

A Clear Conscience

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DELIVERED BY

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"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments."

[Psalm 119:6.](#)

ANY attempt to keep the Law of God with the view of being saved thereby is sure to end in failure. So contrary is it to the express warnings of the Divine Lawgiver and so much does it run counter to the whole Gospel, that he who ventures to seek justification by his own merits ought to be ashamed of his presumption. When God tells us that salvation is not by the works of the Law, are you not ashamed of trying to procure it by your obedience to its precepts? When He declares that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, are you not ashamed to go and seek after justification where He tells you it never can be found? When He, over and over again, declares that salvation is by faith and that it is a matter of Grace to be received, do you not blush for yourself that you should give the lie to God and propound a righteousness of your own conceit in which you have vainly tried to keep up a respectable appearance, screening the palpable delinquencies of your life under a thin veil of piety toward God and charity toward men?

Eternal life is not to be earned by any trade you can carry on in works of the flesh because, however estimable in the opinion of men, they are simply vile in the sight of God! If a man seeks to keep the Commandments of God in order that he may attain eternal life, he will be ashamed and confounded. He had better at once renounce the folly of attempting so insane, so futile, so impossible a task as that of defending his own cause and justifying his own soul! But when a man is converted; when he has believed in Christ Jesus to the salvation of his soul; when he is justified by faith and his sin is blotted out—when he has obtained mercy, found Grace in the eyes of the Lord and entered into the rest of faith because he knows that he is a saved man—then in keeping the precepts of the Law he will gratify a strong inclination. In fact, it henceforth becomes his highest ambition to be obedient—and the great delight of his soul is to run in the ways of God's Commandments out of gratitude for the great benefits he has received.

And let it never be imagined that because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, there is, therefore, a complete removal of all moral constraints and restraints from Christian men! We are not under the Law, but under Grace, yet are we not lawless and libertine since we have become servants of God and followers of Christ. No, but we are under another Law—a Law of another sort which works upon us after another fashion. What if a man says, "I am free from the police, the magistrate, the judge and the executioner"? Does

it, therefore, follow that he is free from the rules of his father's house? Assuredly not! The child may be quite clear of the police court, but there is a rod at home. There is a father's smile; there is a father's frown. And though Christians shall never be so punished for their sins that they can come under condemnation, seeing they are delivered from that evil calamity by Christ, yet being children of God they come under another discipline—the discipline of His house and home—a discipline of chastisements not at all of a legal caste, for, however bitter the suffering it often entails, though He cause grief, He will have compassion.

The rebukes are sharp, but the retribution is not vindictive and the Lord is known to smile with approbation, to speak with commendation and to bestow His compensations with liberal hands on those who seek His face, listen to His voice and do His bidding. When He has committed to us some service which He only could qualify us to discharge, He has often caused us to partake of the fruits in abundant joy. Now, I shall endeavor to bring out this principle while I am speaking upon our text. Those who are children of God should seek after universal obedience to the Divine Commands. They should have respect unto all the Lord's Commandments. If they do so, they will have a full requital and this is the reward. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." Two things, then, claim our attention—the universality of believing obedience and the excellence of its result.

I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF BELIEVING OBEDIENCE is here highly commended. The esteem in which we hold and the tribute we pay to all God's Commandments is spoken of. Not some of His Commandments, but all of them. Not picking and choosing—paying attention to this because it pleases me and omitting that because it is not equally

pleasurable—but the careful, earnest respecting of all the statutes of God and the anxious endeavor to keep them all! This it is which challenges attention and therein is great blessedness. Turn to the Psalm, itself, which is far preferable to any reflections we could offer, inasmuch as the Word of God must ever excel the word of man. There David says, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord."

