

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ABIDING OF THE SPIRIT THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5th, 1886, BY

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“Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.” – Haggai ii. 4, 5.

SATAN is always doing his utmost to stay the work of God. He hindered these Jews from building the temple; and to-day he endeavours to hinder the people of God from spreading the gospel. A spiritual temple is to be builded for the Most High, and if by any means the evil one can delay its uprising he will stick at nothing: if he can take us off from working with faith and courage for the glory of God he will be sure to do it. He is very cunning, and knows how to change his argument and yet keep to his design: little cares he how he works, so long as he can hurt the cause of God. In the case of the Jewish people on their return from captivity he sought to prevent the building of the temple by making them selfish and worldly, so that every man was eager to build his own house, and cared nothing for the house of the Lord. Each family pleaded its own urgent needs. In returning to a long-deserted and neglected land, much had to be done to make up for lost time; and to provide suitably for itself every family needed all its exertions. They carried this thrift and self-providing to a great extreme, and secured for themselves luxuries, while the foundations of the temple which had been laid years before remained as they were, or became still more thickly covered up with rubbish. The people could not be made to bestir themselves to build a house of God, for they answered to every exhortation, “The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” A more convenient season was always looming in the future, but it never came. Just now it was too hot, further on it was too cold; at one time the wet season was just setting in, and it was of no use to begin, and soon after the fair weather required that they should be in their own fields. Like some in our day, they saw to themselves first, and God’s turn was very long in coming; hence the prophet cried, “Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?”

By the mouth of his servant Haggai stern rebukes were uttered, and the whole people were aroused. We read in verse twelve of the first chapter, “Then Zerubbabel the son of

Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord.” All hands were put to the work; course after course of stone began to rise; and then another stumbling-block was thrown in the way of the workers. The older folks remarked that this was a very small affair compared with the temple of Solomon, of which their fathers had told them; in fact, their rising building was nothing at all, and not worthy to be called a temple. The prophet describes the feeling in the verse which precedes our text. “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” Feeling that their work would be very poor and insignificant, the people had little heart to go on. Being discouraged by the humiliating contrast, they began to be slack; and as they were quite willing to accept any excuse, and here was an excuse ready made for them, they would soon have been at a standstill had not the prophet met the wiles of the arch-enemy with another word from the Lord. Nothing so confounds the evil one as the voice of the Eternal. Our Lord Himself defeated Satan by the word of the Lord; and the prophet Haggai did the same. The subtle craft of the enemy is defeated by the wisdom of the Most High, which reveals itself in plain words of honest statement. The Lord cuts the knots which bind his people, and sets them at liberty to do his will. He did this by assuring them that He was with them. Twice the voice was heard – “*I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts.*” They were also assured that what they builded was accepted, and that the Lord meant to fill the new house with glory; yea, He meant to light it up with a glory greater than that which honoured the temple of Solomon. They were not spending their strength for nought, but were labouring with divine help and favour. Thus they were encouraged to put their shoulders to the work: the walls rose in due order, and God was glorified in the building up of His Zion.

The present times are, in many respects, similar to those of Haggai. History certainly repeats itself within the church of God as well as outside of it; and therefore the messages of God need to be repeated also. The words of some almost-forgotten prophet may be re-delivered by the watchman of the Lord in these present days, and be a timely word for the present emergency. We are not free from the worldliness which puts self first and God nowhere, else our various enterprises would be more abundantly supplied with the silver and the gold which are the Lord’s, but which even professing Christians reserve for themselves. When this selfish greed is conquered, then comes in a timorous depression. Among those who have escaped from worldliness there is apt to be too much despondency, and men labour feebly as for a cause which is doomed to failure. This last evil must be cured. I pray that our text may this morning flame from the Lord’s own mouth with all the fire which once blazed about it. May faint hearts be encouraged and drowsy spirits be aroused, as we hear the Lord say, “*My spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.*”

I shall enter fully upon the subject, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, by calling your attention to *discouragement forbidden*. Then I shall speak of *encouragement imparted*; and, having done so, I shall linger with this blessed text, which overflows with comfort, and shall speak, in the third place, of *encouragement further applied*. Oh that our Lord, who knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, may cheer the hearts of seekers by what shall be spoken under this last head of discourse!

