

## **A Hasty Expression Penitently Retracted**

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DELIVERED BY

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"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You." [Psalm 31:22](#).

THAT is a bit of genuine experience, honestly told, in the most natural manner. How glad we ought to be that David never fell into the hands of an ordinary biographer, for such a piece of weakness as this text records would have been carefully repressed lest the good man's reputation should suffer. It was only a hasty expression and every friendly biographer would have felt that it ought to be taken as unspoken. Here, however, stands this piece of human weakness upon David's life and we are right glad of it—it is a comfort to us little folks to perceive the champions were men of like passions with ourselves! As a bee sucks honey out of nettles, so does faith find comfort even in the failings of David. But we must mind that we do not turn his errors into excuses, for that were to extract poison instead of wholesome juices.

The experience of a good man, of a great man, of a tried man like David, is exceedingly instructive and impressive. The children of God delight in doctrinal preaching and in practical preaching—but I believe that nothing is so sweet to them as experimental preaching by which we are not only taught the Truth of God in the head and in the hand, but something is said of Truth in the heart! This it is which endears the Book of Psalms to the whole Church and makes the explanation of that volume so important. Nothing more sweetly cheers the straggler after better things than to hear of the life-struggles of godly men.

Behold, then, a written confession, dictated by the penitent heart of David who withdraws the curtain from his own innermost life! I should not wonder if his experience should turn out to be very like your own for, as in water, face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man and this is the reason why the experience of one man is his best means of interpreting the feelings of another. Take heed, however, when you are reading the histories of the saints, that you use them with prudence, for it is not all the experience of a Christian that is Christian experience! A Believer may experience much which he does not experience as a Believer, but because his believing is failing him! Sometimes we are rather to regard the experience of good men as beacons to warn us from rocks than as lighthouses to show us where the harbor may be.

Rheumatism is certainly a human disease, but I would, by no means recommend a person to seek after it in order to prove his manhood! We can well do without some things

which were characteristic of certain eminent men, since they did not adorn or strengthen them, but rather disfigured and weakened them. In David's case, it is well to follow David—but it is better to follow David's son—for David, sometimes, went astray like a lost sheep—but David's son was that great Shepherd of the sheep whose every step it is safe for the flock to follow! Do not let us imitate David in his speaking in haste, or in his saying, "I am cut off from before Your eyes." But, at the same time, let us take care that we closely copy him in confessing conscious fault, as he does here, in crying to God in the hour of trouble as he tells us he did—and also in bearing witness to the exceeding goodness of God, notwithstanding our faults—as he here bears witness when he says, "Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You."

For our edification we will consider the text thus—here is, first, an utterance of unbelief—"I am cut off from before Your eyes." Secondly, here is incidentally mentioned an effort of struggling faith—David says, "You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You." And, thirdly, here is a testimony of gratitude, for David joyfully declares that notwithstanding his unbelief, the Lord heard and answered his cries. O for the touch of the Holy Spirit to make this outline into a living sermon! Here are the altar and the wood—O Holy Spirit, You be the fire!

I. Let us begin by listening to AN UTTERANCE OF UNBELIEF—"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes." Note here, first, that unbelief is generally talkative—"I said." It had been better for him not to have thought it, even, but when he did think thus wrongly, it was most unwise to speak the thought. I have heard it said, "If it is in the

mind it may as well come out," but this is not true. If I had a rattlesnake in a box on this platform, I think you would, none of you, vote for the creature's being let loose! Poison in a vial is deadly, but it will hurt no one until the cork is drawn and then we cannot tell how far the mischief may go. Lions and tigers and vipers are best shut up—the wider range you give them, the more you empower them to do mischief. If you have an ill thought, repent of it, but do not repeat it—it may harm you—but it will not harm others if you let it die within doors.

Do as David did in another case, when he had a very ugly thought. He said, "If I shall speak thus I shall offend against the generation of Your people," and he would not, therefore, put his thought into words lest he should offend the godly. If you have a harsh thought of God, utter it not in the presence of His own children. Would you grieve your Brethren? Utter it not in the presence of His enemies. Would you open their mouths to speak against Him? Where will you utter it? Speak it not upon earth, for it is His footstool. Say it not in prayer, for you are bowing at His Throne. Say it nowhere, for God will hear it if no one else should. Bury in silence that offspring of your soul of which it has good cause to be ashamed. Let it be cast over the wall as the untimely figs and consumed upon the rubbish heap of forgotten things.