Comes this blessedness simply on those who are in the way, irrespective of their walk and conversation? No, but let them take heed lest they step aside and put their foot into the puddle and stain their garments. The persons who are truly blessed are the undefiled who so watch their walk that they endeavor, in everything, to adorn the doctrine of God, their Savior, and in nothing to grieve the Spirit of God! There lies the blessedness, not in partial obedience, but in perfect obedience as far as it can be attained! Not now and then, but ever and always! Not in some things, but in all things, as far as we are taught of the living God. The only way to avoid defilement is to have respect and pay deference to all the Commandments of the Lord.

Whether we observe it or not, there is never an omission of duty or a commission of fault that does not cast a stain upon the purity of conscience and the integrity of character. Would you wish to be spotted from head to foot, Believer? I know you would not! If you would be blest, you must be undefiled—and if you would be undefiled, there must be a universality about your obedience—walking in all the Commandments of the Lord. To enjoy this beatitude, a holy walking must become habitual. This sacred exercise is very different from sluggish piety. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the Law of the Lord." A man may sit down in the road without soiling his skin or fouling his apparel, but that is not enough. There must be progress—practical action in the Christian life! And in order to blessedness we must be doing something for the Master!

Slothfulness is not the way to blessedness! Nor can we serve the Lord in this active work unless we labor in all things to mind His will and walk according to His way. God is to be sought diligently by sincere souls. "Blessed are they that keep His testimonies and that seek Him with the whole heart." Now, you cannot keep the testimonies and know the doctrine unless you have the will in full force and vigorous energy. It seems to be almost as inevitable as a Law of Nature that a man who is not sound in his life cannot be sound in his judgment. Wisdom will not long hold a seat in the head of that man who has yielded up his heart to folly. A pure theology and a loose morality will never blend. We have known men who thought themselves mightily orthodox, indulge in many unseemly and profligate habits. In fact, they have made light of their own sins—and that boasted orthodoxy of theirs presently develops into some pernicious fallacy!

Be assured of it, you cannot claim the promises unless you are willing to keep the precepts. Vaunt as you may your knowledge of the letter of the Scriptures, you shall fail to be owned of God as His witnesses unless there is the witness of the life as well as the witness of the lips! And how can the witness of the life be sincere unless we strive in all things to keep the statutes of the Lord? How can we be said to serve Him with our whole heart if part of our heart goes after vanity—if we hug some favorite sin or if we leave some known duty in abeyance, saying—"When we have a more convenient season we will attend to that." No, the blessedness is to the undefiled! The blessedness is to the walkers in the way! The blessedness is to the keepers of the Divine Laws. The blessedness is to those that seek the Lord with their whole heart.

So, you see, you must take care to have respect unto all the Commandments if you are to get the blessedness of the Christian life. If you will carefully notice the fourth verse of this Psalm, you will see that this keeping of all the Commandments is, itself, a positive command of God—"You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently." That is enough guarantee for a Christian—"You have commanded." Now, the command of God to His people is not, "You shall keep some of My commands and walk in a measure according to My mind and after My will." What father is there who will say to his children, "You must sometimes

obey me. The rule of my house is that you may use your own discretion and follow your own inclination as to which of my injunctions you obey and which you neglect. You can have your own way at times if you will but occasionally yield to me in a few things?"

Such a father would be quite unworthy to be at the head of any household! Certainly our heavenly Father is not thus lax in His discipline. He has spoken to His children in tones of love. The Law of His mouth has been given as a light to illuminate our path and as a lamp to guide our feet. So palpable, then, is the Divine Benevolence, that the more imperious His voice, the more interested we must be in heeding it. Does He say—"You shall keep My statutes and observe My ordinances"?—doubt not for an instant that there is much profit in following the instructions closely and great peril in disregarding them! And inasmuch as the authority of God goes with each command—with one precept as

well as another—therefore should it be the objective of the Christian that he should keep all the commands! He should make no choice, or selection, as to the words of the Lord, but take them all and pray the Lord to bring him into conformity with every one of them.

