

THREE PRECIOUS THINGS

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A SERMON
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“He is precious.”
1 Peter 2:7.

“Precious promises.”
2 Peter 1:4.

“Precious faith.”
2 Peter 1:1.

THESE three precious things, when put together, present to us a treasure of priceless things, altogether without parallel. When Moses was about to die he pronounced a blessing upon all the tribes, but the benediction which he allotted to the tribe of Joseph was remarkable for containing in it an extraordinary collection of precious things. In the 13th verse of the 33rd chapter of Deuteronomy, we read, “And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that couches beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush.” That blessing, large as it is, would, were it not for its last term, fall far short of the three texts which we are about to consider. The blessings here called by Moses “precious,” were, after all, but temporal mercies. The dews exhale—even the deep that lies under will one day be dried up; the precious fruits brought forth by the sun will wither; the precious fruit ripened by the moon will rot; there are no chief metals in the ancient mountains, whether they are silver or gold, that are eternal, or that can make a spiritual being rich; there are no precious things of the lasting hills, though they are copper and iron. And these things are precious in the arts and sciences, and employments of men, but will perish in the using. As for the precious things of the earth, are they not earthy? And the fullness thereof, is it not vanity? Was it not that the blessing of the great Lawgiver closed with “the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush,” it would not have contained a word large enough to satisfy an immortal spirit, or give bliss to the heart of man. Before you, however, my brothers and sisters, I spread a far choicer store of precious things than Moses strung together in the golden chain of his benediction. We have here three precious things which will outlast sun and moon; precious things which are all heavenly, spiritual, soul-filling, and satisfactory; precious things which, if a man has them, they shall make him rich, and bring him no sorrow; precious things that shall adorn and enrich their owners when all the peculiar treasure of kings shall be dissolved by the last fire.

The three precious things of my text bear a certain relation to one another, which will aid your memories. “He is precious,” that is, Jesus Christ is precious; here is *the priceless gem*. “Exceedingly great and precious promises”—here is *the worthy case* which holds the gem. “Like precious faith,” as Paul calls it, “like precious faith” with the apostles—here is *the blessed hand* by which we grasp the case and the gem, too. Mark well, I pray you, the precious pearl, the precious case to hold it, and the precious title-deed that secures it to us, or as I said before, the precious hand which enables us to grasp the unrivalled jewel, and to call it all our own.

I. To begin then with THE PRICELESS GEM, the first, the highest of all precious things.

Jesus Christ our Lord is in Himself to believers most precious. O that I had power to speak of His preciousness as it ought to be spoken of! He is worthy of an angelic speaker to tell out all His worth. He is, first of all, *essentially precious*. He possesses an intrinsic worth. We worship Him as God, we believe

Him to be “very God of very God,” and though most assuredly man, and in this respect, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, He is our brother born for adversities, yet is He co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, and therefore we can never too reverentially speak of Him, nor set too high a value upon Him. He must be precious who is infinite God. Being however God and man, He becomes remarkably precious to us in His complex nature. His manhood was without taint of sin; He came into this world with no corruption; He lived in this world with no transgression; His was immaculate manhood. What a wonder that God should be willing to veil Himself in human flesh! What a miracle of miracles that the infinite should deign to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and be found in fashion as a man! Viewing our Lord Jesus as God, we should have adored Him at a distance; as perfect man we should have revered His character, but when we see Him as God *and* man together, we mark that He is the connecting link between our groveling condition, and the loftiness of the Most High, and we prize beyond measure the incarnate God. When we see how by God’s coming down to man, man goes up to God, Immanuel, God with us becomes our peace, and brings us near to God, though before we were afar off. brothers and sisters, if we consider our Lord in the character which is peculiar to Himself, and which He prizes most, and to which, indeed, He owes the name Jesus Christ, we shall see Him as the anointed Savior. To every sinner who feels his sin, Christ is precious; to every child of God who is saved, the Savior must forever be fairest among the fair; to every heir of heaven who has experienced the sweetness of His saving grace, Christ must appear to be “the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” A world destroyed I see if it had not been for a Savior born; a world forever cast into hell I see if it had not been for a Savior dying on the cross. As a Savior, O earth, you as yet know not His preciousness; as a Savior, O heaven, you cannot reach the full merit of His praise. He is precious, then, if you think of Him as He is, as God and man, and as a Savior, in which office the two natures are combined in one.

