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GOD'S PROVIDENCE

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"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

—Matthew 10:30

During this week my mind has been much directed to the subject of Providence, and you will not wonder when I relate a portion on one day's story. I was engaged to preach last Wednesday at Halifax, where there was a heavy snow storm. Preparations had been made for a congregation of 8,000 persons, and a huge wooden structure had been erected. I considered that owing to the severe weather, few persons could possibly assemble, and I looked forward to the dreary task of addressing an insignificant handful of people in a vast place. However, when I arrived, I found from 5,000 to 6,000 people gathered together to hear the Word; and a more substantial looking place it has not been my lot to see. It certainly was a huge uncomely building, but, nevertheless, it seemed well adapted to answer the purpose. We met together in the afternoon and worshipped God, and again in the evening—and we separated to our homes, or rather, we were about to separate, and all this while the kind providence of God was watching over us. Immediately in front of me there was a huge gallery, which looked an exceedingly massive structure, capable of holding 2,000 persons. This, in the afternoon, was crowded, and it seemed to stand as firm as a rock. Again in the evening there it stood, and neither moved nor shook.

But mark the provident hand of God: in the evening, when the people were about to retire, and when there was scarcely more than a hundred persons there, a huge beam gave way, and down came a portion of the flooring of the gallery with a fearful crash. Several persons were precipitated with the planks, but still the good hand of God watched over us, and only two persons were severely injured with broken legs, which it is trusted will be re-set without the necessity of amputation. Now, had this happened any earlier, not only must many more have been injured, but there are a thousand chances to one,

as we say, that a panic must necessarily have ensued similar to that which we still remember, and deplore as having occurred in this place. Had such a thing occurred, and had I been the unhappy preacher on the occasion, I feel certain that I should never have been able to occupy the pulpit again. Such was the effect of the first calamity, that I marvel that I ever survived. No human tongue can possibly tell what I experienced. The Lord, however, graciously preserved us; the fewness of the people in the gallery prevented any such catastrophe, and thus a most fearful accident was averted.

But we have a more marvelous providence still to record. Overloaded by the immense weight of snow which fell upon it, and beaten by a heavy wind, the entire building fell with an enormous crash three hours after we had left it, splitting the huge timbers into shivers, and rendering very much of the material utterly useless for any future building. Now mark this—had the snow begun three hours earlier, the building must have fallen upon us, and how few of us would have escaped we cannot guess. But mark another thing. All day long it thawed so fast, that the snow as it fell seemed to leave a mass, not of white snow, but of snow and water together. This ran through the roof upon us, to our considerable annoyance, and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealing from God's providence. But if it had been a frost instead of a thaw, you can easily perceive that the place must have fallen several hours beforehand, and then your minister, and the greater part of his congregation, would probably have been in the other world. Some there may be who deny providence altogether. I cannot conceive that there were any partakers of the scene who could have done so. This I know, if I had been an unbeliever to this day in the doctrine of the supervision and wise care of God, I must have been a believer in it at this hour. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together; He hath been very gracious unto us, and remembered us for good.

Now, when we look abroad into the world we see, as we think, such abundant proofs that there is a God, that we are apt to treat a man who denies the existence of a God with very little respect or patience. We believe Him to be willfully blind, for we see God's name so legible upon the very surface of creation, that we cannot have patience with him if he dares to deny the existence of a Creator. And in the matter of salvation: we have each of us seen in our own salvation such positive marks of the Lord's dealings with us, that we are apt to be somewhat censorious and harsh towards any who propound a doctrine which would teach salvation apart from God. And I think we shall be very apt this morning to think hardly of the man, who, having seen and heard of such a providence as that which I have just related, could fail to see God's hand. It seems to me that the hand of God in providence is as clear as in creation. And whilst I am sure that if saved at all I must be saved by God, I feel equally certain that every matter which concerns all of us in daily life, bears upon itself the evident trace of being the handiwork of Jehovah, our God.

