

THE LIFE, WALK, AND TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

NO. 1082

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“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.” — Genesis 17:1,2.

BELOVED, all Scripture is the word of God, but some Scripture is expressly so. Much of its teaching comes through inspired men, but some of it was spoken by God’s own mouth, directly and without instrumentality: such are the words now before us which were of old spoken into Abram’s ear by the Almighty God. These sentences ought for this reason to be regarded with peculiar reverence, and considered with double attention. The glow of Divinity is fresh upon the lines, bend then your souls to the understanding of them. If a letter were written to you when you were far from home, you would value every line of it if your fond mother had asked a friend to write it in her name, and had dictated the expressions which he should employ but if there were inserted in the body of the letter several sentences with this preface, “and your mother expressly says” — then you would treasure up the exact words, and repeat them to yourself again and again; would you not? All God’s words in Scripture are pearls, but this is one of the fairest of them. They are all diamonds, but such words as God speaks from his own mouth I may call the Koh-i-noors of Scripture.

Look, then, at the text. We will read it again: “When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.”

Happy was Abram to have such intimate intercourse with God! These sacred visitations were the grand events of his life; but we need not envy him, for God has appeared unto us in a yet more glorious manner, and the appearance is abiding. Behold, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ the tabernacle of God is among men, and he doth dwell among them; and, in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the believer has obtained an intimacy with God, which none of the older dispensation attained unto. The Lord was to the former saints as a wayfaring man who tarried but for a night; but it is our privilege to pray, “Abide with us,” and our joy to know that wherever two or three are met together in the name of our Lord, he is there, and will manifest himself unto them. Permit me, therefore, to encourage you to pray that the words of the Lord to Abram may be words for you, pressed home upon your own spirit, and sounded in your souls with power, as from the lips of the Lord himself: Then shall our meditations be sweet indeed, and we shall be blessed with faithful Abraham. O, Spirit Divine, make it so we entreat thee!

I. The first thing we shall speak about, upon this occasion, is SURE RELIANCE. The foundation of it is laid before us in the text. True confidence leans alone upon God, who declares himself to be Almighty God, or God all-sufficient — for such is an equally correct rendering of the passage.

All true faith hangs upon God, as the vessel upon the nail. Strong faith realises the all-sufficiency of God and that is the secret of its strength, the hidden manna on which it feeds and becomes vigorous, The Lord is all-sufficient in power to accomplish his own purposes, all sufficient in wisdom to find his own way through difficulties which to us may appear to be like a maze, but which to him are plain enough; and he is all-sufficient in love, so that he will never fail us for want of mercy in his heart, or pity in his bosom. God is God All-sufficient; simple as that truth is for us to speak, and for you to hear, it is a deep unfathomable, and did we really grasp its truth and dwell upon it, it would have a very wonderful effect upon our whole conduct.

Remember, that Abram was ninety years old and nine, and as yet had no child by his wife Sarah; yet he had received a promise from God that there should be a seed which should spring out of his loins. He was long past the natural term of life in which it was likely that he would be the father of a son. So, also, was it with his wife Sarah. Abram, for a while overcome by

unbelief, thought it best to take to himself, at the suggestion of his wife Sarah, her handmaid Hagar, and now, for some few years, Abram had possessed a son named Ishmael, and it is probable that he thought that this son would answer to God's promise, and that somehow or other the blessing would come through him. But the Lord had not so determined. He took no pleasure in the carnal policy which led to Ishmael's birth. The Lord meant the language before us to be a gentle but unmistakable rebuke for him, for he said in effect, "I am God All-sufficient — quite sufficient to fulfill my own purposes without Abram's help — quite able to achieve my own denials without such a questionable expedient as that of Hagar and her son Ishmael." That is, no doubt, the divine intent in the declaration of all-sufficiency. Hear ye, then, these words if ye also have been at any time distrustful, and let them sink into your souls, — "I am God All-sufficient." If any of you are tempted at this time to do what is questionable, because you cannot see how God's promise to you will be effected without it, the Lord tells you he wants no help of yours to achieve his own designs. "I am God almighty," saith he; "Is anything too hard for me? Dost thou think I need thy wisdom to set me right, or thy puny arm to strengthen me? Do I want help to achieve my purposes, which stand fast as my eternal throne?" It was a tender rebuke of Abram's very gross mistake, and it is to us a hint that we are never to put forth our hand unto iniquity, or to do anything that is doubtful in any form or shape, under the notion that we are thus effecting the purposes of God. Look at Rebekah. She little understood the all-sufficiency of God. God had promised her that Jacob should have the covenant-blessing, but she seems to think that God cannot keep his word and cause Jacob to inherit the promises unless she has a finger in it. Father Isaac has sent out Esau a-hunting, to bring home savoury meat, and has promised that he will give him the blessing when he returns. And now Rebekah thinks God will be defeated, the anxious mother imagines the Most High to be in a dilemma, and his purposes to be likely to fail unless her inherited craftiness can devise a stratagem to eke out the divine wisdom. Rebekah must tell lies, and Jacob must tell lies too; and poor old Isaac must be deceived, or else God's purposes will not be accomplished. O foolish Rebekah! Ere we speak thus, and condemn that gracious woman, let us make sure that we confess and condemn the same tendency in ourselves. Have we not also dreamed that we might do evil that good might come? Have we not followed policy where we ought to have sternly adhered to principle, and all this because we thought it necessary, and feared that otherwise evil would triumph? Has not our judgment been

