

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?**NO. 2098**

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1889,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“But He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”
Job 23:10.*

On several Sabbath mornings of late I have earnestly handled spiritual subjects which I trust may have been for the edification of the people of God; but it will not do to continue in that line. I am a fisher of men as well as a shepherd of the flock. I must attend to both offices. Here are souls perishing, sinners that need to be saved by Christ, and therefore I must leave the flock and go after the wanderers. I must lay down the crook and take up the net. By a simple sermon, full of earnest expostulation, I would reason with the careless. At this moment I have not so much to expound doctrine as to arouse hearts. Oh, for the power of the Holy Spirit, without which I must utterly fail in my design! We have this morning been praying for the conversion of many—we expect our prayers to be heard. The question is not, Will there be any converted under this sermon? But, WHO will it be? I trust many who have come here with no higher motive than to see the great congregation, and to hear the preacher, may, nevertheless, be met with in God's infinite mercy and placed in the way of eternal life. May this be the spiritual birthday of many—a day to be remembered by them throughout eternity!

Job could not understand the way of God with him; he was greatly perplexed. He could not find the Lord, with whom at some prior time he constantly abode. He cries, “Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He does work but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.” But if Job knew not the way of the Lord, the Lord knew Job's way. It is a great comfort that when we cannot see the Lord, He sees us, and perceives the way that we take. It is not so important that we should understand what the Lord is doing as that the Lord should understand what we are doing, and that we should be impressed by the great fact that He does understand it. Our case may be quite beyond our own comprehension, but it is all plain to Him who sees the end from the beginning, and understands the secrets of all hearts.

Because God knew his way, Job turned from the unjust judgments of his unfeeling friends and appealed to the Lord God Himself. He pleaded in the supreme court where his case was known, and he refused the verdicts of erring men. He that does right seeks the light; and as Job saw that the light was with God, he hastened to that light, that his deeds might be made manifest. Like a bird of the day, which begins to signal the return of the morning, he could sing when he stood in the light of God! He was glad that the Lord knew his way, his motive, and his desires; for from that truth he inferred that he would be helped in his trials, and brought safely through them—“When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

These words afford rich consolation to the saints; and if I were to use them for that purpose, I should expect the Lord's people greatly to rejoice in the Lord, whose observant eyes and gracious thoughts are always upon them. Our whole condition lies open to Him with whom we have to do. Though never understood by men, we are understood by our God—

*“It is no surprising thing
That we should be unknown—
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son.”*

As the Son of God was known to the Father, though unknown to the entire world, so are we hidden from the knowledge of men but well known of the Most High. “The Lord knows them that are His.” “You have known my soul in adversities.”

I quit the design of comforting the people of God for the more presently pressing work of arousing the unconverted; their way is evil, and the end thereof is destruction. Oh, that I could arouse them to a sense of their condition! To that end I shall ask four questions of every man and woman within reach of my voice. God knows the way that you take. I will ask you first: Do you know your own way? Secondly: Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way? Thirdly: Are you tried in the way? And, if so, fourthly: Have you confidence in God as the result of that trial? Can you say with Job, "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold"?

I. My hearer, I ask you, first: Do You have a way? There is a way which you have taken, chosen, selected for yourself; there is a way which you follow in desire, word and act. So far as your life is left to your own management, there is a way which you voluntarily take and willingly follow. Do you know what that way is? It is not everyone who does know as much as that. It is a very simple question to put to you; but yet it is a very necessary one to a great many; for many walk on as in a dream.

