

MY RESTORER NO. 1149

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1873,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He restores my soul.”
Psalm 23:3.*

THIS sweetest of the Psalms sings of many mercies which the happy soul of the believer receives. And it traces all those benefits to one source, namely to the Good Shepherd Himself. “I shall not want.” Why? Because the Lord is my Shepherd. I lie down in delicious repose in green pastures. Why? Because “*He* makes me.” I march onward making holy progress beside the still waters. Why? Because “*He* leads me.” In the prospect of death I am calm and free from fear. Why? Because *He* is with me, His rod and staff they comfort me. The crown is composed of many costly things. Gold, pearls and rare gems from the land beyond the river, are all blended in one diadem and that diadem is, without a question, joyfully placed upon the head of the Great Shepherd of Israel. The poet laureate of Scripture sings surpassingly in this Psalm, and every line is dedicated to the Beloved of his soul, in who were all his fresh springs. My object, while handling a part of one of his verses, shall be the same as his own. I also would speak of “things which I have made touching the King,” with the view of extolling His name. I desire to glorify Him from one particular point of view, namely, as The Restorer who Himself, brings back our wandering spirits when we forsake His ways. I would just now write the first word of the text in capitals, capitals as large as you can find. “HE restores my soul.” He, He alone, He and not another. Unto Him be praise!

I. The text is full of lessons and reminders, and reminds us, in the first place of OUR TRUE POSITION as believers. Let us dwell upon it in that light. What is the true position of every believer? It is that of a sheep abiding close to its Shepherd. The text suggests that the sheep has gone astray and the shepherd brings it back in order to put it into the position which it ought never to have left. The fittest condition of a believer is in communion with Christ. It ought not to be a privilege occasionally enjoyed. It should be the everyday life of the soul. We are to abide in Jesus, walk with Him and live in Him. Paul did not say, “For me to specially rejoice is Christ,” or, “For me to feast on holydays is Christ;” but, “For me to live is Christ.” Christ is the ordinary bread of the common meal as well as the fat things full of marrow for the banquet. He is water from the rock as well as wine on the lees well-refined. To us, His name is the watchword of earth as we expect it to be our passport into heaven. We need fellowship with Jesus, not as a luxury for red-letter days and Sabbaths, but as the necessary provision of every day of our lives. “Abide in Me” is His Word to us for all seasons. And we ought to strive to realize it, so that always, by night and by day, on the Sabbath and equally on the weekdays, in our joys and in our cares, we should abide in Him. Christ is not merely a harbor of refuge, but a port for all weathers. Do not think, beloved, that I am setting up too high a standard, when I say this. I am so sure I am not that I will repeat what I have said, the proper condition of a child of God at all times is that he should sit with Mary at the Master’s feet, or with John, should lean his head upon the beloved Redeemer’s bosom.

I think this will be clear, first, if we *remember our obligations to Jesus*. When we were newly converted and first knew our sins to be blotted out, if we had been asked how we should, in the future, act towards our Lord, we should have set up a very high standard. “Did He die for me, bearing all my sins in His own body? Then I will forever view His death as the grandest miracle of love. And my grateful heart shall have communion with Him by love and praise. Has Jesus really forgiven me? Am I clean through being washed in His most precious blood, clean every whit, and made a child of God, and accepted in the Beloved? Oh, then, I will praise Him and bless Him, and magnify Him, and live to Him all my days.

