

RAILINGS NO. 2999

A SERMON
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*“When you build a new house, then you shall make a railing for your roof that you bring not guilt of bloodshed on your household, if any man fall from it.”
Deuteronomy 22:8.*

[This sermon was originally entitled BATTLEMENTS.]

THIS interesting law which, in its letter, was binding on the Jewish people, in its spirit furnishes an admirable rule for us upon whom the ends of the world are come.

It is not necessary to inform this audience that the roofs of Eastern dwellings were flat and that the inhabitants were accustomed to spend much of their time upon the tops of their houses, not only conversing there during the day, but sleeping there at night. If the roofs were without any fencing or protection around their edge, it might often happen that little children might fall over—and not infrequently grown-ups might inadvertently take a false step and suffer serious injury, if not death itself. Where there were no railings or low walls around the roof, accidents frequently occurred. But God commanded His people, while they were yet in the wilderness, that when they came into the promised land and proceeded to build houses, they should take care in every case to build a sufficient railing that life might not be lost through preventable casualty.

This careful command clearly shows us that God holds life to be very valuable and that as He would not permit us to kill by malice, so He would not allow us to kill by negligence, but would have us most tender of human lives. Such rules as the one before us are precedents for sanitary laws and give the weight of Divine sanction to every wise sanitary arrangement. No man has a right to be filthy in his person, or his house, or his trade, for even if he, himself, may flourish amid unhealthy accumulations of dirt, he has no right, by his unclean habits, to foster a deadly typhus, or afford a nest for cholera. Those whose houses are foul, whose rooms are unventilated, whose persons are disgusting, cannot be said to love their neighbor—and those who create nuisances in our crowded cities are guilty of wholesale murder. No man has a right to do anything which must inevitably lead to the death or to the injury of those by whom he is surrounded—he is bound to do all in his power to prevent any harm coming to his fellow men. That seems to be the moral teaching of this ordinance of making railings around the housetops—teaching, mark you, that which I would like all housewives, workingmen, manufacturers and vestrymen to take practical note of.

But, if ordinary life is precious, much more is the life of the soul and, therefore, it is our Christian duty never to do that which imperils either our own or other men's souls. To us there is an imperative call from the great Master that we care for the eternal interests of others and that we, as far as we can, prevent their exposure to temptations which might lead to their fatal falling into sin.

We shall now lead you to a few meditations which have, in our mind, gathered around the text.

I. First, GOD HAS RAILINGS ON HIS OWN HOUSE. Let this serve as a great Truth with which to begin our contemplations. God takes care that all His children are safe. There are high places in His House and He does not deny His children the enjoyment of these high places, but He makes sure that they shall not be in danger there. He sets railings around them lest they should suffer harm when in a state of exaltation.

God, in His House, has given us *many high and sublime doctrines*. Timid minds are afraid of these, but the highest doctrine in Scripture is safe enough because God has railed it—and as no man in the East need be afraid to walk on the roof of his house when the railing is there, so no man need hesitate to believe the Doctrine of Election, the Doctrine of

Eternal and Immutable Love, or any of the Divine teachings which circle around the Covenant of Grace—if he will at the same time see that God has guarded those Truths so that none may fall from them to their own destruction.

Take, for instance, the *Doctrine of Election*. What a high and glorious Truth of God this is, that God has, from the beginning, chosen His people unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the Truth! Yet that Doctrine has turned many simpletons dizzy through looking at it apart from kindred teachings. Some, I do not doubt, have willfully leaped over the railing which God has set about this Doctrine and have turned it into Antinomianism, degrading it into an excuse for evil living and reaping just damnation for their willful perversion! But God has been pleased to set around that Doctrine other Truths of God which shield it from misuse. It is true He has a chosen people, but “by their fruits you shall know them.” Without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Though He has chosen His people, yet He has chosen them unto holiness—He has ordained them to be zealous for good works. His intention is not that they should be saved *in* their sins, but saved *from* their sins! Not that they should be carried to Heaven as they are, but that they should be cleansed and purged from all iniquities and so made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

Then there is the sublime brush of the *Final Perseverance of the Saints*. What a noble height is that! A housetop Doctrine, indeed! What a Pisgah view is to be had from the summit of it—“The Lord will keep the feet of His saints.” “The righteous also shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” It will be a great loss to us if we are unable to enjoy the comfort of this Truth. There is no reason for fearing presumption through a firm conviction of the true Believer’s safety. Mark well the railings which God has built around the edge of this Truth! He has declared that if these shall fall away, it is impossible “to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.” If those who are true saints should altogether lose the life of God that is within their souls, there would remain no other salvation! If the first salvation could have spent itself unavailingly, there would be no alternative but “a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” When we read warnings such as, “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall,” and others of that kind, we see how God has made a railing around this tower-like Truth of God so that saints may ascend to its very summit and look abroad upon the land that flows with milk and honey—and yet their brains need not whirl, nor shall they fall into presumption and perish!

