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Deuteronomy Sermons by C H Spurgeon

Deuteronomy 1:6 Advance

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“The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.”- Deuteronomy 1:6

IT is a good thing sometimes to look back, — to take a retrospective view of our life. It is a very bad thing to live upon the past, — to say, “I believe I am a child of God because I had certain spiritual enjoyments and experiences ten or twelve years ago.” Ah! such stale fare as this will not feed hungry souls. They need present enjoyment, or, at least, present confidence in the ever-living God. Yet, brethren, we may sometimes gather fuel for today from the ashes of yesterday’s fire. Remembering the mercies of God in the past, we may rest assured concerning the present and the future.

If we have wisely learnt by experience, we may, from our own failures in the past, gain wisdom which shall enable us to avoid the evils which overcame us on former occasions. It is well to do as you may sometimes have seen the barge do own a river or canal. They walk backward, pushing with all their might backward, to drive their barge, forward; and, sometimes, we may go backward just far enough to help us to push forward, but no further than that. Never must any one of us say to himself, “What I was in my youth, or what I was in middle life, is a sufficient comfort for me now. Soul, take thine ease, for I have much goods laid up for many years.” That will never do, for we need to exercise a present faith, to enjoy a present love, and to live in present holiness and fear of the Lord. Yet it will help us if we remember all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us these many years in the wilderness.

But, coming to our text, we are reminded that we must expect changes: “Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.” Secondly, we ought not to make these changes without the authorization of our Divine Leader: “The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.” But, thirdly, in our spiritual pilgrimage, there are times when it becomes very clear that we have been long enough in a certain condition and need to make an advance towards the Canaan which is our blest inheritance.

I. To begin, then, We Must Expect Changes.

Israel was not always to dwell at Horeb, and even the choicest place of divine manifestation is not always to be ours. The land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar, though very precious to us because of the spiritual experiences we have enjoyed there, are not to be our permanent places of abode. We have to journey onward, and pitch our tent somewhere else.

We need not wonder at this, my brethren and sisters, for this is a changing world. We should be out of gear with the whole creation if we did not frequently change. Behold how the year changed. It seems but yesterday that the rivers were locked in ice. Anon, we

saw the flowers peeping up from the soil, and now we have reached midsummer, and shall soon be looking for the appointed weeks of harvest, and it will not be long before winter will be here, again. On this earth, on the greatest or on the; minutest scale, all things change, whether it be an empire that rises and passes away, or a crocus or a harebell that blooms and fades. All things that are, once were not, and by-and-by shall not, be; or, at least, the place which knoweth them now shall know them no more for ever. These forest once slept in an acorn cup. That some forest, beneath the axe, shall pass away, and vanish into smoke. All things change, and therefore we also must expect to change.

And, mark you, we have already changed. Perhaps we had a happy childhood, and can remember even now the songs of the nursery and the holy hymns of our cradle days. But there came a time when we had dwelt, long enough in that mount, for it would have been ill for us always to continue children. Then we were youths, and were at school, and perhaps we recollect with pleasure, those free days of boyhood and girlhood when, if we did not know the value of knowledge, at any rate we found that those who taught us had more pleasant ways of teaching than our fathers knew. But it was not well for us always to stay at school; there came a time when our parents felt, and we also felt, that we had stayed long enough in that mount. Since that, some of us have passed from change to change till we have come to: the full maturity of spiritual life; and some of you I see, with the snows of many a winter lying on your brows, are approaching yet another change; you know that, by-and-by, you must come to another, for it will be said of you, "You have dwelt long enough in this mount." And so, through all the several stages of man we shall pass till we come to the blessed mount where we shall never dwell too long, nor ever feel that we have dwelt there long enough. But while we are beneath the moon, there must be waxings and wanings to all who come under the moon's spell; and where the very heart of the earth, like a great sea, has its ebbs and its floods, we cannot but expect that we, too, should have our ebbs and our floods without us and within us.

We must expect to have changes, next, because it is good for us to have them; for, if not, we might become rooted to the earth.

This is not our rest; but if we were always in one place, and in one state, we should begin to think that it was. Have you no noticed, with regard to the brethren who are free from trouble, — who, to use a Scriptural simile, have not been emptied, from vessel to vessel, — how they settle on their lees, and what a scum generally rises upon the surface of such people's hearts? Because they have no changes, they begin to this; that they shall continue for ever as they are. They do not put that thought into words, they are not quite so foolish; yet they have the notion treasured up in their hearts that tomorrow will be as this day, only more abundant, and all the future in a similar fashion. If we have a long-continued spell of calm weather, we, are apt to think that it will always be so; and if it always were so, perhaps we should get into as bad a condition as Coleridge pictures in his "Ancient Mariner." Because there was no wind to drive the ship along, and the tropical sun was everywhere shining, everything was becoming corrupt. God knows that our tendency is in that direction, and therefore he makes us to be pilgrims and strangers here, as all our fathers were.

Were it not for changes, too, some would grow utterly weary. Some of God's children would welcome almost any change from their present condition. They suffer, perhaps, from abject poverty, — perhaps, from unkindness on the part of those who ought to love and care for them it may be that their condition is one in which the iron enters into their soul. Possibly, their sorrow is a secret sorrow, and the more severe because it must be kept to themselves, and cannot be communicated to others. A worm, unseen by any human eye, it gnawing at their heart. They dare not mention it; if they did, they would not, be sympathized with, and might even be ridiculed. Ah! we little know the sorrows of others; and there are some, who look most cheerful, and are wise to look so, who ought to be praised because, with sacred patience, they keep their sorrow to themselves. There are some, whom you perhaps, are envying, who far more need your pity than they deserve your envy. There is much sorrow even among God's saints, and it is a great mercy for them that the Lord sometimes turns their captivity. It seemed a pity that, when Job had all his treasures, there should come such a change to him, and that he should have to sit down among the ashes; but when he sat among the ashes, it was a happy circumstance for him that a change came, and that "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." What if you are the lowest spoke of the wheel just now? You will be the highest spoke in less than a minute, for the wheel is always turning round. You are not in a permanent position as to your low estate any more than as to your high estate; if prosperity does not endure, neither doth adversity it is written, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning;" the hours of the night will pass away in due course, and the joys of the morning will recompense you for the sorrows of the season of darkness.

Besides, dear friends, it is well that we should have these changes, because, if we did not, we might all of us become unwatchful. I do not know anything that helps more to take away the freshness and vigor with which a man does a thing, than for him to do that particular thing every day. The same kind of thing happens when he does many times something that at first is very trying. If you put a man into one of the big boilers over in Southwark, when they are putting in the rivets, — well, I should not like to be that man, for the hammering is apt to make him deaf; yet I am told, by those who have to be inside the boiler to hold the rivet-head, that they do not know anything about the great noise, for they have got used to it. 'They are like the blacksmith's dog, that will go to sleep under the anvil when the sparks are flying all around him; and it is possible to get used to anything in life. The sentinel, who stands still in his box, must not be very severely blamed if he goes to sleep. It is a good thing for him if he has a little walk to take, so that he can go to and fro with his rifle on his shoulder, and thus may be able to keep awake by a change of posture. He may have a difficulty in doing that, however, if the watch is to long continued. The mill-horse, that goes round and round perpetually in a certain

track, learns to sleep as he goes his round. There was a prisoner, who was sentenced to the cruel punishment of being awakened every quarter of an hour throughout the night; but, at last, he learned to answer to the knock, and still sleep right on, and so was not disturbed one whit.

I can well understand how, abiding in one state, we may get to be mechanical as a matter of routine, with no life, and no vigor. I wonder how some of you would feel if you had to preach as often as I have; I wonder whether you would not find that, it was apt to become rather mechanical. That is one of the things which I dread almost beyond all else), and I trust that it, will never become so with me, for I feel that, if our ministry ever becomes merely mechanical, our usefulness will be completely destroyed. But the same thing may happen in Christian life; you may get to live mechanically. I have seen professedly Christian people, who have done the right thing, but they have done it while they have been sound asleep. Did you ever or go into a congregation-it has not been my lot to see such a sight often, but I have seen such a sight, — where the minister has been fast asleep, and the preaching has been nothing better than articulate snoring? There, the people sing while they are asleep, and pray while they are asleep; there is no life, no force, no power, no change of any sort. Well now, if you could burn that meeting-house down, and the good man had to preach to-morrow in the little meadow by the side of it, why, he would be wide awake then, and so would all his people be. The mere change of position would do them good. Sometimes, sitting in a different seat might help people to feel a little more attentive to the message. It is for this reason that the Lord comes, and shakes us up, and we begin to awake out of sleep, and each one says, "Where am I? New troubles have given me new grace and new comforts; so, Lord, I bless thee for them. Give me new praises." Thus the change begins to do us good; it lifts us out of the old ruts, and sets us doing something different from what we have done before, which we are able to do with a measure of freshness which we have not previously known. That may be one reason why we have changes.

Another reason is this; if we have no changes in our pilgrimage, it is quite clear that we shall make no progress. If the children of Israel had remained at Horeb, they would never have reached the land of Canaan. We cannot stay in one place, and go on to another at the same time. So, shifts and changes are often promotive of growth. See, there is a tree, which has grown in the place it now occupies as much as it can grow there, because there is not much earth there, and there is, besides, a pan of rock just underneath it from which it cannot derive any nutriment. Now, if with care the husbandman lifts the tree, and shifts it to another position where the soil is deeper and richer, the tree will develop wondrously; and, sometimes, it is so with us. We have grown as big in Christ as we ever shall grow in that particular position, so now we must be shifted into a new one. Why, our very comforts may be like a pan of rock under the tap-root of our soul. We cannot get down any deeper, and it may be that our circumstances but us in like huge walls through which the roots of our spiritual being cannot penetrate to get fresh nourishment. To make us grow, it is a good thing that we do not always remain in one position.

And, moreover, I believe that our removes help us to grow in proportion; for one condition of life may make us grow only in one way. There is one set of trials that, we have, and they develop a certain set of graces; or there is one kind of service that we perform, which brings out one special faculty, and strengthens and sanctifies it; but God does not want his children to grow so as to have their arms twice as long as their toes, and he does not want the trees of his own right-hand planting to be lop-sided trees, sending all their branches out either toward the East or the West, and having no boughs for the other part of the compass. God would have us to be developed as manhood should be, — each faculty and limb and muscle having its fair share of harmonious growth, and the whole keeping up that equilibrium which is characteristic of all God's works. My dear brethren, you have been in a very comfortable position for a long time, and you know that you have never had a trial to test your patience. The result is, that you have not any patience. You are very impatient if you have ever such a little trouble. Now, the Lord is going to shift you into a place where you will need a great deal of patience, and he will give it to you. And there is another side of your character of which you know next to nothing, and which none of your friends suppose that you possess; but the Lord is going to bring that out. He has painted one part of your portrait, and he is now going to turn his attention, by his blessed Spirit, to another side of it, that it may be seen that you are a representation of all the graces of the Christian character. You ought to be glad that it is so, for who knoweth how much of glory God is about to get from you through this change, which, perhaps, you are looking upon with the greatest-possible dread?

Once more, and then I shall have given reason enough why we must expect changes. It may be, brethren, that we undergo changes in order that we may do more good. Some Christian man, perhaps, who has long been in one position, has practically brought to Christ all who ever will be brought in by him in that place. I know that it is so with ministers. We sow our seed, and we reap our harvest, and it would be very wise of some brethren if they would just take their sickles, and go off to another field, and sow and reap there. After you have been a long while fishing in one pond, and have caught all the best of the fish, it will be a weary task to go on fishing there; so, do as wise angler would do, take your rod and line off to another pond, and try there. Changes for God's servants are not at all things for which they ought to be blamed; at least, I know some ministers, whom I would not blame if they were to make a change; neither do I think that the people of their charge would to particularly anxious to retain them. It is the same with us in our Christian life. It may be that we have done all the good we can do in our own family at home. Well, then, God is going to put us into another family it may be that, from our present standpoint, we are only capable of a certain form of good; so the

Lord is going to shift us, and make different men and women of us, that we may be fitted for another form of service; and it is a blessed thing to be furnished and equipped for all the work of the Lord, whatsoever it may be that he commits to our charge.

II. And now, secondly, and very briefly, Thue Lord's People Are To Be Careful That They Do Not Make Changes Without Divine Authorization:

"The Lord our God spake unto us in Haleb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount."

The children of Israel had a fiery-cloudy pillar to guide them in their many wanderings; and if the pillar did not more, they stopped. Whether it was a day, or a week, or a month, or a year, they stopped while the pillar stopped; and when the pillar moved, then they moved, even though they had scarcely pitched their tents; and, brethren, let us also always seek divine guidance, let us put ourselves under the protection of providence, especially in making changes.

Some make changes out of mere love of novelty. Some make changes because they think that anything new will be better than what they have at present. My dear brother, you knew the temptations that assail you now, so I should not advise you to seek to have a new set, about which you know nothing. My dear sister, the cross that you have been carrying did not, at first seem to fit your shoulders, but your shoulders have by degrees become fitted to it, so you had better keep that cross than seek another. There are many people who leap out of the frying-pan into the fire, as our old proverb says. They think that things are going to be much better with them as soon as they make a change, but they had better "let well alone," as another proverb says, for "as a bird that wandereth from her nest, so it a man that wandereth from his place." There have been many people who have changed from side to side, just as sick persons restlessly move to and fro, merely shifting their position, yet all the while keeping their pain. One of the greatest blessings that we can have is a contented mind; and if we have that, we shall not be anxious for a change.

Do not change because of a mere whim; let not that be your reason for altering your position. Do not change from worldly motives, and be not always seeking the best for yourself. Do not change because of distrust, or because of anger with thy God. If he bids thee stand where thou art, stand thou there, and die at thy post if need be; but, if he bids thee go, then go, though it would make a rent as if thy very heart were cleft in twain. It will be better for thee thus to suffer than to disobey thy Lord. We do not make many mistakes in life where we absolutely give ourselves up to God's guidance, because, though we do not hear voice speaking out of the oracle, and we have not, our way mapped out for us as on a chart, yet, somehow or other, if we are honestly seeking to do right, and yet are about to make a mistake, God graciously interposes, and prevents the mistake, or he overrules what evidently was a mistake in such a way that it turns out to be the right thing after all. Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it, to pass. You are not fatherless; you are not left without a guide. Poor tempest-tossed and weather-beaten baroque, thou still hast a helmsman; thou art not a derelict, left to drift upon the sea at the mercy of every current and every gale. There is within thee, O believer, One who is strong of hand and keen of eye, who steers thee through the fiercest storms and direst tumults of the sea, making even these to contribute to thy progress towards the desired heaven. Be not swift to change because of any reason of thine own, but, be not slow to change if God bids thee do so. When the time comes, and you have dwelt long enough in this mount, up with the stakes, roll up the tent lines, and put the canvas on the camel's back, and be off to the next halting-place which the Lord has marked out for thee, for he has gone before these to prepare thy way.

III. I will not, dwell longer upon that topic, but pass on to notice that There Are Some Places, Spiritually, In Which God's People Have Dwelt Quite Long Enough. I wish to speak to the heart of everyone here; take home what belongs to you, and may the Spirit of God be pleased to apply it to your soul!

