

Two Choice Benedictions

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"Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise you shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them." [Numbers 6:23-27](#).

"The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."

[2 Corinthians 13:14](#).

IT seemed to me that as this was the last of the Thursday evenings of the dying year and I should no more meet some of you who only come here on Thursday evenings during this year, it would be well for us to close the year as our Master closed His life on earth, with a benediction—and, oh, it will be a rich enjoyment in the year to come if, by God's Grace, we shall be able to grasp and make our very own the precious things which are here presented to the whole redeemed family of the living God! I shall begin, therefore, first of all with—

I. THE AARONIC BLESSING.

This was pronounced at the close of the public tabernacle service when the people were about to separate, the one from the others. It is said by the Rabbis to have been only spoken at the morning sacrifice, but not in the evening because, say some, the old faith of the few gave them the early blessing. But it remained for Christ to come in the eventide of the world, at the end of time, to give us the evening blessing, the blessing of the great, eternal, evening Sacrifice.

It is worthy of notice that the word, Jehovah, which is put in capital letters in our English version, occurs three times—three blessings—and each time the word has a different accent in the original Hebrew. And the Rabbis, although they did not know the meaning of it, or pretended not to know, yet all agree that there is some significant mystery therein. The word would not be accented thus differently unless there were some different shade of meaning intended. I believe we have here the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. "The Lord bless you and keep you." Is that the blessing of the Father? "The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you." Is that the blessing of the Son? "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." Is that the blessing of the great forgiving Holy Spirit? I think it is very likely. At any rate, this threefold blessing from the Jehovah, whose

name is mentioned three times, may direct our thoughts to the glorious Trinity, the Trinity in Unity, whom we cannot understand, but on whom our faith rests and in whom our love finds delight and repose!

Let us look at these three blessings. "The Lord bless you and keep you." When we bless God there is nothing more than well-saying and well-wishing. But when God blesses us, it is well-doing! We cannot bless God in the sense of giving to Him so as to add to His riches or to His Glory, for He is the infinitely great, the inconceivably glorious and nothing that we can do can add to Him. We can only bless Him by expressing our thanks to Him, paying to Him our reverent love. "The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock." "Blessed be the name of the Lord from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same." But when God blesses us, I say, it is well-doing! He blesses us in our very creation and much more in our new creation. It is a blessed thing to be born, but a much more blessed thing to be born-again! He blesses us in our food—but much more in giving us Christ who is the Bread to keep alive and nourish our soul's best life! We are blessed in being clothed, but infinitely more blessed in being wrapped about in the Righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is a

blessing to be a member of a kind, loving, happy family—but it is an unspeakable blessing to be a member of the family of Christ and adopted into the family of God!

What a blessing it is, my Brothers and Sisters, to have sin pardoned, to have righteousness imputed, to have sanctification worked in us—in short, to enjoy all the privileges and benedictions of the New Covenant! Now, I think some of us can say, "God has blessed us, oh, how richly." Blessed us sometimes when we did not perceive the blessing, for many of God's mercies come, as it were, in at the back door of our house. We do not see the mercies, and when we do, we are too often ungrateful and forget them. What blessings we have received in trouble—in deliverance from trouble—in sustaining us in it! Oh, what blessings have we not had? Some of you, perhaps, have had very remarkable mercies during the year. Now, while the blessing is pronounced, "The Lord bless you," let your reply be, "The Lord has blessed me!" This will encourage you to expect that He will continue to do the same. And what blessings, my dear Friends, may we hope will be in store for us during the coming year? Many troubles, I have no doubt, are in store for us. If we were to have a telescope here this evening and we could look through it and see the future, those would be very foolish who looked! He would be the wise man who said—

"This will set my heart at rest— What my God appoints is best."