That this is a meet and proper subject of prayer becomes very obvious, for in the next verse the Psalmist exclaims, "Oh that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!" Now, no man, I think, ever prayed God to grant him partial obedience. Did he ever pray—dare he ever pray, "O Lord, help me to overcome some of my sins, but not all! This day preserve me from some temptations, but allow me to indulge some of my propensities"? Did you ever pray, "O Lord, keep me, I pray You, from great and open sins, but permit me, in Your infinite mercy, to enjoy certain private sins that I am exceedingly fond of? Such a prayer were worthier of a worshipper of Satan than of a worshipper of God! No, our heart renewed by Grace craves to be perfectly set free from sin! We have not obtained it—we are pressing on towards it—but this, even now, is our desire and our prayer. Hence you cannot wonder that in the text the believing man is spoken of as having respect unto all God's Commandments, since, if it is a matter of prayer, it cannot be in respect to some of God's Commandments, but he must pray that he may have respect to every one of them.

Now, I want to come a little closer to details. What do we mean by having respect to all God's Commandments? I reply that whatever there is that the Lord has spoken in any part of His Word, we desire to hold in devout esteem and to have respect to every utterance of His will. The Law, as He gave it to Moses, is no longer, to us, the way of obtaining life, but it is still, in the hands of Christ, a most blessed rule of living. It is divided into two tablets and our prayer is that we should keep them both and reverently observe them, that towards God our life should always be obedient, truthful, adoring. We pray that we should have respect unto Him in all our ways; that we should lean upon Him; that we should depend upon Him; that we should serve Him and devote ourselves wholly to Him. To seek His Glory, first and foremost, is the chief end of our being. We must not forget this.

But then there follow six Commandments upon the other stone which relate to men—and we must mind them—for it were a poor thing to say, "I am devout towards God, but I care not to be just towards men." A devout thief would be a strange anomaly! An adoring murderer were a singular incongruity! A disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ indulging in covetousness is a self-evident contradiction! No, he that loves God must love his neighbor as himself and I trust our desire is that we may not fail in obedience to either of these tablets, but may, by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, be worked into an uprightness of conversation and character, both towards God and towards men. Some commands of God are highly spiritual, while others may be described rather as moral. Surely, to trust God is one of the grand commands. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" is a precept which we would never wittingly neglect.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding." "Cast your care on Him." "Draw near unto Him." All such spiritual exhortations as these relate to the life of the quickened Believer. God has forbidden us to disregard, to despise, or to disparage any of them. Oh that we may abound in all the Graces of the Spirit and be diligent in all the acts of our spiritual life! But we must not, therefore, forget or be negligent concerning morals, which some have accounted to be minor obligations! They pretend to abound in prayer, but are positively slothful in business. They are content to wait, but not to work. They say that they are serving at the altar, but we see that they are indolent enough in the shop. Christian men who stand up for the Truth of God should take care not to be lax in their conduct when they are so wonderfully strict in their creed.

Do not trifle with truth in speaking to your fellow man while you insist on respecting the Truth of God. Can anything be more despicable than the priests who prate much about the faithfulness of God's promises but are not very particular about keeping their own promises? They say that they will let you have an article home on Friday night and you do not get it till the following Wednesday—that is telling a falsehood. If you saw yourselves as others see you, though you might account yourselves spiritually true, you would know for certain that you were morally false! Little duties are almost too insignificant for such high-flying spiritual professors. They are such that can pray at a Prayer Meeting, therefore they need not do an honest day's work for an honest day's wage!

On the other hand, they can oppress the laborer in his wages because they mean to give a donation to the hospital! It will not do! In vain you pretend to be spiritual and attend to spiritual duties, while you ignore the commonplace morals! Depend upon it—if you are not moral, you are not a disciple of Christ! It is all nonsense about your experience. If you occasionally get drunk, or if you now and then let out an oath, or if, in your business you would make twice two into five

or three, according as your profit happens to run—why, man, do not talk about being a Christian! Christ has nothing to do with you—at least no more to do with you than He

had to do with Judas Iscariot! You are very much in the same position. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If without holiness, then much more without morality can no man expect to see the face of God with acceptance!

