

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

HEAVEN ABOVE, AND HEAVEN BELOW

A Sermon

Delivered by

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“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.” — Revelation 7: 16,17.

“They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.” — Isaiah 49:10.

JORDAN is a very narrow stream. It made a sort of boundary for Canaan; but it hardly sufficed to divide it from the rest of the world, since a part of the possessions of Israel was on the eastern side of it. Those who saw the Red Sea divided, and all Israel marching through its depths, must have thought it a small thing for the Jordan to be dried up, and for the people to pass through it to Canaan. The greatest barrier between believers and heaven has been safely passed. In the day when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we passed through our Red Sea, and the Egyptians of our sins were drowned. Great was the marvel of mercy! To enter fully into our eternal inheritance, we have only to cross the narrow stream of death; and scarcely that, for the kingdom of heaven lieth on this side of the river as well as on the other.

I start by reminding you of this, because we are very apt to imagine that we must endure a kind of purgatory while we are on earth, and then, if we are believers, we may break loose into heaven after we have shuffled off this mortal coil. But it is not so. Heaven must

be in us before we can be in heaven; and while we are yet in the wilderness, we may spy out the land, and may eat of the clusters of Eshcol. There is no such gulf between earth and heaven as gloomy thoughts suggest. Our dreams should not be of an abyss, but of a ladder whose foot is on the earth, but whose top is in glory. There would not be one hundredth part so much difference between earth and heaven if we did not live so far below our privileges. We live on the ground, when we might rise as on the wings of eagles. We are all too conscious of this body. Oh, that we were oftener where Paul was when he said, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth"! If not caught up into Paradise, yet may our daily life be as the garden of the Lord.

Listen a while, ye children of God; for I speak to you, and not to others. To unbelievers, what can I say? They know nothing of spiritual things, and will not believe them, though a man should show them unto them. They are spiritually blind and dead: the Lord quicken and enlighten them! But to you that are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, I speak with joy. Think of what you are by grace, and remember that what you will be in glory is already outlined and foreshadowed in your life in Christ. Being born from above, you are the same men that will be in heaven. You have within you the divine life — the same life which is to enjoy eternal immortality. 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life': it is your possession now. As the quickened ones of the Holy Spirit, the life which is to last on for ever has begun in you.

At this moment you are already, in many respects, the same as you ever will be. I might almost repeat this passage in the Revelation concerning some of you at this very hour: — "What are these? And whence came they? These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." I might even go on to say, "Therefore are they before the throne of God" — for you abide in close communion with the King — "and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." I am straining no point when I thus speak of the sanctified.

Beloved, you are now 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God,' and you are 'the called according to his purpose.' Already you are as much forgiven as you will be when you stand without fault before the throne of God. The Lord Jesus has washed you whiter than snow, and none can lay aught to your charge. You are as completely justified by the righteousness of Christ as you ever can be; you are covered with His righteousness, and heaven itself cannot provide a robe more spotless. 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God.' 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' Today we have the spirit of adoption, and enjoy access to the throne of the heavenly grace; yea, and today by faith we are raised up in Christ, and made to sit in the heavenlies in Him. We are now united to Christ, now indwelt by the Holy Ghost: are not these great things, and heavenly things? The Lord hath brought us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Although we may, from one point of view, lament the dimness of the day, yet, as compared with our former darkness, the light

is marvellous; and, best of all, it is the same light which is to brighten from dawn into mid-day. What is grace but the morning twilight of glory?

Look ye, beloved: the inheritance that is to be yours tomorrow, is, in very truth, yours today; for in Christ Jesus you have received the inheritance, and you have the earnest of it in the present possession of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you. It has been well said, that all the streets of the New Jerusalem begin here. See, here is the High Street of Peace, which leads to the central palace of God; and now we set our foot on it. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' The heavenly street of Victory, where are the palms and the harps, surely we are at the lower end of it here; for 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' Everything that is to be ours in the home country *is*, in measure, ours at this moment. As sleeps the oak within the acorn, so slumbereth heaven within the first cry of "Abba, Father!" Ay, and the hallelujahs of eternity lie hidden within the groans of penitence. "God be merciful to me a sinner" has in its bowels the endless "We praise thee, O Lord." O saints, little do you know how much you have in what you have!

