

CREATION—AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH

NO. 462

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Ah Lord GOD! behold, you have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for you.”
Jeremiah 32:17.*

AT the very time when the Chaldeans had cast up mounds round about the city of Jerusalem, and when the sword and famine and pestilence had desolated the whole land, Jeremiah, while in prison, was commanded by his God to purchase a field of Hanameel, his uncle's son at Anathoth, to subscribe the evidence of purchase by the usual witnesses, to seal the deed of transfer according to law and custom, and to do this publicly in the presence of all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

Now, this was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it, it was purchasing an estate which was utterly valueless. Reason would repudiate the notion, it was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bidden him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all His children who act in faith. He bought the piece of land, and it was secured to him, he did as he was commanded, and returned to his dungeon.

When he came into his chamber alone, it is possible that he began to question himself as to what he had been doing, and troubled thoughts rolled over his mind. “I have been purchasing a useless possession,” said he. See how he refuses to indulge the thought. He gets as far as saying, “Ah, Lord GOD!” as if he were about to utter some unbelieving or rebellious sentence, but he stops himself, “You can make this plot of ground of use to me, You can rid this land of these oppressors, You can make me yet sit under my vine and my fig tree in the heritage which I have bought, for You did make the heavens and the earth, and there is nothing too hard for You.”

Beloved, this gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God's command, things which were unaccountable to sense, and which reason would condemn. They consulted not with flesh and blood, but whether it is a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days using no weapons but the blasts of rams' horns—they all act upon God's command, they act contrary to all the dictates of carnal reason, and God, even the Lord God, gives a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith. I would to God we had in the religion of these modern times, a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. But no, I see the Christian church degenerating more and more into a society acting upon the same principles as commercial companies. The church, I fear, cannot now say, “We walk by faith and not by sight.”

When Edward Irving preached that memorable sermon concerning the missionary, who he thought was bound to go forth without purse or scrip, and trusting in his God alone, to preach the Word, a howl went up to heaven against the man as a fanatic. They said he was visionary, unpractical, mad, and all because he dared to preach a sermon full of faith in God. I do avow myself fully in sympathy with the views which he then enunciated, and I think, if the power of God were once more to baptize the church, we should have men who would dare to trust in God instead of putting confidence in men, who would act once more as if God's bare arm were quite enough to lean on, as if faith were not fanaticism, as if confidence in an unseen Being were not an unjustifiable enthusiasm.

I would to God the church had once again a rich anointing of the supernatural, and I believe she would have if she would again act by faith, and if you and I, brethren, would venture more upon the naked promise of God we would enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers. If we would but walk the waters of trouble by a living faith, we should find them solid as marble beneath our feet. If once again we could, like the world, be hung upon nothing but the simple power and providence of God, I am sure we would find it a blessed and a safe way of living, glorious to God, and honorable to ourselves. I would that once again the Master would raise up a race of heroes who would be ridiculed by the world and despised by mere professors, men who would act by faith in the God that lives and abides forever, and venture on bold deeds where the weakness of the human arm would be manifest, and the might of Deity revealed. Then should we see the millennial age dawning upon us, and God, even our own God, would bless us, and all the ends of the earth would fear Him.

Dear friends, it is my business this morning, to conduct you to Jeremiah's place of confidence. Seeing that his case is hopeless, knowing that man can do nothing at all for him, the prophet resorts at once to the God that created the heaven and the earth, and he exclaims, "Nothing is too hard for you." I shall use my text in addressing three characters, *to stimulate the evangelist, to encourage the inquirer, and to comfort the believer.*

I. TO STIMULATE THE EVANGELIST.

And who is the evangelist? Every man and woman who has tasted that the Lord is gracious should be an evangelist. We should, without exception, if we have been begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, tell to all around us what they must do to be saved. There should be no mute tongue in all our host, we should have no idle hand in the harvest field, but everyone in his measure, whether man or woman, should be doing something to extend the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And here, dear brother in Christ, my friend and fellow laborer, here is your encouragement, the work is God's, and your success is in the hand of Him who made the heaven and the earth. Let me refresh your memory with the old story of creation, and I think you will perceive flashes of light upon your work which will greatly encourage you in it.