We must, if we would be true believers in God and would avoid all atheism, give unto Him the kingship in the three kingdoms of creation, grace, and providence. It is in the last, however, that I think we are the most apt to forget Him; we may easily see God in creation if we be at all enlightened, and if saved, we cannot avoid confessing that salvation is of the Lord alone. The very way in which we are saved, and the effect of grace in our hearts, always compels us to feel that God is just. But providence is such a checkered thing, and you and I are so prone to misjudge God and to come to rash conclusions concerning His dealings with us, that perhaps this is the greatest stronghold of our natural atheism—a doubt of God's dealings with us in the arrangements of outward affairs. This morning I shall not be able to go deeply into the subject, but very heartily can I enter into it, after being so great a partaker of His wonder-working power.

From the text I shall draw one or two points. First of all, the text says, "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." From this I shall infer 1) the *minuteness of providence*. Again, inasmuch as it is said of believers that the hairs of their head are all numbered, I shall infer 2) *the kind consideration, the generous care, which God exercises over Christians*. And then, from the text, and from our Savior's reason for uttering these words, I shall draw 3) *a practical conclusion of what should be the spirit and temper of the men who believe this truth*—that the very hairs of their head are all numbered.

1. The Minuteness of God's Providence

First, then, our text very clearly teaches us *the minuteness of providence*. Every man can see providence in great things; it is very seldom that you find any person denying that when an avalanche falls from the summit of the Alps, the hand, the terrible hand of God is there. There are very few men who do not feel that God is present in the whirlwind and in the storm. Most men will acknowledge that the earthquake, the hurricane, the devastation of war, and the ravages of pestilence, come from the hand of God.

We find most men very willing to confess that God is God of the hills, but they forget that He is also Lord of the valleys. They will grant that He deals with great masses, but not with individuals; with seas in the bulk, but not with drops. Most men forget, however, that the fact which they believe of providence being in great things involves a providence in the little, for it were an inconsistent belief that the mass were in God's hand, whilst the atom was left to chance; it is indeed a belief that contradicts itself—we must believe all chance or else all God. We must have all ordained and arranged, or else we must have everything left to the wild whirlwind of chance and accident. But I believe that it is in little things that we fail to see God; therefore, it is to the little things that I call your attention this morning.

I believe my text means literally what it says. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's wisdom and knowledge are so great, that He even knows the number of the hairs upon our head. His providence descends to the minute

particles of dust in the summer gale; He numbers the gnats in the sunshine, and the fishes in the sea. While He certainly doth control the massive orbs that shine in heaven, He doth not blush to deal with the drop that tricklETH from the eye.

Now, I shall want you to notice, how *little circumstances of daily life*, when we come to put them all together, evidently betray their origin. I will take a Scripture history, and show how the little events must have been of God, as well as the great results. When Joseph was sent into Egypt by his brethren, in order to provide for them against a day of famine, we all agree with Joseph's declaration: it was God "that sent me hither" (Gen 45:8). But now, if we notice each of the little ways through which this great result was brought to pass, we shall see God in each of them. One day, Joseph's brethren are gone out with the sheep; Jacob wants to send to them. Why does he send Joseph? He was his darling son; he loved him better than all his brethren. Why does he send him away? He sends him, however. Then why should it have happened at that particular time, that Jacob should want to send at all? However, he did want to send, and he did send Joseph. A mere accident you will say, but quite necessary as the basement of the structure. Joseph goes; his brethren are in want of pasture, and therefore leave Shechem, where Joseph expected to find them, and journey on to Dothan. Why go to Dothan? Was not the whole land before them? However, Joseph goes there; he arrives at Dothan just when they are thinking of him and his dreams, and they put him into a pit. As they are about to eat bread, some Ishmaelites came by. Why did they come there at all? Why did they come at that particular time?