But, as true Believers in our Lord, we hope that He will enable us to have respect unto all God's Commandments. Some Commandments specially concern the Church. Every Christian should endeavor to discharge his duties towards his fellow Christians. There are also duties connected with the family and every Christian should see that he does not let one of these kill the other. I once knew a man—I cannot tell you whether he is alive at this present moment—I knew him well. He used to go out into the villages with all the local preachers. He was a constant attendant at Prayer Meetings— in fact, you never went to a public service connected with the Church without seeing him—and he was out at tract society and missionary anniversaries and every gathering of the sort. The only place where you never found him was at home with his boys.

I had the misery to teach one of his boys. That boy died in drunkenness before he had reached the age of manhood. Others of his sons were the pests of the town in which he lived. That man was eminently good in certain respects—doing a great deal for other people's families—but nothing for his own. Now, that will not do, Brothers and Sisters. That will never do! We must never bring to God, as a sacrifice, a duty smeared with the blood of another duty! That were an abomination! There is a balance and a proportion to be observed. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." The works of the Christian life may be divided, if you like, into public and private. How zealous some individuals are in the discharge of public work! Anything that will be seen of men shall have their closest attention!

But how about private work? We attend the Prayer Meeting, but do we forsake the closet? We hear sermons, but do we read our Bibles alone? We attend public meetings, but do we have private communion with God? O Beloved, there are two sets of duties—the outward and the inward. What, though to outward observation we walk uprightly before God and there is nothing about us that the human eye can detect as wrong, yet if the heart is not pure—if though the outside of the platter is washed, the inside is full of filthiness, how far we are from perfection! These reflections ought to cause a world of self-examination while I press home the crucial words—"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments"—those Divine injunctions which concern the secret inward life as well as those which have to do with our more outward and public carriage. We sometimes divide Christian duties into greater and smaller. Of course they are all great—none are small except in their bearing upon others even though some things appear to have less relative magnitude.

Now, some people are remiss and careless about what they call petty, trivial matters, but the genuine lover of the Lord will show his love to his Master in bestowing much care

upon little things. I know it is in a family the little things that bring discomfort and the little things that give pleasure. And I believe in the family of God those who give diligent heed to the little things of the Word usually bring much comfort to their fellow Christians and great glory to God. At the same time, there were Pharisees of old who strained out gnats from their drink, but swallowed camels by their immoralities. There were those who tithed mint and anise and cumin and yet neglected the weightier matters of the Law. This must never occur with us. We must endeavor to have such a careful walk that we would not go an inch astray—and yet it is idle to talk about going an inch astray when we give ourselves license for a mile or two of wandering every now and then! God grant we may have Grace to avoid small faults, while we strive to keep clear of great transgressions!

One other word I would like to say here. In the full sweep of our text there must be taken in duties unknown as well as known. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." There may be some of God's commands that you do not know. Study the Word of God in order that you may know them. "Well," says one, "but I am excused if I do not know them." Do you really think so? Because, if so, the more ignorant a man is, the safer he is from coming into condemnation, for, knowing little, he is under little obligation, according to such an estimation. But our understanding and knowledge are not the measure of our duty. The command of God is our sole standard! Conscience, itself, is not a trustworthy rule. If a man's conscience is unenlightened, he may be sinning and reaping the ill consequences of his sin—not less surely because he is not conscious that his misfortunes are due to his folly rather than his fate! His conscience cannot be the standard. The standard is the Law of God.

