

RIGHT AT THE LAST

A SERMON

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“Gad, a troop that overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last.”
Genesis 49:19

WE have here clearly shown the doctrine of the fall and rise of man. It is not the fall of man in Adam that I shall this morning dwell upon. There is another kind of fall that is sure to be followed by a rise; but the fall in Adam is not necessarily followed by a rise. Hence it is, that in the mysterious, unfathomable deeps of God's infinite wisdom and eternal judgments, millions of the human race will never rise from their fall in Adam. They are born into this world, and sin every day, and that sin sinks them lower, lower, and lower, till they get down to the very gates of hell, and then all their sins accumulated sink them to hell. And then, when the body is raised at the last day, the sins of the body and of the soul laid upon such persons will sink them lower still, and, as said the poet:

“Down they sink to rise no more.”

Oh, how little, how trivial, are all the calamities and troubles of life in comparison of the wrath to come, in comparison of the judgment yet to be executed. Can we, then, be too earnest before God upon this great matter of deliverance from the wrath to come. If there were none in the world but real Christians and openly profligate characters, then we should not be so perplexed as we are now to know who are Christians, and who are not Christians; but we have so many doctrines and so many systems one way and the other, delusions are so general, that the word of the Lord declares (and that seems a very hard scripture), “Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” That delusion is so general, that one who could not be deceived in this matter, one who never opened his mouth to speak anything but unadulterated and infallible truth, said, “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.” And when ministers insist upon that vitality of religion essential to the saving of the soul, for so doing they are generally treated as though they themselves had coined these scriptures; as though they themselves were the authors of these discriminating and cutting declarations. But there they are in the Bible; and let us bless the Lord that we live in a day when the Bible itself at least is open to all; and happy the man that can take the Bible before him, and lay his hand upon his heart, and entreat the Lord to teach him in reading that mysterious and wonderful book; happy is the man that can, from time to time, with the Bible before him, look up to a heart-searching God, and say, “Let the words of my mouth,

and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord;" and then if, from happy experience, he can go on to the conclusion of the verse, and say, "my strength and my Redeemer," that is the man that will find his way to heaven; that is the man that shall escape the wrath to come, and be found prepared, fitted, made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I will take a twofold view of the subject before us. First, *The fall and rise of man*. Secondly, *From the history of the tribe of Gad we will show how the latter part of the text was fulfilled*, "he shall overcome at the last."

First, *The fall and rise of man*. The fall that I have to speak of is sure to be followed by a rise. "Gad, a troop shall overcome him." The word "Gad" means a troop, a company, or an army. And when the Lord is pleased to convince a sinner of his state, and to turn his sins into a kind of army against him, and he sees that all his sins are mighty, and stand against him, and that the strength of every one of his sins is God's eternal law, for "the law is the strength of sin," and the law must lose its legal hold of the sinner before sin can lose its strength, and the law will part with its legal hold of the sinner only by the atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; when the Lord does this, and connects the terror of his holiness, justice, and judgments therewith, the sinner falls down in his own estimation; yes, in his own soul and feelings he is brought down, shall I say, as David was when he said, "He brought me up out of a horrible pit." But how came he into that horrible pit? perhaps you will say, by the fall of man. True; but there must be another fall; there must be a being cast down from our lofty imaginations, our pride, and everything that exalts itself against Christ. And when the sinner thus sees and feels that he is in a horrible pit, ah, he says, my sinful state is a horrible pit, and these threatenings of God's word are a horrible pit; hell is a horrible pit. "Horror," said one, "has taken hold upon me; while I suffer your terrors, I am distracted." When a man is thus brought down under a conviction of his state, what is the prayer that he sends up to God's throne? He does not want paper and ink to teach him how to pray; he does not want formality to teach him to pray. There is a prayer that goes up to God, and that prayer is sure to be heard. And the prayer is this: "Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me;" let me not be shut out from all light, and help, and hope. And thus from time to time he will sigh, and cry, and look; there is a set time to favor Zion, and when that set time shall come, the Lord will bring such an one up out of this horrible pit, by revealing to him the Lord Jesus Christ, and showing what the atonement of Jesus Christ has done, and what his righteousness has done, and that he came into the world for the very purpose of thus saving sinners from the wrath to come, assimilating them to himself, and bringing them to everlasting glory. Hence, when David realized this, he said, "I waited patiently for the Lord;" I still waited when I was in the pit; I still felt a sort of secret hope; "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he has put a new song in my mouth;" the new song means the new creature-ship, the new and living way; the new theme altogether; old things are passed away, and all things become new; "he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." My old song was praise to myself; for every man will be sure to see some reason to praise himself, and to exalt himself, to justify himself, to gratulate himself, and to plead his own cause. But now the Lord has stripped me of that, and "put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." Thus, an array of sins and terrors overcomes the sinner; he is bound hand and foot; and thus, humbled he sends up the cry to heaven, "Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." Thus, a troop overcomes him; but as sure as he is thus overcome, he himself shall overcome at the last. We have the same things intended, in another