Why were they going to Egypt? Why might they not have been going any other way? Why was it that the Ishmaelites wanted to buy slaves? Why might they not have been trading in some other commodity? However, Joseph is sold; but he is not disposed of on the road to Egypt, he is taken to the land. Why is it that Potiphar is to buy him? Why is it that Potiphar has a wife, at all? Why is it again, that Potiphar's wife should be so full of lust? Why should Joseph get into prison? How is it that the baker and the butler should offend their master?

All chance, as the world has it, but every link necessary to make the chain. They do both offend their master; they are both put into prison. How is it that they both dream? How is it that Joseph interprets the dreams? How is it that the butler forgets him? Why, just because if he had recollected him, it would have spoiled it all. Why is it Pharaoh dreams? How can dreams be under the arrangement of God's providence? However, Pharaoh does dream; the butler then thinks of Joseph; Joseph is brought out of prison and taken before Pharaoh. But take away any of those simple circumstances, break any one of the links of the chain, and the whole of the design is scattered to the winds. You cannot get the machine to work; if any of the minute cogs of the wheels are taken away, everything is disarranged. I think it seems very clear to any man who will dissect not only that, but any other history he likes to fix upon, that there must be a God in the little accidents and dealings of daily life, as well as in the great results that tell upon the page of history, and are recounted in our songs. God is to be seen in little things.

We will now notice in the minutia of providence, how *punctual* providence always is. You will never wonder more at providence, than when you consider how well God keeps time with Himself. To return to our history, how is it that the Ishmaelites should come by just at the time? How many thousand chances there were that their journey might have been taken just before! There certainly was no special train to call at that station at that particular time, so that Joseph's brethren might arrange to go and call him. No such thing! And yet if there had been all this arrangement, it could not have happened better. You know Reuben intended to fetch Joseph out of the pit half an hour later, and "the child was not." God had these Ishmaelites ready: you do not know how He may have sped them on their journey, or delayed them, so as to bring them on the spot punctually at the identical moment.

To give another instance, there was a poor woman whose son had been raised from the dead by Elisha; she, however, had left her country at the time of famine, and had lost her estate. She wanted to get it back; God determined that she should have it. How was it to be done? The king sends for Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, and he talks to him. He tells him one instance about a woman who had had a child raised from the dead. How strange!—in comes the woman herself. My lord, this is the woman; she comes to obtain her suit. Her desire is granted, just because at the very moment the king's mind is interested concerning her. All chance, was it not? Nothing but chance? So fools say; but those who read Bibles, and those who have judgment, say there is something more than chance in such a coalition of circumstances. It could not be a mere coincidence, as men sometimes say; there must be God here, for it is harder to think that there is not God than that there is. And whilst a belief in God may be said by some to involve a great stretch of faith, the putting Him out of such things as this, would involve an infinitely greater amount of credulity.¹ No—there was God there.

There is another instance that I remember in the New Testament history. Paul goes into the Temple, and the Jews rush upon him in a moment to kill him. They drag him out of the Temple, and the doors are shut against him. They are just in the very act of killing him, and what is to become of poor Paul's life. Five minutes longer and Paul will be dead, when up comes the chief captain and delivers him. How was it that the chief captain knew of it? Very probably some young man of the crowd who knew Paul and loved him, ran to tell him. But why was it that the chief captain was at home? How was it that the ruler was able to come on a moment's emergency? How was it that he did come at all? It was only just a Hebrew, a man that was good for nothing, being killed. How was it that he came, and when he came the streets were full; there was a mob about Jerusalem? How did he come to the right street? How did he come at the exact nick of time? Say, "It is all chance"—I

¹ **credulity** – belief; faith.

laugh at you; it is providence! If there be anything in the world that is plain to any man that thinks, it is plain that God "Overrules all mortal things, and manages our mean affairs."

But mark that the running of the youth, and his arrival at the precise time, and the coming of the chief governor at the precise time, just proved the punctuality of divine providence. If God has a design that a thing shall happen at twelve, if you have appointed it for eleven, it shall not happen till twelve; and if He means it to be delayed till one, it is in vain that you propose any earlier or any later. God's punctuality in providence is always sure, and very often apparent.