Some of you know that you are not happy, and that you lack something, but you do not know what it is that you lack. Some of you used to be very happy, at one time, in the pleasures of the world; but, somehow, either they have changed or else you have. You have an empty space in your heart now, and you cannot fill it. The glass seems to have come off the world's amusements; and your businesses, which used to occupy you from morning to night, has become distasteful to you. You feel that you want something, but you do not know what that something is; let me tell you that what you really want is your God. Surely you have lived long enough without him, you have lived long enough in sin, you have lived long enough in impenitence, you have lived long enough in danger of the wrath to come. O prodigal son, thy father calls thee to come home! Thou surely hast had enough of riotous living, enough of the swine-trough and the company of the hogs, enough of the citizens of that country, and their scorn and cruelty, enough of rags, and enough of the husks that the swine feed upon. Say now, "I will arise, and go to my father;" and if thou sayest this, the Spirit of God helping thee so to do, this very hour thou shalt be in the embrace of thy God, thou shalt receive the kisses of his love, the best robe shall be put upon thee, and thou shalt be welcomed home even as the prodigal in the parable was.

The mount mentioned in our text, was Mount Horeb, or Sinai, — the mount that burned with fire, the mount around which they set bounds so that, if so much as a beast touched the mount, it should be stoned or thrust, through with a dart it was that mountain

from which they heard the thunder pealing while the law was being proclaimed in a voice so terrible that they entreated that they might not hear it any more. I believe there are some here, — I had almost said that I hope there are, — who have been long standing at the foot of Sinai. You have heard the thunder of that dreadful voice, and you have felt condemned; your soul is in bondage even now. If ever there was a slave in this world, you are one; you have the festers on you, and you have the cruel whip perpetually flagellating your conscience. Other slaves do have rest sometimes, but you get none; you are tortured and tormented; you are almost like the fiend himself when he walked through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. Well do I remember when I was in your present condition, and I was in it, oh, so long! And blessed was the day when my Lord said to me, “Thou hast dwelt long enough; in this mount,” and then I came to Calvary, and the blood of sprinkling, and I had done with Sinai. Yet I have never felt regret that I lingered so long at the foot of Sinai. I shall regret it if any of you do so; but I do not regret it in my own case, because I think it was needful for one, who was to be a public teacher, that he should have more depression of spirit and more trial than anybody else, that he might know the ins and outs of this matter in his own experience, and so be able to help others who may be tortured in a similar way. But there is no reason why you, my friend, should have this experience, for it may be that you are not to be a public teacher; and it would be well for you if, this very moment, the spirit of bondage were cast out of you and the Spirit of adoption took possession of your soul. You need not remain at the foot of Sinai, for, as I found out, there is another hill, called Calvary. You need not listen to the threatenings of the law, for there is another voice, the voice of the blood of Jesus, “which speaketh better things than that of Abel.” If you will, by simple faith, but listen to that voice, you will learn that it speaks peace, not punishment, and cries out for mercy, not for justice. O tempted, distressed, despairing soul, thou hast dwelt long enough in mount Sinai! At this glad hour, the silver trumpet proclaims a jubilee for thee. Thine inheritance, which thou hast forfeited, has been redeemed; and thou thyself, once sold into slavery, art now manumitted, for the price of thy redemption has been paid to the utmost farthing.

There is another mount, a little further on, to which some of my friends have come, — the mount of Little Faith. They do believe in God now; they have looked to Jesus, and have been lightened; yet they still see men as trees walking. Now and then, they have high days and holidays, and then they know whom they have believed, and have great joy in the Lord; but, at other times, they get down in the dumps, and sing, — or rather, moan, —

'Tis a point I long to know,

Of it causes anxious thought, —

'Do I love the Lord, or no?

'Am I his, or am I not?'

Some of these are the very best people in the world, and I would sooner see a man always doubling his interest in Christ and walking humbly and carefully before God, than presuming upon his own safety, and getting proud, and then venturing into temptation, and falling into sin. There are some of God's children, who are truly his, but who seem to be like those flowers that grow best in shady places. If they had too much sunshine, I do not know what might become of them; but these people do not allow themselves that luxury. They are constantly troubled. They say that they believe, yet the petition always has to be added, “Lord, help our unbelief.”

Now, my brother or my sister, if you are in this condition, do you not think that you have dwelt long enough in this mount? I knew you when you used to be raising such doubts and questions five years ago. Is it not time that, you abandoned that bad habit? You never complain of a baby for cutting its teeth, and you do not wonder if it has a lot of little complaints while it is a baby; but you do not expect it to cut its teeth, and to have all these little infantile diseases, when it gets to be a man. Do you not think that it is time that you had grown from being little children to become young men? And should not the young men begin to grow into fathers in the Christian church? We watch and tend you while you are the lambs of the flock; but are you always going to be lambs? You, who are forty, fifty, sixty years of age, and who ought to set an example to others by being courageous, and full of confidence, are you always going to be Feeble-minds and Ready-to-halts? What, are you always going to use crutches? Will you never outgrow them? Must we always wheel you about in a perambulator of rich consolation? Will you never walk alone? Will you never outgrow your days of weakness? You must have dwelt long enough, and far too long, in this mount. Remember that Jesus Christ declared that he had come that his, people “might have life.” Well, you have that, have you not? But he added, “and that they might have it more abundantly.” You have not that, but do not rest satisfied until you have it.

There is another company of professors, — men of brain, but with less heart than brain; — men of the Thomas order, who want a great deal of evidence to convince them; — who tarry in the mount of questioning. We have some persons of this kind, who, we trust, are Christians, but they always have some question to ask, and they come to see the pastor about it; and after that one is answered, they ask another, and then another and another. We are very glad to see them so thoughtful; we wish everybody was thoughtful, and we do not want people to take things for granted just because we say them, we like to have them enquiring. But these people are always enquiring, and they seem to have been always enquiring. If I have lost my way, on a foggy night, I do not

mind enquiring; but, I like to move on a little, and not stand still, and keep on enquiring which is the way. There are some people who are always in a fog, and always enquiring, and every new heresy that is started gives them a new set of enquiries. It is a wretched life that they lead themselves, and other people, too; and I may well say to them, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount."

Just think, my Christian brother, while you have been vainly trying to find out how many angels can stand on the point of a needle, your brother has been winning souls for Jesus Christ. You have been sitting up at night seeking to discover the meaning of the tenth toe of the great image mentioned in the book of Daniel, and of these little horn an the fourth beast, and you have been puzzling yourself as to what is going to happen at a certain period of the world's history; but you have not found out much yet. Now, if you had been visiting the sick, and the poor, and the ignorant, and going after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, would not your occupation have been much more remunerative? Would it not have brought you a brighter crown at the last great day? Enquire, certainly, as to all truth revealed in the Scriptures; but many of you have already dwelt quite long enough in that mount of questioning; it is time that you had ascertained that, there are some things that are settled. I spoke with a man, some time ago who said that he made his creed every week. I thought that he must be a disciple of the moon, though I did not call him a lunatic yet he was very like one, and you might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as judge such a man by the creed which he is constantly changing. Oh, but there are some things about which we are sure; and I bless God that some of us can say that the gospel, which we preached more than twenty years ago, is precisely the same gospel that we preach now; we are not conscious of having shifted our ground with regard to any of its doctrines, precepts, warnings, or invitations it is a grand thing when all old divine is able; to say, as my own dear grandsire said to me not long before he died, "For sixty years I have preached the gospel, and the sermon that I preached the first time I went into the pulpit, I could have preached the last time I went there, for I have made no alteration in my sentiments. The truths that God taught me at the beginning, I have held fast, though I have been continually learning more and more of the meaning of them." It is very needful, if we are to do any good to others, though for a while we go to the mount of enquiry, that we should feel that there comes a time when we have made up our minds, and have learned something which we never mean to question again; we have dwelt long enough in that mount.

At Horeb, Moses divided the people, and marshalled them, and said that such-and-such a tribe should go first, and another second, and another last. He drilled them as an army, yet they were not always to be content with being marshalled and drilled, they were to go forward, and possess the land of Canaan. They had dwelt long enough in that mount of marshalling and drilling, and some of you Christian people have had quite enough marshalling and drilling. Is it not time for those of you, who are not doing anything for Christ, to begin to do something for him? I do not think that, when a young man is converted, he ought at, first; to begin working for Jesus Christ as the main business of his life. He should go to Christ's school, and try to learn something that he can afterwards talk about to others. I was very pleased with a dear brother, a working-man, who joined the church here a month or two ago. When I put to him the question, "What are you doing for Christ?" he said, "Well, sir, I have the heart to do a good deal, and I hope I shall yet do it; but, at the present time, I am trying to learn more about him; for, if I were to go and speak to some of my mates about Jesus Christ, they would be more than a match for me, and I should not like to have my Savior man a subject of ridicule." I thought there was sanctified common sense in that answer, and I would advise other young Christians to go and do likewise; only do not forget to serve your Master when you have learned the way to do it. You Mr. Recruit, have surely practiced "the goose step" long enough; can you not now go forward? To my certain knowledge, you have been in the army for a dozen years, could you not do a little fighting if you were to try? Could you not learn to load a gun, and fire it? Have you been studying the properties of gunpowder all this time, and done nothing else to prove that you are a soldier? Fie on you!

I fear that the Church of Christ as a whole, has been tarrying far too long in the mount of marshalling and drilling. Some clever brother draws up a fine plan and the next thing is to form a committee, with a president, and a vice-president, and all manner of officers. You are getting old now, like a house afire; and that is how the thing usually ends, — in smoke! There is the paraphernalia; there is the marshalling; there is the grand parade; and there is the army, — on paper! But when will the army begin the battle in real earnest? When will the Church of Christ get to close quarters with sinners? When will every Christian man and woman really begin working for Christ and cease talking about it? We have had the resolutions which have been proposed and seconded, and carried unanimously, and then forgotten! It is significant that there is no book containing the resolutions of the apostles, but we have the Acts of the apostles; and there will be something worth recording in the Lord's "book of remembrance" if we turn our good resolutions into acts of holy service. Let us get to the work, for we have tarried long enough in this mount.

There are many other "mounts" that I might mention, but I do not think I need do so. Unto whatsoever truth you have attained, dear friend, make sure of that, and then go on to something beyond. Do not stop anywhere, for you have not yet attained, neither are you yet perfect. You can buy a box of the patent perfection paint, and cover over all the knots and imperfections in the wood, but the wind and the rain will test your fine-looking house, and you will find the paint, cracking and the bad joints and the holes in the wood showing before long. At least, it is so with me in a spiritual sense. Imperfections will reveal themselves very soon, and the paint will not answer after all. But, brother, never be satisfied with yourself, for self-satisfaction is the end of all progress. A painter said to his wife, one morning, "I shall never paint again." "Why, my husband?" asked the good woman.

Because the picture, that I have just finished, perfectly satisfies me; it realizes my ideal; and, therefore, I know that, now, my genius is exhausted." When a man says, "Yes, I am a splendid fellow. I will tell everybody what I am, only I will do it very cunningly, and say this is what grace has done for me; I will thank God for it, for the Pharisee in thee temple had grace enough to do that;" — then, depend upon it, brother, the very power to grow has gone from you; for, if you were growing, you would have growing pains; you would feel like the chick in the egg, that wants to get out. Oh, how often my soul feels cribbed, and cabined, and confined, within my imperfect self! She will get completely free one day; and, in anticipation of that blessed time, I joyously sing, —

Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge,

That sets my longing soul at largo,

Unbinds my chains, breaks up my cell,

And gives me with my God to dwell.

Till that "sweet hour" arrives when you will dwell with God for ever, do not delude yourself with the notion that you have got where you may stop. "Forward, onward," must still be your motto. O eagle of God, if you are of the true royal breed, though you have looked the very sun in the face with eye undimmed, and soared till you have left the clouds far below you, yet still higher, higher, higher, must you soar! If you could distance the sun himself, and reach a yet more distant orb, still higher, higher, must you soar. "Excelsior" is the motto of every Christian until, at last, he comes into the very presence of his God, and sees him face to face. You never see an eagle roosting upon a thorn-bush, and saying, "I can get no higher;" and if any of God's birds of paradise do that, I would bid them beware of the fowler. My self-satisfied brother, he is after you, and his big net will enclose you if you are not careful. Mount, higher, brother! Higher yet, for, however high you have ascended, you have dwelt long enough in that mount, and must advance to something higher and better still. May God help you so to do, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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Deuteronomy 8:3-6

THE PILGRIM'S GRATEFUL RECOLLECTIONS.

NO. 939

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3RD, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore then shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him." — Deuteronomy 8:3-6.

OUR aptness to forget God's mercies, is, alas! too conspicuous. It has been said that the annals of a prosperous and peaceful country are singularly uninteresting; does this arise from the fact that we do not make memoranda of our mercies, or at least if we do they are far more readily blotted out than the record of our sorrows? We trace our joys in the sand, but we write our afflictions on marble. We forget the streams of mercy, never ceasing, which flow so continually parallel with our pathway. If we thus ungratefully forget, it should cause us serious reflections, when we see that God does not forget. Here in this Book he brings to his people's memories all the mercies they have received, because they were always present before his own mind. The child may forget the kindness of its mother, but the mother doth not forget what she bore, and what she has sacrificed for her child. The friend may forget what he has received, but it is not likely that the benefactor will forget what he has bestowed. If God's memory therefore records all that he has given me, let me be ashamed to let my memory suffer these things to slip. What God counts worthy of his divine recollection let me record on the pages of my memory, and often let me peruse the record.

We are also far too slow to draw the inference of obligation from benefits received. We receive the blessing, but we do not always feel that a proportionate debt is due in return to God, the bounteous giver of every good gift; yet grace has its obligations as well as laws — obligations which honorable minds reckon to be among the first to be discharged. If I do not do what I ought because I fear

the law, at any rate let me prove that I am not so base as to be ungrateful to undeserved mercy and love. It has been said by some, and there have been others whose lives have almost proved it, that the driving of the law is more effectual to produce works than the sweet drawings of the gospel; but it ought not to be so — and if it be so, the fault is in the man acted upon, and not in the principle of gratitude; for with right-minded men, with men educated by the Spirit of God, with men who are lifted up out of the common mass of mankind and endowed with the higher life, the highest motive that can be suggested even by infinite wisdom is the in motive which is drawn from the transcendent love and grace of God.

Now, brethren, though we forget our obligations, it is clear from the text that God does not, for here, after giving a summary of his benefits, he concludes by drawing an inference with the word “therefore,” and he tells Israel that having received so much, they were bound to walk in his ways and in his fear, and to keep his commandments. If he thus considers, whose wisdom none dare dispute, let us voluntarily, cheerfully, practically, concede that such is the very truth, and ask that he will help us to be obedient, and resolve that, receiving his help, we will say in our hearts and lives: —

Loved of my God, for him again

With love intense I burn;

Chosen of him ere time began,

I choose him in return.

I shall now ask your attention to the list of favors given in the text, with the view of enforcing the divine conclusions there from.

I. Let Us Pass In Review The Favors Of The Lord, taking what he did for Israel as being typical of what he has done for us.

