

A QUESTION FOR A QUESTIONER

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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?”
Psalm 77:9.

ASAPH was very grievously troubled in spirit. The deep waters were not only around his boat, but they had come in, even, into his soul. When the spirit of a man is wounded, then is he wounded, indeed, and such was the case with this man of God. In the time of his trouble he was attacked with doubts and fears, so that he was made to question the very foundations of things. Had he not taken to continual prayer, he would have perished in his affliction. But he cried unto God with his voice and the Lord listened to him. Nor did he only pray, but he used the fittest means for escaping from his despondency. Very wisely this good man argued with *himself* and sought to cure his unbelief. He treated himself homeopathically, treating like with like. As he was attacked by the disease of questioning, he gave himself questions as a medicine. Observe how he kills one question with another, as men fight fire with fire. Here we have six questions, one after another, each one striking at the very heart of unbelief. “Will the Lord cast off forever? Will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He, in anger, shut up His tender mercies?” If questions are raised at all, let us go through with them—and as the Savior answered one question of His opponents by another—so may we, also, silence the questions of unbelief by further questions which shall strip our doubt of all disguises.

The question which makes our text is meant to end other questions. You may carry truth as far as you like and it will always be truth. Truth is like those crystals which, when split up into the smallest possible fragments, still retain their natural form. You may break the Truth of God in pieces; you may do what you like with it and it is still the Truth of God throughout—but error is diverse within itself and always bears its own death within itself. You can see its falsehood even in its own light. Bring it forward, strip it of its disguises, behold it in its naked form and its deformity at once appears! Carry unbelief to its proper consequences and you will revolt from it and be driven by the Grace of God to *faith*. Sometimes our doubts assume appearances which are not their own and are hard to deal with, but if we make them take their own natural shapes, we shall easily destroy them.

The question before us is what the logician would call a *reductio ad absurdum*—it reduces doubt to an absurdity. It puts into plain and truthful words the thought of an unbelieving mind and at once it is seen to be a horrible notion. “Is His mercy clean gone forever?” One might smile while reading a suggestion so absurd and yet there is grave cause for trembling in the profanity of such a question. “Has God forgotten?” We stumble at the first word. How can God forget? “Has God forgotten to be?” We snap the question at that point and it is blasphemous. It is no better when we give it as a whole—“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” The bare idea is both ridiculous and blasphemous! Again, I say, it is wise, when we are vexed with evil questioning, to put down the questions in black and white and expose them to the daylight. Drive the wretched things out of their holes! Hunt them in the open and they will soon be destroyed. Let the Light of God into the dark cellar of your despondency and you will soon quit the den in sheer disgust at your own folly. Make a thought appear to be absurd and you have gone a long way towards conquering it.

The question now before us is one of very wide application. I shall not attempt to suggest all the ways in which it may be employed, but I am going to turn it to three uses this morning. The first is for *the man of God in distress*. Let him take this question and put it to his own reason and common sense—and especially to his own faith—“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” When we have handled the question in that way, we will pass it over to *the seeking sinner who is despondent* and we will ask *him* whether he really believes that God has forgotten to be gracious. When this is done, we may

have a moment or two left for *the Christian worker who is dispirited*—who cannot do his work as he would wish to do and who mourns over the little result coming from it. “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Will you be allowed to go forth weeping, bearing precious seed—and will you never come rejoicing again, bringing your sheaves with you? We shall have quite enough matter to fill up our time and many fragments remaining when the feast is over. May God the Holy Spirit bless the word!

I. TO THE MAN OF GOD IN DISTRESS, this question is commended, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

What kind of distress is that which suggests such a question? Where had Asaph been? In what darkness had he wandered? In what tangled wood had he lost himself? How came he to get such a thought into his mind?

