

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

FALSE AND TRUE SEEKERS.

A Sermon

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“I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.”—ISAIAH xlv. 19.

WE cannot too clearly see that there are two orders of people that are called the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—namely, the literal and the spiritual ; and many thousands of those who were the literal descendants were through grace the spiritual descendants also of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and thousands upon thousands, or, as John words it, a multitude that no man can number, out of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, were also the spiritual posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; for “they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham ;” they that be of faith are the children of Abraham. To which of these two orders of people does our text apply ? Certainly not to the literal, for they were under a temporal covenant, and they themselves being, as we all are by nature, carnally minded, liked anything, it did not matter what it was, in preference to God’s truth ;—the very leeks, and onions, and fleshpots of Egypt, the golden calf—anything rather than God’s truth. And so this same carnal mind in the same people at last carried itself so far that they preferred a murderer to God’s Christ. Do not spare this man, but spare Barabbas, the robber and the murderer. Therefore it is said of these people, under this temporal covenant, the Lord called them from time to time ; but then that covenant did not entitle them to saving grace or to effectual calling ; and the Lord called upon them from time to time to repent, to reform, to renounce their gross idolatries, and to follow the Lord ; and this is all that covenant could do ; but they would none of his counsel, they would none of his reproof ; therefore the Lord saith, “I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh ;” so that that people, when the destruction of Jerusalem came, sought the Lord, but sought .

him in vain. But there is a seed, the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom the Lord will never say, "Seek ye me in vain." Suffice it, then, to say that if the Jews had understood this distinction,—that it was one thing for them to be the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after the flesh, and another thing to be, as the Lord said to Nicodemus, born of God,—“Ye must be born again,” and so become the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after the spirit,—had the Jews understood this distinction, they would not have thought to say within themselves, “We have Abraham to our father;” and John lays the axe to the root of that delusion, and shows that that relation to those patriarchs was of no avail whatever in the matter of eternal salvation.

I do not know that I could have met you this morning with a subject more vitally important. I feel my need of grace and power from on high in order to work out and set before you the great matters contained in our text. I will divide it into two parts, though I suppose I shall scarcely reach the second part, but only just be able to hint at it. First, *what it is to seek the Lord aright*; secondly, *the relation which such bear to Jacob*; they are the seed of Jacob.

First, *what it is to seek the Lord aright*. The dear Saviour gives us a key upon this subject:—“Every one that has heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.” I will now say something concerning false seekers after the Lord, who could not find him, and whose religion came to nought, in order that I may thereby contrast the false with the true, and enable you to see where you are. I refer especially to John vi. There were persons that the Saviour had fed by a miracle, and they sought Jesus Christ, and he said, “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” There would have been nothing wrong in their doing so from that motive if it had not stood alone; it is no harm to seek the loaves and fishes at the Lord’s hand; it is no harm to seek his providential interposition and favour; it is no harm to pray for what he hath promised—harvests and fruitful seasons; it is no harm to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” But unhappily this motive stood alone; this was the only thing they did seek; and they were not the first, and I suppose will not be the last, that supposed that gain is godliness, that the business of godliness is to enable a man to get on in this world; therefore the flesh says, That kind of religion that will enable me to get on best in the world is the religion for me. But the object of godliness is something infinitely and eternally more important than the things of this life. Now the Saviour sets before these seekers a certain truth; and if they miss that, if they do not understand, appreciate, and abide by that, they will miss their way afterwards, and the result will be their de-