As to ever being weary of Him, impossible! As to ever growing cold and indifferent towards Him, better my heart should cease to beat than that it should ever be.” Do I not accurately describe what you thought at the first? Have I not truthfully described the ardor of your espousal love? You have not realized your ideal, but that is what you rightly judged to be, and, beloved, it is what you ought to have been. It is not a higher condition than your solemn obligations to Christ really demand. If an angel had never heard of men before, and should suddenly alight upon this earth and meet with one of our race, and hold talks with him, he would be filled with wonder at what he discovered. Suppose that we should tell him that we fell into sin and were condemned to die, but that the great Maker of heaven and earth condescended to take upon Himself our nature, and died in our place? Can you imagine the angel’s astonishment at the condescension of the Son of God? After his first amazement had passed away, he would say to us, “And do you not love Him infinitely? Are you able, within the limits of your little heart, to hold all the love you feel for such unutterable grace? How do you live? Do you not feel that you cannot do half enough for Him? You certainly will never fail in obedience to Him! In trust of Him! In zeal for Him, that would be quite impossible!” How deeply would we blush and strive to cover our faces as we confessed to our angelic questioner that for such surprising love we have made but a poor return. I am quite sure, however, that we should quite agree with the angel as to what was due to our Lord, our conscience and our heart awarding Him the highest affection and the most constant service. Such deeds of love as Jesus has performed for us can never be adequately requited, but at the very least they ought not to be insulted by lukewarm and casual communion. They demand our heart, our soul, our all. With Him who has healed us we desire evermore to remain. With our Ransomer we would live in lifelong discipleship and be His servants, to go no more out forever.

Moreover, *our relationships to the Lord Jesus* require perpetual communion with Him. Know you not that you are the friends of Christ? And if you are friends, will you not show yourselves friendly? But how can you be friendly if by the space of a week you have no converse with Him in the house, or in the field, or by the way? Is this your kindness to your Friend? You are more than friends, you are His brethren. “The same is my brother, and sister, and mother,” said He, and can you treat a brother so indifferently as to walk towards Him as if He were a stranger and a foreigner, and scarcely exchange a token of affection by the months together? Is this brotherly? Did David treat his Jonathan thus? More than that, in wondrous love Jesus has called Himself your husband and taken you to be His spouse. Is not that strange love, or the lack of it, which would allow a married pair to walk together week by week without the fellowship or affection? Surely, their marriage bands would be bonds, and their unity would be misery. I can conceive of scarcely any worse torment than conjugal union without affectionate communion. Shall I be the bride of Jesus and my love never be displayed in converse with Him? Shame upon me, a thousand times shame, if I allow a day to pass unblest with thoughts, and words, and deeds of love. Yet more, the Lord has been pleased to call us members of His body. Now, every member of the body must carry on vital fellowship with the head. It must exercise inevitable, though not always conscious, fellowship. In the spiritual body communion should be consciously enjoyed at all times. Shall the hand, become indifferent to the head or the foot refuse commerce with the brain? If we are in good health, no such schism in the body will ever occur, but with the head all the members will abide in affectionate, unbroken communion. We may suspect paralysis if life ceases to flow through the entire corporate body, and so communion is suspended. It is clear to all who are taught of God that our relationships certainly require of us that we abide in the Lord Jesus.

Moreover, beloved, this case ought to need no pleading, for if *we would have happiness*, where is happiness to be found but in walking near to Jesus? I speak what I know, and the common testimony of all the saints is with me, when I say that out of heaven there is no heaven but nearness to Christ. Fellowship with Him is Paradise without a serpent in it. It is Canaan itself, without the Canaanite foe. Communion with Jesus is the porch of glory. It is the Saturday night of the eternal Sabbath, the dawn of the heavenly day. Communion with Christ, if it is not actually heaven, is certainly the choicest suburb of the new Jerusalem. Did not our poet cry—

Where can such sweetness be,

*As I have tasted in Your love,
As I have found in Thee?"*

Now, men do not ordinarily need to be stirred up to that which is their delight. Their spirits fly after their joys as eagles to the spoil. Where their heart moves with pleasure, it draws all their powers after it. And if, indeed, it is so, (and who shall contradict it?), that fellowship with Christ is the richest of all joys, the most intense of all delights, why are we so hard to move? Oh, how sluggish are our hearts, how dull our spirits, that we do not fly after Jesus with rapture of desire and do not labor perpetually to abide in Him.

While this should draw us, another consideration should drive us, namely, that *our daily necessities* demand that we should live in fellowship with Him. If we are foolish and ignorant, where should we dwell, but with the Teacher? If always weak, to whom should we resort but to the strong for strength? Let the child abide by its parent, the scholar with the master, the patient by his physician, the poor man with his helper. To whom should we go in our hourly needs but to Him who has, up to now, been our all in all? Israel could not afford to be a single day without the manna, nor can we be satisfied for an hour without the bread of life. "Without Me, you can do nothing," says our Lord, and we have proven His words to be true. Do we need more humiliating evidence? Are we willing to fall into a condition in which we can do nothing else but sin? I hope not. We ought never to be satisfied, except when abiding in Jesus, we are clothed with His power and are bringing forth much fruit to His praise.