1. The first blessing mentioned in our text is that of humbling: “And be humbled them, and suffered them to hunger.”

Not very highly esteemed among men will this favor be; and at first perhaps it may be regarded by ourselves as being rather a judgment, one of the terrible things in righteousness, than a great favor from the Most High. But rightly judged, this is one of the most admirable proofs of the Lord’s lovingkindness, that he does not leave his people in their natural pride and obstinacy, but by acts of grace brings them to their right mind. Note in the text, that the humbling was produced by hunger. What makes a man so humble as to be thoroughly in want? It was not hunger for luxury merely, bread and water failed them. How could the soil beneath them of hot sand yield them a harvest? Where could they find a stream to slake their dreadful thirst, which the broiling sun and the arid sand continually increased? To want bread and water is a short way of making a man feel that he is but a man, and that he is dependent, very dependent, upon the providence of God. Their hunger was, no doubt, increased in its power to humble them by their position. They were hungry not, in Goshen, nor in Canaan, but hungry in a waste, howling wilderness, where, let them search as they would, they could find nothing available for sustenance. They were reduced to the most abject condition of spirit, and broken by the most urgent wants; and yet, I say, this was a great blessing to them, for, being humbled, they were put in a position where God could bless them. Speaking after the manner of men, there are some positions where God cannot bless us. If we are proud and lifted up, it is not consistent to the divine honor and glory that he should smile upon us; but when we are laid low at the foot of the throne, then there is an opportunity for God to come and deal with us in pity and grace. It was good, therefore, for Israel to be placed where God’s mercy could flow to them. Being there, and being hungry, there were opportunities given for divine grace and bounty; a man who is not hungry cannot be fed — why needs he, at any rate, to be fed? and if fed, he will not be grateful as a hungry man. But now when they are famishing, now will God work his miracles. The open windows of heaven shall, to their astonishment, rain down their daily food, and up through those open casements shall their praise and thankfulness ascend to the throne of God. There is room for mercy where there is misery, space for grace where there is poverty. Happy was Israel, therefore, to be humbled by hunger, and placed where mercy could glorify itself. They were thus, by their being made needy brought to receive superior supplies. If they had possessed the corn of Egypt, they would have missed the manna of heaven. If beneath their feet there had sprung up crops of common wheat, from which they could have reaped their daily supplies, they would have missed the angels’ food which fell from heaven around their camp. Absence of meals was more than compensated by the presence of manna. It is a blessed thing to have a famine of the creature, if thereby we are supplied by the Creator!

Now, my dear friends, just think for a minute that this was your case and mine. Years ago, in the case of some of us, the Lord met with us and brought us into a painful state of spiritual hunger. All our supplies failed us, we had thought before that, we were at least as good as others, that we might somehow work our way to heaven, and we were satisfied, after a fashion, with worldly joys; but the Lord suddenly took away our earthly comforts, or took away our rest and enjoyment of them, and at the same time we saw sin and its punishment before us, and we were brought to a condition in which we were like those in the wilderness, who were afflicted with fiery serpents, and bitten with scorpions. Our thoughts would not suffer us to rest; our sins plagued and tormented us. We looked round for comfort, and we could find none; we looked and looked again, and we only found fresh cause to despair. We were

driven right away from self. What a mercy it was that we were so humbled, for then the Lord could reveal his love to us! What a blessing it was that we were so wretched, for then there was room for Jesus to come with his pardoning blood, and the Holy Spirit to come with his divine quickening, and the promise of the Father to come with all its fullness of grace and truth. And oh! how blessedly, being deprived of earthly consolations, were we supplied with heavenly ones. Our self-confidence, what a blessing it was to lose it, for we had confidence in Christ instead of it! Our carnal security, happy were we to see it wither, for we had security in Christ given us in the place of it and our self-righteousness. Thrice happy was it for us that it was totally dried up, for now we come to drink water out of the living rock of Christ Jesus, and he has become our joy, our song, and our salvation. You remember well that humbling season — you have had such seasons since. You have been brought since then into great spiritual straits, when you found that all the supposed grace which you had in store utterly failed you, even as the manna which the children of Israel unbelievably tried to lay by in store — it bred worms and stank. You have been brought down to deep spiritual poverty, but that has been a great blessing to you, for each renewed season of soul poverty has been the prelude for a fresh season of divine manifestation of grace. When I find myself brought very low in spirit, and made to see the depravity of my heart, and to groan over my own weakness, I have learned to expect better things. I have been thankful for humblings because I have learned by experience that when I am emptied the Lord means to fill me; that when I am brought low it is only a preface to being lifted by the divine Spirit. Surely for these reasons we may reckon our humblings amongst the choicest favors of heaven; and as here the humbling stands first in the text, so let it not be last in our song. As it is put here as the frontispiece to the volume of grateful remembrances, let it be prominent in our minds. “He humbled thee, and caused thee to hunger.” Oh, blessed hour in which he prostrated my soul at his feet! Oh, happy season when he stripped me of what I thought my glory, but which were filthy rags! Oh, thrice memorable period when he wounded me with the arrows of conviction, when he slew me by the law, for this was but a preparation for healing me with his touch of love, and making me alive with the eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. The first mercy, then, is that of humbling the soul.

2. I shall have to notice, in the second place, the divine feeding. We shall now see ourselves mirrored in the ease of Israel as in a glass. “He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee.” How sweetly that follows, “suffered thee to hunger and fed thee;” the light close on the heels of the darkness. Is there a desponding soul here who has been suffered to hunger? “Blessed are ye that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for ye shall be filled.” That “and” in the text is like a diamond rivet, none can ever take it out or break it. “He suffered thee to hunger and fed thee.” He who suffers thee to hunger will be sure to feed thee yet upon the bountiful provisions of his grace. Be of good cheer, poor mourning soul.

Now let us notice what our spiritual food has been, brethren, said the first remark shall be, we have been fed spiritually every day; we have had day by day our souls’ daily bread; as the manna fell daily, so has the food of our souls been given us from time to time by the power of the Spirit of God. Israel in the wilderness was always on the brink of starvation, yet never knew a want. There was nothing between the people’s being starved except (and what a blessed exception!), except the divine interposition. They could not go to their stores, and say, “Here are tons of food.” They could not, as you may in going down the Thames, look at huge warehouses full of corn laid by in store; no, no, there was not a halfpenny worth of store in the house of any Israelite as he went to bed, the whole place was bare, all was gone. There was nothing between them and being starved, I say, but the divine faithfulness. This is precisely how I have lived before the Lord ever since I have known the Lord; there has been nothing between my soul and falling from grace, except the divine faithfulness: no, nothing whatever at all of the past experience, or all the present knowledge, that could have stood me in any stead in the time of trial. Not a man among you has anything spiritually to depend upon but the daily interpositions of covenant grace. Let the child of God remember this, and when he feels himself very weak in himself, and driven to his Lord in prayer, let him rejoice that he is just where God would have him be. When I am weak, then am I strong; when I have nothing, then have I all things. While I have nought to depend upon of the old corn of the land, the manna will continually fall, and day by day my strength shall be renewed. Has that been your experience, dear brother? If it has been, then every day give God a fresh song, who interposes between your soul and death.

Yet though the manna came every day, it was always sufficient. I spoke of starvation, but Israel never had any reason even to think of it, for the provender which God sent was not limited so that any man could say, “It is not sufficient for me.” What sufficed one man might not suffice another in ordinary food, but of the manna every man had enough. So to this day it has been in grace with every believer. God has given to you and to me, up till this hour, all the grace we have needed, and though he has given us so much, there is as much more left in the infinite provision as if he had never drawn upon it. Go to the richest man’s store, and take something out, and there is so much less remaining; but when the manna came from heaven, there was just as much manna left after it had come as before. So the grace of God is just as all-sufficient after you and I have received as it was at the first. The only stint the Israelite knew in the matter of the manna was the limit of his own capacity to receive. He might have as much as ever he could eat; and if we have not had more grace, it has been our own fault; if we have not lived nearer to God, if we have not possessed more joy, or been more useful, we have not been straitened in our God, we have been straitened in our bowels. We have had the provisions of his grace day by day, we have had as much as we asked for, and often a great deal more, and we might have had as much more as we would if we had but had larger desires and greater confidence in God. The Lord’s name be praised for daily food in this wilderness, and for sufficient food.

The manna was a very mysterious thing. It is said in the text that it was food that they did not know, and which their fathers had not known; and, certainly, the grace of God which has kept us to this day is a most mysterious power upon us. The worldling does not understand what it is to eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood, and though we know what it is by sweet experience, we could not explain it. We have lived to this day upon the promises of God, upon the inflowing of the divine Spirit into our souls, but we cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. Nor do our fathers after the flesh know; and though our sires, who have gone before us to heaven, fed on the same food, yet it was to them mysterious as it is to us. Talk of wonders, the Christian man is the greatest wonder in the world! Speak of miracles, what is the Christian life but a continued miracle, a series of miracles, like links in a chain, one following the other — kept alive in the midst of death, and supported by a marvellous food, which the world knoweth nothing of; we are wonders unto many, and more so to ourselves. Brethren, the manna came from heaven, and here is the very marrow of the truth as to what we have lived upon spiritually — we have lived upon heavenly food. If our supplies had depended on human ministry, they would have failed; if they had depended upon the mere reading of good books, there might be times when we could read to profit; but the everlasting well-Springs of divine love are not affected by our condition of body or of mind — the grace and love that are treasured up in Christ Jesus come to us when creature cisterns are broken, and all the help of friends is unavailing. From thee, great God, from thee we have derived the nutriment of our spiritual life, and it has always come in due season — up to this hour we have known no lack. Thou hast made us hunger when we have looked to earth for supplies, but when we have turned to thee, our souls have been satisfied with marrow and fatness! Blessed be thy name for evermore! Dear brethren and sisters, do endeavor to live more and more upon unseen things. Let your fellowship be with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. Look not to the granaries of Egypt, stay not yourself on an arm of flesh. Israel in the wilderness had no grainaries, they looked neither to Moab nor Ammon, but they looked to Jehovah, and to Jehovah alone, and let it be so with you, and, assuredly, even in the time of famine, your spirit shall be satisfied.

After all, the children of Israel in the wilderness were fed on the best food that ever fell to the lot of mortals. They did eat angels' food. Egypt and Assyria, with all their wealth, tasted not of bread which dropped from heaven, but poor Israel in the howling wilderness was fed with royal dainties. Let the sons of earth be nourished as they may, and fattened like kings' sons, yet there are no faces that are so fair to look upon with holy joy and exultation, as the faces of the men who feed on Christ Jesus, who is the bread that came down from heaven; there are none who are so blest as those who live upon God himself, for they have this for their surpassing excellence, that eating as they do this bread, they live for ever. He that eats other bread derives temporary nourishment from it, but ere long he dies; he who feeds on Christ feeds on immortal food, and more, he becomes immortal himself — the food transforms the man. Matchless is the manna which comes from heaven, for it makes us heavenly and bears us up to the heaven from whence it came! They who live on Christ become like Christ; being fed upon him, they become conformed unto his image, made meet to be partakers of the glory of God in heaven. I wish I could speak so as to stir your hearts with gratitude, but the subject ought to do it without words of mine, and, sitting calmly here with Jordan sparkling before us, and Canaan hard by on the other shore, we are bound to remember all the way whereby the Lord our God hath led us, and the food which up to this day has never failed us.

3. The third favor mentioned in the text, upon which we will pause awhile is the remarkable raiment. "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee." This has been interpreted by some to mean that they were able constantly to procure from the surrounding nations fresh changes of clothing. Others have said, and there is truth in the remark, that they had among them persons of great skill, who were able to use the produce of the flocks and herds, so that they were not without clothes to supply their needs: and indeed if that be all the meaning, it declares a great cause for thankfulness. The tribes never became a ragged regiment, though always on the march they were always well dressed, their clothes waxed not old. But I am not among those who like to blot out every miracle from the word of God, and as the history of the children in the wilderness is altogether miraculous, and cannot be accounted for without the introduction of divine interposition, it seems to me that it is as natural to expect their raiment to be miraculously given as to expect their food to be. And the run of the text, if it were read by an intelligent child without any prejudice one way or the other, would suggest a miracle. It stands in the midst of miracles, and is one itself. "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee." Certainly this was the old interpretation which the rabbis put upon it, that by a continuous miracle their clothes did not wear out for the whole space of forty years. Though subject to the ordinary wear and tear incidental to travelling, yet their garments still continued to be as good at the end of forty years as they were when first they left the land of Egypt. I believe that to be what the text means. And how, spiritually it is the case with us. "Thy garments waxed not old upon thee." Do you remember, brethren, when first you put your garments on? I do well remember when first I discovered, as Adam did in the garden, that I was naked, and I hid myself. I tried then as you did to make a fig-leaf covering for myself: that would have waxed old soon enough, for the fig leaves of our own righteousness soon wither and decay; but I was pointed to the righteousness which God had prepared, even as Adam and Eve were pointed to the coats of skins which the Lord God had made ready for them; and then I put on the robe of Christ's righteousness which he had provided, and glory be to his name that garment has not waxed old upon me. Is it not so with you? You are not found naked this day. Perhaps you have been a believer forty or fifty years, but that robe of grace is ever new and evermore as fresh as at the first, and as suitable as at the beginning. All your nakedness is hidden from the face of God, and hidden from yourself too; you can now rejoice in the Lord, and approach him without fear. You do not want to hide yourself, but

rather you wish to show yourself to God, and you say, "Search me, O God, and know my ways, try me, and know in my heart." Our garment, then, which covers our nakedness, has not waxed old.

But we have a garment for more than this, namely, to make us acceptable. Jacob put on his brother Esau's clothes, and he obtained the blessing of his father. We, too, have put on the garments of Christ, and have won the blessing; he who went into the feast and had not on a wedding garment was cast out; the wedding garment which we wear to-day is the righteousness which Christ has wrought out for us, find which he works in us by his Spirit; now, blessed be his name, that which we put on many years ago, has not waxed old yet, we are still accepted in the Beloved. That robe has endured much wear and tear; what with our imperfections and sins, shortcomings and transgressions, if it had not been divinely wrought, it would have been worn out long ago; but blessed be his name, I know, and you know, that we are as acceptable to God this day, as we were when, first we believed in Jesus. We are still dear children, still beloved of the Lord, still heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus, our garment of acceptance has not waxed old.

Besides, we have the garment of consolation. Men put on their clothes to warm and comfort them, and how often have we wrapped ourselves about with the promises of God's word, and with the doctrines of revelation and made garments of them to screen us from the cold blast of tribulation! These, also, have not waxed old. Glory be to God for those everlasting promises! When we were young we trusted in them, and when we are old and grey-headed we shall still find them to be founts or consolation as clear, and true, and sure, and precious as ever they were. You cannot point me to a stale promise in all God's book, neither can you find me a worn-out doctrine. The rabbis say that when the young Israelites grow older their clothes grew as they grew. I do not know how that was, but I do know that let us grow in mental stature as we may, the doctrines of the gospel still are suitable for us. If they were like milk to us when we were babes, they are strong meat to us when we become men. They always meet our needs and conditions, and thus we can joyfully say that the garment which covers our nakedness, which adorns us before God, and affords us consolation, has not waxed old these forty years. Blessed be the name of the Most High for all this.