That wonderful *Doctrine of Justification by Faith* which we all hold to be a vital Truth of God, not only of Protestantism but of Christianity, itself, is quite as dangerous by itself as the Doctrine of Election, or the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints—in fact, if a man means to sin, he can break down every bulwark and turn any doctrine into an apology for transgression! Even the doctrine that God is merciful, simple as that is, may be made into an excuse for sin. To return to the doctrine that we are justified by faith and not by the works of the Law, Luther put it very grandly, very boldly and, for him, very properly. But there are some who use his phrase, not in Luther’s way, and without Luther’s reasons for unguarded speaking—and such persons have sometimes done serious damage to men’s souls by not mentioning another Truth which is meant to be the railing to the Doctrine of Faith, namely, the necessity of sanctification. Where faith is genuine, through the Holy Spirit’s power, it works a cleansing from sin, a hatred of evil, an anxious desire after holiness and it leads the soul to aspire after the image of God. Faith and holiness are inseparable. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.” Good works are to be insisted on, for they have their necessary uses. James never contradicts Paul—it is because we do not understand him that we fancy he does so. Both the doctrinal Paul and the practical James spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Paul builds the tower and James puts the railing around it—Paul conducts us to the summit of God’s House and bids us rejoice in what we see there. And then James points us to the railing that is built up to keep us from leaping over the Truth of God to our own destruction. Thus is each doctrine balanced, bulwarked and guarded, but time would fail us to enter into detail—let it suffice for us to know that the Palace of the Truth of God is railed with wisdom and prudence!

Take another view of the same thought. The Lord has guarded the position of His saints if endowed with wealth. Some of God’s servants are, in His Providence, called to very prosperous conditions in life—and prosperity is filled with dangers. It is hard to carry a full cup without a spill. A man may travel on the ground well enough, and yet find it hard work to walk on a high rope. A man may be an excellent servant who would make a bad master—and one may be a good tradesman in a small way who would make a terrible failure of it as a merchant. Yet be well assured that if God shall call

any of you to be prosperous and give you much of this world's goods, and place you in an eminent position, He will see to it that His Grace is given suitable for your station and affliction necessary for your elevation!

The Lord will put railings around you, and it is most probable that these will not commend themselves to your carnal nature. You are going on right joyously, everything is "merry as a marriage bell," but, all of a sudden you are brought to a dead still. You kick against this hindering disappointment, but it will not move out of your way. You are vexed with it, but there it is. Oh, how anxious you are to go a step farther and then you think you will be supremely happy—but it is just that perfect happiness so nearly within reach that God will not permit you to attain, for then you would receive your portion in this life, forget your God and despise the better land! That bodily infirmity, that lack of favor with the great, that sick child, that suffering wife, that embarrassing partnership—any of these may be the railing which God has built around your success, lest you should be lifted up with pride and your soul should not be upright in you! Does not this remark cast a light upon the mystery of many a painful dispensation? "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." That experience may be read another way and you may confess, "Had I not been afflicted, I would have gone far astray. But now I have kept Your Word."