I answer, first, this good man had been troubled by unanswered prayers. “In the day of my trouble,” he says—“In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.” And he seems to say that though he sought the Lord, his griefs were not removed. He was burdened and he cried unto God beneath the burden, but the burden was not lightened. He was in darkness and he craved for light but not a star shone forth. Nothing is more grievous to the sincere pleader than to feel that his petitions are not heeded by his God. It is a sad business to have gone up, like Elijah’s servant, seven times, and yet to have seen no cloud upon the sky in answer to your importunity. It tries a man to spend all night in wrestling and to have won no blessing from the Covenant Angel. To ask and not to receive; to seek and not to find; to knock and to see no open door—these are serious trials to the heart and tend to extort the question—“Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Unanswered prayer is very staggering, even to strong faith, but the weak faith of a tried Believer is hard put to it by long delays and threatened denials. When the Mercy Seat, itself, ceases to yield us aid, what can we do? You will not wonder, then, considering your own tendency to doubt, that this man of God, when his prayers did not bring him deliverance, cried out, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Besides that, he was enduring continued suffering. Our text says, “My sore ran in the night.” His wound was always bleeding—there was no cessation to his pain. At night he woke up and wished it were morning. And when the daylight came, he wished for night again, if, perhaps, he might obtain relief. But none came. Pain of body, when it is continuous and severe, is exceedingly trying to our feeble spirits. But agony of *soul* is still worse. Give me the rack sooner than despair! Do you know what it is to have a keen thought working like an auger into your brain? Has Satan seemed to pierce and drill your mind with a sharp, cutting thought that would not be put aside? It is torment, indeed, to have a worm gnawing at your heart, a fire consuming your spirit—yet a true child of God may be thus tormented. When Asaph had prayed for relief and the relief did not come, the temptation came to him to ask, “Am I always to suffer? Will the Lord never relieve me? It is written, ‘He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds’—has He ceased from that sacred surgery? Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

In addition to this, the man of God was in a state of mind in which his depression had become inveterate. He says, “My soul refused to be comforted.” Many plasters were at hand, but he could not lay them upon the wound. Many cordials offered themselves, but he could not receive them—his throat seemed closed. The meadows were green, but the gate was nailed up and the sheep could not get in! The brooks flowed softly, but he could not reach them to lie down and drink. Asaph was lying at the pool of Bethesda and he saw others step in to be healed, but he had no man to put him into the pool when the waters were troubled. His mind had become confirmed in its despondency and his soul refused to be comforted.

More than that, there seemed to be a failure of the means of Grace for him. “I remembered God and was troubled.” Some of God’s people go up to the House of the Lord where they were accustomed to unite in worship with delight, but they now have no delight. They even go to the Communion Table and eat the bread and drink the wine, but they do not receive the body and blood of Christ to the joy of their faith. Soon they get to their chambers, open their Bibles and bow to their knees and remember God—but every verse seems to condemn them—their prayers accuse them and God, Himself, seems turned to be their enemy. And then it is little wonder that unbelief exclaims, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

At the back of all this there was another trouble for Asaph, namely, that he could not sleep. He says, “You hold my eyes waking.” It seemed as if the Lord, Himself, held up his eyelids and would not let them close in sleep. Others on their beds were refreshed with “kind nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep.” But when Asaph sought his couch, he was more unrestful there than when he was engaged in the business of the day! We may speak of sleeplessness very lightly, but

among afflictions, it is one of the worst that can happen to men. When the chamber of repose becomes a furnace of anguish, it goes hard with a man. When the Psalmist could not find even a transient respite in sleep, his weakness and misery drove him to say, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Moreover, there was one thing more—he lost the faculty of telling out his grief—“I am so troubled that I cannot speak.” There are some people to whom we would not tell our trouble, for we know they could not understand it, for they have never been in deep waters, themselves. There are others to whom we could not tell our trouble, though they might help us, because we feel ashamed to do so. To be compelled to silence is a terrible increase to anguish—the torrent is swollen when its free course is prevented. A dumb sorrow is sorrow, indeed! The grief that can talk will soon pass away. That misery which is wordless is endless. The brook that ripples and prattles as it flows is shallow, but deep waters are silent in their flow. When a man falls under the power of a dumb spirit, it needs Christ, Himself, to come and cast the devil out of him, for he is brought into a very grievous captivity. We who know what a poor thing human nature is when it is brought into affliction are not surprised that the man of God said in such a case, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Having thus, you see, put the doubt in the most apologetic style and mentioned the excuses which might mitigate the sin of the question, I am now going to expose its unreasonableness and sinfulness by considering *what answers we may give to such a question?* I shall endeavor to answer it by making it answer itself—

