he knew it, a very small volume compared with our complete Bible, and yet we may surely apply it to the whole of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments.

The Hebrew original has it, “Sweeter than the dropping of honeycombs.” Whereupon gracious Thomas Brookes, the Puritan divine, observes, “it is sweeter than those drops which fall naturally and instantly from the comb without any force or art, and which are counted as being the purest, choicest, and richest honey.” How true is this! There are some texts of Scripture that may yield their treasures of instruction, comfort, or direction after deep study and holy meditation, but there are others, which are marvelously free in the giving forth of their sweetness, calling for little else than a heart that loves and longs to hear God speak.

As little children have their own confections that need no vigorous mastication, but will melt in the mouth, so some passages of the Scriptures are prepared as choice morsels for the Lord’s children, they have only to receive them by transparent faith and unaffected love, and their enjoyment is great.

I know that some of the words of the Lord are as nuts that need breaking open to secure their nourishing, or as grapes that must be trodden in the winepress, for their richest meaning lies not upon the surface, and plain to all. But these others of which we speak—as the droppings of the honeycomb—are simple sweetnesses, prepared pleasures. Plain, unmistakable, choice delicacies for God’s loved ones.

To enjoy these, one needs not to be a deep theologian, a learned grammarian, or even much less, a profound philosopher or baffling mystic. The honey of the meaning flows easily and sweetly out of the comb of the words as liquid love, pure joy, choicest consolation, and perfect truth. The student does not require to pore over his books, or the preacher to search his library, or the hearer to gather up all his knowledge, to receive and enjoy these. The dainty comfort offers itself at once to the soul’s receiving, and without effort the sweetness and savour pervade the whole inner being.

So as the Holy Spirit shall open up the word to me, I hope to be able to give you, beloved, some honey out of the rock, by dwelling on one or two choice, plain texts that, speak their sweetness direct to the heart. Not so much for intellectual gratifying—though that is included—as for spiritual satisfying and stimulating. Some preachers seem to make their main business to be the leading of people among the thorns, to be torn with perplexities, or into the fog to tantalize with uncertainties, be it ours on this occasion to run as did Ahimahaz by way of the plain, along the level road of gracious and comforting teaching. We do well, sometimes, to let the heart have undivided play, and gain thereby the solace and joy that we so much need.

The droppings of the honeycomb are not so much for labor and toil, as for renewal and delight, that the mere student and man of affairs may for a while come and sit and indulge in holy pleasures.

Let this suffice for introduction to our first word of saved assurance as given to Abram.

“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”

“Fear not, Abram.” No more necessary or practical word could be spoken to the great Father of the Faithful thou this. Fear, alas! is an ague, which haunts all the marshlands of earth. It can beset the king on his throne, the peasant in his cottage; the statesman in his lofty office, as the poor old mother who dreads the pauper’s lot and fare. It is the shadow that follows us when the sun is shining brightly before, and how to escape it is the problem that perplexes thousands of the saints of God.

We might be sure that it was so, when so mighty a believer as Abram was in great peril of it. Does he need a “fear not” from JEHOVAH’S lips, Then we may be sure that we shall require it too. I am afraid that wherever there is faith there will be also a measure of fear, though the less of it the better.

How tenderly the Lord quiets the fears of His children and lulls their forebodings to rest! “Fear not, Abram.” As much as if He had said “You are all alone, but fear not, for I am with you.” You are in much labor, needing great strength, but fear not, I will help you. You have no portion, but are a stranger and sojourner in this land, but fear not, for I am your God. Do not fear concerning the past, nor the present, nor the future. Fear neither the fury of foes, nor the worse trial the failure of friends. Be brave, calm, trustful, hopeful, joyful. “Fear not, Abram.”

You have just been fighting the kings, you desired to be a man of peace, and were not, indeed, accustomed to the deadly strife, but I have given the marauders and plunderers like driven stubble to your bow, and you have brought back Lot and all his train of servants that were taken prisoners. You need not fear even for your relatives, I will bless and keep them for your sake. Besides, since you have borne yourself in a right royal fashion, and not touched a thread or a shoe latchet of the king of Sodom’s goods, do not fear to enjoy your success and you shall be safe from all attacks, and shall command the respect of the great ones around you. This blessed “fear not” was a quietus to every form of alarm and misgiving which might come near and threaten this man of God.