Nor is it only in the minutes of time that we get an idea of the minuteness of providence, but it is in the use of little things. A sparrow has turned the fate of an empire. You remember the old story of Mohammed flying from his pursuers. He enters a cave, and a sparrow chirps at the entrance, and flies away as the pursuers pass. "Oh," say they "there is no fear that Mohammed is there, otherwise the bird would have gone a long while ago"; and the imposter's life is saved by a sparrow. We think, perhaps, that God directs the motions of the leviathan, and guides him in the sea, when he makes the deep to be hoary. Will we please to recollect, that the guidance of a minnow in its tiny pool is as much in the hand of providence, as the motion of the great serpent in the depths.

You see the birds congregate in the autumn, ready for their flight across the purple sea. They fly hither and thither in strange confusion. The believer in providence holds that the wing of every bird has stamped upon it the place where it shall fly, and fly with never such vagaries of its own wild will, it cannot diverge so much as the millionth part of an inch from its predestinated track. It may whirl about, above, beneath—east, west, north, south—wherever it pleases; still, it is all according to the providential hand of God. And although we see it not, it may be, that if that swallow did not take the precise track which it does take, something a little greater might be affected thereby; and again, something a little greater still might be affected, until at last a great thing would be involved in a little. Blessed is that man who seeth God in trifles! It is there that it is the hardest to see Him; but he who believes that God is there, may go from the little providence up to the God of providence.

Rest assured, when the fish in the sea take their migration, they have a captain and a leader, as well as the stars; for He who marshals the stars in their courses, and guides the planets in their march, is the master of the fly, and wings the bat, and guides the minnow, and doth not despise the tiniest of His creatures. You say there is predestination in the path of the earth; you believe that in the shining of the sun there is the ordinance of God; there is as much His ordinance in the creeping of an insect or in the glimmering of a glow-worm in the darkness. In nothing is there chance, but in everything there is a God. All things live and move in Him, and have their being (Act 17:28); nor could they live or move otherwise, for God hath so ordained them.

I hear one say, "Well, sir, you seem to be a fatalist!" No, far from it. There is just this difference between fate and providence. Fate is blind; providence has eyes. Fate is blind, a thing that must be; it is just a bow shot from an arrow, that must fly onward, but hath no target. Not so, providence; providence is full of eyes. There is a design in everything, and an end to be answered; all things are working together, and working together for good. They are not done because they must be done, but they are done because there is some reason for it. It is not only that the thing is, because it must be; but the thing is, because it is *right* it should be. God hath not arbitrarily marked out the world's history; He had an eye to the great architecture of perfection, when He marked all the aisles of history, and placed all the pillars of events in the building of time.

There is another thing that we have to recollect also, which will strike us perhaps more than the smallness of things. The minuteness of providence may be seen in the fact that even the thoughts of men are under God's hand. Now, thoughts are things which generally escape our attention when we speak of providence. But how much may depend upon a thought! Oftentimes a monarch has had a thought which has cost a nation many a bloody battle. Sometimes a good man has had a thought, which has been the means of rescuing multitudes from hell, and bearing thousands safely to heaven. Beyond a doubt, every imagination, every passing thought, every conception, that is only born to die, is under the hand of God. And in turning over the page of history, you will often be struck when you see how great a thing has been brought about by an idle word.

