

THE GOLDEN GATES

A SERMON

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“Then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates.” Judges 5:11

WE have in this book various apostacies and restorations of the Israelites; and it is a remarkable thing that those things that constitute the very reason why we should abide by the Lord are the very things on account of which men forsake the Lord. It was so in the fall of man, and it has been so ever since. And if you ask what those things are that constitute the reason why men forsake the Lord, and at the same time constitute the reason why we should abide by him, it is simply this, that God is all and in all. He made himself so before the fall of man: if Adam had been content to have remained, and let the Lord be everything, let the Lord's name and the Lord's law be everything, and Satan nothing, and the creature nothing, then Adam would have been safe; but when Satan came in in opposition to this truth, and set up the terrible falsehood, “you shall be as gods,” in order to set aside the truth of the great God being all and in all, then we see the direful consequences. And this has been the ground of apostacy in all ages. And so, when they entered, into the land of Canaan, that that became offensive to mere professors was that Jehovah, in distinction from all other gods, would be everything, and rightly everything or else be nothing. And just so in the matter of eternal salvation; unhappily, through the mind of man being by sin poisoned against God, enmity against God, there is nothing so offensive to man as that which, after all is the actual essential of his welfare, namely, that God should be all and in all. Hence men's antipathy to the perfection and certainty of Christ's work, men's antipathy to electing grace and to predestinating favor, men's antipathy to God's sworn covenant, men's antipathy to the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost in regenerating the sinner, and so carrying on the work in that way that shall humble the creature more and more, and ultimately bring about the great design of the gospel. And I am sure there never will be any safety without the accomplishment of that great design, and that design is that God may be all and in all. And this shall be so brought about in salvation matters as never again to be deranged; people shall never again apostatize, therefrom: no separation from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. It is, therefore, worth your while to take notice of this: that the very things that constitute our safety are the reasons that men forsake the Lord. Why do men in our day that have professed these great truths glide off for the sake of a little human association; human applause, and human friendship, all of which is as hollow as the wind? the whole of which, from east to west, from north to south, throughout the population of the globe, is as hollow as the wind, as uncertain as the wind. “Cursed,” it may well be said so, “Cursed is the man that trusts in

man: and that makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord;” he does indeed leave the fountain of living waters, and hews out to himself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Ah, my hearer, would you have undeceiving friendship, would you have solid standing, would you have real security, would you have real safety? It must be in the Lord God Almighty. And when the Lord shall bring about this restoration, then shall the people of the Lord, the people of Jehovah, go down to the gates.

Thus, then you will perceive from these remarks the main drift of my discourse this morning, all bearing upon this one blessed truth, that our God is all and in all. And what a blessedness there is in this; because where he is everything there can be no failing, there can be no coming short; but where the creature is something, and the scriptures are full of the truth of this observation, where the creature is to be something, there is sure to be failure. Hence if you take the old covenant, all the parts of that covenant that were conditional, failed, but those parts of that covenant that were not conditional, stood good. Therefore, the Lord was determined to have a covenant that should be entirely unconditional; that should be ordered in all things, and being ordered in all things, in all things it is consequently sure. “This, said a wise man, is all my salvation and all my desire.”

First, then we have *the gates*: secondly, we have *a privation implied*, “Then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates,” implying they are at present deprived of that privilege; and then thirdly, we have *a freedom promised*, “then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates; and fourthly, *a destiny implied*.

