

CHARLES KINGSLEY

TRUE WORDS FOR
BRAVE MEN: A BOOK
FOR SOLDIERS' AND
SAILORS' LIBRARIES

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for Soldiers' and Sailors' Libraries**

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*“Yet was he courteous still to every wight,
And loved them that did to armes incline.”*

Spenser.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This little volume is selected from the unpublished sermons and addresses of Charles Kingsley by the request of a Colonel of Artillery, and with the sanction of an Army Chaplain of long experience, who knew the influence of his writings on soldiers, and who wish that that influence may live, though he is no longer here. The Lecture on Cortez was given at Aldershot Camp in 1858, and the Address to Brave Soldiers and Sailors written for and sent out to the troops before Sebastopol in the winter of 1855, when Mr. Kingsley's own heart, with that of all England, was grieving over the sufferings of our noble army in the Crimea. F. E. K.

I. THE GOOD CENTURION; OR, THE MAN UNDER AUTHORITY

“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home, sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.

The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say unto this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel.”

—Matt. viii. 5-10.

We find in Holy Scripture, that of the seven heathens who were first drawn to our Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel, three were soldiers.

The first was the Centurion, of whom our Lord speaks in such high terms of commendation.

The next, the Centurion who stood by His cross, and said, “Truly this was the son of God.” Old legends say that his name was Longinus, and tell graceful tales of his after-life, which one would fain believe, if there were any evidence of their truth.

The third, of course, was Cornelius, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles.

Now these three Centurions—commanding each a hundred men—had probably risen from the ranks; they were not highly educated men; they had seen endless cruelty and immorality; they may have had, at times, to do ugly work themselves, in obedience to orders. They were doing, at the time when they are mentioned in Scripture, almost the worst work which a soldier can do. For they were not defending their own country against foreign enemies. They were keeping down a conquered nation, by a stern military despotism, in which the soldiery acted not merely as police, but as gaolers and executioners. And yet three men who had such work as this to do, are singled out in Scripture to become famous through all time, as the first-fruits of the heathen; and of one of them our Lord said, “I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel.”

Why is this? Was there anything in these soldiers' profession, in these soldiers' training, which made them more ready than other men to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ? And if so; what was it?

Let us take the case of this first Centurion, and see if it will tell us. We will not invent any reasons of our own for his great faith. We will let him give his own reasons. We will let him tell his own story. We may trust it; for our blessed Lord approved of it. Our Lord plainly thought that what the soldier had spoken, he had spoken well. And yet it is somewhat difficult to understand what was in his mind. He was plainly no talker; no orator. Like many a good English soldier, sailor, yeoman, man of business, he had very sound instincts in him, and drew very sound conclusions from them: but he could not put them into words. He knew that he was right, but he could not make a speech about it. Better that, than be—as too many are—ready to make glib speeches, which they only half believe themselves; ready to deceive themselves with subtle arguments and high-flown oratory, till they can give the most satisfactory reasons for doing the most unsatisfactory and unreasonable things.

No, the good soldier was no orator: but he had sound sense under his clumsy words. Let us listen to them once more.

“I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” Surely the thought which was in his mind is to be found in the very words which he used—Authority. Subordination.

Discipline. Obedience. He was under authority, and must obey his superior officer. He had soldiers under him, and they must obey him. There must be not only no mutiny, but no neglect, no arguing, no asking why. If he said Go, a man must go; if he said Come, a man must come; and make no words about it. Otherwise the Emperor's service would go to ruin, through laziness, distrust, and mutinous talk. By subordination, by discipline, by mutual trust and strict obedience, that empire of Rome was conquering the old world; because every Roman knew his place, and every Roman did what he was told.

But what had that to do with our Lord's power, and with the healing of the child?

This. The honest soldier had, I think, in his mind, that subordination was one of the most necessary things in the world; that without it the world could not go on. Then he said to himself, "If there must be subordination on earth, must there not be subordination in heaven?" If he, a poor officer, could get his commands obeyed, by merely speaking the word; then how much more could God. If Jesus was—as He said—as His disciples said—the Lord, the God of the Jews: then He had no need to come and see a sick man; no need to lay His hands on him; to perform ceremonies or say prayers over him. The Laws of Nature, by which health and sickness come, would obey His word of command without rebellion and without delay. "Speak the word only, Lord, and my servant shall be healed."

But how did the Centurion know—seemingly at first sight, that Jesus was the Lord God? Ah, how indeed?

I think it was because he had learnt the soldier's lesson. He had seen many a valiant officer—Tribunes, Prefects, Consuls, Emperors, commanding men; and fit to command men. There was no lack of such men in the Roman empire then, as the poor, foolish, unruly Jews found out to their cost within the next forty years. And the good Centurion had been accustomed to look at such men; and to look up to them beside, and say not merely—It is a duty to obey these men, but—It is a delight to obey them. He had been accustomed—as it is good for every man to be accustomed—to meet men superior to himself; men able to guide and rule him. And he had learned—as every good soldier ought to learn—when he met such a man, not to envy him, not to backbite him, not to intrigue against him, not to try to pull him down: but to accept him for what he was—a man who was to be followed, if need be, to the death.

There was in that good Centurion none of the base spirit of envy, which dreads and therefore hates excellence, hates ability, hates authority; the mutinous spirit which ends, not—as it dreams—in freedom and equality, but in slavery and tyranny; because it transforms a whole army—a whole nation—from what it should be, a pack of staunch and faithful hounds, into a mob of quarrelsome and greedy curs. Not of that spirit was the good Centurion: but of the spirit of reverence and loyalty; the spirit which delights in, and looks up to, all that is brave and able, great and good; the spirit of true independence, true freedom, and the true self-respect which respects its fellow men; and therefore it was, that when the Centurion came into the divine presence of Christ, he knew at once, instinctively and by a glance, into what a presence he had come. Christ's mere countenance, Christ's mere bearing, I believe, told that good soldier who He was. He knew of old the look of great commanders: and now he saw a countenance, in spite of all its sweetness, more commanding than he had ever seen before. He knew of old the bearing of Consuls and of Emperors: and now, in spite of Christ's lowly disguise, he recognised the bearing of an Emperor of emperors, a King of kings. He had learnt of old to know a man when he met one; and now, he felt that he had met the Man of all men, the Son of Man; and that so God-like was His presence, that He must be likewise the Son of God.

And so had this good soldier his reward; his reward for the soldierly qualities which he had acquired; for subordination; for reverence; for admiration of great and able men. And what was his reward? Not merely that his favourite servant was healed at his request: but that he learnt to know the Lord Jesus Christ, whom truly to know is everlasting life; whom the selfish, the conceited, the

envious, the slanderous, the insolent, the mutinous, know not, and never will know; for they are not of His Spirit, neither is He of theirs.

But more: What is the moral which old divines have drawn from this story? “If you wish to govern: learn first to obey.” That is a moral lesson more valuable than even the use of arms. To learn—as the good Centurion learnt—that a free man can give up his independence without losing it. Losing it? Independence is never more called out than by subordination. A man never feels himself so much of a free man as when he is freely obeying those whom the laws of his country have set over him. A man never feels so able as when he is following the lead of an abler man than himself. Remember this. Make it a point of honour to do your duty earnestly, scrupulously, and to the uttermost; and you will find that the habits of self-restraint, discipline, and obedience, which you, as soldiers, have learned, will stand you in good stead for the rest of your lives, and make you each, in his place, fit to rule, just because you have learned to obey.

But now go on a step, as the good Centurion went on, and say—If there is no succeeding in earthly things, whether in soldiering or any other profession, without subordination; without obeying rules and orders strictly and without question: then perhaps there is no succeeding in spiritual and heavenly things. For has not God His moral Laws, His spiritual Laws, which must be obeyed, if you intend to prosper in this life, or in the life to come?

“Thou *shalt* love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, and thy neighbour as thyself.

Thou *shalt* honour thy father and thy mother. Thou *shalt not* kill, steal, commit adultery, slander, or covet.” So it is written: not merely on those old tables of stone on Sinai; but in The Eternal Will of God, and in the very nature of this world, which God has made. There is no escaping those Laws.

They fulfil themselves. God says to them, “Go,” and they go; “Come,” and they come; “Do justice on the offender,” and they do it. If we are fools and disobey them, they will grind us to powder. If we are wise and obey them, they will reward us. For in wisdom’s right hand is length of days, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her, and blessed is every one that retaineth her; as God grant you all will do.

