

HAGAR AT THE FOUNTAIN

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And she called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her, You God see me: for she said, Have I also here looked after Him that sees me? Wherefore the well was called Beer-Lahai-Roi.”
Genesis 16:13, 14.*

YOU know the story of Hagar. I am not going to deal with the allegorical meaning of it; that would be apart from our subject this morning. I shall speak of the incident simply as it stands, and even then I shall not use it strictly as a case of sure conversion, for I am not certain that it was such. I suppose Hagar to have been an Egyptian woman, probably one of the maidservants who were given by the King of Egypt to Abram at that unhappy time when Abram's faith failed him, and he went down into Egypt, and requested Sarai to conceal the fact that she was his wife. Sin, whenever it is committed by the child of God, is sure to involve him in sorrow. In the long run, the result of any false dealing comes home to the believer, and it does so in very unexpected ways. Hagar became the special maid of Sarai. God had promised to Abram that he should have a son, and that thus he should be the father of nations. That blessing did not appear likely to come to him, for there were no children born to Sarai, nor did there seem to be the possibility of any. Husband and wife were both old and well stricken in years. No special mention had been made of Sarai in the promise as it then stood, and therefore it was not clear to Abram but what some other might be the mother of the expected seed, and when, in her unbelief, Sarai proposed that her maid should become his secondary wife, Abram listened to her. According to the custom of the times, and of oriental nations, this act was right enough, but as it was not really right in itself, and showed littleness of faith on Abram's part, sorrow soon came of it. Hagar began to behave herself proudly towards her mistress, and her mistress finding herself despised, complained to Abram, and began also to behave harshly towards her. The wrong element would not work in Abram's family, it might do very well for the Canaanites around him, but in a house where God was feared, it was an evil principle, and could not work for peace or holiness. Hagar's high Egyptian spirit, finding herself likely to be famous in the house, would not stand for the rule of her mistress, nor could Sarai, the quiet, but queenly matron, put up with the insults of her slave. The mistress became hard and harsh to her handmaid. Worked into a frenzy, Hagar flies from the tent, and makes the best of her way on the road to Egypt, where she originally came. But what could a lone woman do in her condition, all alone in the wilderness?

Wearied with her journey, she spies a fountain, and sits there. It was the likeliest place for any passing traveler to find her, and she sits down there in her proud despair. Perhaps they will send for her, Abram may repent his yielding to Sarai, and send for her; she will wait there, and if nothing comes to her help, she will die rather than return. She does not appear at that time to have lifted up her heart in prayer to God. She had lived in a godly household, but possibly, as she thought herself ill-treated, she had conceived a dislike towards the God of her mistress, such harsh treatment as she had received was not likely to incline her towards the religion of those from whom she had fled; she was godless and hopeless. Do you not see her crouching at the fountain, half mad with pride and vexation, and at the same time stricken with a sullen despair? She knows not what she is to do, neither does any way of hope open before her. Alas, poor Hagar!

But although there was no prayer of hers for God to hear, another voice spoke in His ear. The angel who suddenly appeared to her said, “The Lord has heard your affliction.” That is a very beautiful sentence. You have not prayed; you have been willful, reckless, and at last despairing, and therefore you have not cried unto the Lord. But your deep sorrow has cried to Him. You are oppressed, and the Lord

has undertaken for you. You are suffering heavily, and God, the All-pitiful, has heard your affliction. Grief has an eloquent voice when mercy is the listener. Woe has a plea which goodness cannot resist. Though sorrow and woe ought to be attended with prayer, yet even when supplication is not offered, the heart of God is moved by misery itself. In Hagar's case the Lord heard her affliction, He looked forth from His glory upon that lone Egyptian woman who was in the deepest distress in which a woman could well be placed, and He came speedily to her help.

We have not much difficulty in deciding who the angel was that appeared to her. We are sure that this Angel of the Lord was that great messenger of the covenant who was afterwards to appear in actual flesh and blood, but who many a time before He was born at Bethlehem anticipated His descent to earth, and visited it in human form. His delights were ever with the sons of men, and so when there was a message to be brought to men, that blessed One, the Second Person of the divine Unity condescended to be the bearer of it. In the present instance I discern foreshadowing of the Son of man, I perceive sure traces of the Christ who in a later age would dwell among mankind. Read a little before the text and you will find it written, the angel of the Lord "found her," it is the deed of the good Shepherd to find a lost sheep. I see before me that Son of man who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Surely this is that great Shepherd of the sheep who goes after His sheep until He finds it! He had come far into the waste after her, and He rested not until He found her. Great gladness filled His heart, as when a merchantman finds a pearl of great price. I see high joy in the countenance of this angel of Jehovah. We read in verse seven, "The angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water." Significant place! Can you forget how, when that blessed One was here in flesh and blood, He found another woman at the well. "Jesus being wearied, sat thus on the well. There comes a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus says unto her, Give Me to drink." Does not this story of Hagar read like a rehearsal of that Samaritan incident? "He found her by a fountain of water."

