

## Sarah and Her Daughters

(No. 1633)

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1881,

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you." [Isaiah 51:2](#).

"Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." 1 Peter 3:6.

I DESIRE to thank God for having had the privilege of preaching in Exeter Hall, yesterday, to a large congregation from the whole of the second verse of the 51st of Isaiah—"Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." [See No. 1596, HEARKEN AND LOOK—OR, ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BELIEVERS preached on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society on the morning of April 27, 1881.] On that occasion I confined my remarks to Abraham and tried to make prominent the facts that God called him while he was a heathen man, one man and a lone man—and yet He blessed him and made him the founder of His people, multiplying his seed as the stars and as the sand of the seashore. I devoutly beseech the Lord to accept my testimony to His power and to increase the faith of the many of His servants to whom I spoke on that occasion. His Holy Spirit gave me the word—may He cause His saints to feed upon it!

Now, I never like to do an injustice to anybody and I feel that I did not, in that sermon, speak sufficiently about Sarah, though I did not quite forget her. Let us make up for our omissions. If we had Abraham at Exeter Hall yesterday morning, we will have Sarah at the Tabernacle, tonight, and maybe we shall learn a lesson from her holy character as well as from that of her husband. And the two lessons combined may go to the perfecting of each other. May our great Teacher, the Holy Spirit, now instruct us! To begin with, let us note what a happy circumstance it is when a godly, gracious man has an equally godly and gracious wife.

It is ill when there is a difference, a radical difference, between husband and wife—when one fears God and the other has no regard for Him. What a pain it is to a Christian woman to be yoked with an unbelieving husband! In a case which I remember, the husband lived all his life indifferent to Divine things, while the wife was an earnest Christian woman and saw all her children grow up in the ways of the Lord. The father lived unregenerate and died without giving any testimony of a change of heart. When our Sister speaks of him, it is with fearful anguish. She does not know what to say, but leaves the matter in the hands of God, often sighing, "O that by a word or a look I could have been enabled to indulge a hope that my poor husband looked to Jesus at the last."

The same must be the case of a husband who has an ungodly wife. However much God may bless him in all other respects, there seems to be a great miss there—as if a part of the sun were eclipsed—that a part of life which should be all light is left in thick darkness. Oh, let those of us who have the happiness of being joined together in the Lord thank and bless God every time we remember each other! Let us pray God, that having such a privilege—that our prayers are not hindered by irreligious partners—we may never hinder our prayers ourselves! God grant that we may give unto His name great glory because of His choice favor to us in this respect.

Abraham had cause to praise God for Sarah and Sarah was grateful for Abraham. I have not the slightest doubt that Sarah's character owed its excellence very much to Abraham. I should not wonder, however, if we discover, when all things are revealed, that Abraham owed as much to Sarah! They probably learned from each other. Sometimes the weaker comforted the stronger and often the stronger sustained the weaker. I should not wonder if a mutual interchange of their several Graces tended to make them both rich in the things of God. Perhaps Abraham had not been all that Abraham was if Sarah had not been all that Sarah was.

Our first text bids us, "Look to Sarah," and we do look on her and we thank God if we, like Abraham, are favored with holy consorts, whose amiable tempers and characters tend to make us better servants of God. We notice, next, as we look to Sarah, that God does not forget the lesser lights. Abraham shines like a star of the first magnitude and we do not, at first sight, observe that other star with light so bright and pure, shining with milder radiance but with kindred luster, close at his side. The light of Mamre, which is known under the name of Abraham, resolves itself into a double star when we apply the telescope of reflection and observation. To the common eye, Abraham is the sole character and ordinary people overlook his faithful spouse, but God does not!

Our God never omits the good who are obscure. You may depend upon it that there is no such difference in the love of God towards different persons as should make Him fix His eyes only upon those that are strong and omit those who are weak. Our eyes spy out the great things, but God's eyes are such that nothing is great with Him and nothing is little. He is infinite and, therefore, nothing bears any comparison to Him. You remember how it is written that He who counts the stars and calls them by name also binds up the broken in heart, and heals all their wounds. He who treasures the names of His Apostles, notes, also, the women that followed in their train. He who marks the brave confessors and the bold preachers of the Gospel also remembers those helpers who labor quietly in the Gospel in places of retirement into which the hawk's eyes of history seldom pries.