First. I notice then, first, THE GATES. You are aware, of course, in ancient times matters of law were determined very frequently at the gates of cities; matters of the greatest importance being there determined. Hence gate or gates came to be made use of figuratively as places of judgment. Now the truths of the gospel are spoken of as gates, the gates of righteousness, and the gates of heaven, and the gates of truth, and the gates of praise. The truths of the gospel are spoken of as gates of righteousness; “Open unto me the gates of righteousness, and I will go in unto them and will praise the Lord.” Now the first gate of righteousness, and indeed that which shall chiefly dwell upon for a minute or two, is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything is wrong between us and God, as sinners considered; Judgment is gone out against us, the judgment of Almighty God, the wrath of Almighty God; all by nature being children of wrath, and under this fearful state of things. But then there is a gate wherein, wrong as things are, fearful as things are, distressing as things are, there is a gate where all can be made right, and where all is made right; and where all shall be made right; and that gate is called, as you are aware, a strait gate, a difficult gate: it is very difficult to find; and very difficult, until we are taught sufficiently our need, to enter in at. This gate then is the Lord Jesus Christ. In what he has done, whatever may be our state as sinners, he has entirely met that. And if I am brought to know my need of that, and brought to acknowledge what Jesus Christ has done, brought to acknowledge that his atonement only can make things right between the soul and God, he bringing in everlasting righteousness, so that God by him is just, and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus, so as to enter into an understanding of the truth of what Christ has done, to enter into an understanding of his atonement, to enter into an understanding of his righteousness, to enter into an understanding of the way in which God is just, and yet the justifier, this is nothing else but entering in at the gates of righteousness, where everything is made right, not merely today, but is made right for ever; the judgment once given is given for ever; and, as you are aware, the judgment is, “He that believes in me,” see how suited

the mode of entering is; we enter by faith, it means the persuasion of the truth, that “he that believes in me has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.” Now all the truths of the gospel, centering in this mediatorial work of Christ, are gates of righteousness, everyone is a gate of righteousness. I might enumerate here the doctrines that we hold, and there will be no harm just to name them. Take, for instance, the gate of God’s everlasting love: why, it is righteous love; the love stands good in accordance with righteousness by what Jesus Christ has done. Election also stands good by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by the mediation of Jesus Christ; that justice has no loss sustained by our being chosen to eternal glory, seeing that we come to that glory by the mediatorial perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the covenant of grace: God, it is true, has entered into a sworn covenant, but then it is by the priesthood of Jesus Christ; “God has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Jesus Christ is called then the gate of righteousness, where everything is put right, and where everything is kept right. It is a good thing to be brought to this, that, every day there is wrong in our hearts, every day crooks in our circumstances, every day painful things to meet with, there will be more or less all our journey through; and we cannot keep too close to this gate of righteousness, this gate into which the righteous shall enter, It is an unpleasant thing to have anything wrong with those you love on earth, but infinitely more unpleasant to live under the fearful apprehension that matters are not right between us and the great Judge of all, between us and that God at whose tribunal we must soon appear; and happy the man that is brought under an apprehension of this in that way that will make him do as the Israelites, under the captivity to which this chapter refers, did, they cried unto the Lord. And so, my hearer, if we have a heart to cry unto the Lord, it will bring us into an acquaintance with his dear Son, where all our sins are blotted out, where there is no condemnation, but where judgment is given universally in our favor, and all things made to work for our good and for his glory. But again, the truths of the gospel are called gates of righteousness also, the gate of heaven. Hence said Jacob, “The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” I like that declaration very much; I think it is expressive not merely of what Jacob there enjoyed; for, although the place was dreadful, it was dreadful in a sense, quite congenial to the solemnized feelings of Jacob, to the feelings of a convinced sinner, to the solemnized feelings of a poor forlorn creature. What kind of gate was it? It is called in the same connection a ladder, whose top reached heaven, and the foot thereof set on the earth. And the last, verse of the 1st chapter of the Gospel by John shows us that this ladder points to Christ; and thus, you see Christ is not only the gate of righteousness, but the gate of heaven. And then just notice something else, and that is this, that the promises that were given to Jacob on that occasion, were certainly positive; there was not one condition in them. “I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac, the land, whereon you lay to you *will* I give it, and to your seed; and behold, I am with you, and *will* keep you in all places whither you go and *will* bring you again into this land; for I *will not* leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of. Here the promises are positive, showing how Jacob expected to get to heaven.

