

A WISE DESIRE

NO. 33

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 AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL.

“He shall choose our inheritance for us.”

Psalm 47:4

The Christian is always pleased and delighted when he can see Christ in the Scriptures. If he can but detect the foot-step of his Lord and discover that the sacred writers are making some reference to Him, however indistinct or dark he will rejoice—for all the Scriptures are nothing except as we find Christ in them. St. Austin says, “The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the man-child Christ Jesus and were all intended to be hallowed garments in which to wrap Him.

So they are. And it is our pleasant duty to lift the veil, or remove the garment of Jesus and so behold Him in His Person, in His nature, or His offices. Now, this text is concerning Jesus Christ—He it is who is to “choose our inheritance for us.” He in whom dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge is the great Being who is selected as the Head of predestination—to choose our lot and our portion and fix our destiny. Verily, Beloved, you and I can rejoice in this great fact, that our Savior chooses for us. For were we all to be assembled together in some great plain, as Israel was of old, to elect for ourselves a king, we should not propose a second candidate.

There would be one who stands like Saul, the son of Kish, head and shoulders taller than all the rest, whom we should at once select to be our king and ruler of Providence for us. We would not ask for some prudent sage or deeply taught philosopher. We would not choose the most experienced senior. Without a single moment’s hesitation, directly we saw Jesus Christ, in the majesty of His Person, we should say, in the words of the Psalmist, He who redeemed us, He who ransomed us, He who loved us—“*He shall choose our inheritance for us.*”

I remember once going to a chapel where this happened to be the text and the good man who occupied the pulpit was more than a little of an Arminian. Therefore, when he commenced, he said, “This passage refers entirely to our temporal inheritance. It has nothing whatever to do with our everlasting destiny—for,” said he, “we do not want Christ to choose for us in the matter of Heaven or Hell. It is so plain and easy that every man who has a grain of common sense will choose Heaven. And any person would know better than to choose Hell. We have no need of any superior intelligence, or any greater being, to choose Heaven or Hell for us.

“It is left to our own free will,” he said, “and we have enough wisdom given us, sufficiently correct means to judge for ourselves,” and therefore, as he very logically inferred, “there was no necessity for Jesus Christ, or anyone, to make a choice for us. We could choose the inheritance for ourselves without any assistance.” Ah, but my good Brother, it may be very true that we *could*, but I think we should want something more than common sense before we *should* choose aright. For you must recollect that it is not simply the choosing of Heaven or Hell. It is the choosing of pleasure on earth, of pain, of honor or of persecution.

And very often the man is bewildered. If it were just simply Hell that a man had to choose, none would prefer it. But since it is *sin* which engenders Hell and the *lust* which brings him on to punishment—*there* comes the difficulty. For by nature we are all inclined to follow the way which leads downwards. We are naturally willing to walk the road which leads to the pit—we do not seek the pit itself, but the road that leads to it—and were it not for sovereign grace, none of us would ever have followed the path to Heaven. I am daily more and more convinced that the difference between one man and another is not the difference between his use of his will, but the difference of grace that has been bestowed upon him.

So that if one man has his “inheritance in Heaven,” it will be because Christ chose his inheritance for him. And if another man has his place in Hell, it will be because he chose his inheritance himself. We DO need someone to choose for us in that matter. We want our Father to fix our eternal destiny and write our names in the Book of Life. Otherwise, if left

to ourselves, the road to Hell would be as naturally our choice as for a piece of inanimate matter to roll downwards, instead of assisting itself upwards.

However, to come at once to our text and leave every other person's observations alone, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." First, I shall speak of the text as being a *glorious fact*—"He shall choose our inheritance for us." And, secondly, I will speak of it as being a *very just and wise prayer*—"He shall choose our inheritance for us."