Brothers and Sisters, I would not have you live in daily neglect of a Divine command which I am persuaded you would obey if you knew it. Hide not yourself behind a pillar, but come into the light and take the Word of God and read it and always ask that God would be pleased to open your eyes to anything there you have not seen before. You know you can wink very hard, sometimes, when you are reading the Bible. I should say that our friends in the Southern states of America, when they kept slaves, must have winked dreadfully hard when they were reading such a passage as this—"As you would that men should do to you, do you also unto them likewise." And I could mention some other matters that concern English people that would require a frequent putting of the finger in the eye for fear too much light should come in. But be you not such! Seek to let the Word photograph itself upon your understanding and then, straightway, when you know the Divine will, labor to carry it out in all particulars.

Thus have I tried to show the range of this text. But now notice that what is aimed at here is that the soul should pay respect unto all God's Commandments—pay respect to them—love them, study them, value them and thus pay respect to them all. I do not know whether you catch my thought, for I am afraid that I am putting it rather awkwardly. The

commands of God are proportionate to one another. When an architect is about to erect a large edifice, say a cathedral, he has to make the height of the various proportions relative to each other. He grasps an idea of what the general effect is to be, so he does not throw out all his strength upon the nave, or the transept, or the chancel, or the spire, but he tries to make each part of the magnificent pile assist and contribute to the general harmony of the entire structure.

Now, it ought to be so, also, with the Christian life. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments"—to the foundation commandments, striving to dig deep. To the high soaring commandments— seeking to rise into the utmost fellowship with God. To those commandments that need stern labor, like the rugged walls upon which much toil must be spent and upon those which are a delight and a beauty, like the golden light windows that require fine taste and delicate skill. One would wish to do it all, to realize it all, to aim after a completeness of character so that we may be like the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh that we were enamored of this perfection and were seeking after it! It becomes us, dear Friends, who are believers in Christ, to set before us as our standard a perfect character and we should aim to reach it, looking to have the mind and will of God for that model.

That I may in all things do what God requires of me and abstain from everything which He forbids me should be the great objective of my life. Be it my firm resolve and my daily and hourly desire, that, by the power of His Spirit, I may attain this conformity to the Divine purpose. I should endeavor with constant maintained persistency to get nearer and nearer to this obedience to every Divine Commandment. Every failure should cost me sorrow. Every mistake should lead me to chasten myself with penitence. Every time I err I should go back to the blood and ask to be washed, that no defilement may remain upon me.

II. Having thus spoken upon this universal obedience, only a few minutes can be afforded for the reward, to wit— THE EXCELLENCY OF ITS RESULT, "Then shall I not be ashamed." I suppose that means, first, that as sin is removed, shame is removed. Sin and shame came into this world together. Our first parents were naked and were not ashamed, but when, in another sense, they became naked, then they were ashamed. They had no sooner sinned against God than they were told that they were naked and they hid themselves from the Presence of the Most High. Unless sin gets to a high head, which it will not do in the Believer, shame is always sure to go with sin. Excessive sin or habitual transgression at last kills shame and gives a harlot's forehead so that the hardened culprit knows not how to blush.

It is an awful thing when a man is no longer conscious of shame, but a still more awful thing when he comes to glory in his shame—for then his damnation is not far off! But as sin is cast out of the Believer, shame is cast out of him in proportion and it, therefore, comes to pass that courage rises with a consciousness of rectitude. The man that has respect unto God's commands is no longer ashamed of men. He is not abashed by their scorn, or disconcerted by their ridicule. Let them say, "Oh, you are too precise," we would be very foolish to

take that as a reproach. I remember a man once contemptuously calling me John Bunyan as I went down the street. I took off my hat to him and felt rather flattered. I only wished I had been more like he! If anybody says to you, "Oh, you are a Methodist," take the imputation kindly. It is a most respectable name. Some of the grandest men that ever lived were Methodists.

