

WRECKED, BUT NOT RECKLESS.

NO. 1070

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY EVENING,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“All hope that we should be saved was then taken away.” — Acts 27:20.

HERE was a case of extreme peril, in which there seemed to be no possibility whatever of any of the lives of nearly three hundred persons being preserved. In this emergency the apostle Paul resorted to prayer. We may avail ourselves of this privilege at the worst pinch. When things are so black that they cannot be any darker, we may still pray. God is good at a dead lift. Our extremities, as we well know, are always his opportunities. When we can do nothing to help ourselves, let us pray, and we can get help from God in everything. Or, after we have done the little we can do, let us leave all with God and resort to him in prayer. This is one case out of many in which prayer has averted peril, while faith has grappled with fear, and despair has been routed from the heart by a calm dependence on the Lord. Thus Paul was enabled by his supplication to save the lives of all that were in the ship. Do not think, dear brethren, then, that your prayers in time of extremity will prove fruitless. God enable you to pray with faith. Recollect there never was a prayer of faith that failed yet; heaven and earth shall pass away, but this truth shall never cease to be true, that God is the hearer of prayer if we will but believe in him. He that wavereth must not expect to receive the answer; but he that is confident in his God shall never be confounded.

However, I am going to take the text out of its connection; I want to use it for different reasons and purposes. We have frequently known men to be in

a condition in which they have said that all hope that they should be saved was taken away. We are going to speak to such to-night. Sometimes I have been glad to hear that cry; sometimes I have deplored it; sometimes I have heartily sympathised with it. Upon those three phases of the cry we shall speak.

I. Sometimes, as I have said, when we have heard a man say that all hope that he shall be saved has been taken away, we have REJOICED TO HEAR HIM SAY SO. Does that appear to be a cruel statement? It is not meant to be so. Let me explain, and then I hope you will understand it.

Multitudes of persons are sailing in what they think to be the good ship of self-righteousness: they are expecting that they shall get to heaven in her. But she never did carry a soul safely into the fair haven yet, and she never will. Self-righteousness is as rapid a road to ruin as outward sin itself. We may as certainly destroy ourselves by opposing the righteousness of Christ as by transgressing the law of God. Self-righteousness is as much an insult to God as blasphemy, and God will never accept it, neither shall any soul enter heaven by it. Now, this vessel manages to keep on her way against all the good advice of Scripture; for often men have a soft south wind blowing, and things go easy with them, and they believe that through their own doings they shall assuredly find the port of peace. I am glad, therefore, when some terrific tempest overtakes this vessel; and when men's hopes through their own doings and their own feelings are utterly wrecked. I am glad when the old ship parts timber from timber, when she goes aground and breaks to pieces, and men find safety in some other way; for whatever seeming safety they may have to-day will only delude them. It must end in destruction, and it is therefore a thousand mercies when they find it out soon enough to get another and a better hope of being saved rather than this, which will certainly deceive them. I recollect very well when that terrific Euroclydon blew on my vessel. It was as good a vessel as any of you have, although I would be bound to say each of you would vindicate your own. Sails wanted mending, and here and there she wanted a little touch of paint, but for all that she was sea-worthy and fit to be registered "A.1." at Lloyd's, and entered in the first class, at least so I thought. And I recollect when the storm blew over her, and she went to pieces. I bless God that she went to pieces altogether, for I should have been kept on board to this very minute if I had not been washed off. I tried to cling to it to the very last plank, but I was obliged to give it up and look somewhere else for help and safety. Now, it will happen sometimes that when God is

