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A SERMON. *of our dear  
Mr. Bradford  
July 19. 1891*

DEUTERONOMY xxxiii. 12.—“And of Benjamin He said, the beloved of the Lord, shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders.”

WE find Moses, the Man of God, was led to bless the children of Israel in the way in which the Lord would have them blessed; and not only so, but we believe that the characters here referred to set forth the characters of the people of God, so that this addressed to Benjamin we believe may be applied to the people of God, and it is in this way we shall endeavour to look at the words.

“And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him.” Then, Benjamin is looked upon here, as one of God’s dear children, as one whom God loves, for he is said to be the beloved of the Lord.

Then we want to notice the blessed place Benjamin is in; he is said to be near the Lord. “He shall dwell in safety by him, that is by his God; he has a place of security there, and it is said ‘The Lord shall cover him all the day long.’” So he is well protected, and we have the time that he is guarded referred to, it is said to be during the whole of the day. Sometimes day may refer to one’s time on earth, or to one’s period of life after spiritual quickening, and sometimes day refers to a time of trial or temptation.

“And the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders.” That is, God dwells between the shoulders of Benjamin, and He is between the shoulders of Benjamin both before and behind. Remember that! We find that Benjamin was the son of Jacob and of Rachel, and that she died at his birth, which was a great trial to Jacob. As she was departing this life she called his name Benoni, which signifies, “the son of my sorrow,” but Jacob called him Benjamin, or “the son of my right hand,” and, in a certain sense, every spiritual Benjamin, every dear child of God, may be said to be the son of God’s right hand, because His right hand does all the work in respect to their salvation; He is first and last in it, He lays His hand upon them in a way of chastening for their good, and in a way of comfort, mercy and support; and, at the end of their race, He lays His hand upon them and says, “Come up higher;” so, in a certain sense, they are all sons of God’s right hand. But we find Jesus Christ stands

out before all the sons by adoption, for He is a Son by generation. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee," Psalm ii. 7. So that this Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the man of God's right hand. "Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself," Psalm lxxx. 17. Now, what a mercy it is to be among the spiritual tribes. We find the tribes of Israel are referred to in the Revelation, and are named one by one (chapter vii.), and there are said to be sealed of each tribe twelve thousand, so what a sweet and blessed thing it is to be among the spiritual tribes—though those sealed among the tribes may refer to the redeemed among the Jews, for we read afterwards (Rev. vii. 9) about a great multitude which no man could number out of all kindreds and tribes, being seen by John. But, my dear friends, whether Jews or Gentiles, all are saved in one way by a Three One God, and the longer I live and the more I know of the desperate wickedness of my heart, I am more and more convinced "Salvation is of the Lord," as Jonah exclaimed. How many of us are brought to acknowledge the same thing? "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him."

O, to be a person in such a case, not only to have an interest in God's providential care and goodness, but also in His rich, free, sovereign, almighty love. To be His delight, His pleasant plant, to be among His children, to be a son by adoption, or a daughter of the Lord God Almighty, to be wedded to Him by eternal wedlock. He says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jeremiah xxxi. 3. So that the drawing is the fruit and effect of everlasting love. So if you have been drawn by grace to His feet in contrition and godly sorrow over sin, it is because you have been loved of God.

"Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I'd burn,  
Chosen of Thee e'er time began,  
I'd choose Thee in return,

says Toplady; so would we, most heartily, thoroughly, cordially, and with all one's heart make Him our choice, for He is entitled to our love. As He loves us so freely, so fully, and for evermore, it is a little thing for us to love Him with a little love here and there. I dare say, my dear friends, you are sometimes concerned about your love to Him, it seems so small; there does not seem much in your heart to draw Him to you or commend you to His notice. But God looks at His dear Son, and at what you are in Him, and never expects you to be fit for His presence apart from His dear Son; therefore it is well for you to consider that your meetness and fitness are all in Jesus Christ; there is none else-