Is not this our Lord’s own message to His children everywhere today? He has scattered His “fear-nots” all over His blessed Word as some river’s bank is all be spread with sweet forget-me-nots, and these “fear-nots” cover every emergency of our life and answer to them with the assurance that His love will never forget or fail us, and if we will but remember this, we shall have no cause whatever to fear.

But the Lord appears to teach Abram that after his conflict and signal victory he might begin to sink. Such is often the case with the bravest men. The natural reaction, unless special divine grace is given, is very great. It was so with Elias, the prophet of fire. Men have little time or space to dread whilst the fierce conflict is raging, their spirit of dash and enterprise is roused and equal to the struggle and the danger, but when all is over, and strained body and brain and nerves begin to assert themselves, then they need greatly the Lord’s reviving and fortifying “fear not.”

Beloved, have you never felt yourself strangely supported under the direst afflictions, so that they seemed not afflictions at all? And yet when pressure has been removed you have been ready to faint, like Samson after he had slain the Philistines. Fear is a strange contradiction, a grim inconsistency, for it is apt to be greatest when the reason for it is least and smallest.

We are often quiet in a storm and distracted in a calm. We are mysteries to ourselves and riddles to our neighbour. Our constitutions and dispositions appear sometimes to be made up of odds and ends, and gatherings from all manner of beasts, and birds, and fishes, and none can understand us but the Lord who made us. But, blessed be His name, He knows us altogether and therefore He can, and does, bring forth at the right moment the exact consolation and the precise heartening that we need, saying, “Fear not” in the instant wherein we are most likely to fear.

“Fear not, Abram.” Were there not mainly two things about which the patriarch might have feared? First, *about his own safety*. This was most by the assurance, “Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield.” When he had no other guard, Abram was garrisoned in God. He was like a sheep in the midst of wolves, alone

stranger surrounded by hostile nations, but a strange divine spell had fallen upon the Canaanites, for the Lord had made them hear Him saying, “Touch not mine anointed and do my prophet no harm.”

The protected of the Lord needed not to wear armor, nor bear a sword, nor have any human panoply, for JEHOVAH had said, “I am thy shield.” Abram possessed no fortress, commanded no army but his few servants, he had not even a permanent house in which to dwell. His tents were frail and undefended, and yet so guarded of heaven, that no one ever broke into them or dared molest or threaten those who dwelt within. No assassin waylaid him, no marauder attacked him, he dwelt at ease, for was he not under the broad shield of the Almighty? He was as safe as if he had been enclosed within walls that reached to the skies. The armor of Lord covered him from head to foot.

So, dear friends, when we seem to have nothing, certainly nothing visible, to protect us, what a blessing it is to know that we are nevertheless completely guarded by the omnipotent though invisible God.

The visible is necessarily the limited and finite, but the invisible God is infinite, and there is no searching of His understanding, or resistance to His power. You are infinitely safe if you really trust the living God—your beginnings and endings, your wakings and sleepings, your restings and journeyings, your doings and sufferings, your honor or your reproach, your poverty or wealth, your success or failure, your life or death—your all forever and ever is most secure when the Lord is your keeper and your shield upon your right hand. Be it ours in truest wisdom, and sincerest trust, to give up our hearts to the repose of simple faith in him.

Come, sing with me that verse of the beloved singer Toplady—

*“Inspirer and hearer of prayer,
Thou Shepherd and Guardian of thine,
My all to Thy covenant care,
I sleeping and waking resign.
If Thou art my shield and my sun,
The night is no darkness to me:
And fast as the moments roll on,
They bring me but nearer to Thee.”*

We are invulnerable and invincible if God be with us. We may be in the very midst of cruel adversaries, but no weapon that is formed against us can prosper if God be our shield. Our Lord did not say to Abram, and does not say to us, “I will shield you,” but that I, that am the Almighty, I am thy shield, it is not alone My power, My wisdom, My love, which will protect you, but I Myself will be your shield.