This fountain is further said to be "in the wilderness." Note that. Remember those words of His when He actually became incarnate, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he finds it?" Again we read, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness." This wonderful appearance of the Christ before He actually assumed our flesh has a likeness to His actual incarnation of the most delightful kind. 'Tis He, we are sure it is He. All the tones of the voice and the modes of the speech are His. That this angel of the Lord was God we also know, for our text says, "She called the name of Jehovah that spoke unto her, You God see me." The all-seeing God had veiled Himself in that angelic form. That Divine One, whom we adore as the Son of God and the Son of man, condescended to be the messenger of mercy to a poor slave woman, who had run away from her mistress. None but God would have thus condescended. The world had no pity in those days for slaves of any kind, much less for those who had left their master's house. Here the Lord of love found a noble opportunity for revealing His gracious nature to a forlorn one. No eye pitied her, and no hand brought her deliverance, "Now will I arise, says the Lord." The angel found her, and it is of that finding, and of what came of it, that I am going to speak this morning. May the Holy Spirit cause the words to be with power.

I. In speaking of Hagar, I shall first dwell for a little upon HER REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE. I pray that to some daughter of sorrow the like experience may come. May your case be mirrored in that of Hagar, as when one sees his face in a looking glass.

Observe that *Hagar had outlawed herself*. No doubt she had much to put up with, but she had been insolent and provoking to her mistress, and at last she had in her impatience deliberately left the house of Abraham, and left the abode of the chosen family. Whatever that house may have been, it was the best place then upon the earth, it was almost the only spot under heaven where the Lord God was known. You might have said of Abraham's family, "You are of God, little children, and the whole world lies in the wicked one." She, an Egyptian, once unenlightened by the superstitious worship of her country, had enjoyed the light of the knowledge of the true God for a while, and now she had turned her back on it. She could not but have marked Abraham's high character and sincere devotion. She must have seen his true and real faith in God, and the way in which he endeavored to order his household aright. Whatever faults she may have perceived there, whatever errors she may have suffered from, she could not but have noticed that there was a great difference between Abraham's tent and the abodes of Egypt. Now she quits her place of privilege, she renounces the high hopes which surrounded her, and in her fierce passion she rushes she cares not where. The untamable spirit which afterwards showed itself in

her son Ishmael raged in her bosom. So, too, have we met with those who have deliberately left the ways of God and the people of God, and all semblance of goodness, because they have thought themselves badly used. They have happened to suffer somewhat, and in the bitterness of their spirit they have resolved to take no more of it. They vow that they will have nothing to do with God, or with His people; they will turn their backs upon everything that is religious, and they will mix with the world in its most ungodly form. They do not, indeed, care what becomes of them; they would flee from the presence of God Himself if they could. Friends, relatives, good men and the circle of blessing they would quit, and roam in a wilderness, hoping to be forgotten. Now their hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against them, and in their high spirit they are prepared to defy the universe to subdue them.

While she was there, in the moment of her desperation, *she was found by the angel*. He had come on purpose to seek her out and find her, and He had not failed in His search, as, indeed, He never does. This was the last thing she thought of. She may have hoped to have been found by some merchants going towards Egypt, or to be picked up by certain of the wandering gypsies of the wilderness, but she had not thought that God Himself would come after her. What was there about her that Jehovah should come out of His place to seek her? Yet He came in unexpected grace, as He is known to do. He remembered the low estate of His handmaiden, and because His mercy endures forever, He found her by the fountain in the wilderness.