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Answer—Has God forgotten *anything*? If He could forget, could He be God? Is it not absurd to speak of Him as short of memory, of whose understanding there is no searching? Shall we speak of Him as forgetting, when to His mind all things are present and the past and the future are always before Him as in a map which lies open before the beholder’s eyes? Oh child of God, why do you talk thus? Oh troubled heart, will you insult your God? Will you narrow the infinity of His mind? Can God forget? *You* are forgetful! Perhaps you can scarcely remember, from hour to hour, your own words and your own promises—but is the Lord such an one as you are? Not even the least thing is passed over by Him! He has not forgotten the young ravens in their nests, but He hears when they cry. He has not forgotten a single blade of grass, but gives to each its own drop of dew. He has not forgotten the sea-monsters down deep in the caverns of the ocean. He has not forgotten a worm that hides itself away beneath the sod! Therefore banish the thought, once and for all, that your God has forgotten anything, much less that He has forgotten to be gracious!

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Then He has forgotten an old, long, ancient, yes—*eternal* habit of His heart! Have you not heard that His mercy endures *forever*? Did He not light up the lamps of Heaven because of His mercy? Do we not sing, “To Him that made great lights: for His mercy endures forever. The sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever”? Since the creation has He not, in Providence, always been gracious? Is it not His rule to open His hands and supply the need of every living thing? Did He not give His Son to redeem mankind? Has He not sent His Spirit to turn men from darkness to light? After having been gracious all these myriads of ages. After having manifested His love and His Grace at such a costly rate, has He forgotten it? You, O man, take up a practice and you lay it down—you do a thing now and then—and then you cease from your way. But shall the eternal God who has always been gracious forget to be gracious? Oh, Lord, forgive the thought!

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Why, then, He must have forgotten His purpose! Have you not heard that before the earth was, He purposed to redeem unto Himself a people who should be His own chosen, His children, His peculiar treasure, a people near unto Him? Before He made the heavens and the earth, had He not planned in His own mind that He would manifest the fullness of His Grace toward His people in Christ Jesus? And do you think that He has turned from His eternal purpose, torn up His Divine decrees, burned the Book of Life and changed the whole course of His operations among the sons of men? Do you know what you are saying to talk so? Does He not say, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”? Has He said and will He not do it? Has He purposed and shall it not come to pass? Banish, then, the thought of His forgetting to be gracious!

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Then He must have forgotten His own *Covenant*, for what was the purport of His Covenant with Jesus Christ, the second Adam, on the behalf of His people? Is it not called a Covenant of Grace? Is not *Grace* the spirit and tenor and object of it? Of old He said, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” And in His Covenant He ordains to show this Grace to as many as are in Christ Je-

sus. Now, if a *man's* covenant is confirmed, it stands fast. Nothing that occurs after a covenant has been made can alter it—and God, having once made a Covenant, turns not from His promise and His oath! The Law, which was 430 years after the Covenant made with Abraham, could not change the promises which the Lord had made to the believing seed, neither can any accident or unforeseen circumstance make the Covenant of Grace null and void! Indeed, there are no *accidents* with God, nor any unforeseen circumstances with Him! He has lifted His hand to Heaven and has sworn! He has declared, “If My Covenant is not with day and night, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob.” The Lord has not forgotten His Covenant with day and night, neither will He cast off His believing people! He cannot, therefore, forget to be gracious.

More than that, when you say, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” do you not forget that in such a case He must have forgotten *His own Glory*, for the main of His Glory lies in His Grace. In that which He does out of free favor and love to undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving men, He displays the meridian splendor of His Glory! His power, His wisdom and His Immutability praise Him, but in the forefront of all shines out His Grace. This is His darling attribute—by this He is illustrious on earth and in Heaven above! Has God forgotten His own Glory? Does a man forget his honor? Does a man turn aside from his own name and fame? He may do so in a moment of madness, but the thrice holy God has not forgotten the Glory of His name, nor forgotten to be gracious!