But you, too, in time may have soldiers under you. Think, I beseech you, earnestly of this, and for their sake, as well as for your own, try by God’s help to live worthy of Christian English men. Let them see you going out and coming in, whether on duty or by your own firesides, as men who feel that they are “ever beneath their great taskmaster’s eye;” who have a solemn duty to perform, namely, the duty of living like good men toward your superior officers, your families, your neighbours, your country, and your God—even towards that Saviour who so loved you that He died for you on the cross, to set you the example of what true men should be; the example of perfect duty, perfect obedience, perfect courage, perfect generosity—in one word—the example of a perfect Hero.

Live such lives, and then, will be fulfilled to you, and to your children after you, from generation to generation, the promises which God made, ages since, to the men of Judea of old; promises which are all true still, and will continue true, in every country of the world, till the world’s end.

“Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good; dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

The Lord knoweth the doings of the righteous; and their inheritance shall endure for ever.

They shall not be confounded in the perilous time; and in the days of dearth they shall have enough.

The Lord ordereth a good man’s going; and maketh his way acceptable to himself.

Though he fall, he shall not be cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

I have been young, and now I am old; yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.

Flee from evil, and do the thing that is good; and dwell for evermore.

For the Lord loveth the thing that is right; He forsaketh not his that are godly, but they are preserved for ever.” Amen.

II. CHRIST IS COME. A CHRISTMAS SERMON

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.”

—*Isaiah ix. 6, 7.*

It is now more than three thousand years ago that God made to Abraham the promise, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Again the promise was renewed to Moses when he was commanded to tell the Jews, “a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me. Hear ye him . . .” In David’s Psalms, again, this same strange person was spoken of who was already, and yet who was to come. David calls him the Son of God, the King of kings. Again, in the Prophets, in many strange and mysterious words, is this same being spoken of as a virgin’s child—“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us;” and again, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God—the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” And again, “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And with righteousness shall He judge the poor,” &c.

And again, “Thou Bethlehem, though thou be little among the princes of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth He that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from everlasting. And He shall be great unto the ends of the earth.”

But time would fail me if I tried to repeat to you half the passages wherein the old Jewish prophets foretold Him who was to come, and in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, more and more clearly as the time drew nigh.

Well, my friends, surely you know of whom I have been speaking—of whom Moses and the prophets spoke—of Him who was born of a village maiden, laid in a manger, proclaimed of angels to the shepherds, worshipped with hymns of glory by the heavenly host on the first Christmas day eighteen hundred and seventy-eight years ago, as we count time. Aye, strange as it may seem, *He is come*, and in Him all the nations of the earth are blessed. *He is come*—the Conqueror of Evil—the desire of all nations—the Law-giver—the Lamb which was to suffer for our sins—the King of kings—the Light which should lighten the heathen—the Virgin’s child, of wondrous wisdom, whose name should be God as well as man—whom all the heathens, amid strange darkness and mad confusions, had still been fearing and looking for.

He is come—He came on that first Christmas-tide. And we here on each Christmas-tide can thank God for His coming, and say before men and angels, “Unto us a child is born—the Prince of Peace is *ours*—to His kingdom we belong—He has borne about on Him a man’s body, a man’s soul and spirit—He was born like us—like us He grew—like us He rejoiced and sorrowed—tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin—able to the uttermost to understand and help all who come to God by Him. He has bruised the serpent’s head—He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and brought us into *His* kingdom. Through His blood we have redemption and forgiveness—yes! through Him who, though He was laid in a manger, was yet the image of the unseen God. And by Him, and for Him—that Babe of Bethlehem—were all things created in heaven and earth—and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. All heaven and earth, and all the powers therein, are held together by Him. For it pleased the Father that in *Him* should all fulness dwell; and having

made peace through the blood of His cross, to reconcile by that child all things unto Himself—all things in heaven—all things in earth.”

This should be our boast—this should be our glory—for this do we meet together every Christmas day.

But what is all this to us if that Blessed Man be gone away from us? Our souls want more than I have told you yet. Our souls want more than a beautiful and wonderful story *about* Christ. They want Christ Himself. Preaching is blessed and useful if it speaks of Christ. Our own thoughts are blessed and useful if we think of Christ. The Bible is most blessed and useful containing all things necessary to salvation, for it speaks of Christ. Our prayers are blessed and useful if in them we call and cry earnestly to Christ. But neither preaching, nor thinking, nor praying are enough. In them we think about Him and speak to Him. *But we want Him to speak to us.* We want not merely a man to say, your sins *may* be forgiven you; we want Christ Himself to say, “Your sins *are* forgiven you.”

We want not merely a wise book to tell us that the good men of old belonged to Christ’s kingdom—we want Christ Himself to tell us that we belong to His kingdom. We want not merely a book that tells us that He promised always to be with us—we want Him Himself to tell us that He is really now with us. We want not merely a promise from a prophet of old that in Him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, but a sign from Christ Himself that this nation of England is really now blest in Him. In short, we want not words, however true words, however fine words, *about* Christ. We want Christ Himself to forgive us our sins—to give peace and freedom to our hearts—to come to us unseen, and fill us with thoughts and longings such as our fallen nature cannot give us—such thoughts and feelings as we cannot explain in words, for they are too deep and blessed to be talked about—but thoughts which say to us, as if the blessed Jesus Himself spoke to us in the depths of our hearts, “Poor, struggling, sinful brother! *thou art mine.* For thee I was born—for thee I died—thee I will teach—I will guide thee and inform thee with mine eye—I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

Well—you want *Him*—and you want a sign of Him—a sign of His own giving that *He is among you this day*—a sign of His own giving that He has taken you into His kingdom—a sign of His own giving that He died for you—that He will feed and strengthen your souls in you with His own life and His own body.

Then—there is a sign—there is the sign which has stood stedfast and sure to you—and to your fathers—and your forefathers before them—back for eighteen hundred years, over half the world.

There is the bread of which He said, “Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you.” There is the wine of which He said, “This cup is the New Covenant in my blood, which is shed for you, and for many, for the forgiveness of sins.” There is His sign. Don’t ask *how*. Don’t try to explain it away, and fancy that you can find fitter, and soberer, and safer, and more gospel-sounding words than Jesus Christ’s own, by which to speak of His own Sacrament. But say, with the great Queen Elizabeth of old, when men tried too curiously to enquire into her opinion concerning this blessed mystery—

“Christ made the Word and spake it,
He took the bread and brake it,
And what His Word did make it,
That I believe, and take it.”

He said, “This bread is my body which was broken for you.” He said, “This cup is the New Testament in my blood.” Is it? or is it not? And if it is, is not Christ among us now, indeed? Is not that something better than all the preaching in the world? Jesus Christ, the King of kings—the Saviour—the Deliverer—the Lamb of God—the Everlasting Son—the Word—the Light—the Life—is here among us ready to feed our souls in the Holy Sacrament of His body and blood, as surely as that bread and wine will feed our bodies—yea—to feed our souls and bodies to everlasting life.

“Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink. Come, buy wine without money and without price.”

III. IS, OR IS NOT, THE BIBLE TRUE?

“If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?”
—*John viii. 46.*

Is, or is not, the Bible true? To this question we must all come some day or other. Do you believe that that book which lies there, which we call the Bible, is a true book, or a lying book? Is it true or false? Is it right or wrong? Is it from God, or is it not from God? Let us answer that. If it is not from God, let it go; but if it *is* from God, which we know it is, how dare we disobey it?

That *God*, the maker of heaven and earth, should speak to men—should set His commands down in a book and give it to them—and that they should neglect it, disobey it—it is the strangest sight that can be seen on earth! that God in heaven should say one thing, and a human being, six feet high at most, should dare to do another!

If the Bible is from God, I say, the question is not whether it is *better* to obey it or not. Better? there is no better or worse in the matter—it is infinitely necessary. To obey is infinitely right, to disobey is infinitely wrong. To obey is infinitely wise, to disobey is infinite folly. There can be no question about the matter, except in the mind of a fool. Better to obey God's word? Better indeed—for to obey is heaven, to disobey is hell. *That* is the difference. And at your better moments does not the voice within you, witness to, and agree with, the words of that book? When it tells you to care more for your soul than your body—more for the life to come, which is eternity, than for the present life which lasts but a few years—does not common sense tell you that? The Bible tells you to reverence and love God the giver of all good—does not reason tell you that? The Bible tells you loyally to obey, to love, to worship our blessed King and Saviour in heaven. Does not common sense tell you that? Surely if there be such a person as Jesus Christ—if He is sitting now in heaven as Saviour of all, and one day to be Judge of all—by all means *He* is to be obeyed, He is to be pleased, whoever else we may displease. Reason, one would think, would tell us that—and it is just want of reason which makes us forget it.