dealing with a self righteous person who is delighting himself with the thought that he is all right, that he is not a great sinner, that he is a religious person, that he takes the sacraments, that he says his prayers, that he is as good as most people, perhaps rather better; and that if he does not go to heaven he wonders who will — I say it will happen to such a man, if God loves him (if he does not care about him he will let him go on in his own way till he is destroyed, but if he has set his eternal love on him it will so happen) — that a storm will come, perhaps on a sudden, just as the tempest did to Paul's vessel, and twist him right round, and make his gallant vessel in the storm to be like a thing that has lost its mind and will not obey the rudder, and cannot be quieted and controlled. Oh, we have seen them sometimes when they have woke up on a sudden and said, "I never knew this; I could not have believed it! I find myself to be a sinful creature, lost and undone, and up to this moment I really thought I was as right as could be and almost fit for heaven, and quite sure of it." A terrible awakening it has been to some. They have been bewildered, they have almost lost their reason for a time, when they have seen that the law of God is spiritual; that it condemns us for sins of thought as well as sins of action; that it never was meant to justify us and cannot do so. By it comes the knowledge of sin and nothing more. When a man has found out that his heart is evil, noxious, deceitful; that in it there are enmities, murders, filthinesses of all sorts; that it is a nest of unclean birds, a den of ravenous beasts — when he has found all that out he says to himself, "If this be true, where am I; what can I do; whither can I look?" and he drifts before the pitiless storm and the horrible tempest, all hope of being saved beginning to fail him. Yet it is really wonderful how self-righteous persons will do their best to preserve their self-righteousness as long as they can. We have seen them pull in the boat like these mariners. They had got a boat behind the vessel. So there are some who have not only good works enough, but a few to spare. They have had a little righteousness over and above what they ordinarily required, that they could boast and rejoice in as a kind of security against accident or misadventure. They have hauled this in very soon under stress of weather, and got the boat on deck for fear of losing it altogether; and then they have set to work right mightily to run under the lee, if they could, of some favorable shore, as Paul's mariners did. "If we cannot be saved by good works," they say, "we will get under the lee of some church and get ceremonies to help us out — baptism, confirmation, the Lord's supper — we will just get into a snug place there so as to escape the storm." Or else they have thought, "Well, we will make a

profession of religion, join with some sort of Christian people, pass through their rites and take their sacraments, and then, perhaps, our vessel need not go down after all; for, good as we are, with just a little shelter of profession of religion, we shall be able to weather the tempest.” And when the hurricane has blown them out to sea, and they have found that there is no defense for a soul in all the rites and rituals, the ordinances and observances of the churches; that even the rites which God ordains for a testimony have no atoning efficacy; that only the precious blood can cleanse away sin, and even that must be applied through the Holy Ghost by faith to give the conscience peace; — alas! poor souls, their hope of being saved has become more slender than before. But they will take to undergird the ship, like these sailors did; they passed hawsers right round the vessel. So people try to gird their self-righteousness together; pray more, read the Bible more, go to a place of worship oftener — by any means they will endeavor to keep together the timbers that the storm had begun to loosen. Oh, I recollect well how I went to a place of worship three times always on the Sunday, thinking that surely I should get some good by it. When I woke in the morning I began to read religious books; I would have done anything and everything if I might have found peace through my own doings and feelings. But the storm blew too severely; the vessel could not be preserved even by such appliances as these. And then you will notice that Paul’s sailors set to work cutting down all that might hamper them; they took away the sails, and masts, and every superfluous thing, for the wind was strong. Men convinced of sin do the like. “Oh yes,” they cry, “we cannot boast any longer; we must confess we are sinners; we acknowledge we have transgressed in some respects, but, Lord, accept our confessions; receive them, and in thine infinite mercy put away our sin, because we have confessed it, because we have repented of it.” They have given up a good deal, you see; but they still cling to the old ship as long as they can. She must go to pieces, or you cannot get them out of her; so the Lord sends the wind, and the storm again breaks over them, gives them no rest or respite; every timber creaks and the old crazy thing is ready to go to pieces. They go to the word of God for comfort, but, like the mariners in Paul’s story, they get no food: they cannot find anything that can stay their souls, for there are no promises in God’s word for people that are self-righteous; there are no consolations in the whole Bible for those who can save themselves. Plenty of good words for sinners, and good words for those that are righteous in the righteousness of Christ; but for your good people, your Pharisees, it is all thunder and lightning from Genesis to

