

PRESENT PRIVILEGE AND FUTURE FAVOR NO. 624

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1865,
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AT UPTON CHAPEL.

*“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them.”
Deuteronomy 33:27.*

THERE is a great satisfaction in having such a text as this, for even if the *preacher* should not be able to say anything to edification, yet the text itself is rich food for the saints, and may fully satisfy their hunger. Let but a child of God really digest such a royal dainty as this, and he shall be as well fed as was Elijah when, waking up, found food under the juniper tree, in the strength of which he might go for 40 days. This one verse may, by the Holy Spirit, be made sufficiently nourishing to sustain a believer from that place where he now is, to the gates of glory. “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

It is fabled that the swan sings but once, and that just before it dies; so Moses, who had been all his life a prophet, now closes his career a poet, and dies singing. He praises God, setting Him above all gods, and defying all men to find one like unto Him, “Who is like unto the God of Jeshurun?” Not satisfied with this, he also exalts in the highest degree all the people who have God to be their portion. “Happy are you, O Israel, who is like unto you?” I may say that my text is a combination of the two—he is here extolling God, the everlasting and eternal God who is our refuge—and he is here admiring the privilege of believers who have such a God to rest upon. While we are speaking, therefore, this evening, if you are not profited by our words, yet your hearts may be blessed if you praise God for His great goodness towards you, and may you also feel melted with holy joy at the blessed privileges which belong to you as the people of God, in having such a God who is so good to you.

The text naturally divides itself into two parts—the *present* and the *future*; in the present, we have the eternal God to be our refuge; in the future it is written that He shall thrust out the enemy from before us, and shall say, “Destroy them.”

I. Beginning, then, with the first part of the text, THE PRESENT BLESSING appears to me to give us three distinct thoughts.

God is our shelter; “The eternal God is your refuge.” But the word, “refuge,” according to many of the best translators, may be read, “mansion,” or “abiding place,” so here comes a second thought, that *God is our abode*. Then the next sentence gives us the third thought, “And underneath are the everlasting arms,” so that *God is our support*, as well as our shelter and our abode.

1. We will begin our meditation, in the Spirit’s power, by considering *God as our shelter*. The children of Israel, while they were in Egypt, and in the wilderness, were a type of God’s visible Church on earth. Moses was speaking primarily of them, but secondarily, of all the chosen ones of God in every age. Now, as God was the shelter of His ancient people Israel, so is He the refuge of His saints through all time. And first, He was eminently their shelter when *they were under bondage and the yoke was heavy*. When they had to make bricks without straw, and the taskmasters oppressed them, then the people cried unto the Lord, and God heard their cry, and sent unto them His servant Moses. So also, there often comes to men a time when they begin to feel the oppression of Satan. I believe that many ungodly men feel the slavery of their position. Even some of those who are never converted have sense enough to feel at times that the service of Satan is a hard one, yielding but little pleasure, and involving awful risks. Some men cannot go long making bricks without straw, without being more or less conscious that they are in the house of bondage; these, who are not God’s people, under the pressure of mind consequent upon a partial discovery of their state, turn to some form of pleasure or self-righteousness in order to forget their burden and yoke; but God’s elect people, moved by a higher power, are led to cry unto their God. It is one of the first signs of a chosen soul—that it seems to know, as if by heavenly instinct—

where its true refuge is. Dear brethren, you remember that although you knew but little of Christ, and in doctrinal matters you were very dark, though you did not understand, perhaps, even your own need, yet there was a something in you that made you pray, and realize that only at the mercy seat could you find your refuge. Before you were a Christian, before you could say—"Christ is mine," your bedside was the witness to many flowing tears when your aching heart poured itself out before God, perhaps in strains like these—"O God, I need *something*; I do not know what it is I need, but I feel a heaviness of spirit; my mind is burdened, and I feel that You only can unburden me. I know that I am a sinner; oh, that You would forgive me! I hardly understand the plan of salvation, but one thing I know—I need to be saved; I would arise and go unto my Father—my heart pants to make Your bosom my refuge." Now, I say that this is one of the first indications that such a soul is one of God's chosen, for it is true, just as it was of Israel in Egypt, that God is the refuge of His people even when they are under the yoke.