Then Abram many have thought, “I shall be protected, but shall I not spend my life in vain?” *He might have feared for his success.* He led the life of a gypsy, roaming through a land in which he owned no foot of ground, therefore the Lord added, “I am thy reward.” Do you see? He does not say, “I will reward you,” but “I *am* thy reward.”

If we who work for Christ see souls saved, how we rejoice, for they are a kind of reward to us, but nevertheless we will not rejoice so much but rather rejoice that our names are written in heaven. I have in these words quoted an old text, first spoken to chosen men who had healed the sick and cast out devils in Christ’s name. And if many receive our word it is a joy to us, but still we may be disappointed even in professed conversions, and at best, our success will not equal our desires. The only reward that a Christian can fully rejoice in, and without any reservation, is this assurance of his Master and Lord, “I am thy reward.”

Did not the father in the parable say to the elder son, when he growled and grumbled at the reception given to his brother, “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine”? That was reward enough, was it not? It is wealth enough to a believer to possess his God, honor enough to please his God,

happiness enough to enjoy his God. My heart's best treasure lies here, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

"Oh, but," say you, "people have been so ungrateful to me." True, but God is not unfaithful to forget your work of faith, and labor of love. "Ah, sir, but I am dreadfully poor." Yet you have God all-sufficient, and all things are yours. "Alas! I am so ill." But JEHOVAH-Rophi is the Lord that healeth thee. "Alas! I have no friends left to me." Yet this best of friends changes not and dies not. Is he not better to you than a host of other friends?

How great is your God? Doth he not fill all things? Then what more can you seek? Would you have two persons occupying the same places? If God fills all, what room is there left for another? Is not God's grace sufficient for you? Do you bemoan a cup of water that has been spilled at your feet? A well is near. Did I hear you cry, "I have not a drop in my bucket?" A river flows hard by—the river of God, which is full of water. Oh! mournful soul, why art thou disquieted? What ailest thee that thou shouldst fret thy life into rags?

Very fitly does the Lord say to Abram, "I am thy *exceeding great reward*." He is infinitely more as a reward than we could ever have desired, expected, or deserved. There is no measuring such a reward as God Himself. If we were to pine away into poverty or sickness, it would still be joy enough to know that God gives Himself to be our portion. The tried people of God will always confess that in their sharpest time of sorrow, their joys have reached their floodtide when they knew and felt that the Lord is their covenant God, their Father, their all. Our cup runs over when faith receives JEHOVAH Himself as the crown of the race, the wages of the service. What more can even God bestow than Himself?

Now you see what I meant at the beginning by droppings from the honeycomb. I have not strained after novel thoughts or choice words, but have persuaded you to taste the natural sweetness of this fine Scripture promise. Receive it as God gives it, and go your way, and let the flavor of it fill your souls all the week. Fear not, Mary; fear not, William; fear not, Sarah; fear not, John. The Lord saith to thee, even as to Abram, "I am thy shield and exceeding great reward."

No Scripture is of private interpretation, you may take out the name of Abram, and put your own name into the promise if you are of Abram's spiritual seed, and do not stagger at the promise by reason of unbelief. "If children, then heirs" applies to all the spiritual family and to the pledging of all the promises to them.

The ground whereon thou liest the Lord thy God has given thee, if you canst rest on this word, it is truly thine to rest upon. The Lord is thy Defender and Rewarder and by the double title He designs to shut out all fear, and so make thy rest and safety to be doubly sure. Wherefore, cease thou from all anxiety. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. This day He bids thee dwell at ease, and delight thyself in Him.

But we turn from Abram to Moses and we find this sweetly solacing assurance given also to him in time of special need and strain.

"And he said, my presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

It was not a pleasure trip that Moses was taking, it was a journey through the wilderness, on most important business, and with a great pressure of burden on his heart. He took his case to his God and earnestly appealed to Him, "See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people."