Revelation — not a word of comfort, but all storms and hurricanes for them; and it is a great mercy when they feel that too, and get battered and dashed till every timber is shivered, and then they give it up. We find that the sailors on board the vessel with Paul had not only been unable to get anything to eat for a long time, but they labored hard; they tried to pump the vessel. They had been cutting the masts away, and reefing the sails, and doing everything necessary in the storm; they must have been cold and wet, and altogether in confusion. Meanwhile, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appeared. They had no compass as we have now-a-days; they could not tell where they were; they were all in the dark: and that is just the condition of a self-righteous soul when the Spirit of God blows with his rough north wind upon it, and it comes to see that “By the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified.” It is an awful condition to be in some respects; it is a most blessed one in others. Mark this, dear hearers, I desire nothing for you unconverted persons so much as to see you thoroughly convinced that there is nothing that you can do which can save you; that there is no merit whatever in anything that you can do or feel; that you are lost, utterly and helplessly lost, apart from the interposition of Christ; that he can save you, but that you cannot save yourselves, nor help him to save you. From top to bottom, he must be alone your Savior. I do not want to stir you unconverted persons to activity at first; the first thing is to slay you. After that God must make you active. You must lie dead at Christ’s feet, and then he will make you alive; you must confess that you are nothing, and then he will be everything to you; you are simply to be the emptiness, and he will come and fill you. I know you will cry, “Well, I would give up all trust in myself, but I do want to feel deep convictions.” Yes, the fact is, that is only another way of trying to bring something to Christ. “But I must feel,” saith one. Yes, you shall feel enough if you come to Christ first; but he does not want you to bring any feelings to him. “But my heart is so hard,” says one. Do you expect to soften it yourself? “But I feel so unfit.” Do you know that the only fitness you have got is the fitness of being unfit? “Oh, but I am so utterly unworthy.” Do you think he came to save the worthy? Do you ever expect to have any worthiness in yourself? Did not Christ die to save “the ungodly”? Is it not written that he came into the world to save “sinners”? Now “the ungodly” and “sinners” — these are two terms in which I cannot see anything good, if I look them through and through with a microscope. It is bad, altogether bad — “ungodly” and “sinners” — yet these are the sort of people Christ came to save. Oh, that you had grace to put yourself down in that number! It is your badness, not

your goodness, that draws Christ to you as a Savior. You had not any goodness, and therefore that could not bring him from heaven: it was because you were vile that he died for you to make you clean; it was because you were lost that he came to save you, that you might be lost no longer. I tell thee, sinner, thy righteousness will be thy ruin; but thy sin will never ruin thee if thou wilt come and lay it upon Christ by the simple act of dependence upon him. Oh, for such a storm as would that vessel wreck which is sailing under the flag of self-righteousness, that all hope of being so saved might be taken away from you.

Now, in doctrine and theory, my hearers, at least my regular hearers, all believe this; but for all that, it will have to become a matter of experience to you, or you will never be saved. It is one thing to say, "I know I must be empty before Christ can fill me:" it's a different thing to be empty. The stripping room is a place we do not like to go to; but Christ will never robe us till he strips us. We do not like the lancet that cuts out the proud flesh, but our good Physician will never flinch our soul's sores: he will cut out all that is bad, and then will he make sound work of it. We must be levelled, — brought down to the condition of being utterly undone; or, otherwise, we shall never have the hand of Christ to come and lift us up into the condition of being saved by him. Thus much upon the first phase. There are times when we like to hear this cry.

II. But we have heard this self-same statement at other times, when we have GREATLY DEPLORED IT. "All hope that we should be saved was taken away from us." I have heard some such lamentation as this from men who had no self-righteousness certainly, but who had fallen into despair. They had perhaps committed some very gross act of sin. Perhaps they had been guilty of stifling conscience, or, possibly, they had grown careless while hearing the word, and they had gradually wrought themselves into the belief that they must be lost. I meet with many — not so very many, but still with many — whose prevalent thought with regard to religion is, "All hope that I shall ever be saved is taken away from me!" My dear friend, are you here to-night? I should like to take you by the hand and speak very familiarly with you, for I am very sorry, to hear you talk so. And I am sorry for these reasons. First, I am afraid that you will go and do something very wrong; for when a man gives himself up in despair, he is like the sere wood that is ready for the fire. "Because there is no hope," says the man, "I do not care what I do. As the old proverb has it, 'As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.' I shall be damned anyhow, and I may as well have my

full swing of sin before I go to hell.” Ah, despair has been employed by Satan to lead many men into desperate crimes which they would never have thought of if they had had a hope left! And, therefore, I am very much concerned about many of you that despair; for I do not know what you may do. Some have taken their own lives; some have committed gross acts of crime. They have thought themselves useless, and they have flung themselves away. Do not believe what Satan is telling you. There is hope. The hope that you may be saved is not altogether gone — nay, I will tell you the very reverse before I have done.