Let, therefore, those here present who count themselves to be of the tribe of Benjamin, to be little in Israel, never be discouraged on that account—for the Lord is too great to despise the little ones! You are not forgotten of God, O you who are overlooked by men! The Lord's

eyes are upon innumerable the creeping things in the great sea as well as upon leviathan—He will observe you. If He sends the deluging showers that make strong the cedars, which are full of sap and adorn the brow of Lebanon, so does He send to each tiny blade of grass its own drop of dew. God forgets not the less in His care for the greater! Sarah was in life covered with the shield of the Almighty as well as Abraham, her husband—in death she rested in the same tomb—in Heaven she has the same joy! In the Book of the Lord she has the same record!

Next, notice that it would be well for us to imitate God in this—in not forgetting the lesser lights. I do not know that great men are often good examples. I am sorry when, because men have been clever and successful, they are held up to imitation, though their motives and morals have been questionable. I would sooner men were stupid and honest than clever and tricky! It is better to act rightly and fail altogether than succeed by falsehood and cunning. I would sooner bid my son imitate an honest man who has no talent and whose life is unsuccessful, than point him to the most clever and greatest that ever lived—whose life has become a brilliant success—but whose principles are condemnable.

Learn not from the great but from the good! Be not dazzled by success, but follow the safer light of truth and right! But so it is that men mainly observe that only which is written in big letters. But you know the choicest part of God's books are printed in small characters. They who would only know the rudiments may spell out the words in large type which are for babes, but those who want to be fully instructed must sit down and read the small print of God, given us in lives of saints whom most men neglect! Some of the choicest virtues are not so much seen in the great as in the quiet, obscure life. Many a Christian woman manifests a glory of character that is to be found in no public man. I am sure that many a flower that is "born to blush unseen" and, as we think, to "waste its fragrance on the desert air," is fairer than the beauties which reign in the conservatory and are the admiration of all!

God has ways of producing very choice things on a small scale. As rare pearls and precious stones are never great masses of rock, but always lie within a narrow compass, so full often the fairest and richest virtues are to be found in the humblest individuals. A man may be too great to be good, but he cannot be too little to be gracious. Do not, therefore, always be studying Abraham, the greater character. Does not the text say, "Look unto Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah that bore you"? You have not learned the full lesson of patriarchal life until you have been in the tent with Sarah, as well as among the flocks with her husband.

Furthermore, another reflection arises, namely, that faith reveals itself in various ways. Faith makes one person this and another that. Faith in Noah makes him a shipbuilder and the second of the world's great fathers. Faith in Abraham makes him a pilgrim and a stranger. Faith in Moses makes him plague Egypt and feed a nation for 40 years in the wilderness. Faith in David makes him kill a giant, save a kingdom and ascend a throne. Faith in Samson

makes him slay a thousand Philistines and in Rahab it makes her save two Israelites. Faith has many ways of working and it works according to

the condition and position of the person in whom it dwells. Sarah does not become Abraham, nor does Abraham become Sarah.

Faith in Isaac does not make him the same royal man as Abraham—he is always tame and gentle rather than great and noble—he comes in like a valley between the two great hills of Abraham and Jacob. Isaac is Isaac and Isaac has such virtue as becomes him whom the Lord loved. And Jacob, too, is Jacob and not his father. He is active, energetic and far-seeing. God does not, by His Grace, lift us out of our place. A man is made gentle, but he is not made a fool. A woman is made brave, but Divine Grace never made her masterful and domineering. Grace does not make the child so self-willed that he disobeys his father—it is something else that does that. Grace does not take away from the father his authority to command the child. It leaves us where we were, in a certain sense, as to our position, and the fruit it bears is congruous to that position.

Thus Sarah is beautified with the virtues that adorn a woman, while Abraham is adorned with all the excellences which are becoming in a godly man. According as the virtue is required, so is it produced. If the circumstances require courage, God makes His servant heroic. If the circumstances require great modesty and prudence, modesty and prudence are given. Faith is a wonderful magician's wand! It works marvels, it achieves impossibilities, it grasps the incomprehensible. Faith can be used anywhere—in the highest Heaven touching the ear of God and winning our desire of Him—and in the lowest places of the earth among the poor and fallen, cheering and upraising them. Faith will quench the violence of fire, turn the edge of the sword, snatch the prey from the enemy and turn the alien to flight.