For if that telescope were here and you were trying to look through it, you would be sure to breathe on the glass with your hot breath—and in your anxiety you would see nothing but clouds and darkness—whereas, very likely, there would be nothing of the sort there. Leave that matter with your God! The future, though it may possibly have trial and trouble, will still be blessed if you are God's servant. One thing there is of which you can be quite confident—He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Another thing will

also be fulfilled, "As your days, so shall your strength be." You are very poor, are you? Yet, at any rate, none can rob you of this assurance—"Your bread shall be given you: your water shall be sure." If you are fearing many trials, this promise is your special fortifying—"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon you." You have God's word for it, "Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God." If, during the next year, it is appointed unto you to die, you may still say, "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." "The Lord bless you." As I say that to each Believer here, knowing that the Lord will so bless you, may your soul look forward, not with dread, but with hope! "The Lord bless you" was the wish of the priest under the old Law, and it is always the Nature of God to confirm what He bids His servants desire. "The Lord bless you."

Now, observe the blessing which is said to spring out of that, "The Lord bless you, and keep you." And no small mercy it is to be kept by God! Where would we be if He did not keep us in a moral and spiritual point of view, yes, and in a natural point of view, too? It is God that keeps our lives from death and our bodies from perishing. Perhaps, during the past year, some of you have been kept when in storms at sea, or when you have been upon a railway, or when you have passed through places infected with disease. It is no small privilege to hear the Lord say, "He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways: they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." The Lord has blessed us and kept us in that sense during the past year. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a privilege to be kept from falling into sin! He is ill-kept who is his own keeper! He is worse kept who has his brother for his keeper! But he is splendidly kept who has God to be his shield on his right hand, his glory and his defense.

During the past year we have seen some high professors put out like candles and the foul odor of their fall has filled the Church with nausea and depression. We have known some who were like bright stars who have turned out to be only meteors—and their once dazzling brilliance has suddenly died out in greater gloom. Why are we still kept? We have had enough temptation to cast us down! Enough tinder here, inside our hearts, to have made a great blaze! How is it we are still unburned and walking in the paths of righteousness?

Must we not say, "The Lord has blessed us and kept us"? Let us, then, without reserve, commit our souls to Him for the future. Let us not fancy that we shall not fall. Oh, that is a thought that is very apt to twine itself around us like a serpent! "I am not so giddy as some people! I am not at all likely to do what some young people have done and get into this sin, and that sin. I have had so much experience, I shall be able to stand!" That is the very man that is likely to fall!

We are never so weak as when we think we are strong, and never so strong as when we know we are weak and look out of ourselves to our God! Distrust self, then. There would not be such a supplication as, "The Lord bless you and keep you," if you did not need keeping. Trust in God for your help. If you fear temptation, let this be your prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," and if you trust in God, you will pray, "Deliver us from evil." You will be tempted during the year that is soon coming, but He will, with the temptation, make also a way of escape. He will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to bear! You shall go through the wilderness leaning on your Beloved and you shall not slip, though the way is ever so smooth, nor trip, though the road is ever so rough. You shall be upheld, for God is able to hold up in perfect safety those who stay themselves upon Him. "The Lord bless you and keep you." Holy Father, we breathe the prayer to You as we read this blessing! Pronounce it upon us now by the mouth of Your own dear Son, and let us now and until life's latest hour be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

Now, take the next blessing bestowed, through Aaron, upon the people. "The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you." I understand by the expression, "The Lord make His face to shine upon you," His being completely reconciled to us. As they would say in the Hebrew, a man's face frowned, his countenance fell, when he was at enmity or angry with another. But when he was his friend and genial towards him, then his face revealed it, it began to beam or shine! Now, this is the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is through Him that God's face is made to shine upon us. The Lord would have no favorable regard towards a sinner as such while his sins still lay upon him because of impenitence and lack of faith. The Lord's love might come to him as an elect creature, but viewing him merely as a sinner, he would be the subject of Divine disapprobation!

