

CHRIST'S WORK NO FAILURE.

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*“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth:
and the isles shall wait for his law.” — Isaiah 42:4.*

PREVIOUS verses at the close of the forty-first chapter indicate the utter failure of the hope of man from man. God himself looked, and behold “there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them could answer a word.” How often it is so in human history: man fails to find leadership and help in man! Great men are raised up now and then, and the tendency is to make idols of them, and so to trust in an arm of flesh. These die, and then their fellows look out in the church, and in the world, for other men upon whom they may dote after the same manner; but it sometimes happens that they look in vain; none arise whom they can elect for leaders. Just now I think it is so in more departments than one. Look where you may, where will you see the man who is equal to the crisis? Somehow or other, in the providence of God, every hour has, in due time, had its man; but if our hopes are fixed in men, we must feel at this time sorely pressed.

In expounding the one verse which I have selected for a text, I shall need to open up the whole passage. Follow me, therefore, with opened Bibles, and obey the first word of the chapter, which is, *Behold*.

We are commanded at all times to *behold the Son of God*. There is never a season in which he is not a fit subject for contemplation and expectation. “Behold the Lamb of God” is the standing rule from generation to generation, from the first of January to the last of December. But specially in cloudy and dark days ought we to behold him. When after having

looked, and looked long, you see no man and no counsellor, then this precept has an emphatic force about it, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” When all other saviours fail, look to the Savior whom God has set up. The darker all things else become, the more eagerly look for his appearing, whose coming is as a morning without clouds. When the lower lights are burning dim, behold the lamp above.

Our great comfort is that *the Lord Jesus Christ is always to be beheld*. He ever lives and ever works for his people. We must view him not merely as one who appeared upon the scene years ago, but as still living. He died in the heat of the battle, but he rose again to secure the victory. We do not found our hopes of a brighter future upon a dead Savior; our hopes for the future of the world, and for the accomplishment of God’s gracious purposes hang upon one who ever liveth, and is at this time in the place of vantage, carrying on his great work and warfare at the right hand of God. My text saith, “Behold my servant”; and that matchless servant of God is to be beheld — not with the eye of sense, that were little worth, for men saw him in that way, and crucified him; but he is to be beheld with the eye of faith, and this is a noble sight; for those who look to him in that manner are lightened, and their faces are not ashamed. At the commencement of my discourse, I beseech you, dear brethren, to look to Jesus Christ the ever-living Worker. If you have been troubled and fretted by peering into these gloomy times and perceiving nothing that can raise your spirits, I pray you look about you no longer, but look up! There *he* sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, the appointed man, the glorious, chosen Deliverer. Behold him, and your fears and sorrows will fly away.

The text declares concerning our Lord that “he shall not fail nor be discouraged.” This leads us to consider what is the work which Jesus Christ has undertaken, in which he will not fail nor be discouraged. Our text directs us in this matter, for it tells us that he has come to “set judgment in the earth,” and that “the isles shall wait for his law.” The earth is to be delivered from misrule and sin, and men are to be submissive to his instruction and direction. There are some who doubt it, but I still believe in that verse which we sang just now: —

*“Jesus shall reign where’er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”*

Our Lord has come to save his own elect, and he will save every one of them. No soul for whom he stood as surety and substitute shall ever be cast away. The sheep shall pass again under the hand of him that telleth them, and they shall all be there. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged"; but he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