When the angel of the Lord found Hagar, *He dealt graciously with her*. Indeed this was the objective of His finding her; He came in pity, not in wrath. His first act was to awaken conviction within her. He said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, from where have you come, and where will you go?" This language is singularly like the Lord Jesus Christ's mode of address. The name of the person is mentioned. This forcibly brings to my mind the speech of Our Lord when He said unto the woman, "Mary," and she turned herself, and said unto Him, "Rabboni." He says, "Hagar, Sarai's maid," His word is a personal word, and she cannot mistake it. Is not this the Lord's way in other cases? Has He not said, "I have called you by your name"? He adds her description, and reminds her that whatever else she might be, she was "Sarai's maid." How surprised she must have been! She had never seen the august personage before, but evidently He had seen her before, and knew all about her, for His words searched her through and through.

Then, further to bring her to her right senses, the angel asks her, with touching pathos of tone—"From where have you come?" What have you left behind you? What have you given up? All your hopes lie in Abraham's tent, and you have left the place. For you there is a high destiny, and you are flying from it. You are, after all, a favored woman, and you know it not, you are flying away from that which will be your blessedness! This is the question of the Holy Spirit to every runaway rebel. O wandering sinner, what are you leaving? In fleeing from goodness, and God, and hope, and grace, do you know what you are leaving?

Again, He asks her, "Where will you go?" Her crouching form is before Him, she lifts up her eyes, all red with tears, and she weeps anew as He says, "And where will you go?" "Will you go into the wilderness further, and die there of thirst and hunger? Will you go down into Egypt, back to all the cruelties of that unenlightened land? Where will you go?" It is thus the Lord meets runaway sinners that are bent upon their own destruction, and He calls to them by name, and asks, "From where have you come? What are you leaving? What are you losing? What are you rejecting? What are you turning your back upon? And where will you go? What can be the end of such a life as yours? Where can it carry you but to destruction? Where will you go by this course of desperate sin? Can you face the Eternal, and the judgement seat, and the curse that withers the ungodly? From where have you come and where will you go?" It is thus, I say, that the covenant Angel met with many of us, when He awakened our consciences and made us pause in our headlong rush of sin. Some of us heard the warning voice long years ago, and we can never forget it, the call rings in the chambers of our memory even now. It is thus that the Lord met with some of you a short time since, and you are at this moment filled with gratitude for the interposition. I believe that this morning the Lord will thus meet with some who are in this congregation, whom I know not, but whom He knows right well, for His eyes are resting on them now, and His voice is speaking to them through my voice. Like as He said of old, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, from where have you come? And where will you go?" so does He speak at this hour, and asks you why you are bent upon destroying your own souls.

This worked in her mind *conviction*, after a certain sort, and where the Son of God spiritually speaks to the heart, a deep and piercing conviction is felt. His word lays sin bare and open, and makes the guilty conscience feel that nothing is hidden from God, but that all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. As when the butcher hangs up the body of a beast, and with a stroke lays bare the heart and inwards of the creature, so with a single word the Angel of the covenant reveals the heart of Hagar. Thus also the convincing Spirit deals with the sinner, and lays him bare even to the backbone, till all the secrets of his soul are revealed, and he cries, "You God see me." The Word of the Lord, by revealing the thoughts and intents of the heart, proves its own divine origin to him who feels its operation, and thus God Himself is made known as speaking by the Word.

When He had thus worked conviction in her, the angel who had found Hagar next gave her *an exhortation*. He said to her, "Return unto your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands." A hard message, as it seemed to her in her pride, no doubt. "Return," however hard the way, "Submit yourself," however humiliating the deed. Hagar is not spared; the angel puts His words very plainly. If it were kindness to say, "Return," it is still greater kindness to say severely, but truthfully, "Return to your mistress;" mark, not to your master only, but "to your mistress." He also says, "Submit yourself under her hands," to show that the submission must be entire and absolute. Put yourself back into your right place, and then grace can deal with you. When the covenant Angel deals with any man or woman among us, He will say, "Return, return, return. Repent, and be converted. Turn you; turn you, why will you die?" The gospel does not spare the sinner the pangs of repentance. It calls him to sorrow after a godly sort. You must abhor your sin, and flee from it, or your sin will be your ruin. You must so repent of your sin as to make such restitution as may be possible. You must replace stolen goods, and recall false words. You must humble yourself where you have been insolent; you must bow yourself down before God, and submit to man also, so far as you have wronged him. God the Holy Spirit, when He deals with a proud, unrighteous heart, lays justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and sweeps away as with hail every refuge of lies. He cries, "Return! Submit!" and puts the matter so closely home that there is no misunderstanding it. He bids the man confess, and forsake his sin, and gives him no hope of mercy, unless he will do so. God has not met with you, friend, if you go on in your sin. God in mercy has not met with you if sin remains sweet to you, and repentance is unknown to your heart. You must go back to the place from where you came, and you must submit yourself, or nothing will go right with you.