But when the sinner is washed in the blood of Christ, when the sinner is justified through the righteousness of Jesus, then the Lord looks upon him with pleasure. That very man who was an heir of wrath becomes a child of love! and he who would have been driven from God's Presence with, "Depart, you cursed," is established in Christ's heart with "Come, you blessed." Now, dear Friends, I hope many of us have already received, during the past year, this great blessing, "The Lord make His face to shine upon you." Don't you feel that you have, tonight, to look up to God and do not feel any fear? You know that He is not frowning upon you! He is reconciled unto you—you are reconciled unto Him. You may say, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed." And you are persuaded that as God looks upon Christ, and upon you in Christ, you are well-beloved in Him. Well now, as it has been, so it shall be, for if God once makes His face to shine in the sense of His favor, He never takes that favor away! You may not see it. You may think He is angry with you and, in another sense, He may be, but legally, and so far as concerns the Law and its power of condemnation, there is not a single thought of anger in the mind, or feeling of displeasure in the heart of God towards any one of those who rest in Jesus!

You are accepted in the Beloved. God sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel. As He looks upon them in His Son, He sees them without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

"The Lord make His face to shine upon you." Well, and what springs out of that? Why this, "and be gracious unto you." Because God is thus favorable towards us through His dear Son, Divine Grace comes to us. And what a great, all-comprehending word is that! Grace! It has many meanings and includes a whole universe of blessing! Grace—it is the free and undeserved favor of God! Grace—it is the mighty operation of that favor, effectually working in them that believe! Grace—it is that which enlightens us to see our lost estate—that which leads us to see the All-Sufficiency of Christ! Grace—this works faith in us, gives us love to God! Grace creates our hope, carries on the work within our souls and completes it, too! Grace—it is a term so comprehensive that I would need the whole of this evening, yes, and longer, too, to enumerate the mighty catalog comprised and packed, as it were, in this golden casket of the word, Grace! "The Lord be gracious unto you." Well, now, Beloved, He has been gracious to us in the past. Oh, the Grace of God to me!—

"Oh, to Grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be!"

Can you say the same? Look at what a sinner you have been and yet how favored! Look at your backslidings! Look at your ingratitude and yet His mercy does not cease—

"Oh, to Grace how great a debtor!" Let your hearts say it, if your lips do not. And now, Beloved, He will be gracious to you in the future as He has been in the past. Every mercy received is a pledge of mercies yet to come! He knew what He was doing when He began with us

and, therefore, He will not leave off. If He had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us such things as these. The great Master Worker would not have built the house so far if He did not mean to finish it. All His previous Grace and glory will be wasted and evaporate if He should not complete His redeeming work. Therefore, I am sure that after advancing so far with His glorious purpose, He will finish it and, if necessary, in the teeth of men and devils! He has begun and His right arm, which always goes with His Grace, will surely carry it through to the end. "The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you."

But now, thirdly, "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." Is this the voice of the Holy Spirit? Whether it is so or not, does not greatly matter to us tonight. "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you." Does not this mean, "The Lord give you a conscious, a delightful sense of His favor"? Wishing to see a difference—I will not insist upon it—wishing to see a difference, I put the second blessing as meaning God's being reconciled. But the third blessing as meaning God manifesting that reconciliation and giving His children the enjoyment of His favor. Now, God's people do not always have this—it is not always sunshine. "The evening and the morning were the first day," and there is evening as well as morning in the day of God's people. God always loves His people, but His people

do not always know it. Because of their sins, they do not always enjoy it. Oh, what a blessing it is when the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the soul—when we can say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." When we get out of these mists and fogs and can see the sun once more shining clear and bright, Beloved, it is Heaven on earth! It is the true ante-past of Heaven above, when the Lord lifts up His countenance upon you! I have no doubt the original allusion is to a father whose child has done wrong and he says, "Now, Sir, get out of my sight, you have grieved and vexed me. You shall not see my face." The child goes upstairs to bed—anywhere out of his father's sight. And after a while, when the father hears he has been penitent and sees his tears, he smiles again upon him, gives him a kiss and presses him to his heart. May God the Holy Spirit give us just that! May everyone of us have it!