If I could bring believers consciously nearer to the state of glory by their more complete enjoyment of the privileges of the state of grace, I should be exceeding glad. Beloved, you will never have a better God: and 'this God is our God for ever and ever.' Delight yourselves in Him this day. The richest saint in glory has no greater possession than his God: and even I also can say, in the words of the psalm,

"Yea, mine own God is he."

Despite your tribulation, take full delight in God your exceeding joy this morning, and be happy in Him. They in heaven are shepherded by the Lamb of God, and so are you: He still carrieth the lambs in His bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young. Even here He makes us to lie down in green pastures: what would we have more? With such a God, and such a Saviour, all you can want is that indwelling Spirit, who shall help you to realize your God, and to rejoice in your Saviour; and you have this also; for the Spirit of God dwelleth with you and is in you: 'know ye not that ye are the temple of God?' God the Holy Ghost is not far away, neither have we to entreat His influence, as though it were rays from a far-off star; for He abides in His people evermore. I will not say that heavenly perfection is not far superior to the highest state that we ever reach on earth; but the difference lies more in our own failure than in the nature of things. Grace, if realized to its full, would brighten off into glory. When the Holy Spirit fully possesses our being, and we yield ourselves to His power, our weakness is strength, and our infirmity is to be gloried in. Then is it true that on earth God is with us and there is but a step between us and heaven, where we are with God.

Thus I have conducted you to my two texts, which I have put together as an illustration of what I would teach. In the New Testament text we have the heavenly state above; and in

the Old Testament text we have the state of the Lord's flock while on the way to their eternal rest. Very singular, to my mind, is the sameness of the description of the flock in the fold, and the flock feeding in the ways. The verses are almost word for word the same. When John would describe the white-robed host, he can say no more of them than Isaiah said of the pilgrim band, led by the God of mercy.

I. First, **LET US CONSIDER THE HEAVENLY STATE ABOVE.** The beloved John tells us what he heard and saw.

The first part of the description assures us of *the supply of every need*. 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.' In heaven no need is unsatisfied, and no desire ungratified. They can have no want as to their bodies, for they are as the angels of God. Children of poverty, your straitness of bread will soon be ended, and your care shall end in plenty. The worst hunger is that of the heart; and this will be unknown above. There is a ravenous hunger, fierce as a wolf, which possesses some men: all the world cannot satisfy their greed. A thousand worlds would be scarce a mouthful for their lust. Now, in heaven there are no sinful and selfish desires. The ravening of covetousness or of ambition enters not the sacred gate. In glory there are no desires which should not be, and those desires which should be are all so tempered or so fulfilled that they can never become the cause of sorrow or pain; for, 'they shall hunger no more.' Even the saints need love, fellowship and rest — they have all these in union to God, in the communion of saints, and in the rest of Jesus. The unrenewed man is always thirsting; but Christ can stay this even now, for He saith, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." Be you sure, then, that from the golden cup of glory we shall drink that which will quench all thirst for ever. There is not, in all the golden streets of heaven, a single person who is desiring what he may not have, or wanting what he cannot obtain, or even wishing for that which he has not to his hand. O happy state! Their mouth is satisfied with good things; they are filled with all the fullness of God.

And as there is in heaven a supply for every need, so is there *the removal of every ill*. Thus saith the Spirit, "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." We are such poor creatures that excess of good soon becomes evil to us. I love the sun: if you had ever seen it shining in the clear blue heavens, you would not wonder that I speak with emphasis. Life, joy, and health stream from it in lands where it is enough of pleasure to bask in its beams. But too much of the sun overpowers us; his warmth makes men faint, his stroke destroys them. Too great a blessing may prove too heavy a cargo for the ship of life. Hence we need guarding from dangers which, at the first sight, look as if they were not perilous. In the beatific state, if these bodies of flesh and blood were still our dwelling-place, we could not live under the celestial conditions. Even here, too much of spiritual joy may prostrate a man, and cast him into a swoon. I would like to die of the disease; but still, a sickness cometh upon one to whom heavenly things are revealed in great measure, and enjoyed with special vividness. One of the saints cried out in an agony of delight, "Hold, Lord, hold! Remember I am but an earthen vessel, and can contain no