bewildered by strange providences, and been led to sanction irregular procedures, or at least to think less severely of them? Under the influence of blind unbelief, have we not been ready, like Uzzah, to lay our hand upon the ark of the Lord to steady it, for fear it should fall, as if God's ark could not take care of itself without our sinful hand being laid thereon? That lesson learned by Israel at the Red Sea is still a hard one to us: we cannot stand still and see the salvation of God. Because we do not believe in the Almighty God we are eager to make haste, we hurry, worry, fret, fuss and sin! Fear drives us, and self-sufficiency draws us, and the noble quietude of faith in God is lost. O could we but rest in omniscient love, could we but know the Lord, and wait patiently for him, how much sin and sorrow we should be spared!

*“With feeble light and half obscure,
Poor mortals Thy arrangements viewer;
Not knowing that the least are sure,
And the mysterious just and true.*

*My favor'd soul shall meekly learn
To lay her reason at Thy throne;
Too weak Thy secrets to discern,
I'll trust Thee for my guide alone.”*

Here is the fit place to set in contrast the conduct of David. He knew that in God's decree it was ordained that he should be king over Israel, yet he took no means to secure the crown. He would not lift his hand to smite Saul, nay, he spared him when he was entirely in his power. He did not unbelievably interfere to make a providence for himself, but left the course of events in the Lord's hands; and, in consequence, when he came to the throne he had an easy conscience and no innocent blood upon his hands. May our faith teach us the same patient waiting, and confident repose of soul. May we believe, to see the glory of the Lord. The Lord All-sufficient will in the end clear the darkest providences from all question, and our souls shall know how happy are those who put their trust in the Lord alone.

This blessed text, “I am God All-sufficient,” may apply to us in times when we are inclined to shirk any service for God. Have you never felt on certain seasons that God's choice of you for a special labor could not be a wise one, for you were so unfit for it? Have you never felt in your own hearts — “I cannot do that; I think the Lord would have me do it, but I cannot. I

have not the qualification. I believe I am called to it, but it is too difficult for me. I shall not be able to achieve it?" Have you never had the disposition, like Jonah, to flee to Tarshish, or somewhere else, and to escape from Nineveh and its trials? Have you never pleaded, like Jeremiah, "But I am a child?" Have you never cried, like Moses, "I am slow of speech, send by whomsoever thou wilt send, but not by me?" Now, at such a time the Lord may well remind us, "I am God All-sufficient, cannot I strengthen thee? Weak as thou art, cannot I make thee strong? Worm of the dust, cannot I make thee thresh the mountains? Why dost thou fear? Thou art feeble, but I am not. Thou art foolish, but I am wise. Give thyself up to my guidance; trust thyself in my hands, and thou shalt achieve marvels; and exceeding great wonders shalt thou accomplish by my power and grace." It will be sadly sinful if we arrogate to ourselves the right to arrange our own place, and alter heaven's appointments. We are not where we are by chance, or by a freak of fate: as God's servants, our work is allotted us wisely and authoritatively. Dare we be wiser than the Lord? Are we also of Jehovah's council? His choice of instruments is wise, even when he chooses the weak things of the world to work his purposes. Their insufficiency is of no consequence, for their sufficiency is of God. For them to attempt to shun their duty because of conscious feebleness, would be a daring sin against the prerogatives of the King of kings, an impious censure upon the infallible appointments of Infinite wisdom. May not this be a word in season to some brother or sister here, who may happen to be under that temptation? If it be, may the Lord speak it home by his Spirit, and a blessing will come of it! Work on, dear friend, and wait on, for it is no business of yours to correct your Maker's arrangements. He who placed you where you now are, knew what he was at. Look at your infirmities with another eye. No longer allow them to distress you; but rather glory in them because they afford room and space for the divine power to rest in you and work by you. Listen no more to the wailings of your trembling flesh, which cries, "Alas, I am weak," but hear the voice of him who saith "I am God Almighty."