It is very beautiful to notice the argument that Moses uses. He says, "Lord, thou hast set me to take care of this people. How can I do it? But they are thy people." Therefore he appeals to JEHOVAH Himself for assistance. "Thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me" is his complaint, but he seems to have always before him the fact that HE, whose people they were, who had put him into

commission to guide them, and to bear all their provocations, must intend to give him some very superior help. The answer to that is, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” What more could Moses want, and what more can we want? We are so foolish that we look about for strength away from God, but there is none except in Him.

For all preachers and evangelists how specially precious is this promise! They need divine help in journeying from place to place, and that help lies in the constant fellowship of heart with their Lord, the continual presence of God consciously enjoyed. They have a great burden of souls lying upon them, their only strength to bear it bravely and triumphantly is that each hears for himself the promise from God’s own lips, “My presence shall go with *thee*.” It may not appear to some that the quarter of an hour in the morning spent in looking into the face of God with ecstatic joy can fill us with strength, but we know from blessed experience that there is no strength like it. If the Eternal overshadow us then Omnipotence comes streaming into us, JEHOVAH in infinite, condescending liberality gives forth His might to us.

Notice, beloved, that Moses was not informed that God would send Hobab, his father-in-law, to go with him, nor that Joshua, his successor, should accompany him, nothing either was said about the seventy elders who were by and by to share the burden of responsibility with him. Moses was, indeed, to have their presence and help, but his true power was to lie in this, “*My presence shall go with thee.*” The journey upon which he was to start was one of great importance foreseen by God to be a journey of great trial and great provocation, a journey that was to last for forty years, but this is all the provision that he needs, and God Himself could give him no more.

And then he adds, “*And I will give thee rest.*” Little as we sometimes imagine it, yet still it is true, that the most important possession of any Christian worker is rest—deep rest of soul in God, “A heart at leisure from itself.” “I do not expect any rest,” says one, “while I am here.” Do you not? Then you will not do much mighty and effective work for the Lord. They who work most must learn the holy art of resting in the Lord. Indeed, it cannot be done well at all, unless they have plenty of rest.

You will notice how people that get greatly excited often talk sad nonsense, and people who are very fretful or fearful do not speak or act as they should. If we are to move others, we must have both feet firmly fixed, there is nothing like having a good grip of the ground if you are to wrestle with, and throw, your antagonist. My restfulness in God enables me to wrestle and conquer all of difficulty and hard toil that is to be overcome.

“Do you think Moses had this rest?” someone will ask. Yes, I am sure he had, because of the meekness of his spirit. You remember how the Lord Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls.” It is true that meekness of heart produces rest, and yet it is a deeper truth still that rest produces meekness of heart. You can very well afford to be quiet with your fellows when you yourself are perfectly restful in the living God.

I remember a man being run over in the street one day. Somebody rushed off post haste, for the nearest doctor, and when the medical man heard of the accident he went calmly into his surgery, turned over his case of instruments, selected those he thought he might want, and then walked quietly to the spot where the injured man lay. The messenger tried to hurry him, but it was of no use. “Be quick, doctor,” he cried, “the man’s leg is broken, every moment is precious.”

Now the surgeon knew that he was doing the very best thing that he could do, and he was far wiser than he would have been if he had rushed off in wild haste, perhaps forgetting the very instrument he most needed, and arriving out of breath, and quite unfit for the delicate duty required of him. The doctor’s composure was not the result of coldness of heart, but of the resolve to do the best possible thing in the best possible fashion.

If you are conscious of the Lord’s presence, you will do the best thing possible by being very calm, deliberate, and quiet in His service. “He that believeth,” in that sense, “shall not make haste,” but he shall go about the business in a restful Spirit.

Mark too, the kind of rest that is here mentioned. “I will give thee rest.” All the rest that God gives we may safely take. No man ever rested too long on the bosom of Jesus. I believe many Christian workers would be better if they enjoyed more. I was speaking to a large gathering of preachers the other day upon this very matter, my subject being the Savior asleep during the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He knew there was a storm coming on, but He felt so happy and restful in His Father’s love and care, that He went into the hinder part of the ship, the best place for sleep, and taking the steersman’s cushion for a pillow, lay down, and went to sleep. It was the very best thing He could do. He had been busy all day, teaching and feeding the multitudes, and He felt that it was His duty to go to sleep that He might be ready and fit for the next day’s toil. When *you* get very weary, and perhaps worried as well, the best thing you can do is to go to sleep. Go to bed, brother, and go to sleep.