Now can we say we are brought this far? If do, all we want is faith, that is all we want, precious faith to receive these promises, and to enjoy these promises that honor Jesus Christ., I am persuaded, my hearer, there is a great deal of our experience we do not understand; and if you ask to what I refer, it is something like this: that the apostle, when he had a thorn in the flesh, whatever that thorn was, which he calls a messenger of Satan, and you must, forgive my plainness when I tell you that it was something that made the apostle feel very Satanic, very demoniacal, and if you

know the bubbling up of your own heart, you would be a very devil sometimes in your own estimation; you would say, oh, what a collection of the dregs of hell I have in my heart; what a poor loathsome worm I am. Ah, but then the apostle was getting a little above this; and the Lord brought him down. Lord, what is the reason of this? why, Lord this is going to hell, this is not going to heaven; this is not rising, this is sinking; this is not coming near to you, this is going afar off, what can be the meaning of it? Why, Paul, you do not honor my dear Son quite enough, you are more pleased with your knowledge, and the revelations that are made; you do not honor my dear Son quite enough, you are going a little away from that, and carried away rather, with gifts, and so now I have just brought you down afresh; but here is the remedy, "My grace is sufficient for you." And the apostle Paul understood it; he knew very well where the secret lay, he said, "Most gladly therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the *power* of Christ," ah, there is the secret; you must know, Paul, that unless there be an infinity of power in Christ's atonement, an omnipotence of power in his atonement, an eternity of stability in his righteousness, and unless there is eternal certainty in his suretyship responsibility, you can never get to heaven. Now, my hearer, this is the way the Lord teaches us what the gate of heaven is, that Christ is the gate of righteousness by his mediatorial work; and that he is the gate of heaven by the yea and amen promises that are sealed by that work. I say we do not understand a great many of our experiences. There is nothing else in our day but smoothing people; and if they can but get them to pretend to a little holiness, and righteousness, and goodness after the flesh, then they think they have made Christians of them. But, my hearer a Christian without Christ formed in the heart the hope of glory, is no Christian at all. The man that is not brought to loathe himself, can never love the true Christ of God. So that a great many of the Lord's dealings with us are to make us honor his dear Son; "for this is the will of the Father, that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Now you admit fully, I speak now to those that know the truth, you admit that you had no hand in the fixation of God's love on you, that you had no hand in your election, because that was before the world was; you admit that you had no hand in this, and yet somehow or another there is a legal working in us that we try to do without Christ in a great measure if we can, if we can come before God with a little something of our own; it is like a child with a toy, because we are pleased with it we think our parents are too, we think our Heavenly Father is too; but he will strip us of all our idols, and make us feel that if ever we get to heaven it must be in the same way the saints of old did, and by the same promises, that were declared to Jacob, when he said "How dreadful is this place, this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Ah, when I look at the gate of righteousness, and then look at myself as a sinner, I see that I may enter, in by that gate of righteousness, for it is intended for sinners, for those that know they are sinners; when I look at the gate of heaven, I look at the yea and amen promises by which that gate is distinguished, I dare not despair, I dare not; no, when I look at what Jesus Christ is, and his power to save; there I stand, in spite of sin and my deceitful heart, in spite of Satan, in spite of enemies, in spite of slanderers, let them do or say what they may, there I stand, and can say with the Psalmist, "Though ten thousand set themselves against me, I will not fear;" why should I? here is a gate that leads from hell to heaven, and will as surely bring us to heaven as that Christ is there himself.

Then they are also called the gates of truth. If you enter into a profession by a falsehood, that falsehood shuts you in, keeps you within the territories of the great deceiver; Satan was a liar from the beginning; and if I enter into a profession by creature reformation instead of regeneration, and I am taking this reformation for regeneration, I am taking a lie for the truth, I am still within the territories of the devil, all the difference is this, I have emigrated from one part of the devil's