I. First, then, I shall speak of this as being A GLORIOUS FACT. It is a great Truth that God does choose the inheritance for His people. It is a very high honor conferred upon God's servants, that it is said of them, "He shall choose their inheritance." As for the worldling, God gives him anything, but for the Christian, God selects the best portion and chooses his inheritance for him. Says a good Divine, "It is one of the greatest glories of the Church of Christ, that our mighty Maker and our Friend, always chooses our inheritance for us." He gives the worldling husks. But he stops to find out the sweet fruits for His people. He gathers out the fruits from among the leaves, that His people might have the best food and enjoy the richest pleasures.

Oh, it is the satisfaction of God's people to believe in this exalting Truth that He chooses their inheritance for them. But since there are many who dispute it, allow me just to stir up your minds by way of remembrance, by mentioning certain facts which will lead you to see clearly that verily God does choose our lot and apportion for us our inheritance. And, first, let me ask, must we not all of us admit an overruling Providence and the appointment of Jehovah's hands as to the means whereby we came into this world? These men who think that afterwards we are left to our own free will by choosing this or the other to direct our steps, must admit that our entrance into the world was not of our own will, but that God there had His hand upon us.

What circumstances were those in our power which led us to elect a certain person to be our parent? Had we anything to do with it? Did not God Himself appoint our parents, native place and friends? Could He not have caused me to be born with the skin of the Hottentot, brought forth by a filthy mother who should nurse me in her "kraal," and teach me to bow down to Pagan gods, quite as easily as to have given me a pious mother who should each morning and night bend her knee in prayer on my behalf? Or, might He not, if He had pleased, have given me some profligate to have been my parent, from whose lips I might have early heard fearful, filthy and obscene language?

Might He not have placed me where I should have had a drunken father, who should have confined me in a very dungeon of ignorance and brought me up in the chains of crime? Was it not God's Providence that I had so happy a lot that both my parents were His children and endeavored to train me up in the fear of the Lord? To whom do any of you owe your parentage—be it good, or be it bad? Is it not to be traced to the decree of God? Did not His predestination put you where you were? Was it not the Lord who appointed the place of your birth and the hour thereof?

Look again at your bodies, do you not see the doings of God there? How many children are born into the world deformed? How many come into it deficient in some one or other of their faculties? But look at yourself. You are perhaps comely in person, or if not, you have all your limbs. Your bones are well set and you are strong—must you not trace this up to God? Do you not see that He arranged the commencement of your life for you? You might have opened your career there, or there, or there. But He placed you there in that particular spot, without asking your leave. Did He turn to you and say, O clay! in what shape shall I fashion you? Or, did He who begat you ask you what you would be?

No—He made you what He pleased and if you have now the possession of your faculties and limbs, you must acknowledge and confess that there was the decree of God in it. And, still further, how much of the finger of God must we discern in our temper and constitution? I suppose no one will be foolish enough to say that we are all born with the same natural temperament and constitution. I am sure there are some persons who differ a great deal from others, at least I should like to differ a little from them—some of those with whom you could not sit a single moment without feeling that you would rather stand in a shower of rain and get dripping wet than sit on a sofa by their side.

Some persons are so exceedingly warm in their tempers that they actually burn a hole in their manners and conversation—they cannot speak without being cross, testy and angry. Now, although such persons often indulge their temper, we must allow that, in some measure, they are excusable. Perhaps they can trace it to the nature which their mother gave them, (as the worldly poet would say), or that temperament with which they were born. And there are others here who are naturally amiable—who have a kind, loving spirit—who are not so easily moved to wrath and passion—n whom there is not so much of that absurd pride which makes man exalt himself above his fellows.

Who has formed them aright or fashioned them so well? Has not God done it and proved Himself a Sovereign? And must we not see in this that God in some way or other has fixed our destiny from the very fact that the opening bud of life is entirely in His hands? It does seem rational that since God appointed the commencement of our existence there should be some evidence of His control in the future parts of it.

But now a second observation. I will ask any sensible man, above all, any serious Christian here, whether there have not been certain times in his life when he could most distinctly see that indeed God did “choose his inheritance for him”? You are a young man—you are asked what will be your pursuit—you choose such-and-such a thing. You are about to be apprenticed to that peculiar trade—a misfortune happens—it cannot be done. Without your consent, or will, you are placed in another position. Your will was scarcely consulted. Your parents exercised some authority, while the hand of Providence seemed to say to you, “it must be so”—and you could not help yourself.