Alas, unbelief does not understand holding its tongue! We read that the children of Israel murmured in their tents. They could not be quiet at home. They complained of God in their families and very soon the murmuring in the tents became a murmuring throughout all the camp till they gathered together in crowds against God and His servant Moses! Yes, unbelief will prattle. I have known believing men slow of speech, but when a man has anything to complain of, he is fluent even to overflowing! He will go from one neighbor to another and lament the badness of trade; how the crops are failing; how ill he is; what a sickly family he has and a legion of other grief! The gazette of sorrow has long columns and is generally crowded with items! It is published every hour of the day and you can get a new edition at almost any house, for unbelief must publish its inventions. The strife of the many tongues of unbelief causes much mischief in the world. Its quiver is full and its arrows are death. It would have been wiser for David to have bit his tongue than to have said what he ought not to have said. However, this much is clear—unbelief is generally talkative.

Our next observation shall be that the utterances of unbelief are generally hasty—"I said in my haste." There was no reason for saying such a thing at all and certainly not for being in a hurry to say it, for he said to God, "I am cut off from before Your eyes." Look at this statement! It is a very solemn thing to make such a declaration. See if it is founded on fact. Do you think it is true? Search a little more. Set your supposed condition in another light and see whether, after all, you may not have made a mistake. But no. Unbelief blunders it out, right or wrong—"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes." I suppose the reason for the hot haste was this—when a man's mind is much distracted and driven to and fro, he needs to come to some sort of conclusion and, though that conclusion may be totally false and may be as far from right as possible, still, his troubled thoughts require some sort of a conclusion.

John Bunyan says of the pilgrim that he was much tumbled up and down in his thoughts. It is a forcible Saxon expression and most of you know what it means. You do not know whether you are on your head or your heels, as the old saying is—you are in a horrible confusion and countless difficulties surround you—and so it is that you blunder at a conclusion and say in your haste what should not be said. But why in such haste to write bitter things against yourself? Why in such haste to write your own condemnation? Why in such haste to misjudge your God? Stop a bit, Brothers and Sisters. Stop a bit! There is time enough for this when the worst has come to the worst. Wait awhile, for when the brain is heated, waiting will cool the brow and prepare a place for wisdom. Why are you so desperately eager to play the fool?

Don't you know that the utterances of unbelief are hasty and hasty things are raw and sour and cannot display the maturity of prudence? What a man says in his haste he generally has to repent in his leisure. If it is a good thing, say it at once! But if it is a doubtful thing, stop! Then stop again. Then stop again and if the stopping should end in your not speaking,

there will be a little more of golden silence in the world! I have heard say that one of the greatest points in good speaking is to know when to pause. I do not know about that, but I am sure that one of the wisest things in good living is to know when to pause, to stop, to question and to deliberate! To go blindly on as though it were neck or nothing with you is to make sure shipwreck some day or other. Do nothing till you are sure that it is right to do it and say nothing till you know that what you say is true.

Hasty deeds and hasty words make up the most horrible parts of human history—the warnings of the past forbid all recklessness. Nevertheless, when once we grow despondent, this is our temptation and it will be well to bit and bridle both mind and tongue lest we fall into the evil. Frequently when a man speaks in haste, his expressions are the result of

his temper. "We are quick-tempered," some will say. If you are quick-tempered, it is very likely that you are also quick tongued and this is a great pity. You speak in a moment what you cannot unsay in a century! Now, it is very evil when we are in a temper with God. Is that always the case? Oh yes. I fear that professing Christians are often out of temper with God. A good woman was wearing deep mourning years after the loss of him whom she mourned and a Quaker said to her, "Friend, I perceive you have not yet forgiven God."