I. To begin with, here is DISCOURAGEMENT FORBIDDEN. Discouragement comes readily enough to us poor mortals who are occupied in the work of God, seeing it is a work of faith, a work of difficulty, a work above our capacity, and a work much opposed.

Discouragement is very natural: it is a native of the soil of manhood. To believe is supernatural, faith is the work of the Spirit of God; to doubt is natural to fallen men; for we have within us an evil heart of unbelief. It is abominably wicked, I grant you; but still it is natural, because of the downward tendency of our depraved hearts. Discouragement towards good things is a weed that grows without sowing. To be faint-hearted and downcast happens to some of us when we are half drowned in this heavy atmosphere, and it also visits us on the wings of the east wind. It takes little to make some hands hang down: a word or a look will do it. I do not, therefore, excuse it; but the rather I condemn myself for having a nature prone to such evil.

Discouragement may come and does come to us, as it did to these people, from a consideration of the great things which God deserves at our hands, and the small things which we are able to render. When in Haggai's days the people thought of Jehovah, and of a temple for Him, and then looked upon the narrow space which had been enclosed, and the common stones which had been laid for foundations, they were ashamed. Where were those hewn stones and costly stones which, of old, Solomon brought from far? They said within themselves, "This house is unworthy of Jehovah: what do we by labouring thus?" Have you not felt the depressing weight of what is so surely true? Brethren, all that we do is little for our God, far too little for Him that loved us and gave Himself for us. For Him that poured out His soul unto death on our behalf the most splendid service, the most heroic self-denial, are all too little; and we feel it is so. Alabaster boxes of precious ointment are too mean a gift. It does not occur to our fervent spirit to imagine that there can be any waste when our best boxes are broken and the perfume is poured out lavishly for Him. What we do fear is that our alabaster boxes are too few, and that our ointment is not precious enough. When we have done our utmost in declaring the glory of Jesus, we have felt that words are too poor and mean to set forth our adorable Lord. When we have prayed for His kingdom we have been disgusted with our own prayers; and all the efforts we have put forth in connection with any part of His service have seemed too few, too feeble for us to hope for acceptance. Thus have we been discouraged. The enemy has worked upon us by this means, yet he has made us argue very wrongly. Because we could not do much, we have half resolved to do nothing! Because what we did was so poor, we were inclined to quit the work altogether! This is evidently absurd and wicked. The enemy can use humility for his purpose as well as pride. Whether he makes us think too much or too little of our work, it is all the same to him so long as he can get us off from it.

It is significant that the man with one talent went and hid his Lord's money in the earth. He knew that it was but one, and for that reason he was the less afraid to bury it. Perhaps he argued that the interest on one talent could never come to much, and would never be noticed side by side with the result of five or ten talent ; and he might as well bring nothing at all to his Lord as bring so little. Perhaps he might not have wrapped it up if it had not been so small that a napkin could cover it. The smallness of our gifts may be a temptation to us. We are consciously so weak and so insignificant, compared with the great God and His great cause, that we are discouraged, and think it vain to attempt anything.

Moreover, the enemy contrasts our work with that of others, and with that of those who have gone before us. We are doing so little as compared with other people, therefore let

us give up. We cannot build like Solomon, therefore let us not build at all. Yet, brethren, there is a falsehood in all this; for, in truth, nothing is worthy of God. The great works of others, and even the amazing productions of Solomon, all fell short of His glory. What house could man build for God ? What are cedar, and marble, and gold as compared with the glory of the Most High? Though the house was “exceeding magnificent,” yet the Lord God had of old dwelt within curtains, and never was His worship more glorious than within the tent of badgers’ skins; indeed, as soon as the great house was built, true religion declined. What of all human work can be worthy of the Lord ? Our little labours do but share the insignificance of greater things, and therefore we ought not to withhold them: yet here is the temptation from which we must pray to be delivered.