The same prudence is manifested by our Lord towards those whom He has seen fit to place in *positions of eminent service*. Those who express great concern for prominent ministers, because of their temptations, do well, but they will be even more in the path of duty if they have as much solicitude about *themselves*. I remember one whose pride was visible in his very manner. He was a person unknown, of little service in the church, but as proud of his little badly plowed, weedy half acre as ever a man could be! He informed me very pompously, on more than one occasion, that he trembled lest I should be unduly exalted and puffed up with pride! Now, from his lips, it sounded like comedy and reminded me of Satan reproving sin. God never honors His servants with success without effectually preventing their grasping the honor of their work. If we are tempted to boast, He soon lays us low. He always whips behind the door at home those whom He most honors in public. You may rest assured that if God honors you by enabling you to win many souls, you will have many stripes to bear—and stripes you would not like to tell another of, they will be so sharp and humbling. If the Lord loves you, He will never let you be lifted up in His service. We have to feel that we are but just the pen in the Master's hand so that if holiness is written on men's hearts, the credit will not be ours, but the Holy Spirit must have all the praise—and this our Heavenly Father has effectual means of securing! Do not, therefore, start back from qualifying yourself for the most eminent position, or from occupying it when duty calls. Do not let Satan deprive God's great cause of your best service through your unholy bashfulness and cowardly retirement. The Lord will give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. If God sets you on the housetop, He will place a railing around you. If He makes you to stand on the high places, He will make your feet like hind's feet, so that you shall not fall. If God commands you to dash against the enemy single-handed, still, "as your days, so shall your strength be." He will uphold you and on the pinnacle you are as secure as in the valley, if Jehovah set you there!

It is the same with regard to the high places of *spiritual enjoyment*. Paul was caught up to the third heavens and he heard words unlawful for a man to utter. This was a very, very high place for Paul's mind, mighty brain and heart as he had—but then, there was the railing—"Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the Revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." Paul was not in love with this drawback. He besought the Lord to remove it three times, but still the thorn could not be taken away, for it was necessary as a railing around the eminent Revelations with which God had favored His Apostle! The temptation, if we are at all happy in the Lord, is to grow secure—"My mountain stands firm," we say, "I shall never be moved."

Even much communion with Christ, though in itself sanctifying, may be perverted through the folly of our flesh, into a cause of self-security. We may even dream that we are brought so near to Christ that common temptations are not likely to assail us—and by these very temptations we may fall. Hence it is that as sure as ever we have high seasons of enjoyment, we shall sooner or later endure periods of deep depression. Scarcely ever is there a profound calm on the soul's sea, but a storm is brewing! The sweet day so calm, so bright, shall have its fall and the dew of the succeeding night shall weep over its departure. The high hill must have its following valley and the flood-tide must retreat at ebb. Lest the soul should be beguiled to live upon itself and feed on its frames and feelings—and by neglect of watchfulness fall into presumptuous sins—railings are set around all hallowed joys, for which in eternity we shall bless the name of the Lord.

Too many of the Lord's servants feel as if they were always on the housetop—always afraid, always full of doubts and fears. They are fearful lest they shall, after all, perish, and of a thousand things besides. Satan sets up scarecrows to keep these timid birds from feeding upon the wheat which the great Husbandman grows on purpose for them! They scarcely ever reach the assurance of faith. They are stung by “if's and “buts,” like Israel by the fiery serpents, and they can scarcely get beyond torturing fear which is as an adder biting their heel. To such we say, Beloved, you shall find, when your faith is weakest, when you are just about to fall, that there is a glorious railing all around you—a gracious promise, a gentle Word of the Holy Spirit shall be brought home to your soul so that you shall not utterly despair. Have you not felt, sometimes, that if it had not been for a choice love-word heard in the past, your faith would have given up the ghost? Or if it had not been for that encouraging sermon which came with such power to your soul, your feet had almost gone, your steps had well-near slipped? Now, the Infinite Love of God, dear child of God, values you far too much to allow you to fall into despair—

*“Mid all your fear, and care, and woe,
His Spirit will not let you go.”*

Railed by eternal Grace shall this roof of the house be—and when you are tremblingly pacing it, you shall have no cause for alarm!

II. From the fact of the Lord's carefulness over His people, we proceed, by an easy step, to the consideration that as imitators of God, we should exercise the same tenderness. In a word, WE OUGHT TO HAVE OUR HOUSES RAILED.

A man who had no railing to his house might himself fall from the roof in an unguarded moment. He might be startled in his sleep and in the dark mistake his way to the stairs, or, while day-dreaming, his steps might slip. Those who profess to be the children of God should, for their own sakes, see that every care is used to guard themselves against the perils of this tempted life. They should see to it that their house is carefully railed. If any ask, “How shall we do it?” we reply—

Every man ought to examine himself carefully, whether he is in the faith, lest professing too much, taking too much for granted, he should fall and perish. At times, we should close our spiritual warehouse and take stock. A tradesman who does not like to do that is generally in a bad way. A man who does not think it wise to sometimes sit down and give half a day, or such time as he can spare, to a solemn stocktaking of his soul, may be afraid that things are not going right with him. Lest we should be, after all, hypocrites, or self-deceivers! Lest, after all, we should not be born-again, but should be children of Nature, neatly dressed, but not the living children of God, we must prove ourselves whether we are in the faith. Let us protect our souls' interests with frequent self-examinations!