Take another case—you had established a house of business—suddenly there came a crushing misfortune which you no more could avoid than an ant could stop an avalanche. You were driven from your business and now you occupy your present position because there was nothing else to which you could betake yourself. Was not that the hand of God? You cannot trace it to yourself. You were positively compelled to change your plan. You were driven to it. Perhaps you once had friends on whom you depended. You had no thought of launching out into the world and being independent of the assistance of others. Suddenly, by a stroke of Providence, one friend dies. Then another. Then another. And, without your own volition, you were placed in such circumstances that like a leaf in the whirlpool, you were whirled round and round and the employment you now follow, or the engagement that now occupies you, is not of your own choosing, but is that of God.

I do not know whether all of you can go with me here, but I think you must in some instance or other be forced to see that God has indeed ordained your inheritance for you. If you cannot, I can. I can see a thousand chances—as men would call them—all working together like wheels in a great piece of machinery, to fix me just where I am. And I can look back to a hundred places where, if one of those little wheels had run awry—if one of those little atoms in the great whirlpool of my existence had started aside—I might have been anywhere but here, occupying a very different position. If you cannot say this, I know I can with emphasis. I can trace God’s hand back to the period of my birth through every step I have taken.

I can feel that, indeed, God has allotted my inheritance for me. Some of you are so willfully beclouded that you will not see the hand of God in your being and will insist that all has been done by *your* will without Providence. That you have been left to steer your own course across the ocean of existence. That you are where you are because your own hand guided the tiller and your own arm directed the rudder. All I can say is, my own experience belies the fact. And the experience of many now in this place would rise in testimony against you and say, “Verily, it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.” “Man proposes, but God disposes,” and the God of Heaven is not unoccupied, but is engaged in overruling, ordering, altering, working all things according to the good pleasure of His will.

A third fact let me mention. If you turn to the pages of Inspiration and read the lives of some of the most eminent saints, I think you will be obliged to see the marks of God’s Providence in their histories too plainly to be mistaken. Take, for instance, the life of *Joseph*. There is a young man who from early life serves God. Read that life till its latest period when he gave commandment concerning his bones and you cannot help marveling at the wondrous dealings of Providence. Did Joseph choose to be hated of his brothers? But yet, was not their envy a material circumstance in his destiny? Did he choose to be put into the pit? But was not the putting into the pit as necessary to his being made a king in Egypt as Pharaoh’s dream?

Did Joseph desire to be tempted of his mistress? He chose to reject the temptation, by God’s grace, but did he choose the trial? No, God sent it. Did he choose to be put into the dungeon? No. And had he anything to do with the baker’s dream, or with Pharaoh’s? Can you not see, all the way through, from first to last—even in the forgetfulness of the butler, who forget to speak of Joseph till the appointed time came, when Pharaoh should want an interpreter—that there was verily the hand of God? Joseph’s brothers did just as they liked when they put him into the pit. Potiphar’s wife followed the dictates of her own abandoned lust in tempting him. And yet, notwithstanding all the freedom of their will, it was ordained of God and worked together for one great end—to place Joseph on the throne of Egypt.

For as he said himself, “you meant it for evil, but God intended it for good, that He might save your souls alive!” There was the ordinance of God’s Providence in it as clearly as there is light in the sun. Or take again the life of such a man as *Moses*. I suppose no one will deny that there was a Providence in his being placed in the ark, just in the particular spot where Pharaoh’s daughter came to wash. And who will deny that it was Providence that she should say, “Go and fetch me a woman to nurse this child,” and his mother, Jochebed, should come to nurse him? I imagine that no one would consider that there was an absence of Providence in the fact that the child was comely, that he grew in all the wisdom of Egypt, and that he had a mind capacious enough to receive knowledge.

