



**SERMONS
OF A
SECEDER**

**WILLIAM
TIPTAFT**

Sermons

of a

Seceder

William Tiptaft

2010

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Foreword

The following sermons and substances or notes of sermons preached by William Tiptaft have been collected together for the first time from a number of sources. We are indebted to the indexing system of the late Kenneth W. Howard (now kept at the Gospel Standard Strict Baptist Library), which helped us in our search for Mr Tiptaft's sermons. The sources from which they are taken are mentioned in the footnote at the commencement of each sermon.

Our editorial method has been to reproduce the sermons as originally published. A few alterations have been made where it was felt to be necessary. Where we have made alterations it is to make greater sense of the written English. Inserted words have been placed in square brackets, thus []. Punctuation has been altered in a few instances to bring the text into line with modern usage, but in no case has the meaning been changed.

Further information on the life and ministry of the late William Tiptaft can be obtained from *The Life of William Tiptaft* by J.C. Philpot, which is published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

It is our prayer that these sermons will be made a blessing to the church of God in these days when there is much profession of the things of God but a need to separate 'the precious from the vile.'

James E. North
Totton

William Tiptaft – A Biographical Note¹

William Tiptaft was born in Braunston, a village near Oakham, Rutland, on February 16th 1803. His father, James Tiptaft (died 1811), was a farmer and grazier of some wealth and substance, and his mother, Elizabeth Tiptaft (died 1817), was particularly distinguished for the strictness of her religious principles, her kindness and liberality to the poor and having an amiable disposition. Both were firm adherents of the Church of England. William seems to have inherited much of his mother's temperament.

At under ten years old, William was sent to the Grammar School at Uppingham, Rutland, with the design of being educated as a clergyman. Here he continued until he went to St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1821, and after surviving a severe attack of typhoid, gained his B.A. degree in 1825. Following further study under a private tutor at Cheltenham, he was ordained at Wells Cathedral in 1826, and appointed curate at Treborough, Somerset. In January 1828 he was appointed curate of Stogumber, Somerset, and in February 1829 he was instituted to the living of Sutton Courtney, Oxfordshire.

Although a clergyman, he had known nothing for himself spiritually of the truths he had learned and which he preached, until his soul was awakened in 1827. To give his own words:

'I trust my soul was quickened in January, 1827, and from that time I have had marks of the fear of God in my heart, and earnest desires to be taught aright by the Spirit of God. But how dark, blind and ignorant I have been respecting spiritual things, and how I should have continued so, if it had not been for rich and sovereign grace. Blessed be God for the little I do trust that I do know of myself as a vile sinner, and of Jesus Christ as a precious Saviour. How gradually did the scales fall from my blind eyes, and how gradually have I been led to know the blessed doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, and also the doctrines of predestination and election. How earnestly did I pray that if these

¹ A précis of Mr Philpot's book on the Life of William Tiptaft. This is still in print and obtainable from the publishers, Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

despised doctrines were true, that I might receive them; if they were not true, that I might reject them; and the Lord confirmed the doctrine of election to my soul by applying that portion respecting the opening of Lydia's heart. I was convinced of the truth of it, which took place the latter end of the summer of 1829. Through mercy, I have been enabled to contend for the doctrine ever since, but I know it is a hard doctrine to receive, and feel risings in my own mind against it. It is a blessed doctrine, when fully received in the heart, as the 17th Article [of the Church of England] describes it.'

The fear of God thus imparted could not be hidden. Being favoured with good health and having much zeal he laboured hard as an evangelical clergyman, with much seriousness and yet feeling an increasing separation in spirit from the world and the things which so many of his contemporaries indulged in. His eyes had not been fully opened as yet and his views of truth were dim, yet his zeal, earnestness and acts of kindness endeared him to his parishioners. When he came to Sutton Courtney in 1829, his farewell sermon to the congregation at Stogumber was published at their request. Although not included in this book, it shows a young man deeply conscious of the solemnity of eternity, warning of the evils of sin and contending for the necessity of repentance, but not as yet able to bring forth the precious truths of the everlasting gospel as one who had handled, tasted and felt them for himself. He was still Arminian in his views, but having proved at this time the vanity of free-will in his own case, this would later put a keener edge on the sword which he drew so vigorously against Arminian doctrine in years to come.

It was in the summer of 1829 that Mr Tiptaft became acquainted with Joseph C. Philpot, then a curate at Stadhampton, a village about six miles away. The conversation turned upon the doctrines of grace. Mr Tiptaft was deeply affected, as it was at this time, as in his own account given above, that he was brought to receive these doctrines in his heart. Also at this time he was engaged to 'a most amiable and pleasing young lady, the eldest daughter of a highly respected clergyman in the neighbourhood.' Clearly these doctrines went further than his head, for shortly afterwards he was discussing them with his fiancée who opposed them very warmly. She finally got up and left him and broke off the engagement, feeling she could not unite herself to one who held such

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extreme views in religion. He deeply and for a long time felt the stroke, but ever after remained single, feeling no doubt that this state was best suited to the work for which God had designed him.

His friendship with Mr Philpot grew. Mr Philpot's own testimony of him at this time is this:

‘Those who knew William Tiptaft know that in the things of God no minister in our day feared man less, or desired to fear God more. His boldness and decision, where he knew and felt himself to be right, were some of the strongest marks of his character. Immediately, therefore, that his eyes were opened to see, and his heart touched to believe and receive the grand and glorious truths of the gospel, and especially the fundamental doctrine of election, as he was full of zeal and earnestness, of a most bold, undaunted spirit, and counted the smiles of men as dust in the balance compared with the favour of God, he began to proclaim from the pulpit salvation by sovereign grace. He had at that time a voice of singular loudness and power, and his language was so plain, clear, and pointed, his delivery so warm and earnest, and he so beat down salvation by works, and so set up salvation by grace, that a mighty stir soon began to be made in the neighbourhood. His church, which was a very large one, was completely thronged with hearers from all the surrounding parishes, and the zeal, warmth, and earnestness with which he preached, new as it was to the people, sent, as it were, an electric shock through his congregation.

‘About this time, as I had returned to Stadhampton, and he knew that my views were in full accordance with those which he had just embraced, he wrote me a note to ask me to come over and preach for him on a week evening, as he had recently set up a week-evening service, and I was, from my own engagements, unable to come for a Lord's day. Not having heard of the revolution which had taken place in his views and feelings, I was struck with the change in his language from the usual cold, stereotyped, evangelical form (as, for instance, the expression of his desire that, ‘if I came, the Holy Spirit would enable me to preach such truth as God might bless to his people’) and accepted his invitation. It was about the end of the summer of that year, 1829; and as we went into the churchyard, it was surprising to see the number of people coming along the various roads, or standing in groups waiting for the service to

commence. The church soon became so filled that there was scarcely standing room in the aisles. And of whom was the congregation made up? Almost wholly of poor men and women. Labourers were there in their smock-frocks and week-day clothes almost as if they had just come out of the fields, poor women in their cotton shawls, with a sprinkling of better-dressed people in the pews; but a thorough plain and rustic assembly had gathered together to hear a sermon on the week-day evening—an event which had not probably occurred in that church or neighbourhood since the days of the Puritans. He read the prayers, and especially the lesson, which was a chapter out of the epistles, with all that loudness of voice, emphasis of accent, and earnestness of manner which were always such a marked feature in him, and it seemed to thrill the whole congregation, as he roused up the sleeping echoes of the old church walls as they probably had never been roused up before.

