

THE IMMUTABILITY OF CHRIST

NO. 170

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 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.”
Hebrews 13:8.

IT is well that there is one Person who is the same. It is well that there is one stable rock amidst the changing billows of this sea of life. For how many and how grievous have been the changes of last year? How many of you who commenced in affluence, have by the panic, which has shaken nations, been reduced almost to poverty? How many of you, who in strong health marched into this place on the first Sabbath of last year, have had to come tottering here, feeling that the breath of man is in his nostrils and wherein is he to be accounted of? Many of you came to this hall with a numerous family, leaning upon the arm of a choice and much-loved friend.

Alas, for love, if you were all and nothing beside, O earth! For you have buried those you loved the best. Some of you have come here childless, or widows, or fatherless, still weeping your recent affliction. Changes have taken place in your estate that have made your heart full of misery. Your cups of sweetness have been dashed with draughts of gall. Your golden harvests have had tares cast into the midst of them and you have had to reap the noxious weed along with the precious grain. Your much fine gold has become dim and your glory has departed. The sweet frames at the commencement of last year became bitter ones at the end. Your raptures and your ecstasies were turned into depression and forebodings. Alas, for our changes—and hallelujah to Him that has no change.

But greater things have changed than we. For kingdoms have trembled in the balances. We have seen a peninsula deluged with blood and mutiny raising its bloody war whoop. No, the whole world has changed—earth has doffed its green and put on its somber garment of autumn and soon expects to wear its ermine robe of snow. All things have changed. We believe that not only in appearance but in reality, the world is growing old. The sun itself must soon grow dim with age. The folding up of the worn-out vesture has commenced. The changing of the heavens and the earth has certainly begun.

They shall perish. They all shall wax old as does a garment. But forever blessed is He who is the same and of whose years there is no end. The satisfaction that the mariner feels, when, after having been tossed about for many a day, he puts his foot upon the solid shore, is just the satisfaction of a Christian when, amidst all the changes of this troublous life, he plants the foot of his faith upon such a text as this—“the same yesterday and today and forever.” The same stability that the anchor gives the ship, when it has at last got the grip of some immovable rock, that same stability does our hope give to our spirits, when, like an anchor, it fixes itself in a truth so glorious as this—“Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.”

I shall first try this morning to open the text by a little *explanation*. Then I shall try to *answer a few objections* which our wicked unbelief will be quite sure to raise against it. And afterwards I shall try to *draw a few useful, consoling and practical lessons* from the great truth of the immutability of Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, we open the text by a little EXPLANATION—“Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.” He is the same in *His Person*. We change perpetually. The bloom of youth gives place to the strength of manhood and the maturity of manhood fades away into the weakness of old age. But, “You have the dew of Your youth.” Christ Jesus, whom we adore, You are as young as ever! We came into this world with the ignorance of infancy. We grow up searching, studying and learning with the diligence of youth. We attain to some little knowledge in our riper years. And then in our old age we totter back to the imbecility of our childhood. But O, our Master, You did perfectly foreknow all mortal or eternal things from before the foundations of the world and You know all things now and forever You shall be the same in Your Omniscience.

We are one day strong and the next day weak—one day resolved and the next day wavering—one hour constant and the next hour unstable as water. We are one moment holy, kept by the power of God. We are the next moment sinning, led astray by our own lusts. But our Master is forever the same—pure and never spotted—firm and never changing—everlastingly Omnipotent, unchangeably Omniscient. From Him no attribute does pass away. To Him no parallax, no tropic, ever comes. Without variableness or shadow of a turning, He abides fast and firm. Did Solomon sing concerning his best Beloved, “His head is as the most fine gold. His locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers. His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl. His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars”?

Surely we can even now conclude the description from our own experience of Him. And while we endorse every word which went before, we can end the description by saying, “His mouth is most sweet, yes He is altogether lovely. His matchless beauty is unimpaired. He is still ‘the chief among ten thousand’—‘fairest of the sons of men.’ ” Did the divine John talk of Him when he said—“His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow. And His eyes were as a flame of fire. And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace. And His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars. And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. And His countenance was as the sun shines in His strength”?

