MANOAH'S WIFE AND HER EXCELLENT ARGUMENT

NO. 1340

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.
But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us,
he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands,
neither would he have showed us all these things,
nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."
Judges 13:22-23

THE first remark arising out of the story of Manoah and his wife is this—that *oftentimes we pray for blessings which will make us tremble when we receive them.* Manoah had asked that he might see the angel, and he saw Him. In answer to his request, the wonderful One condescended to reveal Himself a second time, but the consequence was that the good man was filled with astonishment and dismay, and turning to His wife, he exclaimed, "We shall surely die because we have seen God."

Brethren, do we always know what we are asking for when we pray? We are imploring an undoubted blessing, and yet if we knew the way in which such blessing must necessarily come, we should, perhaps, hesitate before we pressed our suit.

You have been entreating very much for growth in holiness. Do you know, brother, that in almost every case that means increased affliction? For we do not make much progress in the divine life except when the Lord is pleased to try us in the furnace and purge us with many fires.

Do you desire the mercy on that condition? Are you willing to take it as God pleases to send it, and to say, "Lord, if spiritual growth implies trial, if it signifies a long sickness of body, if it means deep depression of soul, if it entails the loss of property, if it involves the taking away of my dearest friends, yet I make no reserve, but include in the prayer all that is needful to the good end. When I say, sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul, and body, I leave the process to Your discretion."

Suppose you really knew all that it would bring upon you, would you not pray, at any rate, with more solemn tones? I hope you would not hesitate, but counting all the cost, would still desire to be delivered from sin. But at any rate, you would put up your petition with deliberation, weighing every syllable, and then when the answer came, you would not be so astonished at its peculiar form.

Often and often the blessing which we used so eagerly to *im*plore is the occasion of the suffering which we *de*plore. We do not know God's methods. We set Him ways which He does not choose to follow, even as John Newton confessed to have done when he asked that he might grow in grace. He says—

"I hoped that in some favoured hour,
At once He'd answer my request,
And, by His love's constraining power
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

"Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

"Yea, more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;

Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low."

This is the Lord's way of answering prayer for faith and grace. He comes with rods of chastisement, and makes us smart for our follies, for thus alone can He deliver our childish spirits from them. He comes with sharp ploughshares, and tears up the soil, for thus only can we be made to yield Him a harvest. He comes with hot irons, and burns us to the heart, and when we inquire, "Why all this?" the answer comes to us, "This is what you asked for, this is the way in which the Lord answers your requests."

Perhaps, at this moment, the fainting feeling that some of you are now experiencing, which makes you fear that you will surely die, may be accounted for by your own prayers. I should like you to look at your present sorrows in that light, and say, "After all, I can see that now my God has given to me exactly what I sought at His hands. I asked to see the angel, and I have seen Him, and now it is that my spirit is cast down within me."

A second remark is this—*Very frequently deep prostration of spirit is the forerunner of some remarkable blessing.* It was to Manoah and to his wife the highest conceivable joy of life, the climax of their ambition, that they should be the parents of a son by whom the Lord should begin to deliver Israel. Joy filled them—inexpressible joy—at the thought of it, but at the time when the good news was first communicated, Manoah, at least, was made so heavy in spirit that he said, "We shall surely die, for we have seen an angel of the LORD."

Take it as a general rule that dull skies foretell a shower of mercy. Expect sweet favor when you experience sharp affliction. When God's great wagons loaded down with blessings are coming to your door, you will full often hear beforehand the wheels rolling and rumbling horridly. You will think that it is the death-cart, perhaps, although it is your Father's treasure-wain that is coming to your door.

Do you not remember, concerning the apostles, that they feared as they entered into the cloud on Mount Tabor? And yet it was in that cloud that they saw their Master transfigured. And you and I have had many a fear about the cloud we were entering, although we were therein to see more of Christ and His glory than we had ever beheld before.

The cloud which you fear makes the external wall of that secret chamber wherein the Lord reveals Himself. It is the thick veil which seems to shut out the light of day, but as we pass behind it into what seems the thick darkness, we behold the bright light of the shekinah of God's presence shining above the mercy seat. Trials come before comforts, like John the Baptist with his rough garment before Jesus the consolation of Israel—be therefore of good cheer.