‘I slept at his house and stayed a day or two with him, if I remember right, during which we had much conversation on the things of God. The change in him was certainly most remarkable, and seemed to have revolutionised, as it were, his very being. He spoke and acted as one brought into a new world. The things of God were his meat and drink. The Bible, which he had not much read, now became his only book, and the doctrines of grace which he had looked on with shyness, if not fear, were uppermost in his heart and on his tongue. He never was a man to do things by halves, or calculate on consequences, I mean worldly or pecuniary consequences. If he believed a thing to be right, he did it; if wrong, no consideration could induce him to violate his conscience. If he believed a doctrine to be true, he preached it; if false, he denounced it. This made his path very clear, but one in which few can walk; for as it required strong convictions of the certainty of truth at first to attain it, so it demanded great courage, much singleness of eye, constant self-denial, and a patient bearing of the cross, which few can submit to, continually to maintain it.’

About this time a circumstance occurred which brought Mr Tiptaft more into the public eye than ever before. He was asked to preach a sermon on the evening of Christmas Day, 1829, before the mayor and corporation of Abingdon, in St. Helen’s church, commonly called, ‘The Great Church at Abingdon.’ He preached from Matthew 1. 21, ‘And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.’

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He began his sermon with these words, 'I stand before you this evening as a servant of Christ or a servant of the devil.' The effect was 'electric' and was remembered for many years by those who heard him; his plain simple statements of divine truth caused a commotion in the town of Abingdon as is rarely witnessed. The public attack on the sermon subsequently induced Mr Tiptaft to publish it and it is included in this book.

Mr Tiptaft was becoming increasingly troubled about his position in the Church of England. In a letter about this time he says, 'I must now tell you that I am harassed in my mind about leaving the Church of England, for I find that I cannot hold my living and a good conscience too. Every reason which is urged on me to continue savours of the things which be of man, and not of God. I believe it to be an unholy system, from an undergraduate in preparation at Cambridge to the Archbishop of Canterbury. I cannot read the Baptismal and Burial Services; and I am inclined to think that pride and covetousness have caused me to continue in it to the present moment. What I shall do if I leave it, I know not. God will direct me. I am willing to labour in His service, and I shall rejoice to be free from such shackles as I now labour in.' Shortly afterwards in November 1831 he resigned his living and bought a piece of land in Abingdon where he erected a chapel, largely at his own expense, which was opened on 25th March 1832. Here he remained, preaching to his own congregation, till his death in 1864. He was baptised in Devizes, Wiltshire, on June 17th, 1832 by Mr Hitchcock.

His preaching in his early days was especially attended with God's blessing in calling sinners out of darkness, not only in Abingdon, but in his visits to other places, especially to his native Oakham. Many years later, when Mr Philpot had become the joint pastor of the churches at Oakham and Stamford, many testified that their first awakening was through Mr Tiptaft's ministry. Yet the Lord had other work for him to do, and for this he was now to be prepared. He had great zeal and earnestness and contended strongly against a formal, pharisaical religion, but was little acquainted with the sorrows, temptations and trials of the living family of God. Nor had he been brought into a gracious felt union with the Lord Jesus so as to be able to say from experience, 'His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely' (Song Sol. 5.16). To do this the Lord was pleased to bring him into many inward trials that much

weighed him down. The following letter written in 1835 shows a very different outlook from some of those earlier:

‘I am more and more convinced how little I know, and how unfit I am to preach; and the work of the ministry is a greater trial to me than ever it was. It seems to me, at times, to be almost presumption to stand up in the Lord’s name, being so ignorant, knowing so little of myself, and less of God. Hardness of heart, unbelief, and a sense of various inward abominations constrain me to contend for a free-grace gospel, the difficulty of going to heaven, and inability of man in every respect. I cannot think well of Christians who have always had a smooth path. If they have never had the pot boil within so as to be sensible of the scum, they have never valued mercy and the restraining grace of God. I get shut up in such places that I can neither go backwards nor forwards, and my hope of entering heaven sinks into nothing. When in that state, I wish someone would tell me how to exercise faith, and to get a glimpse of hope from the past.’

God’s mercy in this was abundantly manifest in that it kept him from the pride to which the success of his ministry might otherwise have tempted him; it brought him to walk more in the valley of humiliation where many of the Lord’s people are found and to be a help to them, and it brought him to know for himself something of how lost we as fallen sinners really are. His sad and tried pathway lasted for several years; he had to go on preaching amidst much darkness and bondage of spirit. Yet even in this the Lord gave him many testimonies that his work was not in vain. In 1838 he had a serious illness, which seemed to have been brought on by overwork and the trials of his mind, and he went to stay at Oakham for many months. The means used were blessed and he was eventually restored, coming back to Abingdon in August 1839. He still walked in much darkness, but the day was at hand.

Mr Tiptaft had been much concerned about attending to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper at Abingdon as there were many who had been called or blessed under his ministry who desired to make a public profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. His own troubles had kept him back for a long while, but in January 1843 he was enabled to break through all obstacles, and he was mercifully strengthened to baptise 23 persons. It was on the night following this baptism that the

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Lord gave him the greatest blessing which he ever experienced. We shall give his own account, written two days later:

Abingdon, January 31, 1843

‘I have now something to relate, in which I trust, you and the other friends at Oakham will feel interested, and will be glad to hear; and may the Lord make it a blessing, and may He have all the praise. It is a new strain for me to begin with: “My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”

‘After talking over the proceedings of the day with four friends, I retired (on Lord’s day evening) to bed in a comfortable state of mind, feeling thankful that the Lord had brought me through a trying day, concerning which I had been much exercised, and trusting the Lord had blessed the word to some that day through such a worm as I felt myself to be, as well as owning His own ordinance, to which we had been attending. When I knelt down to offer up a few words by the bedside, I felt my soul drawn out to God, and humbled low before Him with a sense of my sins; but as soon as I was in bed I began to feel a melting of heart, and a sweet sense of God’s love to my soul, which immediately made my tears flow; and the Lord sweetly began to apply precious promises to my soul with unction and power, and to such an extent as I have never been blessed with before. In fact, I have never experienced any such blessed manifestation and sweet deliverance, though I have been blessed at different times that I can mention; but they were far short of this sweet blessing to my soul; and the savour of it sweetly abides with me still, but I am afraid of losing it, or of being robbed of it.

‘When the promises began to flow into my soul these words came with as great power, and as often as any: “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs”; and again and again: “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee”; “Them that honour me I will honour”; “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” I did sweetly experience this manifestation of love to my soul; and I said to the blessed Lord, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth”, for “his mouth is most sweet.”

The promises flowed into my soul, and my tears flowed so fast that I soon began to water my couch with tears of joy, not of sorrow.

‘I lay till between twelve and one o’clock in this blessed state and then fell asleep for about two hours and awoke in a delightful frame, the Lord blessing my soul again, till I had to restrain myself from crying aloud. I did not go to sleep again, but lay awake, blessing and praising God for His goodness and mercy to my soul with debasing views of myself, and with exalted views of the blessed Jesus, having communion and fellowship with Him in His agony and sufferings. But during my soul enjoyment I kept saying at times, “Is it real, Lord? Is it real, Lord?” I wanted to know whether it was real. I asked myself whether I was willing to die, and I felt I was and if it were the Lord’s will I was willing to die without telling anyone of His great goodness to my soul; for the Lord’s will was my will. I asked myself whether I would rather have a large bag of gold or this blessing, and I felt a large bag of gold was no more to me than a large bag of pebbles, compared to the Lord’s rich blessing. These words came to my mind sweetly again and again:

“[Now] will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found.”

‘And Hart’s hymn, “Blest Spirit of truth, eternal God,” was sweet to my soul.

‘I went up and told J. Kay early in the morning, and could not refrain from crying, and could scarcely shave myself through shedding tears so fast. I shed more tears last night than I have shed for years, for my tears do not flow so easily as many people’s do. These words came with power; “Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it”; also, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” This has been to my soul “a feast of fat things ... of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined”; for “the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” You, as well as others, know I have had to wait, and have been much tried, because the Lord has not blessed me more with His presence and manifestations of His love, though He has given me a few sips by the way.