He is the same—upon His brow there is never a furrow. His locks are gray with reverence, but not with age. His feet stand as firm as when they trod the everlasting mountains in the years before the world was made. His eyes as piercing as when, for the first time, He looked upon a newborn world. Christ’s Person never changes. Should He come on earth to visit us again, as surely He will, we should find Him the same Jesus. As loving, as approachable, as generous, as kind and though arrayed in nobler garments than He wore when first He visited earth, though no more the Man of Sorrows and grief’s acquaintance, yet He would be the same Person, unchanged by all His glories, His triumphs and His joys. We bless Christ that amid His heavenly splendors His Person is just the same and His nature unaffected. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Again—Jesus Christ is the same with regard to *His Father* as ever. He was His Father’s well-beloved Son before all worlds. His well-beloved in the stream of Baptism. He was His well-beloved on the Cross. He was His well-beloved when He led captivity captive and He is not less the object of His Father’s infinite affection now than He was then. Yesterday He lay in Jehovah’s bosom, God, having all power with His Father—today He stands on earth man, with us, but still the same, forever. He ascends on high and still He is His Father’s Son still by inheritance, having a more excellent name than angels—still sitting far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named.

O Christian, give Him your cause to plead. The Father will answer Him as well now as He did afore time. Doubt not the Father’s grace. Go to your Advocate. He is as near to Jehovah’s heart as ever—as prevalent in His intercession. Trust Him, then, and in trusting Him you may be sure of the Father’s love to you.

But now there is a yet sweeter thought. Jesus Christ is the same to *His people* as ever. We have delighted in our happier moments, in days that have rolled away, to think of Him that loved us when we had no being. We have often sung with rapture of Him that loved us when we loved not Him—

*“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God.
He to save my soul from danger
Interposed His precious blood.”*

We have looked back, too, upon the years of our troubles and our trials. And we can bear our solemn though humble witness, that He has been true to us in all our exigencies and has never failed us once. Come, then, let us comfort ourselves with this thought—that though today He may distress us with a sense of sin, yet His heart is just the same to us as ever. Christ may wear masks that look black to His people but His face is always the same. Christ may sometimes take a rod in His hand instead of a golden scepter—but the name of His saints is as much engraved upon the hand that grasps the rod as upon the palm that clasps the scepter.

And oh, sweet thought that now bursts upon our mind! Beloved, can you conceive how much Christ will love you when you are in Heaven? Have you ever tried to fathom that bottomless sea of affection in which you shall swim, when

you shall bathe yourself in seas of heavenly rest? Did you ever think of the love which Christ will manifest to you when He shall present you without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, before His Father's throne? Well, pause and remember that He loves you at this hour as much as He will love you then. For He will be the same forever as He is today and He is the same today as He will be forever. This one thing I know—if Jesus' heart is set on me He will not love me one atom better when this head wears a crown and when this hand shall with joyous fingers touch the strings of golden harps, than He does now—amidst all my sin and care and woe.

I believe that saying which is written—"As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you." And a higher degree of love we cannot imagine. The Father loves His Son infinitely and even so today, Believer, does the Son of God love you. His heart yearns over you. His heart flows out to you. All His life is yours. All His Person is yours. He cannot love you more. He will not love you less. "The same yesterday, today and forever."

But let us here recollect that Jesus Christ is *the same to sinners* today as He was yesterday. It is now eight years ago since I first went to Jesus Christ. Come the sixth of this month, I shall then be eight years old in the Gospel of the grace of Jesus—a child, a little child therein as yet. I recall that hour when I heard that exhortation—"Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and beside Me there is none else." And I remember, how with much trembling and with a little faith I ventured to approach the Savior's feet.

I thought He would spurn me from Him—"Surely," said my heart, "if you should presume to put your trust in Him as your Savior, it would be a presumption more damnable than all your sins put together. Go not to Him—He will spurn you." However, I put the rope about my neck, feeling that if God destroyed me forever, He would be just. I cast the ashes on my head and with many a sigh I did confess my sin. And then when I ventured to draw near to Him, when I expected that He would frown, He stretched out His hand and said, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins."

I came like the prodigal, because I was forced to come. I was starved out of that foreign country where in riotous living I had spent my substance and I saw my Father's house a great way off. But little did I know that my Father's heart was beating high with love to me. O rapturous hour, when Jesus whispered I was His and when my soul could say, "Jesus Christ is my salvation." And now I would refresh my own memory by reminding myself that what my Master was to me yesterday He is today. And if I know that as a sinner I went to Him then and He received me, if I have ever so many doubts about my saintship I cannot doubt but what I am a sinner. So to your Cross, O Jesus, I go again and if You did receive me then, You will receive me now. And believing that to be true, I turn round to my fellow mortals and I say, "He that received me, He that received Manasseh, He that received the thief upon the cross, is the same today as He was then."