Blessed be God for rough winds. They have blown home many a barque which else had sailed to destruction. Blessed be God for trial—it has been Christ's black dog to fetch in many a sheep which else had wandered into the wolf's jaws. Blessed be our Master for the fire—it has burnt away the dross. Blessed be our Master for the file—it has taken off the rust.

Not in themselves considered are these things blessings, but they are often overruled to be so by the mighty hand of God, and they are frequently the harbingers of great favors yet to come.

Before you can carry Samson in your arms, Manoah, you must be made to say, "We shall surely die." Before the minister shall preach the Word to thousands, he must be emptied, and made to tremble under a sense of inability. Before the Sunday school teacher shall bring her girls to Christ, she shall be led to see how weak and insufficient she is.

I do believe that whenever the Lord is about to use us in His household, He takes us like a dish, and wipes us right out and sets us on the shelf. And then afterwards He takes us down, and puts thereon His own heavenly meat, with which to fill the souls of others. There must as a rule be an emptying, a turning upside down, and a putting on one side, before the very greatest blessing comes. Manoah felt that he must die, and yet die he could not, for he was to be the father of Samson, the deliverer of Israel and the terror of Philistia.

Let me offer a third remark, which is this—*great faith is in many instances subject to fits.* What great faith Manoah had! His wife was barren, yet when she was told by the angel that she should bear a child, he believed it, although no heavenly messenger had come to himself personally—so believed it that he did not want to see the man of God a second time to be told that it would be so, but only to be informed how to bring up the child, that was all.

"Well," says old Bishop Hall, "might he be the father of strong Samson, that had such a strong faith." He had a strong faith indeed, and yet here he is saying in alarm, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

Do not judge a man by any solitary word or act, for if you do, you will surely mistake him. Cowards are occasionally brave, and the bravest men are sometimes cowards. And there are men who would be worse cowards practically if they were a little less cowardly than they are. A man may be too much a coward to confess that he is timid.

Trembling Manoah was so outspoken, honest, and sincere that he expressed his feelings, which a more politic person might have concealed. Though fully believing what had been spoken from God, yet at the same time this doubt was on him as the result of his belief in tradition, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

You know how many parallel cases there are in Scripture to this. Look at majestic Abraham, the very father of the faithful—a prince, I might call him, amongst believers, and yet he denies his wife, and says, "She is my sister." These things do not prove that he had no faith, they only show that the strongest faith is mixed with unbelief, and that the best of men are men at the best.

So, too, with mighty Elijah. When you see him on the top of Carmel pleading there with God, and bringing down the fire, and when you hear him cry, "Take the prophets of Baal: let not one escape," and observe that man of iron, slaying them all at the foot of the hill, why you cannot believe it possible that he is the same trembler who flees from the face of Jezebel, and sits down under one of the desert junipers, and cries, "Let me die: I am no better than my fathers."

But it is so. It is ever so. God's saints generally show their weakness in the very grace wherein their strength lies, and this great believer, Manoah, is troubled with a miserable attack of doubt, which so masters him that he expects sudden death.

Now, have any of you lately had such a fit as that upon you? Well, dear friend, do not indulge it. Let it be a fit, and let it come to an end, as no doubt it did with Manoah. He did not continue long in his fainting condition, but it was bad while it lasted. It is very bad when persons have fits every day, and worse still if they are always in fits. It will not do for us to begin to make excuses for our unbelief, or to allow ourselves to remain in depression of spirit.

Our soul must not be suffered to lie cleaving to the dust. We must catechize our hearts, and say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God," Yet do not be surprised, or write your own condemnation, as though some strange thing had befallen you, for so has it happened unto others, that though they have been strong in faith they have had strong misgivings at times.

Once again, another remark is that *it is a great mercy to have a Christian companion to go to for counsel and comfort whenever your soul is depressed.* Manoah had married a capital wife. She was the better one of the two in sound judgment. She was the weaker vessel by nature, but she was the stronger believer, and probably that was why the angel was sent to her, for the angels are best pleased to speak with those who have faith.