When captivity is led captive, the eternal God becomes *the refuge of His people from their sins*. The Israelites were brought out of Egypt; they were free; albeit they were marching they knew not where, yet their chains were snapped; they were emancipated, and needed not to call any man, "Master." But look, Pharaoh is angry, and he pursues them—with his horses and his chariots he hastens after them. The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them." Thus there is a period in the spiritual life, when sin labors to drag back the sinner who has newly escaped from it. Like hosts ready for battle, all the poor sinner's past iniquities hurry after him, and overtake him in a place where his way is hedged in. The poor fugitive would escape, but he cannot! What, then, must he do? You remember that *then* Moses cried unto the Lord. When nothing else could be found to afford shelter to the poor escaped slaves; when the Red Sea rolled before them, and the mountains shut them in on either side; when an angry foe pursued them, there was one road which was not stopped up, and that was the King's highway upward to the throne, the way to their God, and therefore, they began at once to travel that road, lifting up their hearts in humble prayer to God, trusting that He would deliver them. You know the story too well for me to need to repeat it here—how the uplifted rod divided the watery deeps, how the people passed through the sea as a horse through the wilderness, and how the Lord brought all the hosts of Egypt into the depths of the sea—that He might utterly destroy them, so that not one of them was left, and those who had seen them one day saw them no more forever.

Beloved, in this sense God is still the refuge of His people. *Our* sins, which pursued us so hotly, have been drowned in the depths of the Savior's blood. They sank to the bottom like stones, the depths have covered them, there is not one, no, not *one* of them left, and we, standing upon the shore in safety, can shout in triumph over our drowned sins, "Sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously, and all our iniquities has He cast into the midst of the sea."

While God is thus the refuge of His people under the yoke, and when sin seeks to overcome them, He is also their refuge *in times of need*. The children of Israel journeyed into the wilderness, but there was nothing for them to feed upon there; the arid sand yielded them neither leeks, nor garlic, nor cucumbers; and no brooks or rivers, like the Nile, were there to quench their thirst; they would have famished if they had been left to depend upon the natural productions of the soil. They came to Marab, where there was a well, but the water was very bitter; at other stations there were no wells whatever, and even bitter water was not to be had. What then? Why, the unfailing refuge of God's people in the wilderness was prayer. Moses, their representative, always betook himself to the Most High, at times falling upon his face in agony, and at other seasons climbing to the top of the hill, and there pleading in solemn communion with God, that He would deliver the people. And you have heard full often how men did eat angels' food in the desert—how Jehovah rained bread from heaven upon His people in the howling wilderness, and how He smote the rock, and waters gushed forth. You have not forgotten how the strong wind blew, and brought them flesh, so that they ate and were satisfied. Israel had no need unsupplied; their garments waxed not old, and though they went through the wilderness, their feet grew not sore. God supplied all their needs. We in our land must go to the baker, the butcher, the clothier, and many others in order to fully equip ourselves. But the men of Israel went to God for everything! We have to store up our money, and buy this in one place and that in the other—but the eternal God was their refuge and their resort for everything, and in every time of need, they had nothing to do but to lift up their voice to Him.

Now it is just so with us *spiritually*. Faith sees our position today to be just that of the children of Israel then—whatever our needs are, the eternal God is our refuge. God has promised you that your bread shall be given you, and that your water shall be sure. He who gives spirituals will not deny temporals. The mighty Master will never allow you to perish while He has it in His power to succor you. Go to Him with whatever may be the trouble which weighs you down. Do not suppose your case too bad, for nothing is too hard for the Lord! Dream not that He will refuse to undertake temporals as well as spirituals—He cares for you in all things. In everything you are to give *thanks*, and surely in everything by prayer and supplication you may make known your needs unto God. In times when the cruse of oil is ready to fail, and the handful of meal is all but spent, then go to the all-sufficient God, and you shall find that they who trust in Him shall not lack any good thing.