struction. But those that do not miss it, but understand, appreciate, and abide by it, will never miss their way. We want something to set out with that will keep us right all the way. Let us see what that something was in their case. It was something which they could not understand, nor appreciate, nor enter into; and it was simply this,—the eternal sacrificial perfection of Christ; in other words, everlasting supply by his mediatorial work. “Labour not for the meat which perisheth;” that is a very inferior object, a very secondary and temporary thing; “but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you;” you, that is, that rightly seek it and rightly labour for it; “for him hath God the Father sealed.” The people at large did not understand this, but the disciples did; and we shall bring in by and by their testimony. Now famine is one representation of the evil into which the fall of man has brought us and will bring us. There is neither bread nor water in hell; there is nothing there but absolute and eternal destitution. Therefore the meat that endureth to everlasting life refers to the sacrifice of Christ, and to all those blessings which are by that sacrifice. Christ has put an end to this evil of entire destitution, that destitution associated with all the wretchedness of the damned, with the endless wrath of the most high God. For after all the cavillings of men, everlasting will be everlasting, everlasting punishment will be everlasting punishment; it will remain so, and we cannot alter it. Let us look at it, if possible, in its worst form, and then see that the dear Saviour has put an end to sin, has finished transgression, has made reconciliation for iniquity, and that by him we have life and everything in the place of that misery into which we are brought by the fall. If we miss this, if we are not right in this work of Christ, if we are not right in this meat that endureth to everlasting life, then we cannot seek the Lord aright. It will come out as we go along that the people of God have always been taught to seek the Lord in this way. “Every one that hath learned of the Father,” saith Christ, “cometh unto me.” The people missed this, and therefore missed everything afterwards. But those that understand this go along with the after-circumstances harmoniously and beautifully. It is an infinite mercy to be a right seeker after the Lord. If we are taught of God, we shall see there is no way in which he can be sought so as to be found but by the perfect work of Christ. The man that has found out that beautiful secret—for, though proclaimed in the Scriptures, men do not see it—can say, in the words of that hymn you sometimes sing concerning Christ,—

“Complete atonement thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whate'er thy people owed;

At my bleeding Surety's hand
 Payment God cannot twice demand,
 And then again at mine."

Christ saith, "I am the way." Here, then, the seed of Jacob are brought to seek the Lord by this perfect work of Christ.

"For me he pleads the atoning blood,
 For me the righteousness of God."

There must, then, be a sight and sense of your need of this ; there must be a belief in it. You cannot seek God without faith. Believing in this wonderful work of Christ, you thereby seek God. And there must be in your seeking an earnestness that accords with the weightiness of the subject. When I look at some of the little disputations there are among professors, and compare the little questions they are trying to settle among themselves with the ponderous realities of eternal salvation by the work of Christ, how paltry and dishonourable to Christians these little contentions appear ; while the weighty matters of faith, judgment, and mercy, are put almost in the background. The Lord preserve us from these devices of Satan, and keep us looking after the ponderous realities of eternity ! The people, then, did not understand this ; but the disciples did. Are we brought to understand the completeness of Christ's work ? are we brought to seek God in that way, or are we still in a state of enmity against it ? Our text is a wonderfully great text—"the seed of Jacob ;" it embodies everything.

Now these people, as they missed this way of salvation, did not know that faith was the gift and work of God. "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God ?" What is the Saviour's answer ? "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." I must appeal to you for a moment here. You are God's witnesses, you that are Christians. Can you not truly say, in the name of Jesus Christ, seeing what he is, and believing in the perfection of his work, can you not truly say that you have found out from personal experience that you can no more see your interest in that salvation, no more cry Abba, Father, no more believe with full assurance that you belong to God, than you can create a world,—I mean if the Lord doth not put forth his power, if his word be not brought home with power, to minister life, and love, and peace, and liberty to your soul ? It is the ministration of the word that is wanted ; "he sent his word, and healed them." We will suppose that their sickness ; or, shall I say, their want of spiritual health and strength, laid in that one thing, that they could not see the Lord was theirs ; he sent home the word with power, and healed them. Then, and not till then, you are assured of interest in these things. Therefore the seed of Jacob know it is the work of God for them to believe in

Christ; and so their faith standeth not in the wisdom of men, but in the omnipotent and eternal power of God.