What have you to say against the pattern of a true and holy man as laid down in the Bible? The Bible would have you pure—can you deny that you ought to be that? It would have you peaceable—can you deny that you ought to be that? The Bible would have you forgiving, honest, honourable, active, industrious. The Bible would have you generous, loving, charitable. Can you deny that that is right, however some of you may dislike it? The Bible would have you ask all you want from God, and ask forgiveness of God for every offence, great and small, against Him. Can you deny that that is right and reasonable? The Bible would have you live in continual remembrance that the great eye of God is on you—in continual thankfulness to the blessed Saviour who died for you and has redeemed you by His own blood—with daily and hourly prayer for God's Spirit to set your heart and your understanding right on every point. Can you deny that that is all right and good and proper—that unless the Bible be all a dream, and there be no Holy and Almighty God, no merciful Christ in heaven, this is the way and the only way to live? Ay, if there were no God, no Christ, no hereafter, it would be better for man to live as the Bible tells him, than to live as too many do. There would be infinitely less misery, less heart-burnings, less suffering of body and soul, if men followed Christ's example as told us in the Bible. Even if this life were all, and there were neither punishment nor reward for us after death—does not our reason tell us that if all men and women were like Christ in gentleness, wisdom, and purity, the world as long as it lasted would be a heaven?

And do not your own hearts echo these thoughts at moments when they are quietest and purest and most happy too? Have you not said to yourselves—“Those Bible words are good words. After all, if I were like that, I should be happier than I am now.” Ah! my friends, listen to those thoughts when they come into your hearts—they are not your own thoughts—they are the voice of One holier than

you—wiser than you—One who loves you better than you love yourselves—One pleading with you, stirring you up by His Spirit, if it be but for a moment, to see the things which belong to your peace.

But what can you say for yourselves, if having once had these thoughts, having once settled in your own minds that the Gospel of God is right and you are wrong, if you persist in disobeying that gospel—if you agree one minute with the inner voice, which says, “Do this and live, do this and be at peace with God and man, and your own conscience”—and then fall back the next moment into the same worldly, selfish, peevish, sense-bound, miserable life-in-death as ever?

The reason, my friends, I am afraid, with most of us is, sheer folly—not want of cunning and cleverness, but want of heart—want of feeling—what Solomon calls folly (Prov. i. 22-27), stupidity of soul, when he calls on the simple souls, How long ye simple ones will you love simplicity or silliness, and the scorners delight in their scorning (delight in laughing at what is good), and fools hate knowledge—hate to think earnestly or steadily about anything—the stupidity of the ass, who is too stubborn and thick-skinned to turn out of his way for any one—or the stupidity of the swine, who cares for his food and nothing further—or worse than all, the stupidity of the ape, who cares for nothing but play and curiosity, and the vain and frivolous amusements of the moment.

All these tempers are common enough, and they may be joined with cleverness enough. What beast so clever as an ape? yet what beast so foolish, so mean, so useless? But this is the fault of stupidity—it blinds our eyes to the world of spirits; it makes us forget God; it makes us see first what we can lay our hands on, and nothing more; it makes us forget that we have souls. Our glorious minds and thoughts, which should be stretching on through all eternity, are cramped down to thinking of nothing further than this little hour of earthly life. Our glorious hearts, which should be delighting in everything which is lovely, and generous, and pure, and beautiful, and God-like—ay, delighting in God Himself—are turned in upon themselves, and set upon our own gain, our own ease, our own credit. In short, our immortal souls, made in God’s image, become no use to us by this stupidity—they seem for mere salt to keep our bodies from decaying.

Whose work is that? The devil’s. But whose *fault* is it? Do you suppose that the devil has any right in you, any power in you, who have been washed in the waters of baptism and redeemed by Christ from the service of the devil, and signed with His Cross on your foreheads, *unless you give him power?* Not he. Men’s sins open the door to the devil, and when he is in, he will soon trample down the good seed that is springing up, and stamp the mellow soil as hard as iron, so that nothing but his own seeds can grow there, and so keep off the dews of God’s spirit, and the working of God’s own gospel from making any impression on that hardened stupified soil.

Alas! poor soul. And thy misery is double, because thou knowest not that thou art miserable; and thy misery is treble, because thou hast brought it on thyself!

My friends—there is an ancient fable of the Jews, which, though it is not true, yet has a deep and holy meaning, and teaches an awful lesson.

There lived, says an ancient Jewish Scribe, by the shores of the Dead Sea, a certain tribe of men, utterly given up to pleasure and covetousness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. To them the prophet Moses was sent, and preached to them, warning them of repentance and of judgment to come—trying to awaken their souls to high and holy thoughts, and bring them back to the thought of God and heaven. And they, poor fools, listened to Him, admired his preaching, agreed that it all sounded very good—but that he went too far—that it was too difficult—that their present way of life was very pleasant—that they saw no such great need of change, and so on, one excuse after another, till they began to be tired of Moses, and gave him to understand that he was impertinent, troublesome—that they could see nothing wise in him—nothing great; how could they?

So Moses went his way, and left them to go theirs. And long after, when some travellers came by, says the fable, they found these foolish people were all changed into dumb beasts; what they had tried to be, now they really were. They had made no use of their souls, and now they had lost them; they had given themselves up to folly, and now folly had taken to her own; they had fancied, as people

do every day, that this world is a great play-ground, wherein every one has to amuse himself as he likes best, or at all events a great shop and gambling-house, where the most cunning wins most of his neighbour's money; and now according to their faith it was to them. They had forgotten God and spiritual things, and now they were hid from their eyes. And these travellers found them sitting, playing antics, quarrelling for the fruits of the field—mere beasts—reaping as they had sown, and filled full with the fruit of their own devices.

Only every Sabbath day, says the fable, there came over these poor wretches an awful sense of a piercing Eye watching them from above—a dim feeling that they had been something better and nobler once—a faint recollection of heavenly things which they once knew when they were little children—a blind dread of some awful unseen ruin, into which their miserable empty beast-life was swiftly and steadily sweeping them down;—and then they tried to think and could not—and tried to remember and could not—and so they sat there every Sabbath day, cowering with fear, uneasy and moaning, and half-remembered that they once had souls!

My friends, my friends, are there not too many now-a-days like these poor dwellers by the Dead Sea, who seem to have lost all of God's image except their bodies? who all the week dote on the business and the pleasures of this life, going on very comfortably till they seem to have quite hardened their own souls; and now and then on Sabbath days when they come to church, and pretend to pray and worship, sit all vacant, stupid, their hearts far away, or with a sort of passing uneasiness and dim feeling that all is not right—*try to think and cannot—try to pray and cannot*—and, like those dwellers by the Dead Sea, once a week on Sabbath day half remember that they once had souls?

So true it is, that from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have. So true it is, that the wages of sin is death; death to the soul even in this life. So true it is that why men do not believe Christ, is because they cannot hear His word. So true it is, that only the pure in heart shall see God, or love god-like men and god-like words. So true it is, that he that soweth the wind shall reap the whirlwind, and that he who *will* not hear Christ's words, shall soon not be *able* to hear them; that he who will not have Christ for his master, must soon be content to have the devil for his master, and for his wages, spiritual death. From which sad fate of spiritual death may the blessed Saviour, in His infinite mercy, deliver us.

IV. THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE TREE OF LIFE; OR, THE FALL

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

—*Genesis iii. 1-6.*

Here is a lesson for us all. You and I, and all men brought into the world with us a nature which fell in Adam; and, as it fell *before* we were born, it is certain enough to fall, again and again, after we are born, in this life; ay, and unless we take care, to fall lower and lower, every day, acting Adam's sin over again, until we surely die. This is what I mean—What God said to Adam and Eve, He says to every one of us. And what the devil said to Adam and Eve, he will say to every one of us.

First. God says to us, “Of all the trees of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat, lest thou die.”