There is nothing which it cannot do. It is a principle available for all times, to be used on all occasions, suitable to be used by all men for all holy ends. Those who have been taught the sacred art of believing God are the truly learned—no degree of the foremost university can equal in value that which comes with much boldness in the faith. We shall see, tonight, that if Abraham walks before God and is perfect—if he smites the kings that have carried Lot captive, if he does such deeds of prowess as become a man—the same faith makes Sarah walk before God in her perfectness and she performs the actions which become her womanhood. And she, too, is written among the worthies of faith who magnified the Lord!

We are led by our second text to look at the fruit of faith in Sarah. There were two fruits of faith in Sarah—she did well and she was not afraid with any amazement. We will begin with the first. It is said of her that SHE DID WELL, "whose daughters you are as long as you do well." She did well as a wife. She was all her husband could desire and, when, at the age of 127 years, she at last fell asleep, it is said that Abraham not only mourned for her, but the old man wept for her most true and genuine tears of sorrow. He wept for the loss of one who had been the life of his house. As a wife she did well. All the duties that were incumbent

upon her as the queen of that traveling company were performed admirably and we find no fault mentioned concerning her in that respect.

She did well as a hostess. It was her duty, as her husband was given to hospitality, to be willing to entertain his guests. And the one instance recorded is, no doubt, the representation of her common mode of procedure. Though she was truly a princess, yet she kneaded the dough and prepared the bread for her husband's guests. They came suddenly, but she had no complaint to make. She was, indeed, always ready to lay herself out to perform that which was one of the highest duties of a God-fearing household in those primitive times. She did well, also, as a mother. We are sure she did, because we find that her son Isaac was so excellent a man—and you may say what you will, but in the hands of God the mother forms the boy's character!

Perhaps the father unconsciously influences the girls, but the mother has evidently most influence over the sons. Any of us can bear witness that it is so in our own case. There are exceptions, of course, but for the most part, the mother is the queen of the son and he looks up to her with infinite respect if she is at all such as can be respected. Sarah, by faith, did her work with Isaac, well, for from the very first, in his yielding to his father when he was to be offered up as a sacrifice, we see in him evidence of a holy obedience and faith in God which were seldom equaled—and were never surpassed. Besides that, it is written that God said of Abraham, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him."

There is one trait in Abraham's character that, wherever he went, he set up an altar unto the Lord. His rule was a tent and an altar. Dear Friends, do you always make these two things go together—a tent and an altar? Where you dwell, is there sure to be family worship there? I am afraid that many families neglect it and often it is so because husband and wife are not agreed about it. And I feel sure that there would not have been that invariable setting up of the worship

of God by Abraham in his tent unless Sarah had been as godly as himself. She did well, also, as a Believer, and that is no mean point. As a Believer, when Abraham was called to separate himself from his kindred, Sarah went with him. She would adopt the separated life, too, and the same caravan which traveled across the desert with Abraham for its master had Sarah for its mistress.

She continued with him, believing in God with perseverance. Though they had no city to dwell in, she continued the roaming life with her husband, looking for "a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." She believed God's promise with all her heart, for though she laughed, once, because when the promise neared its realization it overwhelmed her—it was but a slip for the moment, for it is written by the Apostle in the 11th of Hebrews—"Through faith, also, Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had

promised." It was not by nature, but by faith, that Isaac was born, the child of another sort of laughter than that of doubt—the child according to the promise of God. She was a believing woman, then, and she lived a believing life and so she did well.

She did well to her parents, well to her husband, well to her household, well to her guests, well before her God. Oh, that all professing Christian people had a faith that showed itself in doing well! But never let it be forgotten that though we preach faith, faith, faith, as the great means of salvation, yet we never say that you are saved unless there is a change worked in you and good works are produced in you, for "faith without works is dead, being alone." Faith saves, but it is the faith which causes men to do well. And if there is a faith (and there is such a faith) which leaves a man just what he was and permits him to indulge in sin, it is the faith of devils!

