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A Miracle of Grace

A Sermon
(No. 3505)
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Delivered by
C. H. SPURGEON,
At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people; but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God."—2 Chronicles 33:9-13.

MANASSEH was born three years after his father's memorable sickness. You will remember that Hezekiah was stricken with a mortal disease, and Isaiah, the prophet, come to him and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." He appears to have been startled and appalled at the tidings, and gave vent to his feelings with bitter tears. Evidently he was afraid at the time to face death. He had probably been indulging a worldly spirit; and besides this, it lay as a heavy burden upon his heart that he had no son whom he should leave as his successor in the kingdom. In deep distress of soul, accordingly, he turned to the wall and prayed to the Lord. With piteous weeping and earnest pleading

he besought that his life might be spared. His prayer was heard, his tears were seen, and his petition was granted by God. His days were prolonged by fifteen years. In the third year of those fifteen years his son Manasseh was born to hire. Had he knows, methinks, what sort of a son would have risen up in his stead, he might have been content to die, rather than to be the father of such a persecutor of God's people, and such a setter up of idolatry in the land. Alas! full often we know not what we, pray for. We may be covetous of an apparent boon which would prove to be a real curse both to ourselves and to thousands of others. You prayed, mother—yea, prayed fervently—for the life of that dear babe whom God was pleaded to take away from you. You cannot know what disposition the child would have shown, what temptations would have befallen it, or what consequences would have come of its life. Could some parents have read the history of their children from the day of their birth, they might rightly have wished that they had never been born. We had better leave such matters with God, and submit to his sovereign will. He knows better than we do, for ho is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Thank God, these affairs are not in our own hands. They are in far better and wiser keeping than ours.

Manasseh's mother was named Hephzi-bah, a beautiful name. I wonder whether Hezekiah gave her the name because she was his delight, or because his gratitude inspired it, as he was then himself delighting in his God. I can scarcely think that at such a time he would have chosen one who had not also chosen God; therefore, let us think of her as a godly woman. But in that case she could have had little enough delight in her son; and sometimes, I should think, when she saw him pursuing the people of God with the sword, and sinning with a high hand, she must have been ready to say, "Call me no more Hephzi-bah, but call me Marah, for the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me." It is not always that the thing which makes us glad to-day will make us glad to-morrow likewise. Let children be accounted a heritage of the Lord. They are the joy of our hearts and the flowers of our homes. But what will they be to us when the gay, guileless, sportive days of their childhood have run out? Unless God sends his blessing with them, the increase of our families may be the sorrow of our lives. Evil passions and propensities develop themselves in our children with their growth, and if the grace of God does not subdue their sinful disposition, we may have to rue the day that they were born. Manasseh's name signified "forgetfulness." I hope his father did not forget his training, and leave him to those young courtiers who always hang about kings' palaces, and are pretty sure to instil into a young prince's mind more vanity than virtue, and bespeak his favour and patronage for the popular party. There was a superstitious section in those days, cultivating idolatry and pouring contempt on

the Evangelical brethren, whose cause his father, Hezekiah, had espoused so earnestly and defended all his days. That new religion, imported from among the heathen, had its meretricious attractions. Was there not a great deal to please the eye in its pageant, and much to charm the ear in its worship? The beautiful artistic work in the statuary of its idols, and the fine display of pomp in all the ceremonies—did not these appeal to a cultivated taste? The old-fashioned puritanical order of worshipping at one temple, where the service was bald, and where there was scarcely anything to be seen except by the priests themselves, was becoming effete. Would it not be better to go with the times, take up with Baalim and Ashtaroth, do homage to the sensuous proclivities of the common people, and make friendly alliances with nations holding other creeds? I should not wonder but they talked to the young man in that fashion, and he—oblivious of what God bad done for his sire and forgetful that in the long history of the house of Judah the people had always been smitten when they turned aside to idols and that they only prospered when they clave to the living God fell into the snare, and sinned with a high hand.

I shall introduce him to you first as *a loathsome monster of guilt;* then, secondly, I shall show you how the hand of God followed him till he became *a piteous spectacle of misery;* after which—blessed be God!—we shall have to mount into a clearer atmosphere, when we point him out to you as he became afterwards, *a miracle of grace;* and in fine we shall have to admire him as *a delightful picture of genuine repentance.* We must begin by considering him as:

I. A LOATHSOME MONSTER OF GUILT.

I cannot imagine that any one of my hearers can have been so great a sinner as Manasseh. I shall not attempt to draw a parallel between him and anyone else. Still, I should not wonder if some of you may be led to draw some such parallel for yourselves. If you do so, I pray the Lord to give you such a sense of your own guilt as shall constrain you to seek pardon.