1. Remember, in the first place, that *the world was created from nothing*. You have often said, "Mine is a very hard task, for I address myself to men in whom I see nothing hopeful. I batter against a granite conscience, but it is not moved, I thunder forth the law, but the dead and callous heart has not been stirred, I talk of the love of Christ, but the eye is not suffused with tears, I point to hell, but no terror follows, and to heaven, but no holy desire is kindled! There is nothing in man that encourages me in my work, and I am ready to give it over."

Brother, come you back with me to the world's creation. Of what did God make the world? Was there any substance ready to His hand out of which to mold this round globe? What says the Scripture? Did He not make it of nothing? You have never yet grasped the idea of nothing. The eye cannot see it, it might peer into space, but space itself is something. We look up, and yonder is the blue ether, though we know not what it is, but the eye could not look on nothing, it would be blinded. Nothing is a thing which the senses cannot grasp, and yet it is out of this awful nothing that God made the sun, and moon, and stars, and all things that be.

Had He spoken before creation, there would have been no voice to answer Him, had He cried, there would have been no echo to repeat His voice. Nought was there anywhere, and yet He spoke and it was done, He commanded, and it stood fast! The case of the sinner is a parallel one. You say there is nothing in the sinner. Ay, then, there is room here for a recreating work. Inasmuch as that heart is now empty and void, there is space for the Eternal God to come, and with His outstretched arm to create a new heart and a right spirit, and put His grace where there was none before. If *you* had to convert the sinner, then, indeed, your task were as hopeless as to create new orbs out of nothing, but, inasmuch as it is not you, but your God who works all things, you may console yourselves with this thought, that He who has created all this marvelous earth, and had nothing to begin with, can give life, and fear, and hope, and

faith, and love, where there were no heavenly ingredients upon which He might work. Take that, then, for your joy.

2. But you tell me you have none to help you or go forth in your work with you, and that you have no patronage. “Ah, sir,” says one, “if I had a society at my back, if I had at least a few warm-hearted friends who were banded with me, that would give me some encouragement, but I have to go forth alone, and of the people there are none with me. I stand up to preach in a village where all are cold and callous, where even my minister tells me I am a rash, bold young man, and had better hold my tongue. I look to the world, and it hates me, I turn to the church, and it despises me. I am too enthusiastic for the church, I am too fanatical for the world. What can I do? I am a man alone, and I have no helper!”

Brother, when God made the world—and the same God is with you—*He worked alone*. With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him? When He balanced the clouds, and laid the foundations for the earth, who taught Him the laws of gravity? Who has weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Was He not alone? No parliament of angels bowed at His right hand, for He created even them. No archangel bowed his head and offered advice to the Most High, for the archangel himself is but a creature. Cherubim and seraphim might sing when the work was over, but help in the work they could not.

Look you now, what star did the angels make? What spot of earth is the creation of an archangel? Look you to the heavens above or to the deeps beneath, where see you the impress of any hand but God’s, and that hand a solitary one? The lonely worker out of emptiness creates fullness, out of non-existence calls all things, and out of Himself gets both the matter and the manner, the way, and the how. His courts need no revenue from abroad to sustain them, for from Himself alone He draws the force which is needed.

Roll you, then, your burden on your God if you be alone, for alone with Him you have the best of company. If you had the hosts of heaven with you, what were you without your God? If all the church were at your back, terrible as an army with banners, your defeat were certain if the Holy Ghost did not dwell in you. I tell you, man, if all the saints and angels in earth and heaven should unite to speed you in your objective, yet, if your God should stand aloof from you, you would labor in vain and spend your strength for nought. But with Him you shall prevail though all men forsake you—

*“When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people’s cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?”*

Let not this, then, trouble you, that you are alone. “Ah Lord GOD, behold, you have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for you.”