Do you know where you are going? "Of course," says one, "everybody knows where he is going." Do you know where you are going, and do you carefully consider your end? You are steaming across the deep sea of time into the main ocean of eternity; to what port are you steering? Where go you, O man? The birds in the heaven know their time and place when they fly away in due season, but do you know where you are speeding? Do you keep watch, looking ahead for the shore? What shore are you expecting to see? For what purpose are you living? What is the end and drift of your daily action? I fear that many in this vast congregation are not prepared to give a deliberate answer which will be pleasant to utter and to think upon. Is not this suspicious? If I were to go out tomorrow by sea, I should not walk on board a steamboat and then inquire, "Where are you going?" The captain would think me a crazy fellow if I embarked before I knew where the vessel was going! I first make up my mind where I will go, and then select a vessel which is likely to carry me there in comfort. You must know where you are going. The main thing with the captain of a steamer will be the getting his vessel safely into the port for which it is bound. This design overrules everything else; to get into port is the thought of every watch, every glance at the chart, and every observation of the stars. The captain's heart is set upon the other side; his hope is safely to arrive at the desired haven, and he knows which the haven of his choice is; he would not expect to get there if he did not set his mind on it. How is it with you, dear friend? You are speeding towards heaven or hell—which of these is *your* port? I know of no ultimate abode of souls except the brightness of the Father's glory, or the darkness of Jehovah's wrath—which of these will be your end? Which way are you intentionally going? What is it you are aiming at? Are you living for God? Or are you so living that the result must be eternal banishment from His presence?

Surely, to press this inquiry upon you needs no eloquence of speech. The question is vital to your happiness, and self-interest should induce you to weigh it. I shall not use a single metaphor or illustration; for I am not here to please, but to arouse. I charge every man and woman in this house now to consider this question: Where are you going? What will be the end of the life you are now leading? Do not cast away the inquiry! It is not impertinent; it is not unnecessary. In the name of the Lord, I beseech you, answer me.

If you answer that question, allow me to put another: Do you know how you are going? In what strength are you pursuing your journey? If you feel able to say, "I am seeking that which is right and good," I then press the inquiry: In what strength are you pursuing it? Are you depending upon your own power, or have you received strength from on High? Do you rely on your own resolves and determinations, or have you received help from the Spirit of God? Remember, there are days in every life-voyage in which the storm-fiend puts all human power to a nonplus; even in the fairest weather we are all too apt to run on rocks or quicksand. The voyage of life is seldom altogether a pleasant one, and we must be prepared for tempests. Our own unaided strength will not endure the waves and the winds of the ocean of life; and if you are trusting to yourself, disaster will befall you! The Lord brings men to the desired haven, but left to themselves, they are no match for the thousand dangers of their mysterious voyage. Is God with you? Has the Lord Jesus become your strength and your song? Do you sail beneath the blood-red flag of the cross? If you are trusting in the Lord alone, disappointment, failure and shipwreck are impossible; but if you are hastening on without God for your Guide and Protector, then will your weak-

ness and folly be made clear before long to your inevitable ruin! You may put on all steam and forge ahead in the teeth of the wind; but all in vain—you will never reach the fair havens.

Are there any here who decline to answer my question? Will you not tell us where you are going? When a great vessel is crossing the sea and another comes within sight, they propose the question, “Where are you bound?” If the other vessel took no notice, gave no answer whatever, it would look suspicious. A craft that will not say where it is going! We don’t like the looks of it. If one of Her Majesty’s vessels happened about, and it challenged a sail, and received no reply to the question, “To what port are you bound?” I think they would fire a shot across her bow and make her heave to, till she did answer. Might not the silent craft prove to be a pirate? When a man confesses that he does not know where he is going, or what his business may be, the policeman concludes that he is probably going where he ought not to go, and has business on hand which is not what it should be. If you are afraid to consider your future, your fear is a bad omen. The tradesman who is afraid to look into his accounts will before long have them looked into for him by an officer from the Bankruptcy Court. He that dares not see his own face in the glass must be an ugly fellow; and you that dare not behold your own characters, have bad characters! Not know where you are going? Ah me, do you wish to find yourselves in hell all of a sudden? Would you, like the rich man, lift up your eyes in hopeless misery? I am suspicious of you who cannot tell where you are going; and I wish you would be suspicious of yourselves. You who do not like self-examination are the persons who need it most; you who shun awkward questions are the very people who need to face them. I usually speak out pretty plainly—and those of you who are used to me are not displeased. But sometimes strange hearers are offended and say that they will not come to be spoken to in such a fashion. Ah, my friend! Your ill humor shows that you are in an ill condition, and do not care to be corrected! If you were honestly desirous to be set right, you would like straight talk and honest rebukes; do you prefer to go to a doctor who is known to say, “There is not much the matter—a little change, and a dose of medicine will soon put you all right”? Do you pay your guineas to be flattered? No! The man who is wise wants to know the truth, however alarming that truth may be; the man, who is honest and hopeful, desires a thorough examination, and invites the preacher to deal truthfully with him, even if the result should cause distress of mind. If you decline to see where you are going, it is because you are going down into the pit. If you decline to answer the question: What is your way? I fear your way is one that you cannot defend, whose end will cause you endless lament.