4. But we pass on again. The next blessing for which we ought to be grateful is that sustained personal strength. Our spiritual vigor has not decayed during our sojourn in the wilderness, for it is written, "Neither did thy foot swell." A swollen foot is the common ailment of pilgrims in the desert. Much marching over hot sand soon makes the foot become swollen and puffed up, or else it hardens it, and some read this text, "Neither did thy foot become callous." In neither way in Israel's case was the foot deformed, nor was walking rendered painful. For forty years the pilgrims footed it without pain, and though it was a weary land, yet their strength held out till they crossed the Jordan, and came into the promised rest. So it has been with us. Our foot has not swelled these forty years. In the way of perseverance we have been maintained and preserved. Personally I admire the grace which has kept me in my course, though assailed by many, many fierce temptations, and exposed to great perils in my position. If I wonder, I dare say each one of you has to wonder too. There have been scores of times since you made a profession, when your feet were almost gone, your steps had well nigh slipped, and yet your foot has not swollen, you are still on the way, in the way, and nearing to the end of the way, kept consistent, kept in godliness, even until now. What a blessing! Suppose you had been permitted to faint, suppose you had been suffered to fall on the road, and had no longer held on your way, you know what the result must have been, for only to perseverance is the promise made. But God has helped you to hold on to this hour, and he will aid you even to the end. Up till now you have held on: have confidence. He will keep you still. Your foot has not swelled in the way of perseverance.

Neither have you been lamed in the way of service. Perhaps you have been called to do much work for Christ, yet you have not grown tired of it, though sometimes tired in it; still you have kept to your labor, and found help in it. If you were ever called to preach the gospel, you would be compelled to see, even if you closed your eyes, how dependent you were upon God. Sabbath after Sabbath, and week day after week day, preaching still, having need to say something fresh continually, and often wondering where it will come from, the preacher is grateful that as yet his foot has not swollen. You too have gone to your Sunday-school, or you have held your position as a solitary testifier in the family, or you have served God as a missionary from door to door, and you have thought, "Surely, I shall come to the end of all I know, and all I can do," but you have not yet. Your foot has not swollen all these years, you have kept on in the way of service.

So, too, your foot has not swollen in the way of faith. Such little faith you had at first, that you might well have thought it would all die out by now. See a spark that floats in the sea, see a stone that hangs in the air, surely these must come to an end; the one must be extinguished, and the other must fall! But it has not been so. God has not quenched the smoking flax, nor broken the bruised reed. Still your foot has not swollen. You believe in Jesus yet, and notwithstanding your unbelief, your faith still can give forth the cry of a loving child, and say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

In addition to all this, your foot has not swollen in the way of fellowship. You have walked with God, and you have not grown weary of the holy intercourse. Sometimes that walking with God has cost you much effort, much struggling with inward corruptions, much determination to be clear from the customs and the ways of ungodly men, and you had long ago been tired had not you leaned on your Beloved; but you have leaned so much on him, that your foot has not swollen; you can still walk with him, and hope to do so until you come to your journey's end, and sit down with him for ever and ever.

Moreover, dear brethren and sisters, your foot has not swollen in the way of joy. You were happy young men in Christ Jesus, and you are happy fathers now. You were happy young women, when first you gave your heart to Christ, and you have grown to be matronly now, but you are as happy as in younger days. The novelty has not worn off, or rather one novelty has been succeeded by another, fresh discoveries have broken out upon you, and Jesus has still to you the dew of his youth. If the old light has passed away, yet the new light of a still brighter sun has come, and you are nearing the "sacred, high, eternal noon," where the glory of God and of the Lamb shed splendor all around. He who walks with God Shall never weary, though through all eternity he continues the hallowed march. For all this we give to God our thanks yet again.

5. Bear with me when I notice in the fifth place the memorable blessing of chastisement. I must call special attention to it because God does so in these words, "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart." That unswollen foot, and that unworn garment, you need not so much value as this, for this you are specialty bidden to consider, to meditate upon in your very heart, your deepest thoughts are to be given to it, and, consequently, your highest praises. "Consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." My dear friends, I speak as one of the humblest of God's servants, but I dare not withhold my testimony; I can truly say of everything I have ever tasted in this world of God's mercy — and my path has been remarkably strewn with divine lovingkindness — I feel more grateful to God for the bodily pain I have suffered, and for all the trials I have endured of divers sorts, than I do for anything else except the gift of his dear Son. I am sure I have derived more real benefit and permanent strength and growth in grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity. In fact, I have for years looked upon my great prosperity as being sent as a test and trial of my graces; I regard it as the severest of ordeals which I must lay before God humbly, and ask for grace to bear; but I have learned to regard affliction as being a sheltered nook in which I am more than usually screened from temptation, and in which I might expect to have the peculiar presence of the Lord my God. I am not fearful of my ballast, but I am very anxious about my sail. Moreover, I have discovered that there is a sweetness in bitterness not to be found in honey; a safety with Christ in a storm which may be lost in a calm. I know not how to express quite my meaning, but even lowness of spirits and deep sadness, have a peculiar charm within them which laughter in vain may emulate. It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Now I think if I were to take the testimony of many Christian friends here, they would have to say much the same; so then, as you know all this, let me say nothing about it but just this: Ponder and consider much the gratitude you owe to God for his chastening rod. Dwell much in your heart upon what God evidently regards as one of his distinguishing blessings. Do not pass over slightly what God would have you consider. Count the cross and the rod to be doubly worthy of your deepest thought. "Hear the rod and him that hath appointed it." Remember that whenever you are chastened you are not chastened as a slave-master smites his victim, nor as a judge orders the criminal to be lashed, but as a man chasteneth his son so are you chastened. Your chastisement is a sign of sonship, it is a token of love. It is intended for your good. Accept it, therefore, in the spirit of sonship, and "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art corrected of him." Remember that chastisement is an assured token of the covenant relationship; it is the Lord thy God that chasteneth thee. If he were not thy God he might let thee alone; if he had not chosen thee to be his own, he would not take such care of thee; if he had not given himself to be thy treasure, he might not be so diligent in weaning thee from all other treasures; but because thou art his he will withdraw thy love away from this poor world. Perhaps he will take one child after another from thee, that all the love that was lavished on the child might flow towards himself. Perhaps he will leave thee a widow, that the love that ran in the channel of a husband may run altogether to himself. Perhaps he will take away thy riches, that the consolation thou didst derive from them may be all derived from him. Perhaps he will smite thee, and then lay thee on his own bosom, faint and helpless, that thou mayst derive a strength and a joy from fellowship, close, and near with himself, which thou wouldst never have had if it had not been that these other joys were removed. I have seen a little plant beneath an oak tree sheltered from the storm, and wind, and rain, and it felt pleased and happy to be so screened; but I have seen the woodman come with his axe and fell the oak, and the little plant has trembled with fear because its protection was removed. Alas! for me," it said, "the hot sun will scorch me, the driving rain will drown me, and the fierce wind will tear me up by the roots." But instead of these dreadful results, the shelter being removed, the plant has breathed freer air, drank more of the dews of heaven, received more of the light of the sun, and it has sprung up and borne flowers which else had never bloomed, and seeds that never else had sown themselves in the soil. Be glad when God thus visits thee, when he takes away these overshadowing but dwarfing comforts, to make thee have a clear way between thee and heaven, so that heavenly gifts might come more plentifully to thee. Bless God for chastenings; let the sweetest note of your music be to him that lays not by the rod, but like a father chasteneth his children for their good.

II. Now your time is gone, but you must even be detained, for it is necessary to dwell upon the last thought, which is The Inference From All This.

All this humbling, feeding, clothing, strengthening, chastening, what of it all? Why this — "therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear Mm." If you have not shared in these blessings, I shall not speak with you, for the inference would not tell upon you; but if in very deed and truth, every line here describes to the letter your Christian career, then let these arguments have power with you. He has done thus much for you, will you not serve him? Are you

not his by a thousand bonds? Delivered out of deep distresses, supported under enormous burdens, forgiven heinous sins, saved with a great salvation, are you not now bound by every tie that can bind an honorable man, to be obedient to the Lord your God? Take the model of the text. Let your obedience be universal. Keep the commandments of the Lord, walk in his ways. Set your heart to the Scriptures to find out what the commandments are, and then, once knowing, perform at once. Settle it in your soul, that you only want to know it is his will, and you will, by his grace neither question nor delay, but whatsoever he saith unto you, you will do. Shut not your eyes to any part of his teaching, be not wilfully blind where Christ would guide you with his word. Let your obedience be entire. In nothing be rebellious. Let that obedience be careful. Doth not the text say, "Keep the commandments," and doth not the first verse say, "Ye shall observe to do"? Keep it as though you kept a treasure, carefully putting your heart as a garrison round it. Observe it as they do who have some difficult art, and who watch each order of the teacher, and trace each different part of the process with observant eye, lest they fail in their art by missing any one little thing. Keep and observe. Be careful in your life. Be scrupulous. You serve a jealous God, be jealous of yourself. Let your obedience be practical. The text says, "Walk in his ways." Carry your service of God into your daily life, into all the minutiae and details of it. Do not have an unholy room in your house. Let the bed-chamber, let the banqueting-hall, let the place of conversation, the place of business, let every place be holiness unto your God. Walk in his ways. Whereas others walk up and down in the name of their God, and boast themselves in the idols wherein they trust, walk you in the name of Jehovah your God, and glory always to avow that you are a disciple of Jesus, God's dear Son, and let your obedience spring from principle, for the text says, "Walk in his ways, and fear him." Seek to have a sense of his presence, such as holy spirits have in heaven who view him face to face. Remember he is everywhere; you are never absent from that eve. Tremble, therefore, before him with that sacred trembling which is consistent with holy faith. Serve him with faith and trembling, knowing that be you who you may, he is infinite and you are finite, he is perfect and you are sinful, he is all in all and you are nothing at all. With this sacred, reverential, child-like fear regnant within your spirit, you will be sure to walk practically in obedience to him.

I close by saying, we who have followed God's word so far, and experienced the faithfulness of God so long, ought never to give way to unbelief. Thy foot has not swollen, thy garment has not waxed old these forty years — why wilt thou then mistrust or be suspicious? If he meant to deceive thee he would have left thee long ago.

He cannot have taught thee To trust in his name,

And thus far have brought thee To put thee to shame.

Go on! the present difficulty will melt like the past. Go on! the future mercy will be as sure as the mercies that have hitherto come to thee. Though winds and waves go o'er thy head, and friends vanish from thee, "trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and, verily, thou shalt be fed." The heavens and the earth may pass away, and rocks ran to rivers, and the sun turn to a coal, but the eternal promise ne'er shall fail, and the heart of infinite love shall never change. "Be of good comfort, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

What encouragement all this gives to young brethren who are setting out in the Christian life, or about to engage in the Christian ministry! With that reflection I close. If your fathers, and your fellow Christians of elder years, can say that their bread has been given them, and their supplies have been all-sufficient, then rest assured, my brethren, you are entering upon a happy life, even if it be a tried and difficult one; for the Lord who has dealt so well with some of his people, gives in that fact a pledge that he will deal so with all. Commit yourselves wholly to God, give up all your powers to his service, work for him with all your hearts, and he will supply your needs. Think not of this world's gain, but "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Lay self in the dust, and let Christ be all in all. Live by the rule of truth; walk by the way of faith; have confidence in God, and your path shall be as brightness, and your glory as a lamp that burneth. Joined on earth to the hand of Christian soldiers, you shall ere long be added to the countless host of the church triumphant, who at this hour bear witness that God is faithful, and that his promise is sure.

O you who are not believers, methinks your mouths must water this morning to come and join with God's Israel; and remember that simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, will bring you to be numbered with Israel. If you will but with your hearts accept Christ to be your Savior, then his people shall be your people, his God shall be your God, where he dwells and his people dwell you shall dwell; and if for awhile you be buried with him, you shall arise again to live forever with him in heaven. May the Holy Spirit seal this on your hearts. Amen.

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Deuteronomy 22:8 Battlements

NO. 2999

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“When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.” — Deuteronomy 22:8.

THIS interesting law, which in its letter was binding on the Jewish people, in its spirit furnishes an admirable rule for us upon whom the ends of the world are come.

It is not necessary to inform this audience that the roofs of Eastern dwellings were flat, and that the inhabitants were accustomed to spend much of their time upon the tops of their houses, not only conversing there during the day, but sleeping there at night. If the roofs were without any fencing or protection around their edge, it might often happen that little children might fall over, and not unfrequently grown-up persons might inadvertently make a false step, and suffer serious injury, if not death itself. Where there were no railings or low walls around the roof, accidents frequently occurred; but God commanded his people, while they were yet in the wilderness, that, when they came into the promised land, and proceeded to build houses, they should take care in every case to build a sufficient battlement that life might not be lost through preventable casualty.

This careful command clearly shows us that God holds life to be very valuable, and that, as he would not permit us to kill by malice, so he would not allow us to kill by negligence, but would have us most tender of human lives. Such rules as the one before us are precedents for sanitary laws, and give the weight of divine sanction to every wise sanitary arrangement. No man has a right to be filthy in his person, or his house, or his brace; for, even if he himself may flourish amid unhealthy accumulations of dirt, he has no right, by his unclean habits to foster a deadly typhus, or afford a nest for cholera. Those whose houses are foul, whose rooms are unventilated, whose persons are disgusting, cannot be said to love their neighbor; and those who create nuisances in our crowded cities are guilty of wholesale murder. No man has a right to do anything which must inevitably lead to the death or to the injury of those by whom he is surrounded, but he is bound to do all in his power to prevent any harm coming to his fellow-men. That seems to be the moral teaching of this ordinance of making battlements around the housetops, — teaching, mark you, which I should like all housewives, working-men, manufacturers, and vestrymen, to take practical note of.

But, if ordinary life be precious, much more is the life of the soul, and, therefore, it is our Christian duty never to do that which imperils either our own or other men's souls. To us there is an imperative call from the great Master that we care for the eternal interests of others, and that we, so far as we can, prevent their exposure to temptations which might lead to their fatal falling into sin.

We shall now lead you to a few meditations which have, in our mind, gathered around the text.

I. First, God Has Battlemented His Own House.

Let this serve as a great truth with which to begin our contemplations. God takes care that all his children are safe. There are high places in his house, and he does not deny his children the enjoyment of these high places, but he makes sure that they shall not be in danger there. He sets bulwarks round about them, lest they should suffer harm when in a state of exaltation.

God, in his house, has given us many high and sublime doctrines. Timid minds are afraid of these, but the highest doctrine in Scripture is safe enough because God has battlemented it; and as no man need be afraid in the East to walk on the roof of his house when the battlement is there, so no man need hesitate to believe the doctrine of election, the doctrine of eternal and immutable love, or any of the divine teachings which circle around the covenant of grace, if he will at the same time see that God has guarded those truths so that none may fall from them to their own destruction.