We have, some of us, had it during the past year. We grieve to confess that we did backslide, but when we returned again, we found Him just as willing to receive us as at the first and He lifted up His countenance upon us once again! We said, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation," and He did so! We asked Him to take away His wrath from us, and we found that "His anger is but for a moment." When weeping came to us for a night, joy appeared in the morning. It will be just the same with us during the next year. If we transgress and repent, and return to Him, we have an actual promise that He will forgive us. Now, what says the text? "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." There is no peace like the peace which we have with God, and no peace with God like that which comes from a sense of His assured love! And belief in Christ for the pardon of sin gives us the blessing of non-condemnation. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But this sense of non-condemnation may sometimes be destroyed through weakness of faith. We may be brought very low and our peace may be disturbed, but when we come back to the Cross, and look once more to Him who died there, He is our peace and we see in Him that our peace is made with God—and then our peace becomes like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea! I think it would be impossible for me to describe peace. You must feel it to know it. Peace with God is like that clear shining we sometimes see after a heavy shower of rain. With the thunder and lightning it seemed as if Heaven would be torn in pieces and all the earth shaken, and then, suddenly, it is all over and the sun shines forth! There is a rainbow with its many colors on the clouds, and all the flowers lift up their drooping heads, each one loaded with a gleaming benediction—and all the earth fragrant and smiling and seeming to steam forth the incense of gratitude! Now, after the storm of the conviction of sin, when the Spirit of God comes, it is as quiet and peaceful as that. And after a storm of trouble—and I know what that means—after a hurricane of trial, we can take all our distresses and cares and lay them down at God's feet and feel that we need not care about them anymore!

But if my Father did not undertake them, I would not, for I cannot. He has promised He will, if I cast my cares upon Him. You sometimes walk out of this place when God has blessed your soul and feel, "Now, I do not know what may happen, and really I do not care what does. My heart is resting on my God—I have left it all to Him and I am sure it will be right, whatever may come." Like Jonah, you may lose your gourd, but you cannot lose your God! You may see dark weather before you, but still you can go to Him who cannot fail you—and there shall your soul have repose. Now, that is the peace of God which passes all understanding and, therefore, it must surpass all expression. The peace of God which can only be known by the man who enjoys it—a peace which the world does not give and cannot destroy, but which

Heaven, itself, can work in the soul! Now, may we have this blessing, "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

If we stopped here tonight and went no further, provided we got these blessings and fed upon them, it would be quite enough. Let me just read that text again clearly. "The Lord bless"—now the next word is the very pith of it, and let it be read now to each one of you, my good Sisters and Brothers, you who are young in years and young in Divine Grace, never mind who it is, so long as you are resting upon Christ—Jesus, the great High Priest, speaks from the eternal Glory and He says, "The Lord bless you." "Oh, but I do not deserve it!" Just so, but, "the Lord Bless you." "I am so unworthy, I am so backsliding!" Yes, but the Lord Jesus Christ knows all, covers all. We will read it, then, "The Lord Bless you— you, and keep you: the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." Oh, have you got that worked into your very hearts? It will be like a bundle of myrrh that you may keep in your bosom and it will sweeten your soul the whole year round, making you to know that you are blessed in and of the Lord who made Heaven and earth!

Now, I shall ask your attention for a little while to the second blessing, that spoken in God's name by the Apostle Paul, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." Here we have—

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT BENEDICTION.

This second blessing is precisely like the first as to its essence and substance. But there is some little difference as to the expression and circumstance. The first thing that strikes me in reading it through, as it almost always does when I pronounce it, is this—you notice it begins with the Lord Jesus Christ The Lord Jesus is the Second Person of the blessed Divine Unity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—but this benediction begins with the Son of God. Why is that? In the order of Doctrine and fact, all infinite blessings begin with the Father. He is the Fountainhead of Creation. He is the Fountain, Christ the channel and the Holy Spirit produces the grand results. Father first, Son next, Spirit third. But in the order of experi-