Nor will you deny the Providence that led him to the side of Horeb’s mountain, or to Jethro’s daughter. Nor can you for an instant deny that there was Providence which afterwards brought him before King Pharaoh and helped him all his way through. The man was God’s man. God seems to be stamped upon his brow in all his acts. In all the three forties of his life, whether the forty spent in the palace, the forty in the wilderness, or the forty that he was king in Jeshurun. In all this there seems to be so manifestly God overruling the man’s acts, that you cannot help saying, “Here is the Almighty! Here is the hand of God in everything the man does!” And you turn from the history of Moses and say, “Truly God was in this place though I knew it not.”

I might refer you to the life of *Daniel*, fraught with interest as it were, and in that book you would see how his steps were first of all sadly guided to Babylon by being carried captive. And yet from the degradation of his banishment there arises the grandeur of Daniel’s visions and Daniel’s character is displayed in all its clearness. You must see that a wise hand was dealing with him and developing his virtues and his excellencies. More I shall not say here, because I like you to refer to the Scripture yourselves. Scripture is the best book of Providence we have ever read. If anyone should ask me for a book of anecdotes illustrative of Providence, I should refer him to the Bible.

There he might find the marvelous story of the woman who went out into a distant country and during her absence lost her inheritance. On a certain day she went to the king to ask him for it and just as she came there Gehazi was telling the king concerning a woman whose son Elijah had raised to life—and he said, “O, my Lord! This is the woman and this is the son!” There were Gehazi and the king talking on the subject and the woman came in just at the moment. And yet there are some fools who call that a “chance.” Why, Sirs, it is an appointment as clearly as anything could be.

And that is just one out of myriads of instances you could find in Scripture—where you can see God present in the affairs of man. But as the Bible, after all, is the best proof of any doctrine we can advance, I beg to refer you to one or two texts. First, let me ask you to direct your attention to a passage in Isaiah 45:6, 7, “I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.” Now here is a most direct assertion of the power of God in everything—that He makes peace and that He makes evil—that he creates light and that he creates darkness. We may ask as the Prophet did of old, “Is there evil in the city and the Lord has not done it?”

Even providential evil is to be ascribed to God. And in some marvelous sense which we understand not and cannot comprehend, the ordinance of God has even reference to the sins of men—“He has made even the wicked for the day of His wrath.” “The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, even these shall show forth His praise.” Good and evil in your condition you must ever regard as the work of God. Whatever your circumstances are this morning—are you sick, are you in poverty or are you much troubled—the evil as well as the good is the work of God. And shall a man receive good at the hands of the Lord and shall he not in equal patience receive evil?

Will you not take everything from God which He is pleased to give, seeing that He Himself asserts, “I create light, I create darkness. I make good and I make evil.” Turn now to a passage in Job 14:5—“his days are determined, the number of his months are with You. You have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” What a solemn thought! God has “appointed our bounds.” One of the Prophets says, “You have hedged up my way with thorns and made a wall so that I cannot find my paths.” And that is first the Truth in regard to man’s life. The “bounds” of it are “appointed!” Man only walks within these “bounds.” Out of these limits he cannot get. If this does not imply the hand of God in everything, I do not know what does.

Turn now to a Proverb from the wise man—Proverbs 16:33—“The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” And if the disposal of the lot is the Lord’s, whose is the arrangement of our whole life? You know when Achan had committed a great sin, the tribes were assembled and the lot fell upon Achan. When Jonah was in the ship, they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah. And when Jonathan had tasted the honey, they cast lots and Jonathan was taken. When they cast lots for an Apostle who should succeed the fallen Judas, the lot fell upon Matthias and he was separated to the work. The lot is directed of God. And if the simple casting of a lot is guided by Him, how much more the events of our entire

life—especially when we are told by our blessed Savior—“The very hairs of your head are all numbered: not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father.”

If it is so. If these hairs are counted. If an inventory is written of each one of them. And if the existence of each of these hairs is marked and mapped, how much more precious in the sight of the Lord shall our lives be? Take one more passage in Jeremiah 10:23—“O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps.” Jeremiah said, “I know” and he was an inspired man and that satisfies us. “I know.” I have sometimes, when quoting a passage out of the Apostle Paul, been met by somebody replying that they really did not think Paul so great an authority as other Scripture writers.