Better still, and safer by far, *go often to the Cross* as you think you went at first. Go every day to the Cross—still with empty hands and with a bleeding heart, go and receive everything from Christ and seek to have your wounds bound up with the healing ointment of His atoning Sacrifice. These are the best railings I can recommend you—self-examination on the one side of the house, and a simple faith in Jesus on the other.

Rail your soul about well with prayer. Go not out into the world to look upon the face of man till you have seen the face of God. Never rush down from your chamber with such unseemly haste that you have not time to buckle on your helmet and gird on your breastplate and your coat of mail.

Be sure and rail yourself about with much watchfulness and, especially, *watch most the temptation peculiar to your position and disposition*. You may not be inclined to be slothful. You may not be fascinated by the silver of Demas into covetousness and yet you may be beguiled by pleasure. Watch, if you have a hasty temper, lest that should overthrow you. Or if yours is a high and haughty spirit, set a double watch to bring that demon down! If you are inclined to indolence, or, on the other hand, if hot passions and evil desires are most likely to attack you, cry to the Strong for strength! And as he who guards well sets a double guard where the wall is weakest, so do you the same.

There are some respects in which every man should rail his house by denying himself those indulgences which might be lawful to others, but which would prove fatal to himself. The individual who knows his weakness to be an appetite for drink should resolve to totally abstain. Every man, I believe, has a particular sin which is a sin to him, but may not be a sin to another. No man's conscience is to be a judge for another, but let no man violate his conscience. If you cannot perform a certain act in faith, you must not do it at all. I mean if you do not honestly and calmly believe it to be right, even if it is right in itself, it becomes wrong to you. Watch, therefore, watch at all points. Guard yourselves in company,

lest you are carried away by the force of numbers. Guard yourselves in solitude, lest selfishness and pride creep in. Watch yourselves in poverty, lest you fall into envy of others. And in wealth, lest you become lofty in mind. Oh, that we may all keep our houses well-railed, lest we fall and grieve the Spirit of God and bring dishonor on Christ's name!

III. As each man ought to rail his house, in a spiritual sense, with regard to himself, SO OUGHT EACH MAN TO CARRY OUT THE RULE WITH REGARD TO HIS FAMILY.

Family religion was the strength of Protestantism at first. It was the glory of Puritanism and Non-Conformity. In the days of Cromwell it is said that you might have walked down Cheapside, at a certain hour in the morning, and you would have heard the morning hymns going up from every house and along the street. And at night, if you had glanced inside each home, you would have seen the whole household gathered, the big Bible opened and family devotion offered. There is no fear of this land ever becoming Popish if family prayer is maintained. But if family prayer is swept away, farewell to the strength of the Church! A man should rail his house for his children's sake, for his servants' sake, for his own sake, by maintaining the ordinance of family prayer. I may not dictate to you whether you should sing, or read, or pray—or whether you should do this every morning or evening, or how many times a day. I shall leave this to the free spirit that is in you, but do maintain family prayer and never let the fire on the altar of God burn low in your habitation.

So in the matter of discipline. If the child shall do everything it chooses to do. If it shall do wrong and there is no admonition. If there is no chastisement, if the reins are loosely held, if the father altogether neglects to be a priest and a king in his house—how can he wonder that his children grow up to break his heart? David had never chastised Absalom, nor Adonijah—and remember what they became. And Eli's sons who never had more than a soft word or two from their father—how were his ears made to tingle with the news of God's judgments upon them! Rail your houses by godly discipline. See that obedience is maintained and that sin is not tolerated—and so shall your house be holiness unto the Lord—and peace shall dwell therein!

We ought to strictly rail our houses *as to many things which in this day are tolerated*. I am sometimes asked, “May not a Christian subscribe to a lottery? May not a Christian indulge in a game of cards? May not a Christian dance, or attend the opera?” Now, I shall not come down to debate upon the absolute right or wrong of debatable amusements and customs. The fact is that if professors do not stop till they are certainly in the wrong, they will stop nowhere! It is of little use to go on till you are over the edge of the roof and then cry, “STOP!” It would be a poor affair for a house to be without a railing, but to have a net to stop the falling person half-way down—you must stop before you get off the solid standing! There is need to draw the line somewhere and the line had better be drawn too soon than too late. And whereas the habit of gambling is the very curse of this land—ah, during the last Derby week, what blood it shed! How it has brought souls to Hell and men to an unripe grave!—as the habit of speculating seems to run through the land, and was doubtless the true cause of the great panic which shook our nation a few years ago—there is the more need that we should not tolerate anything that looks like it.