Take, for instance, the doctrine of election. What a high and glorious truth this is, that God hath, from the beginning, chosen his people unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth! Yet that doctrine has turned many simpletons dizzy through looking at it apart from kindred teachings. Some, I do not doubt, have wilfully leaped over the battlement which God has set about this doctrine, and have turned it into Antinomianism, degrading it into an excuse for evil living, and reaping just damnation for their wilful perversion. But God has been pleased to set around that doctrine other truths which shield it from misuse. It is true he has a chosen people, but “by their fruits ye shall know them.” Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Though he has chosen his people, yet he has chosen them unto holiness; he has ordained them to be zealous for good works. His intention is not that they should be saved in their sins, but saved from their sins; not that they should be carried to heaven as they are, but that they should be cleansed and purged from all iniquities, and so made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Then there is the sublime brush of the final perseverance of the saints. What a noble height is that! A housetop doctrine indeed! What a Pisgah view is to be had from the summit of it; “The Lord will keep the feet of his saints.” “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” It will be a great loss to us if we are unable to enjoy the

comfort of this truth. There is no reason for fearing presumption through a firm conviction of the true believer's safety. Mark well the battlements which God has builded around the edge of this truth! He has declared that, if these shall fall away, it, is impossible "to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." If those who are true saints should altogether lose the life of God that is within their souls, there would remain no other salvation; if the first, salvation could have spent itself unavailingly, there would be no alternative, but "a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." When we read warnings such as, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," and others of that kind, we see how God has made a parapet around this tower-like truth, so that saints may ascend to its very summit, and look abroad upon the land that floweth with milk and honey, and yet their brains need not whirl, nor shall they fall into presumption and perish.

That wonderful doctrine of justification by faith, which we all hold to be a vital truth, not only of Protestantism but of Christianity itself, is quite as dangerous by itself as the doctrine of election, or the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints; in fact, if a man means to sin, he can break down every bulwark, and turn any doctrine into an apology for transgression. Even the doctrine that God is merciful, simple as that is, may be made into an excuse for sin. To return to the doctrine that we are justified by faith, and not by the works of the law, Luther put it very grandly, very boldly, and for him very properly; but there are some who use his phrase, not in Luther's way, and without Luther's reasons for unguarded speaking, and such persons have sometimes done serious damage to men's souls by not mentioning another truth which is meant to be the battlement to the doctrine of faith, namely, the necessity of sanctification. Where faith is genuine, through the Holy Spirit's power, it works a cleansing from sin, a hatred of evil, an anxious desire after holiness, and it leads the soul to aspire after the image of God. Faith and holiness are inseparable. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Good works are to be insisted on, for they have their necessary uses. James never contradicts Paul, after all; it is because we do not understand him that we fancy he does so. Both the doctrinal Paul and the practical James spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Paul builds the tower, and James puts the battlement around it; Paul conducts us to the summit of God's house, and bids us rejoice in what we see there; and then James points us to the balustrade that is built up to keep us from overleaping the truth to our own detection. Thus is each doctrine balanced, bulwarked, and guarded, but time would fail us to enter into detail; let it suffice for us to know that the palace of truth is battlemented with wisdom and prudence.

Take another view of the same thought. The Lord has guarded the position of his saints if endowed with wealth. Some of God's servants are, in his providence, called to very prosperous conditions in life, and prosperity is fruitful in dangers. It is hard to carry a full cup without a spill. A man may braver on the ground well enough, and yet find it hard work to walk on a high rope. A man may be an excellent servant who would make a bad master; and one may be a good tradesman in a small way who makes a terrible failure of it as a merchant. Yet be well assured that, if God shall call any of you to be prosperous, and give you much of this world's goods, and place you in an eminent position, he will see to it that grace is given suitable for your station, and affliction needful for your elevation.

The Lord will put battlements round about you, and it is most probable that these will not commend themselves to your carnal nature. You are going on right joyously, everything is "merry as a marriage bell;" but, on a sudden, you are brought to a dead stand. You kick against this hindering disappointment, but it will not move out of your way. You are vexed with it, but there it is. Oh, how anxious you are to go a step farther, and then you think you will be supremely happy; but it is just that perfect happiness so nearly within reach that God will not permit you to attain, for then you would receive your portion in this life, forget your God, and despise the better land. That bodily infirmity, that want of favor with the great, that sick child, that suffering wife, that embarrassing partnership, — any one of these may be the battlement which God has built around your success, lest you should be lifted up with pride, and your soul should not be upright in you. Does not this remark cast a light upon the mystery of many a painful dispensation? "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word;" that experience may be read another way, and you may confess, "Had I not been afflicted, I should have gone far astray; but now have I kept thy Word."

The like prudence is manifested by our Lord towards those whom he has seen fit to place in positions of eminent service. Those who express great concern for prominent ministers, because of their temptations, do well; but they will be even more in the path of duty if they have as much solicitude about themselves. I remember one, whose pride was visible in his very manner, a person unknown, of little service in the church, but as proud of his little badly ploughed, weedy half acre, as ever a man could be, who informed me very pompously, on more than one occasion, that he trembled lest I should be unduly exalted and puffed up with pride. Now, from his lips, it sounded like comedy, and reminded me of Satan reproving sin. God never honors his servants with success without effectually preventing their grasping the honor of their work. If we are tempted to boast, he soon lays us low. He always whips behind the door at home those whom he meet honors in public. You may rest assured that, if God honors you by enabling you to win many souls, you will have many stripes to bear, and stripes you would not like to tell another of, they will be so sharp and humbling. If the Lord loves you, he will never let you be lifted up in his service. We have to feel that we are but just the pen in the Master's hand; so that, if holiness be written on men's hearts, the credit will not be ours, but the Holy Spirit must have all the praise; and this our Heavenly Father has effectual means of securing. Do not, therefore, start back from qualifying yourself for the most eminent position, or from occupying it when duty calls. Do not let Satan deprive God's great cause of your best service through your unholy bashfulness and cowardly retirement. The Lord will give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. If God sets

you on the housetop, he will place a battlement round about you. If he makes you to stand on the high places, he will make your feet like hind's feet, so that you shall not fall. If God commands thee to dash against the enemy single-handed, still, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." He will uphold thee and on the pinnacle thou art as secure as in the valley, if Jehovah set thee there.

It is the same with regard to the high places of spiritual enjoyment. Paul was caught up to the third heavens, and he heard words unlawful for a man to utter: this was a very, very high place for Paul's mind, mighty brain and heart as he had; but then, there was the battlement: "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." Paul was not in love with this drawback, he besought the Lord thrice to remove it; but, still, the thorn could not be taken away, for it was necessary as a battlement around the eminent revelations with which God had favored his apostle. The temptation, if we are at all happy in the Lord, is to grow secure. "My mountain standeth firm," say we, "I shall never be moved."

Even much communion with Christ, though in itself sanctifying, may be perverted, through the folly of our flesh, into a cause of self-security; we may even dream that we are brought so near to Christ that common temptations are not likely to assail us, and by these very temptations we may fall. Hence it is that, as sure as ever we have high seasons of enjoyment, we shall sooner or later endure periods of deep depression. Scarcely ever is there a profound calm on the soul's sea, but a storm is brewing. The sweet day so calm, so bright, shall have its fall, and the dew of the succeeding night shall weep over its departure. The high hill must have its following valley, and the flood-tide must retreat at ebb. Lest the soul should be beguiled to live upon itself, and feed on its frames and feelings, and by neglect of watchfulness fall into presumptuous sins, battlements are set round about all hallowed joys, for which in eternity we shall bless the name of the Lord.

Too many of the Lord's-servants feel as if they were always on the housetop, — always afraid, always full of doubts and fears. They are fearful lest they shall after all perish, and of a thousand things besides. Satan sets up scarecrows to keep these timid birds from feeding upon the wheat which the great Husbandman grows on purpose for them. They scarcely over reach the assurance of faith. They are stung by "if's and "buts", like Israel by the fiery serpents, and they can scarcely get beyond torturing fear, which is as an adder biting their heel. To such we say, Beloved, you shall find, when your faith is weakest, when you are just about to fall, that there is a glorious battlement all around you; a gracious promise, a gentle word of the Holy Spirit shall be brought home to your soul, so that you shall not utterly despair. Have you not felt sometimes that, if it had not been for a choice love-word heard in the past, your faith must have given up the ghost; or if it had not been for that encouraging sermon which came with such power to your soul, your foot had almost gone, your steps had well-nigh slipped? Now, the infinite love of God, dear child of God, values you far too much to allow you to fall into despair.

Mid all your fear, and care, and woe,

His Spirit will not let you go.

Battlemented by eternal grace shall this roof of the house be, and when you are tremblingly pacing it, you shall have no cause for alarm.

II. From the fact of the Lord's carefulness over his people, we proceed, by an easy step, to the consideration that, as imitators of God, we should exercise the like tenderness; in a word, We Ought To Have Our Houses Battlemented.

A man who had no battlement to his house might himself fall from the roof in an unguarded moment. He might be startled in his sleep, and in the dark mistake his way to the stair-head, or, while day-dreaming, his steps might slip. Those who profess to be the children of God should, for their own sakes, see that every care is used to guard themselves against the perils of this tempted life; they should see to it that their house is carefully battlemented. If any ask, "How shall we do it?" we reply: —

Every man ought to examine himself carefully, whether he be in the faith, lest professing too much, taking too much for granted, he should fall and perish. At times, we should close our spiritual warehouse, and take stock; a tradesman who does not like to do that is generally in a bad way. A man, who does not think it wise sometimes to sit down and give half a day, or such time as he can spare, be a solemn stocktaking of his soul, may be afraid that things are not going right with him. Lest we should be after all hypocrites, or self-deceivers; lest, after all, we should not be born again, but should be children of nature, neatly dressed, but not the living children of God, we must prove our own selves whether we be to in the faith. Let us protect our souls' interests with frequent self-examinations.

Better still, and safer by far, go often to the cross, as you think you went at first. Go every day to the cross; still with the empty hand and with the bleeding heart, go and receive everything from Christ, and seek to have your wounds bound up with the healing ointment of his atoning sacrifice. These are the best battlements I can recommend you: self-examination on the one side of the house, and a simple faith in Jesus on the other.

Battlement your soul about well with prayer. Go not out into the world to look upon the face of man till you have seen the face of God. Never rush down from your chamber with such unseemly haste that you have not time to buckle on your helmet, and gird on your breastplate, and your coat of mail.

Be sure and battlement yourself about with much watchfulness, and, especially, watch most the temptation peculiar to your position and disposition. You may not be inclined to be slothful; you may not be fascinated by the silver of Demas into covetousness, and yet you may be beguiled by pleasure. Watch, if you have a hasty temper, lest that should overthrow you; or if yours be a high and haughty spirit, set a double watch to bring that demon down. If you be inclined to indolence, or, on the other hand, if hot passions and evil desires are most likely to attack you, cry to the Strong for strength; and as he who guards well sets a double guard where the wall is weakest, so do you.

There are some respects in which every man should battlement his house by denying himself those indulgences, which might be lawful to others, but which would prove fatal to himself. The individual who knows his weakness to be an appetite for drink should resolve totally to abstain. Every man, I believe, has a particular sin which is a sin to him, but may not be a sin to another. No man's conscience is to be a judge for another, but let no man violate his conscience. If thou canst not perform a certain act in faith, thou must not do it at all; I mean, if thou dost not honestly and calmly believe it to be right, even if it be right in itself, it becomes wrong to them. Watch, therefore, watch at all points. Guard yourselves in company, lest you be carried away by the force of numbers: guard yourselves in solitude, lest selfishness and pride creep in. Watch yourselves in poverty, lest you fall into envy of others; and in wealth, lest you become lofty in mind. Oh, that we may all keep our houses well battlemented, lest we fall and grieve the Spirit of God, and bring dishonor on Christ's name!

III. As each man ought to battlement his house, in a spiritual sense, with regard to himself, So Ought Each Man To Carry Out The Rule With Regard To His Family.

Family religion was the strength of Protestantism at first. It was the glory of Puritanism and Nonconformity. In the days of Cromwell, it is said that you might have walked down Cheapside, at a certain hour in the morning, and you would have heard the morning hymn going up from every house and along the street; and at night, if you had glanced inside each home, you would have seen the whole household gathered, and the big Bible opened, and family devotion offered. There is no fear of this land ever becoming Popish if family prayer be maintained; but if family prayer be swept away, farewell to the strength of the church. A man should battlement his house for his children's sake, for his servants' sake, for his own sake, by maintaining the ordinance of family prayer. I may not dictate to you whether you should sing, or read, or pray; or whether you should do this every morning or evening, or how many times a day; I shall leave this to the free Spirit that is in you, but do maintain family religion, and never let the fire on the altar of God burn low in your habitation.

So in the matter of discipline. If the child shall do everything it chooses to do, if it shall do wrong, and there be no admonition, if there be no chastisement, if the reins be loosely held, if the father altogether neglects to be a priest and a king in his house, how can he wonder that his children one by one grow up to break his heart? David had never chastised Absalom, nor Adonijah, and remember what they became; and Eli's sons, who never had more than a soft word or two from their father, how were his ears made to tingle with the news of God's judgments upon them! Battlement your houses by godly discipline, see that obedience be maintained, and that sin is not tolerated; so shall your house be holiness unto the Lord, and peace shall dwell therein.

We ought strictly to battlement our houses, as to many things which in this day are tolerated. I am sometimes asked, "May not a Christian subscribe to a lottery? May not a Christian indulge in a game of cards? May not a Christian dance, or attend the opera?" "Now, I shall not come down to debate upon the absolute right or wrong of debabable amusements and customs. The fact is that, if professors do not stop till they are certainly in the wrong, they will stop nowhere. It is of little use to go on till you are over the edge of the roof, and then cry, "Halt." It would be a poor affair for a house to be without a battlement, but to have a network to stop the falling person half-way down; you must stop before you get off the solid standing. There is need to draw the line somewhere, and the line had better be drawn too soon than too late; and whereas the habit of gambling is the very curse of this land, — ah! during the last Derby week, what blood it has shed! how it has brought souls to hell and men to an unripe grave! — as the habit of speculating seems to run through the land, and was doubtless the true cause of the great panic which shook our nation, a few years ago, there is the more need that we should not tolerate anything that looks like it.

For another reason, we should carefully discern between places of public amusement. Some that are perfectly harmless, recreative, and instructive, to deny these to our young people would be foolish; but certain amusements stand on the border ground, between the openly profane and the really harmless. We say, do not go to these; never darken the doors of such places. Why? Because it may be the edge of the house, and though you may not break your neck if you walk along the parapet, yet you are best on this side of the battlement. You are least likely to fall into sin by keeping away, and you cannot afford to run risks. We have all heard the old

story of the good woman who required a coachman. Two or three young fellows came to seek for the situation; each of them she saw and catechised alone. The first one had this question put to him, "how near could you drive to danger?" and he said, "I do not doubt but that I could drive within a yard of danger." "Well, well," the lady said, "you will not do for me." When the second came in, the good woman questioned him in like manner, "How near could you drive to danger?" "Within a hair's breath, madam," said he. "Oh!" she said, "that will not suit me at all." A third was asked the same question, and he prudently replied, "If you please, madam, that is one of the things I have never tried; I have always tried to drive as far from danger as ever I can." "You are the coachman for me," said she; and surely that is the kind of manager we all should have in our households. Oh, let us not so train up our children that in all probability they will run into sin! Let us, on the contrary, exhibit such an example in all things that they may safely follow us. Let us so walk that they may go step by step where we go, and not to cast out of the Church of God as a reproach, nor be cast away from the presence of God. Battlement your houses, then: do not be afraid of being too strict and too Puritanic; there is no fear of that in these days; there is a great deal more danger of bringing solemn judgments on our families through neglecting the worship of God in our households.