And if they have the pick of their company, and the wife has more faith than the husband, they will visit the wife sooner than her spouse, for they love to take God's messages to those who will receive them with confidence. She was full of faith, evidently, and so when her husband tremblingly said, "We shall surely die," she did not believe in such a mistrustful inference.

Moreover, though they say that women cannot reason, yet here was a woman whose arguments were logical and overwhelming. Certain it is that women's perceptions are generally far clearer than men's

reasonings. They look at once into a truth, while we are hunting for our spectacles. Their instincts are generally as safe as our reasonings, and therefore when they have in addition a clear logical mind, they make the wisest of counselors.

Well, Manoah's wife not only had clear perceptions, but she had capital reasoning faculties. She argued, according to the language of the text, that it was not possible that God should kill them after what they had seen and heard. Oh that every man had such a prudent, gracious wife as Manoah had! Oh that whenever a man is cast down a Christian brother or sister stood ready to cheer him with some reminder of the Lord's past goodness, or with some gracious promise from the divine Word.

It may happen to be the husband who cheers the wife, and in such a case it is equally beautiful. We have known a Christian sister to be very nervous, and very often depressed and troubled. What a mercy to her to have a Christian husband whose strength of faith can encourage her to smile away her griefs, by resting in the everlasting faithfulness and goodness of the Lord.

How careful ought young people to be in the choosing of their partners in life! When two horses pull together how smoothly the chariot runs. But if one horse draws one way and the other pulls in the opposite direction, what trouble there is sure to be.

Suppose Manoah had happened to have an unbelieving wife. Ah, Manoah, how your spirit would have gone down, down, down into despair, till you would have fulfilled you own sad prophecy. If he had been troubled with a wife like Mistress Job, and she had uttered some bitter saying just at the time when he was in anguish, how much more severe would his griefs have become. But Mistress Manoah was a believing woman, she argued out the question most discreetly, and her husband found peace again.

Tonight, as God the Holy Spirit shall help us, we will take up the argument of Manoah's wife, and see whether it will not also comfort our hearts. She had three strings to her bow, good woman. One was—The Lord does not mean to kill us, because He has accepted our sacrifices. The second was—He does not mean to kill us, or else He would not have shown us all these things. And the third was—He will not kill us, or else He would not, as at this time, have told us such things as these. So the three strings to her bow were *accepted sacrifices*, *gracious revelations*, and *precious promises*. Let us dwell upon each of them.

I. And first, ACCEPTED SACRIFICES.

I will suppose that I am addressing a brother who is sadly tried, terribly cast down, and who therefore has begun to lament—

"The Lord has forsaken me quite.
My God will be gracious no more."

Brother, is that possible? Has not God of old accepted on your behalf the offering of His Son Jesus Christ? You have believed in Jesus, dear friend. You do believe in Him now. Lay your hand on your heart, and put the question solemnly to yourself, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" You are able to say, "Yes, Lord, notwithstanding all my unhappiness, I do believe in You, and rest the stress and weight of my soul's interests on Your power to save."

Well, then, you have God's own Word, recorded in His own infallible Bible, assuring you that Jesus Christ was accepted of God on your behalf, for He laid down His life for as many as believe in Him, that they might never perish. He stood as their surety, and suffered as their substitute, is it possible that this should be unavailing, and that after all they may be cast away?

The argument of Manoah's wife was just this—"Did we not put the kid on the rock, and as we put it there was it not consumed? It was consumed instead of us—we shall not die, for the victim has been consumed. The fire will not burn us—it has spent itself upon the sacrifice. Did you not see it go up in smoke, and see the angel ascend with it? The fire is gone—it cannot fall on us to destroy us."

This being interpreted into the Gospel is just this—Have we not seen the Lord Jesus Christ fastened to the cross? Have we not beheld Him in agonies extreme? Has not the fire of God consumed Him?

Have we not seen Him rising, as it were, from that sacred fire in the resurrection and the ascension, to go into the glory? Because the fire of JEHOVAH'S wrath had spent itself on Him we shall not die. He has died instead of us.