There he hit the nail on the head! Many have not yet forgiven God—they have taken umbrage against Him either because of bereavement, or loss of property, or sickness, or disappointment, or trial and they keep on sulking because they cannot have their own way. Surely they have never heard the question, "Should it be according to your mind?" "Will you sit on the throne and judge your God? Will you—

"Snatch from His hands the balance and the rod, Re-judge His judgment, be the God of God"? This is blasphemy! And yet too often such blasphemy enters into the human heart. Who is to be master? Are we to be lords over all? Who is to order Providence? In whose hands should be the issues of death? Is God to wait on us and ask our will and do our bidding? That is, indeed, the turning of things upside down and it cannot, must not be! It is because we get into wayward, foolish, rebellious tempers with God that we speak in our haste what we ought not even to think! Thus David penitently confesses, "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes."

Again, it is very clear from the text that the utterances of unbelief are frequently exaggerated. "I am cut off from before Your eyes." No, David. No, no! It is not so—you are cut off from the esteem of men through slander and you are cut off from the friendship of those who once professed to love you—whose minds have been soured by an evil report—but you are not cut off from God! It is true you are cut off from the public services of God's House and obliged to hide away in the rocks and caves of the earth. That is true, but you are not cut off from before God's eyes! You know you are not, so why do you say you are?

Oh, but some people always talk big about everything! It is a great pity because it is so near to lying that I do not know whether it is not the same thing! There must be a very

narrow line, fine as a razor's edge, between a lie and the unguarded expressions of exaggeration. Some people talk about their trials on a scale which allows a mile for every inch! Their afflictions are awful. They are dreadful. They are without parallel. There were never any like them and there never will be again! They endure the most extraordinary pains and the most amazing afflictions and they are altogether quite equal to Job and Jeremiah rolled into one. Never did any persons undergo sufferings comparable to theirs. You cannot sit down by their side to comfort them but they will tell you at once that you do not know anything about the great deeps where they are doing business! You are only knee-deep in the waters of trouble, while all God's waves and billows have gone over them.

I meet with some who are almost impossibly afflicted—their tribulations exceed that which is common to man and that which is uncommon, too! But this may be accounted for by the large organ of imagination with which they are endowed. By using this imagination to paint their spectacles, they are soon able to see all manner of dreadful visions and they talk accordingly. That is the way of our unbelief—it will talk at random about trials and troubles. This is not pretty. God does not love His children to talk in that fashion. The lips that speak truth are His delight and if our unbelief will not speak truth, (and it very seldom does)—perhaps never does—then it is a great pity that it cannot hold its tongue. May I ask if any friend here has been exaggerating his trouble? Is there any sister here who is fretting out of all reason—making a great deal out of what may be much, but is not everything? Then stand rebuked at this hour! Your cup is not all gall. Your bread is not all turned to ashes. All your comforts have not fled—many a mercy is left you. Come, come, Friend, we are not quite cut off from before the Lord! Let us leave off exaggeration lest we be guilty of falsehood.

Once more, the utterances of unbelief dishonor God. "I am cut off," says David, "from before Your eyes." He does, as it were, blame the Lord! Before Your very eyes I have suffered this! You have so forsaken me and given me over to the enemy that I am cut off from before Your eyes. Why do You not deliver me? He spoke in his haste as if God, at the very least, had been forgetful, even if He had not been untender and unfaithful! "I am cut off from before Your eyes." It would greatly dishonor God if He did suffer one that could say, "In You, O Lord, have I put my trust," to be cut off from before His eyes. It would be contrary to His promise, for He has said that He will not suffer the righteous to perish. "The eyes of

the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry"—there never was a godly man cut off from God, yet, and there never will be till time shall be no more!

All the attributes of God forbid the destruction of a soul that is resting on the Almighty arm! And yet the unbelieving heart declares that such a destruction has taken place in its own case. Oh, wondrous unbelief, to think the Lord to be so unrighteous as to forget our work of faith and labor of love—to forget His children, to cast away His own, His covenanted one—with whom He has entered into solemn league by oath, saying, "I will never leave you

nor forsake you." He puts His promise very strongly in that passage, using many negatives in the original tongue. "I will not, not, not— never, never leave you. I will not, not forsake you"—many times over negating the idea that He could possibly forsake one of His own.