This word may also be useful to those who are trembling under some present temporal trial and affliction. They are dreading what may yet happen. Forebodings of what may soon come are upon them. Sometimes we have before us a gloomy prospect: we know the trial must come, we are afraid of it; and though we have the promise, "In six troubles I will be with thee, and in seven there shall no evil touch thee," yet we stand

trembling. “I am God All-sufficient” — will not that brace your nerves and enable you to press on, though were through a valley as dark as death-shade itself? Is it poverty? God is All-sufficient to supply your needs. Is it physical pain? — and some of us dread that beyond anything else, — the All-sufficient God can put under your aching head such a peace-creating pillow, that in the sweetness of celestial love you shall forget the smarts of the flesh, and your soul shall be comforted when your body is full of agony. Why, what is it that thou fearest, O child of God? There can be no lack which he cannot supply, no enemy that he cannot subdue. Slander’s cruel tooth, doth that dismay thee? Is not the Lord sufficient for this also? “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.” Hast thou not his own word for it? “Every tongue that rises against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.” Hath not he declared it? and doth not he know how to accomplish his own purpose? Therefore, again, I say, cast thy doubts and thy fears to the wind, for God as surely says to thee, O trembling believer, as ever he did to his servant Abram, “I am God, Almighty God.” O rest in the Lord, and be not troubled. He shall, he must appear: only put not forth thine hand unto iniquity, and do nothing before the time. Thou hast no feeble Deity to trust in; be not a coward, but play the man.

The same may also be applied to each of us when we are under spiritual depressions. Inward tribulations are frequently more severe than temporal trials; the man of God knows this full well. We look within, and we see grace to be at a low ebb with us — at least we think so, our corruptions and our natural depravity — these we see clearly enough, and we are troubled with the sight. Neglects of duty, omissions of devotion, forgotten opportunities of usefulness, all come up and accuse us; and then we are ready to doubt whether we ever knew the Lord at all: and, perhaps, Satan at the same time assails us, and we fall under his foot for awhile. O, let us not, even in such terrible times, ever doubt our God, for he is All-sufficient still! If our salvation depended upon ourselves, it would soon be all over with us; but if it depend upon that arm, the sinews of which can never break, — if it depend upon that heart which can never change and never cease to beat with love omnipotent, why should we be discouraged? “I am God Almighty,” saith the Lord: “Therefore say thou unto the enemy, ‘Rejoice not over me, for though I fall yet shall I rise again.’” And suppose, beloved, you should have temporal troubles and spiritual distresses at the same time? This meeting of two seas is very apt to make the mariner expect immediate shipwreck; but, behold, walking on the