As for the Lord's second coming, we know not when it shall be. Shall the world grow darker and darker till he comes? It may be so. There are passages of Scripture and signs of the times which may be taken to indicate it. On the other hand, shall the age grow brighter and brighter till he appears to bring the perfect day? Through the preaching of the gospel shall there yet be periods in which multitudes shall be converted, and whole nations shall be saved? I do not know: there are texts that seem to look that way, and many a brave worker hopes as much. There are brethren who can map out unfulfilled prophecy with great distinctness; but I confess my inability to do so. They get a shilling box of mathematical instruments. They stick down one leg of the compasses and describe a circle here and a circle there, and they draw two or three lines, and there it is. Can you not see it, as plain as a pikestaff? I am sick of diagrams; I have seen enough of them to make another volume of Euclid. My impression is that very little is to be learned from the major part of these interpretations or speculations. I do not think that anybody can map out the future so as to be absolutely sure of anything definite except certain great clearly-stated facts. It is certain that the Lord will come, that he will come in such an hour as the most of men look not for him; and that his coming will be a surprise even to many of his own church. He may come at this moment while yet I am speaking to you, and he may delay his coming, if so it pleaseth him, through many a century yet. It may sound strange for me to say so, but if our Lord were not to come for ages, we should not be justified in saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming" nor would any prophecy of Scripture be broken. Furthermore, it seems to me pretty clear that truth and righteousness are to win the day upon the earth; the idols are to be abolished, war is to cease, and the great Jehovah is to be called "the God of the whole earth." Either before or after his second advent — I am not going into that question this morning — this polluted earth is to be cleansed, and this round planet of ours, which to-day is darkened by sin, shall yet shine out, like a new-born sun, in all the pristine light which beamed from it when first it came from its Maker's hands. The Lord shall reign over all mankind, and a period of peace, and rest, and holiness shall

be the fruit of his blessed sway. The Lord Jesus will not rest till he has subdued all things unto himself, and put down all the spiritual wickednesses which now tyrannize over the world.

I do not think it necessary for me to go further into detail as to all that our Lord is resolved to do. What I have to say is this, *whatever he has undertaken, he will perform*: whatever commission he has received he will fulfill. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" till all his work is done. Brethren, we get doubting sometimes. We ask, Is it all right? Are matters moving on? Behold him who is at the head of all affairs, the director of the high politics of heaven, the great one upon whose shoulders rests the business of God in the salvation of men! Behold him, and be comforted. You and I may fail; shame on us if we do! We may be discouraged; it will be our sin if we are: but he shall not fail nor be discouraged till he shall have wrought out every point of the promise of grace, and shall have accomplished every iota of the eternal purpose of love.

I believe in the final perseverance of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in the final perseverance of every saint as an individual. Furthermore, I believe in the final perseverance of the saints as a body: the church of God shall live, and continue her work till she has accomplished it. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her." But far diviner is the thought to me of the final perseverance of the Christ of God. If he were to lay down the task and say it is impossible, woe worth the day to us! If he were to turn his back upon his high enterprise, and say, "I will save no more of these rebellious beings; I will attempt no more to shed light into the darkness which comprehendeth it not; I will give up the task in which men so madly oppose me"; then were hope blotted out of the language of men. But while this text stands true the door of hope is open. We need not fail or be discouraged, since *he* will not.

This morning I shall speak to you in the hope that the Spirit of God may fire you with new courage for the holy war. First, *let this truth be considered and believed*; and then, secondly, *let this truth be believed and enjoyed*.

I. First, then, LET THIS TRUTH BE CONSIDERED AND BELIEVED.

Will you now thoughtfully turn it over in your minds? It is certainly a very marvellous enterprise which our Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken. The salvation of a single soul involves a miracle. The salvation of myriads upon

myriads of the human race: what shall I call it but a mountain of marvels? The removal of the darkness which has settled over mankind in tenfold night — what a divine labor! The ending of the enmity which exists between man and God, the reconciling of man unto his Maker — what a design! The redeeming of this world from the bondage of corruption, the setting up of a kingdom of truth and holiness — what an enterprise! Such wonders has Jesus undertaken, and such wonders he will achieve. He died to lay the foundation of his all-conquering kingdom, and he still lives that this kingdom may be established in its supremacy, and all nations may flow to it. Beloved, I fail to conceive, much more to express, the vastness of the task which he has undertaken. Those of you who love your fellow-men often mourn your powerlessness with a single individual. What hard work it is to deal with our own countrymen! How are we baffled by their poverty, their ignorance, their misery, their sin! You have only to battle with a single vice, drunkenness, to wit, to feel what a monster is to be overcome. Only think for a moment of the social impurity of this city, and you are sick at heart as you remember it. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has come to cleanse this Augean stable; and he will cleanse it. The stream of the river of life shall run through the foulest parts of the earth till even those horrible regions which are comparable to the Dead Sea shall be reclaimed.