The tendency to depreciate the present because of the glories of the past is also injurious. The old people looked back to the days of the former temple, even as we are apt to look upon the times of the great preachers of the past. What work was done in those past days! What Sabbaths were enjoyed then! What converts were added to the church! What days of refreshing were then vouchsafed! Everything has declined, decreased, degenerated! As for the former days, they beheld a race of giants, who are now succeeded by pigmies. We look at one of these great men, and cry,

“Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus; and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.”

But, brethren, we must not allow this sense of littleness to hamper us; for God can bless our littleness, and use it for His glory. I notice that the great men of the past thought of themselves even as we think of ourselves. Certainly they were not more self-confident than we are. I find in the story of the brave days of old the same confessions and the same lamentations which we utter now. It is true that in spiritual strength we are not what our fathers were; I fear that Puritanic holiness and truthfulness of doctrine are dying out, while adherence to principle is far from common; but our fathers had also faults and follies to mourn over, and they did mourn over them most sincerely. Instead of being discouraged because what we do is unworthy of God, and insignificant compared with what was done by others, let us gather up our strength to reform our errors, and reach to higher attainments. Let us throw our heart and soul into the work of the Lord, and yet do something more nearly in accordance with our highest ideal of what our God deserves of us. Let us excel our ancestors. Let us aspire to be even more godly, more conscientious, and more sound in the faith than they were, for the Spirit of God remaineth with us.

Brethren, it is clear that discouragement can be produced by these reasons, and yet they are a mere sample of a host of arguments which work in the same direction: hence *discouragement is very common*. Haggai was sent to speak to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people. The great man may become discouraged: he that leads the van has his fainting fits; even Elijah cries, “ Let me die!” The consecrated servant of God whose life is a priesthood is apt to grow discouraged, too: standing at God’s altar, he sometimes trembles for the ark of the Lord. The multitude of the people are all too apt to suffer from panic, and to flee at the sight of the enemy. How many are they who say, “ The old truth cannot succeed: the cause of orthodoxy is desperate; we had

better yield to the modern spirit"! This faint-heartedness is so common that it has been the plague of Israel from her first day until now. They were discouraged at the Red Sea, at the mere rattling of Pharaoh's chariots; they were discouraged when they found no water, they were discouraged when they had eaten up the bread which they brought out of Egypt; they were discouraged when they heard of the giants, and of the cities walled to heaven. I need not lengthen the wretched catalogue. What has not cowardice done? The fearful and unbelieving have brought terrible disasters upon our camps. Discouragement is the national epidemic of our Israel. "Being armed and carrying bows" we turn back in the day of battle. This is as common among Christians as consumption among the inhabitants of this foggy island. Oh that God would save us all from distrust, and cause us to quit ourselves like men!

Wherever discouragement comes in it is dreadfully weakening. I am sure it is weakening, because the prophet was bidden to say three times to the governor, high priest, and people, "Be strong." This proves that they had become weak. Being discouraged, their hands hung down, and their knees were feeble. Faith girds us with omnipotence, but unbelief makes everything hang loose and limp about us. Distrust, and thou wilt fail in everything; believe, and according to thy faith so shall it be unto thee. To lead a discouraged people to the Holy War is as difficult as for Xerxes' commanders to conduct the Persian troops to battle against the Greeks. The vassals of the great king were driven to the conflict by whips and sticks, for they were afraid to fight: do you wonder that they were defeated? A church that needs constant exhorting and compelling accomplishes nothing. The Greeks had no need of blows and threats, for each man was a lion, and courted the encounter, however great the odds against him. Each Spartan fought *con amore*; he was never more at home than when contending for the altars and the hearths of his country. We want Christian men of this same sort, who have faith in their principles, faith in the doctrines of grace, faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and who therefore contend earnestly for the faith in these days when piety is mocked at from the pulpit, and the gospel is sneered at by professional preachers. We need men who love the truth, to whom it is dear as their lives; men into whose hearts the old doctrine is burned by the hand of God's Spirit through a deep experience of its necessity and of its power. We need no more of those who will parrot what they are taught, but we want men who will speak what they know. Oh, for a troop of men like John Knox, heroes of the martyr and covenanter stock! Then would Jehovah of hosts have a people to serve Him who would be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Discouragement not only weakens men, but *it takes them off from the service of God.* It is significant that the prophet said to them, "Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, *and work.*" They had ceased to build: they had begun to talk and argue, but they had laid down the trowel. They were extremely wise in their observations, and criticisms, and prophecies; but the walls did not rise. One person knew exactly how big the former temple was; another declared that their present architect was not up to the mark, and that the structure was not built in a scientific manner; one objected to this, and another to that; but everybody was wiser than all the rest, and sneered at old-fashioned ways. It is always so when we are discouraged: we cease from the work of the Lord, and waste time in talk and nonsensical refinements. May the Lord take away discouragement from any of you who now suffer from it! I suppose some of you do feel it, for at times it creeps over my heart and makes me go with heaviness to my work. I believe that God's truth will come to the front yet, but it hath many adversaries to-day. All sorts of unbeliefs are being hatched out from under the wings of "modern thought." The gospel seems to be regarded as a nose of wax, to be altered and

