

The Holdfasts of Faith

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1890,

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made you a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which are not as though they were." [Romans 4:16,17](#).

The preacher begs the reader, before perusing the sermon, to read the two portions of Scripture which were used in the public service— [Genesis 15:1-6](#) and [Romans 4](#).

ABRAHAM had received an assurance from the Lord that he was to be the father of many nations. His faith in this promise underwent great trials. Where there is the sweet honey of promise, there the wasps of doubt will be gathered together. A promise calls for faith, but through our natural depravity it awakens unbelief and there is a struggle around the sacred promise such as that represented in the prayer, "Lord, I believe: help Thou my unbelief." Satan, with slimy flattery, decoys men into a belief of his lie, but the God of Truth gives us His bare promise and bids us believe it—and when questions suggest themselves He does not relax His claim but bids us still believe.

True faith, as the work of God, is not a thing to be put down—it is a conquering Grace and makes a brave fight against wicked unbelief. While doing so, Faith has her eyes open and she, in due season, spies out grounds of confidence. She looks at God Himself. She considers the days of old. She remembers her own experience at the right hand of the Host on High and thus she lifts her eyes to the hills from where comes her help. When Faith has discovered a helpful Truth of God she makes immediate use of it as a holdfast, even as Abraham did in the case now before us.

The great difficulty with Abraham was death. Death was around him on every side. God had promised him life and life more abundantly, for he was to be the father of many nations and have a seed as many as the stars of Heaven for multitude. But as to all possibility of his being a father, his body was now dead. He was 100 years old and withered with age—how could he become a father of nations? Sarah, also, as to being a mother, was practically dead for she was 90 years old. How should she bear sons unto Abraham?

Further on the Lord bade him, when Isaac was miraculously born, to offer him as a sacrifice and Abraham was willing to do even that at God's command. He believed that in Isaac should his seed be called and therefore he looked that God should "raise him up, even from the dead; from where also he received him in a figure." The Patriarch's faith settled down upon God's power to quicken the dead and he found in that unquestioned Truth a foundation for the firmest confidence. The Truth of God's power to quicken the dead met all the difficulties of Abraham's position. He argued— "What if my body is dead? God can

quicken it. What if my wife is, in this matter, as one dead? By God's power she can receive strength. What if my son, when growing up, should be dead on the altar? He that made me the promise can raise him up from the dead, for what He has promised He is able to perform." Abraham's faith was a nail fastened in a sure place. He knew Jehovah as "God, who quickens the dead" and that resurrection word was, to his faith, a shout of victory!

Abraham had a second holdfast in the creating power of God. The Lord had spoken to him concerning his seed as though it existed and had said, "I have made you a father of many nations." As though these nations were already born, He had changed his name from Abram to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude." Yet, when he entered his tent, no child fondly climbed his knee, no babe smiled from the arms of Sarah! "To me You have given no seed," was the humble statement of the believing Patriarch. He felt that Jehovah could call forth from non-existence a people as many as the stars of Heaven, for He had said, "so shall your seed be."

You know what it is to call a servant. You say, "Mary," and there she is. You have called one who is and she appears at your call. But God calls the things that are not as though they were, and lo, they appear at His bidding! He says, "Light be," and light was. He says, "Let there be a firmament," and the blue sky overarches the whole earth. When He calls for fish or fowl, for plant or beast, they answer to the call. So Abraham argues—"If God calls for descendants for me, they will come. Though there are no signs of my being a father and, speaking after the flesh, it is impossible, yet God, who calls everything out of nothing, can call for a numerous progeny for me and that progeny will come." Thus, you see, in the hour of trial, Abraham's faith fell back upon the two facts of resurrection and creation and there it rested in peace.

I desire, at this time, without wisdom of words, in great simplicity to teach this one lesson. It is a very plain lesson, but if it is well learned it will be a well of strength and solace to you. God raises the dead, and creates out of nothing— and therefore He can carry out the promises of His Gospel. Get this worked into your own souls and you will be strong in faith. Once strong in faith you are strong everywhere, for as a man's faith is, so is he. If your faith shall learn to stay herself upon eternal principles and find her rest in the Omnipotence of God, you will become like Abraham, a prince among men—and this service will bring you a life-long blessing.