The problem staggers us. The systems of evil are colossal. The hold of evil on the race is terrible. Man is inveterately a sinner. You cannot cure him of rebellion: he is desperately set on mischief. Even when the consequences of his sin wound and afflict him he still returns to it. If you prove to him to a demonstration that a thing is right and profitable, he does not therefore love it; if you prove it to be injurious, he therefore chooses it. By the use of an accursed logic he puts darkness for light and light for darkness, and thus stultifies his conscience, and hardens his heart. If, perchance, you convince his judgment, you have not won his affection, you have not carried his will, you have not subdued his mind. Nothing but Omnipotence itself can save a single soul. What must be that mighty power which shall cause nations to run unto the Lord! They that dwell in the wilderness are to bow before him, and his enemies are to lick the dust. What a conquest this! How shall Ethiopia be made to stretch out her hands to him? Look how black are the hearts of her inhabitants, as well as their faces! How shall China and Hindoostan, beclouded by their false philosophies, be led to own the truth? Look you, sirs, look at this great mountain, and do not under-estimate its

mass; and then remember that before our Zerubbabel it must and shall become a plain. The stone mentioned by Daniel, cut out of the mountain without hands, smote the monstrous image and brake it, and in due time filled the whole earth. In the night visions the same prophet saw the Son of Man having dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people should serve him. So must it be. But how great a thing it is!

The task is rendered the more severe because our Lord Jesus at this present works largely by a church, which is a poor and faulty instrument for the accomplishment of his purpose. I sometimes think there are more difficulties connected with the church than with the world; for the church is often worldly, faithless, lethargic, and I was about to add, inhuman. Might I not almost say as much, for she seems at times well nigh destitute of tender sympathy for the lost and perishing? The church at one hour receives the light and reflects it like the full moon, so that you have hope of her enlightening men; but soon she wanes into a mere ring of light, and becomes obscured. She declines from the truth, she forgets the glorious gospel entrusted to her, and she seeks after the rotten philosophies of men. How many times since Pentecost has the church started aside after the wisdom of men, and after a while has painfully returned to her first faith? At the present moment there is just that kind of wandering going on; and this hinders the work of the Lord. If a man has to do a work, he says to himself, "Give me good tools, at any rate. If I have to strike a heavy blow, do not trouble me with a broken hammer. If I have to write, give me a pen that will not hinder my hand." But alas! the church is too often false to her Master's purpose, and traitorous to his truth. Yet, brethren, the Lord will largely do his work and accomplish his good pleasure by such means as these. He will not fail nor be discouraged. If all Christians should become lukewarm, till the whole church became nauseous, as the church of Laodicea, yet still the Lord Jesus will not fail nor be discouraged. The disciple may sleep, but the great Savior agonizes over men. Let this battalion and the other waver as it may, he who holds the banner in the very center of the fight will never be moved: he will hold the field against all comers, for the Altogether Lovely One is the Standard-bearer among ten thousand. Though you mourn over the disciples, rejoice over their Master. They faint or fly, but "he shall not fail nor be discouraged."

To help you to believe this great truth, I beg you to notice who he is that hath undertaken all this: kindly read at the commencement of the chapter: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul

delighteth.” I am sure that he who is thus spoken of will not fail nor be discouraged, for, first, *he is God’s own special servant*. God has many servants, but the Christ is above all others called of God “my servant.” He is a Son far excelling all other sons, and in the same sense he is a Servant far exceeding all other servants. He took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He is a servant as none of us can ever hope to be in so high and wonderful a sense: he performs all the will of the Father. If he that was Lord of all became a servant, do you think he will not accomplish his service? If he that made the heavens and the earth laid aside his splendor and veiled himself in our inferior clay, do you think he will fail in the purpose for which he did this? Can the incarnation of God be a failure? Can the life of the Son of God among men end in defeat? Your heart gives immediate answer — God’s own servant will fulfill his service.