Remember, yet further, that when out of fellowship with Christ *our perils are infinite*. When unfaithful to His love we are readily seduced by every temptation. Without His love in our hearts we become victims to other loves, which lead us into idolatry, plunge us into hurtful lusts and poison the wells of our joy. We must either be enthralled by the surpassing love of Jesus, or we shall be fascinated by the world's deceptions. One of the two masters must rule us, either the Prince of the power of the air, or the King of Kings. When Christ is with us we are safe, for what wolf can rend a sheep when it is close to the shepherd's hand? When we are away from Jesus, we are not only in peril, but are already despoiled. To lose fellowship with Jesus is loss enough, in itself, even if no further calamity occurs. Ships without a pilot, cities without watchmen, babes without a nurse, are we without Jesus. We cannot do without Him. The less we attempt it the better. Samson without his locks is the sad type of a believer out of fellowship. How dare we go forth to business on any day without the presence of the Lord? As well might the warrior go to battle without shield and buckler. Should we not daily pray, "If Your presence go not with me, carry me not up there"? How can we go to our beds till He has kissed us with the kisses of His mouth? May not even the dreams and visions of the night prove our downfall if our souls are not committed to His keeping? For my part, I love to murmur to myself, as I place my head on my pillow, those charming lines—

*"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior's breast."*

The benefits of fellowship with Christ should constrain us to abide in it. If any man would grow in grace, if he would be filled with the Spirit, if he would know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, especially if he would be made like to Him in all things, who is the Head, he must abide in Christ. The whole compass of a Christian's permissible ambition is to be realized in fellowship with Jesus and nowhere else. All that I ought to be, or can desire to be, when I am in a right state, I can enjoy in my Lord, by walking near to Him. Nothing good can any believer obtain by forsaking his Master. Following Christ afar off is evil, only evil. And that continually abiding in Him is peace, joy, holiness, heaven. Therefore, beloved, I say again, let us strive after that which ought to be the habitual position of every Christian, namely, abiding in Christ. This is for babes in grace as well as men in Christ Jesus, for the obscure as well as the famous.

II. Our text, in the second place, reminds us of OUR FREQUENT SIN. "He restores my soul"—He often does it. He is doing it now. Now, the Lord would not do what is unnecessary and therefore, this shows me that I often wander from Him, or else I would not need to be brought back. Beloved, I grieve to say that with man's professions of godliness, suspended communion is the chronic state of things. I

must confess my inability to comprehend the Christian life of many who are called Christians. It is not for us to judge their real condition before God, nor will we attempt to do so, but we cannot help observing the inconsistency of their acts. They have believed in Christ, let us hope. Let us hope, also, that their faith produces enough good works to prove itself to be a living faith. But, for all that, their religion is cold, joyless, and passionless. There are thousands of Christian people whose religion seems to lie entirely in attending religious services on Sunday, and occasionally, perhaps, coming out on a weekday to a lecture. They observe private devotions of a very stereotyped order and keep a Bible somewhere or other, and this is about it. To them prayer is a formality, praise is forgotten, the reading of the Bible is a drudgery, meditation a mere memory and their whole Christianity more like a mummy than a thing of life. With them the complaint that they are out of communion with Jesus is superseded by the question, "Were they ever in it?" I am afraid we have in this church and in all churches, scores and hundreds of members whose highest emotions in reference to love to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ reaches no higher than the inquiry—