Brothers and Sisters, let us consider whether you and I may not have given utterance to words of unbelief. If we have, let us cut up those words tonight—let us call them back and drown them in our tears! Those cruel charges were, none of them, true! They were spoken in haste. They were the offspring of petulance and folly. Lord, have mercy upon Your servants and cast these grievous words of ours behind Your back! Let them be as though they were never spoken, for we never had any reason to speak so and what we have said, we do thoroughly repent of and pray that You would blot it out forever!

II. So much, then, upon the first head—an utterance of unbelief. We are now ready to look within the sorrowing heart and mark the signs that Grace is still living there. We have not far to search, for, secondly, in the text there is mentioned AN EFFORT OF STRUGGLING FAITH. Though David said, "I am cut off from before Your eyes," yet he prayed and prayed directly to God. He says, "You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You." O child of God, cry to a smiting God! Cry to God even when He seems to cast you off, for where else can you go? What remains for you but to cry to Him, even if He shuts His ears to your plea? What if He frowns upon you? Still cling to Him! Where else can you get a glimpse of hope?

To whom, or where could you go if you should turn from God? What if His Providences seems harsh? What if He uses the rod upon you till your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint? What if He even appears to put His hand to His scabbard to draw out the sword to slay you? Even then there remains no resort for you so hopeful as believing prayer! Say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Cling to Him still! Sink or swim, live or die, do not doubt your God—but pray! What did Jonah do when the weeds were wrapped about His head and He went down to the bottoms of the mountains? He still made supplication to the Lord God of salvation and trusted his spirit in the Divine hands. He tells us, "Out of the belly of Hell I cried."

Wherever you may be drifted and however desperate your case, yet still pray—still pray! If you can do nothing else—if your hands are bound as to any form of effort, still pray. Never cease from crying, though you cannot rise a note above the most pitiful wailing. When Bunyan's pilgrim went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he found that he had no weapon with which he could smite the fiends that surrounded him except the weapon of all-prayer. The adversaries were too impalpable for sword or spear, too mysterious for battle-axe or bow—but PRAYER could find them out and smite them to the heart!

Believer, this is the most convenient and useful of all the weapons in our heavenly panoply. All-prayer will help you against man or devil! It will help you to bear up under trials that come from God and tribulations that mysteriously approach you from earth or

Hell. As long as you live, you should pray, for while you can pray you cannot perish. You must, under no pressure, cease from prayer, my Brothers and Sisters. It is your last resort. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Please notice that David prayed in downright earnest, for he says, "You heard the voice of my supplications," so that he offered many prayers—prayers with voices to them—and he describes them under the term, "I cried." His was a crying prayer! Those are the very best prayers.

Our eyes, sometimes, light upon, "prayers to be said or sung"—we have no wish to depreciate such compositions for others, but they are of no possible use to us who delight to tell our desires to our heavenly Father in our own broken speech. That is the prayer which is neither said nor sung, but CRIED—it drops from the eyes in tears, it breaks forth from the lips in moans—and from the breast in groans that cannot be uttered! Those prayers of ours which we could not endure for any human ear to hear are among the best of prayers. A little child may begin to speak and call to its mother in words and, perhaps, Mother will not come to it. But let it give up words and try crying and you will see if Mother does

not come! Let it cry again and again, and Mother's ears will be caught by the child's cry. There is no prayer to God like the crying of a childlike spirit.

A cry is not a very pleasant sound. No—but it is a very prevalent sound! A cry is not even articulate. No—but it's expressive! Crying is the language of pain. It is the eloquence of grief. It is the utterance of intense longing. When you use crying prayer—when you must have the blessing and, therefore, cry for it—you shall have it! We do not always give our children what they cry for, but this is the rule of our heavenly Father, "The righteous cry and the Lord hears." Well did Isaiah say, "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer you." The rule is invariable and many are the cases which go to prove it. We know who said, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." Even in his despair, I say, David prayed—and that praying took the form of an earnest and passionate cry.

Note well that God heard his prayer! We sometimes fancy that God will not hear us if any measure of unbelief is mixed with our prayers. If that were the case, I am afraid that the Lord would not often hear us, for there is a measure of unbelief even in our strongest faith! It is a great mercy that even when we are lamenting, "I am cut off from before Your eyes," yet, if at the same time we can pray, our petition is accepted of the Lord. The Scripture says, "According to your faith be it unto you." Suppose that text had run like this, "According to your unbelief be it unto you." Ah, me, where would you and I have been? Our unbelief would have involved us in the curse and condemnation which rest upon all who believe not in the Lord Jesus! Unbelief would sour and spoil all.