When the angel of the Lord had thus spoken with Hagar, calling her by her name, and working conviction in her heart, and pointing out her duty, He then added *rich promises*—promises which to her mind must have been very unexpected and consoling. She was a runaway slave girl, but He says to her, "I will multiply your seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude, and you shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael." That name signifies, "God hears me," because the Lord had heard her affliction. The angel went on to tell her what this child should be who would be the joy of her heart. Little does a sinner know what blessings are in store for him, if he repents and submits to the Lord's will. He is come to the borders of the wilderness of death, but God intends to bring him back to peace, and joy, and happiness. Oh, if the proud sinner knew what God's grace, will do for him, he would break his heart to think he had been so rebellious! Oh, if the obstinate knew what a place there is at the Father's board and in the Father's heart for the returning prodigal, and how much he is still beloved, notwithstanding all his naughtiness, he would quicken his footsteps, and wish to have wings upon his heels, that he might fly back to his Father's house and his Father's bosom! O soul, I do pray that Jesus Christ may find you this morning, and say to you, "Return unto Me, for I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. Return unto Me, for I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you."

So you see, Hagar's experience was a very remarkable one, although by no means peculiar to herself. Blessed be God, it has happened to tens of thousands, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. When they have run away, and outlawed themselves, grace has followed them, grace has convicted them, grace has admonished them, and grace has made large promises to them. Their proud heart has yielded, and their spirit has become gentle as that of a little child, as Hagar's spirit was, and they have returned to the great Father's house, and submitted themselves, and rich blessings have become theirs. Is it not written, "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land"? Though Hagar had banished herself away from the house of divine favor, yet the Lord devised means for restoring her, and she was restored. Thus much on her remarkable experience.

II. Now, I want you to notice HER DEVOUT ACKNOWLEDGMENT. When that which we have described happened to her, she acknowledged the living God. My text says, “She called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her, You God see me.” *She spoke to Him that spoke to her*, after this fashion do we all begin our communion with God. Oh, when God speaks to you, you will soon find a tongue to speak to Him. I do not mean when *I* speak to you in His name, for what am I? You ought to hear us if we truly speak for God, since it is of His kindness that He sends His servants to speak to you, but if the covenant Angel comes Himself, and if He speaks to the heart, then He unstops the deaf ear, and loosens the mute tongue. Men soon speak to Christ when Christ speaks to them. Did you but know the power of the Almighty word of grace, you would understand that as darkness gave place to light when He said, “Let there be light,” so do men’s hearts quit their sin when Jesus speaks to them in tones of effectual grace. Hagar knew no speaking to God till God spoke with her, but after He had spoken to her there was no silence.

What did she say? *She acknowledged Him to be God.* “She called the name of the Lord that spoke to her, You God see me.” It is one thing to believe there is a God, but it is quite another thing to know it by coming into personal contact with Him. They give you books to prove that there is a God—all well and good, be convinced by them. They tell you to walk abroad and see God in His works. Do so. You cannot better employ yourselves; for God is everywhere. His breath perfumes the flowers, and His pencil paints them. But you will not learn God in this fashion, if you use this method by itself. To go from nature up to nature’s God is a long step for broken legs; we are so mangled by our fall that we never take that step without divine help. But, oh, if the Lord meets with you! If He reveals Himself to your heart! What assurance! What certainty! Think not I am talking now of things that are not, I speak what I have myself felt. God has met with some of us as surely as ever one spirit has met with another. Men have so spoken to us at times that we can never forget their speech; but never has human voice come with such force as that of the Lord of hosts, the accents of whose words we shall hear as long as memory holds her place and reason sits on her throne. We may forget the word of father, mother, wife, or friend, but not the voice of the God of love. “When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.” None doubt the existence of God when God has come into contact with their spirit. When we have felt His power and tasted His love, and known His overwhelming influence, then have we said, “Jehovah, He is the God,” and we have bowed in solemn worship before Him. I do not know that Hagar had ever thought of God before, but she discerns Him now and speaks wisely. No doubt she had heard of Jehovah, for she had joined in the devotions of Abraham’s family, but now, for the first time in her life, she recognizes in deed and of a truth that the Lord lives for her, and therefore she speaks to Him and calls Him, “The God that sees.”