I was astonished at hearing of the following dialogue between two young persons. One remarked, “Mr. Spurgeon is too high in doctrine.” Said her friend—“He is not higher than St. Paul.” “No” said she, “But St. Paul was not quite right according to my opinion.” I was very glad to sink in the same boat as Paul, for if Paul was not right in the view of poor pitiful creatures, verily Spurgeon should not care. I would rather be wrong with Paul than right with anybody else because Paul was inspired. But will they cut out some of the Old Testament, too? Will they dare to accuse Jeremiah of mistake? Jeremiah says, “I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps.”

I may not have proved my point to any person who is an antagonist to this doctrine—but to you who believe I do not doubt that I have somewhat confirmed it. Let me say one word. Perhaps some who hear me will say, “Then, Sir, in the case of Christians you make God the author of sin if you believe that their lives were ordained of Him!” I *never said so!* Prove that I said it and then I will come before your bar and try to excuse myself. But until you hear these lips say that God is the author of sin go your way and prove first of all what it means to speak the Truth. I have not asserted any such vile doctrine.

But I will tell you who does say that God is the author of sin—and that is the man who does not believe in natural depravity—that man makes God the author of sin. I remember the case of a minister who most fearfully split on this rock. When a child had been doing something that was far from right a friend said, “See there Brother, there is original sin in the child. For at its early age see how it sins.” “No” said he, “it is only certain powers God has placed in the child developing themselves. It is the nature which God has given it originally. It is one of God’s perfect creatures.”

These gentlemen make God the author of sin because they throw the nature upon God, whereas had we not fallen, every one of us would have been born with a perfect nature. But since we have fallen, anything good in us is the gift of God and that which is evil springs naturally from our parents, by carnal descent from Adam. I never said God was the author of sin. I thank you, Sir—take the accusation yourself.

II. And now having thus spoken upon the doctrine, we shall have a few minutes concerning this as A PRAYER. “He shall choose our inheritance for us.” Dry doctrine, my Friends, is of little use. It is not the doctrine which helps us, it is our *assent* to the doctrine. And now I have been preaching this morning concerning God’s ordaining our lives. Some do not like it. To them the Truth will be of no service. But there are some of you, who if it were not the Truth, would say you wish to have it so. You would say in your prayers, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.”

First, “You shall choose my *mercies* for me.” You and I, Beloved, often get to choosing our own mercies. God in His wisdom may have made one man rich. “Ah,” says he at night, “would God I had not all this wealth to tease my mind and worry me. I believe any peasant who toils for me has far more rest than I have.” Another who is a poor man wipes the hot sweat from his brow and says, “O my Father, I have asked you to give me neither poverty nor riches. But here am I so poor that I am obliged to toil incessantly for my bread. Would God I could have my mercies there among the rich.”

One has been born with abilities. He has improved them by education and this improvement of his natural powers has entailed upon him fearful responsibilities so that he has to exercise his thoughts and his brain from morning till night. Sometimes he sits down and says, “Now if I am not the most hard-worked of all mortals. Those who keep a shop can shut it up. But I am open at all times and I am always under this responsibility. What shall I do and how shall I rest myself?” Another who has to toil with his hands is thinking, “Oh, if I could lead such a gentlemanly life as that minister. He never has to work hard. He only has to think and read—of course that is not hard work. He has, perhaps, to sit up till twelve o’clock at night to prepare his sermon, that is not work, of course. I wish I had his situation.”

So we all cry out about our mercies and want to choose our allotments. “Oh,” says one, “I have health, but I think I could do without that if I had wealth.” Another says, “I have wealth, but I could give all my gold to have good constitution.” One says, “Here am I stowed away in this dirty London. I would give anything if I could go and live in the country.” Another, who resides in the country, says, “There is no convenience here, you have to go so many miles for the doctor and one thing and the other. I wish I dwelt in London.” So that we are none of us satisfied with our mercies.