Oh, come and try Him! Come and try Him! Oh, you that know your need of Him, come to Him! You that have sold for nothing your heritage above may have it back unbought, the gift of Jesus' love. You that are empty, Christ is as full today as ever. Come! fill yourselves here. You that are thirsty, the stream is flowing. You that are black in sin, the fountain still can purify. You that are naked, the wardrobe is not empty—

***"Come, guilty souls and flee away
To Christ and heal your wounds.
Still 'tis the Gospel's gracious day,
And now free grace abounds."***

I cannot pretend to enter into the fullness of my text as I could desire. But one more thought—Jesus Christ is the same today as He was yesterday *in the teachings of His Word*. They tell us in these times that the improvements of the age require improvements in theology. Why, I have heard it said that the way Luther preached would not suit this age. We are too polite! The style of preaching, they say, that did in John Bunyan's day, is not the style now. True, they honor these men. They are like the Pharisees—they build the sepulchers of the prophets that their fathers slew and so they do confess that they are their fathers' own sons and like their parents. And men that stand up to preach as those men did, with honest tongues and know not how to use polished courtly phrases are as much condemned now as those men were in their time. Because, say they, the world is marching on and the Gospel must march on, too.

No, Sirs, the old Gospel is the same. Not one of her stakes must be removed, not one of her cords must be loosened. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Theology has nothing new in it except that which is false. The preaching of Paul must be the preaching of the minister today. There is no advancement here. We may advance in our knowledge of it. But it stands the same for this good reason—it is per-

fect and perfection cannot be any better. The old Truth that Calvin preached, that Chrysostom preached, that Paul preached, is the Truth that I must preach today, or else be a liar to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape the Truth. I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine.

John Knox's Gospel is my Gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again. The great mass of our ministers are sound enough in the faith but not sound enough in the way they preach it. Election is not mentioned once in the year in many a pulpit. Final Perseverance is kept back. The great things of God's Law are forgotten and a kind of mongrel mixture of Arminianism and Calvinism is the delight of the present age. And hence the Lord has forsaken many of His tabernacles and left the house of His covenant and He will leave it till again the trumpet gives a certain sound. For wherever there is not the old Gospel we shall find "Ichabod" written upon the Church walls before long. The old truth of the Covenanters, the old truth of the Puritans, the old truth of the Apostles is the only Truth that will stand the test of time. It never needs to be altered to suit a wicked and ungodly generation. Christ Jesus preaches today the same as when He preached upon the Mount. He has not changed His doctrines—men may ridicule and laugh, but still they stand the same—*semper idem* written upon every one of them.

They shall not be removed or altered. Let the Christian remember that this is equally true of the *promises*. Let the sinner remember this is just as true of the *threats*. Let us each recollect that not one word can be added to this Sacred Book, nor one letter taken away from it. For as Christ Jesus is yet the same, so is His Gospel—the same yesterday, today and forever. I have thus briefly opened the text, not in its fullest meanings, but still enough to enable the Christian at his own leisure to see into the depth without a bottom—the immutability of Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. And now comes in one of crooked gait, with hideous aspect—one that has as many lives as a cat and that cannot be killed anyhow, though many a great gun has been shot against him. His name is old Mr. Incredulity—unbelief. And he begins his miserable oration by declaring, "How can that be true? 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.' Why, yesterday Christ was all sunshine to me—today I am in distress!" Stop, Mr. Unbelief. I beg you to remember that Christ is not changed. *You* have changed yourself, for you have said in your very accusation that yesterday you rejoiced, but today you are in distress. All that may happen and yet there can be no change in Christ. The sun may be the same always though one hour may be cloudy and the next bright with golden light. Yet there is no proof that the *sun* has changed. 'Tis even so with Christ—

*"If today He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He tomorrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within.
All to make us,
Sick of self and fond of Him."*

There is no change in Him—

*"Immutable His will
Though dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still
Unchangeably the same.
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."*

Your frames are no proof that Christ changes—they are only proof that *you* change.

But says old Unbelief again—"Surely God has changed. You look at the old saints of ancient times. What happy men they were! How highly favored of their God! How well God provided for them! But now, Sir, when I am hungry, no ravens come and bring me bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening. When I am thirsty, no water leaps out of the rock to supply my thirst. It is said of the children of Israel that their clothes waxed not old, but I have a hole in my coat today and where I shall get another garment I know not. When they marched through the desert He suffered no man to hurt them. But, Sir, I am continually beset by enemies.

"It is true of me as it says in the Scriptures, 'And the Ammonites distressed Israel at the coming in of the year'—for they are distressing me. Why, Sir, I see my friends die in clouds. There are no fiery chariots to carry God's Elijahs to Heaven now. I lost my son—no Prophet laid upon him and gave him life again. No Jesus met me at the city gates, to give

me back my son from the gloomy grave. No, Sir, these are evil times—the light of Jesus Christ has become dim. If He walks among the golden candlesticks, yet still it is not as He used to do. And worse than that, Sir, I have heard my father talk of the great men that were in the age gone by. I have heard the names of Romaine and Toplady and Scott. I have heard of Whitfields and of Bunyans. And even but a few years ago I heard talk of such men as Joseph Irons—solemn and earnest preachers of a full Gospel.