where; God has not given me to see the least fitness in any other place, and I am sure He never will. "The beloved of the Lord," loved with an everlasting love, because God would love—loved before the foundation of the world—yes, from all eternity! Loved before we are called by grace, loved at calling, and loved for ever! Afterwards loved, when walking in the way of God's steps and rejoicing in His presence, and loved while clouds and darkness are round about him, and when we are passing through seasons of depression, gloom, and sorrow of heart. Loved when we seem shut up at the Throne of Grace and in reading and hearing the Word. My dear friends, this is enough to cheer your heart and mine; this is enough to encourage us for the battle, and it is a battle indeed. Now, mark, this beloved is said to "dwell in safety by Him," and those whom the Lord teaches desire not only to be sound in their judgment, but they want to be right in their souls, so they differ from all who think soundness in the letter is enough. From observation and from conversation one has had with different persons, one is led to this conclusion—that soundness in the letter of the truth seems to be all in all with some people, but, with regard to the children of God, they not only want their hearts and minds to be sound in God's statutes, but they want the Lord to save them from their sins, from unbelief and hardness of heart. They want God to save them from the powers of darkness and the snares of this world, and to deliver them from every evil way. So, then, if we desire these things, how kindly the Lord bears with us.

"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety." How very suitable this is to the poor trembling sinner, who fears he is not safe, who fears he is not saved by grace, that he is not taught to profit, and that he does not know the Lord for himself. Who is afraid that he has not passed under the rod, that he has never been brought to the place of stopping of mouths, that he has not been corrected in mercy, that his afflictions have not been blessed to him, that he has not a spiritual father on the walls of Zion. Who fears his attachment to Zion is not from the heart, who questions the genuineness of his convictions, and who is tried about all the steps he has taken in temporal things. What is more cheering to a person like that than to hear a sweet whisper, "Son, or daughter, go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole?"

You may rest assured there are really and truly many who are very thankful to get the least hope of salvation. I know I am. I do not know anything that does me more good in this world than to get a little nearer to the Lord, to have some token for good, and some intimation of God's mercy to me, leading me to hope in Him. This seems to work wonders in my soul, and to put every-

thing right, and to enable me to do as the Eunuch did after he was baptised—you know he went on his way rejoicing. Then, God's people desire both to be saved and to be sound in judgment, but they differ as to soundness of judgment; in some cases it comes very gradually. Some of God's people labour under very great disadvantages, not having a faithful ministry; though it is wonderful how, at times, such are instructed of God and blessed with understanding of His Word when they have no minister to teach them.

There is one word I want to draw your attention to in connection with safety, that is *dwell*. We may gather from this that the spiritual Benjamin, the dear child of God, the partaker of grace, not only wants salvation, but he wants to dwell near God, to abide before Him for ever, to stick to His testimonies, to serve Him in His ways, to follow after righteousness, to be a waiter at His door, to be the character who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He does not want to be like a mushroom, for his religion just to start up in a night or so, and then come to nought; but he wants to be one who continues, and is set forth here as dwelling in safety by Him.

My dear friends, it seems to me to be like this—were it not for fresh supplies of grace in time of need, we should go back altogether, utterly decline, and entirely fall; but we prove that God has given us, in Jesus Christ, persevering grace, and all the spiritual Benjamins have to wait on God for it, and they receive a little here and a little there; they may not receive enough to satisfy them concerning their interest, but those who are not satisfied are exhorted to wait for the vision, though it tarry. Hab. ii. 3.

But we cannot follow after these things as we would. O, my dear friends, I find I need the Lord to hold me up lest I fall. I always need the sun, or I grow cold; I always need the rain of grace, or I grow hard; I always need quickening, or else I die; I always need fresh love, or my affections get dull. So you can understand how it is partakers of grace not only want a good beginning but to endure as well. Let us read the words again. "And of Benjamin He said, the beloved of the Lord, shall dwell in safety by Him." Now, the next thing we will notice is, that the beloved of the Lord not only dwells in safety but it is *by Him*. That is where it is; that is the ground of all spiritual progress; the ground of all holding on; the ground of all endurance; the cause of the springing up of faith, prayer, patience, love, godly fear and humility. "The source of all right knowledge, of all growth in grace and wisdom, the root of all strength and of all the swellings of hope." "By Him." My dear friends, what a deal there is contained in these two words—by Him. You cannot