Perhaps not so good as that, for, "the devils believe and tremble," whereas these hypocrites profess to believe and yet dare to defy God! They seem to have no fear of Him whatever! Sarah had this testimony from the Lord, that she did well. And you are her daughters, all of you who believe, if you do well. Be no discredit to your queenly mother. Take care that you honor your spiritual parentage and maintain the high prestige of the elect family.

The point that I am to dwell upon just now is this—that she proved her faith by a second evidence—SHE WAS "NOT AFRAID WITH ANY AMAZEMENT." The text says, "whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." She was calm and quiet and was not put in fear by any terror. There were several occasions in which she might have been much disquieted and put about. The first was in the breaking up of her house life. You see, her husband, Abraham, gets a call to go from Ur of the Chaldees. Well, it is a considerable journey and they move to Haran. There are some women—unbelieving women—who would not have understood that.

Why does he want to go away from the land in which he lives and from all our kindred, away to Haran? That would have been her question had she not been a partaker in her husband's faith. An unbelieving woman would have said, "A call from God? Nonsense! Fanaticism! I do not believe it!" And when she saw that her husband would go, she would have been afraid with great amazement. When Abraham went to Haran with his father Terah, and Terah died in Haran, and then God called him to go further, they had to cross the Euphrates and get right away into a land which he knew nothing of, and this must have been a still sterner trial.

When they packed up their goods on the camels and on the asses and started with their train of servants and sheep and cattle, she might very naturally have said, if she had been an unbelieving woman, "Where are you going?" "I do not know," says Abraham. "Why are you going? What are you going to get?" "I do not know," says Abraham, "God has bid me go, but where I am going, I do not know. And what I am going for, I cannot exactly say, except that God has said, 'Get you out from your country and your kindred, and I will bless

you and multiply you, and give you a land wherein you shall dwell." We do not read that Sarah ever asked these questions, or was ever troubled at all about them. The things were put on the camels' backs and away she journeyed, for God had called her husband to go and she resolved to go with him. Through floods or flames, it mattered not to her—she felt safe with her husband's God and calmly journeyed on. She was not afraid with any amazement.

Then, though we do not hear much about her, we know that all those years she had to live in a tent. You know the man is out abroad attending to his business and he does not know much about the discomforts of home, not even in such homes as ours. But if you were called to give up your houses and go and live in tents, well, the master might not mind it, but the mistress would! It is a very trying life for a housewife. Sarah traveled from day to day and what with the constant moving of the tent, as the cattle had to be taken to fresh pastures, it must have been a life of terrible discomfort. Yet

Sarah never said a word about it. Up tomorrow morning; every tent-pin up; and all the canvas rolled away, for you must move to another station. The sun scorches like an oven, but you must ride across the plain, or if the night is cold with frost and heavy dews, still, canvas is your only wall and roof.

Remember, they were dwelling in tents as pilgrims and strangers, not for one day, or two, nor for a few days in a year, but for scores of years at a stretch! It was bravely done by this good woman that she was not afraid with any amazement. Besides, they did not live in a country where they were all alone, or surrounded by friends, for the tribes around them were all of other religions and of other tastes and ways—and they would have slain Abraham and killed the whole company if it had not been for a sort of fear that fell upon them—by which Jehovah seemed to say to them, "Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm." The Patriarch and his wife dwelt in the midst of enemies and yet they were not afraid! But if she had not been a believing woman, she must have often been afraid with great amazement!

And then there was a special time when the old man, Abraham, put on his harness and went to war. He hears that Chedorlaomer has come down with tributary kings and swept away the cities of the plain and taken captive his nephew, Lot. Abraham says, "I will go and deliver him." And she might have said, "My husband, you are an old man. Those gray locks should not be touched with the stains of warfare." She said nothing of the sort, but doubtless cheered him on and smiled as he invited some of his neighbors that dwelt near to go with him. She is under no distress that her husband is gone and all the herdsmen and servants round about the tents all gone, so that she is left alone with her women servants. No, she sits at home as a queen and fears no robbers, calmly confident in her God!

Abraham has gone to battle and she fears not for him. And she needs not, for he smites the kings and they are given like driven stubble to his bow. And he comes back laden with spoil. God was pleased with Sarah's quiet faith, because in troublous times she was not afraid

with any amazement. Then there came, a little while after, that great trial of faith which must have touched Sarah, though its full force fell on her husband. She observed the sudden disappearance of her husband and his servant. "Where is your master? He does not come into breakfast." The servants say, "He was up a great while before day and he has gone with the servant, and with the ass, and with Isaac."