form, in the 45th Psalm, "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under you." Look at that, "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies", the enemies of the king; those that do not like the reign of the king; they do not like Jesus Christ's reign after the order of his grace, by his righteousness, by the good will and sworn covenant of the great God. All of us are by nature enemies to that new covenant, free grace gospel reign of Christ. We are enemies because we know not its value. But when the arrow comes from his bow, "whereby the people fall under you," then they begin to say, "Well, here is something I have been fighting against, what is it? You have been fighting against this one thing, the reign of Christ, which is summed up in these beautiful words, that "where sin has abounded, grace did much more abound." Ah, says the sensible sinner, have I been fighting against this? Yes. Saul of Tarsus fought against it, and we all do by nature; or if we do not actually fight against it, we do not feel our need of it, and it is a mere hearsay thing to us. But when thus brought down, oh, how concerned we are that pardoning mercy should reign over our mighty guilt, that grace should reign over all our sins; yes, that the Lord God omnipotent in this gospel order of things should reign. So then "this child", Christ Jesus, "is set for the falling," that comes first, "and for the rising again of many in Israel." All that he brings down he will be sure to bring up. In the 145th Psalm there is another beautiful representation of his being brought down and brought up. "The Lord upholds all that fall;" that is, that fall under him. fall under a conviction of what they are; they fall down, give up the devil's armor, cast away their sword, as it were; in other words, which is the Lord's own word, they turn their sword into a ploughshare, and the spear of enmity as into a pruning-hook. "The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up, all those that be bowed down." And then David tells us what they do; they do just what the Lord's people can set their seal to. "The eyes of all wait upon you." How come they to wait upon the Lord? That is something new. Why, because the Lord has thrown them down, bowed them down; he has taken away their false foundations, their false props; he has rooted them up, and thrown them down. "The eyes of all wait upon you, and you give them their meat in due season." They often fear they shall perish before the bread of life and the water of life come, before the wine of the kingdom comes; but no, "You give them their meat in due season. You open your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing;" that is, the living thing that has been thus brought down, and bowed down, and made to wait upon the Lord, and look to him. And see how they are raised up into satisfaction, "and satisfies the desire of every living thing." Some of us know what this is; we know what it is to have such an acquaintance with the Lord as to be perfectly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. And if we are perfectly satisfied with him, we shall never go from him, or seek another; men go from one thing after another because they become dissatisfied with the one, and think they shall be satisfied with the other. Not so with the people of God. Hence the Lord says, "My people shall he satisfied with my goodness." See how Isaiah was made to fall in his own estimation under a conviction of what he was. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple;" and it gave Isaiah a sight and sense of sin, of his own loathsome, guilty, and dreadful condition; it brought him down, and just prepared him for what the Lord had for him. He said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Thus, a troop overcame him. And when the Lord brings conviction, then it is this army of God overcomes us; for the threatening's of his word and these convictions may be called the army of God, with which he goes forth, and thus conquers poor sinners. But was Isaiah left there? No. "Then flew one of the seraphim's unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." Thus, Isaiah was thrown down, and thus he was