more!” The Lord has to limit His revelations, because we cannot bear them now. I have heard of one who looked upon the sun imprudently, and was blinded by the light. The very sunlight of divine revelation, favour, and fellowship could readily prove too much for our feeble vision, heart, and brain. Therefore, in the glorious state flesh and blood shall be removed, and the raised body shall be strengthened to endure that fierce light which beats about the throne of Deity. As for us, as we now are, we might well cry, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?” But when the redemption of the body has come about, and the soul has been strengthened with all might, we shall be able to be at home with our God, who is a consuming fire. “Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” May God grant us to enjoy the anticipation of that happy period when we shall behold His face, when His secret shall be with us, and we shall know even as we are known! Oh, for that day when we shall enter into the Holiest, and shall stand before the presence of His glory; and yet, so far from being afraid, shall be filled with exceeding joy!

But, further, the description of the heavenly life has this conspicuous feature — *the leading of the Lamb*. “The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them.” It is heaven to be personally shepherded by Him who is the Great Sacrifice. In this present state we have earthly shepherds; and when God graciously feeds us by men after His own heart, whom He Himself instructs, we prize them much. Those whom the Lord ordains to feed His flock we love, and their faith we follow, for the Lord makes them of great service to us; but still, they are only underlings, and we do not forget their imperfections, and their dependence upon their Lord. But in the glory-land ‘that Great Shepherd of the sheep’ will Himself personally minister to us. Those dear lips that are as lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh, shall speak directly to each one of our hearts. We shall hear His voice, we shall behold His face, we shall be fed by His hand, we shall follow at His heel. How gloriously will He ‘stand and feed’! How restfully shall we lie down in green pastures! He shall feed us in His dearest character. As the Lamb He revealed His greatest love, and as the Lamb will He lead and feed us for ever. The Revised Version wisely renders the passage, ‘The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd.’ We are never fed so sweetly by our Lord Himself as when He reveals to us most clearly His character as the sacrifice for sin. The atoning sacrifice is the center of the sun of infinite love, the light of light. There is no truth like it for the revelation of God. Christ in His wounds and bloody sweat is Christ indeed. ‘He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.’ With this truth before us, His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. In heaven we shall know Him far better than we do now as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, the Lamb of God’s Passover, ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ That deep peace, that eternally unbroken rest which we shall derive from a sight of the Great Sacrifice, will be a chief ingredient in the bliss of heaven. ‘The Lamb shall feed them.’

But though we shall see our Lord as a Lamb, it will not be in a state of humiliation, but in a condition of power and honour. ‘The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall

feed them.’ Heaven will largely consist of expanded views of King Jesus, and nearer beholdings of the glory which follows upon His sacrificial grief. Ah, brethren, how little do we know His glory! We scarce know who He is that has befriended us. We hold the doctrine of His Deity tenaciously; but in heaven we shall perceive His Godhead in its truth so far as the finite can apprehend the infinite. We have known His friendship to us, but when we shall behold the King in His beauty in His own halls, and our eyes shall look into His royal countenance, and His face, which outshineth the sun, shall beam ineffable affection upon each one of us, then shall we find our heaven in His glory. We ask no thrones; His throne is ours. The enthroned Lamb Himself is all the heaven we desire.