Brothers and sisters, Christ is so precious that *He cannot be bought*. If a man should give all the substance of his house to purchase an interest in Christ, it would be utterly condemned. Rich men might gather together all their goodly things, yes, India might be exhausted of its wealth, Peru drained of its silver, and California of its gold—but neither part nor lot in Christ could be bought, even with sapphires and diamonds! He gives Himself away right freely, according to the riches of His grace, but He cannot be purchased, for He is so precious that *He cannot even be priced!* A whole world can never weigh against Him any more than a single grain of dust would weigh against the universe; there is no measuring line with which to form a unit for calculation, with which to measure Him. He is infinite, and finite judgments will never be able to comprehend His unutterable value. He is God’s unspeakable gift; heaven itself is nothing as compared with Him, and if a man had to wade breast-deep through a thousand hells to come to Christ, it were well worth the venture, if at the last he might but say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.”

Jesus is so precious that *He cannot be matched*. There is none like He is. The fairest of the fair are uncomely and deformed when compared with Him. As Rutherford would say, “Black sun, black moon, black stars, but, O bright, infinitely bright Lord Jesus.” “He is the express image of His Father’s person, and the brightness of His Father’s glory.” You shall find none that can be likened unto Him if you ransack time and space. Miss Him as your Savior, and you have lost the only salvation possible; gain Him, and you will need no other, for He is made of God unto you “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption,” and all your souls can need. Yes, He Himself is all; if heaven and earth were sold, you could not match Christ in any market if you gave the price of heaven and earth for His like. If you search eternity, and ransack immensity, there shall never be found one fit to be second to Him, He is so precious.

Precious, brothers and sisters, He is to us, because *He cannot be lost*. All the precious things in this world can be lost. Our jewels may be stolen, our house may be broken into by a thief, and the safe may be taken away, but Christ is such a jewel that even Satan himself can never rob the soul of him when once it has Him. My heart evermore rejoices in that precious truth of God. Let Jesus Christ be once mine as the gift of God, I am safe, for “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” The Lord never repents of what He has done; He never plays fast and loose, or takes back a benefit which He has once bestowed. Is not Jesus a priceless, precious jewel, since He cannot be lost?!

And what is equally as delightful to remember, *He cannot be destroyed*. Even the diamond can be dissolved, bring but sufficient heat to bear upon it, focus upon it the full rays of the sun, and the sparkling crystal dissolves into a little gas; but though men have tried to focus all the heat of persecution upon the Christian, they have never been able to separate him from the love of Christ; and though earth and hell have stirred up their malice, and the furnace has been heated seven times hotter, and the child of God has been tossed into it, and apparently deserted to the fury of his enemies, yet never in a single case has the precious gem of Christ Jesus in the heart been destroyed, nor the believer's interest in it; for Jesus and His servants have lived together, according to the glorious promise, "Because I live, you shall live also." See the preciousness, then, of Christ, the intrinsic preciousness, the essential preciousness of Christ, because He cannot be bought, He cannot be priced, He cannot be matched, He cannot be lost, He cannot be destroyed. Happy and rich beyond expression are they who can truly say, "Unto us Christ is precious."

This, however, does but touch a very small corner of the field, for *our Lord is precious from the service which He renders to us*. Who shall tell all the benefit which Jesus confers on a believer? As we cannot comprehend so wide a subject in a single discourse, I will give you but a bare outline. There are four precious things which Jesus is to a believer—*life, light, love, liberty*. I will defy all mankind to find four more precious things than these, but they are all in Christ.