want anything better, and there is another thing to be said, you will never get anything better, you cannot get to a better position than this to be nigh to Him. If a man is by Him he will get more or less of His counsel, and will be favoured with His presence, not only as regards that presence of God, which is everywhere, but as regards His gracious presence with His people in time of trouble. "By Him," my dear friends, I will tell you one thing, if you are in any trouble, the speaker desires to sympathise with you, but if you are spiritual Benjamins you are more likely to find something of the presence of God when in sorrow, than when no trouble is nigh. It may be some will say, "It is not very long I go without some trouble nigh." If you look for spiritual instruction and good, it is all the better for there to be some water running across your path, some fire to try you. I do not tell you this because I have learned the art of being patient, because I have not done so yet, for I find in my nature everything that is contrary to God, and this is one of the greatest trials I have. Look where Benjamin's place is by his God, "he shall dwell in safety by him." Then, it would not be wrong for me to tell you that this dear one is always before his God. No, it would be perfectly right for me to say that the dear partakers of grace have always been with their God, in His heart, in His hand, beneath His eye; the Lord has always had them in view, and see what He has done on their behalf. Could He have done more than He has done? yet we are so afraid of pain, so afraid of trouble and persecution, and if we get a little touch of God's hand on mind, body or estate, it does seem such a thing to us, whereas if we could look at what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf, it would be enough to make us glad in our trouble. I know some of us have not much strength, that is why things seem so weighty. "The Lord shall cover him all the day long." It is a great mercy to be covered. I want to draw your attention for a minute or two to those who have suffered persecution for righteousness' sake, to those who have endured imprisonment, and undergone martyrdom for Christ's sake, and I want you to take notice of this, though the Lord may not always be pleased to cover His people in every way, yet He will, you may depend upon it, cover their soul when under the fire in the day of battle. Yes, He will cover their souls if His wisdom sees fit to let men injure their bodies. Some might say, "Is not the body loved as well as the soul." Yes, the redeemed body is loved with the same love wherewith the redeemed soul is loved, but still we find many of God's people have suffered imprisonment, many have been arraigned

at the bar before partial judges, accused by false witnesses, misjudged and condemned, and have had their lives taken away, and not only so, they have been enabled to yield up their lives to God. Yes, they have gone to the stake with a holy willingness; yet we are not willing to go even a little way out of our way, we do not like this, neither are we willing to do this or that, or to submit to one thing or another, whereas these dear men of God under the influence of grace were enabled to go forth to Him without the camp hearing His reproach, knowing they had a better and an enduring substance in heaven. What tortures some of them were put to, imprisoned, flogged, their deep wounds were indeed rubbed with salt, and at last burned at the stake, they were endued with special grace and faith. God had called them to all this, and they obeyed like Abraham, when he was called to offer up his son, and when he was called to go into the land that he afterwards received for an inheritance, without any questioning. To obey is better than sacrifice—1 Samuel, xv. 22. But with regard to the dear martyrs—whom we love, and to some to whom we feel particularly drawn, and thus come to the spirits of just men made perfect, while God permitted them to suffer—He covered them with His hand so they realised His presence, and were enabled to glory in their tribulation, and the bodily anguish that would be an effect of the fire, was overcome by God's grace, so they surrendered themselves willingly, they were covered indeed, and they felt God's presence and God's protection, and believed that there would not be a single hair of their head perish, but that they would have everything in the resurrection, and be all perfect then. God will see to the bodies of His dear people, although they feel to be such unworthy creatures, He knows where they are, and they are all in His hand, guarded by His protection, His Spirit, and His Word. I once read of a godly man whose enemies were endeavouring to find him, and to follow him to his secret hiding places, but his God wonderfully supported, protected, and preserved him, and covered him in the day of trouble, and the God who has sustained His people in the days of persecution, if it should take place again, is still able to succour and defend; and is it wrong to expect the same grace that has been given to others? Are we not justified in hoping for all that Heaven has good for sinners? Yes, we are, although we are so unworthy.