***"Do I love the Lord or not?
Am I His, or am I not?"***

Conscious enjoyment of the love of Jesus and familiar communion with Him they know nothing of, and indeed, they look upon such things as the luxuries of a high class of saints, very pleasant to read of in biographies, but not matters of daily possession. They heartily admire the good people who can attain to such eminent positions, but to dwell there themselves, has never occurred to them as at all possible. Beloved, this is a sad state of things. It is a condition of life in which I tremble for you, because you are starved in the midst of plenty, you are willfully pinching yourselves with poverty while infinite wealth is all around you. You live as hired servants and not as sons. You get the duty of religion without the enjoyment of religion. You wear its yoke but do not feed in its pasture. You seem to me to forego all the cream of our holy faith and to partake of nothing but its skimmed milk. You leave the sunny plains of communion for the frozen regions of negligent living and therefore you shiver with fear while others exult with gladness. You have chosen your position in the outer courts of the temple. You never enter into the holy of holies. You do not pass within the veil to behold the glory of the Lord. You are sailing to heaven, but you are stowed away in the hold in the dark. You appear to me in your religion to live like the beggars who come round to our back doors for the bones and the stale crusts. And therefore I am not very much surprised when I hear that some of you feel a craving for amusements and say that you are very dull, and need lively company and gaiety to make life bearable. If my child were to say that he must go continually to the confectioner's or to the eating-house, I should say to myself, "Surely the food on my table is sufficient for him." But if upon inquiry I found that he did not eat at my table except occasionally, and that he always made choice of the barest bones and driest crusts, I should be at no loss to comprehend why he was so frequently seen at other places of supply. If you are not living upon Jesus, and rejoicing in the measureless bliss which He is capable of bestowing upon you, I do not marvel if you go off to the world for your sweetmeats and feel a leaning towards the leeks and the garlic and the onions of Egypt. Oh, dear brothers and sisters, if you are, indeed, His people, may the Holy Spirit save you from the dull religion in which you live and bring you into that condition in which you shall see your Lord, abide in Him, and rejoice in Him. A miner who lives the most of his days underground is not doing his country justice when he speaks of it as dark, close, and suffocating. It is so down below, but it is not so up above. Religion wears but a grim aspect to those who know nothing of its secret joys, its sacred banquets, its ecstasies, and its calm satisfactions. There is a bleak side and a sunny side to every hill. Those who are careless in their fellowship will know the worst side of things. The bright-eyed dweller in the sunny south is a very different man from the Eskimo who drive their dogs among the ice fields and hide away through long months of winter, in which the sun never sends forth a glimmer to cheer the earth. Who cares to be one of the Eskimos of Christianity, or the Laps and Fins of the church? Yet, alas, these abound on all sides.

We have to confess that others of us, in whom this departure from Christ is not chronic, are nevertheless, subject to acute attacks of declension, and there are seasons, when it is indeed, well for us that

He restores our souls. How soon are we turned out of the way! How little a thing may mar our joyful fellowship with Christ! Have you been in worldly company in the evening? Did you marvel that you could not enjoy communion at evening prayer? Have you become fond of your possessions, or have you been eager to increase them? Then your idols have grieved your Lord. Have you been unreconciled to your losses and fretted against God for His dark providences? "If you walk contrary to Me," He says, "I will walk contrary to you." When our proud spirits chafe and fret against our heavenly Father, we cannot expect smiles and caresses from Him. We may easily lose fellowship with Christ by pride and self-esteem. If He indulges us with happy hours of sacred joy, we are very apt to think that we are somebody, and straightway we hold our heads very high. And whenever that happens we are very likely to fall into the mire and be there until our own garments abhor us and we cry for help like the sinners we are. Christ delights to meet us on terms of grace. He is to be fullness and we emptiness, He the mighty Helper and we the fainting sinner, He the Savior and we the lost ones. While we say that we are rich and increased in goods, He knows that we are false and He leaves us. But when we see that He has the gold and the white raiment, and we the nakedness and the beggary, then are we arrived at terms which befit both Him and us. Vain is it to boast, for we have no beauty. His are the eyes which are as a flame of fire, His countenance goodly as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His is the crown of light and the mantle of glory. Unto Him must all honor be ascribed. Those who honor Him, He will honor. Humility sits at Jesus' feet and that is the chosen place of loving fellowship.