"Ah," but they will say, "you are one of the Presbyterians." Do not frown at the charge, but bow courteously, for some grand witnesses for Christ have belonged to that good fellowship. "Ah," says the world, "you are one of those Puritans—you are one of those religious people." Yes, but you are not ashamed of that! They might as well have said,

"You are a man worth £50,000 a year." Would you blush to admit it? I dare say you would like it to be true! When anybody says, "Ah, there is one of the saints," ask him to prove his words! Tell him you only hope you will try to prove them yourself. There is nothing to be ashamed of in keeping God's commands! Then, again, before men we shall not be ashamed of our profession. Well may some Christians be inclined to put their Christianity into the shade when they remember how little credit they do to it—but when a man has respect unto all God's commands, he is not ashamed to say, "I am a Christian. Look me up and down and examine my conduct. I do not boast of it, but I know that I have sought honestly and sincerely to walk before God in righteousness."

Or, when a false accusation is brought against you, meet it in the same spirit. Perhaps somebody will libel you. I will defy you to avoid it! If you were to live the life of the most irreproachable man of God you would not be safe from calumny! Was not God Himself slandered, even in Paradise, by the serpent? But you need not be ashamed when you can appeal to God and feel that in all things you have endeavored to keep His commands. Thrice is he armed that has his conscience clear. No armor of steel or mail can so well protect a man as to know that before God he has walked in guileless, blameless uprightness and sought to do before the Lord that which is well-pleasing in His sight. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments."

This may likewise refer to that inward shame we sometimes feel when we examine ourselves and pass our own conduct in review. Don't you ever, when reading a promise, look upon it as a very sweet promise made to God's children, though you hardly dare appropriate it to yourself? You feel ashamed. In fact, there are many gracious promises you never have been able to accept as your own. You have been afraid to take them. They were too rich, too ripe, too luscious fruit for you to adventure upon tasting! You thought they were intended for the favored children, not for poor strangers like you. Now call to remembrance my text—"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." There are some delightful privileges of the Christian that you have never yet ventured to seek—some high doctrines that you have scarcely been able to believe. Dear Friend, have respect unto ALL His commandments, for, perhaps, your fear, your doubt, your hesitancy,

your need of assurance may have arisen from your lack of a careful walk before God and when the Holy Spirit has enabled you to be holy, He will enable you, by full assurance, to grasp the rich things of the Covenant.

Now, may I not be speaking to some who have been ashamed of attempting their obvious duty? It is your duty to tell your experience, sometimes, to others, but have you not blushed at the very thought? I know why. It was because you thought of some inconsistency which, if they knew, would disparage your testimony and make you appear very faulty in their eyes. Ah, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." You have not dared to address even the smallest congregation though you can speak very well upon secular topics. Why is that? Is it because your walk is not as close with God as it should be? "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments."

Perhaps, my Brother, you may be a minister and yet you may almost falter in stating some grand doctrinal Truth of God. Why is that, Brother? Is there something at the back that I cannot guess—that I would not mention if I could— which weakens your testimony? Yet you will not be ashamed when you have respect unto all God's commandments! How can we stand to admonish the unrighteous if we are not living righteous lives? How can we be able, like Nathan, to say, "You are the man," if we are conscious that the person rebuked could turn round and point at our lives and say, "See what you do!" No, Brothers, the servants of God that are to have courage in doing duty for their Master must pray to be the undefiled in the way. They must walk in the Law of the Lord and though, at the very best, should they reach the highest point, they will still lie low before God and be humble in His Presence—yet they will not be ashamed when they can feel that they have, in all integrity, walked before the Lord and can say, like the Prophet of old, "Whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes? And I will restore it to you. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed."

But if they could not impugn him, it gives the man Grace not to be ashamed. So will it be in the time of trial, too. I admire Job, notwithstanding the testiness he seemed to have, and I wonder who would not be testy when he was covered with boils from head to foot—yet it was a grand thing to be able to say, "O God, You know I am not wicked"—and he could appeal to the Eternal as his Vindicator because the charges brought against him were not true. He had not sinned against his God in the way in which they said. Though he was not perfect in his nature, yet he was pure in heart. He was

sincere in his disposition and blameless in his outward carriage so that he could defy them to prove any of the insinuations that they hurled at his integrity. This helped him to triumph! It was the very backbone of his patience.