Is anyone here compelled to say, “I have chosen the evil road”? Remember, the Lord knows the way that you take. I am anxious that you should, yourself, know the truth about your condition and prospects. I dread much your going on in ignorance. I wish every man here who is serving Satan to be aware that he is doing it. “If Jehovah is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him”; be hearty one way or the other. If you have chosen the service of sin, acknowledge it like a man, to yourself, at least. Choose your way of life in broad daylight; if you propose to die without hope in Christ, say as much; if you resolve to let the future happen as it may, and to run all risks, then put down in black and white your daring resolution; if you believe that you shall die like a dog and see no hereafter, do not at all conceal from yourself your doggish degradation, but be true to your own choice. If you choose the way of evil pleasures, do it deliberately, and after weighing all that can be said on the other side.

But there is this comfort to me, if it does not comfort you—that if you have chosen the wrong way, that choice need not stand. The grace of God can come in and lead you at once to reverse your course. Oh, that you may now say, “I had not thought of it, but I certainly am going in the wrong direction, and God helping me, I will not go an inch further!” Through our Lord Jesus Christ the past can be forgiven; and by the power of the Holy Spirit the present and the future can be changed! The grace of God can lead you to turn away from that which you have eagerly followed, and cause you to seek after that which you have disregarded. Oh, that today your cry might be, “For holiness and heaven!” You have not been up to now on the Lord’s side, but now enlist in the army of the Lord Jesus. I would gladly stay your vessel in her evil voyage; I am firing a shot across your bow; I solemnly warn you to consider your ways. Think, what will the end of these things be? Break off your sins by righteousness; for it is time to seek the Lord. “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?” This is the voice of God’s own word to you: hear it and be admonished, and God helping you turn at once!

But, my friend, are you drifting? Do you say, “I am not distinctly sailing for heaven, neither am I resolutely steering in the other direction; I do not quite know what to say of myself”? Are you drifting, then? Are you like a vessel which is left to the mercy of the winds and the waves? Ignoble condition! Perilous case! What? Are you no more than a log on the water? I should not like to be a passenger in a vessel which had no course marked out on the chart, no pilot at the wheel, no man at watch! Surely, you must be derelict, if not water-logged, and you will come to a total wreck before long. Yours is a dark prospect. Some time ago, I read in a paper of a gentleman being brought up before the magistrate. What was the charge against him? “Nothing very serious,” you will say. He was found wandering in the fields. He was asked where he was going, and he said he was not going anywhere. He was asked where he came from, and he said he did not know. They asked him where his home was, and he said he had none. They brought him up for wandering as—what?—a dangerous lunatic! The man who has no aim or object in life but just wanders about anywhere or nowhere, acts like a dangerous lunatic, and assuredly he is not morally sane. What? Am I aiming at nothing? Have I all this machinery of life, making up a vessel more wonderful than the finest steamboat, and am I going nowhere? My heartthrobs are the pulsing of divinely-arranged machinery—do they beat for nothing? Do I get up every morning and go about this world and work hard, and all for nothing which will last? As a being created of God for noble purposes, am I spending my existence in a purposeless manner? How foolish! Why, surely, I have need, like the prodigal, to come to myself; and if I do come to myself, I shall ask myself: Can it be right that I should thus be wasting the precious gifts of time and life and power? If I were nothing, it would be congruous that I should aim at nothing; but, being a man, I ought to have a high purpose and to pursue it heartily. Do not say that you are drifting; it is a terrible answer, implying grievous danger and casting a suspicion upon your sanity. If you have reason, use it in a reasonable way, and do not play the fool.