Deep was the crime, and daring was the impiety of Manasseh, in size that *he undid all the good work of his pious father.* What Hezekiah had painfully wrought at the web he began to unravel as fast as he could. That which the father built up for God the son pulled. down; and that which the father had cast down because it was evil the son at once began to reconstruct. I must confess I have known sons do the like. Because, they have hated their father's piety, as it has been a restraint upon their sin, they have vowed that if it ever came into their power to do as they liked, there should be a change in the household. As I passed a certain house this week a friend said to me, "Many a prayer-meeting has been held in that farmhouse. People used to come for miles round there to meet and pray." "Is that a thing of the past?" said I; "are no prayer meetings

held there now?" "Oh! no," he replied; "the father died, and his reprobate son came into the property. A prayer meeting, indeed! No. He defied his mother to attempt such a thing; and after having stripped her, and stripped the little estate of all there was that was worth the having, he has gone away, and has not been heard of for many a year. As far as he could, he tore down everything that belonged to his father that reminded him of his God." Mr. Whitefield used to tell of a wicked son who said be would not live in the same house that his father had inhabited, for he said that every room in the house stunk of his father's religion, and he could not bear it. There are men who after such manner devise mischief. But ah! young man, you cannot sin in that atrocious way without incurring extraordinary guilt. It will be remembered that you sin against the light; it will be recollected at the last great day that you were prayed for—that you were instructed in the right way; nor will you sin so cheap as others—others, did I say? I means such as, when they transgress, only follow an evil example, and run in the path which their parents taught them. Oh! how I grieve over ungodly young men who treat their father's God with dishonour and despite.

Manasseh's sin was aggravated by the fact that *he chose to follow the very worst examples.* Though he had in his father one of the best patterns of purity, that would not do, but he must cast about him to see whom he could imitate. Upon whom think ye, did he light? Why, upon Ahab—the Ahab Of whom God had said that he would cut off every one of his house, and not leave one remaining; a threat which had been executed, for the blood of Ahab had been licked by dogs in the field of Naboth, and Jezebel, his wife, had been devoured of dogs. Yet this young man must needs choose Ahab to be his pattern, so he set up Baalim, even as Ahab had done of old. The like folly I have known to be committed by young men in these days. It may be there are those here who have not found anybody that they could imitate, until at last they sought out some licentious individual, perhaps, of years gone by, whom they have elected to be their leader. Why, half the youth of England used, at one time, to be infatuated with Lord Byron. The glare of his genius blinded them as to the terrible hue of his character and the atrocity of his conduct, so they followed headlong in his track, because, forsooth, he was a great man and a poet. Affecting wit, they bid defiance to pure morals. Alas! for the men whose sentiments, whose language, and whose actions betray the hardihood and the daring of vicious characters they are prone to emulate! Though they know better, they deliberately choose the worst models that they can copy from. What extravagance man will perpetrate in sin!

But this Manasseh sought out for himself *unusual and outlandish sins.* Bad

as Ahab was, he had not worshipped the host of heaven. That was an Assyrian worship, and this man must needs import from Assyria and Babylonia worship that was quite new. He set up the image Ashra, which you may, perhaps, have seen on the slabs that have been brought from Nineveh: a tree bearing souls, intended to represent all the host of heaven. He carved this in the house of God, and set it up for worship. We read in the prophets that the people used to stand in front of the temple and bow before the rising sun, worshipping the hosts of heaven. He was not satisfied with common sin. We have known sinners of this class; they are not content merely to sin as others do; they are ambitious to invent some fresh sin. Like Tiberius, who offered a prize if somebody would find him out a new pleasure, they want to discover a new species of impiety, which shall draw attention to themselves. They must be singular in whatever they attempt; even if it comes to being singularly wicked. Such was Manasseh. He could not be satisfied to run in the race with others, and mingle with the ill-fashion of his times; swiftly as they would fly, he must distance them all.