For another reason, we should carefully discern between places of public amusement. Some that are perfectly harmless, recreative and instructive—to deny these to our young people would be foolish. But certain amusements stand on the border between the openly profane and the really harmless. We say do not go to these—never darken the doors of such places. Why? Because it may be the edge of the house and though you may not break your neck if you walk along the railing, yet you are best on this side of the railing! You are least likely to fall into sin by staying away—and you cannot afford to run risks. We have all heard the old story of the good woman who required a coachman. Two or three young fellows came to seek for the situation. Each of them she saw and questioned alone. The first one had this question put to him, “How near could you drive to danger?” And he said, “I do not doubt but that I could drive within a yard of danger.” “Well, well,” the lady said, “you will not do for me.” When the second came in, the good woman questioned him in like manner, “How near could you drive to danger?” “Within a hair's breath, Madam,” he said. “Oh,” she said, “that will not suit me at all.” A third was asked the same question and he prudently replied, “If you please, Madam, that is one of the things I have never tried. I have always tried to drive as far from danger as I can.” “You are the coachman for me,” she said, and surely that is the kind of manager we all should have in our households! Oh, let us not so train up our children that in all probability they will run into sin! Let us, on the contrary, exhibit such an example in all things that they may safely follow us. Let us so walk that they may go step by step where we go and not be cast out of the Church of God as a reproach, nor be cast away from the Presence of God. Rail your houses, then! Do not be afraid of being too

strict and too Puritan! There is no fear of that in these days—there is a great deal more danger of bringing solemn judgments on our families through neglecting the worship of God in our households!

IV. THE PREACHER WOULD NOW REMIND HIMSELF THAT THIS CHURCH IS, AS IT WERE, HIS OWN HOUSE AND THAT HE IS BOUND TO RAIL IT.

Many come here, Sabbath after Sabbath, to hear the Gospel. The immense number and the constancy of it surprise me. I do not know why the multitudes come and crowd these aisles. When I preached yesterday in Worcestershire and saw the thronging crowds in every road, I could not help wondering to see them—and the more so because they listened as though I had some novel discovery to make—they listened with all their ears, eyes and mouths! I could but marvel and thank God. Ah, but it is a dreadful thing to remember that so many people hear the Gospel and yet perish under the sound of it! Alas, the Gospel becomes to them a savor of death unto death—and there is no lot so terrible as perishing under a pulpit from which the Gospel is preached!

Now, what shall I say to prevent any of my Hearers falling from this blessed Gospel? Falling from the house of mercy—dashing themselves from the roof of the temple to their ruin? What shall I say to you? I beseech you, do not be hearers only! Do not think that when you come here Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays it is all done! No, it is only begun then! Praying is the end of preaching and to be born-again is the great matter. It is very little to occupy your seat, unless you listen diligently, with willing hearts—looked upon as an end, sitting at services is a wretched waste of time! Dear Hearers, be dissatisfied with yourselves unless you are DOERS of the Word! Let your cry go up to God that you may be born-again. Rest not till you rest in Jesus!

Remember, and I hope this will be another railing, that if you hear the Gospel and it is not blessed to you, still it has a power. If the Sun of Grace does not soften you as it does wax, it will harden you as the sun does clay! If it is not a savor of life unto life, to repeat the text I quoted just now, it will be a savor of death unto death! Oh, do not be blind in the sunlight! Do not perish with hunger in the banqueting house! Do not die of thirst when the Water of Life is before you!

Let me remind you of *what the result of putting away the Gospel will be*. You will soon die. You cannot live forever. In the world to come, what awaits you? What did our Lord say, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” The righteous enter into life eternal, but the ungodly suffer everlasting punishment! I will not dwell upon the terrors of the world to come, but let me remind you that they are yours unless Christ is yours! Death is yours, judgment is yours and Hell will be yours—and all that dreadful wrath which God means when He says, “Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.” Oh, run not on in sin, lest you fall into Hell! I would gladly set up this railing to keep you from a dreadful and fatal fall.