Before I plunge into the sermon, let me speak a word to anxious men and women who are not yet saved, but who long to be partakers of life in Christ Jesus our Lord. You are in a conflict of soul just now. The Lord has set before you the promise, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." This you would gladly believe but you are staggered by the greatness of the mercy. How is God able to justify the ungodly? How can He have fellowship with you, for you are defiled with sin? You seem to yourself to have been such a monster of unbelief and enmity against God that you can never be put among the children.

"How can these things be?" is the inquiry of your trembling spirit. Can a lion become a lamb? Can a sinner be turned into a saint? Can the leopard lie down with the kid? Can a rebel become a companion of those who fear the Lord? Can a man who merits the fiercest wrath of God yet live in His love and delight himself in His favor? Is it not beyond belief that one steeped in evil should, at last, be found without fault before the Throne of God? God promises eternal life to all who believe on His Son Jesus, but how can it be fulfilled? Here is the struggle. I want you, dear Friend, before I go fully into my subject, to pick up at once the thread of it and say, "I see where the preacher is driving. He wants me to believe that God can do anything which He has promised to do, seeing that He can raise the dead and call the things that are not as though they were."

Get this one thought into your mind and I hope it will be a help to you in the hour of conflict between faith and feeling. First, let me try and show the time for the exercise of such a faith, or, when shall we rest on resurrection and creation? Secondly, let us look upon the basis of this faith. And then, thirdly, let us sum up the outcome of such a faith. If we really get such a faith, it will be fruitful in abundant blessing.

I. THE TIME FOR SUCH A FAITH AS THIS. To believe God unstaggeringly in the teeth of appearances—when is the best time for this? This duty is not at its best when all goes well with us, for when we walk by sight we scarcely walk by faith! When the soul is full of joy there is wide space for gratitude, but narrower room for faith. "What a man sees, what does he yet hope for?" The light of fleeting day is not for perceptions which deal with eternity—faith's hour of prime is midnight. Even a horror of great darkness affords her a better opportunity for communion with the Covenant

God.

Faith beholds her visions in the night—she needs not earthly light. A blind man loses nothing by the set of sun and faith loses nothing by the removal of outward evidences. Faith has worked many of her greatest deeds in hours which seemed least suitable for her undertakings. Like David's hero, she slays her lion in the pit in the time of snow. Like Jacob, she wrestles with the angel and wins the victory when night has fallen on all the world. Sunshine-faith comes and goes— true faith stands sentry at all hours! Fair-weather faith is poor stuff—give me winter-faith which has warmth within it when the blasts from the north freeze flesh and blood even to the bone!

First, as to trusting God on account of the resurrection, we shall find it greatly in season when our soul is at first made to feel its spiritual death. I am addressing some who mournfully cry, "How can I be saved? I am as dead as the earth I stand upon. I feel nothing—

'I hear, but seem to hear in vain, Insensible as steel;

If anything is felt, 'tis only pain To find I cannot feel.'

" My heart is as iron hardened in the forges of Hell. I am without God and without hope—and yet I do not mourn over my sin, nor feel my awful position as I ought to do. I fear I am dead in trespasses and sins and I ask with the Prophet, 'Can these dry bones live?'"

Now is a special time, poor Sinner, for believing in God that quickens the dead. NOW is your choice opportunity for testing the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus, who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." God can keep His promise of Grace to you, even to you, if you believe, for He quickens the dead. You believe that all the dead shall rise at the last day—can you not believe that, though you are spiritually dead, God can quicken you? Can you not believe in the power of the Lord to carry out His Word? If resurrection has been worked by Him, all things are possible with Him. If you are as a dead man—as stiff and cold to heavenly things as though you were a corpse—yet God can quicken you into newness of life.

Is not this plain enough? Do you believe this? If you can believe it, you are on the way to salvation! If you can trust God in Christ to make you live, man, you live! The very fact that you trust in Christ Jesus for eternal life proves that you have eternal life! Jesus said, "He that believes in Me has everlasting life." Even now, while conscious of so much death, believe in God who quickens the dead!