shaped by every man who wishes to show his superior skill. Nor is it in doctrine alone, but in practice also, that the times are out of joint. Separateness from the world, and holy living, are to give place to gaiety and theatre-going. To follow Christ fully has gone out of fashion with many of those from whom we once hoped better things. Yet are there some who waver not, some who are willing to be in the right with two or three. For my own part, even should I find none around me of the same mind, I shall not budge an inch from the old truth, nor sweat a hair for fear of its overthrow; but I shall abide confident that the eternal God, whose truth we know and hold, will vindicate himself ere long, and turn the wisdom of the world into babble, and its boasting into confusion. Blessed is the man who shall be able to stand fast by his God in these evil days. Let us not in any wise be discouraged. "Be strong; be strong; be strong," sounds as a threefold voice from the triune God. "Fear not" comes as a sweet cordial to the faint: therefore let no man's heart fail him. Thus much about the discouragement.

II. Secondly, here is THE ENCOURAGEMENT IMPARTED, which is the grand part of our text. "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." God remembers His covenant and stands to His ancient promises. When the people came out of Egypt the Lord was with them by His Spirit: hence He spoke to them by Moses, and through Moses He guided, and judged, and taught them. He was with them also by His Spirit in inspiring Bezaleel and Aholiab, as to the works of art which adorned the tabernacle. God always finds workmen for His work, and by His Spirit fits them for it. The Spirit of God rested upon the elders who were ordained to relieve Moses of his great burden. The Lord was also with His people in the fiery cloudy pillar which was conspicuous in the midst of the camp. His presence was their glory and their defence. This is a type of the presence of the Spirit with the church. At the present day, if we hold the truth of God, if we live in obedience to His holy commands, if we are spiritually-minded, if we cry unto God in believing prayer, if we have faith in His covenant and in His Son, the Holy Spirit abideth among us. The Holy Ghost descended upon the church at Pentecost, and He has never gone back again: there is no record of the Spirit's return to heaven. He will abide with the true church evermore. This is our hope for the present struggle. The Spirit of God remaineth with us.

To what end, my brethren, is this Spirit with us? Let us think of this, that we may be encouraged at this time. The Spirit of God remaineth among you *to aid and assist the ministry which He has already given*. Oh, that the prayers of God's people would always go up for God's ministers, that they may speak with a divine power and influence which none shall be able to gainsay! We look too much for clever men; we seek out fluent and flowery speakers; we sigh for men cultured and trained in all the knowledge of the heathen: nay, but if we sought more for unction, for divine authority, and for that power which doth hedge about the man of God, how much wiser should we be! Oh, that all of us who profess to preach the gospel would learn to speak in entire dependence upon the direction of the Holy Spirit, not daring to utter our own words, but even trembling lest we should do so, and committing ourselves to that secret influence without which nothing will be powerful upon the conscience or converting to the heart. Know ye not the difference between the power that cometh of human oratory, and that which cometh by the divine energy which speaks so to the heart that men cannot resist it? We have forgotten this too much. It were better to speak six words in the power of the Holy Ghost than to preach seventy years of sermons without the Spirit. He Who rested on those who have gone to their reward in heaven can rest this day upon our ministers

and bless our evangelists, if we will but seek it of Him. Let us cease to grieve the Spirit of God, and look to Him for help to the faithful ministers who are yet spared to us.