And then these people made a very unhappy allusion, as people in error will. They said, "What sign showest thou, then, that we may see, and believe thee?" We are seekers; and therefore, of course, inquirers. "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert." Oh, unhappy allusion! They could not have alluded to a worse thing; but they wanted some sign, and then very unwisely alluded to their fathers in the wilderness. Ah, we ask such persons, were your fathers in the wilderness converted by the sign with which you seem to suggest you would be satisfied? Did the daily manna turn them into believers? Did the daily manna keep them from wishing to go back to Egypt? Did the miracle of the water flowing from the rock keep them from idolatry, and cause them to abide by the Lord? The Saviour's answer is very solemn and instructive. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead;"—they died under the penalty of that covenant, and did not live their natural course of life; their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Therefore external signs could not do the work. What is it that does it? What is it that keeps us from error? The Saviour saith, "He that eateth of the bread that I shall give him shall never hunger, and he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." This is the bread that endureth unto everlasting life. What will keep us from error? Experience will do it. There must be soul-trouble; there must be a sight and sense of your lost and ruined condition, not only at the first, but you will have that with you increasingly as you go on. The consequence will be, that, understanding your need of Christ, and of the blessings that are by him, being enlightened not by mere information, but by personal experience, you cannot be moved. If you are right in the first, by laying hold of Christ's work in what he has done, as that meat that endureth to everlasting life, then you are right in all that follows. It is this that makes a man a Christian—his oneness with Christ. No man is a Christian if he is not one with Christ; if he does not receive Christ in the completeness of his work. And then mark another thing;—when the Saviour had spoken highly of this bread, what did they say? "Evermore give us this bread." There is the seeker. But when he came to set before them what this bread was—that it was himself in his own sacrificial and eternal perfection, what did they do? They murmured directly. If that is it, that won't do for us. A little further on, "they strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Now they prayed the prayer, "Evermore give us this bread;" but when it was explained what the bread was—the eternal perfection of the sacrifice of Christ

—“He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day; that is, at the last day of this dispensation, not at the beginning of the thousand years, or the beginning of this dispensation, but at the last day of this dispensation; and you will thus see that this sacrifice goes on to all eternity; the false seeker says, “If that’s it, I won’t have it.” Oh, my hearer, how many are there in our in many respects highly favoured day that wish to be saved, that wish to escape hell, that wish to go to heaven; but take them to where the perfection of Christ is set forth, take them to where the sovereign counsels of God are opened up, take them to where regeneration is described and insisted upon, take them to where an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, is rolled in, and like Aaron’s rod swallows up everything else; and they say, If that is it, I won’t have it. “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,” saith the Truth; “ye search the Scriptures, and in them ye think ye have eternal life,” but “ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” You are willing to have it, but not in God’s way. I have heard some,—of course they must have said so in great ignorance and great enmity and passion as well,—I have actually heard people say they would rather go to hell than go to heaven to be with a God that has chosen some and left the others; to be with a God that effectually calls one and leaves the other; to be with a God that has sent a Saviour to mediate for all that were chosen in him before the world was. So strong is their enmity. Let me say, in all humility and affection, that you have these truths in the Bible; and if there are any here this morning that do not like the truth in its free grace order, when you go home ask yourself, I have been accustomed to hold such and such sentiments; have these sentiments delusively inspired me with enmity against those sovereign and eternal truths? Have I heard so much against what they call hyper-Calvinism, high doctrine, that I have suffered what I have heard to prejudice my mind against it? If I have, so far as I am prejudiced I am deluded; I will search the Scriptures for myself, and see whether it be true that that is the nature of the bread,—namely, that it is by the eternal perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the counsel and sovereign pleasure of the everlasting God; and that the whole of a sinner’s salvation, from first to last, lies with the Lord.