Furthermore, our God is the refuge of His saints *when their enemies rage*. When the host was passing through the wilderness, they were suddenly attacked by the Amalekites. Unprovoked, these marauders of the desert set upon them, and destroyed the tail end of them, and what did Israel do? The people did not ask to have a strong body of horsemen, hired out of the land of Egypt for their refuge, or even if they did wish it, he who was their wiser self, Moses, looked to another arm than that of man, for he cried unto God! How glorious is that picture of Moses, with uplifted hands, upon the top of the hill giving victory to Joshua in the plains below. Those uplifted arms were worth 10,000 men to the hosts of Israel; no, twice 10,000 had not so easily gotten a victory as did those two extended arms which brought down omnipotence itself from heaven! This was Israel's master-weapon of war—their confidence in God. Joshua shall go forth with men of war, but the Lord, Jehovah-Nissi, is the banner of the fight, and the giver of the victory! Thus, dear friends, the eternal God is *our* refuge. When our foes rage we need not fear their fury. Let us not seek to be without enemies, but let us take our case and spread it before God. We cannot be in such a position, that the weapons of our foes can hurt us, while the promise stands good—"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against you in judgment You shall condemn." Though earth and hell should unite in malice, the eternal God is our castle and stronghold, securing to us an everlasting refuge.

To close our remarks upon this point—*when their falls into sin had cursed the people of God*, and provoked the Most High so that He sent fiery serpents among them, *even then the eternal God was their refuge*. When we are conscious that sin has brought us into any mischief or sorrow, we are apt to feel—"I must not go to God with this, because it is clearly the natural and inevitable result of my sin—it is a rod of my own making." Yes, but we may go even with that, for if the Lord should send the fiery serpents, still, you must fly into the arms of that very God who has sent the serpents to bite you—for it is He, and He alone, who can lift up the bronze serpent before your tearful eyes, and give you life through looking at it! We make a mistake when we imagine that we may not go to God as sinners; we may feel unworthy to go, but we must not think that we shall be unwelcome. I do not go to my heavenly Father in times of need because I feel there are excellences in me, which will qualify me for receiving His help, but I go, because I feel unfit to be blessed, and am therefore, anxious for the blessing; I go because I feel unworthy of deliverance, and am the more desirous that I may get deliverance from the God of grace.

The eternal God, then, is our refuge in a thousand ways. I have only given you a few hints on this part of the subject, but we will sum them up, and then you can enlarge on them at your leisure. Under the yoke, before sin is forgiven, if you are a child of God, the eternal God is your refuge; when you have escaped from sin, and the past haunts you, still the eternal God is your refuge; when, in the wilderness, your needs press you down, whether they are temporal or spiritual, *then* the eternal God is your refuge; and when your enemies attack you, or your own guilt has brought you into such a position that God Himself chastises you sharply, still, even then it holds good and true that, the eternal God is your refuge if you believe in Him.

2. Now take the second thought with brevity. The eternal God is *our mansion, our dwelling, our abiding place*. The children of Israel had no other, and therefore if God were not their dwelling place, they were houseless. Pilgrims of the weary foot, they found no city to dwell in. At eventide they pitched their tents, but they struck them again in the morning; the trumpet sounded and they were up and away; if they were in a comfortable valley for one day, yet that relentless trumpet bade them resume their wearisome march through the wilderness in the morning; and, perhaps, they thought they lingered the long-

est where an encampment was least desirable. Nevertheless, they always had a dwelling place in their God. If I might use such a description without seeming to be fanciful, I would say that the great cloudy canopy which covered them all day long from the heat of the sun was their roof—and that the blazing pillar which protected them by night was their family fireside. God Himself dwelt in the very midst of them in the bright shining light, the Shekinah, within the Holy Place, and up from the very spot there rose the great pillar which was cloud by day and fire by night, and so, within the compass of God's protecting presence they found a perpetual abode. So Moses sings, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." Wherever they were, if they were but under the shadow of that cloud, they were quite at home, and whenever they got within the radius of the bright pillar of fire, they felt that they were not away from the family circle. Now I hope that many of us can say that the eternal God is our dwelling place—

*"Home, home,
Sweet home,
There's no place like home,"*

says the song, and certainly, if God is our home, the song has a depth of sweetness in it. *At home one feels safe.* An Englishman's house is his castle; who shall intrude upon him there? When the bolt is drawn, when the curtains are drawn, when the family gathers round the fireside, then we have shut the world, and all our enemies' babbling tongues out, and we dwell in quiet. So when we get to our God, not bolts of brass nor gates of iron could guard God's people as well as that wall of fire, which Jehovah is to all His chosen. When we draw near to God in sweet communion, we feel as if the devil himself were dumb—