Next, there is another notable occasion for faith—when the child of God is in apprehension of death through soul trouble. He is crying like David in the 88th Psalm, "My soul is full of troubles and my life draws near unto the grave." Though not absolutely dead as to spiritual things, yet the little life which remains is weak, faint, slumbering and lethargic. I think I hear you cry, "I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that has no strength: free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom You remember no more: and they are cut off from Your hand." Now is the season to glorify God by believing the promise!

You have the sentence of death in yourself so that you may not trust in yourself but in the Lord alone. Your old sins rise up and accuse you—your present evil tendencies, like a rotting body of death, surround you—you find no comfort or joy in life. It seems as though God has given you up and left you to perish. Though once you rejoiced before Him, you are forced to sigh as one forsaken of his God, shut up for destruction. Now, even now, you are on a vantage-ground for glorifying the Lord by faith. It may be that at this time you enjoy nothing when you go up to religious services. And in reading or praying at home the chill of death makes every godly exercise a burden. You are so harassed with fears, so worried with cares, so tortured with regrets and so tried with temptations that you are forced to cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Come, my Brother. Come, my Sister, look to the Strong for strength! You can do nothing, it is clear—therefore cast yourself on Him who is able to quicken the dead! Is there not foothold here? To you, even to you, though you are moaning out, "O wretched man that I

am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" to you, I say, comes this brave hope, "The Lord is risen, indeed," and he that believes in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live! Believe that promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And that other, "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Surely, if you remember that God quickens the dead, you can believe that He will preserve your soul when heart and flesh fail you!

To another character is a like opportunity offered. When death threatens to reach us through temporal trouble, then may we believe in Him that quickens the dead. It may be that the arrows of death have slain your dearest and best and, at the same time, you have suffered crushing losses in business, sickness of body and crosses in your family circle. You think you could truly say with David, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me." If God does not soon interfere, you will either be dead, or worse than dead. You cry, "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up." Listen, my Brothers and Sisters, listen hopefully!

You believe that the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised! Surely, He that can raise the myriads of the dead can deliver you out of your killing troubles. He can bring you through the valley of the shadow of death and give you beauty for ashes. I know He can, and so do you! Doubt no longer, but rest in the life-giving God and He will deliver you. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all"—and so He will deliver you. One more case occurs to me. This is a very sad one to my own heart. When death crushes down the Church and there seems

no sign of revival, then should we believe in the God of Resurrection. The carnal man cares nothing for the condition of the Church of God, but the spiritual man takes pleasure in her stones and favors the dust thereof.

Some of us would sooner suffer personal calamity than see the cause of God and Truth in a low condition. It may be that in the Church of which you are a member you pine under a blight. Little prayer, no Christian fellowship, very few conversions, very little desire to win souls—your heart sinks within you, for death is all around! You look abroad and there is the same state of things. We are sweltering in false doctrine and suffocating in worldliness! In many quarters, religion itself seems dead and buried beneath a mound of rubbishing entertainments. What then? Where shall we turn for comfort? There are a few good, faithful men left, but it will be vain to trust in them—what can they do?

We resolve to hold fast by the faith, ourselves, but we dare not trust to resolves for a witchery is abroad which would fascinate the very elect. Here is our mainstay—God is able to quicken the dead! Of the stones of Jordan's river, He is able to raise up children unto Abraham! The Lord God is able, from the slums and dens of London, to call a people that shall maintain His Truth! God that quickens the dead can either work the seven-fold miracle of arousing His dead Church and making it a power to bless the world or He can set existing Churches on one side and call them a people that were not a people, and her Beloved that

was not Beloved. Have faith in God that quickens the dead that none of His promises or purposes will fall to the ground!

I turn now to the other ground of Abraham's hope. He had no child and yet God tells him that he shall have a seed as numerous as the stars of Heaven! How is the man of God to believe this? His second holdfast is the creating power of God—He calls the things which are not as though they were. He can create as well as quicken. When can we use this fact as a reason for faith? Friend, look to this when necessary Graces are lacking in your heart. Though you cannot find one of the saving Graces within your soul, yet believe in the promise of the Lord. What if within your bosom at present there seems to be neither repentance, nor faith, nor hope, nor love?—the Lord can create them all within you! He can call the things that are not and they will appear.