waters comes thy God to thee, and saying, "I am God All-sufficient even for thee." Was there ever a storm that was not of his brewing? Therefore cannot he control it? Was there ever spirit that came up out of the deeps of hell that was not of his loosing? — and can he not hold him in as with a chain and restrain his malignant power? Behold, Jehovah rides upon the wings of the wind, and the storm-cloud is his car, fear not therefore the rattling of the wheels on which thy heavenly Father rides. In the midst of the tempest he reigns supreme, fear not the darkness which is his canopy, or the lightning which is but the glance of his eye. Trust thou him as all times, and let no fear cast thee down or hurry thee into an unbelieving and restless course of action, which would defile thee and bring dishonor upon his blessed name. Yea, if there are signs about thee of approaching departure, — if thy body, weakened by long disease, be like a house that is ready to fall about the tenant's ears, yet God, who is all sufficient here, will be all-sufficient on yonder dying bed. He who has been almighty in life will be almighty in death. Fear not that solemn flight through tracks unknown, or the awful appearance at the eternal throne. The God of grace is all-sufficient for all the mysteries of eternity; all-sufficient for the thunders of judgment, the terrors of vengeance, and the dread of hell. Fear not the crash of worlds, when he shall bid them all dissolve; the ever-living Redeemer, able to save unto the uttermost, is all-sufficient to support thy spirit — when all created things shall pass away and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. There exists not a conceivable ground of fear to the man who puts his trust in God Almighty! O beloved, set this as a seal upon thine arm to strengthen thee, and roll it as a stone upon the sepulcher of thy doubts. Never let them rise again. Didst thou trust a puny man, thou mightest doubt; but resting upon God, how canst thou be disquieted? Didst thou rely upon changing humanity, — didst thou place thy confidence in a creature that might love to-day and hate to-morrow, then, indeed wert thou unhappy; but his love is everlasting and his power endureth for ever; why, then, art thou cast down? Thou hast built thy soul's hope upon the immoveable rock of All-sufficiency, and thou shalt prove the truth of that inspired assurance. "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him and honor him." Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: and cease thou from man whose breath is in his nostrils; then shall thy light shine forth as the morning, and a dew from heaven shall cause thee to bud and blossom with

joy and rejoicing. Be glad in the Lord ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart, for unto you hath he spoken, and given this for the rock of your confidence, — “I am the Almighty God.”

II. Secondly, our text goes on to speak of our RIGHT POSITION. The Lord says, “I am Almighty God,” and then he adds, “Walk before me.” It is much easier for me to talk about this than it will be to practice it. The meaning is simple — the actual obedience grace alone can work in us. Come, gracious Spirit, and teach us to walk before the Lord in the land of the living. God is an All-sufficient God: then, believer, never go away from him, but abide in him evermore. There is a sense in which we always do walk before God, for “in him we live, and move, and have our being;” and he sees us altogether. But that is not what is intended here. It means this: Abide, O believer, in a constant sense of God’s presence. “Walk before me, the All-sufficient God.” Do not wander into paths wherein you will be made to feel, “I have left my God.” Have thy friend at hand:

*“Be thou my heart still near my God,
And thou my God still near my heart.”*

Remember, he is a very present help in time of trouble; and do thou strive to realize this as a daily fact. Thou hast not to send for thy God on an emergency, but thou art to walk before thy God believing him to be always near thee. Hagar once felt the power of that word, “Thou God seest me,” but believers ought to feel it every moment. “Seeing him who is invisible” is not a thing for now and then, but an hourly exercise. It should be the general tenor of the believer’s life to live always under the great Father’s inspection. A poet puts it — “live ever under the great task-master’s eye;” but I confess I do not like the word task-master. To live always as under my Father’s eye has all the force of the poet’s line, but has much more of sweetness. He is near me whether I journey or abide at home, whether I sorrow or rejoice. If I wake, his eyes pour sunlight on my face; if I sleep, he draws the curtains, and his presence shades me from all ill; if I rest, I sit at his feet in contemplation; if I labor, I work in his vineyard in his name, and for his sake, expecting a gracious reward from him.

“Walk before me.” Not merely “think before me,” and “pray before me,” but “walk before me.” I know many find it easy to cultivate a sense of God’s presence in their own study, or in the room where they are accustomed to pray, but this is the point — to feel it in business, and in the details of every-day life. God’s eye is upon me when I am weighing out or