Beyond this, *he insulted God to his face.* Here, perhaps, his sin culminates. It was not enough to build idol temples for idol worship, but he must needs set up the idols and their altars in the Temple of Jehovah. Such arrogance, as we think of it, makes our blood chill. And ah! one trembles to tell it, not a few men have thus invoked upon their bodies and their souls the curse of the Almighty. So desperately have they been set on transgression, that they have lifted their hand and defied their Maker. Had he not been God—the God of all patience—he would have resented their defiance, and have suddenly smitten them down to hell; but being God, and not man, he has borne with them. He is too great to be stirred by their insults. He has put it by, and let it lie still, winking alike at their ignorance and their assumption. for a while, until their iniquity shall be full; and then, in his justice, will he visit it upon their head. There are not a few in our great city who continually do all that they can to provoke God, and to show how little they reverence him how utterly they ignore his claims on their homage. They will go out of their way to introduce blasphemies into their common conversation, and to express their disgust and contempt for everything chaste and comely, sacred and godly. Such was Manasseh. He set up the altars of the false gods in the house of the living God.

Is not his character black enough? Nay, we have not laid on the thickest touches yet. We are told *he made his children to pass through the fire;* that is to say, he passed them between the red-hot arms of Moloch, that they might belong for ever as long as they lived, to that fiendish deity. If we do not aver that men do this now-a-days, they fall little short of the same cruelty and crime. Many a man teaches his child to drink arduous spirits; trains him to habits

which he knows will lead him to drunkenness; does his utmost to pass the child through the red-hot arms of the spirit-fiend, Else Moloch of the present time. Many a man has taught his child to blaspheme. If he has not deliberately purposed it, he has actually effected it, fully conscious that he was so doing. What was his example but a deliberate lesson? Ay; there are people who seem to take delight in the sins of their children, Laughing at the iniquities they have instructed their own sons to perpetrate. Do I address a father who, for many years, has never attended a place of worship on the Sabbath—who has often gone home reeling drunk, and, though somewhat reformed himself, sees his own son plunging into every vice that he was himself once habituated to? Let me ask you, Do you wonder at it? Do you wonder at it? You have passed your children through the flames; what marvel that they were singed, and that the smell of fire is upon them? Oh! it is a crying sin that men will not only go to hell themselves, but they must needs drag their children with them. Many a man has not been satisfied to be ruined but he must ruin same young woman who, perhaps, once had religious convictions. He becomes her husband, and forbids her to attend the house of God. As for his children, they may, perhaps, be sent to the Sunday School to get them out of the way in the afternoon, yet any goad they might learn there is Soon dissipated by the scenes and sounds they witness and hear under the roof of their home. Why, multitudes in this city—we know it, and they must know it themselves—are ruining their children, deliberately compassing their perdition. Is this a small sin, an insignificant mistake in their training? I trow not.

Moreover, Manasseh proceeded further, for *he made a league with devils.* There were, in his day, certain persons who professed to talk with departed spirits, supposing that the devil had the means of communicating with them about things to come. Now, whether this fellowship with familiar spirits is a delusion and a lie, as I suspect it is, or whether there may be a mystery of Satan involved in it, I do not know; but certain it was that Manasseh tried to get as near the devil as he could. If he could get him to be his friend he was well content to make a covenant with hell, so that it might answer his purposes. Let him have good luck; little did he care for God. He would consult a wizard. Superstition led him to that, but the good Word of God he utterly despised. And there are same that have done this—some here, perhaps. I will not suppose they have lent themselves to those silly superstitions, or resorted lo those deceitful or deceived *mediums* who perform in the dark. I should think, in these modern times of popular education, anyone is fit to be confined in a lunatic asylum who is beguiled by that snare. Intelligence should protect you from imposture. But there be those who, if the devil would help them, would be glad enough to