First, *life*. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "As the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will." What a precious thing is life! The poor mariner's wife rushes down to the beach in the storm, and look, the waves at last have washed up her lost beloved, the father of the baby which is hanging at her breast. He is dead. The ungenerous sea has made a wife a widow. Oh, what would she not give, if she had it, to restore life once more to that well-beloved form! But life is a benefit her prayers and tears cannot obtain. Herein is Jesus glorified, for He gives life to those who are spiritually dead, and if any of you are weeping today over an unconverted husband, a child who is dead in trespasses and sins, a sister or a brother unsaved, Jesus can come to you and give life to your dear ones in answer to your prayers! He is Himself the resurrection and the life. Moreover, He is the sole nutriment of all spiritual life. Yonder shipwrecked man has constructed a raft, and far out on the wild expanse of pitiless waters he has floated wearily day after day sighing for a friendly sail or for sight of land; what would he not give for a little water, for water has become the essential of his life; his tongue is like a firebrand, and his mouth is as an oven; he himself all dried and parched, sighs and cries to heaven, hoping that perhaps a merciful shower may drop refreshment upon him. Now, Jesus Christ is the water of life and the bread of life to such as live unto God. It is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their spiritual life that they should live upon Him; and as they do live upon Him, their thirst is quenched, their hunger is removed, and their spirit rejoices with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." life and the food that sustains life are among the most precious things man can possess, and these are for your souls stored up in Jesus, "For the bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world."

Next to life in preciousness is *light*. What would not they have given in Egypt during those three days when the thick darkness was over all the land, even darkness that might be felt, if they could but have had light back again? It must have been a sad plight for Paul and for his fellows at sea, when for three days and nights neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appeared. They could not tell whether there might not be a rock ahead, or a quicksand upon which the vessel would be broken. Oh, for light! How glad they must have been at last when the black tempest passed away, and once again they could look round on the horizon and know their whereabouts. Light! Oh, how precious would it be to you, if you were confined in one of those prisons which we have seen at Venice below the water's level, deep down, with winding passages, where even a refracted ray of light could never reach the prisoner, where he sat alone and felt for the wall, but could see nothing. "Truly" as Solomon says, "the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Now, the soul has no light, no true light, no heavenly light but what Jesus brings! When a spirit is once made to feel its guilt, it is shut up in prison until Christ brings it light in the darkness of its dismay. There is no hope to a convicted spirit till Jesus shows His atoning blood; there is no clear knowledge of the way of salvation till Christ brings the light of the knowledge of

the glory of God in His own face. You who love Him know what brightness He has given to you. What light has irradiated your once dark spirit since you have known Him, and how your heart has laughed for very joy because He has turned again your captivity, and given you to rejoice in the light of His countenance. Yes, He is precious because He raises us from the dead and gives us light.

I said that another precious thing which Jesus brings is *love*. There are hard hearts that think nothing of love—but I think those who are as they should be, count love to be the dearest of treasures. I had infinitely rather be beloved of my fellow men than own a pyramid of treasure! He is a rich man who has a tender wife and dear affectionate children, and is surrounded by a select circle of true and faithful friends. Men die full often for want of love. It is wretched work to isolate ourselves and float like icebergs all alone, melting amid a desolate sea. A man will love a dog or a bird sooner than be loveless; captives have been known to fall in love with rats, and even spiders on the wall have been the objects of their affection: a little flower that could not speak has been the prisoner's well-beloved friend. We must have something to love. Oh, and what wealth of love Jesus brings into the heart when He enters it! You feel, *then*, that you have one to love whom you can love as much as ever you will, and yet it will not be idolatry. You have one to love who never can betray you, one whom you may trust, and yet never be unwise for having told to Him the secrets of your soul; you have in Jesus Christ one whom you may admire as you love, who will still be above you though you seek to rise to Him, and yet not proudly above you, for He will stoop down to all your lowliness, and be as your own brother and your own friend. Oh, the joy of having Christ to go to! All other friends will sometimes be unfriendly, and the best of them must part with you at your decease or you with them when they depart out of this world unto the Father. But your Lord will never, never leave you! He will abide with you, and death shall only draw Him nearer, for then you shall see His face, and His name shall be on your forehead, and you shall be with Him where He is, to behold His glory forever and ever. If you need love, you large-hearted ones, Christ is just the gem for such a case as your heart is! If you need a channel adown which the mighty streams of your pent-up affections may safely rush with vehemence in impetuous torrents, Christ shall be the fittest riverbed for your soul, and you shall find it joy and blessedness to love Him with all your might!