territories to the other, I have emigrated from the profligate part of the devil's territories to the professing part; we are still in the devil's territories; he is not only a devil in the gross sense of the word, but he is also transformed into an angel of light; and if we thus enter in at the gate of mere profession without regeneration, if we are not quickened by the Spirit of God, and have not the Spirit of God, not born of incorruptible seed by the word of God, then our entering in is false; as John Bunyan says, we have climbed over the wall, though we know it not, we have not come in in a saving way; our very beginning is false, our profession is false, and it is all false together; and thus, instead of entering in by the gates of truth, we have entered in by the gates of falsehood. Do not talk to me about a man being a Christian that can give no account of soul trouble, no account of being cut up, no account of being cut down, no account of fearful apprehension, no account of trembling at God's word, no account of doubts and fears, no account of solemn self-examination; no groanings, and sighs, no struggling, no rebellions, for the law works wrath: and yet the man born of God! What, tell me that the man who knows not what it is to feel that without the perfect work of Christ he is a lost sinner, and at the same time does not know whether he dares to hope in that or not: knowing that thousands hope in it who will be damned at the last, seeing their hope is made up of hay, wood, straw, and stubble; and their hope not being made up of that golden anchor formed by the Holy Ghost that takes a sure anchorage hold of the work of Jesus Christ: tell me the man is a Christian who is a stranger to these things; you may tell me so, but what say the scriptures? "If you be without chastisement, then are you bastards and not sons." You know the object of scourging was to make people tell the truth; and I know there is a deal of wickedness hidden up in the heart unknown to the sinner himself, and God scourges that man, and brings those abominations to light; and bye-and-bye the man come out with the whole truth before God; like the woman who fell at the Savior's feet, she went and told him all the truth, you will confess what a sinner you are, the abominations you have in your heart, you will confess them before God, there will be an acknowledgment of them. And if you are without this discipline, without this scourging, then are you bastards, and not sons; and you never can know the truth unless you are brought down, chastened out of all falsehood, and brought to understand what the truth really is. Do not let us deceive ourselves, religion is a heartfelt reality. Let those dwell upon the speculative parts that have nothing better to do; let those run about that are themselves of no use, and try to hinder those that are useful; but let us fear the Lord and love the Lord, grace enabling us, let us abide in our lawful calling, go straightforward with our business, and from day to day seek mercy from the God of heaven, from day to day let our prayer, grace enabling us, be; "Open unto me the gates of truth, and I will go in unto them, and praise the Lord."

And then these gates also are called the gates of praise, "I will make your walls salvation, and your gates praise." And every truth of the gospel speaks out the praise of Jehovah, every truth of the gospel is expressive of his mercy, of his grace, of his lovingkindness, of his counsel, of his salvation, of that provision which he has made; and it is impossible for us to enter in at these gates without praising the Lord. Thus, then these are the gates which our text says the people of the Lord shall come down to. Now this includes all I have said relative to the humbling work of the Lord. Man is too proud to come down to Christ's finished work till God humbles him; man is too proud to come down to the yea and amen promise until God has brought the man down; man is too proud to come down to the terms of truth until God humbles the man down; man is too proud to come low enough to be prepared to show forth the praises of Jehovah until the Lord himself humbles him down. I am persuaded of it, if we understood our experience a little better than we do I think the Savior would be more precious to us. The Savior even had to say to his disciples, "Are you yet

without understanding?" Why, we have only one loaf in the ship, Lord, that is all. Oh, you have only one loaf in the ship. That is just the way you would reason, some of you; only one loaf in the ship. Now, Peter, let me say a word to you; are you not ashamed of it? No, we have only one loaf in the ship. And is that all that you have? Yes. What a mistake you are making; why man, you have *Jesus Christ in the ship*. Quite forgotten that, quite forgotten it; so, we have; so, we have got Jesus Christ in the ship. So it is, ah, I have very little enjoyment; what of that, there is Jesus Christ; you have got him in the ship; not without him. So, they thought of the poor little loaf, for making their bread daily, as they do in the East, I suppose it was a sort of little penny loaf, hardly enough for one; quite forgot Jesus Christ. Why, he said, are you yet without understanding? Do you remember the loaves that fed the multitude? how many baskets did you take up? Quite forgot that, Lord, quite forgot it; forgot you were here, Lord. So it is: we are such poor creatures; we go reckoning, and reckoning, and reckoning without the Lord. Now the Lord says, "Come, and let us reason together;" and where we can take Jesus Christ into the reckoning, when we can take him into the reckoning, why, if we have only one loaf, or no loaf at all, we have Jesus Christ he can supply all our need; he that could feed the multitude that there should be twelve baskets left, will supply all we need for body and soul. If we have Christ, we have everything; in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and he has power overall worlds; all things are his; and all things are ours by virtue of our nearness with him.