I am also exceedingly sorry that you should think as you do, because I fear that now you are very likely to leave off hearing the gospel. I have met with some who said that they would never go any more to the house of God because it was no good. They had been a great many years, and seen a great many converted, but it had never touched them, and therefore it was no use; they were only adding to their responsibilities and they should never participate in grace. I remember one person whose case I cannot think of without deep sorrow. I think I said one Sunday that there were some here who had heard me for many many years, and if they never meant to be converted or turn to God, I almost wished they would make room for somebody else who would. And there was one who heard that who has never come again and I do not think he ever will. The word of rebuke, that was only meant to startle the conscience, awakened an obstinacy within the soul. Oh, I hope it won't be so with any of you. I hope you will never say “It is no use, and, therefore, I will not come.” A dear sister told me this afternoon a sweet instance of how useful it may become to persevere in hearing the word. She says she had prayed a long time for her landlord, who was an old man and very deaf, and not likely to get good by coming here. She had lent him the sermons, and he had often read them with great attention, and it pleased God suddenly to give him his hearing, so that he came here and heard one sermon, and found the Savior, and went home to his bed and died. One sermon saved his soul, so that he could rejoice in Christ. Don't give up hearing, I pray you. I would sooner you came here and went to sleep, than that you should not come at all, for perhaps when you woke up a saving word might get in somehow or other: God might put it in, and it might be blessed to your soul. Nay, don't say, “There is no hope,” for, possibly — and this would be almost as bad — if you say, “There is no hope,” you will keep on coming out of custom, but you won't listen with any attention, because you will feel “It is no good.” I have heard

of a boy who was noticed to lean forward to catch every word of the preacher; and his mother said to him, "William, what makes you so very attentive?" "Because," said the boy, "our minister said that if there was a sentence in the sermon that was likely to do us good Satan would try so that we should not hear it, and therefore I want to hear all that is said in the hope that God may bless me." I do believe, if you were to hear like that, you would get good one of these days. At any rate, if God does not mean me to speak to you, I should be very glad if he would do it by somebody else so that you may get a blessing. But really you must not, you must never give way to that feeling that there is no hope. And I shall tell you why. First, it is quite contrary to Scripture. Do you find the passage there that says there is no hope for you? You say you think God has determined to cast you away. Where did you find that out? Did you read it anywhere within the pages of that book? I know you never have read the secret decrees of God. No one has; — not even Gabriel can pry between the folded leaves. Do not oppose Scripture; don't go in the teeth of it, for the Scripture saith, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Why do you say he will cast you out. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Why do you say he cannot save you? He says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you not labor? Are you not a laboring man? Are you never heavy laden? Have you no trouble, nothing that depresses you? Well then, if the description suits you, he bids you come to him, and he says, "I will give you rest." Do you not believe him? Do you think the Scriptures must all be untrue and your despairing notion must be the only fact?

Nay; dear friend, you need not tantalize yourself with any such idea, because it is opposed to all fact. There are many here present who were sinners and seekers like you now are, and they have found peace. Now if they have been delivered out of all their distresses, why should not you? You say, "But I have sinned too much." I could find somebody that has sinned more, I daresay; and if I could not, even then you might venture on the promise, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Do not despair, I pray you, for that is to insult the great Father who always receives the prodigals that come back to him. Say that he cannot save you? why you deny his omnipotence! Say that he will not save you? why you distrust his mercy! Nothing makes him happier than to forgive sinners. It is a great part of the joy of God in that portion of his nature which he reveals to us, to display his grace towards the undeserving sons

of men. Moreover, you grieve Jesus Christ when you say there is no hope that you shall be saved. Do you think his blood cannot cleanse you? What, is there some new sin come up that Jesus did not know of? Is there some fresh transgression which at last has overcome the precious blood? You know this morning, we talked about the battle between sin and love, and we showed you how they wrestled together, and how sin seemed to be all but omnipotent, but love kept on and won the day, and gave sin a deadly fall, and set its foot upon it. Never suppose that Christ's love is going to be conquered by your sin. I will say one thing to you: if you will go to Christ, and he rejects you, I have done with preaching, — it is in vain. If you go to Christ, and he rejects you, I will mention it to-morrow — I will promulgate it next Sunday — that I have been mistaken about Christ, and that he does reject sinners. I beseech you, put it to the test. Some of us have tried it. I went to him with a rope about my neck — I mean I went conscious that I deserved to be lost. And I thought when brightest hopes elated me that perhaps he might after a long while receive me, and I might get a little hope and perhaps slink into heaven through some hole or corner. But oh, when I came to him, he received me in such a bounteous manner that the like of it was never known, except by those that have tried him too. He forgave my sins without a rebuke, received me as it were into his heart, and gave me to rejoice in his finished salvation. He is a good Savior, a precious Savior. Oh, that the Spirit of God would lead sinners here to go and try him.