It cannot be that the Lord has made Him suffer, the just for the unjust, and now will make the believer suffer too. It cannot be that Christ loved His church, and gave Himself for it, and that now the church must perish also. It cannot be that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and now will lay our iniquity on us too. It were not consistent with justice. It would make the vicarious sacrifice of Christ to be a nullity, a superfluity of cruelty which achieved nothing. The atonement cannot be made of none effect, the very supposition would be blasphemy.

O, look, my soul, look to the Redeemer's cross, and as you see how God accepts Christ, be you filled with content. Hear how the "It is finished" of Jesus on earth is echoed from the throne of God Himself, as He raises up His Son from the dead, and bestows glory upon Him. Hear this, I say, and as you hear, attend to the power of this argument—If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, He would not have accepted His Son for us. If He meant *us* to die, would He have put Him to death too? How can it be?

The sacrifice of Jesus must effectually prevent the destruction of those for whom He offered up Himself as a sacrifice. Jesus dying for sinners, and yet the sinners denied mercy! Inconceivable and impossible! My soul, whatever your inward feelings and the tumult of your thoughts, the accepted sacrifice shows that God is not pleased to kill you.

But if you notice, in the case of Manoah, they had offered a burnt sacrifice and a meat offering too. Well, now, in addition to the great, grand sacrifice of Christ, which is our trust, we, dear brothers and sisters, have offered other sacrifices to God, and in consequence of His acceptance of such sacrifice we cannot imagine that He intends to destroy us.

First, let me conduct your thoughts back to the offering of *prayer* which you have presented. I will speak for myself. I recall now, running over my diary mentally, full many an instance in which I have sought the Lord in prayer, and He has most graciously heard me. I am as sure that my requests have been heard as ever Manoah could have been sure that his sacrifice was consumed upon the rock. May I not infer from this that the Lord does not mean to destroy me?

You know that it has been so with you, dear brother. You are down in the dumps today, you are beginning to raise many questions about divine love. But there have been times—you know there have—when you have sought the Lord, and He has heard you. You can say, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and delivered him from all his fears."

Perhaps you have not jotted down the fact in a book, but your memory holds the indelible record. Your soul has made her personal boast in the Lord concerning His fidelity to His promise in helping His people in the hour of need, for you have happily proved it in your own case.

Now, brother, if the Lord had been pleased to kill you, would He have heard your prayers? If He had meant to cast you out after all, would He have heard you so many times? If He had sought a quarrel against you He might have had cause for that quarrel many years ago, and have said to you, "When you make many prayers I will not hear." But since He has listened to your cries and tears, and many a time answered your petitions, He cannot intend to kill you.

Again, you brought to Him, years ago, not only your prayers but *yourself*. Remember that glad hour when you said,

"Now, O God, Thine own I am;
Now I give Thee back Thine own;
Freedom, friends, and health, and fame,
Consecrate to Thee alone;
Thine I live, thrice happy I!
Happier still if Thine I die."

You gave yourself over to Christ, body, soul, spirit, all your goods, all your hours, all your talents, every faculty, and every possible acquirement, and you said, "Lord, I am not my own, but I am bought

with a price." Now, at that time did not the Lord accept you? You have at this very moment a lively recollection of the sweet sense of acceptance you had at that time. Even now your heart sings,

"Lord in the strength of grace
With a glad heart and free,
Myself, my residue of days,
I consecrate to Thee."

Though you are at this time sorely troubled, yet you would not wish to withdraw from the consecration which you then made, but on the contrary you declare,

"***High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,***
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till, in life's latest hour, I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

Now, would the Lord have accepted the offering of yourself to Him if He meant to destroy you? Would He have let you say, "I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds"? Would He have permitted you to declare, as you can boldly assert tonight, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," delighting to remember the time of your baptism into Him, whereby your body, washed with His pure body, was declared to be the Lord's forever.

Would He enable you to feel a joy in the very mark of your consecration, as well as in the consecration itself, if He meant to slay you? Oh, surely not! He does not let a man give himself up to Him, and then cast him away. That cannot be.

Some of us, dear friends, can recollect how, growing out of this last sacrifice, there have been others. The Lord has accepted our offerings at other times too, for our works, faith, and labors of love have been owned by His Spirit.