measuring the goods, when I am engrossed with transactions with my fellow merchants, or when I, as a servant, am sweeping up the hearth or minding the household duties. This you should distinctly recognize and act upon. You are to live in the little things of life, knowing that God is always with you, and always looking at you — doing your work just as will please him. Oh, how we smart ourselves up if there is somebody calling to see us. How we adjust our dress in the presence of those whom we admire. I have sometimes thought I have seen working men proceeding very slowly indeed at their tables when alone, but when the master comes by they quicken their pace wonderfully. That is all wrong. It is eye-service, the custom of a man-pleaser, but not the habit of one who would please the Lord. We should feel, “God is always looking at me.” There is many a word we should not say if we remembered that he would hear it, and many an act we dare not do if we remembered that he would register it. Yes, there is the believer’s true place, — my God is God Almighty, and I am always in his presence. A person might do fifty things in a certain place, which he would not think of doing if he were at court and had just presented a petition to the queen; there is a decorousness of manner which we all observe when we are in such conditions, and, therefore, the reasoning is cogent when I ask you before the King of kings what manner of persons ought are to be! We are always in Jehovah’s courts, and under his royal gaze: “Walk before me.” Live ever as in the court, for remember, O believer, you are not like an ordinary person. If an ordinary person sins, it is only a common subject of the king, but you — why, you are a courtier, a favored courtier! You are one that he has chosen to tread his courts. Nay, more: the Prince Imperial has espoused you to himself. You are the bride of the everblessed Bridegroom, the spouse of Immanuel, and there is always jealousy where there is much love. “The Lord thy God is a jealous God.” Whatever he may be to others, he is very jealous of those on whom he has set his everlasting love. “Our God is a consuming fire.” Walk before a jealous God, then, with scrupulous regard to his honor and his holiness. Oh, it is a great word this — “walk before me.” Its brevity is not so notable as its fullness. Surely it means realize my presence, and then, in general life and ordinary conversation, continue under a sense of it, serious, devout, holy, earnest, trustful, consecrated, Christ-like.

But he meant more than that. “Walk before me.” That is, “Delight in my company.” True believers find their choicest joy in communion with God; and did we always walk before God in a sense of communing with him, our

peace would be like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. Would it be possible for us to feel any distress of heart if we always enjoyed the Savior's love? Methinks there are no bitters known that would be able to affect our palate if we always had in our mouth the love of the Savior in its ineffable, all-conquering sweetness. "Walk before me." Do not interfere with God's purposes: do not, unbelieving, try to help omnipotence and supplement omniscience, but rejoice in the Lord and find satisfaction in him only. Be filled with his fullness, and satiated with his favor. Go and do your part, which is to obey and to commune, and leave God's work to God. Walk before him, and attend to that only. Do not doubt God's power to fulfill his own decrees. Do not doubt that he will keep his word to the letter and to the minute, but do thou cultivate fellowship with God, for this will ennoble thee and help thee to give glory to his name.

"Walk before me." Does not it mean just this, in a word, "Do not act as seeing anybody else except me. Walk before me." Now, Abram had walked before Sarah: he had listened to her, and much mischief had come of his so doing, at different times. The dearest friends we have are often those who will lead us most astray when we take counsel with flesh and bloods. She was peculiarly qualified from her fiery excellence of character to influence Abram, and, in her unbelieving moods, to lead him away from the glorious absoluteness of his faith. She meant well enough, but she was too politic in her suggestion as to her handmaid. In the present case the Lord seems to say to him, "Do not suffer Sarah to affect you in these things. Walk before me." Beloved, mind you keep clear of the unbelieving advice of good people, and then you will have the less to fear from bad ones. And there was Hagar: Abram had been a great deal distressed about her, and it was but right that he should feel much interest in her welfare. And there was her son Ishmael whom he loved, and whom he would have to send, in future time, away with deep regret from the household. God says to Abram, "Do not allow your course to be shaped by regarding Hagar, or regarding Ishmael, or regarding Sarah, or anybody else. "Walk before me." I am persuaded that a regard for God, a sense of duty, a straight forward following out of convictions, is the only true style of living, for if you begin to notice the whims and wishes of one, then you will have to do the same with another; and if your course of conduct is to be shaped to please men, you will become man's slave and nothing better; and no child of God ought to come into that condition. If I felt I came into this pulpit to please any of

you, I should feel mean, utterly mean, and unfit to preach to you; and you would soon know it and find out that God was not blessing me to your souls. And if any of you, in your course of business, are always trying to catch the eye of this person, or cringing and fawning to this other nobleman, or squire, or gentleman, why, you are mean too. But the man who says, "I do the right in God's sight: I have not swerved from a sense of conscious rectitude, as before the living God," — why, sir, you have got all the freedom of soul that you can desire this side heaven. To walk before God, that is the point; to fear the Lord, and no one else, that is the state of mind to aim at. Make this the master passion of your soul, "For me to live is Christ;" make the honor of God your chief motive, and the law of God your rule. Walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

III. But we must pass on, for there is another point, and that is, as we have considered our sure reliance and our right position, we notice next OUR GLORIOUS Aim: "Be thou perfect."