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‘I have been led to know my vileness, and to feel much of the depravity of my heart, so as to be sensibly a poor, lost, ruined sinner. Sometimes I have envied the brute creation, and at times I have thought God would strike me dead, being sensible of so much sin in my heart. I felt sure I had but little grace, if I had any at all; and my mind has been much tried respecting the formation of a church here, seeing it a grievous thing that the ordinances of God’s house should be slighted and neglected year after year by those who, I believe, were the proper persons to attend them. I could, therefore, see the need of church order and government much better than I could see in any way my fitness to be a pastor. So I was in great straits, and looked forward to the ordinance next Lord’s day with much exercise and trial of mind, having to administer it in my darkness of soul, and knowing also that there is such a thing as eating and drinking unworthily, and that such eat and drink damnation (or condemnation) to themselves, “not discerning the Lord’s body.” On Friday evening I was with two friends who were speaking of the Lord’s manifestations to their souls; but I was dumb, and could say nothing, and felt as if I could not possibly stand in the position I was placed in, being so dark, shut up, and tried. On Saturday, too, I felt much darkness and trial of mind, but I little thought that God’s great goodness and mercy were so soon to be manifested to my soul. I have had sips, but now my cup is full and even runneth over. In the days of adversity I have considered how the scene would end, but now in the day of prosperity my soul is joyful. “I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.” “The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.”

‘The Lord continues to bless my soul with His love, and Christ is precious; and I am sure the Lord’s spiritual blessings to my soul do not lead to worldliness and licentiousness, but to deadness to the world and to separation in spirit from it. Real faith works by love, and Christ is truly precious, and there is no true victory over the world but through this blessed experience known and felt in the soul; and love to Jesus is accompanied with love to the brethren, and with earnest and sincere prayers for the children of God. “They shall prosper that love [Zion].” Before this blessing I looked forward to the ordinance of the Lord’s

Supper as a man would who had a great payment to make, and had not wherewith to pay; he wishes that there was no such engagement, or that the time was farther distant; and now I can look upon it as the man would upon the payment, if any one had given him all or more than all the money.'

Mr Philpot continues thus, 'On the next Lord's day he gave the people an account of the signal blessing with which he had been thus favoured; and I have been told that such a scene as then took place was scarcely ever witnessed in a chapel. He wept and the people wept for very joy, and there was such a general melting of every gracious heart, attended with such a blessing and praising of the Lord for His love and mercy thus manifested to His dear and honoured servant, and for such a testimony also given to the administering of the ordinances and the formation of a church, that it was as if the Lord Himself were specially present among them. Their faith in the truths which they had so long heard and professed was so confirmed, their hope so strengthened, and their love to the Lord, His ordinances, and His people so enlarged, that the blessing might be pronounced not his only to whom it was specially given, but extended to all his people with him, and I may well add, to the very many readers of the account given of it by himself as inserted soon after in the Gospel Standard Magazine (March 1843).

'His ministry from this period, though not essentially altered, yet became more clear, full, and enlarged; for he was able now to speak, from his own experience, of the rich blessings of the gospel, of the sweetness of the promises as applied to the soul, of the manifested forgiveness of sin, and the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart. This enlargement of his ministry, and the greater confidence with which he could speak of the person, work, blood, and love of the Lord Jesus, and of his own personal interest in them, made his ministry also more sweet and acceptable to those of his hearers who had been similarly favoured, and who hitherto had felt the deficiency of this part of his testimony.

'But though he had been so signally blessed, he never settled down, as many do, into a confident assurance of his state, but was to the last more or less tried and exercised with various doubts and fears, as was evident both from expressions which fell from his lips, in his prayers and preaching, and from his letters, had I space to insert them. He was also, at

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times, much cast down by inward temptations, the hidings of the Lord's countenance, and coldness, darkness, and deadness of his own soul.'

For the next twenty years Mr Tiptaft's labours were abundant and 'wherever he went, his personal kindness, his freedom from all pride and pretence, his liberality to and sympathy with the poor, his keen, pithy sentences, and his acknowledged godliness of life added a weight to his testimony such as few ministers have possessed.'

Towards the end of 1862 his changed appearance, accompanied by a troublesome hoarseness gave much anxiety to his friends. He preached to his beloved people at Abingdon on April 29th, 1863, none thinking it would be for the last time. He went to preach in London in May and there consulted a doctor who earnestly advised him to cease from preaching, at least for the time being. He came home to Abingdon, but did not preach again. His complaint seems to have been an abscess in the throat accompanied by a malignant ulcer on his vocal cords. On July 2nd he went to stay at Oakham where he remained during the whole of the autumn and winter, his health becoming more broken and his voice eventually becoming only a whisper. The following year he was able to visit London to consult another doctor. At times the Lord abundantly blessed him though he was not able to converse much. He went to see several friends, but felt he would like to come back to Abingdon to die, and on July 1st, 1864, he returned to Abingdon to end his days, much to the delight of his sorrowing congregation. He gently breathed his last on 17th August.

William Tiptaft was well known for his short, pithy expressions, a selection of which have been previously published. One that was abundantly true of himself was this: 'What a mercy to be well laid in the grave.'

Reminiscences of Mr William Tiptaft¹

A friend writing in reference to the *Sayings of Mr Tiptaft* says, 'I can look back to various times when his weighty and heart-searching remarks have caused much self-examination as to whether I knew anything in reality of the saving power of redeeming love; and I invariably found (perhaps you have found the same) that Mr Tiptaft's preaching had a great influence upon my mind. With what caution and fear have I conducted myself during the week after I have heard the good man; and how I have prayed that I might live and move in the fear of God as he did. He was the first gospel minister I ever heard for myself; and I think I shall remember to my dying day a remark which he made the first time I heard him, it was as follows: 'As I was journeying yesterday I was struck by the number of trees which lined the road, and was deeply impressed by the thought that shortly my soul must live in heaven or hell as many years as there were leaves on those trees, and, as Bunyan says, "Eternity at the back of them all";' he then added, 'Am I prepared to die,' and, 'How many in this chapel can say that they are ready to meet God?' The writer adds, 'It is nearly eighteen years since I heard Mr Tiptaft make the foregoing remark, the impression of which on my mind is so deep and lasting that I do not think it will ever wear off.' Numerous similar testimonies could be given if necessary.

We shall not easily forget his manner in the pulpit: indisputably he was in some things eccentric, but even these were the result of the labour of his soul to be faithful to his fellow-sinner. The shaking of his head and the wringing of his hands, when speaking of the fearful state of the impenitent and of the awful eternity awaiting such, gave weight to his solemn remarks and evidenced his earnestness in his work. He had a manner of repeating three times any remark which he wished to impress on the minds of his hearers, each repetition with a rising voice and with a pause between. Once, when addressing the Sunday School children, he said, 'I have three remarks to make to you: First, be very particular what

¹ Reprinted from *Reminiscences and Sayings of the Late Mr William Tiptaft*, published by J.C. Pembrey, Oxford, 1875.

company you keep,' a pause; and then with a rising voice, 'Second, be very particular what company you keep,' another pause; and then with increased emphasis, 'Third, be very particular what company you keep.' The effect on parents and children was great, and the advice never forgotten. In the vestry before the service he would pace the room; in the pulpit during the singing before the sermon he would appear in agony, without doubt arising from a sense of the solemn work before him, 'Unfit as he was, ignorant as he was, and unworthy as he was' (to use his own words) 'to stand up between the ever-living God and never-dying souls.' Earnest himself, the insincerity and the lukewarmness of money-grabbing professors of religion would make him appear sometimes very severe in his judgment of men, and he would ask, 'How many of you in this chapel would prefer Christ to a sack of sovereigns?' As might be expected, such honest dealing with men's souls often gave offence; and whilst the godly left the house of God praying for more grace, others left attributing his faithfulness to a bitter spirit.