raised up. And now just let me remind you of one thing here, and that is that there was a great analogy between Isaiah and the apostle Paul in one thing at least, and that is, the abundant revelations granted to Isaiah. What a wonderful book that is, Isaiah! Oh, what revelations were granted to him! His soul must have been happy beyond description in having such fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, and with the glory that should follow. Why, he almost makes you feel, when you read some of the revelations granted to him, as though you were in heaven; he almost makes you feel as though you could never doubt or fear again. So that truly, while he was overcome and thrown down, he was raised up, and these wondrous revelations granted unto him of the person and work of Christ, and the glory that should follow, a number that no man could number, that should rise into the likeness of the Savior, and shine as the stars for ever and ever. So, with Habakkuk, he was thrown down, but he was raised up again. "When I heard," he says, "my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble." What a collection of wretchedness is there described! The quivering lips, the trembling heart, and feeling as though his bones were rotten; everything wretched to the last degree. But did the Lord leave him there? No; the Lord revealed to him the way of deliverance, and did deliver him; so that the same prophet, in the same chapter, ranging over all the provisions of Providence, comes to the conclusion that if these should all pass away, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon my high places." Here, then, is the being brought down, overcome, and yet gaining the victory at the last. These are the same that take the prey; these are the weak that shall say when the Lord appears to them, "I am strong." Need I remind you of Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, how Joshua was brought down, and how he was raised up? Need I remind you of Saul of Tarsus, how he was brought down, and how he was raised up? Need I remind you of the thief on the cross, how instantaneously he was brought down, and as instantaneously raised up? Need I remind you how the publican was brought down, and justification raised him up? Need I remind you of the Day of Pentecost? Need I remind you of yourselves? Can you not look back and bless the day that your sins became an army to you, conviction entered into your mind, and you fell down on the knee of prayer, and saw and felt that you were spiritually like the Israelite of old, of whom it is written that "he was in an evil case." Thus, then, I think I have made pretty clear the first doctrine in our text, that of falling and rising again; being overcome, and thus made to submit to God, and then made to overcome at the last. And I am sure the song of such will be, "Thanks be to God, that gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Our experiences are not our savior's, I grant that most readily; but still it is by experience that we have knowledge, for all knowledge that is not experimental is not real. You see religion differs from everything else. There must be a personal sight and sense of your lost condition; you must be low enough in your own estimation to join with the church in that and similar testimonies, "He has remembered us in our low estate." But then, if we do not know that our estate is a low estate, how can we join with the church in that testimony, and how can we join in the testimony of the remedy, "He remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever?"

Secondly, *from the history of the tribe of Gad, we will show how the latter part of the text was fulfilled*, "he shall overcome at the last." And in entering upon this department I may just observe that their warfare was with persons, but our warfare is not with persons but with principles. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood;" it is not against our fellow-creatures, except by the weapons that God has given us, his holy and blessed word; and that always with a view, if in our right

minds, of being the means of doing to them that good that the Lord has done to us. It was good advice Moses gave to his father-in-law, he said, "Go with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel, and whatsoever good the Lord shall do unto us shall be done unto you also." So, we say to every poor sinner that knows he is a sinner; Go with us. We do not mean to join the same congregation; we do not mean to hear the same minister; no, we leave all that; we mean go with us spiritually: to the same God, to the same throne of grace, to the same Christ, in the same hope; and what good so ever the Lord has spoken, all such little ones and seekers shall share in; "for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel." Now, these Gadites obtained the victory, first, by faithfulness to the covenant under which they were secondly, they ultimately overcame by valor, skill, prayer, and confidence in God. First, they overcame at the last by their faithfulness to the covenant under which they were; and it is a part I enter upon with much pleasure, because it so beautifully represents that work of the dear Spirit of God, which, where he begins, he will carry on to the last. Now, two tribes and a-half, namely, Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh, were to have their inheritance on the eastern side of Jordan; but at the same time, the men of war belonging to those tribes were to cross the Jordan, and not to rest until the victory was so complete that all the land of promise was possessed. Moses, in the 32nd of Numbers, commands them to do this; "and if you will not do so," he says, "behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sins will find you out." But they did not sin this sin of apostacy from the covenant; therefore, the sin could not find them out, for they did not commit it, they persevered, went on to the war. Then, in the 22nd of Joshua, Joshua turns round and says: Now the conquest is won, the victory is gained, the land is possessed, and the work is done; and "you have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you," so that they were faithful to the covenant until the victories were complete. Moses foresaw it would be so; just as you and I foresee that all the people of God, future generations and the present, will be faithful unto death. "Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Now, we are under the spiritual covenant, and we stand engaged in that covenant not to stop short until everything is complete. We must still go on, hold fast God's covenant, and be concerned for others as well as for ourselves, and give up no part of God's truth, for the land of Canaan was a type of God's truth, that which was locality to them is spiritual reality to us; that which was the produce of the earth to them, is to us the produce of the glorious gospel of the grace of God. Let us look at the consequences of their faithfulness to the covenant. One of the consequences was it enabled Gad to take a defiant position. It is wonderful what faith in the truth can enable a man to do, and the wonderful position it will enable him sooner or later to take. Hence, in the 33rd of Deuteronomy, Moses, foreseeing that they would be faithful, and overcome at the last, said, "Blessed be he that enlarged Gad, he dwells as a lion," cannot be moved. Presently comes a false prophet, and there were kings, the greatest men, engaging this false prophet to come and defy and curse these very people. But instead of moving Gad and the right-minded Israelites, it only brought their blessedness to light. When the false prophet came, he looked around, and had a distant glimpse, at the same time, with a heart full of enmity, for though he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous," he had no sympathy with the righteous, no affection for, no oneness with them. Ah, prophet, if you meant what you say, you will drop your enmity, your enchantments and devices against the people, and seek their welfare. But no, he saw their blessedness, but had no sympathy toward them, it rather increased his enmity than not. Yet he was obliged to bring out the blessedness of their position: "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?" Who is to curse his people? "Or how shall I defy whom the Lord has not defied?" Lo, the "people shall dwell alone" in that eternal distinction that God has chosen them to, "and shall not be reckoned among the

