

# GOOD LIVING

## A SERMON

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“And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand; also, they saw God, and did eat and drink.” Exodus 24:11

BY the nobles, I think, we may understand here the ministers of the gospel, as represented by these nobles; and also, secondly, that they are representatives of all the people of God. Hence, in the 30th of Jeremiah, when the Lord there speaks of the blessedness of the state into which he will bring his people, he says, “Their nobles shall be of themselves.” And you will observe how this has been fulfilled. The apostles were of the Lord's people; convinced of their state, as all the people of God are; and led into the mercy and truth of God, as all the people of God are. So that they were indeed nobles, they were noblemen. Like all the people of God, they were born of a high birth, and they stood united to him who is God over all, and blessed for evermore. And ministers of all ages are born, that is, those who are of any lasting and real use to the church, are born of noble birth, and have a noble standing, and they have a noble employment, the most noble in which a man can be employed. And there is a promise that “they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.” Whether ministers will rank as high in their circumstances, and state, and glory, as the rest of the people of God in heaven, some have felt a little doubt, because it says that “they that be wise,” which all the people of God shall be unto salvation, “shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness,” they are to shine only as the stars. Some have thought that as those ministers have had the honor to be ministers here, they are to come a little short in some respects; that those who had to serve the Lord's people here will have to serve them there. Well, if that should be the case, if those who are ministers, and labor here, are to be servants when they get to heaven as well as sons, I will promise two things; first, that I will do my work, as I do now, as well as I can, and, very willingly; and, secondly, that I will do my work a great deal better than I can do it now; and that I shall always please you, and never offend you, when we get there. The Lord Jesus Christ is a servant in heaven, as well as a son, and if he is not above leading his sheep there to fountains of living waters and carrying out in his exalted position the eternal blessedness of the people, if I am to be a laborer there, I shall be very happy. The fact is, I shall be glad to get there at all. So, then if ministers are not to shine as the brightness of the firmament, out only as the stars, be it so. Of course, I hardly believe such a doctrine, but still it is a notion that some hold. Now, then, all the Lord's people also may well be said to be nobles; of exalted rank, and order, and association. Why, the Christian occupies the highest order of creature being and existence. The Lord Jesus Christ is made better than the angels;

and if his people are one with him, then they are more noble than angels. He has obtained a more excellent name than angels, and if they are to be named after him, and he is to be to them Jehovah their righteousness, then they have a name far surpassing that of angels. Oh, what a noble race of beings are these! Well may they be said to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, a holy nation; and their eternal employ shall be to show forth the praises of him that has thus brought them into this eternal oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ. Then it is said, "Their governor shall proceed from the midst of them." They are all brethren; Jesus is the Elder Brother, and God is their Father. "And I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me; for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? said the Lord." Ah, what an approach was that to God which Christ made by his obedient life, by his atoning death! What an approach was that to God when Christ in his own person, and by virtue of his own blood, entered into the holy of holies! What an approach was that to God when he became enthroned at God's right hand, and the Holy Spirit descended, to bring poor sinners to know their state, and to wrap them up in God's eternal salvation! And what an approach will that be to God at the last great day, when the Savior shall say, "Here am I, and the people whom you have given me." And then it is added, "And you shall be my people, and I will be your God;" that is, by what Christ has done.

Now it is said here, "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand." I think this must be understood in the judicial sense of the word; because the Lord does lay his hand graciously upon all his people, and none shall pluck them out of his hand. I think it must be understood here in the judicial sense of the word. On whom shall the law lay its hand? On Jesus, but not on the people. On whom shall justice lay its hand? On Jesus, but not on the people. On whom shall the everlasting covenant lay its hand, and demand all its stipulations, items, and conditions to be confirmed, carried out, and established? Not on the people, but on him of whom we have stated. "Who is this that has engaged his heart to approach unto me?" So that in these words, I think, that liberty which is by Jesus Christ to enter into the holy of holies without a single demand being made upon us.

"Nor aid he seeks, nor duties asks,  
Of us poor feeble worms:  
What everlasting love decrees,  
Almighty power performs."