Of all the trees of the garden thou mayest freely eat. God grudges you nothing good for you. He has put you into this good and pleasant world, where you will find pleasures enough, and comforts enough, to satisfy you, if you are wise; but there are things which God has forbidden you, not out of any spite or arbitrariness, but because they are bad for you; because they will hurt you if you indulge in them, and sooner or later, kill both body and soul.

Now, many of those wrong things look pleasant enough, and reasonable enough, as the forbidden fruit did. Pleasant to the eyes and good for food—and to be desired to make you wise.

As people grow up and go out into life, they are tempted to do many things which their parents forbid, which the Bible forbids, which the law of the land forbids, and they do not understand at first why they are forbidden any more than Adam and Eve understood why they were not to eat of the forbidden fruit.

Then the devil (who is always trying to slander God to us) whispers to them, as he did to Eve, “How unreasonable! how hard on you. People say that this is wrong, and you must not do it, and yet how pleasant it must be! How much money you might get by it—how much wiser, and cleverer, and more able to help yourself you would become, if you went your own way, and did what you like.

Surely God is hard on you, and grudges you pleasure. Never mind—don't be afraid. Surely you can judge best what is good for you. Surely you know your own business best. Use your own common sense and do what you like, and what you think will profit you. Are you to be a slave to old rules which your parents or the clergyman taught you?”

So says the devil to every young man as he goes out in life. And to many, alas!—to many, the devil's words sound reasonable enough; they flatter our fallen nature, they flatter our pride and our self-will, and make us fancy we are going up hill, and becoming very fine and manly, and independent and knowing. “*Knowing*”! How many a young man have I seen run into sin just that he might be *knowing*; and say, “Why should I not see life for myself? Why should I not know the world, and

try what is good, and how I like that, and what is bad too, and how I like that—and then choose for myself like a man, instead of being kept in like a baby?”

So he says exactly what Adam and Eve said in their hearts—“I will eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” He says in his heart, too, just what Solomon the wise said, when he, too, determined to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

Ay, young people, who love to see the world, and to choose for yourselves, read that Book of Ecclesiastes, the saddest book on earth, and get a golden lesson in every verse of it. See how Solomon determined to see life, from the top to the bottom of it. How he “gave his heart to know, seek, and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit,” (Eccles. i. 13).

And then, how he turned round and gave his heart to know mirth, and madness, and folly, and see whether *that* was good for him, and, “I said of laughter, it is mad: and of mirth, what doeth it?” (Eccles. ii. 2-26). And then he gave himself to wine and revelling, and after that to riches, and pomp, and glory, and music, and the “fine arts,” as we call them. “I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.”

And what was the end? “Then I looked on all the works that my hand had done, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” Therefore, he says, that he hated all the labour he had taken under the sun, because he must leave it to the men who came after him, and found out at last, after years of labour and sorrow, trying to make himself happy with this and that, and finding no rest with any of them, that the conclusion of the whole matter was to “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil” (Eccles. xii. 13).

So said Solomon—and God knows, my dear friends, God knows, he said truly. Ay, and I know it to be true; and I entreat you this day, in God’s name, to hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

All this you will find out by eating of the tree of knowledge, and “*seeing life*,” and going your own way, and falling into sin, and smarting for it, for weary years, in anxiety and perplexity, and shame, and sorrow of heart.

All that you will find out thereby—all that Solomon found out thereby,—is just what you know already, and nothing more—just what you have been taught ever since you could speak. “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Why buy your own experience dear, when you can get it gratis, for nothing already?

Yes; a simple, godly, industrious life, doing the duty which lies nearest you, avoiding sin as you would an adder, because it is sure sooner or later to sting you, if you touch it, is the straight road, and the only road, to happiness, either in this life, or in the life to come. Pleasure and amusement, drinking and jollity, will not make you happy. Money will not make you happy. Cleverness, and cunning, and knowledge of the world will not make you happy. Scholarship and learning will not.

But plain, simple righteousness, simply doing right, *will*.

Do right then and be happy. Obey God’s commandments, and you will find that His commandments are *Life*, and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

Make up your minds to do right, to be right, to keep right by the help of God’s Right and Holy Spirit, in the right road. Make up your minds whether you will go through the world in God’s way, or your own way—whether you will taste what God has forbidden, and so destroy yourselves, or obey

Him and live with Him in bliss. The longer you delay, the more difficult you will find it. Make up your minds now, and ask God to teach you His own heavenly wisdom which is a Tree of Life to all that lay hold on it.

V. I AM

*"I AM hath sent me into you."
—Exodus iii. 10.*

Every day I find it more and more true, that the Bible is full of good news from beginning to end. The *Gospel*—that is good news—and the best of all good news, is to be found in every book of it; perhaps if we knew how to search the Scriptures, in every chapter and verse of it, from beginning to end. For from beginning to end, from Genesis to Malachi—from the Gospel of St. Matthew to the end of the Revelation—what our Lord said of the Bible stands true: "They (the Scriptures) are they which testify of ME" (John v. 39). The whole Bible testifies, bears witness of Him, the One Unchangeable Christ, who said to Moses, "Say unto the people, I AM hath sent me unto you."

Now let us think a while what that text means; for it has not to do with Moses only, but with all God's prophets, evangelists, preachers. David might have said the same to the Jews in his time, "I AM hath sent me unto you." Elijah, Isaiah, St. Matthew, St. John, St. Paul, might have said the same. And so may God's ministers now. And I, however sinful, or ignorant, or unfaithful to my duty I may be, have still a right to say, as I do now say solemnly and earnestly to you, "I AM hath sent me unto you" this day.

But what do I mean by that? That ought to depend on what Moses meant by it. Moses meant what God meant, and unless I mean the same thing I must mean something wrong. And this is what I think it does mean:

First. I AM—the Lord Jesus Christ told Moses that his name was I AM. Now you perhaps think that this is but a very common place name, for every one can say of himself—I am—and it may seem strange that God should have chosen for His own especial name, words which you and I might have chosen for ourselves just as well. I daresay you think that you may fairly say "*you are*," and that I can say fairly that "I am."

And yet it is not so. If I say "I am," I say what is not true of me. I must say "I am something—I am a man, I am bad, or I am good, or I am an Englishman, I am a soldier, I am a sailor, I am a clergyman"—and then I shall say what is true of me. But God alone can say "I AM" without saying anything more.

And why? Because God alone *is*. Everybody and everything else in the world *becomes*: but God *is*. We are all becoming something from our birth to our death—changing continually and becoming something different from what we were a minute before; first of all we were created and made, *and so became men*; and since that we have been every moment changing, becoming older, becoming wiser, or alas! foolisher; becoming stronger or weaker; becoming better or worse. Even our bodies are changing and becoming different day by day.

But God never changes or becomes anything different from what He is now. What He is, that He was, and ever will be. God does not even become older. This may seem very strange, but it is true: for God made Time, God made the years; and once there were no years to count by, no years at all. Remember how long had God Himself been, before He made Time, when there was no Time to pass over? Remember always that God must have created Time. If God did not create Time, no one else did; for there is, as the Athanasian Creed says, "One uncreated and One eternal," even God who made Time as well as all things else.

Am I puzzling you? What I want to do is to make you understand that God's life is quite utterly different from our life, or any way of living and being which we can fancy or think of; lest you make to yourselves the likeness of anything in heaven above or of the earth beneath, and think that God is like that and so worship it, and have other gods beside the true God, and so break the first and second commandments, as thousands do who fancy themselves good Protestants, and hate Popery and

idolatry, and yet worship a very different sort of god from the "I AM," who sent Moses to the children of Israel. Remember then this at least, that God was before all things, and all worlds, and all Time; so that there was a time when there were no worlds, and a time when there was no Time—nothing but God alone, absolute, eternal, neither made nor created, the same that He is now and will be for ever.

When I say "God is," that is a very different thing from God Himself saying, "I AM." A different thing? Oh! my friends, here is the root of the whole Gospel, the root of all our hope for this world and for the world to come—for ourselves, for our own future, and the future of all the world.

Do you not see how? Then I will try to explain.

Many heathen men have known that there was one eternal God, and that *God is*. But they did not know that God Himself had said so; and that made them anxious, puzzled, almost desperate, so that the wiser they were, the unhappier they were. For what use is it merely knowing that "*God is*"?