“But where are those men now? Sir, we have fallen upon an age of driveling. Men have died out and we have only a few dwarfs left. There are none that walk with the giant tramp and the colossal tread of the mighty fathers, like Owen and Howe and Baxter and Charnock. We are all little men. Jesus Christ is not dealing with us as He did with our fathers.” Stop, Unbelief, a minute—let me remind you that the ancient people of God had their trials, too. Know you not what the Apostle Paul says? “For your sake we are killed all the day long.” Now, if there is any change it is a change for the better. For you have not yet “resisted unto blood, striving against death.”

But remember that still does not affect *Christ*. For neither nakedness nor famine, nor sword, have separated us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is true that you have no fiery chariot. But then the angels carry you to Jesus’ bosom and that is as well. It is true no ravens bring you food, it is quite as true you get your food somehow or other. It is quite certain that no rock gushes out with water, but still your water has been sure. It is true your child has not been raised from the dead, but you remember that David had a child that was not raised any more than yours. You have the same consolation as he had: “I shall go to him, he shall not return to me.” You say that you have more heart-rending than the saints had of old. It is your ignorance that makes you say so.

Holy men of old said, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? Why are you disquieted within me?” Even Prophets had to say—“You have made me drunken with wormwood and broken my teeth with gravel stones.” Oh, you are mistaken—your days are not more full of trouble than the days of Job—you are not more vexed by the wicked than was Lot of old—you have not more temptations to make you angry than had Moses. And certainly your way is not half so rough as the way of your blessed Lord. The very fact that you have troubles is a proof of His faithfulness. For you have got one half of His legacy and you will have the other half. You know that Christ’s last will and testament has two portions in it. “In the world you shall have tribulation.” You have got that. The next clause is—“In Me you shall have peace.” You have that, too. “Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.” That is yours also.

And then you say that you have fallen upon a bad age with regard to ministers. It may be so. But remember, the promise is true still. “Though I take away from you bread and water yet will I never take away your pastors.” You have still such as you have—still some that are faithful to God and to His Covenant and who do not forsake the Truth. And though the day may be dark, yet it is not so dark as days have been. And besides, remember what you say today is just what your forefathers said. Men in the days of Toplady looked back to the days of Whitfield.

Men in the days of Whitfield looked back to the days of Bunyan. Men in the days of Bunyan wept, because of the days of Wycliffe and Calvin and Luther. And men then wept for the days of Augustine and Chrysostom. Men in those days wept for the days of the Apostles. And doubtless men in the days of the Apostles wept for the days of Jesus Christ. And no doubt some in the days of Jesus Christ were so blind as to wish to return to the days of prophecy and thought more of the days of Elijah than they did of the most glorious day of Christ. Some men look more to the past than the present. Rest assured that Jesus Christ is the same today as He was yesterday and He will be the same forever.

Mourner, be glad! I have heard of a little girl who, when her father died, saw her mother weeping immoderately. Day after day and week after week her mother refused to be comforted and the little girl stepped up to her mother and putting her little hand inside her mother’s hand, looked up in her face and said, “Mamma, is God dead? Is God dead, Mamma?” And her mother thought, “Surely, no.” The child seemed to say “Your Maker is your husband. The Lord of hosts is His name. So you may dry your tears. I have a father in Heaven and you have a Husband still.” Oh, you saints that have lost your gold and your silver! You have got treasure in Heaven, where no moth nor rust does corrupt, where no thieves break through and steal! You that are sick today, you that have lost health, remember the day is coming when all that shall be made up to you and when you shall find that the flame has not hurt you—it has but consumed your dross and refined your gold. Remember, Jesus Christ is “the same today, yesterday and forever.”

III. And now I must be brief in drawing one or two sweet conclusions from that part of the text. First, then, if He is the same today as yesterday, my Soul, set not your affections upon these changing things—but set your heart upon *Him*.

O my Heart, build not your house upon the sandy pillars of a world that soon must pass away—but build your hopes upon this Rock—which when the rain descends and floods shall come, shall stand immovably secure. O my Soul, I charge you, lay up your treasure in this secure granary. O my Heart, I bid you now put your treasure where you can never lose it. Put it in Christ. Put all your affections in His Person, all your hope in His glory, all your trust in His efficacious blood, all your joy in His Presence—and then you will have put yourself and put your all where you can never lose anything because it is secure. Remember, O my Heart, that the time is coming when all things must fade and when you must part with all. Death's gloomy night must soon put out your sunshine. The dark flood must soon roll between you and all you have.