*"Then, let the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steadfast souls shall fear no more,
Than solid rocks when billows roar."*

At home, too, *we take our rest.* Out in the world, in the workshop, we toil until the sweat streams from our face; in the pulpit, in the midst of our congregations, our mind is so active and on the alert, that the brain is often wearied, but at home we cast ourselves down upon the couch, and feel that now the day's work is over, and that the happy evening of rest has come. When I get to my God, no servile works have I to do—no hewing of wood and drawing of water, like a Gibeonite, in God's house; but here I am, His servant, happy in His service, and finding sweet rest in what I do for Him. "We, who have believed, do enter into rest," and there is a peace which, "passes all understanding, which keeps our heart and mind, through Christ Jesus."

At home *we let our hearts loose.* We cast aside all dignity there—we are no longer on our guard like men in armor; we are not afraid that our children will misunderstand us, or that our dear ones will misconstrue our words and sentiments; we feel at ease. So is it when we are with our God. I dare tell Him what I dare not tell anyone else; there is no secret of my heart which I would not pour into His ear; there is no wish that might be deemed foolish or ambitious by others, which I would not communicate to Him; for surely, if "The secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him," the secrets of them who fear Him ought to be, and must be with their Lord.

It is at home, if anywhere, that a man *is thoroughly happy and delighted.* He takes his soul's best solace there; his eyes sparkle most at his own fireside; whatever the man may be abroad, with all his cares and his troubles, he can't wait to get home, as going to the place of his delight. So I trust it is with us and our God. We go out, like Noah's dove; with weary wings we fly over the watery waste, ready to drop; but we come back again, like that same dove, into Noah's hand, and there we find our resting place forever.

It is for home that a man works and labors. I am sure when I see the workers filling the streets, just when work is over, that the most of them have a home to go to, for the sake of which they toil. What makes that man work so hard? Why, there are three little ones at home who must be fed! How is it that he is content to go through so much toil, but there is a wife at home dear to his soul, and for her and the babies he fights the battle of life bravely. Be it ever so homely; be it up ever so many pairs of stairs, yet the thought of that little room, and of the dear ones there at home, gives strength to the man to bear his burden and helps his fingers to fly the quicker over his work. In this sense, too, I think we can say that

our gracious God is our home, our mansion. The love of God strengthens us. We do but think of Him in the person of His dear Son, and a glimpse of the suffering face of the Redeemer compels us to labor. We feel that we must work, for we have brethren yet to be saved; we have uncalled ones yet to be brought in; we have the head of Christ to crown—we have the Father’s heart to make glad, by bringing home to Him His wayward and wandering sons.

We will pause here, and see if we can say, “Yes, ‘tis true, Lord; You are, as the eternal God, our mansion and dwelling place.” I pray, dear friends, do not say this in words unless you know in truth that the eternal God is your dwelling place.

3. We must be very brief on the third part of this present privilege—“Underneath are the everlasting arms.” This means that God is *our support* and our support just when we begin to sink. We need support when we are sinking, and by the arms being “underneath,” it seems that this support is given just when we are going down. At certain seasons the Christian *sinks very low in humiliation*. He has a deep sense of his own sin; he is humbled before God till he scarcely knows how to lift up his face and pray, because he appears, in his own sight, so abject, so mean, so base, and so worthless. Well, child of God, remember that when you are at your worst, yet “underneath you are the everlasting arms,” Christ’s atonement dives deeper than your sin. Sin may sink you ever so low, but the great atonement is still under all! I will give you a text which proves it. “He is able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him.” You may have gone very low, but you can never have gone so low, as “the uttermost.” Here is another. “All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.” You have plunged into nearly all sorts of sin, but you have not gone into, “all manner of sin.” Or if you have, it may be forgiven, so that this promise goes underneath you. The love of God, the power of the blood, and the prevalence of the intercession are deeper down than sin, with all its hell-born vileness, can ever sink the sinner, while breath is in his nostrils