Once when preaching at K— where there was a population of some thousands of souls, but where the gospel in its purity was not preached, he said, 'I wonder whether you could find me in this place fifteen persons who could give a good account of a work of grace in their souls.' After the service the deacon asked him to take a glass of wine, he declined; he was then asked to take a glass of water, to which he consented. The deacon handing him the water, said, 'There, Sir, we have plenty of good water at K— if we have not fifteen good Christians.' Mr Tiptaft replied, 'I never said you had not fifteen Christians among you, there may be true believers in the Church of England, also among the General Baptists, the Independents, and Wesleyans, but I doubt whether you would find among all in this place the number I have said who could give a good account of the work of grace on their souls.' The deacon was silenced.

Not only was he faithful in the pulpit, but he was equally faithful in the vestry and in the parlour; and no difference of position in the church or in the world prevented him from reproof for an inconsistency. As an instance, a minister, doubtless a good man, but light and trifling in his manner, came into the vestry after preaching and saluted him in a very jocose manner. Mr Tiptaft approached him, and in a very solemn but gentle way, said, 'Friend, does not your conscience often condemn you for your levity?' In the parlours of the rich, whom he esteemed as true

believers, he has been known to ask his friends how they could indulge in such luxuries while so many poor were wanting bread. And it is said that he very rarely, if ever, omitted, when asking a blessing at meals, this prayer, 'Make us very mindful of the wants of others.' We know that he was mindful of their wants, and would live on the meanest fare and give away his last shilling to relieve the needy. Though supposed by many to be harsh and severe, he was really very tender in judging the state of others. A friend being very anxious to have his opinion of the religion of a certain person, took advantage of the opportunity for asking when dining with Mr Tiptaft at the house of a mutual friend; the room in which they were sitting opened on to a lawn, the window was open, Mr Tiptaft, without answering the question, rose from the table, walked out of the room, and for some minutes walked in the garden, then returned, and resumed his seat at the table. The question was again put with the same result. When the question was put a third time, he said, 'It is very often a difficult matter to judge of one's own religion, how much harder to judge of another man's.' His company was excellent, for whenever he spoke there was something weighty; instance the following put to a friend: 'If you believe all you hear and tell all you know, you will not be long without enemies, but soon without friends.' Another: 'If you take gratified pride from your pleasures, and mortified pride from your troubles, what would be left?' Such sayings as these in company, like his pulpit sayings, led the listener to think, and the thought was profitable.

Mr Tiptaft was truly a spiritually-minded man, his mind seemed ever occupied by the things of God; he never appeared to weary in talking of God's dealings; as to other matters, he seemed to know little and to care less. One of his favourite hymns was:

'Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me'.

He has been heard to relate how sometimes people stared at him on account of his ignorance of passing events in the world. Once when travelling by coach to preach, as he approached a town there was a great commotion, bells ringing, music playing, flags flying, thousands of people thronging the streets, triumphal arches, etc., and he asked a gentleman sitting at his side what it all meant; his fellow-traveller, who had come many miles to see the sight, looked at him as if he were a

barbarian, not to know that the great Duke of Wellington was to be there that day; and his indifferent 'Oh indeed!' made the man stare the more.

His zeal in preaching the gospel was very great. A provincial newspaper, noticing once his preaching in the market-place in a wagon during a drenching rain, remarked, 'The ardour of the reverend gentleman was nothing cooled by the heavy rain which fell throughout the service.' He used to say, 'Better to wear out than rust out;' and so when out on preaching tours, which was very frequent, he would preach three times on the Lord's Day, and often have to travel in an open conveyance in a bleak country, fresh from a hot, overcrowded chapel, to another place of worship for an afternoon or evening service. Then again, he would preach nearly every evening in the week, beside anniversaries: between services, where there was no settled minister, he would often baptize; in which ordinance he took great delight, and in support of which his arguments were very powerful. In addition to all this labour add that wherever he went he found out the Lord's people (poor in this world) and visited them, reading, praying, and speaking words of comfort at the bedside of the sick and dying. All this labour, pursued as it was for many years without rest, indeed did wear him out. His friends saw that it was telling upon his health, and suggested thoughts of prudence to spare his strength; but while he could work he would work, and even after an exhausting day he would follow on his discourse in the vestry, and with his friends when he reached his lodgings, with as much vigour as if he had just begun, and it was as weighty at the end as at the beginning. He was extremely tender in his conscience, and very fearful of any act which might lay him open to the charge of inconsistency or want of faithfulness; as an instance of this, he was once in considerable uneasiness of mind because he had received an invitation to attend a banquet in connection with a society of the clergy; he took it against him that he had the invitation, saying, 'If I had been faithful would they have wanted me amongst them;' and when the friend suggested that probably it was because they admired his consistency and faithfulness, though disliking his views, that they thought to honour him (a seceder from the Established Church) with an invitation, he meekly replied, as if such a thought had never entered his mind, 'Oh do you think so?' He was always very fearful of having his portion in this life; he was frequently

heard to say, 'What a fearful thing to have our portion in this life;' and with much emphasis would say,

'The greatest evil we can fear
Is to possess our portion here.'

He often said, 'How rich people must cling to life.' 'If we had everything that we could desire here, we should not want to go to heaven.' He indeed might truly say that, 'To live is Christ, and to die is gain.' He ever expressed, 'A desire to depart, and to be with Christ.' At length continual speaking and exposure to cold, with an almost blameable neglect of himself, resulted in an ulcerated throat with loss of voice, which for a few months preceding his death, laid him aside from his beloved work; and now that he could no longer be further useful in the Lord's vineyard, his one desire was to depart and be with Christ in heaven, whom on earth he had so faithfully served: nor was his desire refused; he was not suffered long to be silent, but was soon taken home to

'Sing in a nobler, sweeter song,
The power of Christ to save.'

Without wishing to extol the creature, or to disparage any other good man, it may be safely said that there are but few Tiptafts; so humble, so sincere, so earnest, so self-denying, so faithful, so godly; he feared God above many. His life was most consistent, his end most blessed.

His mortal remains lie buried in the Cemetery of his own beloved Abingdon, covered by a plain stone, strictly in accordance with his simple life. In the Abbey Chapel, over the pulpit, is a neat white marble tablet with a black border.

The Righteous Compassed with Favour¹

'For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.'

Psalm 5:12

Some of you, I trust, have been praying to the Lord, that he would bless me as an instrument in his hands to your souls. But if any of you have not been praying thus for the Lord to bless me, have you been praying that he would bless you? Some do pray, and some do not pray. It was said of the Apostle Paul, as a mark and evidence that he was converted, 'Behold, he prayeth!' I believe all those who are taught by the Spirit to know what they are will be led in this way and manner, whatever worldlings or professors may say; first, to ask the Lord to bless their souls with a sense of his pardoning and forgiving mercy; and then, after they are thus blessed, they will call upon their souls to bless and praise the Lord, saying, 'Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.'

Now, who among you are thus praying for the Lord to bless your souls? Is it your daily prayer, 'O that God would bless me, and give me some token, mark, and evidence that I am among his children, and in the narrow way which leadeth to eternal life! O that the Lord would favour me with some proofs and testimonies of his pardoning love, that I might know that my sins and iniquities are all blotted out and forgiven!' Depend upon it, there will be a real cry from the heart when God begins to work. It will be something like the cry under Peter's sermon, when

¹ Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day morning, March 3rd, 1844. Reprinted from *Zoar Chapel Pulpit*, No. 31.

they said, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' or as the jailor, 'What must I do to be saved?' Though there may come forth with this question a great deal of pharisaism and free-will, and a great idea of what man can do, yet, as sure as God teaches you to feel what you are, you will be brought down into the dust of self-abasement. You will want to know not what you or any man can do, but what Christ has already done. But now, what sort of an answer did the jailor get? Was there a long list of duties set before him, which he must do in order to obtain salvation? No: it was a very short answer; 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' 'What,' say some, 'nothing more than believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then be saved, and go to heaven? Was this man, who had so shamefully treated God's dear children but a little while before, and who, after having received an order from the magistrates to put them into the prison, was so ready to comply with the command, and to go beyond it, by putting their feet also into the stocks; was this man to receive salvation in this way and manner, and on such easy terms as these?'