So, then, you may be earnestly seeking to get to heaven, and you will never get there, because you are not seeking by that that can bring you there. Nothing can bring you there but the perfection of Christ, and the teachings of the Spirit of God, and the grace of God, and the power of God, “kept through faith unto eternal salvation.” If, on the other hand, you are seeking thus in the right way, then

come short you cannot; because you have got hold of Christ. Keep to him, follow him, do not part with him, do not part with God's testimony concerning him. The dear Saviour saith, "He that followeth me"—that is, he that seeketh me—"shall not abide in darkness." Let me bring in a scripture here, concerning some that were in the dark, but they were seeking Jesus, following after him, and they did not abide in that darkness in which they were,—namely, the honourable women of the sepulchre. They were much in the dark at present as to whether they had been deceived, or how matters were; and they sought in the right way, for they believed in Jesus, notwithstanding all the shakings they had experienced; they were following after him. And mark the fulfilment of the Saviour's words, that such "shall not abide in darkness." "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; he is risen, as he said." What a sweet scripture is that!—"risen, as he said." As though the angel should say, You may depend on every word he said; he said he would rise, and he has risen, as he said. "And behold he goeth before you into Galilee, and there shall ye see him;" and that will put an end to your darkness. Lo, I have told you. I am an angel from heaven, and if you do not find him, then say I am a liar, say there must be lies in heaven, for an angel brought one from heaven, or else manufactured it on the way. But they had not gone far before they found Jesus; so they did not abide in darkness. If, then, we have this knowledge of him, are thus laying hold of him, and are seeking the promise and the blessing—pardon, forgiveness, mercy, whatever we need, by the perfect work of Christ, God never said nay to such an one yet, and he never will. He has never said to this spiritual, true seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain; because they are seeking him in the right way.

Again, these false seekers did not appreciate the truth that the Saviour set before them. Let us see if we do, for the true disciples then present did. He said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will." I did not come to devise a plan; I did not come to lay out any order of things; it was all laid out before I came; it was all done in the counsels of eternity; I am come "to do the will of him that sent me;" the testamentary will that was already arranged and settled. What is that will? Lovely, lovely will;—"This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing. Ah, sweet Jesus, to hold us fast through all the ravages of the fall, and the troubles of time; and when we come to the surges of Jordan, the Jordan will be at his command, we shall be in his hands, and cannot be plucked out of them. "This is the Father's will." I should not do the will of my Father if I suffered the least believer depending upon me for salva-

tion to be lost ; if I were to suffer a fault to be laid to the charge of such ; if I did not present them in all the dignity of my eternal righteousness. And not only that I should lose nothing, but "should raise it up again at the last day ;" I am responsible for them even till I bring them to heaven, and also to eternity itself ; for "then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." So that to all eternity Christ is responsible for them. I am sure you are right when you sing the words,—

"We're safe in our Redeemer's hands,
Even when he hides his face."

What do you say to this then ? Are you sorry that there is safety in the hands of God the Father, for none shall pluck them out of his hands, or are you glad ? Are you sorry that there is safety in the Saviour's hands, or are you glad ? Are you sorry that there is safety in the Holy Spirit's hands, or are you glad ? The Holy Spirit that hath begun the good work will perform it, and who can hinder him ? All nations before the omnipotency of the eternal Spirit of God are as a drop of a bucket, as the small dust of the balance ; "and he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." First, the drop of a bucket ; that is very small ; then the dust of the balance, the smallest dust almost you could perceive ; and then an atom : for the Hebrew word there translated "little thing" means "an atom," of no weight at all. If you had got an atom in your hand, it is true you might lose it from the diminutiveness of it ; but you would smile at a person saying, Take care, if you do not mind, that atom will be too strong for you, too much for you ; it will weary you, it will wear you out. You would smile at that, would you not ? Ah, all the isles, the whole world, are nothing but an atom in the hands of the Holy Ghost. Do you love this doctrine of eternal safety by the eternal Three ? If you are a true seeker, you will. But lest I should do harm, I will say this,—you may be a true seeker perhaps, and do not yet understand this doctrine of eternal safety ; but you will feel there is something wanting until you reach this ; and by and by, when you more clearly understand the perfect work of Christ, and that eternal safety that is by the immutability of God's counsel, then you will be satisfied. You will say, Now for the first time I can understand that beautiful scripture concerning Naphtali, "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour." What, all the time there is a possibility of being lost ? No, but when this safety is recognised, realized, and somewhat enjoyed—"satisfied with favour"—what is the result ? "Full with the blessing of the Lord." "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son,"—do you not see that takes us back to our first

thought, the meat that endureth to everlasting life, his perfect work—do you not see that? Yes, say you, bless the Lord, as clear as day. Then it is the Lord that hath revealed this to you. “Blessed are ye, for my Father which is in heaven hath revealed this unto you;” if the Lord had meant to kill you, he would not have shown it to you. “This is the will of him which sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day;” safety again.