Again, the Christian sometimes sinks very deeply in *sore trials from without*. He loses his property; his children die; his wife is carried to the grave—every earthly prop is cut away. What then? He goes down, down, down—yet still underneath him are the everlasting arms! You cannot sink so deep in distress and affliction, but what the covenant grace of an ever-faithful God will be still lower than you are—even when at your very lowest. Look at your Savior—you are never as low as He was. Perhaps you cannot pay your rent, and you are to be turned out of that little room; this is falling low indeed, but what did your Savior say—“Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay My head.” I have supposed you to be in a very sad case, but, you see, underneath you there are the sufferings of Christ. Perhaps your friends have forsaken you; yes, but hear Him—“He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.” He is deeper in the mire than you. You are very, very, *very* poor, but see, there *He* hangs upon the cross—stripped naked, without a rag to cover Him; deserted by all. You have gone very far, but not as far as that. Jesus represents the great goodness of God in its communion with your need, and in Him your God puts underneath you His everlasting arms.

Possibly you are sinking very deep down, *under trouble from within*. You have felt such vexations of spirit as you never thought you could have known; you have waged such a conflict as you never dreamed of; the fountains of the great deep have been broken up, and, as a deluge, sin threatens to cover your spirit, and drown all the life in your heart. Beloved, you cannot, even there, be brought as low as Christ was, for what did He say—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” God is still with you to be your succor, and if you have lost the light of your Father’s countenance, yet you have not lost it to so great an extent as your Savior did; you have not yet sweat “great drops of blood,” you have not yet prayed with strong crying and tears, and found that the cup could not be removed altogether. You have not yet descended into the depths, as your Savior did; and so we will take it for granted that underneath you, wherever you may be, there are the everlasting arms. I think I see the devil trying to drown a believer, but underneath are the everlasting arms. Satan says, “I will have him yet,” and down he dives lower still—but the everlasting arms are even there. Why, look what he did with Jonah! He got him into the whale’s belly, but he was not content with that. The whale, of course, was near the surface when it first sucked Jonah in, but it goes down, perhaps half a mile; it must go yet deeper, and so it stirs up the deep in its pain, for it has an indigestible morsel within, and it does not know what to do with it! It plunges down, down, *DOWN*, till Jonah says he went to the bottoms of the mountains, and the weeds

were wrapped about his head, and the earth with her bars was about him forever—yet even then, “underneath were the everlasting arms,” and therefore the whale comes up, and Jonah stands upon the dry land once more! So shall it be with you, beloved, for in your worst trials and times of difficulty, underneath you are the everlasting arms!

And this, also, I may give you *by way of comfort, in any weary labors in which you may be engaged*. There are some of God’s servants who feel as if they would willingly die; for to serve God, though very pleasant, is at times very difficult work; and when one is involved in God’s service, and is ready to drop, one will cry out, “Oh, when shall the day of rest come?” Courage, courage, you fainting soldier! Underneath are the everlasting arms—you shall have strength equal to your day! Your shoes shall be iron and brass! You shall end your journey well, and you shall fight the fight till the victory comes!

At last, *when death comes*, the promise shall still hold good. We shall stand in the midst of Jordan and, like poor *Christian*, it is possible that we may begin to sink; but may we have some *Hopeful* with us then, to say, as *Hopeful* did to *Christian*, “Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, it is good”—for underneath us there will be the everlasting arms. You may be full of pain and anguish, and the spirit may sink into a spiritual death even before the natural death comes on; you may feel dying to be dreadful work, but still, if the worst should come to worst, you shall yet, in the hour of extremity, win the victory! You shall triumph over death, and enter into the presence of God, and bless His name because, “underneath you are the everlasting arms.”

I can scarcely venture on the second part of my subject tonight at all, for we have not done with the first point. I wish you to notice those two phrases which are the pith of the text. “The *eternal God*.” “*Everlasting arms*.” “The *eternal God*.” Here is *antiquity*. The God who was before all worlds is forever my God. Oh, how I love that word, “eternal”! But, brethren, there are some people who do not believe in an *eternal* God. At any rate, they do not believe in Him as being theirs eternally. They do not believe that they belonged to Christ before they were born; they have a notion that they only had God to be theirs when they believed on Him for the first time. They do not believe in covenant settlements, and eternal decrees, and the ancient purposes of the Most High; but let me say that for comfort, there is no thought more full of sweetness, than that of an eternal God engaged in Christ Jesus to His people; to love, and bless, and save them *all*! One who has made them the distinguished objects of His discriminating regard from all eternity. It is the *ETERNAL* God. And then there are the “*everlasting arms*”—arms that will never drop, arms that will never grow weary, arms that will never lose their strength. They put the two words “eternal” and “everlasting” together, and they remind us of another sweet word—*immutability*. An everlasting God who faints not, neither is weary, who changes not, and turns not from His promise. Such is the God we delight to adore and to use as our eternal shelter, our dwelling place and our support.

