

Spurgeon on Micah

Spurgeon's Sermons on Micah

MERCY FOR THE MEANEST OF THE FLOCK.

Micah 4:6

NO. 3201

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"In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted." — Micah 4:6.

This is spoken, I suppose, in the first place, of the Jewish people, who have been so afflicted on account of their sin that they almost cease to be a nation, and are driven hither and thither among the lands, and made to suffer greatly. In the last time, when Christ shall appear in his glory in the days of halcyon peace, then shall Israel partake of the universal joy. Poor, limping, faltering Israel, afflicted with tempest, shall yet be gathered, and rejoice in her God.

However, I am sure that the text applies to the Church of God, and we shall not do amiss if we also find in it promises to individual Christians. We will regard the text in those two lights as spoken to the Church and as spoken to individual souls.

I. First, then, As Referring To The Church Of God : In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted."

Editorial Note: I hate to disagree with Spurgeon, but Micah is addressed to Israel and not to the Church of God, which is in fact not mentioned in the OT - however the principles in Micah are certainly applicable to the Church according to 2Ti 3:16, 17 (see notes) -- just be aware of Spurgeon's bias as you read his sermon. See study Israel of God - Is God "Finished" with Israel in His prophetic plan?

The Church of God is not always equally vigorous and prosperous. Sometimes she can run without weariness and walk without fainting, but at other times she begins to limp and halt; there is a deficiency in her faith, a lukewarmness in her love, doctrinal errors spring up, and many things that both weaken and trouble her, and then she becomes like a lame person. And, indeed, beloved, when I compare the church of God at the present moment with the first apostolic church, she may well be called, "her that halteth." Oh, how she leaped in the first Pentecostal times! What wondrous strength she had throughout all Judea and all the neighboring lands! The voice of the church in those days was like the voice of a lion, and the nations heard and trembled. The utmost isles of the sea understood the power of the gospel, and before long the cross of Christ was set up on every shore. Thus was the church in her early days; the love of her espousals was upon her, and her strength was like that of a young unicorn.

How the church halteth now! How deficient; in vigor, how weak in her actions! If I compare the church now with the church in Reformation times, when, in our own land, our fathers went bravely to prison and to the stake to bear witness to the Lord Jesus, when, in Covenanting Scotland and Puritan England, the truth was held with firmness, and proclaimed with earnestness, and what is, perhaps, better still, when the truth was lived by those who professed it, — then was she mighty indeed, and not to be compared to "her that halteth," as I fear she is now in these days of laxity of doctrine and laxity of life, when error is tolerated in the church and loose living is tolerated in the world.

I might almost use the same simile for the church to-day as compared with those early days of Methodism when Whitefield was flying like a seraph in the midst of heaven, preaching in England and America the unsearchable riches of Christ to tens of thousands when Wesley and others were working, with undiminished ardor, to reach the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low. Those were good days with all their faults. Life and fire abounded, the God of Israel was glorified, and tens of thousands were converted. The church seemed as though it had risen from the dead, and cast off its grave-clothes, and was rejoicing in newness of life. We are not without hopeful signs to-day. There is not everything to depress, but much to encourage. At the same time, the church limps; she does not stand firm, and run fast. Oh, that God would be pleased to visit her!

Moreover, if I look at the text, I perceive that the church not only is sometimes weak, but, at the same time, or at some other time, the church is persecuted, and made to suffer, for the text speaks of "her that is driven out." And it has often happened that the church has been driven right out from among men. It has been, said of her, "Away with her from the earth! It is not fit that she should live." But how wondrously God has shown his mercy to his people when they have been driven out! The days of exile have been bright days. The sun never shone more fairly on the church's brow than when she worshipped God in the catacombs of Rome, or when her disciples "wandered about, in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." In our own country, those who met by stealth, perpetually pestered by informers, who would bring them before the magistrate for joining in prayer and song, often said, when they got their liberty, that they wished they had the days again when they were gathered together in the lonely house, and scarcely dared to sing loudly. They had brave times in those days, when every man held his soul in his hand, when he worshipped his God, not knowing whether the hand of the hangman or the headsman might not soon be upon him. The Lord was pleased to bless his people, when the church was driven out.