But I added that there was a fourth preciousness in Christ; that, giving life, light, love, He gave also *liberty*. Oh, that magic word liberty! It makes men start to their feet; it is the word that made William Tell a hero and the Bruce of Bannockburn more than a king. The thought of liberty makes men count jeopardy of life a small hazard if their country may be rid of a tyrant. May God be praised that great strides have been made, and grand advances within these last few years, until even once priest-burdened Spain bears across her Sierras the trumpet notes of liberty, and her sons are free! The highest liberty is that which emancipates the soul from sin; the grandest liberty is that which sets free the heart from fear, which leaves the soul without a dread, and enables the spirit to walk even in God's Presence without alarm; the liberty which delivers us from the felon's dread, and bids us demand who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect. It is God who justifies, who is he that condemns, since Christ has died and risen again? What room is there for fear for the man who has been set free by the precious blood of Jesus? The liberty of the children of God, the liberty to pray, the liberty to talk with God as a man talks with his friend, the liberty to grasp the promises, the liberty to lay hold of God Himself, and say that the divine attributes are all our own; this is what Christ has given us, and is He not therefore precious, most precious?

One word more before we leave our meditation on the precious gem. We have said that Christ is precious for His intrinsic work, precious for the service He renders; and we must now add, He is assuredly precious, *actually so, from the place which He holds and always must hold in believers' hearts*. Go and stand at St. Bartholomew's Hospital at Smithfield, and you will see in the wall the tablet which is erected to the memory of heroic men whose ashes there testified years ago that they loved Christ better than property, better than children, better than life itself, and accounted it their joy to die that they might hold unsullied their testimony to the divinity, to the Sovereignty, to the truthfulness, to the salvation of Jesus Christ! Ah, there were brave days in those black periods; brave days when great hearts proclaimed by dying how dear Christ was to them! When a certain martyr was led out to die, they made his wife kneel down by the way, with a long line of his own dear children, 11 of them, like a descending set of

steps; they were compelled by his enemies, to pray their father and husband, by the love he bore to them not to die. He looked on them with tears, and said, "I love you as a man, and God knows I would do anything to live, and succor you, and enjoy your sweet society, my dear ones, but I cannot give up Christ," and he turned away to die. It is so still, my brothers and sisters, for if we are not called to die for Christ, yet I hope we could if we were called to do so; for at this moment nothing thrills us like Christ's name, nothing makes us so happy as to see His cause prosper. I have often asked, when I have looked upon you before me by the thousands year after year, and know that my speech has nothing in it remarkable, why it is that you gather so continually? Many others have asked the secret why this house is always thronged; the true answer is that I preach Jesus Christ to you, and it is written, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." I have no other theme, and I thank God I need no other; it is not worn out, and never will be. Though I should stand here by the space of the next 6,000 years, I believe the house would still be filled if the testimony were the same. Despite London's sin, nothing strikes London's heart like the name of Jesus Christ; you may preach what you will of your learning and your philosophy, and you may talk pretty things concerning God out of Christ, but you will never stir the souls of men as the preaching of the Son of God has done and will do! "In the cross of Christ I glory, towering over the wrecks of time," and as long as we can make it still prominent in our ministry, we are sure that an enthusiastic response will be given in regenerate hearts, for unto those who believe, He is precious still! So I must leave that point. There is the gem: happy are they who see it, happier they who have it.