Observe, dear friends, that *she acknowledged His observant love.* She could not help acknowledging it, for it flashed before her eyes. I do not think when she said, “You God see me,” that she meant merely that God is omniscient and therefore that He saw her, but she meant this, “You see *me*, with a special observation. You see *me* with eyes of tender concern and loving care. You know me in my adversity.” She felt in her inmost soul that eyes of thoughtful love were fixed on her. “Hagar, Sarai’s maid,” knew that she was especially under watchful care. Those holy eyes had noticed all her sin, which had been brought to her remembrance; those eyes had seen her duty, which she was now willing to resume; those eyes had spied out the promise for her, which promise had brought a warm comfort to her poor, chilled spirit. “Oh,” she said, “what a God You are—the God who sees, who knows, who considers, and thinks of me!” Now she has a God, not in theory, but in fact. You that only know God as one, who made the heavens and earth, do not indeed know Him at all. He must be personally a God to you, or He will not be your God at all. To us the true God is the God who sees us. Does not His law begin, “I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”? His special care is the mark by which we know Him. It was so in Hagar’s case, God’s watchful care towards her made Him real to her. She knew that He must be God; she could not doubt it, for she had been so strangely found out by Him. In the extremity of her lost estate, when she had gone to the uttermost of sin and sorrow, He had found her out, and so she calls Him, “The God that sees me.”

In the presence of that God she felt overpowered and ready to yield. She was so overwhelmed, that no rebellion remained within her. She girds her garments about her, and she makes the best of her way home to the tent of Sarai. Her mistress is hard, but sin is harder. She will go back and bear the reproach and rebuke, for she has a promise hidden in her heart to sustain her, she shall yet be the glad mother of a

father of nations who shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. She returns surrounded with God. Bathed in the sense of the divine oversight, she resigns herself to her work. Though Abram should not encourage her, and Sarai should not acknowledge her, yet the Lord's eye would be upon her, and God's favor was preparing great things for her. Her heart was light within her, because of the divine favor, and in that spirit she was subdued unto the will of God. That is what I want to happen to many a poor soul this morning in a still fuller and more spiritual sense. Pray, you people of God, that it may be so. If *you* are here this morning, Mistress Sarah, let me put in a gentle word for your poor maid. If she does come back to you, do not treat her harshly again, do not drive her away again, but receive the runaway and make the best of her. Let the past be buried. Say, "If an angel has appeared to you, and taught you to know the Lord, I will gladly receive you, and show the kindness of God unto you."

III. Let me now call to your notice THE MANIFEST AMAZEMENT of this woman, for in her glad surprise she uttered a sentence which runs as follows, "Have I also here looked after Him who sees me?" This is a sentence very hard to be understood, not because it is hard to make out a meaning, but because it is so full of meaning. It reads like an oracle. Expositors will tell you that as many senses may be given to this sentence as there are words in it, and each one of these senses will bear a measure of decent defense. I shall not go into them all, but I think I see clearly that *she was amazed that God should care for her*. "You God see me. Have I also here looked after Him who sees me?" Does He see *me*? Do I see *Him*? If I had loved God when I was in Sarai's tent, I could have understood His following me here, if I had sought Him when I was with Abram, and had known my master's God in Canaan, I could have understood that He should remember me now, but I was a wild Egyptian; I would not bow my knee to Jehovah, no, I had no wish nor thought for the living God, yet has He looked after me, the slave girl, for whom nobody cared! He has spoken to me concerning things to come." Brethren, it is a great wonder to me this day that ever my God should think of me. Brothers, sisters, do you not share that feeling, each one for yourself? Do you not say, "Why me, my Lord? Why me"? Sit still in holy wonder, and adore and bless the Lord.

I think *her next amazement was that she should have been such a long time without ever thinking of Him who had thought so much of her*. She says, "Have I also here looked unto Him who sees me?" "What! Have I been these years with Abraham, and heard about the God who has been looking at me in love, and have I never glanced a thought to Him?" Her ungodliness astounds her. Brother, when you are brought to God it will strike you as though a dart went through your flesh that you should so long have done despite to God and heavenly things. Then will you say, "Have I forgotten Christ? Have I forgotten God? Has He had designs of love to me, and purposes of grace for me, and yet have I rebelled against Him? Did He die for me, and did I refuse to live for Him? Did He bleed His life away on the cross for me, and have I been all these years thoughtless and careless of Him?" It will stagger you; you will feel ready to sink into the dust when you once feel the folly and meanness of your course. You can bluster, you can be proud and careless, when you know not God; but when you once fully meet with Him, you will be ready to bite your tongues to think you could have lived so long in ignorance and neglect of your God. Hagar was evidently startled as she remembered that she had never up till that time looked to the observing One.