There are some of you, I am pleased to remember, whom God has blessed to the conversion of little children whom you have tried to teach for Jesus. You have some in heaven whom you brought to the Savior, and there are others on earth that you can look upon with great joy because God was pleased to make you the instrument of their conviction and their conversion.

Some of you, I perceive, are ministers of the Gospel, others of you preach on the corners of the streets, and there have been times in your lives—I am sure that you wish they were ten times as many—in which God has been pleased to succeed your efforts, so that hearts have yielded to the sway of Jesus.

Now, you do not put any trust in those things, nor do you claim any merit for having served your Master, but still I think they may be thrown in as a matter of consolation, and you may say, "If the Lord had meant to destroy me, would He have enabled me to preach His Gospel? Would He have helped me to weep over men's souls? Would He have enabled me to gather those dear children like lambs to His bosom? Would He have granted me my longing desire to bear fruit in His vineyard, if He did not mean to bless me?"

Surely He will not let me be like Judas, who preached the Gospel and betrayed his Master. But having accepted me and given me joy in my work, and success in it, He will continue with me and help me even to the end. As Mr. Wesley well puts it,

"Me, if purposed to destroy
For past unfaithfulness,
Would God vouchsafe to employ
And still so strangely bless?"

Those are comparatively small things, but sometimes small things help our small minds. Little fishes are sweet, and little diamonds are precious, and so little evidences may let in a great deal of peace. They may at least help us while we are looking out for something better, so that we may rise out of our troubles and grasp the higher joys.

So much upon the first point. Mistress Manoah argued that, if God had accepted their offerings, He did not mean to kill them. And there is our argument tonight, for He has accepted the great sacrifice of Christ, and then He has accepted the sacrifices which His grace has enabled us to offer, and therefore He does not mean to kill us.

"Who said He did?" says somebody. Well, the devil has said that numbers of times. He is a liar from the beginning, and he does not improve a bit. He will have the impudence to say this to you when you have just been in the presence of Christ. As you come fresh from the closet, he will meet you outside the door, and he will tell you that the Lord has utterly forsaken you, for there are no bounds to his falsehood. Reply to him, if he is worth replying to at all, in the language of our text.

II. But now, secondly, the second argument was that they had received GRACIOUS REVELATIONS. "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have shewed us all these things."

Now, what has the Lord shown you, my dear brother? I will mention one or two things.

First, the Lord has shown you, perhaps years ago, or possibly at this moment He is showing you for the first time—*your sin*. What a sight that was when we first had it. Some of you never saw your sins, but your sins are there all the same.

In an old house, perhaps, there is a cellar into which nobody goes, and the windows are always kept shut. There is a wooden shutter, no light ever comes in. You live in the house comfortably enough, not knowing what is there. But one day you take a candle, and go down the steps, and open that moldy door, and when it is opened, dear me!

What a damp, pestilential smell! How foul the floor is! All sorts of living creatures hop away from under your feet. There are growths on the very walls—a heap of roots in the corner, sending out those long yellow growths which look like the fingers of death. And there is a spider, and there are a hundred like him, of such a size as cannot be grown, except in such horrible places. You get out as quickly as ever you can. You do not like the look of it.

Now, the candle did not make that cellar bad, the candle did not make it filthy. No, the candle only showed what there was. And when you get in the carpenter to take down that shutter which you could not open anyhow, for it had not been opened for years. And when the daylight comes in, it seems more horrible than it did by candlelight, and you wonder, indeed, however you did go across it with all those dreadful things all around you, and you cannot be satisfied to live upstairs now till that cellar downstairs has been perfectly cleansed.

That is just like our heart. It is full of sin, but we do not know it. It is a den of unclean birds, a menagerie of everything that is fearful, and fierce, and furious—a little hell stocked with devils. Such is our nature, such is our heart.

Now, the Lord showed me mine years ago, as He did some of you, and the result of a sight of one's heart is horrible. Well does Dr. Young say, "God spares all eyes but His own, that fearful sight, a naked human heart." Nobody ever did see all his heart as it really is. You have only seen a part, but when seen, it is so horrible that it is enough to drive a man out of his senses to see the evil of his nature.