I at once, then, come, having noticed the previous parts of this verse last Lord's day morning, to the subject of this heavenly eating and drinking: "Also they saw God, and did eat and drink."

First, then, I notice *the order of eating and drinking with God*. Secondly, *the qualities of the sustenance*. Thirdly, *the recognition of God in this sustenance*.

First, then, *the order of eating and drinking with God*. And this eating and drinking with God, I need not say, is a form of speech to denote living with God; because if you unexceptionably eat and drink with a person, you cannot be absent from him very long at a time. And hence the manna in olden times came every day. The Lord would not send them a stock that would last them for months: as though he should say, If you have a sufficient quantity to last you so long, as long as that lasts you will not care much about me; so I will feed you after that manner that shall keep you with me. I therefore take advantage of the words of our text, and apply them to the general

experience of the people of God. You have first, then, the order of eating and drinking with God; and in noticing this order I would say, in the first place, it is paradisiacal. In paradise there was the tree of life, and all trees that were good for food. and the Lord was with Adam by the tree of life, and by the trees that were of a like kind, and Adam with the Lord. Let this tree of life be, as you know it is, a type of the gospel; a type, in a word, of Jesus Christ. Solomon's Song speaks very beautifully upon this; "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Here Adam was to live in perfect peace; there was no adversary; there was no fault between him and the Lord; he had no fault to find with the Lord, and the Lord had no fault to find with him, and he was perfectly happy; everything was tranquil and comfortable, and everything was pleasing to man and pleasing to God. But there was another tree, of which, I think, you will presently see very solemnly the meaning. Adam must, in order to live in peace with God, and be happy, and have no guilt on his conscience, and no fetters on his soul, no hardness in his heart, no cloud in his skies, nothing inclement in the elements or weather around him, everything pleasing, he must keep to the tree of life. But there is another tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This tree is evidently intended to represent the law of God. Now, Adam, if you are determined either to leave the tree of life and go to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or if you are determined to combine the two, and to live partly by the tree of life, and partly by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, then that is the way to death; that is the way to destruction; you shall as surely die as that you exist. And so, it came to pass. Now, then, there is something here deeply worthy of the attention of every Christian. Go to the 3rd of Galatians, and there you will be told that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." And the apostle gives this evidence of it; he says, "For it is written, Cursed is every one." Any one of you escape if he can; any one of you get away from it if he can; any one of you hold up your head by the law if you can; "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Has it not often appeared to you that it was a very simple circumstance just taking of the fruit of that tree? There was no violence; there was nothing apparently of any great importance. But it set aside God's order of things. And so, men now, "Oh," they say, "it doesn't matter what doctrine you believe; if you believe in a Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter whether it is the Jesus Christ." But let me tell you that unless you are so acquainted with the law as to become dead to it, and if the Lord should give you that acquaintance with that I have just stated, that "cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," and the law is good, and condemns all your badness, or condemns you for all your sins, and by the law is the knowledge of sin, and is the tree of the knowledge of good, which will not pardon badness, and of the knowledge of evil, which overwhelms and sinks the sinner to despair, ah, you will say to yourself, I am cursed in everything. I am cursed in life. I am cursed in death, I am cursed in judgment, I am cursed to all eternity. But stop! hearken! Listen! there was One that did continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them; and though he was made a curse for us, as the substitute for us, himself cannot be cursed; himself made blessed, blessed for evermore; and he could say, "I always do those things that please him; and you always hear me; and I have set the Lord always before me;" and he abides a priest continually. Now, then, poor sinner, if you would live with God as in a paradise, fly from the law, renounce all confidence in the flesh; let Jesus, unmixed with anything else, be your tree of life; let him be the way, the truth, and the life, the everything. "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." I could stay here, and if I knew how, could compose a song of gratitude to God for ever discovering to me, and discovering to you, and discovering to thousands more, what we are in the eyes of the law, and the utter impossibility of living with him in any way but