But the true Christian says, or ought to say, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.” High or low, rich or poor, town or country, wealth or poverty, ability or ignorance, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.”

Again—we must leave to God the choice of our *employment*. “Oh,” says the preacher—and I have been wicked enough to say so myself—“how would I like to have all my employment in the week that I might sit in the pew on the Sabbath and hear a sermon and be refreshed.” I am sure I should be glad to hear a sermon. It is a long time since I heard one. But when I do attend one, it always tires me—I want to be improving on it. How would I like to sit down and have a little of the feast in God’s house, myself, instead of always being the serving man in God’s household. Thank God! I can steal a crumb for myself sometimes.

But then we fancy, O that I were not in that employment! O that like Jonah we might flee to Tarshish, to avoid going to that great Nineveh. Another is a Sabbath-School teacher. He says, “I would rather visit the sick than sit with those troublesome boys and girls. And then the teachers do not seem to be so friendly with me as they should be.” The Sunday-School teacher thinks he can do anything better than teach. But there is his friend who visits the sick coming down the stairs and he says, “I could teach little children, or preach a little but really I cannot visit the sick. There is nothing so hard and that requires so much self-denial.”

Another says, “I am a tract distributor. It is not easy work to have your tracts refused at this door and then at another. And persons looking at you as if you came to rob them. I could stand up before the congregation and speak, but I cannot do this.” And so we get selecting our employments. Ah, but we ought to say, “You shall choose my inheritance for me,” and leave our employment to God. “If there were two angels in Heaven,” said a good man, “supposing there were two works to be done and one work was to rule a city and the other to sweep a street crossing—the angels would not stop a moment to say which they would do. They would do whichever God told them to do. “Gabriel would shoulder his broom and sweep the crossing cheerfully and Michael would not be a bit prouder in taking the scepter to govern the city.” So with a Christian.

But there is nothing that we more often want to choose than our *crosses*. None of us like crosses at all. But all of us think everybody else’s trials lighter than our own. Crosses we must have. But we often want to be choosing them. “Oh,” says one, “my trouble is in my family. It is the worst cross in the world—my business is successful—but if I might have a cross in my business and get rid of this cross in my family, I should not mind.” Then, my beloved Hearers, in reference to your mercies, your employments and your afflictions, say—“Lord, You shall choose my inheritance for me! I have been a silly child. I have often tried to meddle with my lot. Now I leave it. I cast myself on the stream of Providence, hoping to float along. I give myself up to the influence of Your will.”

He that kicks and struggles in the water, they say, will be sure to sink. But he who lies still will float—so with Providence. He that struggles against it goes down. But he who resigns everything to it will float along quietly, calmly and happily.

Having thus spoken upon the extent of the surrender very briefly, I might hint at *the wisdom of it* and show you it is not only good for you to offer this prayer, but it is better for you than to control yourself. I might tell you that it is good for you to give yourself up to God’s hands because He understands your wants. He knows your case and He will so pity your necessities that He will give you the best supplies. It is better for you than if you trusted in yourself, for if you had the choosing of your troubles or your employments, you would always have this bitter thought, “Now, I chose it myself and therefore I must blame my own folly.”

But now another thought. *What was the cause of the Psalmist saying this?* How came he to be able to feel it? There are few Christians who can really affirm it and stand to it—“You shall choose my inheritance for me.” I think the cause is to be found in this—that he had a true experience of God’s wisdom. Poor David could indeed thank God for having chosen his inheritance for him for He had given him a very goodly one. He had put him in a king’s mansion. He had made him conqueror over Goliath and had raised him to be ruler over a great people. David, by a practical experience, could say, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.”

Some of you cannot say it, can you? What is the reason? Because you have never witnessed Divine guidance. You have never looked to see the hand that supplies your mercies. Some of us who have seen that hand in a few instances are obliged to say from the very force of circumstances—

“Here I raise my Ebenezer.”

Then, again—

“Here by Your help I’ve come.”

I hope and trust in that same good pleasure which has guided me up to now, that it will bring me safely home.