But can you say, “Yes, I am bound for the right port”? It may be that your accents are trembling with a holy fear; but none the less I am glad to hear you say as much. I rejoice if you say, “Christ commands me; I am trusting to His guidance; He is my way, my life, my end.” Dear friend, I congratulate you! We will sail together, as God shall help us, under the convoy of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord High Admiral of the sea of life. We will keep with His squadron till we cast anchor in the glassy sea. But now that you know your way, and are assured that you are on the right tack, put on all steam; exert your strength in the work to which your life is consecrated. Waste not a single moment! Let no energy lie dormant, arouse every faculty! If you are serving the Lord, serve Him with all your might. Is it not written, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength”? Those words sound to me like great strokes of the soul’s paddle wheels! They urge us to press forward in the holy voyage! Brothers and sisters, we must run, for our life is to be a race; it must be hard running, too. “Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” If we really are on the right way, let us press forward with all our powers, and may God help us that we may win the prize! Answer this first question, and know for sure whose you are, and where you are, and where you are going.

II. Secondly, IS IT A COMFORT TO YOU THAT GOD KNOWS YOUR WAY? Solemnly, I believe that one of the best tests of human character is our relation to the great truth of God’s omniscience. If it startles you that God sees you, and then you ought to be startled; if it delights you that God sees you, you may reasonably conclude that there is within your heart that which is right and true, which God will approve of. You are among those who know the truth, for you come to the light and cry, “Search me, O God.” Allow me to apply the test to you now, by asking what you think of the truth of God that the Lord knows you altogether. Remember, if your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart and knows all things. But if your heart condemns you not, then have you confidence towards God.

Dear friend, it is quite certain that God does know the way that you take. The Hebrew may be read, “He knows the way that is in me,” from which I gather that the Lord not only knows our outward actions, but our inward feelings. He knows our likes and dislikes, our desires and our designs, our imaginations and tendencies; He knows not only what we do, but what we would do if we could. He knows which way we would go if the restraints of society and the fear of consequences were removed. And that, perhaps, is a more important proof of character than the actions of which we are guilty! God knows

what you think of, what you wish for, what you are pleased with—He knows not only the surface of your character but the secret heart and core of it. The Lord knows you altogether! Think of that. Does it give you any joy, this morning, to think that the Lord thus reads all the secrets of your bosom? Whether you rejoice therein or not, so it is, and ever will be!

The Lord knows you approvingly if you follow that which is right. He knows them that put their trust in Him. That is to say, He approves of them. If there is in you even a faint desire towards God, He knows it, and looks with pleasure upon it; if you practice private prayer, if you do good by stealth, if you conquer evil passions, if you honor Him by patience, if you present gifts to Him which nobody ever hears of—He knows it all, and He smiles upon it. Does this give you pleasure, greater pleasure than if men praised you for it? Then it is well with you; but if you put the praise of men before the approval of God, you are in an evil way! If you can say this morning, “I am glad that He knows what I do, for His approval is heaven to me,” then conclude that there is a work of grace in your heart, and that you are a follower of Jesus.

God knows your way, however falsely you may be represented by others. Those three men who had looked so askance upon Job, accused him of hypocrisy and of having practiced some secret evil. But Job could answer, “The Lord knows the way that I take.” Are you the victim of slander? The Lord knows the truth; though you have been sadly misunderstood, if not willfully misrepresented by ungenerous persons, yet God knows all about you. And His knowledge is of more importance than the opinions of dying men! If you are not afraid to put your character and profession before the eyes of the Lord, you have small reason for disquietude, though all men should cast out your name as evil.

The Lord knows the way that you take, though you could not yourself describe that way. Some gracious people are slow of speech, and they have great difficulty in saying anything about their soul affairs. Coming to see the elders of the church is quite an ordeal; I am half afraid that they even feel it a trial to see me, poor creature that I am. They are timid in speech, though they would be bold in act; they could *die* for Jesus, but they find it hard to *speak* for Him. Their heart is all right, but when they begin to talk, their tongue fails them; they are unable to describe their conversion, though they feel it; they love repentance but can barely describe their own repenting. They have believed in the Lord Jesus, but it would puzzle them to tell what faith is. Trembling one, fall back on this—“He knows the way that I take.” If I cannot express my faith, yet He accepts it—if I cannot describe His work in my soul, yet He discerns the work of His own hands!