shake hands with him, and say, "Hail, fellow; well met!" If they do not entertain the devil, it is no fault of theirs. They have set the table for him, and furnished the house, and made themselves quite ready for any evil spirit that chooses to come to them. Oh! what iniquity this is! They will not have God; they will have Satan. They cast off the great Father in heaven, but the archenemy of souls—with him they make a covenant, and contract a league. Could sin go much farther shall this? It could, and it did; for *this man led the whole nation astray.* Being a king, he had great power, and he used his authority and exerted his influence to induce his subjects to follow his pernicious course. I often wonder what will be the horror of a man that has lived in gross sin when, in the next world, he meets those that he betrayed and seduced into iniquity, when he begins to see, in the murky gloom of that intolerable pit, a pair of eyes which somehow or other seem to hold him fixed and fast. He recognises them; he has seen them somewhere before, and those eyes flash fire into the soul as though they would utterly consume him, and a voice says, "A thousand curses on thee! Thou art he that led me first into sin-enticed me from a virtuous home, and from godly associations, to become thy partner in iniquity. A blast be on thee evermore!" What company they have to keep in that place of torment! How they will gnash their teeth at one another in dreadful rage, each one charging the other with being his destroyer! Oh! there is remorse enough in store for a man who ruins himself, but who can tell the pangs that shall scourge his soul who betrays his fellow-creatures, and precipitates them into everlasting ruin? Verily, dear friends, we stand aghast at the picture of such a man as Manasseh, he set no bounds to his sin. He sinned with both hands greedily, and when the messengers came from God to tell him of it, he was angry with them. Tradition says that he sawed the prophet Isaiah in halves for daring to reprove him. But it is not from tradition, but from revelation, we learn that he made Jerusalem to swim with blood from one end to the other, putting to death all those that would not go in his ways and follow his devices. Persecution of the saints of God is a scarlet sin, that calls aloud to heaven for vengeance. Manasseh was guilty of this, among other crimes. I am sick at heart, and my tongue is weary of the story. Let me turn to another branch of the narrative. This terrible monster of iniquity presently became:—

II. A SINGULAR SPECTACLE OF MISERY.

A few words will suffice to describe it. The Assyrian king sent his captain, one Tartan, who besieged the city till it was devastated, and the king fled. It would appear that he hid himself in a thorn brake, and was dragged out from it, and fettered and manacled with heavy irons. There remains a representation at the present time of some Jewish king—we cannot be sure it was Manasseh—

who was dragged before the King of Babylon. At any rate, it represents what was done to Manasseh, whether the like treatment befell any other Jewish king or not. He has two rings—a ring on each ankle, and a heavy bolt between them, and his hands are fastened in the same manner. He is brought before the king at Babylon. There he seems to have been cast into prison, and kept in confinement. The cruelties of the Assyrian monarchs are attested by the memorials upon their own palace walls; therefore, I can fully credit the story told; by Jerome, that this Manasseh was himself put into a brazen vessel, and subjected to the most intense heat, the Assyrian king abusing him for having passed his own child through the fire in the same manner. That he was kept for many a long month in a dark and dreary dungeon, with only sufficient bread and vinegar given him to sustain his life, appears certain. He must have been wretched to the last degree: his crown gone, his kingdom devastated, his subjects put to unheard—of miseries, We are told that the judgment which God executed upon the land was such that it made the both ears of him that heard of it to tingle. The king must, therefore, have experienced some indescribable afflictions from the hands of the tyrant of Assyria. Ah! sinner, though thou harden thyself in thy transgressions, thou wilt not go unpunished. A bitter end awaits thee. Reckless as thou art, young man, thy father's God will not always be mocked. You have persecuted your wife and your friend, but their unhappiness will return ere long to your own bosom. There will come an end to your arrogance, and a beginning to your recompenses. Oh! I wish your iniquity would come to an end soon, and that it might end with your conversion. If it does not come to that end, your outlook is gloomy indeed, for your total destruction will complete the course you are running.

Perhaps I am addressing somebody who has been living in heartless sin until he has become entangled in helpless misery. In this crowd you seem as if you were pointed out, for your heart is ready to break with anguish. Your property is lost, your health is broken up, your character is blasted; you are a mere wreck, a waif, a stray upon the dark sea. There is none to have compassion upon you. You are a castaway. Even your old companions have forsaken you. The devil himself seems to have cast you adrift. You are abandoned, and you might cry out and sound your own death knell. "Lost! lost! lost!" Well, now, I have a message from God to you. I am come to speak to you, in the name of the Lord, about this man Manasseh, in the hope that it may be also concerning yourself true—that after having been a prodigy of sin, and a spectacle of misery, you may now become as, in the third place, Manasseh became:—