Then the last point of the description is full of meaning. *The drinking at the fountain* is the secret of the ineffable bliss. ‘The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters.’ We are compelled to thirst at times, like the poor flock of slaughter which we see driven through our London streets; and, alas we stop at the very puddles by the way, and would refresh ourselves at them, if we could. This will never happen to us when we reach the land where flows the river of the water of life. There the sheep drink of no stagnant waters, or bitter wells, but they are satisfied from living fountains of waters. Comfort is measurably to be found in the streams of providential mercies, and therefore they are to be received with gratitude; but yet common blessings are unfilling things to souls quickened by grace. Corn can fill the barn, but not the heart. Of the wells of earth we may say, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again”; but when we go beyond temporal supplies, and live upon God Himself, then the soul receives a draught of far truer and more enduring refreshment; even as our Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, “He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” In heaven the happy ones live not on bread, which is the staff of life, but on God, who is life itself. The second cause is passed over, and the first cause alone is seen.

In the home country souls have no need of the means of grace, for they have reached the God of grace. The means of grace are like conduit-pipes, which bring down the living water to us — but we have found them fail us; and at times we have used them in so faulty a way that the water has lost its freshness, or has even been made to taste of the pipe through which it flowed. Fruit is best when gathered fresh from the garden: the fingering of the market destroys the bloom. We have too much of this in our ministries. Brethren, we shall soon drink living water at the well-head, and gather the golden fruit from Him who is ‘as the apple tree among the trees of the wood.’ We shall have no need of baptisms and breakings of bread, nor of churches and pastors. We shall not need the golden chalices or the earthen vessels which now serve our turn so well, but we shall come to the river’s source, and drink our full. “He shall lead them unto living fountains of water.” At times, alas, we know what it is to come to the pits and find no water; and then we try to live on happy memories. We sing, and sigh; or sigh, and sing —

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,

*How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.”*

A cake made of memories will do for a bite now and then, but it makes poor daily bread. We want the present enjoyment of God. We need still to go to the fountain for new supplies; for water which standeth long in the pitcher loses its cool and refreshing excellence. Happy is the man that is not living upon the memories of what he used to enjoy, but is even now in the banqueting-house! The present and perpetual renewal of first love and first delight in God is heaven.

Heaven is to know the substance and the secret of the divine life — not to hold a cup, but to drink of the living water. The doctrine is precious, but it is far better to know the thing about which the doctrine speaks. The doctrine is the salver of silver, but the blessing itself is the apple of gold. Blessed are they that are always fed on the substance of the truth, the verity of verities, the essence of essential things.

‘He shall lead them unto fountains.’ There the eternal source is unveiled: they not only receive the mercy, but they see how it comes, and whence it flows: they not only drink, but they drink with their eye upon the glorious Well-head. Did you ever see a boy on a hot day lie down, when he has been thirsty, and put his mouth down to the top of the water at the brim of the well? How he draws up the cool refreshment! Drink away, poor child! He has no fear that he will drink the well dry, nor have we. How pleasant it is to take from the inexhaustible! That which we drink is all the sweeter, because of the measureless remainder. Enough is not enough: but when we have God for our all in all, then are we content. When I am near to God, and dwell in the overflowing of His love, I feel like the cattle on a burning summer’s day when they take to the brook which ripples around them up to their knees, and there they stand, filled, cooled, and sweetly refreshed. O my God, in thee I feel that I have not only all that I can contain, but all that containeth me. In thee I live and move with perfect content. Such is heaven! We shall have bliss within and bliss around us; we ourselves drinking at the source, and dwelling by the well for ever. The fact is, that heaven is God fully enjoyed. The evil that God hates will be wholly cast out; the capacity which God gives will be enlarged and prepared for full fruition, and our whole being will be taken up with God, the ever-blessed, from whom we came, and to whom it will be heaven to return. Who knoweth God knoweth heaven. The source of all things is our fountain of living waters.

Thus I could occupy all the morning with my first head; but I must not tarry, or I shall miss my aim, which is to show you that, even here, we may outline glory and in the wilderness we may have the pattern of things in the heavens. This you will see by carefully referring to the second text.