Again—it was a *true faith* that made the Psalmist say he relied upon God. He knew Him to be worthy of his trust, so he said, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.” And, again, it was *true love*, for love can trust—affection can put confidence in the one it loves. And since David loved his God, he took the unwritten roll of his life and he said, “Write what You will, my Lord.” “You shall choose my inheritance for me.”

I might finish, if I had time, by telling you the good effects that this produced upon the Psalmist’s mind and what it would produce upon yours. How it would bring a holy calm continually if you were always to pray this prayer. And how it would so relieve your mind from anxiety that you would be better able to walk as a Christian should. For when a man is anxious he cannot pray. When he is troubled about the world he cannot serve his Master—he is serving himself. If you could “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” Beloved, “all things would then be added to you.” What a noble Christian you would be—how much more honorable you would be to Christ’s religion! And how much better you could serve Him.

And now you who have been meddling with Christ’s business, I have been preaching this to you. You know you sometimes sing—

“Tis mine to obey, ‘tis His to provide,”

but you have been meddling with Christ’s business, you have been leaving your own. You have been trying the “providing” part and leaving the “obeying” to somebody else. Now take the obeying part and let Christ manage the providing. Come then, Brethren, doubting and fearful ones, come and see your Father’s storehouse and ask whether He will let you starve while He has stored away such plenty in His garner! Come and look at His heart of mercy and see if that will ever fail!

Come and look at His inscrutable wisdom and see if that will ever go amiss. Above all, look up there to Jesus Christ, your Intercessor and ask yourself, “while He pleads, can my Father forget me?” And if He remembers even sparrows, will He forget one of the least of His poor children? “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you,” “He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

This I have preached to God’s children—and now one word to the other portion of this crowded assembly. The other day there was a very singular scene in the House of Commons. There is a certain enclosure there set apart for the members. Into this place a gentleman ignorantly strayed. By-and-by someone raised the cry, “A stranger in the House!” The sergeant of the House went up to him, took him by the shoulder and reminded him that he had no business there—not being a member—not one of the elect—not having been elected by the country. The man, of course, looked very foolish.

But, as he had made a mistake, he was let go. Had he willfully strayed within the enclosure and taken a seat he might not have gotten off so easily. When I saw that, I thought, “A stranger in the House!” This morning is there not a stranger in the house? There are some here who are strangers to the subject we have been discussing—strangers to God—strangers to true religion. “There’s a stranger in the house.” It led me to think of that great “assembly and Church of the First-born, whose names are written in Heaven.” And I thought of the people who, last Sabbath night, sat down at the Lord’s Table to partake of the Sacrament.

And the idea struck me, “There’s a stranger in the house.” Now, in the House of Commons, a stranger cannot sit five minutes without being detected, for all eyes are so soon fixed upon him. But in Christ’s Church—in this church—a stranger can sit in the house without being found out. Ah, there are strangers sitting here, looking as religious as other people—some that are not children, some that are not chosen—some that are not heirs of God. They are “strangers in the house.” Shall I tell you what will happen by-and-by? Though I cannot detect you under the cloak of your profession. Though God’s people may not find you out, the grim “sergeant of the house” is coming. Death is coming—and *he* will discover you!

What will be the penalty of your intrusion, as a professor, into Christ’s Church? What will be your lot if you have been a stranger in His house below, when you find that, though you may have sat for a little while in this House of Commons below, you cannot sit in the House of Lords above? What will be your lot when it shall be said, “Depart you accused”? And you may exclaim, “Lord! Lord! Have we not eaten and drunk in Your Presence and taught in Your streets?” And yet He will say, “Verily, I never knew you!” “You are a stranger in the house!”—“Depart, accursed one!”

How can I tell who is a stranger in these pews and who are strangers upstairs? Some of us are not strangers! “We are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.” To such of you as *are* strangers, I pray you think of it and go to Christ’s Throne and beg Him that yet you may be His children and numbered with His people. Then, after that, I will talk with you about my text, but not now. Now I bid you pray to God, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.”

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