We may lose the presence of Christ by forgetfulness of duty or of truth. We may, on the other hand, lose it by evil thoughts and absorption in fleeting cares. We may lose the company of Christ by inconsistent actions or by idle conversations. "Oh," some of you say, "is that so? Will Jesus be gone from us so soon?" It is even so. Those who know Him best have found out that He is like His Father and there is a trait in His Father's character which is very conspicuous in the Son. It is written, "The Lord your God is a jealous God," and Jesus is a jealous lover. He will not cast away His people. He is faithful to the worst of them. But if we do not walk with Him in holiness, He will withdraw Himself from us. Can two walk together unless they are agreed? If we grieve Him He will make us grieve. Cold, unloving, irreverent walking will soon cause the beams of the Sun of righteousness to glance no more upon us. Blessed be the name of our Beloved, He comes back before long, and He says, "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercy will I gather you." But even the small moments of His forsaking are all too long. A little of His absence is painful for a true spirit to bear. But I leave this mournful point for something more consoling.

III. The text reminds us also, of OUR LORD'S FAITHFUL LOVE. "He restores my soul." This is not what He might have done, or would have done had He been changeable as we are. There are some who teach that Jesus leaves His roaming sheep to perish. As a punishment for their wanderings He gives them up to the wolf. I hope that very few believe that doctrine now. It is so dishonoring to the good Shepherd that I hope all God's people will give it up once and for all. Yet such was the belief of many at one time. Ah, I do not wonder that some believed it, for I have often been hard pressed with the fear that it would turn out to be so in my own case. But I am here this morning to say concerning my Lord, "He restores my soul." He has not cast me off, or left me to myself, or abandoned me to my own devices. But in love to my soul He has plucked my feet out of the net, drawn me up from the horrible pit and set my feet upon the rock of His immutable love. To leave His sheep to perish is not like our Savior. The heart refuses credence to such an idea, it so unlike Him. My witness is that, "He restores my soul." He has done this so often that He may well be described as always doing it. The Psalmist puts it in the present tense, as if the Lord was in the habit of doing so, and was even at this moment in the act of restoring his soul. Truly I must confess that I wander and He restores me. Child of God, as numerous as your sins have been, so numerous have His restorations been. After a hundred times erring, you might have provoked Him to say, "He is given unto his idols, let him alone. My Spirit shall no longer strive with him." But no, He turns His hand again upon you and once more leads you in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. The mother forgets not her suckling, though it is often fretful and peevish. She still has compassion upon the son of her womb, and even thus it is with Jesus. We are too deeply engraved on the

palms of His hands to be at last, left to die. We have cost Him too dearly for Him to relinquish us. Having restored our soul a hundred times, He still restores it. It is the way of Him. It is the habit of His love. The text lovingly insinuates that He is ready to restore us now. He is at His old work again. Even now, “He restores my soul.” Where are you, dear brother? Dear sister? Have you grown very dull and cold of late? Jesus is waiting to make your heart burn within you. Do you feel half-dead spiritually? Your Lord and Master is even now, ready to quicken you by His Word and to restore unto you the joy of His salvation.

If you ask me why the Lord is thus quick to restore His people, I can find no answer in them or their merits, but a little further on the psalmist gives you the reason why Christ thus acts in faithfulness and tenderness. “He leads me in the paths of righteousness *for His name’s sake.*” He would not restore us for our sakes. There is nothing in us which could be pointed out to the eye of justice as a claim for restoration, though much might be remembered which, on the footing of the law, would ensure our ruin. Here is our safety. The Lord Jesus has willed to save us, and He stands to His purpose and decree. He has put forward His own veracity and immutability as guarantees of the covenant. His own honor would be in jeopardy should one of His people be lost. Therefore for His own name’s sake He restores the wanderer, lest His enemies should say, “God has forsaken His people,” and lest the hosts of hell should boast, saying, “The Lord began to save them, but He was not able to finish the work.” “For His name’s sake.” Deep and blessed reason! Immutable, immovable foundation of comfort! For His name’s sake He restores our souls when we wander from His way. Strange are the means He uses. Sometimes it is a most heavy rod. At other times a sweetly fascinating love call. Singular are the modes of dealing with His people. He will break them in pieces and crush them beneath His feet, apparently in hot displeasure, but all with the view of making them sick of sin and eager after Himself. He will tear them as a lion tears his prey, and this not to destroy, but to save them. Is it not written, “I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal”? Often by dispensations of terror He leads us into ways of grace and frequently that which appears to be our utter destruction ends in our complete restoration, according to His grace. Let the text stand as a type and testimony of His immutable love. “He restores my soul.”