3. But, you will reply to me, “My sorrow lies not so much in that I am alone, as in the melancholy fact that I am very conscious of my own weakness, and of my want of adaptation for my peculiar work. I come back from my Sunday’s toil, saying, ‘Who has believed my report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ It seems to me as though I plowed a rock, a rock so hard that it blunted the plowshare. I can make no impression upon it. I have beaten the air, I seem to have lashed the waters, I fear that I have not the gifts which are necessary, nor have I the grace that I should have. Woe is me, for I am a man of uncircumcised lips! I am not sufficient for these things, but rather I feel like Jonah, that I would flee into Tarshish, that I might escape from the burden of the Lord against this Nineveh.”

Ay, but brother, come, cast your thoughts back again upon creation. *The Eternal needed no instruments in creation*. What tools did God use when He made the heavens and the earth? When the blacksmith brings forth his work, he fashions it with hammer and anvil, upon what anvil did God beat the red-hot matter of this earth when He formed it, and made it what it is? I know that the engraver needs a sharp tool, upon which he bears with all his might when he traces out the lines of beauty, but

when God drew this fair picture—this wondrous landscape of the heavens and the earth—what engraving tools had He? Where learn you that He had any instruments in His mighty hand? The carpenter has his plane, and his hammer, and his adze, what plane, what hammer, and what adze did the Eternal use? Had He ought beside His own hand? Are not the heavens the works of His fingers, and the sun and the moon His handiwork? See then, if God can work without instruments in the creation of a world, He can surely work with a poor and a mean instrument in the conversion of a sinner.

When I think of myself, it seems to me as if the Almighty worker did take a straw into His hand with which to penetrate a granite rock, yet, I know, though it is a straw, yet if it be in *His* hand, it would be able to pierce the globe, and thread the spheres as on a string. I know that if the Lord takes in His hand but a smooth stone out of the current, yet when He hurls it from His sling, it shall pierce even a giant's brow. He saves not by man's strength, nor by human learning, and eloquence, and talent. It is *His strength*, and not the strength or weakness of the instruments to which we must look.

I pray you, turn your eye away from yourself. What are you? A son of man, in whom is no strength! A man that is born of woman, unclean in your origin, and unhallowed in your actions. There is nothing in you why God should make you a winner of souls, but, inasmuch as you are nothing, you are all the better fitted to be used by Him. He shall have all the more glory because of your weakness. I pray you, therefore, say with Paul, "I glory in infirmities, that the power of God may rest on me," and let this be your song—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." "Ah Lord GOD, behold, you have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for you," You can do wonders even by the humblest instrument.

4. Do I hear you still complain and say—"Alas, alas! it is little I can say! When I speak, I can but give out the text, and utter a few plain words upon it—true and earnest, but not mighty. I cannot sound out the rolling periods of a Robert Hall, nor wing my flight to the majestic heights of a Chalmers. I have no power to plead with souls with the tears and the seraphic zeal of a Whitefield. I can only tell the tale of mercy simply, and leave it there." Well, and *did not God create all things by His naked word?* Was there any eloquence when God spoke, and it was done? "Let there be light," and there was light. Can you perceive any trappings of oratory here? At this day, is not the Gospel in itself the rod of JEHOVAH'S strength? Is it not the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes? And does not our beloved apostle constantly insist upon it, that it is not with wisdom of words, nor with fineness of speech, lest the excellence of the power should not be of God but of man, and lest man's faith should stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of the Most High?

Go thou on, my brother evangelist, go thou on, and speak God's Word still, for it *is* the Word which is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds! 'Twas His naked word, unadorned, simple and plain, which at the beginning made the heaven and the earth. What can be more sublimely simple than "Let there be light"? Go you, and say in the same simplicity, "Sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and your message shall be the voice of God from heaven which shall not return unto Him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereunto He has sent it.