ence—the order in which the blessing comes—it is always the Son first. "No man comes unto the Father but by Me." Not the Father first, but the Son first! What a sinner learns to comfort him first is not that the Father loves Him. No. He learns first of all that Jesus Christ died for sinners because God loves Him—and so he puts his trust in Him. The first thing a poor Believer gets, then, is Grace through Jesus Christ. After that, perhaps, he may sometimes think that God the Father has no love towards him, but as he begins to read his Bible and to experience more of Divine Grace in his heart, he finds that God the Father is full of love. So, then, he goes on and gets the love of God the Father. And when he knows this, perhaps he often wonders what communion may be of, and fellowship. And when he hears some of those delightful hymns which we sing at the Lord's Supper, he thinks he shall never get to them—to talk with God, to have communion with Christ—but, by-and-by, as the Lord leads him on, from being a babe, he grows to be a man and he gets into communion with the Holy Spirit. Babes in Grace know "the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." But as they grow they discover "the love of God our Father." And as they grow still more, they come to "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." The three things are put in the order of experience, not in the order of fact, nor the order of Doctrine.

Having noticed that, just observe the three blessings as they come. "The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich." You know His great poverty—you know His great Grace which brought Him from yonder starry heavens to lie in a manger, to live in obscurity for 30 years and to die upon the Cross in pains that cannot be told. Now, Grace comes to us through Christ and, therefore, it is said, "by His Grace." He is the golden pipe through which it all flows. Believing in Him, we receive the mercy of God! Coming through Him to the Mercy Seat, we obtain unnumbered favors by virtue of our union with Him. As the branch derives sap and then fruit from the vine, we derive Grace from Him. He is to us the channel of all the good gifts of our heavenly Father. "May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." "Be with you all—it is not in the singular—it is not to each one. It is, "with you all," because the genius of the Gospel is expansive. You notice the Redeemer's prayer. It is not My Father. No, but "our Father which are in Heaven " And the Gospel's benediction, though it is personal—blessed be God for that—yet it is also expansive—"be with you all." We are to think of all our Brothers and Sisters. When we get a blessing, we are to look upon ourselves as part of the Divine family. When we come together to break bread, we do not come, each one alone—though it would be the Lord's Supper if only one man were there—but we come there in humble fellowship, one with the other! "Eat, drink you all, of this," said Christ. "Take, eat, this is My body." He would have all His disciples come there and partake. And so with this blessing of the Grace of Jesus Christ—may it be with you all!

Has it been with us all during the past year? There are not so many here tonight as usual. May I, therefore, put the question to each one personally? Has it been with you—and you—and you? Have you, my Hearers, known daily the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you stood by faith at the foot of the Cross and felt that you rested your all on Him? If so, I know you possess His Grace. He it is who has given you power to trust Him wholly and absolutely. All the Grace there is in His great heart and mind belongs to you!—

"Plenteous Grace with Him is found,

Grace to cover all our sins.

May the healing streams abound,

Make and keep us pure within."

May it be with you all!

Next comes "the love of the Father "It is from the love of God that everything blessed and blessing springs. We must not imagine that Jesus Christ died to induce His Father to love us—a very foolish and pernicious idea that! God the Eternal Father always loved His people and Christ has removed the sin which restrained the shinings of the most glorious manifestations of that love—but He loved before Christ died. You know you can boast—

" 'Twas not to make the Father's love

Towards His people sure,

That Jesus came from realms above!

'Twas not the pangs He bore

That God's eternal love procured,

For God was Love before."

That fountain sprung up eternally! It was a well that needed no digging. Oh, dear Friends, I trust we know what the love of God means. Has it not been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us? We shall know it in years to come, for where it once takes possession it never departs. Once in Christ, in Christ forever! In Christ's love you have begun a banquet which will never end. "May the love of God be with you all," is meant for all God's people. But is that love present with all? If you have not tasted God's love, you do not know what life, true life, means. The richest, the most celestial, the most transporting joy that mortal mind can know is a full assurance of the love of God! Dear Hearer, do you love Christ? Can you answer the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Then, if you have love for Christ, pure and true love and trust, if it is the fruit of God's love to you, then be of good cheer! May the love of the Father be with you all your days!