II. The second head is "PRECIOUS PROMISES," or, THE CASE IN WHICH THE JEWEL IS CONTAINED. "*Exceedingly great and precious promises.*"

All that the early saints had before Christ's coming was the promise of His appearing, and the mere promise of His coming was very precious to them. We are favored both with Christ and the promises, which are yes and amen in Him; they had the case, but it was locked up, and they could not plainly perceive the Jewel; we have the opened case, and the Jewel is in all His glory. The utmost wealth of heaven now lies at our feet. The fullness of the Lord is ours. Why are the promises precious? For the same three reasons that Christ was precious. *Precious for their intrinsic worth*, for they are divine, the sacred utterances of God Himself. These are not the words of man, but of God. I would burn my Bible tomorrow if I thought as little of it as some do, for they doubt its inspiration, or fritter down its inspiration till it means little or nothing. To me every word here written is the infallible deliverance of the Most High God, not to be questioned but believed; not because of its reasonableness, but because it has the stamp of divine authority. Every promise of this sacred book is God's own promise spoken through His prophets and apostles, but yet spoken by Himself. The signet of heaven seals every promise; you will never know the sweetness of a promise till it is God's promise to you. They are precious promises because they are divine. If they were the poetic effusions of elevated genius, where great men of old spoke but their own minds in happy hopefulness, they would be to us but as brass and iron; but inasmuch as these reveal to us the mind of God, they are more precious than all the treasures of the mine! No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, for their price is above rubies. The least promise of God is too rich to be valued with the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx or the sapphire. Being divine, the promises are innumerable. No promise of God ever changes. "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven," "His truth endures to all generations." Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He commanded, and shall it not stand fast? The Lord has not spoken in secret in the dark places of the earth, He has not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain. The Lord has never called back a promise yet, but He has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall never pass away."

His promises are precious because they tell of exceedingly great and precious things. We have promises in the Bible which time would fail us to repeat, which for breadth and length are immeasurable; they deal with every great thing which the soul can want: promises of pardoned sin, promises of Sanctification, of teaching, of guidance, of upholding, of ennobling, of progress, of consolation, of perfection. In this blessed book you have promises of the daily bread of earth, and of the bread of life from heaven; promises for time, promises for eternity, promises for yourselves, and promises for your children. All these are like the leaves of the tree, and Jesus is the goodly cluster; or, if you will, the apple of gold hidden among the foliage of promises. You have so many promises that all the conditions and positions of

the believer are met; I sometimes liken the promises to the smith's great bunch of keys which he brings when you have lost the key of your chest, and cannot unlock it; he feels pretty sure that out of all the keys upon the ring someone or other will fit, and he tries them with patient industry. At last—yes—that is it, he has loosened the bolt, and you can get at your treasures. There is always a promise in the volume of inspiration suitable to your present case. Make the Lord's testimonies your delight and your counselors, and they will befriend you at every turn; search the Scriptures and you shall meet with a passage which will be so applicable to you as to appear even to have been written after your trouble had occurred; so exactly will it apply that you will be compelled to marvel at the wonderful tenderness and suitability of it, as if the armor maker had measured you from head to foot, so exactly shall the armor of the promise befit you! The promises are precious in themselves, from their suitability to us, from their coming from God, from their being immutable, from their being sure of performance, and from their containing wrapped up within themselves all that the children of God can ever need.

The promises are *precious*, in the second place, *because of their service to us*. What will not the promises do for us? They will comfort us in distress. Give a child of God a divine promise, let him be able to appropriate it to himself, and you cannot make his house dark or his heart dark! A promise believed in is a sun in the soul, and a song in the heart, marrow to the bones, and rejoicing to the spirit. He that has the promises has heaven and earth as his heritage; he shall ride on the high places of the earth; he shall suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, the eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He shall dwell in safety alone, his fountain shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

The promises of God not only comfort the believer in adversity, but they strengthen him in service. Let the worker who is serving God, but desponds under a sense of personal weakness, receive such a cheering word as this, "Certainly I will be with you"—why, he flees from no labor, the promise makes him daring. "Fear you not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Who will be afraid after that? Difficulties vanish; impossibilities do not exist when the Lord is enlisted on our side!

The promises serve us in another admirable respect, for they elevate the soul. The man who has none of God's promises to enrich him may accumulate gold and silver, but he is earth-bound with his possessions, his soul tries to content herself with corn, and wine, and oil, but these things are only satisfying to our animal nature. Too often men grovel and hoard all the more as they increase in wealth, but he who grasps a promise is uplifted—his mind rises to the Hand from which every good and perfect gift is poured, and walking by faith in the promise of an unseen God, he is elevated in judgment and in taste, and becomes a better and a nobler man.