This same Spirit who of old gave to His church eminent teachers *can raise up other and more useful men*. The other day, a brother from Wales told me of the great men he remembered: he said that he had never heard such a one as Christmas Evans, who surpassed all men when he was in the *hwyl*. I asked him if he knew another Welsh minister who preached like Christmas Evans. “No,” he said, “we have no such man in Wales in our days.” So in England we have neither Wesley nor Whitefield, nor any of their order; yet, as with God is the residue of the Spirit, He can fetch out from some chimney-corner another Christmas Evans, or find in our Sunday-school another George Whitefield, who shall declare the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Let us never fear for the future, or despair for the present, since the Spirit of God remaineth with us. What if the growing error of the age should have silenced the last tongue that speaks out the old gospel, let not faith be weakened. I hear the tramp of legions of soldiers of the cross. I hear the clarion voices of hosts of preachers. “The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it.” Have faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! When He ascended on high he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. He then gave apostles, teachers, preachers, and evangelists, and He can do the like again. Let us fall back upon the eternal God, and never be discouraged for an instant.

Nor is this all. The Holy Spirit being with us, *He can move the whole church to exercise its varied ministries*. This is one of the things we want very much – that every member of the church should recognise that he is ordained to service. Everyone in Christ, man or woman, hath some testimony to bear, some warning to give, some deed to do in the name of the holy child Jesus; and if the Spirit of God be poured out upon our young men and our maidens, each one will be aroused to energetic service. Both small and great will be in earnest, and the result upon the slumbering masses of our population will surprise us all. Sometimes we lament that the churches are so dull. There is an old proverb which says of So-and-so, that he was “as sound asleep as a church.” I suppose there is nothing that can sleep so soundly as a church. But yet the Spirit of God still remaineth, and therefore churches go to be awakened. I mean that not only in part but as a whole, a church may be quickened. The dullest professor, the most slovenly believer, the most captious and useless member of a church, may yet be turned to good account. I see them like a stack of faggots, piled up, dead, and dry. Oh for the fire! We will have a blaze out of them yet.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, brood over the dark, disordered church as once Thou didst over chaos, and order shall come out of confusion, and the darkness shall fly before the light. Only let the Spirit be with us, and we have all that is wanted for victory. Give us His presence, and everything else will come in its due season for the profitable service of the entire church.

If the Spirit be with us, there will come multitudinous conversions. We cannot get at “the lapsed masses,” as they are pedantically called. We cannot stir the crass infidelity of the present age: no, *we* cannot, but *He* can. All things are possible with God. If you walk down to our bridges at a certain hour of the day you will see barges and vessels lying in the mud; and all the king’s horses and all the king’s men cannot stir them. Wait until the tide comes in, and they will walk the water like things of life. The living flood accomplishes at once what no mortals can do. And so to-day our churches cannot stir. What shall we do? Oh, that the Holy Spirit would come with a flood-tide of His benign influences, as He will if we will but believe

in Him; as He must if we will but cry unto Him; as He shall if we will cease to grieve Him. Everything will be even as the saints desire when the Lord of saints is with us. The hope of the continuance and increase of the church lies in the remaining of the Spirit with us. The hope of the salvation of London lies in the wonder-working Spirit. Let us bow our heads and worship the omnipotent Spirit Who deigns to work in us, by us, and with us.

Then, brethren, if this should happen – and I see not why it should not – then we may expect to see *the church put on her beautiful garments*; then shall she begin to clear herself of the errors which now defile her; then shall she press to her bosom the truths which she now begins to forget; then will she go back to the pure fount of inspiration and drink from the Scriptures of truth; and then out of the midst of her shall flow no turbid streams, but rivers of living water. If the Holy Ghost will work among us we shall rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the name of our God.

When once the Spirit of God putteth forth His might all things else will be in accord with Him. Notice that in the rest of the chapter – which I shall read now, not as relating to that temple at all, but to the church of God – there is great comfort given to us. If the Holy Spirit be once given, then we may expect providence to co-operate with the church of God. Read verse 6: “Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. I will shake all nations.” Great commotions will co-operate with the Holy Spirit. We may expect that God will work for His people in an extraordinary fashion if they will but be faithful to Him. Empires will collapse, and times will change, for the truth’s sake. Expect the unexpected, reckon upon that which is unlikely, if it be necessary for the growth of the kingdom. Of old the earth helped the woman when the dragon opened his mouth to drown her with the floods that he cast forth: unexpected help shall come to us when affairs are at their worst.