Depend upon it, then, that the will of man, the thought of man, the desire of man, that every purpose of man, is immediately under the hand of God. Take an instance: Jesus Christ is to be born at Bethlehem. His mother is living at Nazareth: He will be born there to a dead certainty. No, not so. Caesar takes a whim into his head. All the world shall be taxed, and he will have all of them go to their own city. What necessity for that? Stupid idea of Caesar's! If he had had a parliament, they would have voted against him. They would have said, "Why make all the people go to their own peculiar city to the census? Take the census where they live; that will be abundantly sufficient. "No," says he, "it is my will, and Caesar cannot be opposed." Some think Caesar mad. God knows what He means to do with Caesar. Mary, great with child, must take a laborious journey to Bethlehem; and there is her child born in a manger. We should not have had the prophecy fulfilled that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, and our very faith in the Messiah might have been shaken, if it had not been for that whim of Caesar's. So that even the will of man—the tyranny, the despotism of the tyrant—is in the hand of God, and He turneth it withersoever He pleaseth, to work His own will (Pro 21:1).

Gathering up all our heads into one short statement, it is our firm belief that He who wings an angel guides a sparrow. We believe that He who supports the dignity of His throne amidst the splendors of heaven, maintains it also in the depths of

the dark sea. We believe that there is nothing above, beneath, around, which is not according to the determination of His own counsel and will (Eph 1:11); and while we are not fatalists, we do most truly and sternly hold the doctrine, that God hath decreed all things whatsoever that come to pass, and that He overruleth all these things for His own glory and good; so that with Martin Luther, we can say,

“He everywhere hath sway, And all things serve His might; His every act pure blessing is, His path unsullied light.”

2. The Kind Consideration of God

The second point is, *the kind consideration of God in taking care of His people*. In reading the text, I thought, “There is better care taken of me than I can take care of myself.” You all take care of yourselves to some extent, but which of you ever took so much care of himself as to count the hairs of his head? But God will not only protect our limbs, but even the excrescence² of hair is to be seen after. And how much this excels all the care of our tenderest friends! Look at the mother, how careful she is. If her child has a little cough, she notices it: the slightest weakness is sure to be observed. She has watched all its motions anxiously, to see whether it walked right, whether all its limbs were sound, and whether it had the use of all its powers in perfection. But she has never thought of numbering the hairs of her child’s head, and the absence of one or two of them would give her no great concern. But our God is more careful of us, even than a mother with her child—so careful that He numbers the hairs of our head. How safe are we, then, beneath the hand of God!

However, leaving the figure, let us again notice the kind, guardian care, which God exerts over His people in the way of providence. I have often been struck with the providence of God, in keeping His people alive before they were converted. How many are there here who would have been in hell at this hour, if some special providence had not kept them alive till the time of their conversion! I remember mentioning this in company, and almost every person in the room had some half-miracle to tell, concerning his own deliverance before conversion.

One gentleman, I remember, was a sporting man, who afterwards became an eminent Christian. He told me that a little time before his conversion he was shooting, and his gun burst in four pieces, which stood upright in the earth as near as possible in the exact form of a square, having been driven nearly a foot into the ground, while he stood there unharmed and quite safe, having scarcely felt the shock. I was noticing in Hervey’s works one day, a very pretty thought on this subject. He says, “Two persons who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream, and, having run the whole circle of the chase, came at last to the fall of the stag; upon this he cries out with a determined ardor, *I’ll kill him, I’ll kill him*; and immediately feels for the knife which he carried in his pocket. His companion happening to awake, and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger, and the moon shining in the room, he stood to view the event, when, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place where a moment before the throat and the life of his friend lay.” This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders us, even from being assassins of others, or murderers of ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep, only the preventing care of our Heavenly Father.

How wonderful the providence of God with regard to Christian people, in *keeping them out of temptation*. I have often noticed this fact, and I believe you are able to confirm it, that there are times when if a temptation should come you would be overtaken by it; but the temptation does not come. And at other times, when the temptation comes, you have supernatural strength to resist it. Yes! the best Christian in the world will tell you, that such is still the strength of his lust, that there are moments when if the object were presented to him, he would certainly fall into the commission of a foul sin—but then the object is not there, or there is no opportunity of committing the sin. At another time, when we are called to go through a burning fiery furnace of temptation, we have no desire towards the peculiar sin, in fact we feel an aversion to it, or are even incapable of it. Strange it is, but many a man’s character has been saved by providence. The best man that ever lived, little knows how much he owes for preservation to the providence as well as to the grace of God.