Listen, and let unbelief stand rebuked. If God has forgotten to be gracious, then He must have forgotten His own Son! He must have forgotten Calvary and the expiatory Sacrifice offered there! He must have forgotten Him that is always with Him at His right hand, making intercession for transgressors! He must have forgotten His pledge to Him that He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied! Can you conceive that? It is verging upon blasphemy to suppose such a thing! Yet it must be that He has forgotten His own Son if He has forgotten to be gracious!

Once more, if this were the case, the Lord must have forgotten *His own Self*, for Grace is of the essence of His Nature, since God is Love. We forget ourselves and disgrace ourselves, but God cannot do so. Oh Beloved, it is part and parcel of God's own Nature that He should show mercy to the guilty and be gracious to those who trust in Him. Have you forgotten, as a father, your children? Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? These things are barely possible, but it is utterly *impossible* that the great Father should forget Himself by forgetting His children! That the great Lord who has taken us to be His peculiar heritage and His jewels should cease to value us and forget to be gracious to us is an impossibility!

I think I hear someone say, “I do not think God has forgotten to be gracious *except to me*.” Does God make any exceptions? Does He not speak universally when He addresses His children? Remember, if God forgot to be gracious to one of His believing people, He might forget to be gracious to them all! If there were one instance found in which His love failed, then the foundations would be removed and what could the righteous do? The Good Shepherd does not preserve *some* of His sheep, but *all* of them! And it is not concerning the strong ones of His flock that He says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish”—He has said it of *all* the sheep, yes, and of the smallest lamb of all the flock, of the most scabbed and wounded, of all that He has purchased with His blood! The Lord has not forgotten Himself in any one instance—but He is faithful to all Believers.

Now, let us attend to *the amendment of the question*. Shall I tell you, Friend, you who have put this question, what the true question is which you ought to ask yourself? It is not, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” but, “Have *you* forgotten to be *grateful*?” Why, you enjoy many mercies even now! It is Grace which allows you to *live* after having asked such a vile question! Grace is all around you, if you will but open your eyes, or your ears. You had not been spared after so much sin if God had forgotten to be gracious!

Listen—Have you not forgotten to be believing? God's Word is true, why do you doubt it? Is He a liar? Has He ever played you false? Which promise of His has failed? Time was when you did trust Him—then you knew He was gracious—but you are now doubting without just cause! You are permitting an evil heart of unbelief to draw you aside from the living God! Know this and repent of it—and trust your best Friend.

Have you not also forgotten to be reverent? Otherwise how could you ask such a question? Should a man say of God that He has forgotten to be gracious? Should he imagine such a thing? Should the keenest grief drive to such profanity? Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Shall anyone of us begin to doubt that Divine Grace which has kept us out of the bottomless pit and spared us to this hour? Oh, heir of Glory, favored as you have been to

bathe your forehead in the sunlight of Heaven full often and then to lean your head on the Savior's bosom—is it out of your mouth that this question comes—“Has God forgotten to be gracious”? Call it back and bow your head unto the dust and say, “My Lord, have mercy upon Your servant, that he has even *thought* thus for an instant.”

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Why, surely you have forgotten, yourself, or you would not talk so! You have forgotten that you owe everything to your Lord and are indebted to Him even for the breath in your nostrils! You have forgotten the precious blood of Jesus! You have forgotten the Mercy Seat. You have forgotten Providence. You have forgotten the Holy Spirit! You have forgotten all that the Lord has done for you. Surely, you have forgotten all good things, or you would not speak thus! Shake yourself from the dust. Arise and leave the dunghill of your despair and sing, “His mercy endures forever.” Say in your soul—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Thus much to the child of God. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, apply it to every troubled heart.