IV. During the short time which remains for me to discourse to you, I want to throw my whole strength into the last consideration. Our text, emphasized as I have emphasized it, reminds us of HIS SUPREME POWER. “HE restores my soul.” HE, HE, HE alone restores my soul. From first to last my revivals and refreshing come from Him. He Himself first made my soul to live—yes, He was life itself to me. You had no life, beloved, till Jesus passed by and saw you lying dead in sin and said to you, “Live.” You were like Lazarus in the tomb. You were beginning to stink with corruption and sin, and His voice, when it said, “Lazarus, come forth,” was life to you. You did not help the Savior in your quickening, how could you? You exercised no concurrent action. He took the first step and quickened you when you were dead in sin. He began to save you because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. You owe your regeneration entirely to Him and it is not surprising that your revival should come from the same source. Surely He who regenerated can restore. He who created can renew. Restoration is not a more difficult work—no, it is but a secondary work compared with the new creating of the soul. The Lord, even Jesus Christ, who did at the first give you life, can revive you again, and He can do it by Himself, being to your soul her medicine as well as her physician. All the evils under which a Christian smarts arise from the absence of Jesus, or else obtain their power to injure from the fact of the Lord’s being away. There are corruptions which dwell always in us, but these do not dare to show their faces when Jesus reigns within in revealed glory. The traitors lurk in their holes when the king is in the city, they will not venture forth till they hear that He is offended and is gone. While the flag flies on the castle to mark that my lord is at home, His enemies are on their best behavior, for they have a dread of His sword. When our fellowship with Jesus is active, sin lies dormant, or is so thoroughly subdued that it makes but a struggling gasp for life. So, then, if at this time I have become proud, or petulant, or idle, or cannot pray, or will not submit to the divine will, or have fallen into spiritual sickness—it is quite certain that all the mischief is occasioned by

the loss of my Lord's company, and it is clear that His coming back to me will restore my soul. If His absence has developed all this evil, then His presence can surely put it away.

Should it happen that the temptation is outward, still no outward temptation has any force when Christ is present. Let all the world's charms attempt to seduce us, they are horrible distortions when contrasted with the loveliness of Jesus. Only let us see His face and all earthly witcheries have lost their enchantment. Suppose that we were tempted to skepticism? Christ is the antidote for that venom. No man doubts when Christ is present with him. At the sight of Him even Thomas cries, "My Lord and my God." Can we despond while He consoles? Can the children of the bride chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? On the other hand, pride cannot live where Jesus is seen. "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead," said the beloved apostle. His presence is the death of every sin, the life of every grace. Therefore it is that the text says, "He restores my soul." The hunger, famine, and disease of war need but one cure, and that is peace. The woes of the believer's soul need but one remedy, and that lies in the words, "Abide in Me." The presence of Christ has everything in it that the soul can possibly need. I see the green leaves of a plant most dear to all who love the woods in spring. It is now nestling under a hedge upon a shelving bank, just above a trickling stream. I ask it why it does not bloom and it whispers to me that it will bloom by-and-by. "But, sweet primrose, why not put forth your lovely flower at once and gladden us with your beauty?" She answers, "I am waiting for Him." For whom do you tarry, you herald of spring?—

*"All love on you to rest their weary eyes,
Reading therein a history of dearest ties."*

She meekly answers, "I am waiting for my lord, the sun." Do you not need other friends and helpers? "No," she says, "the coming of my lord will be enough, and when he puts forth his strength I shall put on my beauty." But will you not need soft, pearly drops of dew to glisten on the leaves? Are not your blossoms most frail to gaze upon when all around keeps time and tune therewith, when the violet and harebell are in your company, when the buds are swelling and "the green-winged linnet sings"? To which she replies, "*He* will bring them, *he* will bring them all." But are you not afraid of the killing frosts and the dreary snowstorms? "*He* will chase them all away," says the little plant. "I shall be safe enough when he brings on the spring." Believer, you are that plant and Jesus is your sun. He will bring you healing beneath His wings and joy in the light of His countenance.