Those of us who carry about with us a body of flesh and blood are sometimes horribly cast down. When we look within, even by the candle of the Word, there are times when we cannot find in our own souls anything which we would wish to find—peace has fled, love is languishing, holiness is grieving, joy is banished—we are not fruitful, nor useful, nor happy. And yet we cannot give up our faith—we would gladly have it strengthened. Then let us believe in Him who makes all things new. He will create in us the new heart, the right spirit and call out Graces which are not ours as yet. "Well," cries a child of God, "I think I can find faith and a little love, but what shall I do when joy and peace are gone? I have lost the rest I once enjoyed. I cannot sing as once I did when I thought I could out-sing the seraphim because my indebtedness to infinite love was greater than theirs."

Ah, well, dear Friend! God can create joy and peace and put them in your soul as new gifts from Heaven, for He "calls those things which are not as though they were." Believe for faith, believe for hope, believe for peace, believe for joy! These Graces are set upon lower Graces—"Grace for Grace." You rise not on stepping stones of your dead selves, but on the ladder of the creating God who has said, "I create the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him."

I spoke just now in reference to temporal troubles—there is a grand platform for faith when no help is visible. When you cannot see any friend who will assist you, nor any way in which you can help yourself, then trust in the Creator who can make a way. Our friends, like swallows, soon quit us when our summer is over, but God's promise is not dependent upon man's faithfulness. We do not see how we can be delivered, but then the Lord's way is in the sea and His footsteps are not known. My dear Friend, do you not believe in God, your Maker, who calls things that are not as though they were? He can deliver you by means unknown to yourself! Lean hard upon the creating arm. Trust in God, though the fig trees do not blossom, though there are no cattle in the stall, nor flock in the fold, nor corn in the barn. Trust in the promise, "You shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." The Lord that made Heaven and earth can set bread on your table and put clothes on your back.

Once again let me speak of the Church in evil days. Let us trust the Creator concerning His new creation. You bemoan yourself because you are not clothed with power from on high to bring sinners to Jesus. When you get into your class you feel yourself to be as a dry tree and not as Aaron's rod, which budded and brought forth almonds. If you preach, you feel unfit for the hallowed employ. What is worse, the same weakness is almost everywhere. Few seem raised

up to preach with power and to lead on the hosts of God to victory. This is very sad—but suppose death is everywhere— death in the pew, death in the pulpit, death among the prophets and death among the people? The Lord, who calls things that are not as though they were, has but to give the word and great will be the company of them that publish it! Our royal Leader has hidden forces at His command!

Sir Walter Scott speaks of the highland chieftain, in the lone glen, who gave his shrill whistle and straightway an army arose where none had been seen before—

"From shingles gray their lances start, The bracken-bush sends forth the dart, The rushes and the willow-wand Are bristling into axe and brand, And every tuft of broom gives life To plaided warriors armed for strife." Thus can our Lord garrison His Church in a moment! In her desolation He can people her with such multitudes that she shall ask, "Who has begotten me these?" The Lord can send martyrs if they are needed, confessors, preachers, writers and consecrated men and women of every sort. Let us have no timorous thoughts, but let us glorify God by firm faith.

Thus have I set before you the fact that our times of deadness and discontent are grand seasons for believing in Him that quickens the dead and calls all things into being.

II. Secondly, we will observe upon how these things are manifest to us—resurrection and creation. We shall speak of THE BASIS OF THIS FAITH. If our faith is to be based on resurrection, what do we know about it? Paul seems to pass over every other resurrection and to dwell only upon the resurrection of our Lord. See the closing verses of this chapter—"If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification."

Brothers and Sisters, you believe that our Lord was crucified, pierced to the heart, dead and buried. A stone was rolled to the mouth of the grave and that stone was sealed and guarded lest the body should be stolen—but yet He rose from the dead. It gladdens my heart to hear a great multitude sing—

"Death cannot keep his prey—Jesus, my Savior!
He tore the bars away—Jesus, my Lord!
Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes He arose a
Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign.