The question for poor human creatures is, "But what sort of a being is God? Is He far off? Millions of miles from this earth? Does He care nothing about us? Does He let the world go its own way right or wrong? Is He proud and careless? A self-glorifying Deity whose mercy is *not* over all His works, or even over any of them? Or does He care for us? Does He see us? Will He speak to us?

Has He ever spoken to any one? Has He ever told any one about Himself?" *There is the question*—the question of all questions. And if a man once begins thinking about his own soul, and this world, and God,—till he gets that question answered, he can have no comfort about himself or the world, or anything—till in fact he knows whether God has ever spoken to men or not.

And the glory of the Bible, the power of God revealed in the Bible, is, that it answers the question, and says, "God *does* care for men, God *does* see men, God is not far off from any one of us."

Ay, God speaks to men—God spoke to Moses and said, not "God is" but "I AM." God in sundry times and in divers manners *spoke* to our fathers by the Prophets and said "I AM."

But more—Moses said, "I AM hath sent me." God does not merely love us, and yet leave us to ourselves. He sends after us. He sends to us. In old times He sent prophets and wise men one after the other to preach repentance and righteousness, and to teach men all that was good for them; and when men would not listen to them, but shut their ears to them and drove them out, killing some and beating some, God was so determined to send to men, so unwearied, so patient, so earnest, so loving still, that He said, "I will send now my own Son, surely they will hear Him."

Yes, my friends, this is the I AM. This is God—this is our God—this is our Heavenly Father; not a proud and selfish Being, who looks down haughtily from afar off on all the misery and ignorance of the world, but as a wise man of old said, "A most merciful God, a revealer of secrets, who showeth to man the things which he knew not." This is our God—not a tyrant, but a Deliverer—not a condemning God, but a saving God, who wills that none should perish, who sends to seek and to save those who are lost, who sends His sun to shine on the just and the unjust, and is good to the unthankful and the evil. A God who so loved the world which He had made, in spite of all its sin and follies, that He spared not His only begotten Son, but freely gave Him for it. A God who sits on His throne for ever judging right, and ministering true judgment among the people, who from His throne beholds all those who dwell upon the earth, and fashions the hearts of them, and understandeth all their works. A God who comes out of His place to visit the wrong done on the earth, and be a refuge for the oppressed, and a help in time of trouble, to help the fatherless and poor unto their right, that the men of this world be no more exalted against them.

This is *our God*. This is our Father—always condescending, always patient, always loving, always just. And always active, always working to *do good* to all his creatures, like that exact pattern and copy of Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (John v. 17).

But again: "I AM hath sent me unto *you*."

Unto whom? Who was Moses sent to? To the Children of Israel in Egypt. And what sort of people were they? Were they wise and learned? On the contrary they were stupid, ignorant, and

brutish. Were they pious and godly? On the contrary they were worshipping the foolish idols of the Egyptians—so fond of idolatry that they must needs make a golden calf and worship it. Were they respectable and cleanly liverers? Were they teachable and obedient? On the contrary, they were profligate, stiff-necked, murmurers, disobedient, unwilling to trust God's goodness, though He had shown them all those glorious signs and wonders for their sakes, and brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm. Were they high-spirited and brave? On the contrary, they were mean-spirited and cowards, murmuring against Moses and against God, if anything went wrong, for setting them free; ready to go back and be slaves to the Egyptians rather than face danger and fight; looking back and longing after the flesh-pots of Egypt, where they eat bread to the full, and willing to be slaves again and have all their men children drowned in the river, and themselves put to hard labour in the brick kilns, if they could only fill their stomachs. And even at best when Moses had brought them to the very edge of that rich land of Canaan, which God had promised them, they were afraid to go into it, and win it for themselves; and God had to send them back again, to wander forty years in the wilderness, till all that cowardly, base, first generation, who came up out of Egypt was dead, and a new generation had grown up, made brave and hardy by their long training in the deserts, and taught to trust and obey God from their youth; and so able and willing to conquer the good land which God had promised them.

Altogether the Children of Israel, to whom God sent Moses, were plainly an ignorant, brutish, cowardly set of people, fallen lower far than the negroes of South America, fit to be slaves and nothing better.

Then why did God take such trouble for them? Why did God care for them, and help them, and work wonders for them? Why? Exactly because they *were* so bad. He that hath ears to hear let him hear, and understand by this example of all examples what manner of God our God is. Just because they were so bad, His goodness yearned over them all the more, and longed to make them good. Just because they were so unclean and brutish His holiness longed all the more to cleanse them.

Because they were so stupid and ignorant, His wisdom longed to make them wise. Because they were so miserable, His pity yearned over them, as a father over a child fallen into danger. Because they were sick, they had all the more need of a physician. Because they were lost, there was all the more reason for seeking and saving them. Because they were utterly weak, God desired all the more to put His strength into them, that His strength might be made perfect in weakness.

True, God's goodness seemed of little use to too many of them. Their history during the next forty years was a very sad one. With many of them God was not well pleased, the Bible tells us, and their carcasses fell in the Wilderness. A sad forty years they were for Moses also, as he says in that sad and glorious Psalm of his (Ps. xc. 7, 8): "We consume away in thy displeasure, and are afraid of thy wrathful indignation. Thou hast set our misdeeds before us, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance, for when Thou art angry our days are gone: we bring our years to an end as a tale that is told."

But that was all their own fault. God never left them for all those forty years. He fed them with manna in the wilderness, and the angel of His presence preserved them.

And now, my friends, remember what I have said of God in this text, "I AM hath sent me unto you," and see how it preaches to you an almighty, unchangeable Father, whose mercy is over all His works, full of love and care for all, longing and labouring for ever by His Son Jesus Christ to raise us from the death of sin (which is the only death we need to be afraid of) to the life of righteousness—the only life worth living here, the only life which we can live beyond the grave! A just God, a merciful God, a patient God, a generous God, a gracious God; a God whose glory is to save—a God who is utterly worthy of our love and respect—a God whom we can trust—a God whom it is worth while to obey—a God who deserves our thanks from our cradle to our grave—a God to whom we ought honestly, and from the bottom of our hearts to say, now and for ever:

“We worship Thee, we bless Thee, we praise Thee, we magnify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, oh! Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.”

VI. THE ENGLISHMAN TRAINED BY TOIL

“All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. . . . Thou shall also consider in thine heart that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.”

—*Deut. viii. 1, 2, 3, 5.*

As God led the Jews through the wilderness, so He leads us through the journey of life. As God called on the Jews to rejoice in Him, and to bless Him for going with them, and teaching and training them by dangers and sorrows; so He calls on us to lift up our hearts and bless Him for teaching and training us in the battle of life.

But some of you may say, “Why do you ask us to thank God for lessons which we have bought by labour and sorrow? Are not our sorrows more than our joys? Our labour far heavier than our rest can be sweet? You tell us to be joyful and thank God for His mercies; but why all this toil?”

Why must we work on, and on, and on, all our days, in weariness and anxiety? Why must we only toil, toil, till we die, and lie down, fairly conquered and worn out, on that stern mother earth, from whom we have been wringing our paltry livelihood from our boyhood to our grave? What is our life but labour and sorrow?”

Are not some of you thinking in this way to-day? Have I not guessed the hearts of some of you at least? And is not this a strange way of making you joyful to remind you of these thoughts?

My friends, be sure I only remind you of these sad thoughts, because they are *true* thoughts, because God meant you to bear them and *face* them like men; because you must have these thoughts, and let them make you sad, and make up your minds to face them again and again, before even you can thank God really like redeemed, immortal Christian men and women. And believe me, I would not mention these sad thoughts, if I had not a remedy for them. If I had not a message to you from the living God, and Christ the King of the earth, whereby I tell you now to rejoice and give thanks to Him in spite of all your labour and sorrow. Ay more, I say, Rejoice and give thanks *on account* of all your labour and sorrow, and count it all *joy* when ye fall into divers tribulations.

It is true, my friends, we are a hard working and a somewhat sad race of men, we English. The life of the working man is labour and sorrow, and so is the life of the scholar, and so is the life of even many a rich man. All things are full of labour in England. Man cannot utter it, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; we are the wisest of all nations; and yet as Solomon says, behold in much wisdom is much grief; and in increasing knowledge, we still increase sorrow.