II. LET US CONSIDER THE HEAVENLY STATE BELOW. I think I have heard you saying, “Ah, this is all about heaven; but we have not yet come to it. We are still

wrestling here below.” Well, well; if we cannot go to heaven at once, heaven can come to us. The words which I will now read refer to the days of earth, the times when the sheep feed in the ways, and come from the north and from the south at the call of the shepherd. *‘They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.’*

Look at the former passage and at this. The whole description is the same. When I noticed this parallel, I stood amazed. John, thou art a great artist; I entreat thee, paint me a picture of heaven! Isaiah, thou also hast a great soul; draw me a picture of the life of the saintly ones on earth when their Lord is with them! I have both pictures. They are masterpieces. I look at them, and they are so much alike, that I wonder if there be not some mistake. Surely they are depicting the same thing. The forms, the lights and shades, the touches and the tones are not only alike, but identical. Amazed, I cry, “Which is heaven, and which is the heavenly life on earth?” The artists know their own work, and by their instruction I will be led. Isaiah painted our Lord’s sheep in His presence on the way to heaven, and John drew the same flock in the glory with the Lamb; and the fact that the pictures are so much alike is full of suggestive teaching. Here are the same ideas in the same words. Brethren, may you and I as fully believe and enjoy the second passage, as we hope to realize and enjoy the first Scripture when we get home to heaven.

First, here is a promise that *every want shall be supplied*. ‘They shall not hunger nor thirst.’ If we are the Lord’s people and are trusting in Him, this shall be two in every possible sense. Literally, ‘your bread shall be given you, your water shall be sure.’ You shall have no anxious thought concerning what you shall eat, and what you shall drink. But, mark you, if you should know the trials of poverty, and should be greatly tried, and brought very low in temporal things, yet the Lord’s presence and sensible consolations shall so sustain you that spiritually and inwardly you shall know neither hunger nor thirst. Many saints have found riches in poverty, ease in labour, rest in pain, and delight in affliction. Our Lord can so adapt our minds to our circumstances, that the bitter is sweet, and the burden is light. Paul speaks of the saints “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” Note well that the sorrow has an ‘as’ connected with it; but the rejoicing is a fact. “They shall not hunger nor thirst.” If you live in God, you shall have no ungratified desire. ‘Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.’ There may be many things that you would like to have, and you may never have them; but then you will prefer to be without them, saying, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” If Christ be with you, you will be so happy in Him that wanton, wandering wishes will be like the birds which may fly over your head, but dare not make their nests in your hair. You will be without a peevish craving, or a pining ambition, or a carking care. “Oh,” says a believer, “I wish I could reach that state.” You may reach it: you are on the way to it. Only love Christ more, and be more like Him, and you shall be satisfied with favour, and sing, “All my springs are in thee”; “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.”

I do not mean that the saints find a full content in this world's goods, but that they find such content in God, that with them or without them they live in wealth. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of that which he possesseth; and many a man who has had next to nothing that could be seen with eyes or handled with hands, has been a very millionaire for true wealth in possessing the kingdom of the Most High. The Lord has brought some of us into that state in which we have all things in Him; and it is true to us, 'They shall not hunger nor thirst.'

Then, next, there is such a thing as having *every evil removed* from you while yet in this wilderness. 'Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them.' Suppose God favours you with prosperity; if you live near to God you will not be rendered proud or worldly-minded by your prosperity. Suppose you should become popular because of your usefulness; you will not be puffed up if Christ Jesus is your continual leader and shepherd. If you live near to Him, you will be lowly. If your days are spent in sunlight, and you go from joy to joy, yet still no sunstroke shall smite you. If still you dwell in God, and your heart is full of Christ, and you are led as a sheep by Him, no measure of heat shall overpower you. It is a mistake to think that our safety or our danger is according to our circumstances; our safety or our danger is according to our nearness to God, or our distance from Him. A man who is near to God can stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and the devil may tempt him to throw himself down, and yet he will be firm as the temple itself. A man that is without God may be in the safest part of the road, and traverse a level way, and yet he will stumble. It is not the road, but the Lord that keepeth the pilgrim's foot. O heir of heaven, commit thou thy way unto God, and make Him thine all in all, and rise above the creature into the Creator, and then shalt thou hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite thee.