Now, the connection shows us that the only way to be perfect is to walk before the Lord. If any man desires holiness, he must get it through communion. The way to be transformed into the likeness of God is to live in the company of God. That which thou lookest upon, thou wilt soon be like; and if thine eyes look on God, thy character will become like God. Hence the order of our text is highly suggestive, and should be earnestly noted and practically carried out. First, God must be known as All-sufficient; thus he helps and enables his servant to walk before him, and then, as a consequence, that favored servant labors to obey the avoid of command, "BE THOU PERFECT." There could be no walking before the Lord if all-sufficient grace did not work it in us, and the command, "Be thou perfect," would be mere mockery if Almighty love did not stand engaged to work all our works in us. To a man who has learned to rest in Almighty faithfulness, the perfect law is delightful; and with confidence in the energy of the Holy Spirit he is not staggered by its commands. I desire you to note this for the order of Holy Scripture is always full of reason and weight. Whatever ill-taught divines may do, the Holy Spirit never puts the fruit before the root, and never places the pinnacle where the foundation should be. Begin with God's All-sufficiency, go on to the holy fellowship and obedience, and then aim at scriptural perfection, and so you will take everything in due sequence.

But we must pass on. As you are aware, our margin reads the text thus, “Be thou sincere,” or “Be thou upright;” and either translation would not be incorrect. Now, child of God, you have been saying, “I do not see how God is to fulfill his promise to me.” What have you to do with that? Walk before God, and be you sincere. He will attend to the due performance of all that he has promised. Remember —

*“Though dark be your way, since he is your guide,
‘Tis yours to obey, ‘tis his to provide.”*

In all things be transparently sincere, never pray a formalistic prayer, or sing a heartless hymn, or prattle out experience you never felt. Shun first and foremost the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Be what you would seem to be. Be down-right; intensely real, thorough, and if you are that, you shall never find God less thorough than you are, nor the Lord less true to his word than you shall be. If you are wavering and doubleminded, you must not expect anything of the Lord, but if you are single-hearted he will abundantly you. Mind this, I pray you, every day you live. This is the era of plausible sham, the era of superficiality; therefore be unmistakably true before the God of truth. The margin translates the passage by the word “upright;” and it comes to just this. You are fretting about how the Lord will deal with you. Brother, that is no concern of thine. Thy concern is that thou be upright in business. “My trade falls off,” says one. Be upright, brother: whatever you do, be upright. “But I have drifted into such difficulties, I am afraid I shall be ruined.” Be upright, brother, whatever you do, be upright. “Could not I get away a few of my goods, for instance, which ought to be my creditors’?” Brother, be upright; be upright. “Ah, but then, surely, I shall hardly have a rag left.” Be upright, brother, be upright. “Oh, but I consider my children.” “Walk before me,” says the Lord, “and be thou upright.” “Oh, but a man must take care of himself and his family.” Be upright, brother; that is the main thing to take care about. It will not matter how poor you are, if you do not lose your character. Lose everything else and you may yet be happy; but if you lose your peace of mind who can comfort you? If the worldling can point at you and say, “There is a professor who wronged his creditors,” that will be worse than all. No court is so much to be dreaded as the court of conscience — keep all things clear there. Better an honest pauper than a rich rogue. I am sure your fellow Christians will respect you none the less, however low you come, if you come there fairly; all those whose love is worth the having will cling to you in hearty sympathy, and only false friends, the parasites of

the hour, will desert you, and a good riddance will their departure turn out to be. But avoid, I implore you, those tricks so common among traders now-adays — those rash speculations, those deceptive accommodations, the lying and duping of others, which men fly to as a drowning man catches at a straw — a straw that he ought never to touch. Not losing, but cheating is the mischief; and the Lord says to you, “I am God All-sufficient: I can take care of you: I can bring you through all this; but do not touch forbidden things in order to escape from trial, or your trials will multiply and crush you. Walk before me, as under my eye; and be thou upright.”

But our version says, “Be thou perfect,” and for my part, I like it as it stands: “Be thou perfect.” “Oh,” says one, “but how can we be perfect?” I will ask thee another question: Wouldst thou have God command thee to be less than perfect? If so, he would be the author of an imperfect law. “The law of the Lord is perfect;” how could it be otherwise? I do not find that he bids us partly keep his law, but wholly keep it. And so the Lord holds up this as the standard of a Christian, “Be thou perfect.”