The promises let me say, while they elevate the life, greatly cheer and gild with glory the deathbed. Ah, how delightful it is to die with a promise on the lips, feeling it in the heart! It may be in a very lonely cottage, and the stars may come and look through the tiles, and the hangings of the bed may be very ragged, and all the surroundings may be poverty stricken, but he who can lie there and say, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"—he that can rejoice in the promise of the resurrection, and of the life to come, dies grandly! His bed is changed into a throne! His little room, despite its poverty, becomes a palace chamber, and the child of God, who seemed so poor before, is perceived to be a peer of heaven's own blood royal, who is soon about to take possession of his heritage, appointed from before the foundation of the world! Yes, the promises have been very precious to us in their influence upon our minds, and I am sure I can say they are precious because of their dearness to our souls at this very day. There are passages of Scripture which are carved on our hearts; you all possess some little secret treasures of some kind or other at home, treasures which bring before your minds heart-moving memories. I have seen a mother go to the secret drawer to look at a certain little pair of wool shoes—with these in her hands, she would sit down and weep for the hours together! Ah, there were little feet that wore those shoes once, and they are laid all stiff and motionless in the lap of earth. I have seen a certain friend look at a ring, a little plain gold ring which he wears on his finger, and as he looked at it he has wept. There was a dear hand once upon which that ring was fondly placed in happier days. Yes,

and just in that way some of the promises of God have been so rich to us, and so connected with family memories, and with personal trials, and personal mercies, that they are unutterably precious. A poor old Christian woman was accustomed to make marginal notes in her Bible, and she placed against one text a “T,” and a “P.” The minister asked her what that meant, and she said, “It meant tried and proved, for I tried that promise on such-and-such an occasion, and found it true.” “But, my dear sister,” he said, “I see up and down these pages, whenever there is a choice verse a great ‘P’ put against it! What does it mean?” “That means *precious*, sir, for I have found it precious, and have therefore set my seal to it.” We, too, have our Bible spiritually, if not literally marked after the same fashion, and often does the letter “P” appear against “exceedingly great and precious promises” of God which have been sweet in our experience. We hope to die with a promise on our lips, and enter into heaven to enjoy their full fruition.

I have now shown you that the jewel is of the first water, without a flaw, with none to match it, and that the case is of superior workmanship, worthy of the gem it holds. We must now turn to the third thing.

III. Faith IS THE PRECIOUS HAND which grasps the case and holds the gem.

As time has gone, I shall not enlarge upon this third head, but shall briefly observe that faith is a most precious grace because it opens and reveals the treasure hid in the promises. Until a man has faith he does not see the value of the promises. “Tush,” says he, “the Bible is a dry book.” Till a man has the faith of God’s elect, he thinks very little of Christ. He may confess that he is a good example and a wise teacher, but he does not say with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.” faith is to our souls what our eyes are to our bodies; without eyes light would not be valued; without faith Christ is not dear. Without a mouth food would not nourish; faith is our mouth, and without faith Christ does not nourish us. A man might have a plank close to him when sinking, but it would be of no service to him until he could lay hold of it; faith is the hand that lays hold, and thus it becomes precious. Faith first reveals to us what there is in Christ, and in the word, and then it appropriates the whole. A soldier might be in the midst of a city where there was much spoil, but if his hands were cut off, how could he take to himself the booty? Faith puts out its hands, and says, “This is mine, and that is mine”; and what is more, faith carries *right* with it as well as *might*! Faith not only says, “I will take it,” but faith says, “I have a *right* to take it,” for God has made over to faith by a covenant deed, Christ and all the inspired promises, too! If you have faith, your faith is the guarantee that the gem and the case are both rightfully yours! A mere piece of parchment, whatever is written on it, cannot be of any very great value in itself, and yet there are persons who would give large sums of money to recover lost documents, because upon the possession of those documents rests their claim to great estates! Now, faith in itself is like a title-deed, signed, and sealed, and ratified, and on the possession of faith hangs your evidence of right to Christ, and to the covenant of grace; therefore faith becomes a very precious grace. It sees Christ, it grasps Christ, it claims Christ by right, and by faith it holds to what it claims. Faith says of the Well-Beloved, “I hold Him, and I will not let Him go.” It gets such a grip of Christ that neither life nor death can take Him away.