5. "Alas!" I hear a brother crying from some corner of the building, "You are not aware of the darkness of the district in which I labor. I toil among a benighted, unintelligent, ignorant people. I cannot expect to see fruit there, toil as I may." Ah! brother, and while you talk so, you never will see any fruit, for God gives not great things to unbelieving men. But for the encouragement of your faith, let me remind you that it is the God that made the heavens and the earth on whom you have to lean, and what is that which was written of old? "The earth was without form and void, *and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*" How dense that darkness was I cannot tell, that primeval darkness which had never been stirred by a single ray of light, that dense, thick seven-fold Egyptian darkness that had never known a sun or moon, and had never been pierced by light of star, and yet, primeval though it was—I was about to call it eternal darkness, but nothing can be eternal but the Most High—yet there was but a word—"Light be," and light was.

And do you think the darkness of your hearers is thicker than this ancient darkness of the everlasting night? Even were it so, still God is Almighty, He has but to speak through you, has but to make *your* word *His* word, and the films of blindness shall fall from the eye, and he that was wrapped in midnight shall be brought out into marvelous day. I would like to know where the dark place on the earth is, for there it is that the missionaries should first be sent. O that we had faith to do and dare for God, and undertake the hardest tasks first!

But alas! we are such cowards, we love fair fields of labor, we want promising prospects. We will plant a chapel where there is a likelihood that the people will appreciate it, we send a missionary where we think there is a probability that they will receive His Word. But shall we send the man where, in our judgment, they will not receive Him, and bid him go where they will cast out His name as evil? This is to act by faith, and this is what the heroism of the Gospel demands.

Gird up your loins, you followers of Christ, seek for difficulties and overcome them. If you are not greater than other men, how are you the followers of the divine Jesus? If you cannot do where others despair, how dwells the Holy Ghost in you? If you will not risk where others flee, where is the glorious majesty of your faith?

6. Further, and still to press the same blessed argument. “Ay,” says one, “but the men among whom I labor are so confused in their notions, they put darkness for light and light for darkness, their moral sense is blunted, if I try to teach them, their ears are dull of hearing and their hearts are given to slumber. Besides, they are full of vain janglings and oppose themselves to the truth, I endure much contradiction of sinners, and they will not receive the truth in the love of it.”

Ay, then, I bid you go back to the old creation that you may be comforted concerning the new. *Did not the Holy Spirit brood with shadowing wings over the earth when it was chaos?* Did He not bring out order from confusion? Do you not remember how, on a certain day, the Lord divided the waters that were above the firmament from those that were under the firmament? Do you not know how He rolled together the waters into their place, and called the dry land earth and the gathering together of the waters called He seas? What greater confusion could there be? That incandescent mass which had once, perhaps, been gas, and afterwards condensed itself into a globe of liquid fire, was cooled with the blessed breath of God. And when its crust grew hard, and the tumultuous waters threw their waves over the heads of Alpine heights, when the winds came roaring forth, and with carnival of hurricanes mingled sky and earth together, when cloud, and hill, and sea, and air, were all one seething mass, the blue sky appeared, and clouds rolled upwards to their place, and seas came downwards to their bed. He spoke, and lo, the obedient waters which had flung their white crests like the manes of wild horses tossing in the wind, hastened to their appointed stable in the deep, and there they remain, kept in check by no more mighty a bridle than a belt of sand. Then the earth stood out all fair and glittering, for God had done it, disorder yielded to law, darkness gave place to light, chaos turned to glorious order in His sight.

Well, now, the same marvels can be worked in your case, only take care that you act *for God and in God's strength*, or else as well might a man bid a stormy sea be still, as you command the confused notions of men to find rest and peace in Christ. He that made the heavens and the earth, even the everlasting God, can move your difficulty away, only trust in *Him*, and He shall bring it to pass.

7. “Ah,” say you, “they are all so dead, so dead!” Ay, sir, and do you not remember *how the waters brought forth* life abundantly—fish, and fowl that should fly in the midst of Heaven, and how the earth—yes, this dull, dusky earth, brought forth the creeping thing, and the cattle after its kind, and how at last, man was made out of the very dust of the earth? O sir, God can readily give life to the dead nature of evil men, you have but to rely on Him and the quickening influence shall descend, and you shall live.