And does it not mean, let us be perfect in desiring to have all the round of graces? Suppose a man should have faith, and should have love, but no hope: he would not be perfect. He would be like a child that had two arms, but only one foot; it would not be a perfect child. You must have all the graces, if you are to be a perfect man. I think I have known some Christians who have had all the graces except patience, but they never could be patient. “Walk before me,” saith the Lord, “and be thou perfect in patience.” I have known some others who seemed to have almost every grace except the grace of forgiveness; they could not very readily forget any injury that had been done to them. Dear brothers get that grace the grace of forgiveness, and walk before the Lord with that, or you will remain a mutilated character. A Christian’s character is spoilt by the omission of any one virtue. And you must labor in the presence of God to have all these things, that they be in you and abound. Be ye in this sense perfect.

And as we have all the graces, so we should seek to have in our lives exhibited all the virtues, in the fulfillment of all our duties. It is a very sad thing when you hear of a Christian man that he is a very excellent deacon, that he is a very admirable local preacher or Sabbath-school teacher, but that he is a very unkind father. That “but” spoils it all. A saint abroad is no saint if he be a devil at home. We have known men of whom it has been

said that out of doors they were all that could be desired, but they were bad husbands. That “but,” — how it mars the tale. It is the dead fly which has got into a very good pot of ointment, and made the whole of it stink. Keep the dead flies out, brethren. By God’s grace may your character be full-orbed! May God grant you grace to be at home and to be abroad, to be in the shop and in the chamber, and to be in every department of life, just that which a man should be who walks before the All-sufficient God.

Now, I think I hear somebody saying, “How shall we ever reach such a height?” My dear brother, you never will do so except you remember the first part of the text — “I am the Almighty God.” He can help you. If there be any sin that you cannot overcome yourself, he can overcome it for you. If there be any virtue you have not yet reached, he can lead you up to it. Never despair of the highest degree of grace. What the best of men have been, you also may be. There is no reason why you should not yet be elevated beyond all the sin into which you may have fallen from inadvertence or temptation. Have hope, my brother; have hope for a higher platform of character. Have hope yet to be conformed unto the image of God’s dear Son. Aim at nothing less than perfection.

But I will not detain you longer, except to notice that last word. It is a very sweet word: “I will make my covenant between me and thee.” How run the words? “I will make my covenant between me and thee.”

Oh, it is the man that knows an All-sufficient God, and that lives in the presence of God, and that endeavor to be perfect in his life — it is that man that enjoys intercourse and communion with God, such as no one else knows, for “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” “There shall be a covenant between me and thee.” It sounds so sweetly to me — as if he had said, “I will say nothing to the outside world; neither wilt thou tell them. It shall be with thee and me. We will strike hands together. Abram, thou shalt be my friend, and I will be thy friend for ever. Thou wilt say, ‘My Father,’ and I will say ‘My son.’ Thou wilt put thyself into my hand and I will carry thee therein. Thou wilt ask to see my glory, and I will make my glory pass before thee. I will tell thee what I mean to do. If I am going to destroy Sodom, I will come and tell Abram my friend. I will let thee speak to me, and I will hear thee. Time after time I will stay whilst thou dost plead for fifty, and for forty-five, and thirty, twenty, and ten. ‘There shall be a covenant between me and thee.’ And I will make it. It shall not be such a one as thy timorous faith would make. I will make it

after the manner of my bounty, my eternity, and my all-sufficiency.” When the Lord makes a covenant, it will stand; it will be sure; it will be rich; it will be full. And, O, I pray that every one of you may know that covenant and live upon its incomparable blessings. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,” and he will show them his covenant. But many a child of God walks frowardly, and the Lord will not fully reveal the covenant to such. Some of his Peters follow afar off, and they get into trouble; but they do not enjoy the sweets of divine fellowship and peculiar manifestation. But this careful walking, this close walking, this keeping near to an All-sufficient God, this resting solely in him — Oh, this it is that brings the sweetness and the joy which are the antepast of heaven — which are, indeed, a young heaven begun this side the tomb. The Lord bring my dear friends all into holy fellowship with God; and if any of you have not come to the border of the happy land, I pray you may be led there at once. The way of salvation is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Faith is both the road to the highest happiness, and the way to the first safety — faith is both the highest round of the ladder, and its first step-- “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Have done with the self-righteous working, and come to the trusting. Have done with seeking to save self, and accept Jesus alone as your Redeemer.

The Lord grant you grace so to do; and his shall be the praise for ever and ever! Amen.