He had not told her, for Abraham had struggled enough with himself to take Isaac away to the mountain and offer him! He could not bear to repeat the struggle in Sarah. He was gone without telling Sarah of his movements. This was a new state of things for her. He did not return all day. "Where has your master gone? I never knew him go away, before, without informing me. And where is Isaac?" Oh, that Isaac! How she feared for her jewel, her delight, the child of promise, the wonder of her old age! He did not come home that night, nor Abraham either. Nor the next day, nor the next. Three days passed and I can hardly picture the anxiety that would have fallen upon any one of you if you had been Sarah, unless you had enjoyed Sarah's faith—for by faith in this trying case she was not afraid with any amazement.

I dare say it took three days for Abraham to come back, so that it was nearly a week, and no Abraham and no Isaac. One would have thought she would have wandered about, crying, "Where is my husband, and where is my son?" But not so. She calmly waited and said within herself, "If he has gone, he has gone upon some necessary errand, and he will be under God's protection. And God, who promised to bless him and to bless his seed will not suffer any evil to harm him. So she rested quietly, when others would have been in dire dismay. She was not afraid with any amazement. We hear so little said about Sarah that I am obliged, thus, to picture what I feel she must have been, because human nature is so like itself and the effect of events upon us is very like the effect which would have been produced upon the mind of Sarah.

Now, this is a point in which Christian women and, for that matter, Christian men, also, should seek to imitate Sarah. We should not let our hearts be troubled, but rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. What is this virtue? It is a calm, quiet trusting in God. It is freedom from fear, such as is described in another place in these words—"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Or, as we read in David's words, the other night, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." It is composure of mind, freedom from anxiety, the absence of fretfulness and clean deliverance from alarm, so that, whatever happens, trepidation does not seize upon the spirit, but the heart keeps on at its own quiet pace, delighting itself in a faithful God.

This is the virtue which is worth a king's ransom and Sarah had it! "Whose daughters you are if you are not afraid with any amazement." When is this virtue to be exercised by

us? Well, it should be exercised at all times. If we are not self-composed when we are happy we are not likely to be calm when we are sad. I notice that if I am at all pleased with the

praise of a friend, I become in that degree open to be grieved by the censure of a foe. By so much as you are elated by prosperity, by so much are you likely to be depressed when adversity comes. But if you are calm, quiet, happy—no, more than that—when everything goes well, then you will be calm, quiet, happy—not less than that—when everything goes ill. To keep up an equable frame of mind is a thing to aim at, even as the gardener desires an even temperature for his choice flowers.

You ask, Who are to exercise this virtue? We are all to do so! But the text is specially directed to the sisterhood. I suppose women are exhorted to it because some of them are rather excitable, a little hysterical and apt to be fearfully depressed and utterly carried away. I am not saying that this fault is general or common among women, neither am I blaming them, but only stating the fact that some are thus afflicted and it is a happy, happy thing if they can master it so that they are not afraid with any amazement. But this virtue especially serves in time of trouble when a very serious trial threatens us. Then the Christian is not to say, "What shall I do? I shall never endure it. I cannot live through it. Surely God has forgotten me. This trouble will crash me. I shall die of a broken heart." No. No. No! Do not talk so! My dear Friend, do not talk so.

If you are God's child do not even think so. Try in patience to lift up your head and remember Sarah, "whose daughters you are if you are not afraid with any amazement." And so must it be in times of personal sickness. How many are the pains and sufferings that fall to the lot of the sisterhood! But if you have faith, you will not be afraid with any amazement. I saw one, the other day, who was about to suffer from the surgeon's knife. It was a serious operation, about which all stood in doubt. but I was happy to see her as composed in the prospect of it as though it had been a pleasure rather than a pain. Thus calmly resigned should a Christian be! I went to see, yesterday, an aged Sister—a member of this Church, close upon fourscore years of age. She is dying with dropsy and, being unable to lie down in bed, is obliged to always sit up—a posture which allows little or no rest.