Second. But I must come back to the state of this people. Now this people, the Israelites, were in a state of privation, they were kept from the gates, and consequently from their land; judgment in their favor could not reign; they were worshipers of other gods; and when the Lord brought them into misery, or made them feel the miserableness of their condition, then they cried unto him. First, they were deprived of their land, and these Israelites in this state are a figure of an awakened sinner. Here is a sinner awakened to acknowledge what he is. Ah, I see now that I have lost all that I had in the first Adam; I see there is no Paradise for me, no inheritance for me, no land for me, no sustenance for me. That is the very first thing that fastened upon my mind when I was made concerned for eternal things; before I came into much depth of soul trouble, only thinking how matters might go providentially even: I thought, Well, all I have is mortal life, and what I can get, the casualties of the world; what an uncertain, awful state. Ah, I shall never forget how wretched I felt: as said one, "The wormwood and the gall, my soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind; therefore, have I hope." Here is privation. So, the poor sinner is brought to feel he is in a state of privation, deprived of all he had in the first Adam, and does not know as yet that there is anything for him in the second Adam. Ah, say some, you have nothing to do but believe. My hearer, believe me, there is a solemn difference between the faith of God's elect and mere natural faith. For instance, you know it is written that "he that believes not shall be damned." Believe me, my hearer, thousands and tens of thousands that do believe will be damned. Devils' believe, they will be damned, and "Many will say unto me at that day" take notice of that, owning Jesus Christ, you see, "have we not cast out devils in your name?" did not these men believe? they believed in the letter of God's Word: "and in your name have done many wonderful works?" Why, he says, "I never knew you;" never knew you; I had never any acquaintance with you; and these persons belonged to the great mystery of iniquity, that while it receives the letter, is destitute of the spirit of God's word, and stands opposed to the spirit of the gospel. "Depart from me, you workers of iniquity." Now all these believed. "He that believes not shall be damned;" and so will thousands and tens of thousands that do believe, be damned, because their faith is only natural, and not supernatural.

If there be not two kinds of believing spoken of in the Bible, why in the name of common sense should the scriptures be careful to distinguish the faith of God's elect from that which is not the faith of God's elect? Why should the scriptures speak so carefully of Christ being the author and the finisher of the faith of those that are saved; but he is neither the author nor the finisher of the faith of the others? Thus then, my hearer, be not deceived. We live in a day when tens of thousands in my opinion (and I say it in all soberness) are taking this natural belief for a supernatural, and by-and-bye, when they appear at the bar of God, it will be manifested that they have never been delivered from their old Adam spirit, from their first-born state, that they have never been absolved from the law of God; that the law has never been dead to them, and they never dead to the law; that a dissolution has never taken place between them and the law, and, consequently, no real marriage has ever taken place between them and Christ, for Christ will never marry one that is married; you must first be widowed, divorced from the law; let the law come and convince you of what you are, and make you confess that you are under its curse; you then become divorced from it, dead to it, and it becomes dead to you; and there you remain in that divorced state until Christ shall come and take you up into the bond of the everlasting covenant, and then you will possess the spirit of a gospel marriage, you will then possess the spirit of gospel adoption, you will then possess the spirit of a salvation by grace; you will then possess the spirit of Christ, the spirit of God; and without this you are a damned man to all eternity if you die in that state. Now this is rather digressive, but I could not help these few solemn remarks. Now; this people, the Israelites, then, were in a state of privation; and if you are convinced spiritually (for I am now spiritualizing their captivity) if you are convinced of your privation, then you will wish to come into possession of the heavenly land by the spirit of Christ; and if you do not come into possession of it by the spirit of Christ, it will be sure to be taken from you, and in the end you will be a fool instead of being a wise man.