The heart of man always has, and always will rebel against this way of salvation. As long as fallen men suppose they can have anything to trust to or hope in, as a ground of merit; so long as they believe they have any good works, or have attended to this or that duty, or have done that which others have not done, they think they may have some hope that they are right; and this will satisfy the carnal mind. But all these feelings are only the workings up of old nature, which every one has felt, more or less, who has been taught of the Lord. We know, when the Lord first wrought on our souls, what a deal of this old leaven we had working in us. We endeavoured to be more holy and righteous than others. We thought there was something to be done, and we ought to do it; and when we supposed we had accomplished this or that good deed, we were pleased with it, and thought that we were then in the way.

The doctrine of universal redemption we fully approved of, and we believed that everybody had a chance of going to heaven if they would; and we were not only gratified with it ourselves, but we tried to persuade all that we could into religion. But when we began to think we knew a great deal, we had to find out that we knew nothing aright, and had to learn our own ignorance. We have still to continue in that school, for when God teaches us our own ignorance and folly, we find that our

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wisdom is of no more use to us than our righteousness or sanctification. Thus we are brought low, and driven out of self, that so Christ alone may have all the praise and glory of our salvation. We are brought to know with the Apostle, ‘Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.’

David is here calling on the Lord to listen to his petition. He says, ‘Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.’ Religion had a power on his mind, and caused a pressure on his soul; his prayer was in earnest. But how few we find who have religion in this way; scarcely any are to be found upon whom eternal things lay heavily. They are rare characters indeed who are thus pressed down with these solemn realities, who consider the things of time as nothing in comparison with the things of eternity, who are saying, ‘What would all this world be to me if I had it all, and at last my soul is in hell.’ They will ask the fearful question, ‘For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ And where eternal things do weigh heavily on the mind, where there is a sense of sin and guilt, the knowledge of these things makes the poor sinner see and feel that he deserves eternal wrath. And then, if he has any ground to hope that he is delivered from this state, he will begin to see what an awful state those persons are in, who gather and heap up to themselves riches, and yet have no grace; and how much more blessed those are who are compelled to live in a poorhouse, and yet have grace. But now, have you been brought to know this in your experience? Have you been taught to feel this, that you could not envy those who have this world’s goods without being partakers of God’s grace, and that you would not be in their place for ten thousand worlds? If you have had some little mark or evidence that you are one of the Lord’s living family, however bad your religion may appear to you, if you have only some little token in your soul that you belong to the Lord, would you not rather welcome your poverty, affliction, and trouble, with his blessing, than be without them, have worldly prosperity, and yet have no mark of any part or lot in the matter? But, as I said before, there are very few who are troubled or concerned about

their souls. Persons in general are more perplexed about providing food and raiment for their bodies. How their pride and respectability shall be kept up. How they may be pleased with the things of this world. How they may be kept from a poorhouse. While these things can be done, the affairs of the soul weigh very lightly upon them. Nevertheless, there are 'a few names even in Sardis,' there is a 'remnant according to the election of grace.' There is a traveller here and there; for 'I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.' God has a people scattered throughout the earth. Has his salt in the world. They are a people made peculiar [special] and formed for himself, whom he causes to bring forth fruit to praise and glorify his name. In them he has begun a good work by his blessed Spirit which he will carry on and complete, and bring them home to eternal glory. Not one of them shall ever perish. This is what David understood then, and what the saints are brought to know now.

Now, it is here said, 'thou LORD wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.' If, then, God loves and blesses his people; if he hears and answers their prayers; if he gives them their desires, and grants them the tokens of his love, they can never perish or be in hell. But some may say, 'This gives us no consolation; we fear we do not belong to the people to whom the word righteous applies. If we knew we were among those characters, we should feel assured God would bless us, and then how glad that would make us!' Can you really say that this is your earnest cry and prayer before God; 'O that I knew that I were among his people! O that I could be assured I were one of his children! O that I had a proof in my soul of the work of regeneration, and that I were one of his sheep, to whom Christ hath given eternal life!' If these, then, are your feelings, you begin to see and feel that you cannot make yourself righteous.

Now many think they are among the righteous, and imagine they are walking in the path of life, who have never been delivered from going the broad road that leadeth to destruction; which those who have grace, and but a very little insight into the mysteries of truth, can see clearly. If these words had been spoken to the Pharisee, doubtless he would have said, 'God will surely bless me, for I am one of the righteous;' while the poor publican would have said, 'The Lord cannot bless me; I shall surely sink to hell, for I am so vile and sinful:' and therefore he durst not so

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much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote on his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’ Yet the Lord’s eye of mercy and compassion was on him; for he had blessed him, and compassed him with favour as with a shield, and was preserving him to his eternal glory.

There are many who consider themselves righteous, and yet they have never had this text opened up to them; ‘There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.’ Now, such as these, who are pure in their own eyes, will be sure to put themselves among the righteous; while those who feel like the poor prodigal will never do so. Yet see how the father dealt with this son whom he had lost; he beheld him when he was a great way off; had compassion on him; ran, fell on his neck, and kissed him; he had the best robe brought forth, and put on him, with a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and he had the fatted calf killed; with dancing and merrymaking on the occasion.

Now, if any of you are ready to put yourselves among the righteous, your telling me so would never satisfy me; I should want to know first whether God ever had put you feelingly and sensibly among the wicked and the sinful in their own eyes; because I feel assured, if you are really made wise, you will be brought to see your foolishness and ignorance. In the Proverbs, it is said, ‘The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.’ But if a man only knows about the badness of his heart by reading it in Jeremiah, that ‘the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,’ he will never learn it aright; it is only those who are taught of God, (and none teacheth like him!) who are brought to know feelingly with Paul, that they are the chief of sinners. I once thought that the Apostle had no right to use this language as he did, but God has taught me differently since.

If any of you think you are among the righteous, without having been brought to feel your sins and iniquities like a thick cloud; to see them as of a scarlet and crimson-coloured hue; and have not been led to justify God and believe him to be just and holy were he to send you to hell for your transgressions, you would not commend your religion to me; for I believe there are thousands now in hell who deserve it no more than I do. What do you suppose God the Holy Ghost will do in a sinner’s soul when he begins to work? ‘When he is come, he will reprove

the world of sin.' The sinner thus convinced will feel his sins and iniquities measured up in such a way, that he will say, 'What is ever to become of my guilty soul; I am vile, I am polluted; there is no help in me! O what an unclean and abominable wretch I am! If the Lord will not have mercy on me and compass me with favour, what will ever become of me? For if I were to try to make myself better, I know the root of sin, the fountain of sin is in me. I have had such a disclosure of these things in my heart that I am to take a low place for I feel that I am in a lost and helpless condition!' When the poor sinner is thus compelled from necessity to feel his nothingness, he no longer talks of what he has done, nor of what he intends to do, but he waits to hear of sovereign mercy and a free-grace salvation for sinners. He feels his wound, and wants to be healed. He is something like the children of Israel in the wilderness who were bitten by the fiery flying serpents. He knows his malady, and is obliged to cry unto God for mercy. But how men use that language who have never really found the need of it.