Faith is precious, let me say, because *it is rare*. Notional faith is common, but the faith of God’s elect is the work of the Holy Spirit, and is not vouchsafed to all. They are favored men, indeed, who exercise real faith, but alas, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there are who find it.” Wherever it is possessed, it is most enriching; true faith is like Midas, of whom it was fabled that his touch turned everything to gold, but faith has a safer joy than he, for his privilege became a punishment, for when he touched his meat it turned to gold, and he could not eat; and when he put the cup to his lips, the fable says the wine itself turned into gold, and so he must die! But faith has the power to enrich us, and add no sorrow; faith touches trials, and they become mercies; faith touches affliction, and she glories in them; faith touches losses, and they turn to gains; there is nothing that faith deals with but what is transmuted into good! Who would not wish to have this precious faith? Best of all, wherever faith is, it saves the soul; there never was a soul that believed in Christ Jesus that rested on the merit of His precious blood that was, or could be, cast into hell! Sooner might the eternal pillars of divine truth begin to quiver, and the throne of the infinite sovereignty be shaken from its place, than that believers in Jesus be cast away! Has he not said it—“I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand”? Do you believe in Christ? Then you are saved!

I have spoken so far of these three precious things. Now I must say just these few words by way of closing. Precious as these things are, they are yours, Christian. You have the precious faith; then the precious promises are all yours and our precious Christ is yours. How do you mean to live? With these precious things about you, do you intend to live like a beggar? I mean will you be sinful, low, groveling, and worldly? Oh, rise to your rank, and as you are so ennobled, walk as becomes saints! Is Jesus Christ precious to you? Then serve Him with your best, give Him *your* precious things, give Him your lives, give Him your substance, give Him all that you have—do not give the Redeemer your odds and ends, such as you can afford to give without knowing it—say, “He died to give me Himself; I will give Him myself in return—

*‘And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I must give Him all.’”*

Go and live like those who are rich to all the intents of bliss, and let your cheerful, your godly, your self-denying example be a protest to the unbelieving sons of men that you know the preciousness of Christ.

Alas, for you who are unconverted! What shall I say to you? I am afraid I may preach up Christ a long time before you will believe me. It needs that the arm of God be revealed before you will see these mysteries. The most of men remind us of the old story in Strabo, of the musician who thought himself very wonderfully gifted with power to create melody. Before his audience he was pouring forth his notes, and as he thought holding them all spell-bound, but just then the market bell, with its vile tinkle was heard, and all his admirers except one person left him, for they could not afford to lose the chance of the market. The musician turned to his solitary listener and complimented him upon having a soul above mere merchandise, and an ear which could appreciate music, so that he was not drawn away by the tinkling of a market bell. “Master,” said the man, “I am hard of hearing; did you say the market bell had rung?” “Yes.” “Then I must be off, or I shall be too late.” And away went the last man, unrestrained by the bonds of harmony. So when we preach up Jesus Christ, there will be some who will listen to us, and we perhaps think, “Now we shall surely win them,” but ah, tomorrow’s market bell; I will not say market bell—tomorrow’s bell of sin, and bell of iniquity—the bell that rings to frivolities, and rings to transgressions, they will go after that! Anything that pleases the flesh will secure them! It may be, there is one who has heard with unusual attention, and we begin to say, “This man has a nobler spirit.” But then, perhaps, he has not yet felt the force of temptation, and when he feels it he will go too. What urgent need there is for the Spirit of God to illuminate the dark judgments of the sons of men! May He do so; may He begin with you, dear hearer, if up to now you have been blind. May He give you faith, and the promises, and Christ Jesus! It is my heart’s deepest wish. The Lord grant it to you all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 PETER 1.

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