The false seekers, not appreciating this mediatorial, eternal, sacrificial perfection, having no real taste for the free-grace bread of heaven, not understanding these eternal counsels, went back. Mark, they are all seekers, and even called disciples. And the second time the Saviour declared two things amazingly offensive to man; and if they be offensive to any of you, take note of it, and say to yourself, Well, those are two doctrines that I hate. Go home, and say to yourself, Well, I have hitherto hated those doctrines, blindly; they certainly are in the Bible, and I should not like to die in a state of enmity to the doctrines of the Bible, because that would be a state of enmity to God, to Christ; and therefore, with all my profession, nothing will atone for my enmity. To be an enemy when you come to die is to be lost. What are the two doctrines? Human helplessness and divine sovereignty. “Therefore said I unto you,” he knew what would give the offence. Say you, why did he offend them? Ah, friends, it is better to offend people than to deceive them, a very great deal. “Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me”—there is human helplessness,—except it were “given unto him of my Father;” there is divine sovereignty. God draws whom he will.—These are two truths that the carnal mind hates, and when the Saviour declared these two doctrines, in addition to the doctrines he had advanced, these “disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” What said the true disciples? One speaks, and represents the others. “Will ye also go away?” Do you not like the doctrine of the meat that endureth to everlasting life? Yes, Lord, for that is the doctrine of everlasting life. Do you not like the doctrine of faith being the work of God? Oh, yes, Lord, because he that believeth by the power of God hath everlasting life. Do you not like the doctrine of sacrificial perfection, that he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day? Yes, Lord, we like that, because it is the doctrine of everlasting life. And do you not like the doctrine of human helplessness? Yes, Lord, because there we were, dead in sin, and thou didst say to us with almighty power, “Follow me,” and those words threw life into our souls, light into our minds, and newness into our hearts; for in commanding us to follow thee,

thou didst in effect say, "Seek ye my face," and thou didst speak the word with such power that our hearts replied, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek;" and so they did. Do you not like the doctrine of divine sovereignty? Yes, Lord, we do; for if the Lord had not been pleased to have mercy upon us of his own pleasure, we see no other way in which we could have obtained mercy. Then you will not go away? "Lord, to whom shall we go?" we are too delighted with these things to go away from thee; "thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure;"—well, but these people wanted signs of this sort and the other. Ah, we are quite satisfied without the signs,—“we believe and are sure,” not only that thou art Christ, but “that thou art *that* Christ”—there is the demonstrative pronoun, as grammarians call it;—*that* Christ, the Son of the living God;” he can never die, and his people can never die, for they are as the angels of God, and shall die no more, being the children of the resurrection. This is the way to seek the Lord—by Jesus Christ. “I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.” I could give a great many instances in the Bible of false seeking and of true seeking, but perhaps I have said enough in a way of sample. You see the first point is that “every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;” he comes to Christ for everything, there is nothing out of Christ, everything is in him. Then the man that is right in that department is right in all the after parts, in all the blessed truths of the everlasting gospel.