Have you ever been brought, then, to feel your sins a burden? Have you any evidence that you have been made alive from the dead? Have you felt any anxious and ardent desires after it? Do you ever wonder how such a wretch as you can escape hell, when the heavens are not clear in God's sight, and the angels were charged with folly? Have you ever had the sins of your youth laid before you, and set in the light of God's countenance, and been ready to tremble lest any disease or calamity should overtake you, and cut you off forthwith? Have you through these exercises felt there was no health in you, and driven almost to despair of obtaining mercy, been compelled to take the lowest place and to cry out with the leper of old, 'Unclean, unclean'? Have you really felt yourself to be leprous from head to foot, to be nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores? Ah! but some may say, 'This is the description of a vile, guilty wretch, who ought to be cast into hell; and not that of the righteous. It is no description of the saints, nor of a holy and godly man.'

But I think very little of any man's holiness or godliness, unless he has got it in a right way. I think nothing of a man being found before he is lost; of his being pardoned before he is guilty; of his being healed before he is wounded; of his being lifted up before he is cast down; of his finding help from God before he knows his own vileness; of his hearing

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of God's rich mercy and free grace before he is brought to give up all hope from his own fancied good works. If God has given a man grace, he will give him eternal life; he dwells in him, and walks in him. He has blessed and loved him with an everlasting love, and in due time called him by his grace; and though he may say, 'How guilty, filthy, vile, and black I am!' yet God says, 'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.'

I remember last January twelvemonth, one morning when in prayer before preaching, I had such a sense of my sins, and felt so vile and abominable that I besought the Lord not to let the people go without a blessing on my account; for I felt more fit to be cast into hell than to get up in a pulpit. Shortly afterwards, God was pleased to manifest to my soul that my sins were all put away, and gave me to feel the power of his grace. I was no more righteous then, because I felt his grace bearing witness to my heart, than I was before when groaning under a view of my misery.

The righteous will be brought to experience these evil workings in their heart, and they will have earnest desires to be delivered from them; there will be ardent cries and longing desires going up to God to hear, answer, and bless them. They want to be godly; though sin will come in like a flood and threaten to carry them away, yet there will be sighs and groans underneath all, that God would give them more marks and testimonies, and that he would deliver and bless them. He will bless the righteous, 'both small and great.' But what a difference there is between a new-born babe, and a man six feet high in religion. Now, if you were to try to cut off as an hypocrite one of these little ones, they would bring forth such proofs, signs, and evidences of their state, that you could not gainsay nor resist it; so that you, who are standing on the heights of Zion, would be obliged to confess that you were once as miserable as any of them, and had as many fears as they have, and wished that you had never been born. Therefore, God teaches his people that salvation is all of grace; and they will be brought to feel a love to God, his ministers, and his people; to them the promises shall be applied, though Satan will try to overturn their confidence. And in the midst of all, they are afraid how far a man may go in a profession, and yet not be a partaker of grace. Therefore they will cry out for fresh evidences and testimonies that they are in the strait and narrow way, and will call upon God to search, prove,

and try them, that they may come forth as gold seven times purified, saying 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' And, with Job, 'When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.' Now, would you say that Job was not among the righteous when he was plunged into the ditch, and made to feel that his own clothes abhorred him? The Lord will keep and preserve by his grace all those that are among the righteous; he will not despise the day of small things; and the promise is to 'even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' But we would rather hear of persons crying out under their sins and troubles, and seeking for God's mercy, than only hear of their great exploits and triumphant faith. We want to know that they have felt their burdens, and have sunk into the pit and the mire before they were established, and had the song of praise in their lips; that they have really felt their need of salvation, and are in earnest in cries, groans, and supplications to God to have mercy upon them.

Now, those who are really the righteous, are precious in God's sight, and near to him as the apple of his eye; while others, who merely think themselves among the righteous, and have never been acknowledged or blessed by him as such; know nothing of the root of the matter; have never been drawn by the leadings and teachings of God in their souls; have never been brought to the place of stopping of mouths, nor laid low in the dust of self-abasement; have never been made loathsome in their own eyes, but have been crying, 'peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.'

Now, some may say, though we have been blessed with certain tokens and evidences of God's love, yet we are afraid we are not among the righteous because our besetting sins and iniquities, our backsliding and pride, and our unprofitableness in life and conversation so testify against us; so that when the conscience is made tender and honest, there will be many charges brought, and it will sign the indictment that Satan presents, and wonder how it is they can be the children of God with all these things testifying against them.

'In all our worst afflictions,
When furious foes surround us;

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When troubles vex, and fears perplex,
And Satan would confound us;
When foes to God and goodness,
We find ourselves, by feeling,
To do what's right unable quite,
And almost as unwilling.'

With feelings like these, the poor soul fears that he shall perish; and is ready to say, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?' He thinks it is now made manifest that he has neither part nor lot in the matter; that it will soon be made manifest to the world. But the heaven-born soul will be kept in the midst of these workings of his evil heart. For God will revive and strengthen him, manifest to him the riches of his love and mercy, lift upon him again the light of his countenance, and give him new proofs and evidences of his favour; so that he will bless and praise the Lord, not only for the glorious gospel of free grace, but for renewing and reviving grace also.

Now, God forbid, I should discourage such persons; and say these are not among the righteous, who are thus cast down by the vile workings of their evil hearts, oppressed by Satan's temptations and fiery darts, with evil thoughts of infidelity and blasphemy. I believe this is the way the Lord leads his dear people. They will have to complain much on account of these burdens. They will not only meet with great trials and difficulties, but they will be sorely assaulted by temptation, and this will make them groan and cry unto God, and to know that none but himself can deliver them, and that unless he keeps and upholds them they shall sink to rise no more; but 'blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' Dead professors do not sigh and cry out under these sorrows and burdens, but God's children do. They have many fears that their besetting sins will carry them away like a flood, and that they shall not be able to stand. This makes them say with David, 'But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.' He felt he could not hold himself up, therefore he says, 'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.'

Now, have you been kept up in the hour of temptation? Have you been brought to know, that if temptation and opportunity came together, you should certainly fall unless God held you up; that your faith would be overcome, and you make a wreck of your profession? Well, how a knowledge of this magnifies the riches of God's grace and mercy, to see that he will bless such characters as these by giving his dear Son to die for them, 'the Just for the unjust,' that he might pardon and save unto the uttermost the vilest of sinners: and who can tell to what extent the riches of God's grace will go, for 'mercy shall be built up for ever.' But some may say, 'If God will bless us, why does he not cause us to walk in joy and peace; to enjoy the light of his countenance, and to rejoice in his smiles.' They are ready to say with Gideon, 'If the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us?' How could all these things come upon us, if God were on our side? But if God has a peculiar people to bless and praise his holy name, he will make them to feel peculiar; not by reading or hearing about it, but by peculiar dispensations into which he will lead them, peculiar discipline, peculiar temptations, sorrows, and conflicts, in order to make them become witnesses for God. 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Therefore, he will not only teach them their sins and iniquities, and sift and try them by his grace, but they will be driven into the greatest extremities. Then the Lord will deliver them, to prove that his ear is not heavy that he cannot hear, nor his arm shortened that it cannot save. He will bring them to praise him for delivering them in the time of trouble, and to know that by his hand they have been brought safe thus far.

Now, God will bless the righteous, as he did Paul, by giving them a thorn in the flesh. But some will say, 'If God loves me, why does he make me to suffer this or that cross? Why does he give me all these afflictions, troubles, and sorrows?' Now, supposing they were all removed, should you be more spiritually-minded? Should you pray more? Should you be more ready to go chapel? Or more ready to distribute to the necessities of saints? Should you not mingle among the heathen, and learn their works, and go into the world to gratify yourself with the things of time and sense? Would not your heart go after its idols, by seeking its pleasure in the things which perish in the using? Now God gives his people faith, and he is determined that that faith shall

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be tried. Therefore he will give them plenty of cares, afflictions, troubles, and sorrows, which will make them different from the world, and give them something to cry and pray about.