He restores our entire manhood. Every regenerated faculty grows strong when He is near. Every grace drinks in new life from communion with Christ. Faith triumphs, love burns, hope prophesies, patience becomes strong for endurance and courage is bold for conflict. Christ is such fare that all the graces can feed on Him, and all grow strong upon the sacred morsels.

The best of all is that He is a restoration which is available now, available at once. I felt, the other day, heavy at heart, dull, dead. I thought of myself as though I were a branch of a tree cut off and so I meditated thus with myself—"If I am a branch of the vine, and have been removed from my stem, my only hope is to get back into the place from where I came and be grafted in again, and begin to suck the sap again, and feel the life flowing through me," Then was it sweet to remember that there is no possible state into which a believer could fall, even if it were the most desperate that could be conceived, but what Christ can restore him perfectly and at once. Then for my own comfort and renewal I began with my Lord thus—I looked at Him upon the cross. I stood before Him as a sinner and wondered at Him that He should die for sinners. And I trusted Him and I said to Him, "Lord, You know I trust You. I have no hope but in You and I cling to You as a limpet clings to the rock. With all my heart and soul I cling." I began to feel the sap flow from the stem into my branch at once. Directly I had got into contact with my Lord, by a simple faith, I felt that virtue went out of Him to heal my soul. Once having established the flow of the sap, it flowed more, and more, and more. For as I thought about my salvation through Him, being myself guilty, and He my righteousness, I began to love Him, and my soul began to glow with a passion towards Him. And I wanted to be telling others what a dear, good Savior He was, and in a few moments after I had bemoaned myself as dead to Him and a castaway, I felt as much warmth of love to Him as ever I had done in all my life, and could say in the language of the spouse, "Or ever I was aware,

my Soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib". Now, I believe that this is the natural process to go through for the restoring of your soul. Some of you professors may be feeling, "I do not know how it is, but I am not what I ought to be. I am out of gear with Christ. I wish to get into a better state of heart, to be more pleasing to God than I am, by walking nearer to Him." If such is your state, mind what you do. Try what I have described or, unless you are wide awake, there will come to you Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, and tell you there are other ways of getting your souls restored. First, he says, you should repent bitterly of all this wandering of heart. That is correct enough, but who is to give you this repentance? And then, says he, you must be more attentive to the outward means of grace, you must set aside longer times for prayer and be more diligent in searching the Scriptures privately. That also is all correct. Whatever he bids you that observe and do, as Christ said of the Pharisees, but that is not the way to obtain restoration of soul. The way to heaven is never round by Sinai. Always be afraid of directors who lead you in that direction. All our healing lies in Christ, Christ is the physician and Christ is the medicine too. The way to get your soul restored is not to try to restore it yourself, nor to undergo any processes by which it may work itself right. But go straight away to Christ and lay hold on Him, just as you are whatever your condition may be. Coming into contact with Him, you shall soon have to sing in the words of the text, "He restores my soul." Let others talk of their sacraments, "He restores my soul." Let men boast and glory of special ways of raising their souls to heaven, "He restores my soul." Let some rejoice because their souls need no restoring, but are always strong, I cannot say that, but I can say, "He restores my soul." I hope this morning I shall have many beloved brothers and sisters of like mind, who will go out of this house saying not only, "I knew He could restore my soul," but, "He restores my soul. I was very cold when I came in here, as cold as the weather itself, but Jesus has thawed the ice of my heart." Perhaps you have to confess that you were in a very bad state of mind, ugly-tempered and I do not know what besides, worried out of anything like peace and rest. Now, then, is the time to try the great Restorer, before you leave your seat, labor to get into contact with Christ, by the power of His Holy Spirit. Do, I pray, return to Him as at the first. O branch, come back to the stem. Let the sap flow again. "But I am not in a fit condition," you say. What! Have you gone back to that old Sinai idea of fitness? Have you gone back to that legal demand? Come as you are. Come as you are to Jesus. I mean you saints. Are you going to play the fool as sinners do? Sinners say they are to get ready for Christ, and fools they are for saying it. Are you about to say the same? You will be worse fools still. Come just now. Whatever you have been, let the connection between you and Christ be consciously felt and quickened by an immediate application to Him by simple faith, and you shall yet say, as you rise into more than your former vigor, "He restores my soul."

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END OF VOLUME 19.