Then the great God says of him, “*My servant whom I uphold.*” If God upholds him, how can he fail? Though God upholds all his people, yet beyond all others he is upholding his own chosen Son and servant: how then, can he fail? Is it possible with the divine power perpetually streaming into him and abiding in him, that he should fail, or be discouraged? The text may be read, “Behold my servant upon whom I lean,” and the picture is of a great Oriental monarch who comes forth leaning upon a favourite lord, whom he honors by placing him in that position, indicating thereby that he trusts his affairs with him, and regards him as his right hand man, a very pillar of the State. Yes, we say it with reverence, God the Father leans on Jesus the Christ. He rests his honor and glory with the person of the incarnate God; and now he comes before us as God in Christ Jesus, revealing his glory through the Mediator, putting his own sovereign power into the keeping of his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things. Can that Glorified One fail? Has the Father trusted his kingdom of grace with one who will be overcome? How can he fail whom the Father upholds, and upon whom the Father leans all the dignity and glory of his moral government? “He shall not fail nor be discouraged.”

Then the Scripture adds this very significant word, “*Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.*” The chosen of God, the most choice one that God knows, shall he prove a failure? Not only does God delight in him, but it is put more strongly still: “In whom my soul delighteth.” Do you taste the marrow of the expression? It seems to me to be exceeding full. The chief delight of God is in his Son, as Mediator. God said of the world, that it was

very good; but we read not that his soul delighted in it: but, see, the very soul of the Godhead is moved and filled with delight because of the Savior, commissioned to redeem. Blessed Father, we do not wonder that thou art taken up with delight in Jesus; for even we ourselves, when we get a sight of him, are ravished with his charms. There is none like him. He is thine Only Begotten, the Son of thy heart; well mayest thou be well pleased with him. How, then, is it possible that one whom the Lord loves so well, in whom his soul delighteth, should be put upon a work in which he can fail, or should be left in that work to be discouraged? It is impossible. The connection of Jesus of Nazareth with Jehovah, God of all, makes it absolutely certain that the divine enterprise to which he has pledged himself shall assuredly succeed. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

Furthermore, *our Lord is the abiding place of the Holy Spirit*. The text says, "I have put my spirit upon him" — the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory and honor for ever, the Holy Spirit, very God of very God, dwells in Christ. Upon us he comes in measure. We sometimes receive a large portion of his power, but still we are not capable of receiving all the fullness of the Holy Ghost. But Christ has the residue of the Spirit abiding in him. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove, and rested upon him, and it does rest upon him still. My brethren, do you dream that he on whom the Holy Ghost always rests can fail or be discouraged? Do you believe that the Gospel system is to die out? Is it going to be throttled by philosophy? strangled by modern thought? or trampled down beneath the hoof of anarchy? Nay, while the Holy Ghost abideth upon the great Servant of Jehovah we cannot know a fear. The anointing on the head will descend to the skirts of the garments; and as he cannot fail nor be discouraged, neither shall we be dismayed. He who is owned, honored, trusted, sustained, loved, and anointed of God cannot but be successful. Jesus must persevere successfully to the end.

Notice yet farther, that *the success of Jesus is guaranteed by the decree of God*. It is written, "He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Oh, those blessed "shalls" and "wills"! Some people make little of them, but I make everything of them. Here my heart rests; if God says "shall," then it certainly shall be. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Think you he spake in vain? Turn to the second Psalm, and read: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost

parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Shall this solemn proclamation of Jehovah be mere waste paper? My brethren, the sun may forget to shine, the eye of the world may be darkened; you mighty ocean may cease to ebb and flow and the heart of the earth may die; all nature may be driven on the rock of fate in general wreckage and confusion; but no word of God shall fall to the ground; for that word is essential life and power. If Jehovah hath spoken, it is done. If he declares it, it shall be. Therefore the Christ must and shall succeed, for his work is the subject of a divine decree.

Yet, brethren, it may be that at times we fear that the gospel is not prospering nor fulfilling the purpose for which God hath sent it. Looking back on past history, and looking out upon the present state of affairs, we are afraid that things are not going well. Possibly this may arise out of *our Lord's way of working*, which is so different from what our minds would choose. It is written in the second verse, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." You are in an awful hurry, are you not? But he is never in haste. You would make a great stir and noise, I know, but Jesus will not thus spread the gospel. You would go out and fight all the enemies of truth, and set clamor against clamor, cry against cry; but "he shall not strive." You would shout, and rage, and rave; but he shall not cry. You would advertise to the ends of the earth; but he shall not cause his voice to be heard in the street. When Mahomet commenced his enterprise he announced that Paradise was to be found beneath the shadow of swords, and numbers of brave men rushed to the battle; they swept everything before them, and stained continents with blood: they carried the name of Allah and Mahomet over Asia and Northern Africa, and seemed intent on conquering Europe: and yet the work done will not endure. The prophet and his caliphs did indeed strive, and cry, and cause their voices to be heard in the street: but Christ's system is the very reverse of that: his weapons are not carnal. Behold his battle-axe and weapons of war! Truth divinely strong, with no human force at the back of it but that of holiness and love; a gospel full of gentleness and mercy to men, proclaimed not by the silver trumpets of kings, but by the plain voices of lowly men. The gospel seeks neither prestige nor patronage from the State; nor does it ask to be advocated by scholastic sophistry, or human eloquence. It does not even aim at becoming predominant by force of the learning or talent of its teachers. It has neither pomp to commend it, nor arms to enforce it. It finds

