

loth the heart of man is to do this; how readily man catches at this and that and the other earthly support, and clings to that as his refuge? How unwilling he is to renounce them all, and discard them all, and cast them all away, and flee to Christ alone! The struggle is sometimes long,—it is sometimes severe. The man clings to the earth; earthly ties and earthly hopes entwine themselves about him, and he cannot resolve to quit them. The constraining influence of Divine grace can alone cause the prisoners of hope to turn to this stronghold. When the Spirit of God begins to work within; when the power of the Holy Ghost begins to open the eyes, and awaken the heart, and arouse the conscience, and turn the soul, then it is that he is driven off, first from one post, and then from another, until he relinquishes them all, and by faith lays hold on Christ. Here is the open door; here he clings with firm and safe and secure grasp; he rejects all his vain confidences, and cries, with Israel of old, “Asshur shalt not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in thee,” O Lord, pre-eminently, in thee, distinctively, “the fatherless findeth mercy.”

And now, am I speaking to any who feel uninterested in this momentous subject,—any who are still exposed to the perils of eternal punishment, and yet have never sought, have never enquired, after any refuge;—have not yet fled to the stronghold? Allow me plainly, yet most affectionately, to speak to such.

This subject, my friends, addresses you particularly; it reminds you of your danger, and it points out to you a way of escape. It calls you “prisoners;” perhaps you may be tempted to doubt the propriety of this appellation. You feel free and active; you deem yourselves at liberty; but are you really free? I say, are you really free? Look at these frail, decaying bodies in which you are shut up; think of that propensity to sin which you must feel; reflect upon the shortness of life and the uncertainty of earthly hopes, and the nearness of eternity. You say that you are free; but let me ask, can you calculate upon one single hour? You call yourselves the sons and daughters of liberty, and say with the

Jews of old, “We were never in bondage to any one;” and yet sin is enslaving you, and pleasure is engrossing all your care and all your time, and the world is chaining you down with its iron fetters, and holding you in its powerful, its adamantine bonds.

And, then, as to the future, what are your prospects? What security is there? You know not how soon or how suddenly your prison doors may be opened, and you led forth as a criminal to execution! You know not how soon you may cease to be a prisoner of hope, and become a prisoner of despair! O trifle not with the present season; trifle not with your advantages. Now we invite you to Christ,—now we call on you to awake from your slumbers, and shake off your chain, and seek after that liberty with which Christ makes His people free. “Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.” Look not to this deluding world; rest not in any doubtful and insecure position; but now, while life still lasts—now, while the door of mercy is still open,—now, while the gospel message is still sounding in your ears,—now, while we are privileged to address you as prisoners of hope,—O flee to the place of refuge; O take shelter in the arms of an all-gracious and almighty Saviour; O come and seek protection under the wings of mercy, and seek a refuge from the coming storm.

And to you, ye blessed, who have fled for refuge, I need only say, abide in it. Keep close in Christ, suffer not Satan or the world to tempt you from your refuge out of Christ. If you are only in Him, nothing in time or eternity can hurt you. “There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” Satan can not hurt you; sin shall not have dominion over you. You have a refuge from every storm; you have a retreat from every tempest; you have a covert from every attack. Let your trials and sorrows and afflictions drive you nearer to Christ. Let the very assaults of Satan only drive you nearer to Christ. Let the sense of your own weakness and frailty lead you to bear more simply, more undividedly, more entirely, more unreservedly, on Christ. Prisoners you are, but prisoners of hope. Soon shall you be released from the bondage of corruption; soon will this prison-house,