Another great mercy is that God knows the way we take when we hardly know it ourselves. There are times with the true children of God, when they cannot see their way, nor even take their bearings. It is not every saint that knows his longitude and latitude. No, it is not every saint that is sure that he is a saint! We have to ask, “Is my repentance real? Is my faith true? Have I really passed from death to life? Am I the Lord’s own?” I do not wish you to be in such a state—it is a pity that such a question should be possible. But I know full well that many sincere saints are often put to the question, and not altogether without reason. Herein is comfort—the Lord knows His children, and He knows the truth of their graces, the preciousness of their faith, the heavenliness of their life; for He is the former, the author of them all. He knows His own work and cannot be deceived. Therefore, dear friends, let us feel confident in God’s knowledge of us, since He is greater than our hearts, and His verdict is more sure than that of conscience itself.

Once more, remember that at this very moment God knows your ways. He knows not only the way you have taken and the way you *will* take, but the way you are now choosing for yourself. He knows how you are acting towards the sermon you are hearing. It may be you conclude that the preacher is very tiresome. Be it so—but still the subject is one which ought to be pressed upon your consideration. Therefore, bear with me; but if you reply, “No, it is not that. But I do not want to be probed and pressed in this way.” Well, the Lord knows that you are taking the way of resisting His Spirit and hardening your neck against rebuke. Do you like that fact? I think I hear one say, “I really wish to be right, but I am afraid I am not right; oh, that I could be made so!” God knows that feeling—breathe it into His ear in prayer. If you can say, “I am willing to be tested; I know to what port I am going; I am no pirate; I am bound for the New Jerusalem,” then I rejoice! Well, well, the Lord knows; He dearly sees your present

thoughts, your present wishes, your present resolves; He knows your heart. Is that a comfort to you? If it is, well. But if it saddens you that God should know your present condition, then be afraid, for there is something about you to be afraid of. He that sews fig leaves together, as Adam did, that he may hide himself from God, must know that he is naked. If he were clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, he would seek no concealment, but would be willing both to examine himself and to be examined of the Lord.

Thus have I handled these two questions: Do you know your way? Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way?

III. Thirdly, DO YOU MEET WITH TRIALS IN THE WAY? I anticipate your answer. Out of the many here present, not one has been quite free from sorrow. I think I hear one saying, “Sir, I have had more trouble since I have been a Christian than I ever had before.” I met with such a case the other day; a man said to me, “I never went to a place of worship for many years and I always seemed to prosper. At last I began to think of divine things, and I attended the house of God. But since then I have had nothing but trouble.” He did not murmur against God, but he did think it very strange. Friend, listen to me. These troubles are no indication that you are in the wrong way! Job was in the right way and the Lord knew it; and yet He allowed Job to be very fiercely tried.

Consider that there are trials in *all* ways. Even the road to destruction, broad as it is, has not a path in it which avoids trial. Some sinners go over hedge and ditch to hell; if a man resolves to be a worldling, he will not find that the paths of sin are paths of peace! The wicked may well be ill at ease—for God walks contrary to them because they walk contrary to Him. No man, be he on the throne, or on the wool-sack, or up in a mill, or down in a coal pit, can live without affliction! In a cottage near a wood there are troubles as well as in the palace by the sea. We are born to trouble—if you look for a world without thorns and thistles, you will not find it here.

Then, remember, the very brightest of the saints have been afflicted. We have in the Bible, records of the lives of believers. Can you remember the life of a single believer who lived and died without sorrow? I cannot. Begin with father Abraham—the Lord did try Abraham. Go on to Moses, a king in Israel. Were not his trials many and heavy? Remember David and all his afflictions. Come down to New Testament times. The apostles were so tried that one of them said, “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” Through much tribulation they reached their rest. If the saints of God confessed that theirs was a troublous way, you need not suppose that you are out of the road because your way is full of difficulty. Is there any ocean upon which a ship can sail in which it shall be quite sure that no storms will arise? Where there is sea there may be storms; and so where there is life there will be changes, temptations, difficulties, and sorrows.