But next, *she is amazed still more to think that at last she does look unto God*. In effect she cries, "What! Has it come to this? Have I also here looked after Him who sees me? Is Hagar at last converted? When I had bread to eat, I never looked after God, and now that I have come into this wilderness, do I seek and find Him? No creature can hear my call, and do I now call upon my Creator? I am alone, alone, alone, there is nothing here but this well, and lo, the Angel of Jehovah has found me and spoken with me, and now in this wild place I for the first time look after the Lord who has looked after me! Is this the place, the spot of ground, where I must necessarily close in with my Maker and know that there is a God, and believe His promise, and begin to live in expectation of its fulfillment?" It might well astound her. Perhaps somebody has come into this service this very day, almost driven to desperation, you have acted so wrongly—I cannot tell how wrongly—and now you are smarting from the consequences of your foolishness. If God is meeting with you this morning you will cry out in astonishment, "What! Have I come here to find God? Have I come into this miserable condition that I might be driven to look after Him? This is surprising grace!" An old man in the country was a gracious father, and brought up his children in the fear of the Lord, but his son while yet a youth must necessarily see life in London, and therefore he came to the great city, and plunged into all sorts of sin. He cared nothing for the Sab-

bath, but even felt glad to escape from the weariness of the meeting house to which he had been taken from his infancy. It was no design of his to ever find God, but God found him in the most unlikely of all the places in the world, namely, in a low play-house. A scene occurred in which a mutinous sailor was to be hanged, and asking for a glass of spirits he was represented as drinking to his own health in the words—"Here's to my immortal soul." "Immortal soul," thought the foolish youth, "Immortal soul." He had almost forgotten that he had an immortal soul. It was a shot fired at the center of the target, it struck him home, he was ready to drop; he sought the open air and a place where to weep. The next Sabbath morning found the young scapegrace at a prayer meeting, seeking his father's God, and before long he found peace through the blood of Jesus, and began preaching the gospel which he had so grievously abused. God knows how to get at the heart of sinners. Remember Colonel Gardiner about to commit a foul offense, he made an appointment, and reached the spot an hour too soon, and while he waited he saw, or thought he saw, his Savior, and heard a voice accusing him of ingratitude. He fled the place of his temptation, sought pardon, and became eminent as a saint. What a surprise it must be to rebels to be thus seized in the arms of grace and transformed into friends of the King! I ask God that such a surprise may await some who are here today. May you also inquire in amazement, "Have I here also looked after Him who sees me?"

One other surprise Hagar had, and that was *the surprise to think that she was alive*. It was the common conviction of that age that no man could see God and live. She knew that she had seen Him in angelic form, and she marveled that she found herself alive and able to look up with hope. The awakened sinner, when he is met with by the God of grace wonders that he has not been cut down as a cumberer of the ground. If the Lord had met with me in a way of vengeance, and caused me to wither away from the root like the fruitless fig tree, I could not have wondered, but to bless me in infinite compassion is a wonder indeed. If He had sentenced me to depart to the lowest hell I could not have complained, but to meet me in love, to pardon, relieve, and save me—this is a miracle of grace. Does the Lord say, "I receive you to My heart, and I intend to bless you from now on and forever"? Then does He act like a God. Who but He would speak thus? His grace awakens an amazement which is not soon forgotten or easily expressed. The soul cries in surprise and delight—

*"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?
I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face.
Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of hell!"*

IV. My time has fled, or I should have asked you to notice HER HUMBLE WORSHIP. Her humble worship was expressed by her using an expressive name for the angel of the Lord. She worshipped God heartily and intelligently, *according to her knowledge*. She did not use the first word that came to hand, but she spoke fitly, thoughtfully, and well. She knew that the Lord was the seeing God, for He had seen her, and so she worshipped Him under that title, "You God see me." We cannot worship "The Unknown God;" at least, such worship lacks eyes and light, and is fitter for owls and bats than for man.