But the Lord will never leave nor forsake his people; he will compass them ‘with favour ... as with a shield.’ ‘The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.’ In former times, a shield was used as a weapon of defence to receive the darts which were thrown in the time of war. And so God himself is a shield to defend and protect his people. He said to Abraham, ‘Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.’ Thus God is a shield to all his elect family; he will defend them from all evil, and provide them with all good. ‘For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.’ God would not give the righteous the shield of faith, nor be himself their shield, to preserve, strengthen, encourage, and compass them about with favour, if he did not intend they should go out to battle, and if Satan did not throw his fiery darts at them.

How we see in Job’s case, that Satan found out that God had set a hedge around him, and about all that he had; so that he is a defence and a wall of fire around all his dear family. There are certain times and seasons which God’s children have to pass through wherein they know if God was not their shield to compass them around, they feel assured they must be destroyed. There are times when sin comes into their hearts like a flood to carry everything away; or, like a child in a giant’s grasp, they have no power to resist it. There are times when the soul is so assailed with temptations, so troubled, exercised, and tried, that they know not what the end will be.

If any of you should say, ‘We are not troubled, tempted, nor tried in this way,’ I should say, then you have not the faith of God’s elect, nor are you good soldiers of Jesus Christ, called to endure hardships and to go out into the battle. Such a faith as you have, may do very well to talk of and boast about, but there is no proof or evidence that it is of the Lord’s bestowing. If you are God’s children, you will want some token and mark of it. Nor can you be satisfied without it. The Lord will keep the feet of his saints, but the feet of the wicked ‘shall slide in due time.’ They may go on very well in a profession for a time, but when troubles

and difficulties arise, when temptation assaults them, then they will fall away, and make it manifest that they were not trees of the Lord's own right-hand planting. 'But he that endureth to the end shall be saved;' but these never knew anything of changes, either of joy or sorrow, light or darkness, nor have had the chequered path of the living soul.

But now, God's people sometimes feel as though they could not endure anything, while at other times they can endure all things, and can adore his grace and mercy for what he has done for them already, for what he has promised to do till they arrive safe home to glory. But now, in their present state, they will be tried and tempted, plagued with feelings of infidelity and blasphemy, which will oftentimes discourage and cast them down. [These feelings] cause them to fear they shall not be able to stand, nor endure to the end; so that they will cry to God to hide them under the shadow of his wing; and say, 'Draw us, we will run after thee.' Then, when he lifts upon them the light of his countenance, they will begin to bless and praise his holy name, become joyful and glad, and say, 'O LORD, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise;' and, 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.'

I know this is the case with my poor soul. Sometimes I can bless and praise God, and feel the tears of gratitude roll down my cheeks; while at another time, the devil and sin will come in like a flood, and threaten to swallow me up. I am so tempted and tried, that I begin to think it is of no use for me to go on praying or preaching any longer; that I know nothing about the matter, and shall soon give it all up. But then again, God shines into my soul once more, and manifests the riches of his mercy; and then I can bless, praise, and adore him. So that God's children are called to a life of conflict. 'What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.' Flesh and spirit! 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' There is and ever will be this warfare in every child of God. They must pass through difficulties, troubles, and sorrows to their heavenly home; but the Lord says, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'

Sermon 1 – The Righteous Compassed with Favour

Now, if there were no conflicts and trials in the way, how could David say as he does, ‘O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together?’ Why does he use this language? Because God had delivered his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling. This caused him to adore and bless his name for showing mercy to one so vile and guilty as he felt himself to be. Thus God teaches all his children to know the distinction of sounds, ‘for the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.’ Such living souls as these cannot hear those ministers who make it appear as though it were a very easy path to heaven; as if there were no devil to tempt, nor wicked heart to plague; for they are convinced that God’s dear saints will have to follow Jesus Christ in the path of sorrow, grief, and trouble. He was ‘a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,’ from the cradle to the grave. As he had to walk in the path of trial and trouble, do you think those that are followers of him are going to escape? ‘If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.’

If, then, you are among the righteous, you will have much to contend with from your wicked heart, the world, and the devil. So that, if you are led in this tried path, you will want the encouragements which God has promised to give to his exercised children. If God is your shield, you will have occasion for him to appear in that capacity, to protect, defend, and bring you through all your conflicts, troubles, and sorrows.

Other people’s religion may do very well to live with, but it will not do to die by. Do any of you, then, want the Lord to compass you as with a shield? Do you want him to preserve you and put your enemies to flight? Are you ever tried in this way, that you care a thousand times more about your body than your soul? Do you feel that it is hypocrisy to make a profession of religion at all, if you are so much more concerned about the things of this life than those of eternity? Are you ever fearful of being deceived? Do you cry to God to make you honest, and to tear off the veil of delusion from your heart, if there be one, that so you may not add iniquity to iniquity?

I remember a person telling me of his troubles in this way some years ago. I could not understand it then, but it has been like bread cast upon the waters since, for God has taught it me now. I believe that God’s children are brought into this state, and are kept low. They are led about in the wilderness, where they meet with many thorns and

briars, cares and sorrows, and have to suffer much from their evil hearts, with the temptations of the devil. They become an astonishment to themselves, and wonder how it is they are carried on from day to day, while such mountains of difficulties surround them. Thus they are brought to glorify God's grace, and to say, 'Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.' And the Lord will keep his saints crying to him thus to be saved from these troubles, afflictions, and sorrows.

'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be,' is the promise; and therefore it cannot be a smooth and easy path in which God intends his people shall walk. But though they are thus tempted, cast down, and afflicted; though they are faint, yet they are pursuing. Though you have so many difficulties and burdens to bear from time to time, yet God knows your way, and what you most need. He has kept you thus far; he has been with you in trouble, and he promises that he will never leave you, nor forsake you. In all his diversified dealings with you, he will give fresh evidences and proofs that when he has tried you, you shall come forth as gold. Though you may be thus sunk in a low place, yet remember, he loves you as well in the valley as though you were singing on the heights of Zion.

But now, who among you have been panting after a knowledge of the pardon of your sins? Who is there that has been crying to God for deliverance from their iniquities, and that he would give them some tokens and evidences that he has had mercy on their never-dying souls? Now, if you can appeal to God for a witness, and say, this is the inmost desire of your heart, I have a good hope of your religion. Though professors may speak against it, yet if your only hope of salvation is through God's mercy, and you can say that you would rather have the Lord to be your God, and for him to say to you, 'I am thy salvation,' with a sense of the pardon of sins in your conscience, than the greatest gifts that could be given to you, then I believe this is a blessed mark in your favour. You shall have the desire of your souls.

Well then, if you can say these things, I am glad to hear it. You are like a poor prisoner who longs to have his chains knocked off, his prison doors thrown open, and to be delivered therefrom. You can say, your heart has been broken for sin. You feel a 'Who can tell?' but what the

Sermon 1 – The Righteous Compassed with Favour

Lord will be gracious. He has kept you alive in time of famine and preserved you to the present moment. The Lord will never forsake the work of his own hands. ‘The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.’ He says, ‘The needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.’ You are waiting, longing, and desiring to know something of the enjoyment of the love of Christ sweetly and blessedly in your soul. The Lord will not leave his work unfinished; the bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench; as saith the Apostle, ‘being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’ Thus, many of those who thought they had grace, and were among those who were going to heaven, will at last find themselves in hell; while others who have feared one day or other they should sink to hell, and are among the tried, tempted, and exercised of the Lord’s people, are those who shall awake up in the likeness of the Lord, and dwell with him for ever.

The Lord looketh down from heaven upon the humble, broken-hearted, and contrite, to revive his work, and to comfort the poor mourners in Zion, who are full of doubts and misgivings, and ready to think they are despised because they are cast down and afflicted. Their case appears to them to be so desperate; but I say to such, Christ ‘came not to call the righteous,’ but the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

I am truly glad, then, to find and hear of such characters, who are thus humbled down, and are made to take a low place; for I believe no one can be rightly established in the truth that has not been led, more or less, through this path of tribulation. There is no getting over the wall into the strait and narrow way. ‘God ... giveth grace unto the humble,’ and ‘though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.’ He that hath hitherto blessed and delivered his people, doth deliver, and will yet continue to deliver, and will bring them safely through the toils of the wilderness, to enter into and enjoy for evermore the mansions of bliss which he has provided for them from before the foundation of the world!