II. Furthermore, I desire to talk a little with THE SEEKING SINNER IN DESPONDENCY. You have not yet found joy and peace through believing and, therefore, I will first describe your case and what it is that has made you say, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

You labor under a sense of guilt. You know that you have transgressed against God and you feel that this is a terrible thing, involving wrath to the utmost. The arrows of God are sticking in your soul and rankling there. You cannot trifle with sin as you once did—it burns like a fiery poison in your veins! You have been praying to get rid of that sense of sin, but it deepens. The case I am stating is very clear to every child of God, but it is not at all clear to the man who is enduring it. He cries, “The more I pray; the more I go to hear the Word; the more I read the Bible, the blacker sinner I seem to be. ‘Has God forgotten to be gracious?’”

Moreover, a sense of weakness is increasing upon you. You thought that you could pray, but now you cannot pray. You thought it the easiest thing in the world to believe, but now the grappling-irons will not lay hold upon the promises and you find no rest. You cannot, now, perform those holy acts which you once thought to be so easy. Your power is dried up, your glory is withered. Now you groan out, “I would but I can't repent, then all would be easy. Alas, I have no hope, no strength. I am reduced to utter weakness.” We understand all this, but you do not—and we do not wonder at your crying—“Has God forgotten to be gracious.”

“Oh, but Sir, I have been crying to God that He would be pleased to deliver me from sin, but the more I try to be holy the more I am tempted! I never knew such horrible thoughts before, nor discovered such filthiness in my nature before. When I get up in the morning I resolve that I will go straight all the day, but before long I am more crooked than ever. I feel worse, rather than better. The world tempts me, the devil tempts me, the flesh tempts me, everything is wrong with me. ‘Has God forgotten to be gracious?’ I have prayed the Lord to give me peace and He promises to give rest, but I am more uneasy than ever and cannot rest like I used to. I used to be very happy when I was at Chapel on Sunday. I thought I was doing well to be at public worship. But now I fear that I only go as a formalist and, therefore, I mock God and make matters worse. I rested once in being a teetotaler, in being a hard-working, honest, sober man—but now I see that I must be born again! I used to rest, once, in the idea that I was becoming quite religious, but now it seems to me that my betterness is a hollow sham and all my old nests are pulled down.”

My Friend, I perfectly understand your case and think well of it, for the same has happened to many of us. You must be divorced from *self* before you can be married to Christ—and that divorce must be made most clear and plain—or Jesus will never make a match with you. You must come clear away from self-righteousness, self-trust, self-hope, or else, one of these days, when Jesus has saved you, there might be a doubt as to whether He is to have all the Glory, or to go halves with self! He makes you nothing that He may be All in All to you. He grinds you to the dust that He may lift you out of it forever. Meanwhile, I do not wonder that the question crosses your mind, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

Let me *show how wrong the question is*. “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” If He has, He has forgotten what He used to know right well. David was foul with his adultery—remember that 51st Psalm—but how sweet was the Prophet's message to the penitent king—“The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die!” “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,” was a prayer most graciously answered in that royal sinner's case. Remember Jonah and how he went down to the bottom of the mountains in the whale's belly and was brought even to Hell's door. Yet he lived to sing, “Salvation is of the Lord,” and was brought out of the depths of the sea. Remember Manasseh, who shed very much innocent

blood and yet the Grace of God brought him among thorns and made him a humble servant of the Lord. Remember Peter, how he denied his Master, but his Master forgave him and bade him feed His sheep.

Forget not the dying thief and how, in the extremity of death, filled with all the agonies of crucifixion, he looked to the Lord and the Lord looked on him—and that day he was with the King in Paradise! Think, also, of Saul of Tarsus, that chief of sinners, who breathed out threats against the people of God—and he was struck down and, before long was, in mercy, raised up, again, and ordained to be a chosen vessel to bear the Gospel among the heathen! If God has forgotten to be gracious, He has forgotten a line of things in which He has worked great wonders and in which His heart delighted from of old. It cannot be that He will turn away from that which is so dear to Him.