8. *See how fair and glorious this earth is now!* Well might the morning stars shout together, and the sons of God shout for joy! And do you think that God cannot make as fair a heart in man, and make it bud and blossom, and teem with hallowed life? Do you think that Christ cannot make the angels sing

even a nobler song of joy over a soul that is washed in blood, and a spirit robed in white that shall praise God and the Lamb forever? And all this He can do through you and me, my brother!

O, let us labor then, let us work and toil, let us think difficulties delights, and troubles trifles, let us lean upon Him who made the heavens and the earth, for there is nothing too hard for Him. Unbelief will make you unhappy, it will cause your service to be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High. Unbelief will prevent God from blessing you. “He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” “If you will believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” And if you will act as one who sees Him that is invisible, you shall see greater things than these, and God shall make your path to be as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

II. In this large assembly, there are no doubt, many to be found who are really desirous to be saved, but are full of doubts, and difficulties, and questionings. I speak, then, TO THE ANXIOUS.

May I cut a knot in a moment by making one observation? Remember, my troubled friend, that the question about your salvation is not whether you can save yourself, for that is answered in a thundering negative from God’s throne—*You cannot!* “By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” The question is—*Can God save you?* and if you will please to put it on that ground, I think your answer need not be a very difficult one.

Can God save you? That is the question. Now I know your unbelief will suggest first the difficulty that *your mind is so dark*. “I cannot see Christ,” says one. “I am in such trouble of mind, I cannot understand as I would, I feel benighted, I am like the inhabitants of Zebulon and Napthali, a people that sat in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death, I cannot see, it is all darkness, thick as night with me.” Yes, but then there is the question—Can God roll this night away? And the answer comes, He who said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, can certainly repeat the miracle.

Another of your doubts will arise from the fact that *you feel so weak*—

*“I would, but cannot sing,
I would, but cannot pray;
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away.”*

*I would, but can’t repent,
Though I endeavor oft;
This stony heart can ne’er relent
Till Jesus make it soft.*

*I would, but cannot love,
Though woo’d by love divine:
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.*

*I would, but cannot rest
In God’s most holy will;
I know what He appoints is best,
Yet murmur at it still.*

*O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be;
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve,
My help must come from Thee!”*

I cannot do what I would. I would leave sin, but still I fall into it. I would lay hold on Christ, but I cannot. Then comes the question—*Can God do it?* And we answer, He who made the heavens and the earth without a helper, can certainly save you when you cannot help yourself.

Let me remind you that no part of the world helped its own creation. It is absolutely certain that no mountain lifted up its own head, it is quite clear that no star appointed its own path of brightness. No flower can lift its head and say, “I created my own loveliness,” no eagle that cuts the air can say, “I gave myself my soaring wing and my piercing eye.” God has made them all, and so, sinner, you who are troubled because of your impotency, He wants no power in you. He gives power to the weak, and to them that have no might He increases strength. Rest upon God in Christ, and cast yourself on Him, and He will do it all.

“Ay,” say you again, “but I am in such an awful state of mind, *there is such a confusion within me*, hell is opened from beneath, and the sluices of my soul’s sorrows are drawn up, grief streams forth in rivers from my eyes, I cannot tell what is the matter with me. My heart is like a battle ground torn up with the prancing of the horse hoofs, I know not what I am, I cannot understand myself.” Pause, I pray you, and answer me. Was not the world just so of old, and did not all the beauty of all lands rise out of this dire confusion? Cannot God, then, do this for you, and give you a peace that passes all understanding? I beseech you, my dear distressed friend, trust you in Christ, despite it all, for He can hush the hurricane to slumber, and lay the storm to sleep.

Let me remind you, O inquirer, that there is more hope in your case than there was in the creation of the world, for in the creation there was nothing done beforehand. The plan was drawn, no doubt, but no material was provided, no stores laid in to effect the purpose. We read not that God had piled up a mass of nebulae that He wrought out into worlds. No, He began the work and finished it without any previous preparations, but in your case the work is done already, *beforehand*. On the bloody tree Christ has carried sin, in the grave He has vanquished death, in resurrection He has rent forever the bonds of the grave, in ascension He has opened heaven to all believers, and in His intercession He is still pleading for them that trust Him. It is finished, remember, so that it is easier to save you than to make a world, for the world had nought prepared for it, there was nothing ready, but here everything is ready, and all you are bidden to do is to come and sit at a feast that is already spread, to wear a garment that is already woven, to wash in a bath that is already filled with blood. Sinner, what say you? Will you believe in God’s anointed or no?