II. The second part of the subject, AS TO THE FUTURE, I cannot dwell upon for lack of time, but only give you an outline of what one might have said upon it, if there had been opportunity.

He, who has been our God in the past, will certainly be our God in the future! And in the future we have two things to comfort us—*divine work*, and we have a *divine word*.

Here is a *divine work*. He will thrust out our enemies before us. Whatever your difficulties may be, whatever your sins may be against which you have to contend, remember, Jehovah leads the van, and crushes your foes before you come to them. You have to fight, Christian, with vanquished enemies, and it is an easy thing, when you have to overcome a dragon that has already had his head broken, by your risen Lord. Therefore Dr. Watts makes us sing for our comfort—

*“Hell and your sins resist your course,
But hell and sin are vanquished foes!
Your Savior nailed them to the cross,
And sung the triumph when He rose.”*

Before you get to your difficulties, your God will have removed them. The stone was laid at the mouth of the sepulcher, and the women said, “Who shall roll away the stone?” But when they arrived at the spot, they found that the stone had been rolled away by an angel long before. March on, Christian—the Jordan may be very deep—but as soon as the feet of God’s priests touch the border of the river it shall be dried up. You shall have before you 10,000 things which may appall you, but if you will but go on in

the strength of faith, they shall prove to be but the shadows which disappear when the sun rises. There is divine work always going on before God's people; His shield always goes in front; His sword always cuts and clears the way, and we have but to follow where He leads. When the children of Israel passed over Jordan, the priests who bore the ark first dipped their feet in the stream, and it parted before the servants of the Lord because God was between the cherubim. So in every crossing which lies in the path to the city of our God, that better city, Jerusalem the Golden, we see the footprints of one who is our Priest—touched with a sense of our infirmities and griefs because He has endured the same before us; Who has planted His feet in the darkest depths, and made a path through the mightiest waters so that we need not fear—but may boldly plunge in—assured that we only follow Him whose presence will always enable us to say, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” We follow the Captain of our salvation who says, “Come on, follow Me.” He goes before. Every dart that wounds you passes by Him. Yes, He has felt the first smart of each poisoned arrow in the devil's quiver, and the venomous power has been washed away in His blood. There is not a weapon in hell's armory whose edge has not been turned on the armor of our great Champion; the keenness of every blade is gone since it was buried in His wounds. When Jacob wrestled with the Nameless One till the break of day, he came out of the contest with one sinew withered so that he limped to his grave; and thus each of our foes has received a touch from the finger of Him, “who comes up from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength.” And that touch has crippled the power of our enemies; they are spoiled and robbed of much of their satanic might, because they have been beneath the heel of Him who has trod down all our foes beneath His feet.