Truly, I may say of us Englishmen, as Paul said of the Christians of his time, that if Christ be not raised from the dead, and if in this life *only* we have hope in Him, we are of all nations one of the most unhappy. When we look at all the hundreds of thousands pent up in our great cities among filth and smoke, toiling in factories, in workshops, in dark mines under ground—when we think of the soldier on the march under the sultry sun of India, the sailor on the stormy sea—when we think of this our bleak inclement climate, our five months of winter every year;—no man’s food and clothing to be gained but by bitter toil, either of himself or of others—and then when we compare our lot with that of the dwellers in hot countries, in India and in Africa, and the islands of the South Seas, where

men live with no care, no labour—where clothes and fire are never needed—where every tree bears delicious food, and man lives in perpetual summer, in careless health and beauty, among continual mirth and ease, like the birds which know no care—then it seems at moments as if God had been unfair in giving so much more to the savage than He has to us, of the blessings of this earthly life; and we are led to long that our lot was cast in those fruitful and delicious climates of the South, in a continual paradise of mirth and plenty, and beauty and sunshine.

But no, my friends, we are more blest than the careless Indian who never knows what labour is; his life is but the life of the butterfly, which flutters from flower to flower and sports in the sunshine, and sucks sweets for a brief hour, and then perishes without hope. His life is a dream, he sees no heaven before him, he knows no glorious God, with the sight of whom he is to be blest for ever. His body may be in perpetual ease, and health, and beauty for a few short years, but what care has he for his undying spirit, that is blind and dead within him?

But to bring a man's soul to life, to train and educate a man's soul that it may go on from strength to strength, and glory to glory till it appears in the presence of God—that wants a stern and a severe training of sorrow and labour, of which the poor, pampered, luxurious savage knows nothing. This is why Christ brought our forefathers into this bleak, cold, northern land, and forced them to gain their bread by the sweat of their brows, and the sorrows of their hearts, and to keep their land by many wars.

Now this is the reason of our carefulness, of our many troubles, that God is educating and training us English; that He will not have us be savages, but Christian citizens; He will have us not merely happy, but *blessed* through all eternity. He will not have us to be like the poor Indians, slaves to our flesh and our appetites—slaves to the pleasant things around us; but He will have us fill the earth and subdue it; He will have England the light of the nations—and Englishmen preach freedom, and wisdom, and prudence, and the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations of the earth. Therefore Christ afflicts us because He loves us, because whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. Because He has ordained England to preach the Cross, therefore He will have England bear the cross.

It has often struck me, my friends, as a beautiful and a deep sign, a blessed ordinance of the great and wise God, that the flag of England, and especially the flag of our navy—the flag which is loved and revered through all the world, as the bringer of free communion between nation and nation, the bringer of order and equal justice and holy freedom, and the divine majesty of law, and the light of the blessed gospel wherever it goes; that this flag, I say, should be the red-cross flag, the flag of the Cross of Christ—a double sign—a sign to all men that we are a Christian nation, a gospel people; and a sign, too, to ourselves, that we are meant to bear Christ's cross—to bear the afflictions which He lays upon us—to be made perfect through sufferings, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, that we may be brave and self-denying; going forth in Christ's strength, remembering that it is He who gives us power to get wealth; that we ought to fight His battles, that we ought to spread His name at home and abroad; and rejoice in every sorrow, which teaches us more and more the blessed meaning of His saving name, and the share which we have in it.

I have said that we are a melancholy people. Foreigners all say of us, that we are the saddest of all people; that when they come to England, they are struck with our silence, and gloominess, and careworn faces, and our want of merriment and cheerfulness. And yet, with all this, we are the greatest of nations at this day—the strongest and the most industrious and the wisest. The gospel of Jesus Christ is preached oftener, and more simply, and more fully here in England than in any nation, and I dare to say it, that in spite of all our sins, there are as many or more of God's true saints, more holy men and women among English people at this moment, than among any people of the earth. And why? because there are so many among us who have hope in Christ beyond this life, who look for everlasting salvation through all eternity to His name. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, truly of all people we should be most miserable; but Christ is risen from the dead, and He has ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. He sits even

now at God's right hand praying for us. To Him all power is given in heaven and earth, and He is our covenant God and Saviour, He is our King. He is ours; and He will have us put on His likeness, and with Him be made perfect through sufferings—*through sufferings*, for sorrow is the gate of life.

Through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom of God; without weary pain none of us is born into the world; without weary labour not a harvest in England is grown and reaped; without weary thought, and teaching, and correction, not a child among us is educated to be a man; without weary thought and weary labour, not one of us can do his duty in that station of life to which Christ has called him. Not without weary struggles and arguings and contentions, by martyrdoms, by desperate wars, our forefathers won for us our religion, our freedom and our laws, which make England the wonder of the world. This is the great law of our life—to be made perfect through sufferings, as our Lord and Master was before us. He has dealt with us, as my text tells you He dealt with the Jews, His chosen people of old, as He deals with every soul of man on whom He sets His love. “All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no.

And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live . . . Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.”

For, believe me, my friends, whatever nation or whatever man Christ chooses to be His own, and to be holy and noble and glorious with Him, He makes them perfect through suffering. First, He stirs up in them strange longings after what is great and good. He makes them hunger and thirst after righteousness, and then He lets them see how nothing on this earth, nothing beautiful or nothing pleasant which they can get or invent for themselves will satisfy; and so He teaches them to look to Him, to look for peace and salvation from heaven and not from earth. Then He leads them, as He led the Jews of old, through the wilderness and through the sea, through strange afflictions, through poverty, and war, and labour, that they may learn to know that He is leading them and not themselves; that they may learn to trust not in themselves, but in Him; not in their own strength: but in the bread which cometh down from heaven; not in their own courage, but in Him; and just when all seems most hopeless, He makes one of them chase a thousand, and by strange and unexpected providences, and the courage which a just cause inspires, brings His people triumphant through temptation and danger, and puts to flight the armies of the heathen, and the inventions of the evil fiend, and glorifies His name in His chosen people.

So He calls out in the heart of men and of the heart of nations, the two great twin virtues, which always go hand in hand—Faith in God, and Faith in themselves. He lets them feel themselves foolish that they may learn how to be wise in His wisdom. He lets them find themselves weak that they may learn how to be strong in His strength. Then sometimes He lets them follow their own devices and be filled with the fruits of their own inventions. He lets their sinful hearts have free course down into the depths of idolatry and covetousness, and filthy pleasure and mad self-conceit, that they may learn to know the bitter fruit that springs from the accursed root of sin, and come back to Him in shame and repentance, entreating Him to inform their thoughts, and guide their wills, and gather them to Him as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, that they may never more wander from Him, their life, their light, and their Saviour. Then, sometimes, if His children forsake His laws and break His covenant, He visits their offences with the rod, and their sin with the stripes of the children of men. That is, He punishes them as He punishes the heathen, if they sin as the heathen sin. He lets loose upon them His wrath, war, disease, or scarcity, that He may drive them back to Him.

And all the while He will have them *labour*. He will make them try their strength, and use their strength, and improve their strength of soul and body. By making them labour, Christ teaches

His people industry, order, self-command, self-denial, patience, courage, endurance, foresight, thoughtfulness, earnestness. All these blessed virtues come out of holy labour; by working in well-doing we learn lessons which the savage among his delicious fruits and flowers, in his life of golden ease, and luxurious laziness, can never learn.

And all this Christ teaches us because He loves us, because He would have us perfect. His love is unchangeable. As He swore by Himself that He would never fail David, so He has sworn that He will never fail any one of His Churches, or any one of us. Lo, said He, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ; neither battle nor famine, nor anything else in heaven or earth. All He wants is to educate us, because He loves us. He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. And because He is a God of love, He proves His love to us every now and then by blessing us, as well as by correcting us; else our spirits would fail before Him, and the souls which He has made. When He sees our adversity, He hears our complaint, He thinks upon His covenant and pities us, according to the multitude of His mercies. “A fruitful land maketh He barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, yet when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, He delivereth them out of their distress. He maketh the wilderness standing water, and water springs of dry ground, and there He setteth the hungry that they may build them a city, that they may sow their lands and plant vineyards, to yield them fruits of increase. He blesseth them, so that they multiply exceedingly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease; and again, when they are diminished or brought low through affliction, through any plague or trouble, though He suffer them to be evil entreated by tyrants, and let them wander out of the way in the wilderness; yet helpeth He the poor out of misery, and maketh them households like a flock of sheep.” (Ps. cvii.)