How marvelously, too, has providence *arranged all our places*. I cannot but recur to my own personal history, for, after all, we are obliged to speak more of what we know of ourselves as matters of fact than of others. I shall always regard the fact of my being here today as a remarkable instance of providence. I should not have occupied this hall probably, and been blessed of God in preaching to multitudes, if it had not been for what I considered an untoward accident.

I should have been at this time studying in college, instead of preaching here, but for a singular circumstance which happened. I had agreed to go to college: the tutor had come to see me, and I went to see him at the house of a mutual friend. I was shown by the servant into one drawing-room in the house; he was shown into another. He sat and waited for me two hours; I sat and waited for him two hours. He could wait no longer, and went away thinking I had not treated him well; I went away and thought that he had not treated me well. As I went away this text came into my mind, “*Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.*” So I wrote to say that I must positively decline, I was happy enough amongst my own country people, and got on very well in preaching, and I did not care to go to college. I have now had four years of labor. But, speaking after the manner of men, those who have been saved during that time would not have been saved, by my

² excrescence – outgrowth.

instrumentality at any rate, if it had not been for the remarkable providence turning the whole tenor of my thoughts, and putting things into a new track.

You have often had strange accidents like that. When you have resolved to do a thing, you could not do it any how; it was quite impossible. God turned you another way, and proved that providence is indeed the master of all human events.

And how good, too, has God been in providence to some of you, in *providing your daily bread*. It is remarkable how a little poverty makes a person believe in providence, especially if he is helped through it. If a person has to live from hand to mouth, when day by day the manna falls, he begins to think there is a providence then. The gentleman who sows his broad acres, reaps his wheat, and puts it into his barn; or takes his regular income, gets on so nicely that he can do without providence—he does not care a bit about it. The rents of his houses all come in, and his money in the Three per Cents³ is quite safe—what does he want with providence? But the poor man who has to work at day labor, and sometimes runs very short, and just then happens to meet with somebody who gives him precisely what he wants, he exclaims, “Well, I know there is a providence—I cannot help believing it; these things could not have come by chance.”

3. Application of God’s Providence

And now, in conclusion, brethren and sisters, if these things be so, if the hairs of our head are all numbered, and if providence provides for His people all things necessary for this life and godliness, and arranges everything with infinite and unerring wisdom, what manner of persons ought we to be?

Boldness

In the first place, we ought to *be a bold race of people*. What have we to fear? Another man looks up, and if he sees a lightning-flash, he trembles at its mysterious power. We believe it has its predestined path. We may stand and contemplate it, although we would not presumptuously expose ourselves to it, yet can we confide in our God in the midst of the storm. We are out at sea; the waves are dashing against the ship; she reels to and fro. Other men shake, because they think this is all chance; we, however, see an order in the waves, and hear a music in the winds. It is for us to be peaceful and calm. To other men the tempest is a fearful thing; we believe that the tempest is in the hand of God. Why should we shake? Why should we quiver? In all convulsions of the world, in all temporal distress and danger, it is for us to stand calm and collected, looking boldly on. Our confidence should be very much the same, in comparison with the man who is not a believer in providence, as the confidence of some learned surgeon, who, when he is going through an operation, sees something very marvelous,⁴ but yet never shudders at it—while the ignorant peasant, who has never seen anything so wonderful,⁵ is alarmed and fearful, and even thinks that evil spirits are at work.

We are to say—let others say what they please—“I know God is here, and I am His child, and this is all working for my good; therefore will not I fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea (Psa 46:2).”

Especially may I address this remark to *timid people*. There are some of you who are frightened at every little thing. Oh! if you could but believe that God manages all, why, you would not be screaming because your husband is not home when there is a little thunder and lightning, or because there is a mouse in the parlor, or because there is a great tree blown down in the garden. There is no necessity you should believe that your brother-in-law, who has gone to Australia, was wracked, because there was a storm when he was at sea. There is no need for you to imagine that your son in the army was necessarily killed, because he happened to be before Lucknow.⁶ Or if you think the thing necessary, still, as a believer in God’s providence, you should just stand and say that God has done it, and it is yours to resign all things into His hands.