by the faith of the gospel. Thus, then, they saw God. If you see him in the law, you will fly from that; and if you see him in the gospel, Ah, you will say, let Jesus be the end of the law, and it is done; let Jesus be the law-magnifier and fulfiller, and it is done; and let me live in Zion, where the Lord satisfies the poor with bread. This tree of life, Christ Jesus, is all I need; it bears fruit every month, and it is never leafless; the very leaves are for the healing of the nations, and there is not a dry leaf on it; there is not a dry promise hanging upon it; every promise that hangs upon that tree is a new covenant promise, a green, living promise; the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Thus, then, if you see God rightly in Christ Jesus, you will live with him, as I have said; as if you were in paradise; you will run away from the law; you will run away from all confidence in the flesh. Ah, one who was living by the law; oh! how did he stand aghast when God cleared the clouds from around him, ministered life to his soul, opened his blind eyes! He fell to the ground; his sight was taken from him, as a kind of emblem of the blindness he had been under; paradoxical as it may seem, his eyes were never so opened as they were when his sight was taken from him. He now saw his state as a sinner; looked within, and there saw all manner of concupiscence; saw that the law was spiritual, he was carnal, sold under sin. The apostle, therefore, could so distinguish between the law-forbidden fruit and the tree of life. He felt a delight in pointing these two out to the people, that they may fly from the one, cleave to the other, and give Christ the honor of being the end of the law for righteousness. Never mind what people say. They say, "Ah, you do not take the law as the rule of life." Nor you either, you hypocrite. "I do, sir." Yes, in your head; not in your heart. If you did, you would love every fellow-creature with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind; and you would love God with all your heart, and soul, and mind. You hypocrite, you know you like the world better than you do anything else; and yet you go squeaking about like a guinea-pig, "Yes, I take the law as the rule of life." May God open your poor blind eyes, and make you know that there is no life but by that faith that makes it all of grace. "It is by faith that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed." "Ah, you should not call me a hypocrite, because I mean someday to do it." You mean! you mean! It is your deceitful heart tells you that. Your heart will be as bad next week as it is now, and worse too; and the devil will be as bad next year as he is now, and worse too, because the more experience he gets the worse he gets. The Lord open your eyes, and give you to see the kind of life you need; as the apostle did when he said. "The life I now live is by the faith of the Son of God." This is our paradisiacal life. As though the Lord should say to Paul. Paul, you seem very fond of this paradisiacal life, and yet you have had only a few fruits, some of the outer leaves of the tree of life; should you not like to see the paradise itself? You seem very fond of that sort of life, that gospel life; should you not like to see the paradise itself? I should. Lord, I should. Ah, but before you die? Yes, I should, Lord. And he was caught up to the third heaven, into the paradise of God. Now when I come back, won't I say such things as I never said before! Oh dear, what did you see, Paul? I don't dare attempt to say, for it was so glorious and so wondrous, my soul was so swallowed up, that whether in the body or out I cannot tell. The words unspeakable; the scene infinitely too glorious for human language. "I heard unspeakable words," of those that are there, communing one with another, and praising God; words that it is not lawful or possible to utter. Bless the Lord, then, for this paradise like life, the best of all life, to be brought by faith to live with God by Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the people of God eat and drink with God sacramentally; Melchisedek met Abraham with bread and wine, sacramentally; there is the origin of the Lord's supper. And he was priest of the most high God; a priest of dignity in accordance with his standing, priest of the most high God. Well, Abraham, should you like to be as high in doctrine as that Melchisedek? Yes. The most high