IV. The Preacher Would Now Remind Himself That This Church Is, As It Were, His Own House And That He Is Bound To Battlement It Round About.

Many come here, Sabbath after Sabbath, to hear the gospel; the immense number and the constancy of it surprise me. I do not know why the multitudes come and crowd these aisles. When I preached yesterday in Worcestershire, and saw the thronging crowds in every road, I could not help wondering to see them, and the more so because they listened as though I had some novel discovery to make, — they listened with all their ears, and eyes, and mouths. I could but marvel and thank God. Ah! but it is a dreadful thing to remember that so many people hear the gospel, and yet perish under the sound of it. Alas! the gospel becomes to them a savor of death unto death, and there is no lot so terrible as perishing under a pulpit from which the gospel is preached.

Now, what shall I say to prevent any of my hearers falling from this blessed gospel, — falling from the house of mercy, — dashing themselves from the roof of the temple to their ruin? What shall I say to you? I beseech you, do not be hearers only. Do not think that, when you come here Sundays, and Mondays, and Thursdays, it is all done. No, it is only begun then. Praying is the end of preaching, and to be born again is the great matter. It is very little to occupy your seat, except you hearken diligently, with willing hearts; looked upon as an end, sitting at services is a wretched waste of time. Dear hearers, be dissatisfied with yourselves unless ye be doers of the Word. Let your cry go up to God that you may be born again. Rest not till you rest in Jesus.

Remember, and I hope this will be another battlement, that if you hear the gospel, and it is not blessed to you, still it has a power. If the sun of grace does not soften you as it does wax, it will harden you as the sun does clay. If it is not a savor of life unto life, to repeat the text I quoted just now, it will be a savor of death unto death. Oh, do not be blind in the sunlight! Do not perish with hunger in the banqueting-house! Do not die of thirst when the water of life is before you!

Let me remind you of what the result of putting away the gospel will be. You will soon die; you cannot live for ever. In the world to come, what awaits you? What did our Lord say, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." The righteous enter into life eternal, but the ungodly suffer punishment everlasting. I will not dwell upon the terrors of the world to come, but let me remind you that they are yours except Christ is yours; death is yours, and judgment is yours, and hell will be yours, and all that dreadful wrath which God means when he says, "Beware, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you." Oh, run not on in sin, lest you fall into hell! I would fain set up this battlement to stay you from a dreadful and fatal fall.

Once more, remember the love of God in Christ Jesus. I heard, the other day, of a bad boy whom his father had often rebuked and chastened, but the lad grew worse. One day he had been stealing, and his father felt deeply humiliated. He talked to the boy, but his warning made no impression; and when he saw his child, so callous, the good man sat down in his chair, and burst out crying as if his heart would break. The boy stood very indifferent for a time; but, at last, as he saw the tears falling on the floor, and heard his father sobbing, he cried, "Father, don't; father, don't do that: what do you cry for, father?" "Ah! my boy," he said, "I cannot help thinking what will become of you, growing up as you are. You will be a lost man, and the thought of it breaks my heart." "O father!" he said, "pray don't cry. I will be better. Only don't cry, and I will not vex you again." Under God, that was the means of breaking down the boy's love of evil, and I hope it led to his salvation. Just like that is Christ be you. He cannot bear to see you die, and he weeps over you, saying, "How often would I have blessed you, and you would not!" Oh, by the tears of Jesus, wept over you in effect when he wept over Jerusalem, turn to him! Let that be a battlement to keep you from ruin.

God bless you, and help you to trust in Jesus, and his shall be the praise! Amen.

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Deuteronomy 32:36 Man's Extremity, God's Opportunity

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For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.”—Deuteronomy 32:36

THE same, event may happen alike to all, yet it may have a very different meaning to different individuals. Ungodly men are brought low by affliction or poverty, for sinners have no immunity from suffering. Saints also are led into trying circumstances, for the utmost holiness will not preserve any man from trial. But what a difference there is between the downfall of the prosperous sinner and of the man whom God loves! The wicked man, who continueth in his wickedness, falleth, for ever; but the righteous man, though he may fall seven times, riseth up again, for he shall not fall finally. How dreadful is the language of Jehovah when speaking of the ungodly! “To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.”

The wicked man, who prospers in this world, carries his head very high; he is proud and conceited, and he treads the poor under his feet. His career seems to be one of uninterrupted prosperity; higher, and higher, and higher, and yet higher he mounts; he becomes, more wealthy and famous, and, meanwhile, he also becomes more boastful, and more arrogant towards God. He asks, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” He breathes defiance again at the Most High; his heart grows harder and harder, like the heart of Pharaoh. Do you see where he is now? He has climbed to the very mountain's brow; he is rejoicing that he has reached the topmost pinnacle of fame. Who can ever pull him down from that height? Who can even disturb his peace? Wait a while, tarry but a brief season. High places are full of danger, and the terrible prophecy shall yet, be fulfilled in his experience, and in that of many others who are like him, “Their feet shall slide in due time;” and when men in such a position do begin to slip and slide, their fall is irrevocable. Down, down they go, falling from precipice to precipice, until they are utterly broken in pieces. Am I addressing any man who thinks that he is beyond the reach of the arrows of the Almighty? Ere another week has passed over your head, sir, you may lie gazing into eternity, and the joints of your loins shall be loosed as you begin to realize that you must so soon stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Vain, then, will be all your wealth and all your wit. You may now deride the godly, who seek mercy at the hands of God; but, then, you will cry out worse than they have ever done. You have often, in your pride, mocked them in the hour of their distress; but, in the day of your calamity, it may be that, ere you shall have even time to present one prayer to God, your foot shall slide, you will find yourself lost, and for ever have to wring your hands in anguish at your own folly in having despised eternal love, and rejected the mercy of God in Christ Jesus

I would not change places with the greatest man who is living without, the Savior; if I could have the whole world given to me, if I could be the possessor of a thousand worlds, and yet live for a single moment without having my sin forgiven, and without the love of God shed abroad in my heart, it, would be a living death to me. I think it should be so with each one of you, and it would be if you carefully thought the matter over; and I invite you to do so, and I earnestly ask you to imagine how dreadful must be the doom of an ungodly man. When he dies, he sinks into the abyss of hell. When his light, goes out, there is no means of lighting it again; the tenfold midnight, thick as Egypt's darkness, shall never be broken by the gleaming of a solitary star of hope. I want you to think all the more of this solemn truth because I am going to speak of others, who do fall very low, and suffer very much, yet, after all, their descent is followed by an ascent, their declining leads to a revival, for, according to our text, “the Lord shall judge, his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is, gone, and there is none shut up, or left.”

I. I shall apply the text, first of all, to The Lord's Own Church. It, may relate to any sorely-trying church.

I may be addressing some brethren, up from the country, who are members of churches that are sadly declining. If that is the case, let me remind you, dear friends, that God may have a true church which is very severely tried. The track of the ship of the Church has lain full often over very boisterous waters. Sometimes the sea has seethed and the billows have boiled through the fury of persecution; the prow of the vessel has been crimsoned with blood, but onward has she moved. Still has the divine wind speeded her on her way; and, despite the kings of the earth, and all the infernal tortures that Rome's inquisitors could invent, the sturdy ship has gone straight on towards her desired haven. The days of persecution have not yet ceased, but when any churches are brought very low through the attacks of cruel enemies, there is still hope for them in this promise of the living God.

What is far worse for a church even than persecution, it may be minished and brought low through the folly of its own members. Mine eyes could weep day and night over some churches that I know, which seem to me to be determined to commit spiritual

suicide. They fall to quarrelling, when they are weak enough already, and need what little strength they have for fighting against the common foe. Often, they divide into parties about nothing at all; and where there should be unbroken brotherhood, there is an absence of anything like Christian love, and therefore the Spirit of God departs from them.

Many churches are alas! brought low through a faulty ministry. A ministry, that does not ring out, in tones as clear as a clarion, "Salvation by grace, through faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ," is an impoverishing ministry. If there is no nourishing food for the soul, how can it be in spiritual health? Where will the gathering of the people be if the Shiloh is not present? If Christ be absent from the assembly, is not everything lacking that can build up a true Christian church? In many and many a place that I wot of, the members of the church have become few and feeble because the ministry has not fed their souls. And, sometimes, a church may get down so very low that it appears as if it would become altogether extinct. One is afraid that the doors of the chapel will have to be closed, that the altar-fire will go out, and that the testimony for God will cease in that particular hamlet, or village, or township.

Now, brethren, if any of you are members of such a church as that, what you have to make sure of is that it is a church of Christ, and that, you are God's people: and God's servants, for our text speaks of God's favor to "his people" and "his servants." This passage does not apply to every nominal church, nor to every conglomeration of merely moral men who call themselves Christians; but it does concern every real church of God, however low it may have been brought.

When you are in such a state as this, what you have to do is to lay the condition of the church to heart, and to cry unto God to raise it up again. Use every possible and right means to bring a revival; but if your way is blocked up, and there seems to be no possibility of success attending your efforts, then fall back upon this text, and plead it with God in prayer: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

For, next, if you pray in faith, God will return to you. I believe that half-a-dozen persons, with vital religion in their souls, and really in earnest, may pray a church right out of any ditch into which it may have fallen, or bring it, up even from the sepulcher where it has been buried, and make it live again in fullness of life; only there must be an intense determination that it shall be so, and real anguish and travail of soul until the desired end is attained. The fact that the church has come to her extremity of weakness should cheer you, rather than drive you to despair; for when a thing is so low that it cannot get any lower, there is some consolation in that fact. Now is the time to hope that the tide will turn; if it has ebbed out to the very uttermost, now let us trust that it will soon begin to flow again. I do not know whether the common saying is true, that the darkest hour of the night is that which precedes the dawn of day; but let us hope that it is so with your church, and that, when it has got very, very, very low, it has reached its limit of weakness, and that God will raise it up again.

There are some friends, whom I meet every now and then, who tell me that there are very dreadful times coming upon the world; I am not sure that they are right in all their forecasts; but one thing I do know, and that is, if ever the Church of God should get; into a worse state than she has ever yet, been in, if I am alive at such a time, I will still call together the last, half-dozen faithful ones if I am one of them, and I will get them to read with me this verse, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone., and there is none shut up, or left."

You remember that, when John Huss was being burned to death, he said, "Within a hundred years, there will come a man whom the persecutors will not be able to burn." The name Huss signified goose, and he said, "there will come a swan that you will never be able to, roast;" that was Martin Luther, who was many times, in great peril, and yet was not killed by the persecutors. When he was converted, the world was as dark spiritually as it well could be; yet, God then found, even in the monastery, a monk whose preaching of the gospel shook the world. Never be afraid of the ultimate issue of the great battle; God will beat the devil yet. Never admit into your mind thoughts that shall lead you to despond concerning the end of the conflict. The battle is the Lord's, and he will give the victory to his gospel yet. If some of the young people here should live to see all those who now preach the gospel laid in the silent grave, if any of you should live to see this place of worship empty, if ever this pulpit should cease to resound with the gospel of Christ, do not give up hope, my brethren; still stick together, even if there are only a few of you left, and cry mightily unto God, pleading the promise of our text, for he will remember you, and will "repent himself for his servants," and his cause shall yet again revive.

II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you that, our text is applicable to The Tried Believer. I may be addressing someone to whom these words of Moses shall drop as the rain, and distil as the dew.

Beloved brethren, God may bring his people, in the order of his providence, into such a state that "their power is gone." Apparently, they are in such a condition that they are quite unable to help themselves. They have struggled against many difficulties; but, at last, the difficulties have proved more than a match for them. All earthly help has quite failed them; to quote the words of the text, "their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."—no garrison left in the city, no soldier left in the field, no helper anywhere... You

may be like Job, who had no friends left, except the miserable comforters, who spoke more like enemies than friends. You are not the first of God's servants whose power is gone, and whose friends are gone. The worst about your trial may be that it may seem to you, and seem truly, that some of your suffering is the result of sin. You may not have been walking with God as you ought to have done, your heart may have grown cold; so that which has come upon you may be a chastisement for your wandering, it may be a rod in the hand of your loving Father, smiting you because of your folly. But I beseech you, now that all human power is gone, do not run away from God, but fly to him. Do not give up your hope in him. However deplorable your circumstances may be, let them drive you to God, and not from him. Your only hope now lies in the compassion of your God. Let me read this text again to you, and I pray that your faith may enable you to grasp it: "for the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." There is a gracious purpose behind your present trial, even though you do not yet perceive it.

It is possible that it was absolutely necessary that you should be brought as low as you are in order to cure you of your sin. You have come to, your last shilling, have you! I have known a doctor to keep his patient almost without food, and bring the man down every low in order to starve out the complaint from which he was suffering; and in a surgical case, the knife has had to go in very deeply so as to get at the roots of the cancer. In like manner, it may be that it was necessary that your affliction should not be stopped midway, but, should be allowed to proceed to the bitter end, in order that it might be the means of curing you of the evils which were rankling in your spirit.

Possibly, too, the affliction was permitted to develop to the uttermost in order that you might be induced to return to your God. It may be that in your prosperity you had grown so careless and so fond of the world, and you had so little delight in God, that it was necessary for you to have your gourds withered, and your flowers all made to decay, in order that you might, in your abject distress, turn again unto your God.

Or it may be that God intends that you should for ever bear a testimony to his faithfulness such as no ordinary man can bear. Those people who only sail in a little boat on a lake have no stories to tell of adventures at sea; but he who is to write a book describing long voyages must travel far out of sight of land, and behold the sea in the time of storm, as well as in a calm. You are to become, perhaps, an experienced Christian, you are to bring great honor to God by being the means of comforting others who will be tried in a similar way to yours; you are to be trained into a hero, and that cannot be done except by great and bitter griefs coming upon you. I believe that there are some of us whom God cannot trust with much joy. If we carry much sail, his wisdom and his love compel him to give us much ballast also, or else we shall be blown over. There must be many a man who knows within himself that he cannot be trusted with success. His head would turn dizzy if he were set upon a high pinnacle, and he would get proud, and self-sufficient, and so be ruined. God will not kill his children with sweets any more thorn he will destroy them with bitters. They shall have a tonic when they need it; but when that tonic is so bitter that they seem as if they could, not drink it and live, their Lord will either take the tonic away, or give them some delicious sweetness to remove all the bitter taste.

I will read the text to you again; I cannot preach from it as I should like to do, but the text itself is full of comfort to the Lord's own chosen ones who are in sore straits: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." Tried child of God, I wish I could grasp thy hand in tenderest sympathy, and whisper in thine ear, "In thy lowest moments, do not despair. 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Nay, verily, for the; Lord will not cast off for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.' 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' The Lord himself saith to thee, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;' 'when thou passes through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the, flame kindle upon thee.' 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.' Therefore, if thou walkest in darkness, and seest no light, trust in the Lord, and stay thyself upon thy God, for he will have compassion upon thee; he will take away his wrath, and smile again upon thy soul, and turn thy lamentation into singing, and thy mourning into dancing'."