If the snowy peaks of Piedmont, if the lowlands of Holland, if the prisons of Spain could speak, they would tell of infinite mercy experienced by the saints under terrible oppression, of hearts that were leaping to heaven while the bodies were bruised or burning on earth. God has been gracious to his people when they have been driven out.

Sometimes, trouble comes to God's people in another way. The church is afflicted by God himself. It seems as if God had put away his church for a time, and driven her from his presence. That has happened often in all churches. Perhaps some of you are members of such churches now, or have been; discord has come in, and the spirit of peace has gone. Coldness has come into the pulpit, and a chill has come over the pews. The prayer-meetings are neglected, the seeking of souls is almost given up; the candlestick is there, but the candle seems to be gone, or not to be lighted. The means of grace have become lifeless; you almost dread the Sabbath which once was your comfort. It is wretched for Christian people when it comes to this; and yet, in scores of villages and towns in England, this is the case. The sheep look up, and the shepherd looks down but there is no food for the sheep, neither does the shepherd himself know where to get the food because he has not been taught of God. It is a melancholy thing, wherever this has been the case but I would encourage the saints to cry mightily for the return of God's Spirit, for the restoration of unity and peace, earnestness and prayerfulness, that once again the wilderness and the solitary place may be made glad, and the desert may rejoice, and blossom like the rose.

My brethren, may God never treat the church in England as she deserves to be treated, for, when I look around me and see her sins, they seem to rise up to heaven like a mighty cry. We have been lately told, in so many words, by an eminent preacher, that all creeds have something good in them, even the creed of the heathen, and that out of them all the grand creed is to be made, which is yet to be the religion of mankind. God save us from those who talk in this way, and yet profess to be sent of God! They who know in their own souls what God's truth is will not be led astray by such delusions; but yet God may visit his church, and chasten her sorely by depriving her of his Spirit for a while. If he has done so, or is about to do so, let us still pray that he may gather her that is driven out and afflicted.

I may not dwell longer upon these points, but hasten to notice the blessing that will come, in answer to prayer, upon churches that are weak, or sorely persecuted. There are scattering times, no doubt; but we should always pray that we may live in gathering times, that we may be gathered together in unity, in essential oneness, round the cross, in united action for our glorious Master, and that sinners who are far away may be gathered in, too, and backsliders who have wandered may be restored. Pray for gathering times, brethren, and may the day come when the Lord will assemble her that halteth, and will gather her that is driven out and afflicted.

Notice that the text speaks of a "day." So we may expect that God will have his own time of benediction. "In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth." I believe that to be a day in which we enquire after the Lord, a day in which we are prayerful, in which we become anxious, in which an agony lays hold upon the souls of believers until the Lord shall return unto his people; — a day when Christ is revealed in the testimony of the church, and the gospel is fully preached, — in that day will the Lord assemble her that halteth. May that day speedily come! But if we do not see the blessing to-morrow, let us recollect that to-morrow may not be God's day, and let us persevere in prayer till God's day does come. There are better days in store for the church, and ere the page of human history closes, there will be times of triumph for her in which she shall be glorious, and God shall be glorified in her.

II. I shall, however, pass from this first point about the church, because I wish to speak to mourners, to melancholy ones.

I trust I have a message of mercy to some that are desponding. We shall look on the text, secondly, As Referring To Individual Souls: In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth." There are three characters described here; let us find them out.

First, the Soul that halteth. Of course, by that is intended those Christians who are very weak. Some are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." It would be a great mercy if all God's people were so; but there are some Christians who have faith of but a

feeble sort. They have love to God, but they sometimes question whether they do love him at all. They have piety in their hearts, but it is not of that vigorous kind one would desire. It is rather like the spark in the flax, or the music in the bruised reed. They are like Little-faith and Miss Much-afraid. They are alive, but only just alive; sometimes their life seems to tremble in the balance; and yet it is hidden with Christ in God, and therefore, it is really beyond the reach of harm. They are the weak ones, and God speaks to such weak ones, and says, "I will assemble her that halteth."