III. A MONUMENT OF GRACE.

Oh! I do not wonder at Manasseh's sin one half so much as I wonder at God's mercy. There was the man in the prison. He had never thought of his God except to despise his prerogative, and offend against his laws, till he was immured in that dungeon. Then his pride began to break; his haughty spirit had to yield at last. "Who is Jehovah, that I should serve him?" he had often said. But now he is in Jehovah's hand. Lying there half-starved in the prison, a crushed man, he begins to cry, "Jehovah, what a fool I have been! I have stood out against thee until at length thy sovereign power has arrested me. and thy infinite justice has begun to avenge my crimes. What shall I do? Where shall I hide from thy wrath? How can I escape? Is it possible to obtain thy pardon?" He began to humble himself; God's Spirit came and humbled him more and more; he saw how foolish he had been, how wicked his character, how cruel his conduct, how abominable. Thus he spent his days and nights, in weeping and in lamentation. It was not the prison he cared so much about. His soul had gone into iron bondage. Then it suddenly flashed across his mind that perhaps God might have mercy on him, so he began to pray. Oh! what a trembling prayer that first prayer was. Methinks Satan said to him, "It is no use your praying, Manasseh. Why, you have defied the living God to his face. He will tell you to go to the idol gods you have served, repair to the images you have set up, and bow before the hosts of heaven you have been wont to worship, and see what they can for you." Nay; but in this awful despair he felt he must pray; and surely the first prayer he breathed must have been, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And in his deep abasement, he continued still to pray and plead with God. And that dear Father of ours who is in heaven heard him. If ever you can bring him a praying heart, he will bring you a forgiving message. As soon as he saw his poor child broken down, and confessing his wrong, he took pity on him, heard, and answered him, and blotted out his sins like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud. I think I see Manasseh, with his morsel to eat, never enough to stay his hunger, and his little drops of vinegar, saying to himself, "Ah! I don't deserve this!" He would thank God even for that starving allowance in the depths of his cell, feeling that it was mercy that let him live. "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" And so it came to pass that he was delivered.

The King of Assyria, for State reasons which I need not mention, determined to put this king on his throne again. He thought that he had broken him down, and humbled him enough; that he would make a good viceroy and a faithful lieutenant, and that he would be afraid to rebel again, so one bright day he opened wide Manasseh's dungeon, and told him he was going to send him back to Jerusalem. And when he told him that, then Manasseh knew that

Jehovah, he was God. This conclusion was forced upon him by the mercy he obtained. "Who," he would say, "but the Most High God could have brought me out of this horrible pit, have released me from the power of this tyrant king, or moved his heart to relent, and have compassion on me?" As he rode back to Jerusalem, how his heart would be breaking with gratitude! I think I see him when he first got within sight of the walls of that temple which he had so recklessly profaned. Surely he threw himself upon his face, and wept sore, and then arose and blessed the name of the Lord tl at had forgiven all his trespasses. And when he entered Jerusalem, and the people gathered round him, what must the greetings have been? Where are those courtiers that had been his companions, that led him into sin? Do they come whining round him? What a rebuff they will get! How will he exclaim, "Get you gone. I am another man. I do not want your company or your counsel." Are there any of those poor people standing in the background—the people that used to meet to pray and worship Jehovah, faithful among the faithless found—such as had been wont to hide away their Bibles because they were hunted and harried from one retreat to another—a small remnant, that had escaped the fangs of the persecutors—did they came forward? How he could look at them, and say, "Ah! you servants of Jehovah, you are my brethren. Give me your hands; for I, too, have found from heaven, and I am, like you, a child of God." I warrant you there was singing in Jerusalem that night amongst the feeble band of the steadfast believers; and there must have been music in heaven too, for the fiery angels must have rejoiced in a conversion that seemed so unlikely, so incredible.

"What, Manasseh saved? Manasseh—that bloodhound—is he transformed, by the renewing of his mind, into a lamb of God's flock? What he, the red-handed persecutor—has he become a professor of the faith he once destroyed?" Ah! yes. Well might Bishop Hall say, "Who can complain that the way of heaven is blocked against him, when he sees such a sinner enter? Say the worst against thyself, O clamorous soul! Here is one that murdered men, defied God, and worshipped devils, yet he finds the way to repentance. If thou be vile as he, know that it is not thy sin, but thy impenitence, that bars heaven against thee. Who can now despair of thy mercy, O God, that sees the tears of a Manasseh accepted?" I remember an old lady who would not travel by railway because she thought that some of the bridges were in bad repair, especially the Saltash bridge, near her own house. Over that bridge she could not be persuaded to pass, for fear her weight should break it down, although hundreds of tons weight were carried over it every day. At such folly everybody can smile. But when I hear any man say, "I have committed so much sin, that God cannot pardon it," I think his folly is far greater. Look at this huge train that went over