O my friends, have not these words ever been wonderfully fulfilled to some of you! Then see how true it is that God will not always be chiding, neither keepeth He His anger for ever; but He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust, and like as a father pitieth his children, so does He pity those who fear Him; and oftentimes, too, in His great condescension, those who fear Him not.

My friends, I have been trying in this sermon to make you feel that you are under God's guidance, that His providence is trying to train and educate you. I have told you that there is a blessed use and meaning in your very sorrows, and in this life of continual toil which God has appointed for you; I have told you that you ought to thank God for those sorrows: how much more then ought you to thank Him for your joys. If you should thank Him for want, surely you should thank Him for plenty. O thank Him earnestly—not only with your lips, but in your lives. If you believe that He has redeemed you with His precious blood, show your thankfulness by living as redeemed men, holy to God—who are not your own, but bought with a price; therefore show forth God's glory, the power of His grace in your bodies and your spirits which are His. If you feel that it is a noble thing to be an Englishman—especially an English soldier or an English sailor—a noble and honourable privilege to be allowed to do your duty in the noblest nation and the noblest church which the world ever saw—then live as Englishmen in covenant with God; faithful to Him who has redeemed you and washed you from your sins in His own blood. Do you be faithful and obedient to Christ's Spirit, and He will be faithful to those promises of His. Though a thousand fall at thy right hand, yet the evil shall not come nigh thee. Blessed are all they that fear the Lord and walk in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labours of thine hand. O well art thou and happy shalt thou be. The Lord out of heaven shall so bless thee, that thou shalt see England in prosperity all thy life long. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon thy native land.

Oh, remember how God fulfilled that promise to England seventy years ago, when the French swept in fire and slaughter, and horrors worse than either, over almost every nation in Europe, while England remained safe in peace and plenty, and an enemy never set foot on God's chosen English soil. Remember the French war, and our salvation in it, and then believe and take comfort. Trust in the Lord and be doing good; dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

VII. HIGHER OR LOWER: WHICH SHALL WIN?

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”
—*Romans viii. 12-15.*

Let us try to understand these words. They are of quite infinite importance to us all.

We shall all agree, all of us at least who have thought at all about right and wrong, and tried to do right and avoid wrong—that there goes on in us, at times, a strange struggle. We wish to do a right thing, and at the very same time long to do a wrong one. We are pulled, as it were, two different ways by two different feelings, feel as if we were two men at once, a better man and a worse man struggling for the mastery. One may conquer, or the other. We may be like the confirmed drunkard who cannot help draining off his liquor, though he knows that it is going to kill him; or we may be like the man who conquers his love for drink, and puts the liquor away, because he knows that he ought not to take it.

We know too well, many of us, how painful this inward struggle is, between our better selves, and our worse selves. How discontented with ourselves it makes us, how ashamed of ourselves, how angry with ourselves. We all understand too well—or ought to understand, St. Paul’s words: How often the good which he wished to do, he did not do, but the evil which he did not wish to do, he did. How he delighted in the law of God in his inward man; but he found another law in him, in his body, warring against the law of his mind—that is his conscience and reason, and making a slave of him till he was ready at times to cry, “Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

We can understand too, surely the famous parable of Plato, the greatest of heathen philosophers, who says, that the soul of man is like a chariot, guided by a man’s will, but drawn by two horses. The one horse he says is white, beautiful and noble, well-broken and winged, too, always trying to rise and fly upward with the chariot toward heaven. But the other horse is black, evil, and unmanageable, always trying to rush downward, and drag the chariot and the driver into hell.

Ah my friends, that is but too true a picture of most of us, and God grant that in our souls the better horse may win, that our nobler and purer desires may lift us up, and leave behind those lower and fouler desires which try to drag us down. But to drag us down whither? To hell at last, says Plato the heathen. To destruction and death in the meanwhile, says St. Paul.

Now in the text St. Paul explains this struggle—this continual war which goes on within us. He says that there are two parts in us—the flesh and the spirit—and that the flesh lusts, that is, longs and struggles to have its own way against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. First, there is a flesh in us—that is, a carnal animal nature. Of that there can be no doubt: we are animals, we come into the world as animals do—eat, drink, sleep as they do—have the same passions as they have—and our carnal mortal bodies die at last, exactly as the animals die.

But are we nothing more? God forbid. St. Paul tells us that we are something more—and our own conscience and reason tell us that we are something more. We know that to be a man, we must be something more than an animal—a mere brute—for when we call any one a brute, what do we mean? That he has lost his humanity, his sense of justice, mercy, and decency, and given himself up to his flesh—his animal nature, till the *man* in him is dead, and only the *brute* remains. Mind, I do not say that we are right in calling any human being a brute, for no one, I believe, is sunk so low, but there is some spark of humanity, some spark of what St. Paul calls “the spirit,” left in him, which

may be fanned into a flame and conquer, and raise and save the man at last—unless he be a mere idiot—or that most unhappy and brutal of all beings, a confirmed drunkard.

But our giving way to the same selfish shameless passions, which we see in the lower animals, is letting the “brute” in us conquer, is giving way to the works of the flesh. The shameless and profligate person gives way to the “brute” within him—the man who beats his wife—or ill-treats his children—or in any wise tyrannises over those who are weaker than himself, he too gives way to the “brute” within him. He who grudges, envies, tries to aggrandise himself at his neighbour’s expense—he too gives way to the “brute” within him, and puts on the likeness of the dog which snatches and snarls over his bone. He who spends his life in cunning plots and mean tricks, stealthy, crafty, silent, false, he gives way to the “brute” in him, just as much as the fox or ferret. And those, let me say, who without giving way to those grosser vices, let their minds be swallowed up with vanity, love of admiration, always longing to be seen and looked at, and wondering what folks will say of them, they too give way to the flesh, and lower themselves to the likeness of animals. As vain as a peacock, says the old proverb. And shame it is to any human being so far to forget his true humanity, as to have that said of him. And what shall we say of them who like the swine live only for eating and drinking, and enjoyment? Or what of those who like the butterflies spend all their time in frivolous amusement, fluttering in the sunshine, silly and helpless, without a sense of duty or usefulness, without forethought for the coming frosts of winter, against which their gay feathers would be no protection? Do not all these in some way or other give way to the animal within them, and live after the flesh? And do they not, all of them, of the flesh, reap corruption, and fulfil St. Paul’s words, “If ye live after the flesh ye shall die?”

But some one will say—“Die?—of course we shall all die—good and bad alike.” Is it so, my friends? Then why does our Lord say, “He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die?” And why does St. Paul say, “If ye through the spirit do mortify,” that is crush, and as it were kill, “the deeds of the body,” all those low animal passions and vices, “ye shall live.”

Let us look at the text again. “If ye live after the flesh ye shall die.” If you give way to those animal passions and vices—low and cruel—or even merely selfish and frivolous, you shall die; not merely your bodies—they will die in any case—the animals do—for animals they are, and as animals die they must. But over and above that—you yourselves shall die—your character will die, your manhood or your womanhood will die, your immortal soul will die. The likeness of God in you will die. Oh, my friends, there is a second death to which that first death of the body is a mere trivial and harmless accident—the death of sin which kills the true man and true woman within you. And that second death may begin in this life, and if it be not stopped and cured in time, may go on for ever.

The black horse of which I spoke just now, may get the mastery and drag us down, down, into bogs out of which we can never rise—over cliffs which we can never climb again—down lower and lower—more and more foolish, more and more reckless, more and more base, more and more wretched.

And then there will be no more use in saying, “The Lord have mercy on my soul,” for we shall have no soul left to have mercy on.

This is the dark side of the matter—a very dark one: but it has to be spoken of, because it is true; and what is more, it comes true only too often in this world. God grant, my dear friends, that it may not come true of any of you.

But there is also a bright side to the matter—and on that I will speak now, in order that this sermon may end, as such gospel sermons surely should end, not with threats and fear, but with hope and comfort.