It is astonishing what a difference a night’s rest makes with our troubles. I would say this literally to fidgeting, worrying people like myself, “Go to bed, brother, go to bed.” But I would also say it spiritually to all sorts of people, when you are feeling weak, and disturbed, and you do not know what to do for the best, “Go into the presence of God, and there get rest.” “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” I will give you a little bit of worldly wisdom, which is also of divine inspiring. Whenever you do not know what to do, do not do it. But some people when they do not know what to do, go and do it directly, and get themselves into all sorts of trouble.

Many of us, like Moses, need to be taught to rest. Moses has to bear two millions of people on his heart, he needs rest. He has to put up with them for forty years, he needs rest. Never had another man such a family as that, never was another so likely to be fluttered and worried, and he was a meek spirited man too, who could not make a dash as others might have done. This is his strength, that he dwells in the divine presence, and is therefore restful, calm and strong. It is only now and then that he lets the human meekness be for a moment clouded. Thus was he enabled to march along, like a king in Jeshurun, as he was, and his soul dwelt in the eternity of God, singing ever amidst ten thousand graves, for he had forty of his people dying every day.

Shall not we who love the Savior hear this same gracious promise sounding clear and sweet in our souls, and trusting in the abiding presence of God find that He gives the rest unparalleled, the rest that endures? And if on the other hand we are strangers to that brave, strong peace, shall we not listen as He calls, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest”? and answering to it enter into that rest that ever follows true believing. The Lord grant it may be so, with each one, for His name’s sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 10:1-30 AND HEBREWS 1:1-14

John Chapter 10. Verse 1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you,—*

Now we may be absolutely certain that there is something of the utmost importance wherever Christ uses the solemn asseveration of “Verily, verily,”—the same word is “Amen, amen,” and it has been well observed that if it were not for Christ’s “Amens,” our “Amens” would be of little value. It is because He who is the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, pleads in heaven that our “Amens” are accepted there. If, dear friends, Christ pays an earnest attention to our “Amens,” how much more ought we to attend to His, especially when He doubles them—“Amen, amen, I say unto you.”

1-3. *He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

Here the people of God are compared to sheep. Their harmlessness and gentle character, their feebleness and quiet in the fold, their profitable uses, their defenseless state, requiring some one always to watch over them, the patience with which they are led to the shearer or to the slaughter, and the

constancy with which they are associated with sacrifice, render sheep a most excellent symbol of the people of God.

Doubtless the fold is the church, within this fold all the saints of God are gathered, not always in the visible, but always in the invisible and indivisible church of Christ. None may set up to be shepherds of this fold except those who come in a proper and fitting way, and that is not by a pretended apostolical descent, that is, not by a commission which they have received from their own assumption, but by a commission direct from Christ—coming in through Him as by the door.

The great true Shepherd, the antitype of all shepherds is Christ Himself. To Him the porter openeth. All the prophecies, which, like porters, kept the gates, opened at once to Christ, all godly hearts, which, like the porters of the gate, were watching for the coming of the true Shepherd, opened at once to Jesus, whether it were Anna or Simeon, they at once confessed Him. The sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

We are told by Eastern travelers that in the large district folds into which the sheep farmers put their different flocks, while they are all assembled in one common flock, the shepherd of any one flock has but to make his appearance and begin to speak, and his sheep at once recognize him. Though another person should dress up in his garments they would take no notice of him, they know their shepherd by his voice.

4. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice:

The genius of the law is driving, the spirit of the Gospel is leading, and the joyful imitation follows.

5. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

Heretics attract their companies, but the faithful followers of Christ never go after them. They cleave to the truth, which is the voice of Christ, and they will not be persuaded by the most marvelous lying wonders, nor by the greatest arrogance, to depart from Him who is their all.

6-8. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

They made loud professions of being the true Messias, and some of them gathered great multitudes, and rebelled against the Roman power, but the true sheep, who waited for the true Shepherd, did not hear them.