Still, we are not to be idle, for we have next *a divine word*. He shall thrust out our enemies, but He will also say, “*Destroy them.*” We have to take God's Word, and to be obedient to it in the future. Whatever sins we have, there is only one thing to be done with them, and that is to “destroy them.” A man has a number of faults, and he says, “Well, sir, there is my drunkenness, and my swearing, and so on; I am quite agreeable to what you say, I will destroy *them*. I will hang them on a gallows as high as that on which Haman would have hanged Mordecai; but, sir, I have little a trick in my trade—I should not like to tell everybody of *it*—it is a very profitable one, and I do not think it is so very bad, for nearly everybody else in the trade does it. Do you not think the best way would be to practice it, and give part of the money I get by it to God's cause? I will be very careful, and do it only when compelled.” My dear friend, I have only one thing to say to you about your sin, and that is, “*Destroy it!*” Do not try to make it better, to dress it up, swear it in, and make a soldier of it for Christ—no—destroy it; this is your work. If your eye offends you, “pluck it out.” “Oh,” says another, “but I have a very bad temper; I sometimes fly into a passion, I think I must try to get over it by *degrees*, but still I can make a great many excuses for myself, and am I not quite right in doing so?” My dear sir, I can only say one thing, and that is, “*Destroy it,*” for the only proper treatment of sin is to cut it off and cast it from you. Do not pamper it or excuse it, but destroy it! Smite it to the heart if you can, and never be satisfied till you have utterly destroyed it. Look at Saul. He has been against the Amalekites, and he brings home a very beautiful flock of sheep and bullocks, and so on. He is told to destroy them all, but he brings them home and Agag with them. Why did he not kill Agag? Well, he was such a gentleman, such a thorough gentleman, that he did not want to kill him; it was a public duty to sweep the commonplace Amalekites out of the way, they were such rascals; but this Agag, why, he walked so delicately, he had such a nice way with him, he was so winning, he had such an enchanting face, had the manners and air, in fact, of an Israelite—it would be a pity, a great pity to kill him!

So Saul brought home the best of the sheep, and the beasts, and the cattle, and Agag with them. But Samuel comes in, and is in no sweet mood when he hears the bleating of the sheep. He demands of Saul—“Have you done as God commanded you?” “Yes I have,” said Saul. “Then what mean the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle that I hear?” “Oh,” said Saul, “I did not slay them *all*. I thought I had better spare some of the best of them as an offering unto God, so I kept them alive, and I have also kept Agag.” What came of it? Did the prophet spare the Amalekite? No, truly! Samuel first told Saul that God had put him away from being king, and then he said, “Bring Agag,” and Agag came to him—you can imagine how he would come—and Agag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.”

There he stood, and I think I see Samuel, getting gray then, very gray and not very fit for such service, but he looked for the nearest sword that he could get, and though it is not a prophet's work to kill, yet as soon as he could grasp a sword, he hewed Agag in pieces! He was not content to cut his head off, but hewed him in pieces, as a man would chop a block of wood—to show the anger and detestation which God had towards the most princely sins.

Now, Christian, your business with sin is in the Spirit's power to serve it as Samuel did Agag—to hew it in pieces, and show the utmost hatred towards it. So far from making excuses for it, seek to devise ways by which you may mortify it and put it to death.

When the Prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer, and the fire from heaven had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal, and, said he, "Let not one escape." And he took them all down to the brook Kishon and slew them there. So must it be with our sins—each one must die—let not one escape! Spare it not for its much crying. Strike, though it is a darling sin as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was on His Son; even so, with stern unflinching purpose, condemn to death that sin which may have been the darling of your heart. Spare it not, because it may make sport or be of use in any way. Remember Samson, how he gathered strength as his locks grew once more, and how he avenged himself upon his foes. Beware lest your sins which are only for a while repressed, and not totally destroyed, should rise up again, and with new-found might should hurl you to the ground, and bury you in the wreck of your noblest hopes and deeds. You will probably ask how you will be able to accomplish this work. Why, take the promise we have been talking about—"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." If you would triumph over darkness, set yourself in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness! There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt, as the immediate presence of God. Get into God's arms, and you will see how to hit at sin, and will gather strength to give the final blow which shall lay the monster in the dust. Job never knew how to get rid of sin half as well as he did when his eye of faith rested on God, and he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes.

The fine gold of the Christian is often becoming dim, and the spots will appear upon the surface showing that we dwell among the sons of earth, in a world which lies in the wicked one. We need some sacred fire which shall consume away the dross, and give us back the brightness we have lost. Go to God, He is a consuming fire, not to your spirit, but to your sins. You may so plead the work of Christ and the covenant of grace as to make the very nature of God, which would condemn you out of Christ, to cleanse you, being in Christ Jesus. You will be sanctified by the God who would have destroyed you, had you not fled for refuge to the hope set before you. You have strength to overcome sin given you in the covenant of grace; you have strength to drive out your own iniquities; you have strength to win battles for your Master, because in Christ Jesus, He has promised to be with you even unto the end. May the past experience stimulate you to future exertion, and let the goodness of God excite you to a sacred jealousy and to a holy revenge against those sins which are hateful in His sight.

May God bless you, brethren, for Christ's sake.

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