Why, my dear friends, I feel that we are as bad as we can be, as helpless as we can be, yet, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," 1 Gen. i. 7; so there is none left then, and if there is no sin, there is no sting, for the sting of

death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ—1 Cor. xv. 56-57. As one sings:—

If sin be pardoned, I'm secure,  
Death has no sting besides;  
The law gives sin its damning power,  
But Christ, my ransom, died.—*Watts.*

"The Lord shall cover him all the day long." You understand then the way in which these dear martyrs were sustained all the day long. I do not know how it is, but I seem so very much drawn to Rutherford while I am speaking, it seems as if my heart loves him. His opposers persecuted him, sought after him, and would not let him alone on his dying bed; they thought they would have him brought before them, but you know as one who has arranged his dying words says,

"They've summoned me before them,  
But there I may not come;  
My Lord says 'Come up hither,'  
My Lord says 'Welcome home.'  
My kingly King, at His white throne,  
My presence doth command,  
Where glory, glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel's land."

He heard the sound of the horse's hoofs too, that horse bringing his enemies to him, so they were very near, and no doubt thought they should find an easy prey, but his God took him to Himself, so see how dear Rutherford was covered in the day of battle, and he says in substance—

"Oft in yon sea beat prison,  
My Lord and I held tryst.  
For Anworth was not Heaven,  
And preaching was not Christ.  
And aye, my murkiest storm cloud,  
Was by a rainbow spanned,  
Caught from the glory dwelling,  
In Immanuel's land."

I seem to be thinking so much of Rutherford, not that one wants to have favourites among God's people, but sometimes one seems to come up in one's heart, and at other times another.

In the present day we escape a great many things that others have suffered, my dear friends, and we need not wish to pray for trouble, but we do desire to pray that the Lord would prepare us for whatever may overtake us, for we are in an enemy's country, but the worst enemies we have are our own sad selves; I cannot find any enemy to compare to myself. Sometimes when contending for truth one has to speak of

those holding erroneous views, as if they were enemies, but one is not able to find one to compare with himself. I know this well. "The Lord shall cover him all the day long," we who live now escape a great deal, but still we have the devil to contend with, and a wicked heart, and the spirit of the world, so we have to run with the footmen if not to contend with the horsemen. Footmen may refer more to minor matters, and horsemen to greater trials. But my dear friends, sometimes while we run with the footmen, we seem faint, and want to sit down, or stop and rest, they seem as though they are running us down. "If we run with the footmen and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses."—Jer. xii. 5. Only there is this to be said, my dear friends, and it is a great truth, "As thy days, thy strength shall be."—Deut. xxxiii. 25. Therefore poor sinner,—

"Let not thy heart despond and say,  
How shall I stand the trying day;  
God has engaged by firm decree,  
That as thy days, thy strength shall be."

God is sure to verify His Word, and you are sure to find your strength proportioned to your day.

"When ghastly death appears in view,  
Christ's presence shall thy fears subdue;  
He comes to set thy spirit free,  
And as thy days, thy strength shall be."—*Fawcett.*

What a mercy that is.

The Lord shall cover his precious soul: Jesus Christ has stood in the gap, and what a covering He is; He endured all the penalties justice demanded, and suffered on the cross, having fulfilled the law. O, what a sufferer He was; we read about what He endured in the Gospels, and also of His obedience; and Toplady says,—

"The terrors of law and of God,  
With me can have nothing to do,  
My Saviour's obedience and blood  
Hide all my transgressions from view."

All the day long. Sometimes day refers to a period of trial, sometimes to one's life on earth.

"Brief life is here our portion."

And these sands of life will very soon run out. The day is already far spent with many of us.

Then in one place day is used in reference to heaven, and in the same place our life here referred to as night. "The night is