nations.” You cannot mix them up, there is something in the real Christian that will not mix with the mind and sentiments of the man dead in trespasses and sins. Then Balak goes to the expense of seven more altars, which cost something to build, I suppose; seven more bullocks and seven more rams, which cost something, I suppose. Now, Balaam, try again, and see if they still dwell as a lion, defying all their foes. Surely their God is not such a God that he cannot be bribed. We can bribe our gods, we can get our gods to say almost anything; if we give our gods so and so, they will turn into any shape and form; that is, to speak plainly, if we pay our priests well, they will say just what we want. Tell us how matters are now, after this second attempt. Well, Balaam says, I will tell you, but you won’t like it; I cannot help it. The matter stands like this: “God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; has he said, and shall he not do it? or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” To tell you the truth Balak, their God is just as able to act as he is to speak; it is no more difficult for him to act than to speak; he made the world by his word. “Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” But how can he make it good? In this way, that he has put the people into a sinless state, that he has put them where he is just, and yet the justifier of these same people. “He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel; the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king,” the King of kings, “is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he has, as it were, the strength of a unicorn.” Well, but come now, Balaam, take your book, and look all through it; you have got there eight or nine hundred enchantments, see if you cannot find one that will turn up against Israel. Are they all unlucky days? You have got your lucky days, and lucky figures, and lucky representations, turn again to your book and see. Well, says Balaam, that is what I did before, there is not one enchantment that will stand against Israel there. “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.” Well, but Balaam, I suppose you have been accustomed to curse this sort of people before, have you not contrived any enchantment against them? No, I have not; I have cursed pretty well everybody; I have cursed a great many tribes, and frightened a great many people, but I have never had access to the God of these people, he will not give me an enchantment or a divination, “There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, what has God wrought?” That is how Gad dwells as a lion; he may well be bold and defiant; he may well send the challenge to the lowest caves of hell, to the remotest bounds of the earth, and to the highest arches of heaven, throughout the universe, of ten million times ten million worlds, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” “Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion; he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain;” until the victory is complete. “Blessed is he that blesses you and cursed is he that curses you.” So, Gad shall overcome at the last. “Blessed is he that enlarges Gad.” Ah, says the natural man, what! enlarge that dreadful high doctrine people? Yes, Moses said, Blessed be he that does this. If that be true, that they are blessed who are the means of thus enlarging spiritually this Gad, this tribe that is thus faithful, and dwells as a lion, then I am sure the apostles must have been very happy men. Why are men so unfaithful that have professed the truth, and are gone from the truth? The Lord can decide that matter a very great deal better than I can; but I am always inclined to think it arises from only one thing, and that is, a destitution of that experience that makes the yea and amen truth of God the one thing needful. The man that feels himself to be in such a state that he is lost eternally without this covenant, ordered in all things and sure, he cannot give it up; for he feels that he has no hope anywhere else. But if a man has not this experience, why another gospel will do better for him than the true gospel, because a false gospel always suits a false experience; but a true experience will feel about hither and thither, and will never feel itself

safe until it can feel that it has gained the pearl of great price, that it has found that liberty wherewith the Lord has made his people free.