that bridge. Behold Manasseh laden with ponderous crimes! Mark what a train of sin there was behind him! Then look at the bridge, and see whether it starts by reason of the loaded teem of wills which is rolling over it. Ah! no, it bears up, and so would it bear the weight if all the, Sins that men have done should roll across its arches. Christ is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." I do not know where to cast my eyes for the person to whom this message is directed. That he is somewhere in this assembly I entertain no doubt. So I speak to some sister who, in an unguarded hour, left the path of virtue, and since then has pursued a course of shame? I pray you accept the message. I deliver it to you. The greatest sin, the utmost guilt, the most incredible iniquity, the most abominable transgressions, can be forgiven, and shall be blotted out. The Redeemer lives; the sacrifice has been offered; the covenant is sealed. Turn now to the Lord with purpose of heart. Confess the sins. Abjure thyself. Trust in the infinite mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, his Son. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Our closing reflection is that Manasseh became:—

IV. A PICTURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

At once he ceased to do evil. He went straightway to the temple and *pulled down the idols.* How I would like to have been with him, and have had a hand in demolishing them. Down went the images; then over went the altars; every stone was dragged right out of the city, and flung away. God grant that every image in England may yet be pulled down, battered to pieces, and the small dust thereof flung into the common sewers. May that which is an utter abomination before heaven stir a righteous indignation on earth. Oh! that our land may be so godly that no respect for fine arts may suffer her to tolerate foul impieties! Manasseh made haste to undo the mischief he had done. This is what every converted man tries to do. All the evil he has ever caused he tries to stay; he takes vengeance on his former devices; against them he lifts both his hands, raises his voice, and exerts his influence.

Nor did this suffice; Manasseh *began forthwith to do good.* Right speedily he began to repair the altar of the Lord, and to restore the services of God and the ordinances of the Temple to their original purity, according to the divine statutes. So when a man is truly converted, he will be anxious to join himself to the Lord's people, and support the institutions of his house. Nor did Manasseh smother his gratitude, but he presented thank-offerings to God. He was not unmindful of the devout acknowledgments that were due for the great mercy he had received. Like that other great sinner, whose gratitude is recorded in the

gospel—the woman who brought an alabaster box of ointment, very precious, and brake it—like her, methinks, he loved much because he had had much forgiven.

And, then, being established in his kingdom, *he proceeded to use his high influence for holy purposes*. He ruled his subjects in the fear of the Lord; and made the law of his God to be the law of the land, renouncing all strange gods, and adhering rigidly to the book by inspiration given. Oh! that God would incline the heart of some penitent sinner here at once to bring forth this fruit of conversion! What a change there would be in his house! What a difference his family would see! What an altered man he would appear in his daily avocation, whether he be employer or employed! He would be seeking the conversion of those whom he formerly led astray. Those he once scoffed at, and called by evil names, would become his choicest companions. "Can God do this?", says one. Oh! my dear hearers, the God that can forgive great sin can also change hard hearts. Cry to him. If you are unsaved, may his Spirit lead you to seek salvation now. Stay not for to-morrow's sun. If you are saved yourself, may that blessed Spirit lead you to pray for others, and seek their present and eternal welfare. Watch unto prayer. Let your own faith in God stimulate you to believe that all things are possible. Never give them up, never give them up. Are you a mother—you do not know how prevalent your intercessions may prove. I wonder whether poor Hephzi-bah was alive when Manasseh was converted? She had grieved over him, doubtless, in his young days. Well, if she did not live to see the fruit of her prayers, yet her prayers lived, and her tears were repaid with rich interest. There is many a mother's son whose heart will be turned to God long after his mother's bones have been laid in the churchyard. The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it. Thy son will yet be brought to glory through thy prayers. Pray on, brethren and sisters, pray on for those whose sins and sorrows lay heavily on your heart. Pray on, and God will hear you. O poor sinners, the mercy of God is the antidote for man's despair. Believe in his mercy. Look for his mercy. Cast yourselves upon his mercy, and you shall find his mercy unto everlasting life. God grant it for Christ's sake. Amen.