Now those who are thus brought to seek the Lord know the name of the Lord. I will quote a few scriptures just to encourage us in the Lord before I go to the last point. Psalm ix. 10, “They that know thy name”—they are the true seekers,—“will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” This is just what they fear, but it is not so. “Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me;” but the Lord’s answer shows that he had not. “They that know thy name.” What is his name? “I am the God of Abraham”—we must take that in the new covenant sense, of course,—“and of Isaac, and of Jacob; this is my name.” What does Abraham exemplify? Discriminating grace,—“I called him alone.” What does Isaac exemplify? Yea and amen promise. What does Jacob exemplify? Sovereign love: “Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated.” “This is my name, and this is my memorial;” this discriminating grace, this yea and amen promise, this sovereign and eternal love; “This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial,” by which I will be remembered, “unto all generations.” No thanks to us either for knowing the name or for remembering it; for the Lord saith, “This is my name and this is my memorial unto all generations.” Can you say

you are seeking the Lord by the testimony of his discriminating grace? Can you say you are seeking the Lord by his yea and amen promise? Can you say you are seeking the Lord, and confessing as you are seeking him his right to do what he will with his own; confessing not only that he has done whatsoever pleased him in the heavens and in the earth, and in all deep places, but that he has a native and original right so to do? Canst thou say so? Then you will not seek (in vain, because there is such a thing as mediatorial perfection to be found; but those that are seeking contrary to that are seeking what does not exist. There is such a thing as discriminating grace to be found, but those that are seeking general, conditional grace, are seeking what does not exist. There is such a thing as a yea and amen promise in Christ; but those that are seeking conditional promises are seeking what does not exist. All the conditional promises are in the old covenant, the Holy Ghost declares that every promise in Christ is yea and amen. And those that are seeking an interest in these things in submission to God's sovereignty are seeking what does exist, sovereign love; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Thus, then, the true seeker seeks Jesus Christ in the right way, knows the Lord's name, and "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee," by thy name. I now come to another scripture, and a wonderfully significant one, and it has a great tendency to encourage us if we are seeking the Lord, especially if we are doing what is there said. What is it? "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant," the new and better covenant, "whom ye delight in." That we do, Lord. I solemnly believe the response that rises from the soul of the believer to heaven is as truthful as the testimony of God to earth;—he saith that we delight in this messenger of the covenant; we do, Lord, with all our hearts and souls, and shall do to all eternity; our whole persons, when immortalized and strengthened, made mighty, like the dear Saviour, shall be thrown into this order of things:—

*"And every heart and every tongue,
Shall roll Immanuel's praise along."*

He "shall suddenly come to his temple." How suddenly he came on the Day of Pentecost. "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in

former years." Now, "who may abide the day of his coming?" Ah, there was a time when I trembled at that, but I do not now. Who did abide? "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;" then came the anthem of the multitude, and off went the shepherds, and worshipped him; so they abode the day of his coming; they stood when he appeared. How? By receiving him as the Saviour. The devil would try to say, You must have some goodness, and piety, and righteousness of your own, something good of your own, and then you will stand; whereas no Pharisee ever stood before him;—it is the poor sinner that receives him as a Saviour. "Unto you is born a Saviour." They received the Saviour, and thereby they were received. The wise men from the East received him as the new-born king that was to reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there should be no end; so the wise men stood, they abode; Herod tried to throw them down, but the Lord sent them into their own country another way. So he does with you sometimes; you cannot get on just in the way you meant; the Lord means you to be somewhere else, and he sends you another way; there is some danger in the way you are going, so he stops you, and sends you another way. And how did Simeon stand? "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." That is how Simeon stood. And the disciples were glad to follow the Saviour, and they stood and abode. Ah, say you, they fled. That is nothing; that betrayed their weakness, not their enmity. Those in John. vi. that went away went away because they hated him; but the disciples ran away because they were frightened, that is all. Judas betrayed him because he secretly hated him, and loved this world and the things thereof; but Peter did not deny him because he hated him. The Lord knows how to manage matters; the true seeker will find it all right at last. And so how were these disciples purified? how were the shepherds purified? "He shall purify the sons of Levi." "Levi" means "joined;" and it is a name belonging to Christ, because he joins us to God. The fall hath severed us from God; Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, making us manifest as heirs of God, joint heirs with himself. "He shall purify the sons of Levi." How did he purify the shepherds? "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The word went home with power, and purified them from all false doctrines; and they came right out into the sanctity of the gospel. The wise men from the East, how were they purified? By the word of the Lord, which explained to them the true meaning of the star.