To the bereaved

And I may say to those of you also who have been *bereaved*. If you believe in providence you may grieve, but your grief must not be excessive. I remember at a funeral of a friend hearing a pretty parable which I have told before, and will tell again. There was much weeping on account of the loss of a loved one, and the minister put it thus. He said, “Suppose you are a gardener employed by another. It is not your garden, but you are called upon to tend it, and you have your wages paid you. You have taken great care with a certain number of roses; you have trained them up, and there they are, blooming in their beauty. You pride yourself upon them. You come one morning into the garden, and you find that the best rose has been taken away. You are angry; you go to your fellow-servants and charge them with having taken the rose. They will declare that they had nothing at all to do with it. And one says, ‘I saw the master walking here this morning; I think he took it.’ Is the gardener angry then? No, at once he says, ‘I am happy that my rose should have been so fair as to attract the attention of the master. It is his own: he hath taken it; let him do what seemeth him good.’”

³ **Three per Cents** – savings institutions in Britain of the late nineteenth century.

⁴ **marvelous** – incredible.

⁵ **wonderful** – astonishing.

⁶ **Lucknow** – city in northeast India, site of a revolt against the British East India Company in 1857, followed by an 18 month siege, where many British soldiers died.

It is even so with your friends. They wither not by chance; the grave is not filled by accident; men die according to God's will. Your child is gone, but the Master took it; your husband is gone; your wife is buried—the Master took them. Thank Him that He let you have the pleasure of caring for them and tending them while they were here, and thank Him that as He gave, He Himself has taken away. If others had done it, you would have had cause to be angry. But the Lord has done it. Can you, then, murmur? Will you not say—

*"Thee at all times will I bless; Having Thee I all possess;
How can I bereaved be, Since I cannot part with Thee."*

Balance

And pardon me when I say, finally, that I think this doctrine, if fully believed, ought to *keep us always in an equable⁷ frame of mind*. One of the things we most want is, to have our equilibrium always kept up. Sometimes we are elated. If I ever find myself elated, I know what is coming. I know that I shall be depressed in a very few hours. If the balance goes too much up, it is sure to come down again. The happiest state of mind is to be always on the equilibrium. If good things come, thank God for them—but do not set your heart upon them. If good things go, thank God that He has taken them Himself—and still bless His name. Bear all. He who feels that everything cometh to pass according to God's will, hath a great mainstay to his soul. He need not be shaken to and fro by every wind that bloweth, for he is fast bound, so that he need not move. This is an anchor cast into the sea. While the other ships are drifting far away, he can ride calmly through.

Strive, dear friends, to believe this, and maintain as the consequence of it, that continual calm and peace which renders life so happy. Do not get to fearing ills that may come tomorrow; either they will not come, or else they will bring good with them. If you have evils today, do not multiply them by fearing those of tomorrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Mat 6:34). Oh, I would to God, that some of you who are full of carking⁸ care and anxiety, could be delivered from it by a belief in providence. And when you once get into that quiet frame, which this doctrine engenders, you will be prepared for those higher exercises of communion and fellowship with Christ, to which distracting care is ever a fearful detriment, if not an entire preventive.

To those who fear not God

But as for you who *fear not God*, remember, the stones of the field are in league against you. The heavens cry to the earth and the earth answereth to the heavens, for vengeance upon you on account of your sins. For you there is nothing good, every thing is in rebellion against you. Oh that God might bring you into peace with Him, and then you would be at rest with all beside. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mat 6:33).

The Lord bless you in this, for Jesus' sake. Amen. ❧

⁷ **equable** – level; equally balanced.

⁸ **carking** – distressful.