“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Then why are all the old arrangements for Grace still standing? There is the Mercy Seat—surely that would have been taken away if God had forgotten to be gracious! The Gospel is preached to you and this is its assurance, “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned.” If the Lord had forgotten to be gracious, He would not have mocked you with empty words.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, is still living and still stands as a Priest to make intercession for transgressors. Would that be the case if God had forgotten to be gracious? The Holy Spirit is still at work convincing and converting—would that be so if God had forgotten to be gracious? Oh Brothers and Sisters, while Calvary is still a fact and the Christ has gone into Glory bearing His wounds with Him, there is a fountain still filled with blood where the guilty may wash! While there is an atoning Sacrifice, there must be Grace for sinners! I cannot enlarge on these points, for time flies so rapidly, but the continuance of the Divine arrangements, the continuance of the Son of God as living and pleading and the mission of the Holy Spirit as striving, regenerating, comforting—all this proves that God has not forgotten to be gracious!

Remember that God, Himself, must, according to nature, be always gracious so long as men will put their trust in the great Sacrifice. He has promised to be gracious to all who confess their sins and forsake them—and look to Christ—and He cannot forget that Word without a change which we dare not impute to Him! God might sooner forget to be than forget to be gracious to those to whom He has promised His Grace. He has promised to every poor, guilty, confessing soul that will come and put His trust in Christ that He will be gracious in pardoning sin—and so it must be!

I shall come to close quarters with you. I know your despair has driven you to the question, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” and I would silence it by putting other questions to you. Is it not *you* that have forgotten to believe in Christ? “I have been praying,” says one. That is all very well, but the Gospel is, “He that *believes* and is baptized shall be saved,” not, “He that prays.” “I have been trying to come to Christ.” I know that, but I read nothing about this *trying* in Holy Scripture and I fear your *trying* is that which keeps you from Jesus. You are told to believe in Christ, not to *try to believe!* A minister in America, some time ago, was going up the aisle of his Church during a revival, when a young man earnestly cried to him, “Sir, can you tell me the way to Christ?” “No,” was the answer, very deliberately given. “I cannot tell you the way to Christ.” The young man answered, “I beg pardon. I thought you were a minister of the Gospel.” “So I am,” was the reply. “How is it that you cannot tell me the way to Christ?” “My Friend,” said the minister, “there is no way to Christ. He is, Himself, the Way. All that believe in Him are justified from all things. There is no way to Christ; Christ is here.”

O my Hearer! Christ Himself is the Way of salvation and that way comes right down to your feet and then leads right up to Heaven! You have not to make a way to the Way, but at once to run in the way which lies before you. The way begins where you now are—*enter it*. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, now, and you are saved! And then you will no more ask the question, “Is His mercy clean gone forever?”

“Oh,” says one, “but I have been looking to reform myself and grow better. And I have done a good deal in that way.” That is not the Gospel! It is all very right and proper, but the Gospel is, “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” The other day I saw my bees swarming—they hung on a branch of a tree in a living mass! The difficulty was to get them into a hive. My man went with his veil over his face and began to put them into the skep and I noticed that he was particularly anxious to get the queen bee into it, for if he once had her in the hive, the rest would be sure to follow and remain with her. Now, faith is the queen bee. You may get temperance, love, hope and all those other bees into the hive, but the main thing is to get simple faith in Christ—and all the rest will come afterwards. Get the queen bee of faith and all the other virtues will attend her!

“Alas!” cries one, “I have been listening to the Gospel for years.” That is quite right, for “faith comes by hearing.” But remember, we are not saved by mere *listening*, nor even by *knowing*, unless we advance to *believing*. The letter of the word is not life—it is the spirit of it that saves. When tea was first introduced into this country, a person favored a friend with a pound of it. It was exceedingly expensive and when he met his friend next, he enquired, “Have you tried the tea?” “Yes, but I did not like it at all.” “How was that? Everybody else is enraptured with it.” “Why,” said the other, “we boiled it in a saucepan, threw away the water and brought the leaves to the table, but they were very hard and nobody cared for them.” Thus many people keep the leaves of form and throw away the *spiritual* meaning. They listen to our doctrines, but fail to come to Christ. They throw away the true essence of the Gospel, which is faith in Jesus! I pray you, do not act thus with what I preach! Do not bury yourself in my words or even in the Words of Scripture, but pass onward to the life and soul of their meaning, which is Christ Jesus, the sinner’s hope!