But secondly, they gained the victory also by great courage. 1 Chronicles 5, there they are said to be valiant men. And the apostles, and I suppose it will apply to ministers, as well as the people of God, are represented as set for the defense of the gospel. There is a beautiful representation of the gospel, and being set forth its defense, in the 3rd chapter of Solomon's Song. "Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?" That, of course, is Christ Jesus coming up out of the wilderness, and bringing his people up with him; said to be like pillars of smoke because at the temple there were two pillars of smoke, the sacrificial and the intercessory. And so, Jesus Christ is the Sacrifice as well as the Priest, and he is the Intercessor. Therefore, in allusion to the sacrificial and the incense altar, he is said to come up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke; "perfumed with myrrh," to denote the bitterness of his sufferings; "and frankincense," to denote the fragrance of his name; and "with all powders of the merchant," to denote the costliest things and blessings that are by Christ Jesus. Now hereby, the Savior having done all our work, all our toil, all our labor, he has entered into rest, and he has the rest for his people, that is, the release. He was released from what he suffered by the completeness of his work, and his people are to be released also. Now they are set to defend this release which the Savior has obtained, this triumphant and beautiful state of things that he has established, therefore, it says, "Behold his bed" you see he is resting now, he is released now; and he releases his people; "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; three score valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war; every man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night." Does not this represent ministers of the gospel standing in defense of that release which is to be preached to every poor sinner? The trumpet of the jubilee is to be sounded from one end of the world to the other, that poor sinners may be convinced of what they are, and then, by precious faith in the dear Redeemer, be released, and released for ever. It is also said of these people who gained this victory at the last, that "they were able to bear buckler and sword, and skillful in war;" they did not make a mistake about it; they went with the right weapons, made every blow tell. The buckler, of course, refers to Christ; he is our shield and buckler; and if you cannot endure him, you will never gain the victory. And the sword is the gospel; the sword of the Spirit is the word of the Lord. And it is said "they made war with the Hagarites," the bond children, contending for their liberty. So, we have now to stand against the bond children, against bondage, and to stand out for the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free; and the man that does so shall overcome at the last. You may be like Samson, tied and bound, but your locks will grow again, the ropes and cords shall snap, and you overcome like him; he overcame at the last, in his dying hour, and went triumphantly to everlasting glory, to the astonishment of every Pharisee under heaven. Let us then stand out for the liberty of the gospel. Now, in this war for liberty, it is said the Lord helped them, and the enemy, with all his powers, was given into their hands; "for they cried to God in the battle." Life, in more senses than one, is a battle; oh, how many conflicts, adversities, and trials. What a sweet thing to have the remedy in your heart; if you have it in your heart, it is always at home. "They cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their trust in him." The Lord appeared for them, they gained the victory, and thus the declaration was fulfilled, "Gad shall overcome at the last." And then they gained very great spoil indeed, but it was only temporal. David, looking at the vast amount of prey and property they gained by their victories, turns away from it all, and looks to Jesus, contemplates what he has gained, and what we shall gain by him. "You," said David, "are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey." So, how much our victory surpasses

theirs. Theirs was only temporal and temporary; ours is spiritual and eternal. And then in the 12th chapter of the same Book of Chronicles it is said of these same people, that their “faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.” I preached a sermon upon those words a great many years ago, and I have always felt them reprove me, because I am wanting in boldness, and much more wanting in swiftness, for I am a poor, slow creature, slow of speech and slow of moving. Yet it is said of them, “their faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.” One word more, and it is this: they dwelt in the liberty they attained until the captivity, when they were all carried away by the kings of Assyria. But we have no captivity to come; we are to dwell in our Paradise to all eternity. Our Jesus has led all captivity captive, he has spoiled all principalities and powers; his victory is final; so that we shall overcome at the last. I might take up all the troubles of life, and show in what a great variety of ways we are overcome; but the Lord steps in, overcomes our troubles again and again; and whatever adversity you may undergo, all shall be well at the last.