III. This must suffice for the, tried child of God, for I want to show that the text also applies to The Convicted Sinner.

Are there any of you who cannot say that you are the children of God, but who wish that you were? I said to one, the other day, "Are you a Christian?" and he replied, "No, sir; but, oh! how I wish that I were!" When I heard with what emphasis he spoke, I thought that, he must be not, far from the kingdom; for is not he who wishes to be a Christian, almost one already? Is there not the beginning of a work of grace in his heart which the Holy Spirit will carry on to completion? So I will read the text now to you who wish to be saved, but fear that you-shall not be, for you have had a dreadful sense of sin: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut, up, or left."

Do these words describe your present condition? First, is your self-righteousness all gone? A few months ago, you were a fine

fellow according to your own estimate; you thought that there were few as good as you. But, to-night, you came slinking in as if you felt afraid even to sit down with the people of God. You remember that line of the hymn,—

“Then look, sinner,—look unto him, and be saved,”— and you feel that you would like to look to the Crucified One, you can go as far as that but you cannot yet say that you have looked unto him, and that you are saved, for you have such an awful sense of your guilt in the sight of God. I know you, my friend; I “know the heart of a stranger;” for such was my heart in the time of my conviction on account of sin. Oh, the heaviness of a guilty conscience! Oh, the long, dark, dreary winter of the soul, when sin blots out the sun, turns even mercy into misery, and sorrow makes the day into night! Ah! I know you, my brother; your self-righteousness is all gone, and I am glad of it; I rejoice that the Lord has broken the iron sinew of your neck, and that your fine feathers and ornaments have all been stripped off you, and that you have put on sackcloth in place of your former comely array. The Lord help you to keep it on till. Jesus Christ takes it off, for it is fit livery for a sinner to wear!

Then, next, you say that your power is all gone. Not many months ago, you thought that you could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ whenever you liked, that it was the easiest thing in all the world to become a Christian, and that you would trust the Savior, some fine, day or other, whenever you pleased. Yet, at this moment, you are sighing, “I would, but can’t, believe. Lord, relieve my load of guilt. All my help must come from thee.” You are the gentleman who was going to conquer his evil temper, and give up his bad habits, and be a saint, and do it all yourself! Oh, yes, yes! then, you thought you could do anything and everything, but now you have come to realize that, apart from Christ, you can do nothing. Only the other morning, when you got, up, you prayed to God, and you thought that you would lead a very good life throughout that whole day, yet you were out of temper before breakfast was over. You! went to your business, and you were going to be quite an example there; and a pretty example you were! You felt that, as you went home at night, all your attempts to be better, and to do right, had failed. I am glad you have learnt your weakness, and I hope that your consciousness of weakness will become deeper and more painful still; for, until every bone in your body is broken, I am afraid that you will not turn to God. You are, I fear, one of the men who, as long as they can lift a little finger to help themselves, will still put all their trust in their little finger, and will not turn to the Strong for strength. To cure them of that evil, you must grind them to powder; you must do with them what Solomon says concerning the fool, bray them “in a mortar among wheat with a pestle,” before you can get this folly of supposed self-strength out of them. Even, then, sometimes, every atom of their ground and pounded being seems still to say, “I am somebody, after all.” So, it is a blessed thing when God makes us to know that all our power is gone.

Is my text true concerning any of you? “Their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.” Are you brought to such a pass that you have not anything in the whole world that you dare to rely upon? You look back upon all your Church-going and your chapel-going, but you dare not rely upon them, for you feel that you have been a hypocrite in the house of God, and that your heart has not been right towards him. You look back upon your attempts to pray,—for you have been trying: to pray lately,—but you feel as if you could not pray aright the words stuck in your throat, and the very desires were dead within your spirit. Have you come to such a pass that, when you read the Bible, it condemns you; and when you hear the gospel, the preacher seems as if he excluded you from its provisions? Is it so? Is there no ray of hope for you anywhere? You, used to have some kind of hope in reserve, some secret, mysterious confidence that still, buoyed you up: is that all gone? Do you realize that you are lost? Do you know that the sentence of death has been pronounced against you? Do you even begin to wonder why it has not been executed? Do you seem to feel in your heart the working of the Spirit, as if even now he would take you away and cast you into hell? Blessed be the Lord if you have come to such a pass as that! Your extremity is God’s opportunity. The difficulty all along has been to get to the end of you; for when a man gets to the end of himself, he has reached the beginning of God’s working. When you are cleaned right out, and have not anything at all left, then all the mercy of the covenant of grace is yours. I may have doubts about whether God’s grace will be exercised in certain cases; but I cannot raise, any question about the freeness of divine grace to a soul that is empty, to a soul that is ready to perish, to a soul that is enquiring after God, to a soul that is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. If you, poor sinner, are covered with leprosy from head to foot; if, though the priest should thoroughly examine you, he would have to declare that there is not one sound speck in you even of the size of a pin’s head, let, me tell you what the law itself says,—you are clean; therefore, go your way. When once your soul is so conscious of your sin that every hope of salvation by your own works is entirely abandoned, and you feel that you are utterly condemned, then is Jesus Christ yours, for he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners. So, accept him as yours; take him, receive him now. He is made of God fullness to our emptiness, righteousness to our unrighteousness, life to our death, salvation to our condemnation, all in all to our poverty, our wretchedness, our sin.

Now let me read the text to you yet once more, and see if God the Holy Spirit does not press it home upon your conscience and heart: “For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. “There is no hope for you except in the pity of God, no hope except in his mercy, and no hope of mercy except in the freeness of his mercy; and no hope even of the freeness of mercy except in the sovereignty of God, who hath mercy on those upon whom he will have mercy, and who gives his grace to the most unworthy, that it may be proved to be all the greater grace because it, saves the very chief of sinners. If there is one of you who says, “I am the most unlikely man in all the world ever to be saved; I have the least claim upon God of any man that lives; the only claim I have is the right to, be damned, for I have so grievously transgressed against God; I feel myself to be so guilty, that my only claim upon justice is the demand to be tried,

condemned, and executed;”—if you really mean what you say, then you are the man to whom the gospel of the grace of God is specially sent, for it is written, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure, for a good (a benevolent) man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” He gave himself for our sins not for our righteousness; and he himself said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Trust Christ thou who darest not trust thyself. Fling thyself, all broken to pieces, at the feet of the brokenhearted Savior, and he will turn again, and have compassion upon you. Yea, look unto him, and live, for—

There is life for a look at the Crucified One;

There is life at this moment for thee.

Give but one believing glance at that dear dying Son of God, and thou shalt hear him say to thee, “Go thy way; thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee.” The LORD grant, it, for his name’s sake! Amen.

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Deuteronomy 32:39 The Royal Prerogative

NO. 1465B

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal.

- Deuteronomy 32:39.

THERE is but one God: Jehovah is his name - the “I AM.” That one God will not endure a rival. Why should he? He made all things, and sustains all things. Should a creature that his own hands have made be set up in rivalry with him? If it be a great man like Nebuchadnezzar, if he saith, “Behold this great Babylon which I have builded,” God will send him to grass among the bullocks, and make him to know that no man is great in the sight of God. What a provocation it must be to God to see men bowing down before idols fashioned by their own hands! What a degradation to man that he should worship gold, or silver, or wood, or stone; but what a grievous dishonor to the great God of all! And it seems to me to be the worst of all dishonors when God sees the image of his own dear Son made into an idol, and the representation of the cross on which redemption was made lifted on high that before it men may prostrate themselves in worship. This must touch his sacred soul, and vex him even to the uttermost, for God is God alone, and beside him there is none else; his glory will he not give to another, neither his praise to graven images. In the text before us the great ego is seen. The Lord says, “I, even I.” That ego is so great that it fills all places: and, therefore, there can be no room for another. “I, even I, am God, and there is no god with me.” “Besides me,” saith he in another place, “there is none else.” Oh, to have such lofty thoughts of God that we can have no consideration for anything that would rob him of the glory which is so exclusively his own. Fain would we burn with a holy jealousy which abhors the idea of a rival god, and casts the name of Baal out of its mouth with utter loathing.

In the text the Lord claims the sovereign prerogative of life and death. He says, “I kill, and I make alive.” It is he from whom we first of all receive our being. His hand ‘kindles the torch of life, and from him comes the quenching of the flame. No angel’s arm could save us from the grave; nor could a myriad of angels confine us there when once again he shall bid us rise. God killeth and God maketh alive. Royal personages have usually been very jealous of the prerogative of life and death, but our great God hath it without bound or limit. He reigns supreme. “I kill,” says he, “and I make alive.”

From the connection in which the text stands it is clear that the Lord alludes to the making of nations, or to the destroying of nations. It was God that made Israel to be a people; it was God that east out Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites from being nations before him: it was God that raised up Chaldea, and Babylon, and then strengthened Persia to break Babylon in pieces, and Greece to destroy Persia, and Rome with iron foot to break down Greece; and when the time had come it was he who spoke to the city of the seven hills, and she, too, lost her royal power. Kingdoms and thrones belong unto the Lord, and the shields of the mighty are lifted on high or laid in the dust as he willeth. Though they regard it not, there is a King of kings and Lord of lords; and when the long page of history shall be unrolled, and men shall be able to see the end from the beginning with enlightened eye, they shall know that, all through, the disregarded and neglected God, the unseen and even unthought of God, was still reigning evermore. Across the page of earth’s long record shall be written in right royal hand, “I kill, and I make alive.” In providence God is absolute, the blessed and only Potentate whose sovereign will knows no dispute.

At this time, however, I purpose to carry this great truth away from the realm of providence into the kingdom of grace; and we shall confine ourselves to that second sentence - “I wound, and I heal.” On this word we shall make three observations, the first being

that none but the Lord can wound or heal; secondly, that the Lord can wound and heal; and, thirdly, that the Lord does wound and heal, - three thoughts which are closely connected, and yet are marked by instructive shades of difference.

I. First, None But The Lord Can Wound Or Heal.

To begin at the beginning - the Lord alone can spiritually wound. When we have to deal with human hearts our first effort has to be to wound them. Naturally, man thinks himself whole-hearted, and in sound health, but he is not so. The great object of the gospel ministry, at first, is to convince men of sin, to humble them before God: in fact, to wound them, to cut them to the heart. But no man can wound without the Lord. I speak without any measure to my utterance, no preacher can truly wound the human heart. He may speak very honestly and plainly; he may speak with deep pathos and true affection; he may wield at times the thunders of God, and anon the soft and gentle bands of love may be in his hand; but in no way can the preacher get at the heart of men unless his Master be with him. Charm thou never so wisely, O wise man, the adder is deaf, and it is in vain that thou usest thine enchantments. As well convince the wild winds, or convert the wayward waves, as hope to touch the human heart till God makes bare his arm. It is the Holy Spirit's work to convince of sin, and until he putteth forth his power the preacher may preach himself dumb with weariness and blind with weeping, but no result can possibly follow. And what is true of preachers is true of all the teachers in the Sunday-school, of all the earnest folk that go about to speak personally to men, ay, and of the most tender mother and the most earnest father. There is no wounding the child's heart; there is no breaking it down into contrition by the tenderest arguments or the wisest counsels. You will come back and say as we have done, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Yes, dear friends, and the most solemn truths which in themselves have a natural tendency to wound the heart, nevertheless cannot do it apart from the work of God himself. There is the sword, and in itself it is sharp and cutting, but no man can handle it. The eternal arm must be revealed, or the hide of behemoth will not feel the weapon. A sword will cut through a coat of mail if a Coeur-de-Lion hath the wielding of it; but not in a child's hand will it wound to killing. God must take the Scripture in his hand and use it to the dividing of joints and marrow, or sinners will escape its power. Terrible truths there are in the Bible which ought to make men shake, but they hear them, they deny them, they even laugh at them, and continue in sin. Sweet truths there are which ought to make a rock shed tears, but you may tell of Gethsemane's bloody sweat and the five dear wounds of him who was found guilty of excess of love, and yet men will hear it and go their way, each man to his farm and to his merchandise, and forget it all. I grant you the truths are powerful, but not until the mighty God applies them to the heart and conscience.

And in addition to truth, providence itself may come and work upon the heart of men, but cause no wounding of the right sort. I have seen the ungodly brought to destitution and poverty by their extravagances, and brought to sickness and death's door by their lusts, and yet they have not been wounded. They have seen the result of sin, they have even felt it in the marrow of their bones, and yet the dogs have gone back to their vomit. They have still clung to their idols and held to their abominations. The burnt child dreads the fire, but the burnt sinner thrusts his hand into the flame again. We have seen men so sick that they have trembled at the thought of death, and it has been supposed from what they said that they were really impressed, and if they were restored to health would lead another life: but, alas, we have seen them restored to health and sinning worse than before. The wicked break his bands asunder, they cast his cords from them. All the terrors of providence - bereavements, losses, sicknesses - all have failed with the unregenerate. Their adamant heart has turned the edge of the plough which sought to break it up. Men have wearied all the agencies of grace and providence, but yet they have not been wounded: their heart is stout as that of leviathan, "yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone." None can effectually wound the heart but God alone.

Now, the same thing is true about the healing: none but the Lord can heal. Of course that is true with regard to those who were never wounded. Nobody can heal such persons. I have known some preachers try to do that, though it has always seemed to me to be poor work to try to heal men who have never been wounded, to preach mercy to persons who think that they have no sin, to preach grace to men who dream that they have merits of their own. Christ did not so; he said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The whole have no need of a physician, but those that are sick." There is no healing, then, for those who are not wounded; and equally there is no healing those who are wounded, except God lay his hand to their sore. Have you ever met with spiritually wounded persons? If you have, if you are a believer, your whole heart has gone out towards them, and, drawing examples from your own experience and promises from the word of God and sweet encouragements from gospel doctrine, you have labored to pour a healing balm into their bleeding wounds. But have you not often failed? Nay, apart from the Spirit of the living God, have you not always failed, and must you not fail? Ah, dear friends, it is one thing to talk of a wounded spirit, but it is quite another thing to feel a wounded spirit; and you may talk about healing, too, but it is quite another thing to receive the healing, and quite another thing to apply it. Let God cut a man with his great sword as once on a time he smote me, and I warrant you that no ordinances will heal him. "No," says a friend, "come and hear a sermon." He hears it; but the preaching makes him worse, and he feels more sad than ever. I have known persons foolish enough to persuade such seekers to come to the communion table. They have only eaten and drunk condemnation to themselves. While they have been at the table they have known themselves to

be intruders, and their hearts have bled more than ever. You can easily pacify a man whose sense of sin is a mere pretense, just as you may soon heal the imitation of a wound; but it is not so with one who has the arrows of the Lord rankling within him, he needs divine surgery. As for the hypocritical penitent, give him outward sacraments and he believes that he is all right; but if God has wounded him all the sacraments under heaven will never minister consolation to him. He must go to God for that, for only in Christ Jesus can it be found. All the preachers, ay, and all the doe-trines of the Bible, sound and true as the preachers may be, and inspired as the doctrines certainly are, will fail to comfort a bleeding soul until the eternal Lord shall bow himself from his throne in heaven and bind up the broken in heart. I know it is so. Gospel truth is sufficient in itself to comfort all that mourn, but it will comfort nobody so long as the natural unbelief of the heart remains. Get a hold of a lacerated spirit, torn with unbelief, and try what you can do. Say, "Trust in the Lord, my friend," and he replies, "I cannot trust." Tell him Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; and he says he knows that, but he cannot get hold of it. Go on to tell him how the Lord receiveth the very chief of sinners. Do your duty with him, for whether you can heal him or not you are bound to set the gospel before him: but you shall find that you have worked in vain if you have gone in your own strength, and forgotten the prayerful spirit and the humble reliance which are so needful to success. God can use you to heal a broken heart, but you cannot do it yourself.