When I entered her room she welcomed me most heartily, which, perhaps was not amazing, for she is greatly attached to her minister. The wonder lay in the fact that she expressed herself as being full of happiness, full of delight, full of expectancy of being with Christ! I went to comfort her but she comforted me! What could I say? She talked of the goodness of God with an eye as full of pleasure as if she had been a maiden speaking to her young companion of her marriage day! Our Sister used to sit just there, in yonder pew. I seem to see her sitting there now, but she will soon sit among the bright ones in Heaven! I was charmed to see one with such evident marks of long-continued pain upon her face, but with such sweet serenity there, too! Yes, with more than serenity—with unspeakable joy in the Lord—such, as I fear, some in health and strength have not yet learned! A Christian

woman should not be afraid with any amazement either in adversity or in sickness, but her holy patience should prove her to be a true daughter of Sarah and Abraham.

Christian women in Peter's day were subject to persecution as much as their husbands. They were shut up in prison, scourged, tortured, burned, or slain with the sword. One holy woman in the early days of the Church was tossed upon the horns of bulls. Another was made to sit in a red-hot iron chair. Thus were they tortured, not accepting deliverance. In the early days of martyrdom the women played the man as well as the men! They defied the tyrant to do his worst upon their mortal bodies, for their conquering spirits laughed at every torment! If persecuting times should come again, or if they are here, already, in some measure, O daughters of Sarah, do well and be not afraid with any amazement! And so, if you should be called to some stern duty; if you should be bound to do what you feel you cannot do, remember that anybody can do what he can do. It is the believing man who does what he cannot do. We achieve impossibilities by the power of the Almighty God. Be not afraid, then, of any duty, but believe that you will be able to do it, for Grace will be sufficient for you.

At the last, in the prospect of death, my dear Friends, may you not be afraid with any amazement! Oftentimes a deathbed is vantage ground for a Christian. Where others show their fear and, sometimes their terror, there should the Believer show his peacefulness and his happy expectancy, not afraid with any amazement, whatever the form of death may be! Now, what is the excellence of this virtue? I shall answer that question by saying it is due to God that we should not be afraid with any amazement. Such a God as we have ought to be trusted. Under the shadow of such a wing, fear becomes a sin! If God were other than He is, we might be afraid. But while He is such a God, it is due to Him that fear is banished. Peacefulness is true worship. Quiet under alarming conditions is devotion. He worships best who is most calm in evil times.

Moreover, the excellence of this virtue is that it is most impressive to men. I do not think anything is more likely to impress the ungodly than the quiet peace of mind of a Christian in danger or near death. If we can be happy, then, our friends will ask, "What makes them so calm?" Nor is the usefulness confined to others. It is most useful to ourselves, for he who can be calm in time of trouble will be most likely to make his way through it. When you once become afraid, you cannot judge wisely as to your best course. You generally do wrong when you are frightened out of your confidence in God. When the heart begins palpitating, then the whole system is out of order for the battle of life. Be calm and wait for your opportunity. Napoleon's victories were, to a large extent, due to the serenity of that masterly warrior and, depend upon it, it is so with you Christian people—you will win if you can wait. Do not be in a hurry. Consider what you should do.

Do not be so alarmed as to make haste. Be patient; be quiet; wait God's time and so wait your own time. Wait upon God to open your mouth. Ask Him to guide your hand and to

do everything for you. Calmness of mind is the mother of prudence and discretion. It gives the firm foothold which is necessary for the warrior when he is about to deal a victorious blow. Those who cannot be amazed by fear shall live to be amazed with mercy! "How," asks one, "can we obtain it?" That is the question! Remember, it is an outgrowth of faith and you will have it in proportion as you have faith! Have faith in God and you will not be afraid with any amazement.

Very early in my preaching days I had faith in God in times of thunderstorms. When I have walked out to preach, it has happened that I have been wet through and through with the storm and yet I have felt no annoyance from the thunder and lightning. On one occasion I turned in, by reason of the extreme severity of the rain, to a little cottage and I found a woman there with a child who seemed somewhat relieved when she had admitted me, but previously she had been crying bitterly with sheer alarm and terror. "Why," she said, "this is a little round lodge house and the lightning comes in at every window. There is no place into which I can get to hide it from my eyes."