Yet again, remember that God has done something more in you than there was done before He made the world. Emptiness did not cry, “Oh! God, create me.” Darkness could not pray, “Oh! Lord, give me light.” Confusion could not cry, “Oh! God, ordain me into order.” But see what He has done for you! He has taught you to cry, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” He has made you plead, “Lighten my darkness, O LORD, lest I sleep the sleep of death.” He has taught you to say, “I have gone astray, like a lost sheep, seek Your servant.”

See, friend, the grass cannot pray for dew, and yet it falls, and shall you cry for it and God withhold it? The thirsty earth has no voice to ask for showers, and yet they descend, and will God let you cry and not answer you? See you the forests in winter, they cannot ask for leaves, and yet the verdure comes in its season, nor can the corn entreat for sunshine, and yet God gives good things to all in due season, and you, made in His own image, will He let you cry and not hear you? when He has Himself said, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but would rather that he should turn unto me and live.”

Yet once again, and here is a rich thought of comfort. It was in God’s power to make the world or not, just as He pleased. No promise bound Him, no covenant made it imperative upon Him that His arm should be outstretched. Sinner, the Lord is not bound to save you except from His own promise, and that promise is “He that calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” He cannot, He cannot withhold saving you if you call upon Him. His covenant has bound Him to be merciful to those who confess their sins. He is merciful and just to forgive us our sins, and to save us from all unrighteousness. This, then, is

a case that glistens with brighter light than did the case of the uncreated world, and as, of His own will, without pledge or covenant, He made the earth what it is, most surely now He has promised it, He will save you if you trust in Jesus.

Once more here. It is certain that there is more room in your case for God to glorify Himself, than there was in the making of the world. In making the world He glorified His wisdom, and He magnified His power, but He could not show His mercy. He could have no mercy upon floods and mountains, upon cattle and flying fowl. There was kindness, but no mercy, for they had not sinned. Now, here in your case, there is room for every attribute of God, for His loving-kindness, His faithfulness, His truth, His power, His grace. Yours is a hopeful case, because it is hopeless to you, there is room for God, because, certainly, there is no space for you. You can do nothing, it is your extremity, and it is therefore God's opportunity.

What would I give this morning if I could turn one tearful eye away from itself to Christ! I know how foolish we all are that we will be looking to flesh and blood. Turn your eye, sinner, to the cross where bleeds the Savior. Rest on Him, He, without whom was not anything made that was made, dies for you. He who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, works out your redemption. Trust *Him*, and the work is done. Rest on Him, and your soul is brought today into the realm of safety, and you have passed from death unto life.

I will tell you a little anecdote which will show how foolish we are, when we depend on self. I have heard that lately, a ship on her way to Australia met with a very terrible storm, and sprung a leak, and a little while after another hurricane overtook her. There happened to be a gentleman on board, of the most nervous temperament that can be imagined, whose garrulous tongue and important air were calculated to alarm all the passengers. When the storm came on, the captain, who knew what damage had been done, managed to get near him, and the gentleman said to the captain, "What an awful storm, I am afraid we shall go to the bottom, for I hear the leak is very bad." "Well," said the captain, "as you seem to know it and perhaps the others do not, you had better not tell them, lest you should dispirit my men. Perhaps, as it is a very bad case, you would lend us your valuable aid, and we may possibly get through it. Would you have the goodness to stand here and hold hard on this rope, pray do not leave it, but pull as hard as ever you can till I tell you to let it go."