All the aroma of the Gospel is in Christ! All the essence of the Gospel is in Christ and you have only to trust Him to enjoy eternal life! You guilty, worthless sinners—you at the gates of Hell, you who have nothing to recommend you, you who have no good works or good feelings—simply trust the merits of Christ and accept the Atonement made by His death and you shall be saved—your sin shall be forgiven, your nature shall be changed, you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus—and you shall never say again, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

III. The time has gone and, therefore, THE DISAPPOINTED WORKER must be content with a few crumbs. You have been working for Christ, dear Brother, and have fallen into a very low state of heart, so that you cry, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” I know what state you are in. You say, “I do not feel as if I could preach; the matter does not flow. I do not feel as if I could teach; I search for instruction and the more I pull, the more I cannot get it.” “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Can He not fill your empty vessel again? Can He not give you stores of thought, emotion and language? He has used you—can He not do so again?

“Ah, but my friends have gone; I am in a village from which the people remove to London and I lose my best helpers.” Or, perhaps you say, “I work in a back street and everybody is moving out into the suburbs.” You have lost your friends and they have forgotten you—but, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” You can succeed so long as the Lord is with you. Be of good courage, your best Friend is left. He who made a speech in the Academy found that all his hearers had gone except Plato—but as Plato remained, the orator finished his address. They asked him how he could continue under the circumstances and he replied that Plato was enough for an audience. So, if God is pleased with you, go on, the Divine pleasure is more than sufficient! “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Did not Wesley say, when he was dying, “The best of all is, God is with us”? Therefore fear not the failure of friends.

“But, Sir, the sinners I have to deal with are such tough ones. They reject my testimony, they grow worse instead of better. I do not think I can ever preach to them again.” “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” You cannot save them, but *He* can. “But I work in such a depraved neighborhood. The people are sunk in poverty and drunkenness.” “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Does not He know the way to save drunks? Does not He know how to rescue the harlot and the whoremonger and make them clean and chaste?

“Ah, but the Church in which I labor is in a wretched state. The members are worldly, lukewarm and divided. I have no Brethren around me to pray for me, as you have. They are always squabbling and finding fault with one another.” That is a horrible business, but, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Cannot God put you right and your Church right? If He begins with *you* by strengthening your faith, may you not be the means of healing all these divisions and bringing these poor people into a better state of mind—and then converting the sinners round about you? “Has God forgotten to be gracious?”

“Ah, well,” says one, “I am ready to give it all up.” I hope you will not do so. If you have made up your mind to speak no more in the name of the Lord, I hope that Word will be like fire in your bones, for if God has not forgotten to be gracious, provoked as He has been, how can you forget to be patient? Is it possible, while God’s sun shines on you, that you will refuse to shine on the fallen? If God continues to be gracious, you ought not to grow weary in well-doing.

Perhaps I speak to some dear Brother who is very old and infirm. He can hardly hear and scarcely see, so that he reads his Bible with difficulty. He gets to the service, now, but he knows that soon he will be confined to his chamber and then to his bed. His mind is sadly failing him. He is quite a wreck. Take this home with you, my aged Brother, and keep it for your comfort if you never come out again—“Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Oh, no! The Lord has said, “Even

to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” Having loved His own which were in the world, the Lord Jesus loved them unto the end! And He will love you to the end. When the last scene comes and you close your eyes in death, blessed be His name, you shall know that He has not forgotten you!

“I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” is the Lord’s promise and His people’s sheet-anchor. Therefore, let us not fear when our frail tabernacles are taken down, but let us rejoice that God has not forgotten to be gracious. Though our bodies will sink into the dust, they will, before long, rise again, and we shall be in Heaven forever with the Lord. Blessed be His name. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 77.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 77, 502.

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