And what satisfaction will it supply when our course is reaching its close and we face the hour of our departure if no dark clouds hang over our retrospect of life! Let God's Grace

enable you and me to live godly lives—we shall find, then, our evidences clear! Though we shall not always rely upon any works of righteousness that we have achieved, or any character of holiness that we have acquired, but shall ever rest as much in Christ as we did when at first we cast our sinful souls on Him for mercy, yet it will be sweet to look back upon a life that has been spent in the service of God and to exchange this service below for the nobler service of His courts above!

And when our course is finished and we are gathered to our fathers, do you not think it will be well to leave an unclouded reputation behind? Did you ever notice the painful contrast between the record concerning one and another of the good kings of Judah? Take, for example, Amaziah and Hezekiah. Of Amaziah it is said, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David, his father. Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice and burnt incense on the high places." There was no such qualification to the tribute offered to Hezekiah's memory. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David, his father, did. He removed the high places and broke the images, and cut down the groves, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him." So, Brothers and Sisters, I pray it may be with each and all of us, though we may not hold any such exalted position as the kings of Judah! Yet let it be our desire and our aim to be "sincere and without offense till the day of Christ."

Once more, and I have done. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." "Then I shall not be ashamed before God." There is such a thing as a child of God being very much ashamed in the presence of his father. He does not doubt that he is a child, but he feels ashamed. Is it not so with your own children? They know that they are your children and they know that you love them, but, still, they are ashamed because they have been doing something which grieves you and so they do not seek your company. They get away from father. Father has looked very angrily at them. And yet you never say, "Oh, you are not your father's child because you have done wrong and your father will turn you out of the family."

They are never apprehensive of your casting them off. Oh no! They are Calvinistic enough to know that they are not threatened with such a punishment! But at the same time they are fully aware—and it is enough to distress them—that their father is vexed and that he frowns, so they keep out of his way. Now, remember, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." But we must walk in the light, or else we shall not have fellowship with God. Sin will mar and break up that fellowship. Sin will make you leave off communing, or else communing will make you leave off sinning! The two things are not consistent with each

other. I, of course, do not mean, by sinning, those sins of infirmity which we commit unconsciously, but I mean a general habit of sinning to which our willfulness or our negligence contribute.

No rebellion or remissness can be tolerated in those who are living with God. Have you ever noticed two boys that want some indulgence and one of them says, "Ask Father for such-and-such. Ask Father to let us have a holiday." The other says, "John, you ask him." "No," says John, "I cannot ask him. You ask him." "Why should the younger one ask?" "Well," John says, "you know I have offended Father and though, of course, he loves me, yet I do not think it is quite the time for me to go and ask him for any great favor. You go and ask for us both." Have you not felt, sometimes, like that when engaged in prayer when you have not been walking with God as you should? You could pray for forgiveness; you could pray for common mercies; but as for any great favor or special mercy you have felt ashamed, at such times, to ask, and you have been glad for some Brother to open his mouth a little wider than you dared and ask for the Church and you some great blessing.

O Lord, Your servant knows what it is to draw near to Your Mercy Seat, but he feels as if he were not on such terms with You as usual and that he cannot offer prayers and intercessions with that sense of liberty he has often enjoyed. There are other times when God meets us with the kisses of His love and says, "Ask what you will, and it shall be given to you." It is grand praying with us then! "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments." I shall not plead my obedience before You. No, verily, but I shall plead the blood and righteousness of Christ—and this I

shall do with all the greater boldness because my heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience—and that same Spirit which has worked obedience in me will work in me the spirit of adoption! And He that taught me to listen to Your voice will teach me so to speak that You will listen to my voice and an answer of peace shall come to me!

May God bless you, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work for Jesus' sake. Amen.