Once more, *remember the love of God in Christ Jesus*. I heard, the other day, of a bad boy whom his father had often rebuked and chastened, but the lad grew worse. One day he had been stealing and his father felt deeply humiliated. He talked to the boy, but his warning made no impression. And when he saw his child, so callous, the good man sat down in his chair and burst out crying as if his heart would break. The boy stood very indifferent for a time, but, at last, as he saw the tears falling on the floor and heard his father sobbing, he cried, “Father, don’t! Father, don’t do that! What do you cry for, Father?” “Ah, my Boy,” he said, “I cannot help thinking what will become of you, growing up as you are. You will be a lost man and the thought of it breaks my heart.” “O Father!” he said, “pray don’t cry. I will be better. Only don’t cry and I will not vex you again.” Under God, that was the means of breaking down the boy’s love of evil—and I hope it led to his salvation. Just like that is Christ to you. He cannot bear to see you die and He weeps over you, saying, “How often would I have blessed you, but you would not!” Oh, by the tears of Jesus, wept over you in effect when He wept over Jerusalem, turn to Him! Let that be a railing to keep you from ruin!

God bless you, and help you to trust in Jesus, and His shall be the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 6:1-14; 30-45.

Verses 1-6. *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. When Jesus then lifted up*

His eyes and saw a great company come unto Him, He said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to test him: for He Himself knew what He would do. That verse is worth thinking over. How often does Christ seem to ask us riddles and place us in difficulties, so that we begin to say, “What will come of this? How shall we escape from this temptation, or how shall we stand under this trial?” He Himself knows what He will do and it is a very blessed thing when our faith, being tried, shows itself to be strong enough to leave the burden with Him who can bear it, and to leave the difficulty with Him who can meet it! “He Himself knew what He would do.”

7. *Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may take a little.* That is our way. When our faith is little, we begin calculating the pennyworths that are needed, and we make them out to be so much more than we possess or can possibly scrape together. That is not faith, it is reason—poor, dim, shallow reason which forgets the Infinite and begins to calculate its own limited and insufficient forces!

8-10. *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said unto Him, there is a lad here who has five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.* When Christ bids men sit down, He has a dainty carpet for them to sit upon. “There was much grass in the place.” One might have thought that some of those people would have refused to sit down, for it is not everybody who will sit at a table that has nothing on it—but God knows how to move the hearts of men, so these people, if they had not strong faith, yet had faith enough to do as they were told—I wish that we all had as much faith as that!

11. *And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.* “As much as they would.” Note those words, for they are the rule at Christ’s feasts. Of earthly things, He gives us as much as we need—and of heavenly things, as much as we would! “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” “According to your faith be it unto you.”

12, 13. *When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.* “Waste not, want not.” Heavenly economy is to be practiced in the things of God. Christ is not stingy, but He is no waster.

14. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.* They were convinced through their stomachs! They came to this conviction merely through eating and drinking—and that faith which comes by the senses is no faith at all, or it is a sensual faith which cannot save the soul! These people who came to this belief through eating, were very poor followers of Christ, as He said to them, “You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

30-32. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign show You then, that we may see, and believe You? What do You work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven.* Jesus did not say to them, “I gave that bread to your fathers in the wilderness,” as He might truly have said. It was not Moses who fed their fathers in the wilderness, it was God who had fed them and if they would but think, they would clearly see that it was so. But the Master took them on to another tack and led their thoughts to a higher topic.

33, 34. *For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.* Not knowing the meaning of their own request.

35-39. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life: He that comes to Me shall never hunger, and He that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That you also have seen Me, and believe not. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father’s will.* Many want to pry between the closed leaves of God’s secret purposes to see what His will is. Now this is it—“This is the Father’s will.”

39-44. *Which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the Bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?*

How is it then that He says, I came down from Heaven; Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him. Note how that Doctrine of Sovereign Grace is used by Christ. He seems to wave it, like a lighted torch, in the faces of His adversaries, as if He said to them, "I did not expect you to understand Me. I did not expect you to receive Me. Do not think that you surprise Me by your action. Imagine not that you frustrate My eternal purposes by rejecting Me. I knew that you would not receive Me and that, as you are, you could not come to Me, for 'no man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.'"

44, 45. *And I will raise Him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me. May we so hear and so learn of the Father that we may come to Jesus Christ!*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 533, 546.

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