Then put your heart with Him who will never leave you. Trust yourself with Him who will go with you through the black and surging current of death's stream and who will walk with you up the steep hills of Heaven and make you sit together with Him in heavenly places forever. Go, tell your secrets to that Friend that sticks closer than a brother. My Heart, I charge you, trust all your concerns with Him who never can be taken from you, who will never leave you and who will never let you leave Him, even "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever." That is one lesson.

Well, then, the next. If Jesus Christ is always the same, then, my Soul, endeavor to imitate Him. Be you the same, too. Remember that if you had more faith, you would be as happy in the furnace as on the mountain of enjoyment. You would be as glad in famine as in plenty. You would rejoice in the Lord when the olive yielded no oil, as well as when the vat was bursting and overflowing its brim. If you had more confidence in your God, you would have far less tossing up and down. And if you had greater nearness to Christ you would have less vacillation. Yesterday you could pray with all the power of prayer—perhaps if you did always live near your Master, you might always have the same power on your knees.

One time you can bid defiance to the rage of Satan and you can face a frowning world—tomorrow you will run away like a craven. But if you did always remember Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, you might always be firm and steadfast in your mind. Beware of being like a weather-cock. Seek God that His Law may be written on your hearts as if it were written in stone and not as if it were written in sand. Seek that His grace may come to you like a river and not like a brook that fails. Seek that you may keep your conversation always holy—that your course may be like the shining light that tarries not, but that burns brighter and brighter until the fullness of the day. Be like Christ—ever the same.

Again—if Christ is always the same, Christian, rejoice! Come what may you are secure—

***"Let mountains from their seats be hurled
Down to the deeps and buried there.
Convulsions shake the solid world—
Our faith shall never need to fear."***

If kingdoms should go to the rack, the Christian need not tremble. Just for a minute imagine a scene like this—Suppose for the next three days the sun should not rise. Suppose the moon should be turned into a clot of blood and shine no more upon the world—imagine that a darkness that might be felt, brooded over all men. Imagine next that all the world did tremble in an earthquake till every tower and house and hut fell down. Imagine next that the sea forgot its place and leaped upon the earth and that the mountains ceased to stand and began to tremble from their pedestals. Conceive after that that a blazing comet streamed across the sky—that the thunder bellowed incessantly—that the lightning without a moment's pause followed one the other.

Conceive then that you did behold many terrible sights, fiendish ghosts and grim spirits. Imagine next that a trumpet, waxing exceeding loud, did blow—and there were heard the shrieks of men dying and perishing. Imagine that in the midst of all this confusion there was to be found a saint. My Friend, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever," would keep him as secure amidst all these horrors as we are today. Oh, rejoice! I have pictured the worst that can come. Even *then* you would be secure. Come what may, then, you are safe, while Jesus Christ is the same.

And now, last of all, if Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today and forever," what sad work this is for the ungodly! Ah, Sinner, when He was on earth He said, "Their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched." When He stood upon the mount He said, "It were better to enter life halt or maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into Hell's fire." As a Man on earth, He said that the goats should be on the left and that He would say to them, "Depart, you cursed." Sinner, He will be as good as His Word. He has said, "He that believes not shall be damned." He will damn you

if you believe not, depend upon it. He has never broken a promise yet—He will never break a threat. That same truth which makes us confident today that the righteous shall go away into everlasting life should make you quite as confident that unbelievers shall go into eternal misery. If He had broken His promise He might break His threat. But as He has kept one He will keep the other.

Do not hope that He will change, for change He will not. Think not that the fire which He said was unquenchable will after all be extinguished. No, within a few more years, my Hearer, if you do not repent, you will find that every jot and every letter of the threats of Jesus will be fulfilled. And, mark you, fulfilled in *you*. Liar, He said, “All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.” He will not deceive you. Drunkard, He has said, “You know that no drunkard has eternal life.” He will not belie His Word. You shall not have eternal life. He has said, “The nations that forget God shall be cast into Hell.” All you that forget religion—moral people you may be—He will keep His Word to you—He will cast you into Hell.

O “kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” Come, Sinner, bow your knee. Confess your sin and leave it. And then come to Him. Ask Him to have mercy upon you. He will not forget His promise—“Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” Come and try Him. With all your sins about you, come to Him now. “Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.” For this is my Master’s Gospel and I now declare it—“He that believes and is immersed shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” God grant you grace to believe, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

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