God did not deal with David according to his unbelief, but He dealt with him according to his faith. We are a sorrowful mixture of natures and if we were reckoned with according to our evil side, who among us could stand? David's faith was small, but still it was true. It

was an infant faith that could cry—a struggling faith that could plead. It was a patient faith that could wait and so it was an accepted faith which obtained favor of the Lord! It was a faith which, if it had not an arm to fight with, had a voice to cry with and, therefore, it prevailed with God. My Friend, you who are in trouble, whoever you may be, let me urge, persuade, entreat you not to listen to the voice of Satan who tempts you to cease from prayer! Do not say, "God will not hear me because I am in this wretched condition." Remember the words, "Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord." Cry to Him wherever you may be, or whoever you may be!

However desperate your plight, you shall survive it if you pray! However dire your danger, a way of escape shall be made for you if you cry unto the Lord! Cannons have been styled, "the last arguments of kings"—but I may better call PRAYERS the last arguments of needy sinners! Cling to the Mercy Seat when you can cling nowhere else! Cling to the Mercy Seat when Justice lifts her sword to slay you! Increase your earnestness in proportion as you are tempted to cease from prayer and may God the Holy Spirit, who is the God of Grace and of supplications, intensify your desires, help your infirmities and teach you how to pray and what to pray for as you ought.

III. Our text next supplies us with A TESTIMONY OF GRATITUDE. The Psalmist says, "Nevertheless You heard

the voice of my supplications." Notice that God acted in directly the opposite manner from that in which the Psalmist's unbelief acted, for, first, his unbelief spoke and said this and that, but God did not speak. He was a listener—"You heard." Not a word came from God—there had been too many words in the business already. When we begin to grumble with anybody it takes two to make a quarrel and if number two answers to our murmuring, we soon stir up a fierce quarrel.

If God were as man is, if His thoughts were as our thoughts, He would say, "Murmur, do you, when I am dealing with you so kindly? Then you shall have cause for complaining. Is My little finger heavy? You shall feel My hand! Is My hand heavy? You shall know the weight of My loins." Well might God say to us, "What? Do you find fault while you are surrounded with so many blessings? Tell Me I have forsaken you? Say to Me that you are cut off from before My eyes when I am dealing graciously with you all day long? Do you dare talk to Me so? Then I will do as you have said. I will take you at your word and make your complaints true."

But oh, the marvelous patience of God! He says nothing. There was the strength of Christ—as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth in the midst of His accusers—and here is a part of the marvelous power of God—the Omnipotence which restrains Omnipotence so that He is not provoked, or, being provoked, speaks not in anger and deals not with His servants in wrath—otherwise we had long ago been consumed. Oh,



how sweet to look back and think He did not answer me according to my folly, or walk stubbornly with me because I walked stubbornly with

Him! His Word says, "With the froward You will show Yourself forward," but He did not fulfill that threat to me, nor walk contrary to me though I walked contrary to Him! In gentleness and patience He regarded not my evil words and answered me not according to my folly! You see, then, the difference between the quiet of God and the clamor of our unbelief. David bears cheerful testimony to the fact that he was in error when He spoke so hastily and that God was exceedingly gracious in taking so little notice of His foolish complaint.

The next contrast is seen in the fact that though David spoke in a hurry, there was no haste in God. "I said in my haste." Yes, but God did not reply in haste. Notice the glorious leisure of infinite love, for it is written, "You heard the voice of my supplications." God was quietly hearing while His petulant servant was fiercely complaining. We had a meeting of ministers a short time ago at which it was agreed that for five minutes each one should relate an experience with our congregations. One of the Brothers gave us this thought which I shall not soon forget. He said, "It is a great thing for a minister who visits his people to be a good listener. The afflicted value this faculty above gold. Perhaps the pastor calls upon a poor woman who is in great trouble and he sits down and she tells him her mournful tale. Bless her heart! He has heard that tale a dozen times before, but he sits quite still and takes it all in, listening most earnestly. He has not, perhaps, the power to help her at all, but she feels very thankful to him because he has heard her case and it has comforted her to tell it."