Once again let me admonish you. Don't despair, dear heart, don't despair, for you do injury to the Holy Ghost, you dishonor him if you do, for there is nothing which the blessed Spirit cannot move out of your way which is now an impediment. If thy heart be like the nether millstone, he can turn it into wax. If you cannot feel your sin, he can make you feel. What if you cannot believe? He can give you faith. What if you be dead? He can give you life. The Holy Ghost is God himself; and is anything too hard for the Lord? No, no. You must not go away and say, "All hope that I shall be saved is taken away from me." Have you fallen, sister, for by that name I will call you? Have you forfeited your good name? Yet all hope that you shall be saved is not taken away. Jesus Christ receives such as you are, and forgives them and cleanses them and puts them into the family. Young man, have you done wrong? Are you afraid of being found out? Confess the wrong that you have done, and make restitution and come to God; for there is hope for you yet. Backslider, have you come here to-night? Have

you dared to show your face here again? We are glad to see you, for all hope that you should be saved is not taken away from us, though it may seem to be so to your stricken conscience. Come back, come back, come and welcome, to the Savior's feet, and you shall find mercy now. Is there one that has said, "Well, I can believe all this for others, but not for myself. I am the one out of the catalogue; I am the odd man. There is nothing that can ever deal with me?" Thou art the very man I am seeking after. Thy hope of being saved has been wrecked; but there is a better hope than the one thou hast lost. There is life in a look at the crucified Savior; if thou wilt but come and throw thyself at the foot of his cross, and let his drops of blood fall on thy soul, thou shalt be cleansed, ay, thou shalt be saved, to-night. The Lord God, the Father of mercies, grant to despairing souls to find peace and life just now.

III. I pass on to the last phase of this cry. At times I have heard the exclamation, "All hope that we should be saved is taken away," when I have SYMPATHIZED IN IT — sympathized with those who uttered it, because, not once nor twice but many a time have I felt the same. Children of God do not always find it smooth sailing to heaven. Even in the good bark of Christ-crucified there are storms. Christ may be in the vessel, but he may be asleep, and the ship may be tossed with the tempest. I shall describe with great brevity what I believe to be with some Christians a frequent experience. The light of God's countenance is taken away from us. We were sitting yesterday at the banquet of wine with Christ, with his banner of love waving over us, and now to-day we cry, He hath brought me into darkness, not into light! He hath turned against me his fierce anger! Oh, that I knew where I might find him that I might come even to his feet, for, truly, he is turned against me and he smites me with a heavy hand! At such seasons it will happen that our graces will refuse to act. Like some flowers that shut up their cups when the sun is gone, so will our love and our faith shut themselves up. They are reflectors, when there is no light without they cannot reflect any within. I have known what it is to search my heart through and through without being able to discover any spark of love to Jesus Christ in it, ay, and to bring my soul to the closest investigation, with diligent enquiry asking, "Is this faith, or is it presumption? Is it really trusting in Christ, or is it all a fond persuasion of my own, an unwarranted confidence, a false security? At such times you may rest assured that the devil will cast in suggestions to torment us. He is an old coward: he always strikes the saints when they are down. I only