“If ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” If you will be true to your better selves, if you will listen to, and obey the spirit of God, when He puts into your hearts good desires, and makes you long to be just and true, pure and sober, kind and useful. If you will cast away and trample under foot animal passions, low vices, you shall live. *You* shall live. Your very soul and self shall live, and live for ever. Your humanity, your human nature shall live. All that is humane

in you shall live. All that is merciful and kind in you, all that is pure and graceful, all that is noble and generous, all that is useful. All in you that is pleasant to yourselves shall live. All in you that is pleasant to your neighbours. All in you that is pleasant to God shall live. In one word, all in you that is like Christ—all in you that is like God—all in you that is spirit and not flesh, shall live, and live for ever. So it must be, for what says St. Paul? “As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Those who let the spirit of God lead them upward instead of letting their own animal nature drag them downward, they are the sons of God. And how can a son of God perish? How can that which is like God and like Christ perish? How can he perish, who like Christ is full of the fruits of the spirit? of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance?

The world did not give them to him, and the world cannot take them from him. They were not bestowed on him at his bodily birth—neither shall they be taken from him at his bodily death—for those blessed fruits of the spirit belong neither to the flesh nor to the world, but to Christ’s spirit, and to heaven—to that heaven in which they dwell before the throne of God—yea, rather in the mind of God Himself, the eternal forms of the truth, the beauty, the goodness—which were before all worlds—and shall be after all worlds have passed away.

Oh! choose my friends, especially you who are young and entering into life. Remember the parable of the old heathen, about the two horses who draw your soul. Choose in time whether the better horse shall win, or the worse; whether your better self, or your worse, the Spirit of God or your own flesh, shall be your master—whether you will rise step by step to heaven, or sink step by step to death and hell? And let no one tell you. That is not the question. That is not what we care about.

We know we shall do a great many wrong things before we die. Every one does that; but we hope we shall be able to make our peace with God before we die, and so be forgiven at last.

My dear friends, that kind of religion has done more harm than most kinds of *irreligion*. It tells you to take your chance of beginning at the end—that is just before you die. Common sense tells you that the only way to get to the end, is by beginning at the beginning, which is *now*. Now is the accepted time. *Now* is the day of salvation, and you are accepted now, already, long ago.

What do you or any man want with making your peace with God? You are at peace with God already. He has made His peace with you. An infinitely better peace than any priest or preacher can make for you. *You are God’s child*. He looks down on you with boundless love. The great heart of Christ, your King, your Redeemer, your elder brother, yearns over you with boundless longing to draw you up to Him, that you may be noble as He is noble, pure as He is pure, loving as He is loving, just as He is just. Try to be that. God will at the last day take you as He finds you. Let Him find you such as *that*—walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and then, and then only, there will be no condemnation for you, for you will be in Christ Jesus. Do not—do not talk about making your peace with God some day—like a naughty child playing truant till the last moment, and hoping that the schoolmaster may forget to punish it. No, I trust you have received the Spirit. If you have, then look facts in the face. I trust that none of you have received the Spirit of bondage, which is slavery again unto fear. If you have God’s Spirit you will see who you are, and where you are, and act accordingly—you will see that you *are* God’s children, who are meant to be educated by the Son of God, and led by the Spirit of God, and raised day by day, year by year, from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness, from the likeness of the brute animal, to the likeness of Christ, the Son of Man!

VIII. ST. PETER; OR, TRUE COURAGE

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.”

—*Acts iv. 13, 18, 19.*

I think that the quality, the grace of God, which St. Peter's character and story specially forces on our notice is courage—the true courage which comes by faith. The courage which comes by faith, I say. There is a courage which does not come by faith. There is a brute courage which comes from hardness of heart; from obstinacy, or anger, or stupidity, which does not see danger, or does not feel pain. That is the courage of the brute. One does not blame it or call it wrong. It is good in its place, as all natural things are which God has made. It is good enough for the brute; but it is not good enough for man. You cannot trust it in man. And the more a man is what a man should be, the less he can trust it. The more mind and understanding a man has, so as to be able to foresee danger and measure it, the more chance there is of his brute courage giving way. The more feeling a man has, the more keen he is to feel pain of body, or pain of mind, such as shame, loneliness, the dislike of ridicule, and the contempt of his fellow-men; in a word, the more of a man he is, the more chance there is of his brute courage breaking down, just when he wants it more to keep him up, and leaving him to play the coward and come to shame.

Yes; to go through with a difficult or dangerous undertaking a man wants more than brute courage. He wants spiritual courage, the courage which comes by faith. He needs to have faith in what he is doing to be certain that he is doing his duty—to be certain that he is in the right. To give one example. Look at the class of men who in all England in times of peace undergo the most fearful dangers; who know not at what hour of any night they may not be called up to the most serious and hard labour and responsibility, with the chance of a horrible and torturing death. I mean the firemen of our great cities, than whom there are no steadier, braver, nobler-hearted men. Not a week passes without one or more of those firemen, in trying to save life and property, doing things which are altogether heroic. What do you fancy keeps them up to their work? High pay? The amusement and excitement of the fires? The vanity of being praised for their courage? My friends, those would be but weak and paltry motives, which would not keep a man's heart calm and his head clear under such responsibility and danger as theirs.

No; it is the sense of duty. The knowledge that they are doing a good and a noble work in saving the lives of human beings and the wealth of the nation—the knowledge that they are in God's hands, and that no evil can happen to him who is doing right—that to him even death at his post is not a loss, but a gain. In short, faith in God, more or less clear, is what gives those men their strong and quiet courage. God grant that you and I, if ever we have dangerous work to do, may get true courage from the same fountain of ghostly strength.

Yes; it is the courage which comes by faith which makes truly brave men, men like St. Peter and St. John, who can say, “If I am right, God is on my side, I will not fear what men can do unto me.” “I will not fear,” said David, “though the earth be moved, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea.” The just man who holds firm to his duty will not, says a wise old writer, “be shaken from his solid mind by the rage of the mob bidding him do base things, or the frown of the tyrant who persecutes him. Though the world were to crumble to pieces round him, its ruins would strike him without making him tremble.”

Such courage has made men, shut up in prison for long weary years for doing what was right, endure manfully for the sake of some great cause, and say—

“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage,
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage.
If I have freedom in my thought,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty.”

Yes; settle it in your hearts, all of you. There is but one thing you have to fear in heaven or earth—being untrue to your better selves, and therefore untrue to God. If you will not do the thing you know to be right, and say the thing you know to be true, then indeed you are weak. You are a coward, and sin against God. And you will suffer the penalty of your cowardice. You desert God, and therefore you cannot expect Him to stand by you. But who will harm you if you be followers of that which is right?

What does David say:—“Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.

He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”—Psalm xv. 1-5. Yes, my friends, there is a tabernacle of God in which, even in this life, He will hide us from strife. There is a hill of God in which, even in the midst of danger, and labour, and anxiety, we may rest both day and night—even Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages—He who is the righteousness itself, the truth itself. And whosoever does righteousness and speaks truth, dwells in Christ in this life, as well as in the life to come. And Christ will give him courage to strengthen him by His Holy Spirit, to stand in the evil day, the day of danger, if it shall come—and having done all to stand.

Pray you then for the Spirit of Faith to believe really in God, and for the spirit of ghostly strength to obey God honestly. No man ever asked honestly for that Spirit but what he gained it at last. And no man ever gained it but what he found the truth of St. Peter's own words—“Who will harm you, if you be followers of what is good?”

IX. THE STORY OF JOSEPH

“I fear God.”
Genesis xlii. 18.

Did it ever seem remarkable to you, as it has seemed to me, how many chapters of the Bible are taken up with the history of Joseph—a young man who, on the most memorable occasion in his life, said “I fear God,” and had no other argument to use?

Thirteen chapters of the book of Genesis are mainly devoted to the tale of this one young man.

Doubtless his father Jacob’s going down into Egypt, was one of the most important events in the history of the Jews: we might expect, therefore, to hear much about it. But what need was there to spend four chapters at least in detailing Joseph’s meeting with his brethren, even to minute accounts of the speeches on both sides?

Those who will may suppose that this is the effect of mere chance. Let us have no such fancy.

If we believe that a Divine Providence watched over the composition of those old Scriptures; if we believe that they were meant to teach, not only the Jews but all mankind; if we believe that they reveal, not merely some special God in whom the Jews believed, but the true and only God, Maker of heaven and earth; if we believe, with St. Paul, that every book of the Old Testament is inspired by God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works—if we believe this, I say, it must be worth our while to look carefully and reverently at a story which takes up so large a part of the Bible, and expect to find in it something which may help to make *us*

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