It is a great thing to be willing to sit and listen and hear a story which, perhaps, is very badly told and is not at all pleasant to hear—which even creates sorrow in your own mind as you listen to it. Such hearing displays tender sympathy. Hence the Scriptures say of God, "O You that hears prayer." Mark, it is not "answers," but "hears." Those Brothers who need to be exceedingly correct tell us, "God is the hearer and answerer of prayer." Yes, that is very proper. But the Scripture is content to write, "O You that hears prayer." It is a wonderful thing that God should sit down, as it were, and listen to the prayers of His people and put up with their nonsense—their complaining and their crying. David does not cease to wonder that in his unhappy condition he had yet been regarded of the Lord—"You heard the voice of my supplication."

How beautiful that is! "I spoke in haste." All the Lord did was He heard it all, took it all in, considered the case David's fevered brain meant and how far that out of it and, therefore, forgave the sad unbelief which spoke out so audaciously in words of repining. Oh, it is beautiful, that gentleness of God which led Him to give no answer to the hurried, passionate speech of David, but just to hear it and no more! Well did David say in another place, "Your gentleness has made me great." It is delightful to see how the Lord always notes the good and ignores the evil when dealing with His saints. In David's case He would not hear the

foolish and false charges of his unbelief, but He heard the cries of his struggling faith! Remember the instance of Sarah? She doubted as to her bringing forth a child when she was old and asked, "How shall it be, my Lord being old, also?" The Holy Spirit says nothing in the New Testament about Sarah's unbelieving speech except that He commends that one good word in it and notes that she, "obeyed her husband, calling him, Lord." If the Lord can spy a beauty in His people, He fixes His eyes on it—and as for all their defilements, He washes them away, saying, "They shall not be remembered against them any more forever."

Let us go a little farther in our contrast between David and his Lord. There was no exaggeration with God. Unbelief exaggerates—He diminishes the evil of His servants till it comes to nothing, putting it all away. He heard the feeble cry of faith in David's heart and did not allow the voice of his unbelief to drown it. He did not look upon His servant's fault till it hid His Grace—but He smiled upon the work of Grace, little as it was. And though, as we have said, unbelief dishonored God, yet God did not dishonor His servant's prayer for all that! No. He might have said to David's prayer, "Go your way, I will not hear you. Does the same fountain send forth sweet water and bitter? I heard David say, just now, 'I am cut off from before Your eyes.' Am I going to hear out of the same mouth, a charge against My faithfulness and a cry for help? If He thinks I have forsaken Him, let it be so."

But not so our God! He will not dishonor prayer, even though prayer is very feeble and though there is an unbelief in it which is grievous in His sight. It never shall be said that faith and prayer came back from the Throne of God with blushing faces! He will maintain His memorial untouched and the motto of that memorial is—"The God that hears prayer." "You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You." We dare not make much out of our English version by way of dogmatic teaching and yet, somehow, I feel inclined to pull each little word of the text in pieces just for a minute. Look at it. "Nevertheless You heard the voice." "Never-the-less," as much as to say, Though I had spoken as I

ought not to do, yet You did not lessen Your attention to me, but You did just as much hear my prayer as if I had never sinned with my tongue. Not one jot the less was Your pity or Your bounty—Your ears did not, in any measure, lose their readiness to hear my prayer, nor Your heart its willingness to feel for me. Not one particle the less for all my transgressing, "You heard the voice of my supplications."

gracious God, never-the-less do you deal out Your mercies though it seems as if ever-the-more we sin! Nevertheless do You love though ever the more do we err. Oh grant that ever the more we may be grateful to You and never, oh never, may we again grieve You by our unbelief!

The time has come for me to wind up with SUNDRY LESSONS IN A FEW WORDS. The first is, let us repent heartily of every harsh thought we have ever had of our God and Father. I am forced to look back upon some such sins of thought with much distress of mind. They have come from me in serious pain and depression of spirit and now I pray the

Lord, in His great mercy, to look at them as though I had never thought them, for I do heartily abhor them and I loathe myself in His sight that I should ever have questioned His tender love and gracious care. If you have similarly transgressed, dear Friends, in your dark nights of trouble, come, now, and bow your heads and pray the Lord to forgive His servants concerning this thing, for He is so good, so gracious, that it is a wanton cruelty to think of Him as otherwise than overflowing with love.