wish he would meet me on some sunny day when my faith is strong and Christ is with me, I would give him a wound or two for himself! But, alas, he comes on us in the dark, when we have been slipping and tumbling down about in that Valley of Humiliation, where we are afraid of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and there he stands right in the way and swears that he will spill our soul's blood, but farther on the road to heaven we shall never go; and then, if Satan comes, and his tyrannical voice is heard, the dogs that erst did lay quiet within our soul begin to howl, and the corruptions that we almost thought dead and buried suddenly lift their hydra heads. Seems it not as though the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and a very Noah's flood, a mighty deluge breaks forth to inundate even the mountains of our last hope, till we seem to have no chance of escape and the soul is ready to die. Perhaps at this moment we turn to the word of God: and it seems all a blank. The very promises that used to cheer us refuse to speak to us. We go where the saints of God go to hear the gospel, but we find no comfort there. The word appears to condemn rather than console us. Peradventure, at that very minute we are assailed with some temporal trouble, and when spiritual trouble and temporal trouble come together and two seas meet — ah, it is hard for the poor bark to keep above the water at all. Yet have we known it so. There has been a perplexity about money, or an anxiety about a sick child, or sore disquietude concerning a dear sick wife, or a dire apprehension that the health of our body, or the stability of our circumstances is menaced. A strange fever, a wild deliriousness has seized us. At the same time there has been this horrible thought, "After all may I not have been deluded?" and Satan howls out, "Why, of course you were! You are no child of God!" and the flesh prevails awhile over the spirit, and conscience itself becomes a tormentor, upbraids and accuses us; then alas! for our poor vessel — it seems as if all hope that we should be saved were utterly taken away.

Well, but cannot we turn to prayer at such times as that? Yes brethren, and that is the only thing we can do; and perhaps the only prayer we can get at then is a groan or a sigh, and it is a thousand mercies that if we cannot pray we can groan, or, if we cannot get to a groan, we can breathe, and our very breath of desire is accepted of God. When we are so down in the dust, so crushed, and broken, and bruised, that we could not put half-a-dozen sentences together, and would not dare to utter even one as children of God, we may still come as sinners and say, "Lord receive a poor worm of the dust, and if I never was thy child yet, make me one now. Take me just

as I am! I come to thee just as I thought I did before, and, sink or swim, I rest my guilty soul on Christ.”

Now, why I have introduced this at all is just this. There are many young believers who get into such a squall, and do not know what to make of it. They say, “Why, had I been a child of God I could not have drifted into this frightful tempest.” How sayest thou so? Did not David go through it? He said, “All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me.” You must be very little acquainted with the history of the people of God if you think that they are strangers to these conflicts. There are some old mariners here that I could call up into the pulpit, if it were needed, to tell you that they have done business on great waters many years, and they have encountered many storms. You cannot expect to be upon these seas and not have tossings to and fro sometimes. The strongest faith that ever was in this world has sometimes faltered. Even Abraham had times when his faith was exceeding weak, though, indeed, at other times it staggered not at the promise through unbelief. David was a great man in battle, but he waxed faint, and had like to have been slain. So you will find the bravest of God’s servants have their times when it is hard to hold their own; when they would be glad to creep into a mouse-hole, if they could there find themselves a shelter. But this is the point, dear brothers and sisters — no soul that rests in Jesus will ever be wrecked. You may have the tempests and tossings, but you will come to land; be sure of that. The old story tells us of Caesar in the storm, when he said to the trembling captain, “Fear not! Thou carriest Caesar and all his fortunes!” Now, Christ is in the same boat with all his people. If one of his members can perish, he must perish too. “Strong language!” say you. Well, it is all in that verse — “Because I live ye shall live also.” You know, if you have got a man and you put him in the water, as long as his head is above the water you cannot drown him. There are his feet down in the mud; they will not drown, and he cannot drown. There are his hands in the cold stream; the hands are not drowned, cannot be, because his head is all safe. Now, look at our glorious Head. See where he is exalted in the highest heavens, at the right hand of the Father. The devil cannot drown me, and cannot drown you if you are a member of Christ’s body, because your Head is safe. Your Head is safe, and you are safe too. Rest you in this; that your faith may be shaken, but it cannot be destroyed if you are resting upon Christ. Your little temporary foundations that may have overlain Christ may move, but the rock of Christ Jesus never can. You remember Mr. James Smith telling a story of a good woman,

whom he visited upon her dying bed. He said to her, "Well, my sister, how are you? Are your spirits good?" "Yes," she said: —

*"The gospel bears my spirit up,
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation of my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood."*

"But," said the minister, "don't you feel yourself very sinking?" "Sir," she said with surprise, "What do you say?" He repeated his question, "Don't you feel yourself in these times weak and sinking?" She said to him, "Minister, I would not have believed that you would have put such a question, but as you have I must answer it. What do you say? Sinking! sinking! Did you ever hear of anyone sinking through a rock? If I stood upon the sand I might sink, but standing upon the rock, how can I sink?"

Glory be to God in Christ, we are on that rock, and sinking there is none for us. God bring you all there, and to him shall be the praise for ever and ever. Amen.