He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!" Realize that Resurrection more and more, for there lies your hope. Hear this! Our Lord "was delivered for our offenses." God gave Him up to justice as if He had said, "Take Him away: I have laid on Him the transgressions of My people— take Him to the place of chastisement. Condemn Him, scourge Him, crucify Him, for He is made a curse for My people. I have delivered Him up, I have left Him and forsaken Him."

See the soldiers lead Him through the streets of Jerusalem! Look, they fasten His hands and feet with nails to the cruel Cross! Behold Him lifted up to die in extreme agony! He dies—they take down those precious limbs, wrap them in white linen and place them in the sepulcher. He is delivered unto the grave for our offenses. There went all my sin and the sins of all Believers—He made an end of sin in His death. The wrath of God was spent upon Him for those sins which were made to meet in the Person of the Well-Beloved and now those sins are gone forever. How do we know? We know that it is so because our Surety is set free! To meet our debt He was put in prison. When He paid the debt, He would be liberated, but not till then. When He was raised again it was because our justification was accomplished. A public declaration was given that the debt was discharged and the everlasting righteousness was brought in. Right well do we sing—

"He bore on the tree the sentence for me,

And now both the Surety and sinner are free." If Christ is raised from the dead, Believers are no more guilty before God for their guilt must have been put away, or else their Representative would not have risen! If God has let our Representative and Substitute go, we are free! What a

glorious Rock this is! Cannot you get upon it—the Resurrection of your blessed Lord? This is a fact proved beyond any other fact in history and means this to us—He has completed the work by which His people are saved. Hallelujah!—

"If Jesus had not paid the debt He ne'er had been at freedom set" but in the prison of the grave He would have been incarcerated to this hour. God, who has raised His Son and thereby set free His people, may well be trusted to fulfill every promise.

To this I add that we know that all the dead will rise and surely on this ground we may rest in the Almighty God. We have seen others spiritually quickened and made to live unto God, yes, more, in the case of many of us, we, who were dead in trespasses and sins, have been quickened and therefore, knowing of a surety that God quickens the dead, we are persuaded that what He has promised He is able to perform. We are eternally secure in a risen Savior because all the promises are in Him are yes and amen—and the fact of His rising proves that He can do all things for us.

If you desire another basis for your faith—and we hardly think you do—there is Creation. If you wish to strengthen your faith, behold Creation and you have not far to go—your own body is full of wonders. See the fields with their ripe harvest! Wander in the woods and

forests—mark the hills and valleys, the rippling brooks and flowing streams and the wide expansive ocean. Look up to the sun, the clouds, the sky. Go out at night and watch the moon and stars. Who made all these? Who leads them out in their order? Who built the pillarless arch which covers all things? Who created everything, from the tiniest atom up to the greatest world? Who but God?

Surely He that made all these can make me a new creature in Christ Jesus! He that made all these things can make me meet to be a partaker with the saints in light! If He chooses to be a Potter, as He does, He can make me revolve upon His wheel and with every touch of His finger He can impart beauty to me till He has made me symmetrical in holiness and fit for the Master's use. We, seeing the works of His hand all around us, ought to believe in Him without a doubt. Mungo Park, the African traveler, lost his way in the wilds and then and there was cheered by viewing a tiny moss and marking its singular beauty. He saw the finger of God in that small object and felt sure that the great God would take care of him.

So may we be taught faith by every created thing—the Creator can do all things. When you have looked at creation, remember Providence, which is a prolongation of the creative act. The power which made all things upholds them. The Lord keeps them in their places or they could not remain. They tell us nowadays that the universe stands because of law. Is there any power about a mere law? No, my Friends—law requires the almighty power of the living God! Nowadays, philosophers are quick to claim for men freedom of action—and the Lord, who made man, is spoken of as if He were no free agent but the mere slave of laws. Everybody is now to be a free agent except the living God! Is this philosophy? Is this reason? Is God the captive of His own laws? I know no such God!