Trials are no evidence of being without God—many trials come *from* God. Job says, “When He has tried me.” He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually worked the trouble, but the Lord not only permitted it, but He had a design in it. Without the divine concurrence, none of his afflictions could have happened. It was God that tried Job, and it is God that tries us! No trouble comes to us without divine permission. All the dogs of affliction are muzzled until God sets them free. No, against none of the seed of Israel can a dog move its tongue unless God permits. Troubles do not spring out of the ground like weeds that grow anywhere, but they grow as plants set in the garden. God appoints the weight and number of all our adversities. If He declares their number ten, they cannot be eleven; if He wills that we bear a certain weight, no one can add half an ounce more. Since every trial comes from God, afflictions are no evidence that you are out of God’s way.

Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests—“When He has *tried* me.” The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the patriarch was real and sincere. Did not the enemy say—“Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land; but put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.” The devil will have it that as dogs follow men for bones, so do we follow God for what we can get out of Him. The Lord lets the devil see that our love is not bought by temporal goods; that we are not mercenary followers but loving children of the Lord, so that under dire suffering we exclaim, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” By the en-

duration of grief, our sincerity is made manifest—and it is proven that we are not mere pretenders but true heirs of God!

Once more upon this point—if you have met with troubles, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says, “When He has tried me.” As much as to say, He will not always be doing it. There will come a time when He will have done trying me. Beloved, put a stout heart to a steep hill and you will climb it before long; put the ship in good trim for a storm, and though the winds may howl for a while, they will at length sob themselves asleep; there is a sea of glass for us after the sea of storms. Only have patience and the end will come. Many a man of God has lived through a hundred troubles when he thought one would kill him; and so will it be with you. You young beginners, you that are bound for the kingdom but have only lately started for it, be not amazed if you meet with conflicts. If you very soon meet with difficulties, be not surprised; let your trials be evidence to you that you are in the right, rather than that you are in the wrong way: “for what son is he whom the Father chastens not?” He that will go to hell will find many to help him there, but he that will go to heaven may have to cut his way through a host of adversaries! Pluck up your courage. The rod is one of the tokens of the child of God. If you were not God’s child you might be left unchastened; but inasmuch as you are dear to Him, He will whip you when you disobey. If you were only a bit of common clay, God would not put you into the furnace. But as you are gold, and He knows it, you must be refined; and to be refined it is necessary that the fire should exercise its power upon you. Because you are bound for heaven you will meet with storms on your voyage to glory.

IV. Fourthly, HAVE YOU CONFIDENCE IN GOD AS TO THESE STORMS? Can you say, in the language of the text, “When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold”? If you are really trusting in Jesus; if He is everything to you, you may say this confidently; for you will find it true to the letter. If you have really given yourself up to be saved by divine grace, do not hesitate to believe that you will be found safe at the last. I do not like people to come and trust Christ with a temporary faith as though He could keep them for a day or two, but could not preserve them all their lives. Trust Christ for everlasting salvation—mark the word “everlasting.” I thank God, that when I believed in His Son, Jesus Christ, I laid hold upon *final perseverance*—I believed that where He had begun a good work, He would carry it on and perfect it in the day of Christ. I believed in the Lord Jesus, not for a year or two but for all the days of my life and to eternity! I want your faith to have a hand of that kind, so that you grasp the Lord as your Savior to the uttermost; I cannot tell what troubles may come, nor what temptations may arise, but I know in whose hands I am, and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve me, so that when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. I go into the fire, but I shall not be burned up in it—“I shall come forth.” Like the three holy children, though the furnace was heated seven times hotter, yet the Son of Man will be with me in the furnace, and “I shall come forth,” with not even the smell of fire upon me! Yes, “I shall come forth,” and none can hinder me. It is good to begin with this holy confidence and to let that confidence increase as you get nearer to the recompense of the reward. Has He not promised that we shall never perish? Shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold?