God; above everything; does just as he pleases. And that is what I like; my God does just as he as he pleases. If he did not, he would not have loved me as he does; if he did not, he would not have chosen his people to everlasting life. Priest of the most high God. God had given victory to Abraham. The king of Sodom came and he said, Now, Abraham, don't you go too far; must not go too high: must share things a little with me; let me help you a little; have a little of my religion; take just one thread; your gospel shoes may fail; let me just put a free-will shoe latchet on. "Not from a thread to a shoe latchet will I take of you, lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich." Oh, I like that glorious spirit; I disdain to own that a single thread or shoe latchet of my eternal welfare belongs to any but God himself. A man said to me some time ago, "Why, you don't mind whom you put down if you can set what you call your covenant God up." I said, "I really do not; because when they are down, they are just in a right position to get up the right way," Most people get up wrong; but when they are down under a sight and sense of what they are, and grace lifts them up, they will be up right. It is one thing to be up wrong, another thing to be up right. And you may depend upon it, Abraham understood the bread after the order in which he was blessed with it; and it pointed to the bread of everlasting life; he understood the vine, it pointed to the blood of the everlasting covenant. Thus, he did eat and drink with God sacramentally; it was a sacred matter. If you are thus brought to the High Priest to receive Jesus Christ in the way I have stated, then you are not far off from some great blessing or blessings. I never knew a sinner yet brought down very low at the Savior's feet, that there was not some great blessing, or many great blessings, not very far off; for "if any man love me, he shall be beloved of my Father, and we will come and make our abode with him." So, poor sinner, if you are thus far, if you can say that you do love this great High Priest Jesus Christ, having perfected forever all them that are sanctified; if you are brought thus far, you will fare just as Abraham did. Say you, How did he fare? The Lord stepped in. And you can hear the pious people, after Abraham would not take a thread nor a shoe latchet, saying, "Oh, that old Abraham; that old high-doctrine bigot; cannot we put him down; cannot we injure him; cannot we slander him; cannot we get him into prison; cannot we kill him?" Why, say you, you don't think they were so bad as that? Yes, I do, and worse than I can describe. And the Lord saw it all, and so the Lord stepped in, and said, "Fear not, Abraham; I am your shield;" and they must get me out of the way before they can hurt you; "and your exceeding great reward." And you know how the Lord goes on in that chapter; brings Abraham abroad at night. Now, Abraham, look at the skies. Yes, great many stars, and they are very high. "So shall your seed be." Is it possible, Lord? Then they are all to be high ones. To be sure they are; and independent of the earth, indestructible. "So shall your seed be." Well, Lord, to make the matter short, I really do believe it. Then you are my friend. And so, it was counted to him for righteousness. Thus, he did eat and drink sacramentally. And if you are brought to receive the testimony of the antitypical Melchizedek, the eternal Priesthood of Christ, then you are sustained by his sacrificial flesh and by his precious blood, and God is your shield, your exceeding great reward, and will keep you as the apple of his eye. Now, then, we see God in this paradisiacal order of things, and we see God in this eternal priesthood. There was a time when we did not see God in this paradisiacal order of things. we do now: there was a time when we did not see God in this sacramental sense, after the order of this eternal priesthood.

Third they did eat and drink with God testimonially; they bear testimony of their confidence in God. The angel of death is commissioned to Egypt, those that have any confidence in God take the spotless lamb. What shall I say to this, friends? It is in its ultimate meaning beyond all that I can say? Oh, those that receive the spotless lamb receive Christ Jesus, and those that receive Christ

Jesus receive the eternal God. And what do you receive by receiving the eternal God? "He that receives me receives him that sent me." Oh, then the lord helps us to bear testimony of our confidence in God, in receiving the Paschal Lamb. But they were to receive the lamb also as a suffering lamb. It was to be slain and roasted with fire. Only in the death of Christ that order was reversed. There the lamb was slain, and afterwards subjected to the fire but Christ endured the fire first and then was slain when he had quenched the fire. So, we receive Jesus Christ not only as the spotless Lamb, but we receive him also as Christ crucified. "You are worthy for you were slain and have redeemed us by your blood out of all kindreds and nations. And they were to eat of the paschal lamb, and to rest quiet and comfortable; they were to adopt no other means. You will at once perceive what a beautiful illustration this is of confidence in God. The confidence you observe was not to be in bolts or bars or in the kindness of any creature whatever but simply and entirely in God. And you never can eat comfortably if you don't feel safe. They had to eat in haste, it is true but that suited those that were hungry. Quick at meals and quick at work: live well work well. Now they were to eat in haste; that will suit me very nicely indeed; their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, ready to start, staff in hand, the promise before them, God with them. They were to rest quietly and have confidence in God and so, they did. And they were not only in an enemy's country and defenseless, speaking after the manner of men, but in addition to this the angel of death was abroad and in addition to this there were all the Egyptians eager to be at them; and yet they were quiet and comfortable. The angel won't come to us and the Egyptians can't come; so, the one cannot and the other will not; God will take care they shall not: so, we get the will not, the cannot. God takes care they shall not. And so, if a poor nervous thing like some of you had been there, you might have been as quiet. Just as we realize the preciousness of Jesus Christ now are, we quiet and comfortable.