its strength rather in feebleness than in power. The kingdom comes by the Holy Spirit dropping like dew on human hearts, and fertilizing them with a divine life. Christ's kingdom comes not with observation, but in the stillness of the soul. All that is really the work of God is wrought in the silence of the heart by that wind which bloweth where it listeth. Sweetly the Holy Spirit constraineth all things by his own power; but the day of his power is not with roar of tempest, but with the noiseless fall of the dew. You, ardent spirit that you are, are all in a hurry; you are going to push the church before you, and drag the world after you. Go and do it! But if the Lord works not after your fashion, be not greatly surprised; for it is written, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street."

His purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. He will do his work all the more surely because he sets about it quietly I always delight in a man who can afford to go about his life-work without fuss, bluster, or loud announcement. See how a master-workman lays down his tools! He arranges his plan, sketches his ideal, and then begins as he means to go on. He will do the thing in that way; depend upon it. Another fellow flings his tools about, rushes at the work without system, makes the dust try, litters the place with chips, spoils the work, and leaves it in disgust. Our Savior works not so: he calmly, deliberately, resolutely pursues his mighty plan; and he will perform it. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

Note well the spirit in which he works. He is gentleness itself, and that always: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." You cannot work in hot haste in this spirit. Gentleness makes good and sure speed, but it cannot endure rashness and heat. We know reformers who, if they had the power, would be like bulls in a china-shop; they would do a great deal in a veer" short time. But the world's best Friend is not given to quench and bruise. Here is a bruised reed, and it is of no use to anybody: you cannot even get music out of it, much less lean upon it; yet he does not break it. Here is a smoking flax, a wick with an offensive smell, containing very little heat, and no light; yet he does not put it out. This oft quoted text is used, as you know, in the New Testament, in reference to the Pharisees: they thought themselves strong pillars, but the Lord knew that they were only bruised reeds; they thought themselves great lights, but he knew that they were only as smoking flax; and yet he did not go out of his way to snuff them out. Even to them, though often righteously indignant, he was yet gentle, and only assailed them when they

put themselves in his way, and forced a verdict from him. The Lord Jesus was too good and great to be irritated by Pharisees. Lions do not hunt for "rats and mice, and such small deer." Great principles are laid down, which in due time destroy the meanesses which it is not worth while to attack in detail. The smoking flaxes of error, and the bruised reeds of presence go in due season, but the gentle Lord is not in hot haste to put them out of the way. Hence we grow discouraged. But he will not fail nor be discouraged any the more because of his gentleness. Nay, let me tell you, brethren, it is the quiet man, the meek man, who is always hard to be turned aside from his purpose. When a man is passionate, and easily excited, you have only to wait a while, and he will cool down; perhaps chill down below zero. These fiery fellows will be easily managed by the devil, or somebody else, after the flame is over. Give me a man who deliberately makes up his mind, calmly sets to work, and patiently bears all rebuffs, and I know that what he sets himself to do will be done. He will work in God's way, and will not put forth his hand to snatch a premature success at the expense of principle. He is quiet because he is sure, patient because he is strong, gentle because he is firm. The man who cannot be provoked is the man who cannot be turned aside. You cannot discourage him: he will go through with his work, even to the end; be you sure of that. As you look at our blessed Master, patient and immovable amidst all the battle and the strife, you may assure yourself that he will not fail nor be discouraged. I do not admire Napoleon, except in the matter of his cool courage, but for that he was noteworthy. They always represent him in the midst of the battle with folded arms. His eagle eye is on the conflict, but he is motionless as a statue. Every soldier in the imperial army felt that victory was sure, for the captain was so self-possessed. If he had been hurrying to and fro, rushing here, there, and everywhere, and making a great fuss about everything, they would have inferred that defeat was impending. But see him yonder! All is well. He knows what he is at. It is all right, for he does not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard; he is calm, for he can see that all is well. There stands the Crucified this day, upon the vantage ground, at the right hand of God, and he surveys the battle-field in calm expectancy until his enemies are made his footstool. Tender towards the weakest of the weak, and kind even to the unthankful and the evil, we may see in all this mercifulness the pledge of his success. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