Further, it is said, that on earth we may enjoy *the leading of the Lord*. See how it is put: 'For he that hath mercy on them shall lead them.' Here we have not quite the same words as in the Revelation, for there we read, 'The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them.' Yet the sense is but another shade of the same meaning. Oh, but that is a sweet, sweet name, is it not? 'He that *hath* mercy on them.' He has saved them, and so *has had* mercy on them. Yes, that is very precious, but the word is sweeter still — 'He that *hath* mercy on them,' He that is always having mercy on them, He that follows them with mercy all the days of their lives, He that continually pardons, upholds, supplies, strengthens, and thus daily loadeth them with benefits — 'He that hath mercy on them shall lead them.'

Do you know, beloved friends, what it is to be led of the Lord? Many are led by their own tastes and fancies. They will go wrong. Others are led by their own judgements. But these are not infallible, and they may go wrong. More are led by other people; these may go right, but it is far from likely that they will. He that is led of God, *he* is the happy man, he shall not err. He shall be conducted providentially in a right way to the city of

habitations. Commit your way unto the Lord: trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass. It may be a rough way, but it must be a right way if we follow the track of the Lord's feet. The true believer shall be led by the Spirit of God in sacred matters — 'He will guide you into all truth.' He that hath mercy on us in other things will have mercy on us by teaching us to profit. We shall each one sing, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." We shall be led into duty and through struggles; we shall be led to happy attainments and gracious enjoyments; we shall go from strength to strength.

In the case of the gracious soul, earth becomes like heaven, because he walks with God. He that hath mercy on him visits him, communes with him, and manifests Himself to him. A shepherd goeth before his flock, and the true sheep follow him. Blessed are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They have a love to their Lord, and therefore they only want to know which way He would have them go, and they feel drawn along it by the cords of love and the bands of a man. If they can get a glance from their Lord's eye it suffices them: as it is written, 'I will guide thee with mine eye.' Every day they stand anxiously attentive to do the King's commandment, be it what it may. They yield themselves and their members to Him to be instruments of righteousness, vessels fit for the Master's use. Beloved, this is heaven below. If you have ever tried it, you know it is so. If you have never fully tried it, try it now, and you will find a new joy in it. Jesus says to you, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I do not know anything more delightful than to be such a fool, as the world will call you, as to yield your intellect to the teaching of the Lord; and to be so weak that you cannot judge but accept His will; and so incapable that even to will and to do must be wrought in you of the Lord. Oh, to be so unselfed as to take anything from Christ far more gladly than you would choose of your own accord! If your Lord puts His hand into the bitter box, you will think the potion sweet; and if He scourge, you will thank Him for being so kind as to think of you at all. When you get to that point, that you are as a sheep to whom God Himself is the Shepherd, it is well with you. Then you will realize, even in the pastures of the wilderness, how the rain from heaven drops upon the inheritance of the Lord, and refreshes it when it is weary. 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' God give you to know it, dear friends! I can speak experimentally of it: it is not only the antepast of heaven, but a part of the banquet itself.

But now the last touch is *the drinking at the springhead*. We were not surprised to find, in our description of heaven, that the Lamb led them to the fountains of waters; but we are delighted to find that, here below, 'even by the springs of water shall he guide them.' Beloved, covet earnestly this drinking at the springs. Those who merely *profess* to be Christians will not know what I am talking about this morning — they will think I have got into the way of the mystics, and am dreaming of things unpractical. I will not argue with *them*; let me speak to those who understand me.