He does all things. Natural laws are but the summary of God's usual way of working—but the laws neither hinder God in anything, nor perform anything as of themselves. He Himself causes everything to abide, or to change, as seems good to Him. As you see everything upheld by the word of His power, surely you have good ground for believing in His power to keep His promise to you! Meanwhile, a creation work of Grace is going on around you. If you do not feel it in yourself, my Brothers and Sisters, you can soon see it in others. Speak to the people of God and they will tell you—and to new converts and they will show you. The story of what Free Grace has done is ever telling, yet untold.

One will tell you, "I was a drunkard and the Lord converted me." Another will confess, "My feet had almost gone, but the Lord preserved me." Another will declare, "I was in the furnace and the Son of Man walked in the fire with me." Another will testify, "I was brought low and He helped me." You will have abundant evidence that Grace-Creation is going on continually and that God is working great wonders in the midst of His people! Be of good courage and put your trust in the God of the new Creation. I wish the Grace of God would bring every one of you as far as we have now come, namely, to believe that He who raises the dead and creates out of nothing, can do for us what we need. We have an Almighty God

to deal with—and His Grace is linked with His Omnipotence—and His love is as large as His power.

I want you to trust Him. Oh, if you have never done so, do it now! God help you! If you are holding on to anything but God in Christ Jesus, let it go—let it go at once! You will not get hurt by falling into the unseen arms. I have heard of one who, wandering in the night, came to what he thought to be an awful precipice, and as he was about to fall, in sheer desperation he caught the root of a tree and held there for dear life. His arms were weary. His hands were ready to fail him, but he held on with a death-grip. At last he was obliged to give up his hold and when he had done so, down he

fell—and you expect me to add that he was dashed to pieces. No, he only fell a few inches upon a soft bed of moss, for he was not near a precipice after all!

When you let go all other trusts, you think it an awful thing to fall into your Savior's arms, but it is not so—it is not a dangerous venture, but a wise reliance. If faith falls, she falls upon the bosom of her God. If you trust Him who loved you unto death, you are safe and happy. Give up all earthly confidence, all human hope—and repose in Jesus Crucified and you shall find rest unto your souls.

III. But now, let us review THE OUTCOME OF THIS FAITH. May we all see the same results in ourselves through the Holy Spirit! Abraham believed and looked at things from God's standpoint. "As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations, before Him whom he believed, even God." Abraham looked at the promise as Abraham and he could not see how it could be. He had no child and his wife was old. But God calls him by the name which signified "Father of a multitude," because He viewed him as such. And the Lord talked to him about his household after him—about their number—and about their being strangers in a strange land. To God's foreseeing eye, Abraham was what he was to become—He calls the things that are not as though they were.

Now, faith has the wonderful property of becoming like the God in whom it trusts and of looking at things as God sees them. How I wish, my dear, tried Brothers and Sisters, you could see your troubles as God sees them—namely, as means to your advancement in Divine Grace! Look at affliction today as a process that is enriching you! Sinner, when you believe in Jesus, God looks at you as saved, justified, forgiven and quickened into eternal life! If you believe in Jesus, see yourself as God sees you. It is a great thing for a sinner, dead in himself, to say, "And yet I live." But assuredly he may say it! It is a great thing for one consciously guilty to say, "And yet I am justified." Still, it is true and it is no presumption to believe it! Oh, this is a grand art, to look at things from God's point of view!

Faith takes the Omnipotence of God and girds herself with His almighty power—and then she takes the foresight of God and though it does not yet appear what we shall be—Faith perceives that in Christ, the poor, trembling and guilty soul is made pure, spotless and glorious before God! Believer in Jesus, know yourself to be what the Gospel says you are

and hold on to that knowledge! However desperate the tug may be, never let go your conviction that God's view of you in Christ is the true one. God sees the truth of things and teaches faith to see the same. Justification by faith is no fiction—it is a fact that the Believer is just, is saved, is complete in Christ Jesus! God give us to see this fact even as He sees it, and then, being justified by faith, we may have peace with God.