Now, let us gather some honey out of this dead lion. Brother, if the Lord had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us our sin, because we were happy enough previously, were we not? In our own poor way we were content enough, and if He did not mean to pardon us, it was not like the Lord to show us our sin, and to torment us before our time, unless He meant to take it away.

We were swine, but we were satisfied enough with the husks we ate, and why not let us remain swine? What was the good of letting us see our filthiness if He did not purpose to take it away? It never can be possible that God sets Himself studiously to torture the human mind by making it conscious of its evil, if He never intends to supply a remedy.

Oh no! A deep sense of sin will not save you, but it is a pledge that there is something begun in your soul which may lead to salvation, for that deep sense of sin does as good as say, "The Lord is laying bare the disease that He may cure it. He is letting you see the foulness of that underground cellar of your corruption, because He means to cleanse it for you."

So, dear brethren, if the Lord had meant to kill us He would not have shown us such things as the infamy of our nature and the horror of our fall. But since He has revealed to us our nakedness and poverty He desires to clothe and enrich us.

But He has shown us more than this, for He has made us see the *hollowness and emptiness of the world.* There are some here present who, at one time, were very gratified with the pleasures and amusements of the world. The theater was a great delight to them. The ballroom afforded them supreme satisfaction. To be able to dress just after their own fancy, and to spend money on their own whims, were the very acme of delight.

But there came a time when across all these the soul perceived a mysterious handwriting, which being interpreted ran thus—"Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." These very people went to the same amusements, but they seemed so dull and stupid that they came away saying, "We do not care a bit for them. The joys are all gone. What seemed gold turns out to be gilt, and what we thought marble was only white paint. The varnish is cracked, the tinsel is faded, the coloring has vanished. Mirth laughs like an idiot, and pleasure grins like madness."

I have known persons in that condition of mind seek after still more stirring pleasures. They have thought that, if they went a step farther, till what was mere amusement came to be vice, perhaps they might find something there. They have tried it, till they have drained all the cups of the devil's banquet, and found them sickening as lukewarm water, insipid, and even nauseous. Satiety has come upon them, and they have been weary of life.

Now, brethren, the Lord has taught many of us this in different ways, even those of us who have never gone very far into worldly amusements. And so we have learned that there is nothing round the spacious globe that can satisfy a hungry soul.

We, too, have heard the words, "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity," sounding in our hearts, and now do you think that, if the Lord had meant to kill us, He would have taught us this? Why, no, He would have said, "Leave them alone, they are given unto idols. They are only going to have one world in which they can rejoice, let them enjoy it." He would have let the swine go on with their husks if He had not meant to turn them into His children, and bring them to His bosom.

I think I told you once of a story which illustrates this, of a good wife—a good Christian woman—who had been converted. Her husband remained a godless and licentious man. Nevertheless, her gentleness and patience were surpassing, and one night, while out in a drinking party, her husband made a boast that there was not one of them that had such a wife as he had.

He said she was far too religious, but for all that there was never such a woman. "And if I were to take you now," said he, "ten of you, home to supper tonight, though it is past twelve, she would provide for you, receive you with a smile, and never say a syllable by way of complaint."

They did not believe it, and so they went down to the house. She was sitting up past midnight, weary, and the wicked husband said he had brought in his friends, and he wished them to have some supper.

She had to forage very carefully, and make the best of what there was in the house, and she begged the gentlemen to have a little patience and wait. The meal might not be quite served as she should like to have it, since the servants were in bed, but still she would do her best. She managed well, the company sat down at the table, the lady treated them most graciously, and the husband had won his bet.

Then they asked her how it was that she could bear with such treatment, and act so nobly. Bursting into tears, when they pressed her again and again, she answered, "I have long prayed for my dear husband, and anxiously desired his salvation, but I am afraid he never will be saved, and so I have made

up my mind to make him as happy as possible while he is here, fearing he will have no happiness hereafter."