Second, we learn that these Israelite's were kept from the wells of water, that would make them fear they would perish; And so, a poor, sinner, his sins will keep him from the wells of salvation. Ah! he says, there is the well of mediation, there is the well of mercy, there is the well of electing grace, and the well of everlasting love and there stands the promise that "with joy they shall draw water from the wells of salvation;" but I am a sinner, cannot believe it is for me. Ah! say some, be should come. Come! he can no more come than he can create a world. And there he remains, and he will do so until he has cried unto the Lord. And if you have that cry in your heart it shall be answered. We read that David said, "Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well by the gate of. Bethlehem:" and David's mighty men rushed through the host and drew water. And so, now, if you have that prayer in your heart, God has a few mighty ministers, on earth, and they shall rush through the crowd of your sins, and shall bring you front Bethlehem's well a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, and it shall assuage your feverish feelings, give rise to a hope in your heart, and make you begin to hope that Jesus has quenched the raging flames of hell on your behalf, and that after all your happy destiny will be to draw water with joy out of the wells of eternal salvation, and to rejoice in the blessed hope that you are one of that happy number that the Lamb will ever feed, and lead to living fountains of water, while God shall wipe away ultimately all tears from your eyes. Privation! What a mysterious kind of subterraneous, narrow path is the path of this divine experience; the vulture's eye has not seen it, the lion's whelps have not trodden it; the keenest philosopher and the most tyrannical enemy, with all their schemes, can never enter into the spirit of godly experience. It is a spirit of soul trouble, a spirit of divine realization, a spirit

of divine endearment, and a spirit of heavenly prospect, into which none can enter but the man that is born of God; he knows it, he understands it, and can bear testimony of it.

Again, these people were deprived of their armor. “Was there a sword or a spear found in all Israel?” Ah, says the poor sinner, the convinced sinner, I have nothing to fight the devil with, I have nothing to go against sin with, I have nothing to go against death with, I have nothing to meet the threatening with, I am without armor, I am a poor lost creature, I have no shield, I have no shoes, like the prodigal, I have no girdle, I have no breastplate, I have no helmet; ah, I have nothing with which to come against sin, against Satan, against death, or against hell. “Was there a sword found, or a shield in all Israel?” Ah then, say the people, we shall never get the victory; stop, let the Lord step in, he will get the victory. Now, my hearer, if you are convinced of this your state, you will, seek some armor; you will want some shoes, a girdle, a breastplate, a helmet, a shield; and a sword, and skill to use the same; “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;” you will step into reconciliation with God, and then you will have the girdle of truth; a girdle that will reach all round. What girdle is that, say you? why, that same line of truth that I called last Sunday morning a range of mountains. Take the girdle, one end of it is “whom he did foreknow,” and the other is, “He also glorified.” Ah, you will be glad to wear it; that is the girdle of truth. Well, but I want a breastplate; the righteousness of Jesus Christ will be your breastplate. But I want a helmet. But I want a sword, that is to be God’s word; and with that you are to cut your enemies down, overcome them. Ah, but how am I to use it? with all prayer and supplication. Lord, as you have girded me into this gospel peace, give me grace to stand where I am, shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Lord, as you have girded me with the gladness of your truth; for I am glad you did foreknow me, and predestinate me, and have called me, and will glorify me, and, Lord, let me gird on this same girdle from day to day; and let me hope to the end for more grace to be brought: I have received a great deal already, but there is more to come yet. Lord, you have given me a breastplate, help me to face sin, Satan, and the world and stand fast, and never turn my back upon your truth; no, let me stand fast, face the enemy, cut my way through hosts of devils, and having done all to stand. Lord, help me to keep the helmet of salvation, the hope of salvation; first the hope of eternal salvation, second the hope of intermediate salvation, third the hope of circumstantial salvation. First the hope of eternal salvation by Jesus Christ; secondly, in soul-trouble, hope still, hope to be delivered.

Again, in temporal trouble, if I lose any near and dear relative, or whatever it may be, let me never despair, but remember that God is above all, orders all, manages all. We sometimes think circumstances are unmanageable, they are so to us, but he has his way in the whirlwind and the storm, the clouds are the dust of his feet, and by-and-bye, when I understand the whole, and see the way as the Lord sees it, we shall both agree upon the matter as much as we disagree now.