Next, you see that Abraham considered his body now dead. Our Authorized Version runs thus—"He considered not his own body now dead." The Revised Version has—"He considered his own body now as good as dead." It is a curious fact that among the ancient manuscripts there are two readings of almost equal value—one with the "not," and one without it. I think both mean the same thing. You say, "How is that?" He considered his own body to be dead, but he did not make any consideration of that fact, but believed in God all the same. He considered it so far as to be fully aware of it, but he did not consider it so as to raise a question about the fulfillment of the promise. He considered it to be true that he was past having a son in the strength of Nature, but he considered that he should have a son through the power of the promise. God could work out His purpose as well with Abraham and Sarah in old age as in their youth.

O poor seeking Soul, listen to this! Know yourself to be spiritually dead! Think as badly of yourself as ever you like, for you are worse than you think you are, but after you have considered the fearful fact of your lost estate, do not go on to consider it as any hindrance to God in the work of His Grace. Jesus is able to save you over the head of all your death, guilt and corruption. If you have been a thief, a Sabbath-breaker, a liar, a swearer, a murderer—He can forgive you! And if today you feel so dead that you can do nothing towards your own salvation, yet if you will believe His promise, He that can raise the dead can save you from the guilt and power of sin! Do not consider your helpless state to be any barrier to Free Grace, for the love of God will triumph over all your loathsomeness and death!

Abraham, as the outcome of his faith, obeyed God in all things—a very essential point, this. Believing God, he left his estates in Ur of the Chaldees and came to Canaan to live in tents and wander about like a gypsy, that he might dwell where the Lord had called him to sojourn alone—a stranger in a strange land. If you believe the promise of the Gospel, you will come out from the world. You will come out from sin and you will become one of those strangers who follow Jesus where ever He goes. God will be your Leader. Christ will be your Commander. And though in the world, you will not be of the world. All true Believers, like Abraham, obey. Obedience is faith in action. You are to walk in the steps of

the faith of father Abraham. His faith did not sit still—it took steps—and you must take these steps, also, by obeying God because you believe Him. That faith which has no works with it is a dead faith and will justify no one. How should a dead thing justify? Faith, knowing a thing to be true, acts upon that truth and is thus itself justified, or proved to be justly called faith.

And then the result was that Abraham enjoyed the promise. I have often thought of the old man laughing at the thought of the birth of a son to him in his 100th year. Two people may do the same thing and in the one it may be right, and in the other it may be wrong. Sarah laughed because she thought it absurd and could not believe it. But Abraham laughed because he did believe it and realized it. He knew it would be so and he began to laugh with joy and gladness! Oh, for more of such laughing! He believed himself to be the father of many nations and the old man laughed, and laughed again! It seemed such a fountain of happiness to him. If you believe, you will laugh, too.

We have too much crying among us. Oh, for a little more filling of the mouth with laughter and the tongue with singing, for the Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad! It is not a fiction, it is a fact. The Lord has given us eternal life in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us laugh and laugh again, for an unutterable joy of heart floods our spirit! Bunyan pictures Christiana as saying to Mercy, "What was the matter that you did laugh in your sleep tonight?" And Mercy said, "But are you sure I laughed?" When she told her dream, Christiana said, "Laugh, yes, well you might to see yourself so well." She laughed because she dreamed she had been welcomed into Glory. To faith this is no dream. We have had many dreams of this sort and we know that we are saved by Grace, adopted of the Father, united to the Son, indwelt by the Holy Spirit—visions most true—and these have made us laugh with an inward, inexpressible delight! The more steadfastly we believe, the more of this rapturous joy we shall experience.

Best of all, because of this, Abraham was accounted righteous. And who accounted him righteous? Well, not the sons of men—they knew him as righteous only by his outward character. God accounted him righteous because he had faith! The moment you believe in his risen Son, God counts you righteous and as you keep on believing, God accounts you righteous. "Oh, but I am a poor, imperfect creature!" God counts you righteous. "I strive after holiness, but I am not what I want to be." God counts you righteous. God never makes mistakes. He never miscounts. If He counts a man righteous, that man is righteous, depend upon it—righteous in such a way that he may stand before the Judgment Seat of God at the last and none shall be able to lay anything to his charge—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day For who anything to my charge shall lay? While through Your blood absolved I am From sin's tremendous curse and shame." Believe, and you shall be accounted righteous! The Lord help you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— [Genesis 15:1-6](#); [Romans 4](#).
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—122 (SONG I), 621, 193.