Consideration of the statement leads us to believe it firmly.

II. I want you to give me a few minutes while I say, LET THIS TRUTH BE BELIEVED AND ENJOYED. I want you to enjoy the fruit of this truth, and to be made glad by it.

First, enjoy it by recollecting that *Jesus has finished the work for his people*; that first work wherein he brought in everlasting righteousness, and bore the penalty of human guilt, and laid the foundation whereupon should be built the temple of God. Jesus has done all things well. He persevered in his life labor till he could say, "It is finished." From the hour when as a child he said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" All through the contradiction of sinners, and the weakness, and the poverty, and the shame in which his life was spent, you never see about our Divine Master any indication of failing or of being discouraged. We sorrowfully cry, "I am almost ready to give up"; but he never spoke in that fashion, nor even thought it. He had reckoned upon all the toil and the grief. He had foreseen it all: he had taken it into his calculations, and therefore he was not surprised and downcast. He determined to go, for our sakes, to death and the grave, and to bear the shame of our sin and the curse of our guilt, and even to be put by the Father into darkness on our account. He set his face like a flint; and like a flint his face remained to the bitter end. He never turned aside. Let us bless him this day for his persevering love. It is not a half-finished salvation that we behold on yonder bloody tree: it is not an incomplete redemption that we see in that rising again of Jesus from the dead. When we look up to him in his glory we know and feel that through all the agony and death he did not fail, and was not discouraged, and that he has set up a kingdom which cannot be removed for ever. There let us rest with peaceful confidence.

The next reflection which I want you to enjoy is this — *he will finish the work in his believing people*. He will not fail nor be discouraged until he has completely saved you and me. If I had been my own saviour I should have given up the work long ago. We meet now and then with supposed perfect people, but the most of us dare not whisper the word perfection. When I have overcome a whole body of sin and have risen to be somewhat like my Lord, it seems to me as if a new body of death were formed about me. I kill one dragon, and lo, his body yields a crop of monsters. My evil nature seems to have coats like an onion, and when I have taken off one of them, it only lays bare another quite as offensive. Will it not be so to the

end of the chapter? You may be growing better; I hope you are, but I shall be all the more hopeful that you are so if you fear that you are growing worse. If you think less and less of yourselves, it is probably true that you are growing in grace; but if you think more and more of yourselves, it is highly probable that you are growing in pride. There is a great difference between being puffed up and being built up. I can clearly see that I shall fail and be discouraged if salvation rests with me; but here is my comfort — *He* will not fail nor be discouraged. If my Lord begins with me, he will never be beaten off from his purpose. What bad stuff is our humanity! What wretched raw material for sainthood! It must be hard, treading and pounding such gritty clay; and I wonder not that both the hands and the feet of the great Worker were sorely wounded, since he had such clay to deal with. When he fashions us on the wheel, and we begin to assume somewhat of the form which he intends for us, yet we crack and spoil when we come to the oven, and all his work upon us seems lost. He has to grind us down again, to a powder, and begin with us again *de novo*, and fashion us once more. It would have been an easier work to have created new beings altogether than to take us poor fallen ones and lift us up to become sons of God. The Almighty Lord had only to have said, “Let a church be!” and a church most fair and spotless would have leaped into being; but instead thereof, he works upon us sinful ones, and undertakes to make us perfectly pure, and present us to himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. What a marvel of grace! He will do it, brother. He will do it, sister. He has not grown weary of the work, neither is he discouraged by all our ill behavior. Before he began he knew all about it. Had he not been a far-seeing Christ, able to foresee all our shortcomings and backslidings, he might have been surprised into weariness; but he says, “I knew that thou art obstinate”; and again, “I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously.” He foreknew all our ingratitude, backsliding, unbelief, and unworthiness, and therefore he will not fail nor be discouraged till his work in us is done, and we are fit for heaven.