This confidence is grounded on the Lord’s knowledge of us. “He knows the way that I take”; therefore, “when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” If something happened to us of which the Lord had not foreseen and provided for, we might be in great peril, but He knows our ways even to the end, and is prepared for its rough places. If some amazing calamity could come upon us which the Lord had not reckoned upon, we might well be afraid of being wrecked; but our Lord’s foreseeing eyes have swept the horizon and prepared us for all weathers; He knows where storms do lurk and cyclones hide away; and He is at home in managing tempests and tornadoes. If His far-seeing eyes have spied out for us a long sickness, and a gradual and painful death, then He has prepared the means to bear us through. If He has looked into the mysterious unknown of the apocalyptic revelation and seen unimaginable horrors and heart-melting terrors, yet He has forestalled the necessity which He knows is coming on; it is enough for us that our Father knows what things we have need of, and “when He has tried us, we shall come forth as gold.”

This confidence must be sustained by sincerity. If a man is not sure that he is sincere, he cannot have confidence in God. If you are a bit of gold and know it, the fire and you are friends! You will come forth

out of it, for no fire will burn up gold. But if you suspect that you are some imitation metal, some mixture which glitters, but is not gold, you will then hate fire and have no good word for it; you will proudly murmur at the divine dispensations: Why should I be put into the fire? Why should I be tried? You will kick against God's providence if you are a hypocrite, but if you are really sincere you will submit to the divine hand and will not lie down in despair. The motto of pure gold is, "I shall come forth." Make it your hopeful confidence in the day of trouble! I want you to have this sense of sincerity which makes you know that you are what you profess to be, that you may also have the conviction that you will come forth out of every possible trial. I shall be tempted, but "I shall come forth." I shall be denounced by slander, but "I shall come forth." Be of good cheer—if you go into the fire gold, you will come forth gold!

Once more, he says, "I shall come forth as gold." But how does that come forth? It comes forth *proved*; it has been assayed and is now warranted pure. So shall you be. After the trial you will be able to say, "Now I know that I fear God. Now I know that God is with me, sustaining me. Now I see that He has helped me, and I am sure that I am His." How does gold come forth? It comes forth purified. A lump of ore may not be as big as when it went into the fire, but it is quite as precious. There is quite as much gold in it now as there was at first. What has gone? Nothing but that which is best gone! The dross has gone. But all the gold is there. O child of God, you may decrease in bulk but not in bullion! You may lose importance but not innocence! You may not talk so big, but there shall be really more to talk of; and what a gain it is to lose dross! What gain to lose pride! What gain to lose self-sufficiency! What gain to lose all those propensities to boastings that are so abundantly there! You may thank God for your trials; you will come forth as purified gold!

Once more, how does gold come forth from the furnace? It comes forth ready for use. Now the goldsmith may take it and make what he pleases of it. It has been through the fire, and the dross has been taken away from it, and it is fit for his use. So, beloved, if you are on the way to heaven and you meet with difficulties, they will bring you preparation for higher service—you will be a better and more useful person; you will be a woman whom God can more fully use to comfort others of a sorrowful spirit. Spiritual afflictions are heavenly promotions. You are going a rank higher—God is putting another stripe upon your arm; you were only a corporal, but now He is making a sergeant of you! Be not discouraged. You that have set out for heaven this morning do not go back because you get a rainy day when you start; do not be like Pliable; when he got to the Slough of Despond, and tumbled in, all he did was to struggle to get out on the side nearest home. He said, "If I may only once get out of this bog, you may have that grand city for yourself." Come, be like Christian, who, though he did sink, always kept his face in the right way, and always turned his back on the City of Destruction. "No," he said, "if I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I will go down with my eyes towards the hills from where comes my help." "I am bound for Canaan, and if all the Canaanites stand in the way in one block, I will die with my face towards Jerusalem—I still will hold on, God helping me, even unto the end." May the Lord so bless you, for He knows the way you take; and when He has tried you, He will bring you forth as gold. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 139.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—914, 139, 701.

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