Beloved in the Lord, you can even now live upon God Himself, and there is no living comparable to it. You can get beyond all the cisterns, and come to the river of the water of life, even as they do in heaven. To live by second causes is a very secondary life: to live on the First Cause is the first of living. I exhort you to do this with regard to the inspired Word. This is a day of man's opinions, views, judgements and criticisms. Leave them all, good, bad, and indifferent, and come to this Book, which is the pure fount of inspiration undefiled. When you study the Word of God, live upon it as His Word. I am not going to defend it; it needs no defence. I am not going to argue about its inspiration; if you know the Lord aright, His Word is inspired to you, if to no one else. You know not only that it was inspired when it was written, but that it is inspired still; and, moreover, its inspiration affects you in a way in which no other writings can ever touch you. It breathes upon you; it breathes life into you, and makes you to speak words for God, which prove to be words from God to other souls. Oh, it is wonderful, if you read the word of God in a little company, morning by morning — simply read it and pray over it, what an effect it may have upon all who listen! I speak what I do know. If you read the inspired words themselves, and look up to Him who spoke them, their spiritual effect will be the witness of their inspiration. This is a miracle-working Book: it may be opposed, but never conquered; it may be buried under unbelief, but it must rise again. Blessed are they to whom the Word is meat and drink. They quit the cistern of man for the fountain of God; and they do well. 'By the springs of water shall He guide them.'

Yet I would exhort you not even to tarry at the letter of God's word, but believingly and humbly advance to drink from the Holy Ghost Himself. He will not teach you anything which is not in the Bible, but He will take of the things of Christ, and will show them unto you. A truth may be like a jewel in the Word of God, and yet we may not see its brilliance until the Holy Spirit holds it up in the light and bids us mark its lustre. The Spirit of God brings up the pearl from the deeps of revelation, and sets it where its radiance is perceived by the believing eye. We are such poor scholars that we learn little from the Book till 'the Interpreter, one of a thousand,' opens our heart to the Word, and opens the Word to our heart. The Holy Ghost who revealed truth in the Book, must also personally reveal it to the individual. If ever you get a hold of truth in that way, you will never give it up. A man who has learned truth from one minister, may unlearn it from another minister; but he that has been taught it of the Holy Ghost, has a treasure which no man taketh from him.

Beloved, we would exhort you to drink of the springs of living water while you are here. Be often going back to fundamental doctrines. Especially get back to the consideration of covenant engagements. Whence come all the deeds of mercy from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ? Come they not from eternal purposes, and from that covenant, 'ordered in all things, and sure,' made or ever the earth was, between the Father and the ever-blessed Son? Get you often to the well of the covenant. I know of nothing that can make you so happy as to know in your very soul how the Father pledged Himself

by oath to the Son, and the Son pledged Himself to the eternal Father concerning the great mystery of our redemption. Eternal love and covenant faithfulness: these are ancient wells. Do not hesitate to drink deep at the fountain of electing love. The Lord Himself chose you, having loved you with an everlasting love. Everything comes to the saints 'according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.' The Philistines have stopped this well full many a time, but they cannot prevent its waters bubbling up from among the stones which they have cast into it. There it stands. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Get you back to the love that had no cause but the First Cause, to the love that knows no change, to the love that knows no limit, no hesitancy, no diminution, the love that stands, like the Godhead itself, eternal and immovable. Drink from eternal springs; and if you do so, your life will be more and more 'as the days of heaven upon the earth.' God grant us to get away from the deceitful brooks to 'the deep which lieth under,' and with joy may we draw water.

Christ's presence, and fountain drinking — give me these two things, and I ask no more. The Lamb to feed me, and the fountain to supply me; these are enough. Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee? Come poverty, come sickness, come shame, come casting out by brethren; yea, come death itself, nothing can I want, and nothing can harm me if the Lamb be my Shepherd and the Lord my fountain.

Before another Sunday some of us may be in heaven. Before this month has finished, some of us may know infinitely more about the eternal world than the whole assembly of divines could tell us. Others of us may have to linger here a while. Yet are we not in banishment. Here we dwell with the King for His work. We will endeavor to keep close to our Master, and if we may serve Him and see His face, we will not grudge the glorified their fuller joys.

You that know nothing about these things, God grant you spiritual sense to know that you do not know, and then give you further grace to pray to Him, "Lord, lead me to the living fountains." There is an inner life, there is a heavenly secret, there is a surpassing joy; some of us know it, we wish that you, also, had it. Cry for it. Jesus can give it you at once. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt live for ever. The new birth goes with faith in Christ. May He give it you this morning, and may you begin to be heavenly here, that you may be fit for heaven hereafter. The Lord bless you, dear friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.