"Calm amidst tempestuous motion.  
When we know our Lord is nigh;  
Waves obey him.  
And the storms before him fly."

Eat with God testimonially; this is the way we are to testify our confidence in God. I am to testify my confidence in God by living by Jesus Christ, by the Paschal Lamb; and I am to testify my confidence in God by living in the same way. Also, I am to testify my confidence by preaching the same, and you by hearing the same. Why the apostles would have shown a very poor confidence in God if they had known anything among the people save Christ and him crucified; they would have shown a very great want of confidence if they had preached any other gospel but the free-grace gospel of the blessed God. They would have shown a sad want of confidence in the God of all grace if they had deviated one hair's breadth from the gospel. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." "If anyone, even an angel, brings any other gospel let him be accursed."

Then I meant to have had the joyful. In the days of Solomon every man was sitting under his vine and under his fig tree, eating and drinking from Dan to Beersheba; not an adversary nor evil occurrent. Then that was the glory of Solomon. That passed away. But the glory of Jesus Christ does not pass away; and bless the Lord. there is no evil in Christ, there is no adversary in Christ, where our faith is, where our standing is, where our provision is: and he does not pass away, therefore this joyful festivity does not pass away. Also, domestically. The prodigal had an elder brother, but not a brother in spirit. Now when the prodigal was home, there was the father and all

the family; they were all happy together, and they did eat and drink and were merry; a nice representation, as you know, of the Lord's mercy in receiving every poor sinner that feels his need of mercy into his family, and making them quite at home. Now if the elder brother could have got in, he would have looked black at everything. So, you Pharisee, you halfway professor, if you could get to heaven in your present state, the first thing you would look black at when you got there would be the parchment of the Lamb. When you saw the book of life unrolled, and heard the people, rejoicing that their names were inscribed there from all eternity, that is the first thing you would look black at. Why, all heaven would be amazed; they would say. "What Paul, How has he come in? Who in the world has sent him?" You know sometimes, when a family is perhaps all at once interrupted by the intrusion of a total stranger, and perhaps a very disagreeable one, how it stops your mirth; must not speak friendly now, must not speak comfortably now; must pull long faces now; as though our Maker, the God of goodness, was an undertaker. But when we get rid of this Pharisee professor, we can be happy again. And so, it is. I have really found in company where I have been, I have meet with a few Christians, one enemy to the truth in their midst; there is no gladness there, all gloom, as though to believe in Jesus Christ was one of the most awful things possible; as though to believe in God was a very awful thing; as though to come before his presence with gladness, and to enter into his courts with praise; as though to dance before the ark of the everlasting covenant, and for our countenances to be lighted up from the gladness of our hearts, the expansion of our souls, that these were such awful things that we ought to pull a face as long as a fig-leaf, and seem as awful as a thunder-storm in the midst of it. I meet with some of that stamp. While I like real solemnity, I hate that mock-faced gloominess, that mock gloominess; that is hypocrisy in the essence of it. I met one some time ago of that stamp; so, I thought, Well, here is an old-fashioned sort of house; I will knock at the door, and see if I can find anything within. I got the door a little way open, and I found every room in his house was a lumber room; so, I did not go in. What do you mean by that? I mean his understanding was dark, his affections carnal, his will adverse to the truth, his conscience put into an iron frame, with his formalities: and I found every room was a lumber-room. And I thought to myself, You be off; you are a walking death. Whereas a man who is taught of the Eternal Spirit, knock at his door, get him to open the treasures of his soul; he can tell you of soul-trouble, he can tell you of the glories of Christ, he can tell you of the promises of God, he can tell how his soul rejoices in God's salvation