Now do you not think that God would act on that principle with you and with me if He meant to leave us to perish? Would He not allow us to have the enjoyment of this world at any rate? But because He has taught us that this world is a mockery and a cheat, I gather that He will not destroy us.

But He has taught us something better than this—namely, *the preciousness of Christ*. Unless we are awfully deceived—self-deceived, I mean—we have known what it is to lose the burden of our sin at the foot of the cross. We have known what it is to see the suitability and all-sufficiency of the merit of our dear Redeemer, and we have rejoiced in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If He had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us Christ.

Sometimes also we have strong desires after *God*! What pining after communion with Him have we felt! What longings to be delivered from sin! What yearnings to be perfect! What aspirations to be with Him in heaven, and what desires to be like Him while we are here! Now these longings, cravings, desires, yearnings, do you think the Lord would have put them into our hearts if He had meant to destroy us? What would be the good of it?

Would it not be tormenting us as Tantalus was tormented? Would it not, indeed, be a superfluity of cruelty thus to make us wish for what we could never have, and pine after what we should never gain? O beloved, let us be comforted about these things. If He had meant to kill us, He would not have shown us such things as these.

III. I shall have no time to dwell upon the last source of comfort which is what the Lord has spoken to us—MANY PRECIOUS PROMISES. "Nor would he have told us such things as these."

At almost any time when a child of God is depressed, if he goes to the Word of God and to prayer, and looks up, he will generally get hold of some promise or other. I know I generally do. I could not tell you, dear brother, tonight, what promise would suit your case, but the Lord always knows how to apply the right word at the right time. And when a promise is applied with great power to the soul, and you are enabled to plead it at the mercy seat, you may say, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have made us such a promise as this."

I have a promise that hangs up before my eyes whenever I wake every morning, and it has continued in its place for years. It is a stay to my soul. It is this—"I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Difficulties arise, funds run short, sickness comes, but somehow or other my text always seems to flow like a fountain—"I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." If the Lord had meant to kill us, He would not have said that to us.

What is your promise, brother? What have you got a hold of? If you have not laid hold of any, and feel as if none belonged to you, yet there are such words as these, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and you are one.

Ah, if He had meant to destroy you, He would not have spoken a text of such a wide character on purpose to include your case. A thousand promises go down to the lowest deep into which a heart can ever descend, and if the Lord had meant to destroy a soul in the deeps, He would not have sent a Gospel promise down even to that extreme.

I must have done, and therefore I should like to say these two or three words tonight to you who are unconverted, but who are troubled in your souls. You think that God means to destroy you. Now, dear friend, I take it that if the Lord had meant to kill you, He would not have sent the Gospel to you. If there had been a purpose and a decree to destroy you, He would not have brought you here.

I am glad to see unconverted people here on Thursday nights. When souls begin to love week-night services I always think that there is a something good in them towards the Lord God of Israel.

Now you are sitting to hear that Jesus has died to save such as you are. You are sitting where you are bidden to trust Him and be saved. If the Lord had meant to slay you I do not think He would have sent me on such a fruitless errand as to tell you of a Christ who could not save you. I think, on Thursday nights especially, I may hope that I have a picked congregation whom God intends to bless.

Besides, some of you have had your lives spared very remarkably. You have been in accidents on land or on sea—perhaps in battle and shipwreck. You have been raised from a sick bed. If the Lord had meant to destroy you, surely He would have let you die then. But He has spared you, and you are getting on in years, surely it is time that you yielded to His mercy, and gave yourself up into the hands of grace.

If the Lord had meant to destroy you, surely He would not have brought you here tonight, for, possibly, I am addressing one who has come here, wondering why. All the time that he has been sitting here he has been saying to himself, "I do not know how I got into this place, but here I am."

God means to bless you tonight, I trust, and He will, dear friend, if you breathe this prayer to heaven—"Father, forgive me! I have sinned against heaven and before you, but for Christ's sake forgive me! I put my trust in Your Son." You shall find eternal life, rejoicing in the sacrifice which God has accepted.

You shall one of these days rejoice in the revelations of His love, and in the promises which He gives you, and say as we say tonight, "If the LORD were pleased to kill us He would not have showed us all these things!" The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JUDGES 13

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—734,738

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