Again, dear friends, *he will finish his work by his people*. Whatever the work is that is to be done by the church, he will not fail nor be discouraged until it is performed. I do not know whether any of you have noticed in my text a very singular thing. If you have the Revised Version, the margin will give you some rather singular information. The text might be read thus: “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: yet he shall not burn dimly nor be bruised.” Though he deals with bruised

reeds and smoking flaxes, yet he himself is not crushed, nor does his light become a mere glimmer. To my mind, this is a deeply interesting use of words, and should not be allowed to slip. Christianity just now, they say, is a mere smoke, the old-fashioned doctrine especially burns very dim. Do not you believe it: the light of Jesus shall not darken or grow less. Those souls that can see his light will tell you that his face shines still like the sun. There is a glory about him that is undiminished and undiminishable. He does not glimmer, and he is not crushed. He is no reed; his enemies will one day find that he carrieth a rod of iron. He is a pillar of the house of our God: he beareth up all things, for he is strong and mighty, and he cannot fail. I want you to eject at the back door every suggestion that enters your house as to the defeat of the Christ and the failure of the gospel; it is not possible, it cannot be. *You* may smoke like the flax, *you* may be broken like the reed; but he will never glimmer nor be a crushed reed, even to the end: wherefore comfort one another with these words.

And to conclude, I should not have treated the text properly if I did not say that it has in it great comfort to those of you who are as yet outside of the Church of God, and are not numbered with his people. Will you kindly read the sixth and seventh verses? — “He shall not fail nor be discouraged,” till he has done, what? — the Divine will, and this is a part of it: *“To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”* Oh, say you, I cannot see Christ! He has come on purpose to make you see. Turn your sightless eyeballs this way. Breathe this prayer, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” And if he saith: “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” answer, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” In one single moment, ay, while the clock is ticking, Jesus Christ can take the scales from a blind man’s eyes and let in such a flood of daylight that he shall see heaven itself: Lord, do it this morning. O dear hearts, will you not each one cry, Lord, do it to me? Are you saying that, my friend? He will do it. He loves to hear a blind man’s cry. Do you not remember in the New Testament how often he stood still when he heard a blind man’s cry. Poor blind soul! cry to him now. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, he will come to you, and save you.

“Ah!” Faith one, “but I am worse than that, I am shut up in prison.” Kindly read the seventh verse again: — “To bring out the prisoners from the prison.” You are miserable, without hope, shut up in an iron cage. He has come who will not fail nor be discouraged; he has come on purpose to

fetch you out of the cage. Ask him to break the bars in sunder. I see him lay his pierced hand to that iron bar. You have filed it a long while, and it has broken the teeth of your file; you have tried to shake it in its place, but you could not stir it in the least. See what he does! He plucks bar after bar out of its place, as if they had been so many reeds, and you are free. Arise and take your liberty! The Son of God has made you free. If thou hast trusted him, he has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder; thou art free, enjoy thy liberty.

“Oh, but,” saith one, “in my case it is blindness and slavery united.” Listen, then. He has come to “bring them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.” You cannot see the bars that shut you in, nor even mark the limits of your narrow cell; but he has come who will give eyes to you, and light to those eyes, and liberty to your enlightened sight. Only trust him. All things are possible to him that believeth when Christ is near: Thou knowest not, thou who art now at the bottom of the sea, how high he can lift thee in an instant! Out of the belly of hell, if thou wilt cry, he can lift thee in a moment, to the very heights of heaven. I say no more of my Lord than he deserves to have said of him; nay, nor yet half as much. Try him, and see if he will fail. Try him now, thou in the worst and lowest of all circumstances, thou devil-bound and devil-tortured spirit. Dare to believe that Jesus can do all things for thee. Leave thyself with him. Go thy way, for as thou hast believed so shall it be unto thee. To the name of him that will not fail nor be discouraged be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —
Isaiah 41:28, 29; 42:1-16.***

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”
— 72 (SONG I.), 339, 953.**