There is none like unto Him among the sons of men! The kindest of mortals have not His heart of compassion! There is none like unto You, Jehovah, even among the gods—no fabled deity, however painted in glowing colors can be compared to You! Let us take back our words if at any time we have said anything against Him and make the utmost amends by magnifying His holy name! In the next place, let us earnestly pray that if ever we shall be tempted again to harsh, mistrusting thoughts, we may be able to put a check upon our language and to keep our mouth as with a bridle. Oh that our tongue, which is given us to praise our God, may never be perverted into an instrument of complaint against our greatest Benefactor! O you vile tongue, how could you ever, in your hottest haste, let slip an angry word against the Lord? Better far to be dumb than to dishonor a name so dear!

The next lesson is this—let us always continue to pray, come what may. Brothers and Sisters, never cease praying! What I have said before, I say again—continue in prayer. Call upon your God! Cry to Him! Cry to Him! While breath lasts and life gives power to feel a desire, never cease to supplicate the Lord. Last of all, let us always speak well of His mercy. If we have bitterly complained, let us, with equal vigor, declare His goodness! I wish that you who are given to grumble would make up your minds that the time past will suffice you to have grumbled and now you are going to growl backwards—to recall all your harsh speeches—and to praise God as much as you have formerly complained against Him. I should like farmers to break into a wonderful excitement of gratitude so that all the nation would ring with it and all men would confess—"Whenever you meet a farmer, you meet with a man who is always praising God for the weather." It will be a wonderful change if that should ever come to be the general remark!

I wish you tradesmen would suddenly put a new leaf into your books and become the most thankful set of men alive so that it would be universally said, "Whenever we meet a tradesman, we always find him praising God for His goodness to him in his business." For many years most traders have done the other thing and it is time they should pitch a new tune and sing another song! There have been "very bad times—dreadfully bad times," quite long enough! Are there no better times coming? Bad as times are, these grumblers live and live in comfort, too! Do they live on their losses? They cannot well do that and so we may suppose that they are living on the savings of former years—so it is clear that they must have had some wonderfully good times, once, when we did not hear much about them!

They ought to praise God, now, for those wonderful seasons four, five, or six years ago when things were so marvel-ously good that they were able to lay up stores for the years of famine! It will be a blessed thing for us when all times are good because our minds are good and our hearts are content. May we grow like the shepherd who was asked, "Will there be good weather today?" And he answered that there would be good weather. "Don't you think it will rain?" "Very likely, or perhaps it will snow." "But you said that it would be good weather." "Yes," he answered, "if God sends it, it cannot be anything else but good." "But I mean, do you think there will be such weather as pleases you." "Yes, that there will," he said

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"for whatever pleases God pleases me."

May God give us a happy, childlike, rejoicing spirit! We have done enough murmuring to last a lifetime! Let us change the tune. Suppose that you were to say, "I will make up my mind that just as much as I have ever disbelieved, mistrusted, murmured, so much will I do in the way of trusting and praising the Lord"? But suppose you were actually to do as much—that would be a poor life of which you could merely say, "There was as much praise of God in that man's life as there was of murmuring." Shall we be content with such a summary? No, no, no! We must rise to something better than that! We must praise God a thousand times to every complaint! No—we must even get above that—we must have done with all complaining! God deliver us from it and lift us right out of unbelief—and when we do speak in our haste, again, may it only be to exclaim, "Bless the Lord, hallelujah!"

If somebody sincerely remarks, "That was a bit of bold sincere remarks. That was a bit of enthusiasm," you may reply, "Oh yes, but as I am a hasty man and rather quick-tempered, that is the way in which I show my hastiness—I bless the Lord while my heart is hot and then keep on doing so till I have cooled down." Lift up a hallelujah when nobody is prepared for such a word of praise! Startle your friends by crying, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name!" The Lord lift you all up to this and keep you there, for Christ's sake. Amen.