And then they are to feast finally. 7th of Revelation; "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Well, the provision is made for the poor. The same fault is found now with the gospel and with those that preach it that was found with Jesus Christ. "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" I don't know what else he would eat with it he ate with you, at any rate. What are you, then? Oh, I am a pharisee. Oh, a Pharisee! I am sure he would eat with a sinner if he ate with you; certainly, he would. And the Master answered. "Go and learn what it means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; and I am not come to call the righteous," or those that think they are righteous, "but sinners to repentance." Thus then, the gospel comes to us in all its freeness; as I said last Sunday night, if we have the hunger and the thirst, God has the provision.

Now I have said nothing of *the qualities*. I will just say what I was going to say, and then close. First, this sustenance is clean. The Lord chose the diet of the Israelites, and he has chosen the diet of his people, and the sustenance is clean. "He that eats my flesh;" ah, who doubts the purity of Christ's sacrificial flesh? "and drinks my blood;" who doubts the innocence of his infinitely precious blood? The glorious truths of the gospel, who doubts their cleanness and their purity?

And whatever is contrary to those truths is demoniacal, and therefore unclean. "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." How the word devils, there, obscures that scripture! it obscures the meaning. Those of you that understand the original well know that the original there is demon; and the word "devils" there means "demons;" "demons" mean "heathen gods." And therefore, to give an explanation as well as a translation, it would read in this way: "You cannot drink of the cup of heathen gods and of the cup of the Lord." No, the Christian does not desire to do so. You cannot be partaker of the gospel provision of the Lord's table and the table of these heathen gods. There are some professors who do; but then they are under the curse of the law, and that they will find to their cost, if they should die in that state. Second, this sustenance is wholesome, in contrast to the unwholesome. "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Then it is also good, in contrast to that which is evil. "Eat you that which is good; let your soul delight itself in fatness."

But lastly, I notice *the recognition of God, in this sustenance*. "They saw God and did eat and drink." Many of the Israelites did not recognize God in the paschal lamb, else they would not have apostatized as they did. Many of the Israelites did not recognize God in the manna, or else they would not have despised it. They did not recognize God in the flowing rock, nor in the cloud, nor in the high priest, nor in the sacrifices, nor in the mercy-seat, nor in the salvation from Egypt. Oh, it is a great thing, then, in and by those provisions which are by Jesus Christ, to recognize God in his love, in his counsel, in his mercy, and in those great designs from which he will never depart, for his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. I ought to say here, perhaps, as a matter of right, that it is right for us to see God in temporals as well as in spirituals. We look into the Bible, and we see his promise, seedtime and harvest to the end of time. Oh, how faithful he has been, and still is! The Lord help us, in the proper sense of the word, to see him in everything that is temporal. We shall do no harm in that, recognizing God in that way. Old divines, I suppose, spoke from experience, as well as the authority of God's word, when they said, "He that has an eye to watch and acknowledge a kind Providence, shall never want a Providence to be kind to him, and to watch over him." They did eat and drink, and saw God. The ungodly do eat and drink, and see not God, regard not God, fear not God, love not God, and seek not God; but do not be yourself like them are; for the Lord has opened your eyes, and given you that acquaintance with him which you did not once possess, and which you would not possess now if he himself had not given it. It is a great privilege, then, to be able to recognize God in temporal matters. We do bless his holy name that he regards our poor bodies, and that every hair of our head is numbered, and that he will take care of us. So that we may eat and drink temporally, and see God in that also: receive our bread with gladness and thankfulness of heart, that we have bread to eat, and raiment to put on. But in the higher sense of the word also, above all things may it be our happy lot more and more to see God in those everlasting provisions he has made in the gospel, and to glorify him for the same for ever and ever.