Specially do I look for a shaking among the hosts of unbelief. How often did the Lord of old rout His enemies without His Israel drawing sword! The watchword was, “Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” The adversaries of old fell out among themselves; and they will do so again. When Cadmus slew the dragon with his javelin, he was hidden to sow its teeth in the earth. When he did so, according to the classic fable, he saw rising out of the ground nodding plumes, and crested helmets, and broad shoulders of armed men. Up from the earth there sprang a host of warriors; but Cadmus needed not to fly; for the moment they found their feet, these children of the dragon fell upon each other till scarcely one was left. Error, like Saturn, devours its own children. Those that fight against the Lord of hosts are not agreed among themselves; they shall sheathe their swords in each other’s bosoms.

I saw in the night vision the sea, the deep and broad sea of truth, flashing with its silver waves. Lo, a black horse came out of the darkness and went down to the deep, threatening to drink it dry. I saw him stand there drinking, and swelling as he drank. In his pride he trusted that he could snuff up Jordan at a draught. I stood by and saw him drink, and then plunge further into the sea, to drink still more. Again he plunged in with fury, and soon he lost his footing, and I saw him no more, for the deep had swallowed *him* that boasted that he would swallow *it*. Rest assured that every black horse of error that comes forth to swallow up the sea of divine truth shall be drowned therein. Wherefore be of good courage. God, who maketh the earth and the heavens to shake, shall cause each error to fall like an untimely fig.

And next, the Lord in this chapter promises His people that they shall have all the supplies they need for His work. They feared that they could not build his house, because of their poverty; but, saith the Lord of hosts, “The silver and the gold are mine.” When the

church of God believes in God, and goes forward bravely, she need not trouble as to supplies. Her God will provide for her. He that gives the Holy Ghost will give gold and silver according as they are needed; therefore let us be of good courage. If God is with us, why need we fear? One of our English kings once threatened the great city of London that if its councillors talked so independently, he would – yes – he would, indeed he would – take his court away from the city. The Lord Mayor on that occasion replied, that if his majesty would graciously leave the river Thames behind him, the citizens would try to get on without his court. If any say, “If you hold to these old-fashioned doctrines you will lose the educated, the wealthy, the influential,” we answer: But if we do not lose the godly and the presence of the Holy Ghost we are not in the least alarmed. If the Holy Ghost remaineth with us, there is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Brethren, my heart leaps within me as I cry, “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

The best comfort of all remained: “The desire of all nations shall come.” This was in a measure fulfilled when Jesus came into that latter house and caused all holy hearts to sing for gladness; but it was not wholly fulfilled in that way; for if you notice, in the ninth verse it is written, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former; *and in this place will I give peace,*” which the Lord did not fully do to the second temple, since that was destroyed by the Romans. But there is another advent, when “the desire of all nations shall come” in power and glory; and this is our highest hope. Though truth may be driven back, and error may prevail, Jesus comes, and He is the great Lord and Patron of truth: He shall judge the world in righteousness, and the people in equity. Here is our last resource; here are God’s reserves. He Whom we serve liveth and reigneth for ever and ever; and He saith, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

III. I should have done if it had not been that this text seemed to me to overflow so much, that it might not only refresh God’s people, but give drink to thirsty sinners who are seeking the Lord. For a moment or two I give myself to ENCOURAGEMENT FURTHER APPLIED.