A Holy God and His People Israel¹

'But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.'

Psalm 22:3

How many among you present have prayed that God might bless my speaking this evening? The Lord's people are a praying people. Who would like to be cut off by death as a prayerless man or woman? A man that dies prayerless, dies Christless; and if we die out of Christ, we rise to everlasting shame and contempt. Those that die in Christ are happy and blessed. They rise to have pleasures at God's right hand, even pleasures for evermore; so the Word tells us. What a mercy to be made fit for that great change, to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, made fit for heaven, to be amongst a prepared people, for whom mansions are prepared, of which our Lord has given us a particular account! Those are highly favoured people whom he hath made so, blessed with godly fear and a good hope through grace, more especially because of our never-dying souls. This is a work of grace.

What a mercy to be able to describe a work of grace, that by the teaching of the Holy Spirit we may be enabled to know whether we are possessors of this, not destitute of this knowledge! Now the question with me is, as I have to die as well as you, how responsible is my office! What an awful state that minister is in who is destitute of grace, who is ignorant of a work of grace! How can such a one describe what grace is, and its effects upon the soul of a sinner? He who knows nothing of a work of grace upon his own soul cannot describe it. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth this lesson, that the kingdom of God stands not in word but in power. Paul said, 'I will know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power.' And 'wisdom is

¹ Preached at Rehoboth Baptist Chapel, Lower Ford Street, Coventry. Reprinted from *The Gospel Standard*, May 1870.

Sermon 2 – A Holy God and His People Israel

justified of all her children.’ We, then, who have been led to see the difference between power and mere speech may solemnly put this question, ‘Who maketh thee to differ from another?’ O! It is all of grace that we are made to differ; which we may see in these words, ‘Who gave himself for [you].’ Paul, in writing to Titus, said, ‘For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’ Which people signify elect souls, zealous of good works, redeemed, the people whom he hath chosen. ‘According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.’ ‘All thy children shall be taught of the LORD;’ and if we experience this divine teaching, it is an evidence we are called with a holy calling. Some may say they know nothing about divine calling. But all the children of God, sooner or later, are brought to know this, that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. And another thing they know by the teaching of his Spirit, that God brings his saints to repentance. He teaches us out of his law. He teaches us what vile wretches we are. He makes us know how we are to be saved, if saved at all. He strips us of all our supposed goodness, everything of our own in which we trust for life and salvation; so that, being brought to a stand, we know not what to do, and are obliged to flee to the Saviour. We are led by his Spirit to see that nothing but his grace will do for us. We are obliged to embrace this Rock for want of a shelter. He takes the poor from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, and sets him among the princes of his people. The Lord, by his law, brings them to book, brings them low, makes them feel and see their guilty, lost state, their ruined condition. They are called the true circumcision. They are witnesses for the truth, and always contend for the power of true religion.

There is something in real religion more than notion; and those who are the subjects of it will always contend for a feeling sense of it. I do not

know if there are many in this town who know something of a work of grace in the soul. I trust there are a few, scattered about, who know something of that light and life, produced or wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. We may go to church or chapel, and yet be ignorant of the gospel, not know what repentance and saving faith are. If taught by the blessed Spirit of God, we shall not be ignorant of this sort of religion, we shall be able to tell what God has done for us; and to this we must come.

Now let me ask you this question: 'What has God done for you?' I would rather hear, if only for five minutes, what God has done for you, than five hours of your doings for him. It is only as he makes his truth known in our souls that we shall go right, be brought to a sense of our lost estate, a sense of sin, of our vileness, and utter unworthiness of his goodness and mercy. Though, when brought into this state, we draw this conclusion, that we know nothing, yet this is the way the Lord teaches his people; and none teaches like him. He makes them see their ignorance. Sometimes they seem as ignorant and helpless as a child, and being brought to see the dark as well as the light, what their condition is by nature as well as grace. This is through the enlightening of the Spirit. The more the Lord teaches you by his grace, the more you will prize it and declare it.

When the Lord taught me what grace is, what the gospel is, and the true ground of repentance unto life, I then appeared as a witness for God. Bless the Lord, then, for a right experience of the dark parts as well as the light. Bless him that he ever brought us into these places by which we are made to learn something of the anointing of the Spirit, so that we can enter into the dark parts as well as the bright places. Some persons say nothing of the dark parts. They have no desire to hear that. They want a smooth religion, are always on the rejoicing, the triumphing side. From this it is evident they never have had a felt sense of their lost, perishing condition. They know nothing about the path of tribulation, no cross, all smooth. They have no need of the oil of joy for mourning. They are not in trouble as other men. The Lord has promised 'the oil of joy for mourning,' and 'the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' This has been the solemn experience of the Old Testament saints as well as the New. If we come to read their experience, there is enough to make us blush, how the Lord inhabited their praises: 'O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.' Isaiah gives us his testimony. He sings, 'I will

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greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.’ Then again in the Epistle to the Hebrews we have stronger language, where the saints sealed the precious truth with their blood. They were destitute, afflicted, and tormented; worthies of whom the world was not worthy. What we read about faith and its effects would make us blush. So that when things go smoothly, faith is strong, but when they seem to go contrarily, we act as if there was no God.

O! It is a good thing to have a religion that will do to die by, to have that faith that is of the operation of the Spirit, that faith which is

‘... the life of God.
Deep in the heart it lies,
It lives and labours under load,
Though damped, it never dies.

Like the palm tree, the more weight is laid upon it, the more it grows.

What a mercy to have a religion of the right sort; that which brings us to the desired haven! Remember, this will not prevent you from having trouble, affliction, and bitter distress. Trouble we shall have in various ways; yet, blessed with grace, you shall be favoured with a good hope that it shall be well with you in life, well in death, and well when you stand in the presence of God. The consideration of this ought to be enough to stop our murmuring and complaints. As the Lord Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’ Whatever, then, may be the ground of complaint, to have this hope is worth more than a million worlds, if there were so many.

These are the people who are highly favoured and truly blessed. However tried they may be, the Lord will lead them in that way that they shall say it was a right way, proving that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.’ David said, ‘Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?’ ‘Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.’ This is a low, disconsolate state. It is evident from his language he was in trouble; and this causes his cry to God. Had he never been in trouble, he

would not have been led to write this psalm, a psalm which has been so blessed to the church of God. Had he not been in the depths, he never would have been led to write the Psalms, which have been such a comfort to the Lord's tried family. How the Lord listened to his prayers in his distress, 'From heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.' Though the Lord seemed to him afar off, when he says, 'My God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.' However dark we may be, we are brought to know the heavens are not pure in his sight, and the Lord will make his people know that he searches the heart and trieth the reins, that he is the re-in-trying and heart-searching God; and when he makes a discovery of these things, he makes us know our vileness, our guilt, and pollution, that we are in our own eyes as a beast before him, not worthy of the least of his mercies. We are brought to know and say feelingly with Job, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.' What a low place he was in; yet he made his prayer to God, and he answered him.

Though the poor soul may be little in his natural capacity, and despised by natural men and professors of religion for his ignorance, the Lord will not despise him, nor leave him in their hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Whatever there may be about his religion that men despise, the Lord will answer his prayer. He is one highly favoured, and greatly blessed; because by prayer he brings down the divine blessing. The promise is, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word.' The Lord made him to know what was in his heart ere he answered his prayer. Real heartfelt prayer is a great deal better than lip service.

The Lord teaches all his people what vile wretches they are. They are led to exclaim, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' 'But if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.' God sees and knows all things, how we stand in his sight. When the Lord shines upon us, we have a deep sense of his kindness and