So our friend clenched his teeth, and put his feet stiff down, and kept on holding this rope with all his might for several hours. The storm abated, the ship was brought right, and our friend let go of his rope. He expected a deputation would bring him the thanks of all the passengers, but they were unconscious of his merits. He thought at least there would be a contribution for a trophy for what he had done, but no trophy came. Even the captain did not seem very grateful, so he ventured, very distantly in a roundabout style to hint, that such valuable services as his, having saved the vessel, ought to be rewarded with some few words of gratitude at any rate, when he was shocked to hear the captain say, "What, do *you* think *you* saved the vessel? Why, I gave you that rope to hold to keep you out of the way, you did a world of mischief till I got you quiet."

So now, mark you, there are some people who are wanting to do so much, they think they can certainly save themselves, and there they stand holding the rope with their clenched teeth and their feet tightly fixed, while they are really doing no more than our poor friend, who was thus befooled. If ever you get to heaven, you will find that everything you did towards your own salvation was about as useful as what this man did when he was holding the rope, that in fact, the safety of the vessel lies somewhere else and not in you, and that what is needed with you is just to get you out of the way, and when you are out of the way, and are made a fool of, then Christ comes in and shows His wisdom. While, perhaps, all the while you are bemoaning yourself that you should be so badly treated, it would not have been possible for you to be saved unless you had been put out of the way, that Almighty God might do the work from first to last.

III. And now I have to conclude with one or two words of ENCOURAGEMENT TO BELIEVERS.

And so, my brother in Christ, you are greatly troubled are you? It is a common lot with us all. And so, you have nothing on earth to trust to now, and are going to be cast on your God alone? Your vessel is on her beam-ends, and now there is nothing for you but just to be rolled on the providence and care of God. What a blessed place to be rolled on! Happy storm that wrecks a man on such a rock as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God and God alone!

On some few occasions I have had troubles which I could not tell to any but my God, and I thank God that I have, for I learned more of my Lord then, than at any other time. There is no getting at our God sometimes because of the multitude of our friends. But when a man is so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nothing, he flies into his Father's arms, and how blessedly he is clasped there! So that, I say again, happy trouble that drives you to your Father! Blessed storm that wrecks you on the Rock of Ages! Glorious billow that washes you upon this heavenly shore! And now you have nothing but your God to trust to, what are you going to do? To fret? To whine? O, I pray you do not thus dishonor your Lord and Master! Now, play the man, play the man of God. Show the world that your God is worth ten thousand worlds to you. Show rich men how rich you are in your poverty when the Lord God is your helper. Show the strong man how strong you are in your weakness when underneath you are the everlasting arms. Now man, now man, *now* is your time to glorify God.

You know there was no room for your courage before, but now there is space for feats of faith and valiant exploits. Our present mode of warfare bids fair to annihilate courage altogether, for now men fight at such a distance that the hand-to-hand fight is impossible. But in those brave days of old, when the troops of Rupert and of Cromwell met hand-to-hand, when uphill the Puritanical legions spurred their horses against the hosts of "the man of blood," then there was room for bravery. Then men could fight not at two miles' distance, but foot-to-foot. Then there was room for the solitary bravo to lead the way against a multitude, then the scaling ladder clicked on the top of the wall, and the brave man of the forlorn hope went up it step by step, with his cutlass between his teeth, until he reached the top, then men could make themselves famous, but now, what with iron ships and large Armstrong guns, there is hardly room for men to be courageous.

But, believer, you, in your lonely distress, have returned to you "the brave days of old." When you had your regular income from the Consols, when your business prospered, when you had your children and your friends about you, why there was no room for you to perform heroic deeds of resignation and trust, but now you are stripped, now at it, for your foes are before you.

When the Duke of Wellington asked a soldier what kind of dress he would like to wear if he had to fight another Waterloo—"Please, your grace," said the man, "I'd like to fight in my shirtsleeves." Well now, you have come to that, you have nothing now to encumber you, you can fight in your shirtsleeves, and now is the time to win the victory. Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord your God shall certainly, as surely as He built the heavens and the earth, glorify Himself in your weakness, and magnify His might in the midst of your distress. The Lord help us to lean wholly on Him, and never on ourselves, and let His name be had in remembrance while the earth endures. Amen, and Amen.

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