9-14. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

This good Shepherd proves Himself to be so by His actions. Remember, brethren, how carefully He watches His sheep from the tower of the flock, not one of them ever being absent from His eye for a single moment. How graciously He guides those sheep, leading them always by a right way that He may bring them to safety at the last. How plentifully doth He pasture His flock, making them to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters.

And oh! how gloriously doth He defend His flock, dashing into the thickest of their foes, snatching the lamb out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paw of the bear. And we must not conclude this list of His deeds without remembering how readily He hath bought that flock, and how well He hath washed that flock, in blood flowing from His own veins, that He might present them all at the last, not one of them being wanting, nor one of them impure, but each of them like sheep that come up fresh from the washing.

“I know my sheep.” It is not as if salvation was left to haphazard. He knew them before they were created. Having foreordained He did foreknow. He knew them when they did not know themselves, when they were wallowing in the mire like swine He knew them still. He knows them now—unknown to fame, unregistered, perhaps, in the books of the visible church. “I know my sheep wherever they may be.” Then notice the next sentence, for this is the practical way by which you may judge whether you are His or not, “I am known of mine.” They know Him as their only hope and trust, they know the sweetness of fellowship with Him, they know the power of His arm, the efficacy of His blood, the faithfulness of His heart, they know the preciousness of His cross, and the glory of His crown.

15-16. *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

No recognition of free-will here. Christ speaks as one who has the hearts of men in His control. He knows who are His that as yet are not called. He does not say He hopes they will yield to hear His voice, but they *shall*. Oh, irresistible grace, what can stand against thee? The blood-bought shall all be blood-washed, the foreordained and foreknown shall yet know Him who hath saved them by His blood.

In this we ought constantly to rejoice. The feebleness of the minister is no barrier to the carrying out of God’s purpose, nor is the hardness of the human heart any impediment to the completion of the divine degree. “Them also must I bring.” There is a heavenly necessity that all the chosen should be saved.

17-26. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*

There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

Believing does not make them sheep, but being sheep by divine election proves them to be such.

27-30. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.*

Happy are they, then, who have received the character of sheep, for thus they prove themselves to be the chosen of God, and in the hand of Christ, and in His Father’s grasp, they are eternally secure.

*“If in my Father’s love
I share a filial part,
Send down Thy Spirit like a dove
To rest upon my heart.”*

In this chapter our Savior's glorious person is very plainly set before us, and it is made the ground of our faith, and a reason why we should give the more earnest heed to His words, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Hebrews Chapter 1. Verses 1-2. *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,—*

The best last is ever God's rule. "Thou hast kept the best wine until now." Prophets are a very blessed means of communication, but how much more sure, how much more condescending is it for God to speak to us by His Son!

2-3. *Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

You see, dear friends, how glorious was His original—the "express image" of His Father's person. How lowly did He become to purge away our sins and that by Himself, too, using His own body to be the means, by His sufferings, of taking away our guilt. Not by proxy did He serve us, but by Himself. Oh, this is wondrous love!

And then see the glory which followed after the shame. He has now ascended up on high, and sits down at the right hand of God's great Majesty. Follow Him, believer, follow Him with the eye of thy faith, let thy soul lovingly track Him in His upward march, and as thou seest Him, say—"He is my Lord and my God," and know that all that He did and all that He is, He is, and He did for thee.

4-5. *Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?*

They are servants, but they are not sons, they are created, but they are not begotten. You see what He says to the Son—"I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.

6-8. *And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire? But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.*

So you perceive that Christ is no created angel. He is sometimes compared to an angel. He is sometimes called the angel of the covenant, but He is not a created angel. He is higher in nature, higher in rank, higher in intellect, and higher in power than they. He is nothing less than very God of very God. The very man who suffered on Calvary.

***"This is the man, the exalted man,
Whom we unseen adore."***

9. *Thou had loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows.*

As man Christ claims all men as His fellows, but as God He counts it no robbery to be thought equal to God. As man He is most truly man, and only superior to man by reason of the purity of His birth and the perfection of His nature, and the exaltation of His manhood by God; as God He is nothing less than God, though He took upon Himself the nature of men.

10-12. *And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.

13-14. *But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.