It is at the beginning of every gracious purpose that men have most fear, even as these people had who had newly begun to build. When first the Holy Spirit begins to strive with a man and to lead him to Jesus, he is apt to say – “I cannot; I dare not; it is impossible. How can I believe and live?” Now I want to speak to some of you here who are willing to find Christ, and to encourage you by the truth that the Spirit lives to help you. I would even like to speak to those who are *not* anxious to be saved. I remember that Dr. Payson, an exceedingly earnest and useful man of God, once did a singular thing. He had been holding inquiry meetings with all sorts of people, and great numbers had been saved. At last, one Sunday he gave out that he should have a meeting on Monday night of those persons who did not desire to be saved; and, strange to say, some twenty persons came who did not wish to repent or believe. He spoke to them and said, “I am sure that if a little film, thin as the web of the gossamer, were let down by God from heaven to each one of you, you would not push it away from you. Although it were almost invisible, you would value even the slightest connection between you and heaven. Now, your coming to meet me to-night is a little link with God. I want it to increase

in strength till you are joined to the Lord for ever.” He spoke to them most tenderly, and God blessed those people who did not desire to be saved, so that before the meeting was over they were of another mind. The film had become a thicker thread, and it grew and grew until the Lord Christ held them by it for ever. Dear friends, the fact of your being in the Tabernacle this morning is like that filmy thread: do not put it away. Here is your comfort, the Holy Spirit still works with the preaching of the word. Do I hear you say, “I cannot feel my need of Christ as I want to feel it”? The Spirit remaineth among us. He can make you feel more deeply the guilt of sin and your need of pardon. “But I have heard so much about conviction and repentance; I do not seem to have either of them.” Yet the Spirit remaineth with us, and that Spirit is able to work in you the deepest conviction and the truest repentance. “O sir, I do not feel as if I could do anything”: but the Spirit remaineth with us, and all things that are needful for godliness he can give. He can work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. “But I want to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Who made you want to do that? Who but the Holy Spirit? Therefore He is still at work with you; and though as yet you do not understand what believing is, or else I am persuaded you would believe at once, the Spirit of God can instruct you in it. You are blind, but He can give you sight; you are paralyzed, but He can give you strength – the Spirit of God remaineth.

“Oh, but that doctrine of regeneration staggers me: you know, we must be born again.” Yes, we are born again of the Spirit, and the Spirit remaineth still with us; He is still mighty to work that wondrous change, and to bring you out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. The Spirit remaineth with us, blessed be His name! “Ah, dear sir,” says one, “I want to conquer sin”! Who made you desire to conquer sin? Who, but the Spirit that remaineth with us? He will give you the sword of the Spirit and teach you how to use it, and He will give you both the will and the power to use it successfully. Through the Spirit’s might you can overcome every sin, even that which has dragged you down and disgraced you. The Spirit of God is still waiting to help you. When I think of the power of the Spirit of God, I look hopefully upon every sinner here this morning. I bless His name that He can work in you all that is pleasing in His sight. Some of you may be very careless, but He can make you thoughtful. Coming up to London to see the Exhibition, I hope you may yourselves become an exhibition of divine grace. You think not about things, but He can make you feel at this moment a sweet softness stealing over you, until you long to be alone and to get home to the old arm-chair and there seek the Lord. You can thus be led to salvation.

I thought when I came in here that I should have a picked congregation; and so I have. You are one of them. Wherever you come from, I want you now to seek the Lord. He has brought you here, and He means to bless you. Yield yourselves to Him while His sweet Spirit pleads with you. While the heavenly wind softly blows upon you open wide every window. You have not felt that you wanted it; but that is the sure proof that you need it; for he that does not know his need of Christ, is most in need. Open wide your heart that the Spirit may teach you your need; above all, breathe the prayer that He would help you this morning to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, for “there is life in a look at the Crucified One – there is life at this moment for you.” “Oh,” you say, “if I were to begin I should not keep on.” No; if *you* began perhaps you would not; but if *He* begins with you *He* will keep on. The final perseverance of saints is the result of the final perseverance of the Holy Spirit; He perseveres to bless, and we persevere in receiving the blessing. If He begins, you have begun with a divine power that fainteth not neither is weary. I wish it might so happen that on this fifth day of the ninth month, not the prophet Haggai, but I, God’s servant, may have spoken to you

such a word as you shall never forget; and may the Lord add to the word, by the witness of the Holy Ghost, “ From this day will I bless you”! Go away with that promise resting upon you. I would like to give a shake of the hand to ever stranger here this morning, and say, “Brother, in the name of the Lord I wish you from this day a blessing.” Amen and amen.