Unconverted hearer, look not to us as though we could do anything for you, but look to Jesus only. Ah, friend, if I could wound you, and if I could heal you, it would do you no good. If I could convert every sinner here, of what use would the human conversion be? Have you never heard of Mr. Rowland Hill being met one evening by a drunken man, who staggered up to him and said, "Hallo, Mr. Hill, I am one of your converts!" "Ah," said Mr. Rowland Hill, "very likely, but you are none of God's converts, or else you would not be drunk." Now, our converts, if they be our converts, will be very poor productions. If one man can convert you, another man can unconvert you. That which is wrought by the flesh can be undone by the flesh. "Ye must be born again. Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Unless there is a work of grace in the soul which the will of man, the will of the flesh, blood, birth, education, teaching can never work; unless, I say, there is a supernatural power exercised upon us, we shall never see the face of God at the last with acceptance.

So there is the first truth - God alone can wound and God alone can heal.

II. And now, secondly, The Lord Can Wound And He Can Heal.

What a mercy this is, and how comfortably it encourages the Christian to go about his work! The Lord can wound. He can pierce the most unlikely heart. Look at Saul of Tarsus. You would never have thought when he was hurrying to Damascus to drag the saints to prison that ever he would be humbled and made to cry out, "What wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord knew his man, and just when he was on the brow of the hill, and could see Damascus in the plain, and was ready to devour the saints, the Lord let fly an arrow. Down went one Saul of Tarsus, so wounded that it took three days to extract the arrow. This was wonderful; for Saul was like leviathan, of whom we read, "The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon," yet the arrow of the Lord laid him low. The Lord can wound men in very unlikely places. I have known the arrow of conviction come home to a man who had not entered a place of worship for years. Such is the infinite sovereignty of God that he calls them a people that were not a people, and even those who sought him not he seeks out. Ay, even in the haunts of sin a man is not safe from the arrows of God - I mean the arrows of God's infinite love. God can still touch the conscience. Leviathan, you know, is wrapped about with scales, "shut up together as with a close seal"; yet there is a weak point even in leviathan. The cunning hunter knows how to find it out; and there are some men so sceptical, so atheistic, so obstinate, so profane, so abominable, that nobody dares to come near them; yet have we known it - tell it to the praise of sovereign grace - the Lord has smitten even these with his great and strong sword, and afterwards he has healed them by his mighty grace. Never despair of anybody. If salvation were man's work you might despair; but since it is God's work, despair of none. The wretch who is the nearest approach to an incarnate devil may yet become as an angel of God. Such is the grace of God that, though men make a league with death and a covenant with hell, he can break their leagues and disannul their covenants, take the prey from between the jaws of the dragon, and get to himself renown.

The Lord can wound, then. He can wound some that have been sitting under the gospel for years and have defied its power. My arrows have rattled against your harness, and I have said, "It is all in vain;" but I pray my Master that one of these days when I am drawing a bow at a venture, he may be pleased to direct it between that joint of the harness which I feared did not exist, that little joint where the shoulder-piece does not fit close to the breastplate. I have feared that you were encased as in the scales of leviathan, of which we read, "One is so near to another that no air can come between them: they are joined one to another"; yet the Lord can send in his arrow, and make the proud heart feel the power of his glorious truth. The most thoughtless, the most careless, the most abandoned are still within range of the Lord's bow.

What a very sweet side of the truth is the second part of it - namely, that he can heal. There are some awful cases of bleeding wounds! I wonder whether I have in this audience any souls desperately wounded. I have known the heart bleed as though it would bleed to death beneath the sword of conviction. Some are driven to despair, and have been ready to lay violent hands upon

themselves in the bitterness of their souls. Let it ring out like a trumpet, that these poor despairing ones may hear it,-the Lord can heal. There is no case so desperate but what Jehovah-Jesus can recover it. Despair! thou must let thy captive go. Despondency! thou must open thy prison-house when Jesus comes. Has he not come forth from the Father on purpose that he may loose the captives and say to the bondaged ones, "Go free."

The wounds which God gives are apt to fester. You remember how the psalmist said, "My wounds stink and are corrupt." When there is bad blood, we have known men's wounds to become horrible; and some souls who have had their conscience awakened have become a terror to themselves. "I cannot be saved," say they. "I cannot pray. How should such a wretch as I am ever pray? I cannot hope for mercy. It would be an astonishment to heaven and hell, too, if ever I found mercy." Listen to me, and let thy own heart believe it; thou mayest certainly recover. God, who doeth all things, and to whom nothing is impossible, can heal thy wounds though they reek with corruption. If thou dost lie at bell's gate, if thou seemest to be half in Topher already, his arm is strong enough to help thee now. If thou wilt look to Christ uplifted on the cross, there is pardon, life, acceptance, joy, and heaven for thee, even for thee. He that wounded thee will heal thee, he that hath broken thee will bind thee up. He that has killed thee will make thee alive. Let thine ears take in the gladsome message which I am bidden to deliver thee, - "I wound, and I heal."

Yet let me charge you not to look for a cure anywhere but to God in Christ Jesus. Shun the thought of being healed except the Lord shall heal thee. I dread lest a wounded soul should go to a minister or to a priest, or to the most religious person in the world, and think to get healing of man. Thy wounds are meant to drive thee to thy God. Seek him, and no one else. To thy knees now in thy private chamber, or if thou hast not one, get alone even in the street, for thou canst be alone in a crowd; but go to God with thy bleeding heart. Tell him, "I am a sinner: Lord, I am all but a damned sinner. I have been such an offender that I scarcely dare to hope; but I hear that thou canst heal me and give me comfort. Oh, for Jesu's sake be merciful to me. I thank thee that thou hast wounded me; it were better for me to be wounded than to be as indifferent and careless as I used to be; but now, Lord, do not altogether break me to pieces and treat me as an enemy, My spirit fails unless thou comfort me. Oh, look upon me!" If you cannot say as much as that, yet let your tears drop and look up, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Do but cry to him, and you shall find a healing; for God can heal you and none else. Out upon those who dream that outward religiousness can do you good. Away, away with the deceivers who would tell you that they can give you pardon. No man living can absolve his fellow-sinners: the pretense is the superlative of blasphemy. God is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation, and we are glad to proclaim that word, and point you to the Lord Jesus who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.

III. Now I come to my third and last point, and that is - The Lord Does Wound And Does Heal.

I have two things here to-night. I will only show them to you, and have done. First, I have a bundle of arrows which I have seen shot at different times from the bow of God so as to wound men. I cannot shoot them at you just now, but I will show them to you.

I have known him shoot this arrow at a man, - the arrow of continual gentleness. He has been very good to the sinner, and continued his kindness to him for years. Augustine tells of one to whom God was so wonderfully kind, and the man was so wonderfully bad, that at last he grew astonished at God's goodness, and since the Lord continued to load him with benefits, he turned round and cried, "Most benignant God, I am ashamed of being thine enemy any longer. I confess my sin and repent of it." How I wish that this arrow would pierce your hearts! It is one which readily penetrates a noble mind. The more gross and animal natures do not feel it, but where God has left some little spark of nobility, a man more readily feels, "I cannot go on and sin against a God so good." It is a very sharp arrow, but it is dipped in love, and it wounds most sweetly.

Here is another, - God is angry with the wicked every day. Oh, if that truth would go home to some of you, "God is angry with me, for I have broken his holy law." Surely it would cut you to the quick. I do not like anybody to be angry with me; but oh, to have the Lord angry with me! How could I endure it? Dear hearer, I hope you will feel the smart of this warning. It is very easy for you to hear it and for me to speak it, but if you once feel it, it will tear your heart and fill your loins with agony.

Another arrow - "He that believeth not is condemned already." You are not to be condemned at last merely, you are condemned now. You are not in a state of probation; you have already been proved, and you have failed, and you are walking this earth at this moment as a condemned criminal. Ah, if that barbed iron were to enter your soul, it would wound you indeed. Here is another arrow, - "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Many have been playing with that arrow lately; it is an edged tool, and he had best beware who toys with it. Let the Lord send it home, and it will kill a man's proud hopes and vain presumptions as quickly as any arrow in the quiver of the Almighty.

Here is another, - "Thou hast destroyed thyself." Your present state of ruin and danger is your own fault. You have brought it upon yourself, and you have nobody to blame but yourself that you are a lost man. Ah, that will rankle, and pain the soul as though a sword were in the bones.

And here is another, - "You are dead in sin. You have destroyed yourself, but you cannot save yourself." I have seen a man get that into his flesh a little way, and he has raved with anger. He has bitten his lips and said, "I will never hear that preacher again. Why, he made out my case to be hopeless." The man is sure to come again. He is like a great fish in a stream, with a hook in his jaws. He will draw out a good deal of line, and we will let him have it, but he must come to a stop before long with that solemn truth to hold him. He struggles hard; but that sharp text is not soon dislodged from the heart — "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

Thus I might continue to show you a sample of the weapons with which God wounds men: he hath his two-edged sword, his spear, his arrows, his battle axe, and weapons of war. You say, "I do not feel them." No, and I cannot make you feel them. I have told you before that it is not my arm that can wield them; but when God is pleased to use any of these, the people fall under him. "Well," says one, "I do not think that I shall be wounded." No, but I am glad you are in the battle, because when the arrows are flying they may strike you as well as anybody else. I have had to deal with wounded ones that I never reckoned upon seeing in such a condition. Oh, what gashes have I seen in men that had been given to all sorts of fashionable sins, and who had sneered at religion; they have come here at first from the most miserable motives, but they have had to come again and weep and cry before the Lord with broken hearts. You never know where bullets may find their billets. You who are the servants of the devil are on dangerous ground when you come near a faithful ministry. Nay, I will alter it, you are on blessed ground, where the slain of the Lord have been many; and where the people of God are earnestly praying for you now. I know at this moment they are putting up the prayer, "Lord, send the arrows home: send the arrows home." Their prayers prevail with God, and he will bare his arm. There is no mistake about this matter, he "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." When he puts his arm to the work, who shall stand against him? He will do all his pleasure. Glory be to his blessed name, he can wound, and he does wound according to his eternal purpose.

Now I will hold up before you the bottle of balm. When a soul is wounded, the Lord applies his sacred surgery to the heart. He has healed some of us. The particular bottle of balm which he used in healing me is one which I know well, and shall never forget. This was the label, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else." Why, do you know? I was afraid of God until I heard that God was in Christ, and that I was to look to God in Christ, and that the very God whom I dreaded would save me. That revelation came home with divine power to my soul! The preacher said, "Look. This is all that is wanted." "There," he said, "a fool can look; a little child can look; a half idiot can look; a dying man can look." "Look," said he, "and it is done." Did I really understand him - that I was only to look to Christ dying on the cross for me and see God making an atonement for my sin in the person of his Son - that I was only to look, and I should live at once. It was even so, and I did look. My burden passed away, and from that hour I can say what Cowper has so sweetly said in the hymn: -

**"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."**

Oh, what a bottle of balm that is - redeeming love! How sweetly it drops into the soul! The Lord shows the wounded man that though he is full of sin, he can put that sin away without any violation of justice when the soul believes in Jesus. Now let the balm drop a minute. "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned everyone to his own way" - that fact gives us wounds. But now "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all:" no balm of Gilead was ever so potent as that. Poor guilty sinner, if you will now trust Christ, your sin is yours no longer; it was laid eighteen hundred years ago upon the back of Christ, your great Surety; he was punished for it, and he has cast it into the depths of the sea. You are forgiven; go in peace.

Here is another drop of balm, - When a man is wounded he feels that he cannot help himself; but then there comes in this precious truth - that the Spirit of God can do it. God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son, and that Spirit helpeth our infirmities, so that though we know not what we should pray for as we ought, that Spirit is waiting to help us to pray. O you wounded ones, may the great Spirit show you at this time the person of the dear Son of God - God and man. May he show you that person wounded, covered with a bloody sweat, and put to death; and may he sweetly whisper in your ear to-night, "He was your substitute: he bore that you might never bear the wrath of God." Then you will say as you go out of this house, "He can heal, for he has healed me. He has made me leave my despair, and even my doubts, behind me. Now will I sing unto my beloved a song: -

Jesus has become at length

My salvation and my strength.

So have I preached to you nothing but God in Christ Jesus, and I am glad to have him to preach to you. Suppose that there is a bad young man here at this time, who has left his home, and run away from his father. He has done wrong, very wrong: and, instead of going to a tender, loving father and saying, "Father, forgive me," he is afraid of punishment, and therefore he has run away. There is an advertisement for him in the paper, inviting him to come home. Now, what has he to do to be right with his father? This poor, wandering, wayward, lost boy has got among the very scum of London, and he is being ruined and starved to death. What must he

do? Boy, you must go home to your father; go home to your father. He loves you; he is pining for you; he is grieved at heart about you. Oh, if he saw you to-night, it would break his heart to see you in your rags! He wants you to come home. Do you not see that it would be very foolish for that lad to say, "I shall get into an institution," or "I shall try to earn money." Your father is rich, good, wise, and kind; the best thing you can do is to go home to your father. Going home to your father, all will be right. Now, take up the parable. All of us have left our father, and have journeyed into a far country. We shall never get right again except by going back to him from whom we have gone astray. And Jesus - God in Christ Jesus - is waiting to welcome us; he is grieving over us now. We have only to go to him, for he says that he will never cast out one that comes to him. "I do not know how he can receive me," says one. Well, go anyhow and try him. "I cannot pray." You can pray, dear friend. "But not properly." Do not try to pray properly. Pray your heart out as you can, and ask to be helped. I know that some poor souls are in such a state that they would be glad if we would write them out a prayer. I was talking only a little while ago to one in distress, and he said to me, "Oh, Mr. Spurgeon, you do not know how ignorant we are, and when we are under a sense of sin you do not know how foolish we are. If you would sometimes put the very words into our mouths it would do us good." And I thought he was right, because I find the Lord saying in Scripture, "Take with you words and say"; and he tells them what to say.

Come now, poor soul, if you want to find God, let us pray a minute. "O God, save us, for thou alone canst do it. Of thy great mercy heal our wounds, for else we must bleed to death. We cast ourselves upon thy promise in Christ Jesus thy Son; grant us now thy salvation, we beseech thee, for his sake. Amen."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON: - Deuteronomy 32:1-39.

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