Yet be it observed that she worshipped beyond her knowledge, *according to her apprehension*, for she said, "Have I here also looked *after* Him?" as if she knew that she had not fully seen the Lord, but had only looked at Him as He retreated from her. Like Moses, in a later day, she had only beheld the back parts of God, the skirts of His garments, His face she had not seen. The Hebrew has that force. Hagar felt there was much more of God than she had seen, and in that belief she worshipped and adored with lowliest reverence.

Her worship was *wonderfully personal*. It is not "God sees," but "You God see me;" and it is not, "Has God looked after His creature?" but "Have I here also looked after Him that sees me?" True religion is always personal, but it becomes wonderfully so when a man is especially arrested by sovereign grace, for then he adores as if he were the only man in the universe, and beholds God as if no other eyes throughout all the ages had ever beheld Him. Oh, it is wonderful to feel alone with the Lord, while the Lord is searching you through and through.

Remark again, that her worship proved itself deeply true, for it was followed by immediate *practical obedience* to the command of the Lord. Obedience is the best of worship. She returned to her mistress,

and was subject to her. Oh for grace this morning, if God meets with us, not to tarry a single minute in rebellion, but to return at once to subjection to the Lord! Oh, to cry with Thomas, “My Lord and my God,” and then to live henceforth as in His sight! It were well to keep the finger forever in the print of the nails, that we might never lose our fellowship with Jesus, nor our joy in the great Father, nor our subjection to the ever-blessed Spirit of all grace.

V. We will conclude by glancing for an instant at the well which became THE SUGGESTIVE MEMORIAL of this special manifestation and singular experience. That well—we do not know what it had been called before—but that Beer, or well, was henceforth called Beer-Lahai-Roi, or the well of Him—that lives and sees. Will we not all at this time drink of that well? It was a very happy thought to attach a holy name to a well, so that every traveler might learn of God as he refreshed himself. When a person comes to drink at certain fountains, he reads, “Drink, gentle traveler, drink and pray.” The inscription is most suitable. It is fit that men should pray when they receive so precious refreshment as pure water. It was especially meet that travelers should henceforth and forever pray at a spot where the Lord Himself had been, and had called to Himself a wanderer who had felt compelled to cry, “God lives, and God sees.”

Brethren, there is a God, and we know it. He is not an abstraction far away, but He is a reality, and sees and observes, and takes care of men and women. Many of us have proven this to be a fact. Now, next time you eat, worship Him that lives and sees; next time you drink, worship Him that lives and sees. Let our tables and our wells remind us of Him who removes our hunger and quenches our thirst.

Better still, let this very name of God—“The living and the seeing One”—be as a well of water to you, for the comfort of your hearts. By this may your griefs be assuaged. “Mother is dead!” What a loss is the death of a mother to many a girl, and to many a young man! “Mother is dead” is the token of temptation without defense. Such a stay and holdfast mother often is that when she is gone Satan gets a dire advantage over a young soul. Yet if mother is gone, the Lord lives, and all the gentleness and kindness of a mother are treasured up in Him. God lives, think of that, and be comforted. This well is never dry. Your father is dead, or your dear, kind brother is dead, and you are left alone to bear the buffetings of a cruel world. Never mind. Let not your heart fail you. Do not run away. God lives and sees. He in whom is all fatherhood, all friendship, and all kindness, still stands near you watching for your good. Come and drink at this well. The waters are cool and clear. Drink and live. Did I hear you cry out in anguish, “Nobody cares for me”? Do you say, “Nobody knows me in this terrible city. Here I am in this great London as much deserted as Robinson Crusoe on his lone island”? I know what you mean. London is worse than a wilderness to many, a man may lay himself down and die in these streets, and nobody will care for him. The millions will pass him by, not for lack of kindness, but from lack of thought. There is no such horrible wilderness as a wilderness of men. Yet, take comfort, the living God sees you! He sees not as man sees, with a mere gaze of cold notice, but His heart goes with His eye. You have not prayed yet, but He hears your affliction. Oh, begin to pray, and He will speedily deliver! Spread your case before Him, and He will regard your petition. I would encourage you to get alone, if you are in sorrow and sin, and tell it all out before God, and see if He does not deliver you. Some of us have gone to Him in plights as terrible as yours, and we have ordered our cases before Him, and He has answered us. We can truly say, “He has delivered us;” and therefore we encourage you to seek His face in the same manner. May the Lord bring you to seek Him at once, for His great love’s sake, and then to Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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