Then comes "the communion of the Holy Ghost " A very ugly word that—"Ghost." A better translation of the original Greek word would be, "Spirit." "Holy Spirit," and I sometimes wish that we always called Him by that name. It is far more expressive. The word, "ghost," bears such a strange and weird meaning, now, that it were better in this connection entirely to abandon it! The word, "communion," means not only the Holy Spirit coming to us and

having converse with us, but communion means copartnership. When the Churches in Macedonia made a collection for the poor Church in Judea, Paul called the collection, "communion," because by means of giving money to the Church in Judea they had a fellowship, something like having all things common—that is the perfection of fellowship!

Now, the Holy Spirit, if I may use the expression, has all things common with God's people. He gives to them all things. "He shall lead you into truth." What the Spirit knows and teaches us, we are able to bear. He knows the mind of God. He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. He gives us to participate in all that He possesses. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of peace. He gives us peace. He is the Spirit of holiness and sanctification—rather, He is the Spirit of light—He kindles light in our souls. He is a sacred fire. He baptized the Church in fire. Everything that the Holy Spirit is and has, He is and has for the Church of God and in common with the Church of God! Now, what an unspeakable blessing this is, to enter into a sacred copartnership with God the Holy Spirit! To talk with Him, to live with Him, to feast with Him, to have Him to be ours and for us to be His! Now, may such a communion as this be with us! I question whether we have ever got up to the fullness of this.

I think I told you the other evening the story of a good woman who was a little distressed in her mind and who, in reading the passage, "Your Maker is your Husband," said, "Now, I won't be distressed any longer. When my husband

was alive, I took care to live up to my income and now I will take care to live up to my heavenly Husband's income." Oh, I wish to get hold of living up to God's income, for all He has is given to His people! What rich lives we would have if we were to participate in all that He has! We would be continually feeling His power in our souls. Have we done this? May each one of you say, "Lord, give me to know the communion of the Holy Spirit all my days, until I shall be taken up to dwell where You reveal Yourself without a veil between!"

Now, in closing, you see the difference between the two benedictions is this—the second blessing is really exhibited, the first a little veiled—something like Moses, when his face was too bright for the people to look upon, he put a veil upon his face. So the blessing Aaron pronounced is not so distinct or clear as the Apostolic blessing. Note, again, that the blessings in the second benediction are deeper—they are traced up to their source in the Triune Godhead, "Grace, love and communion." The one is a deep, the other a great deep. Note, yet again, that they are wider. The blessings of the Old Testament are individual and personal—to "you." The blessings in the New Testament are to the Corinthian Church and to all the Churches—"with you all."

In the first case there was a confirmation and in the second case there is one also—"Amen," which is the Divine confirmation of this benediction.

But I notice in the Apostolic benediction there is one thing which there is not in the first, namely, the communion, that is, the privilege—the privilege which comes to a child

of God in this age of bliss when Christ is fully revealed. Did you ever notice that when John was born, an angel appeared to his father, Zacharias, to announce that Christ was come? No sooner did that bell begin to ring to tell that Christ was coming, than what happened? The greatest blessing was about to be pronounced and, therefore, the smaller blessing had to be silenced. When Zacharias came out, he was expected to bless the people, but what did he do? He could not speak a word—he was speechless and he beckoned with his hand—and that morning the assembly went home without the benediction! The priest could not pronounce it. Now, I dare say they said one to another, "What a strange thing it was. We always had that benediction before, 'The Lord bless you, and keep you,' but this morning the priest could not speak a word." You and I know what that means. We must stop that one because there is a better coming! God seemed, as it were, to give notice to His people, "I am about to hush the voice of Aaron because Melchisedec is coming. I am about to stop the sound of the symbolic, because the real Priest is coming. I am about to hush the voice of Zacharias because the Son of God is now to appear and declare that the fullest blessing of Jehovah will rest upon His people."

Now, let us go our separate ways tonight, guided home, I trust, safely and rightly. And let us feed upon and make our soul's bread the two precious texts that have been before us. And I am not afraid but that you will be like those who went out to gather the manna—you shall each have enough! He who needs much shall have in abundance and he who requires little shall have no lack. Let us close by singing the blessing and go our way to turn all life into a song of gratitude for God's rich benedictions! Amen.