I explained to her that I liked to see the lightning, for it showed me that an explosion was all over and, since I had lived to see the flash, it was clear it could now do me no harm. I told her that to hear the thunder was a splendid thing, it was only God saying, "It is all over." If you live to see the lightning flash, there is nothing to be afraid of—you would have been dead and never have seen it if it had been sent to kill you! I tried to console her on religious grounds and I remember well praying with her and making her happy as a bird! It was my being so calm and quiet and praying with her that cheered her up and, by God's Grace, when I went on my way I left her in peace. You may depend upon it, my dear Friends, that unless our own souls have peace we cannot communicate it to others.

In this way we must believe in God about everything. It so happened that about that matter—the thunder and lightning—I did believe in God up to the very last degree and, therefore, I could not be alarmed on that score. So if you believe in God upon any other subject, whatever it is, you will have perfect peace with God about it. If you can believe God when you are in a storm at sea, that He holds the water in the hollow of His hand, you will be at peace about the tempest. It is the thing that troubles you that you must believe about—and when Faith makes an application of her hand to the particular trial—then will peace of mind come to you.

This holy calm comes, also, from walking with God. No spot is so serene as the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. Commune with God and you will forget fear. Keep up daily fellowship with Christ in prayer, in praise, in service, in searching the Word, in submitting your heart to the work of the eternal Spirit—and as you walk with God, you will find yourself calm. You know how our poet puts it—

"Oh for a closer walk with God,  
A calm and heavenly frame."

These go together. If you would feed upon certain Truths of God which will produce this calm of mind, remember, first, that God is full of love and, therefore, nothing that God sends can harm His child. Take everything from the Lord as a token of love, even though it is a stroke of His rod, or a cut of His knife. Everything from that dear hand must mean love, for He has said, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." When you accept every affliction as a love token, then will your fear be ended.

Next, remember the faithfulness of God to His promises and the fact that there is a promise for your particular position. The Lord is, at this moment, under promise to you, and that promise is registered in His Book. Search it out and then grasp it, and say, "He must keep it! He cannot break His Word." He has said, "In six troubles I will be with you."

Have you got to number six? He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," and how can He run back from His Word? If He does not leave you nor forsake you, what can you fear? Whatever is coming—poverty, sickness, shame, slander—if all the devils in Hell are loosed and they are all coming up against us at once, yet, if the Lord is with us, we will smite them hip and thigh and send them back to the infernal deep as quickly as the swine of old ran down a steep place into the sea and were drowned in the waters!

"Oh," says the devil, "I can overcome you." We say nothing to him but this—"You know your Master! You know your Master. Lie down, Sir! You know your Master and that Master is our Covenant Head, our Husband and our Lord." Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil shall be able to overcome us since we have the promise of a faithful God to protect us! Many of you here tonight have gray hair, or bald heads. I have always such a large proportion of aged people in my congregation that I can say to you what I might not say to the young folk. We, dear Friends, ought not to be afraid, for trials are no novelties with us! We have smelt powder and been grimed with the dust of the conflict times out of mind! We ought not to be troubled—we have been to sea before.

And has not the Lord helped us? Tell it for His honor! He has been a very present help. He has borne us through such things that to doubt Him would be an impudent slander upon His Character! As for myself—and I suppose the language I now use would come from the lips of many here—my way has been strewn with wonders of Divine mercy! Trials have abounded and I am glad that they have—they have been opportunities for the display of Divine Grace. Labors have been attempted of which some said, "these are visionary schemes." But God has always been better than our faith! We have never been confounded and I think we ought, by this time, to have learned that trusting in God is the most reasonable thing that we ever do!

There are speculations in business, risks, even, in the most solid trading. But there is no speculation in believing God, no risk in trusting in Him! He that hangs the world upon nothing and yet keeps it in its place, can bring His people to have nothing and yet to possess all things! He that makes yon arch of Heaven stand secure without a buttress or a prop—a

mighty arch such as no human engineer could ever contrive—He can make us stand without helpers, without friends, without riches, without strength and stand, too, when all other things except that which God supports shall have come down in the final crash! "Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

I pray for you who are most timid, that from this day you may be true daughters of Sarah and not be afraid with any amazement. God bless you with this gracious help and you will praise His name. Amen.