It not only means that they are weak, but that they are slow and halting persons. A lame person cannot travel quickly; and, oh, how slowly some Christians move! What little advance they make in the divine life! They were little children ten years ago, and they are little children now. Their own children have grown up to be men, but they themselves do not appear to have made any advance. They are just babes in grace, and still have need of milk. They are not strong enough to feed upon the strong meat of the kingdom of God. They are slow to believe all that the prophets and apostles have spoken, slow to rejoice in God, slow to catch a truth, and perceive its bearing, but slower still to get the nutriment out of it, and learn its application to themselves. But, slow as they are, I trust we may say of them that they are as sure as they are slow. What steps they do take are well taken; and if they come slowly, like the snail, yes they are like the snail in Noah's days, crawling towards the ark, and will get in some time.

With this slowness there is also pain. A lame man walks painfully. Perhaps, every time he puts his foot to the ground, a shock of pain goes through his whole system; and some Christians, in their progress in the heavenly life, seem afflicted in like manner. I meet with some Christians who are very sensitive, and every time there is anything wrong they are ashamed and grieved. I wish some other Christians had more of that feeling, for it is an awful fact that many professors seem to tamper greatly with sin, and think nothing of it at all. Better the sensitive soul that is fearful and timorous, lest it should in any way grieve the Spirit of God, with a watchful eye over itself, and a conscience that is quick and tender as the apple of the eye, than such presumption and hardness of heart as others have. But some have this sensitiveness without the other qualities which balance it, and it makes their progress to heaven a painful one, though a safe one. They do not look enough at the cross. They do not remember that, "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." They have not come to see, that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to deliver us from all sin, so that indwelling sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace. So their progress is painful. But, halting one, this word is for you, "I will assemble her that halteth;" when I call my people together, I will call her; when I send an invitation to a feast, I will direct one specially to her. She is weak, she is slow, she is in pain, but for all that I will assemble her with my people."

The allusion, perhaps, is to a sheep that has been somehow lamed; the shepherd has to get all the flock together, and, therefore he must bring the lame one in too; and the great, good Shepherd of the sheep takes care that the lame sheep shall be gathered. I find that the original word has somewhat of the import of one-sidedness; a lame sheep goes as if it went on one side. It cannot use this foot, and so it has to throw its weight on the other side. How many Christians there are that have a one-sidedness in religion, and, unfortunately, that often happens to be the gloomy side! They are very properly suspicious of themselves, but they do not add to that a weight of confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back upon their past, and seeing their own unfaithfulness, they forget God's faithfulness; looking upon the present, they see their own imperfections and infirmities, and forget that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, that, if we had not infirmities, there would be nothing for the Spirit to do to glorify himself in our weakness. When they look forward to the future, they see the dragons and the dark river of death, but they forget that promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." What a mercy it is that the Lord will not forget these one-sided limpers, but that even they shall be assembled when, with the Shepherd's crook, he gathers his flock, and brings them home!

We may add to these; those who have got, tired with the trials of the way. It is a weary thing to be lame. It saddens my heart, often to see the sheep go through the London streets, they go limping along, poor things, so spent and spiritless. There are many Christians who are like them, they seem to have been so long in trouble that they do not know how to bear up, any longer. What with the loss of the husband and the loss of the child, what with poverty and many struggles and no apparent hope of deliverance, what with one sickness and then another in their own person, what with one temptation, and then another temptation, and then a third, they feel very wearied by the way. They are like Jacob when he halted on his thigh. The blessing is; that the Lord says, "I will assemble her that halteth." Lay hold on that, you halting one. I daresay you suppose you are the last one of the flock. You have got so tired and lame that you think that, though all the others are close by the Shepherd's hand, you are forgotten. You remember that the Amalekites in the wilderness fell upon the children of Israel, and smote some of the hindmost of them, and perhaps you are afraid that you will get smitten in that way. Let me remind you of a text: "The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your reward." Those that lead the way can rejoice that God goes before them, but you can rejoice that God is behind you, as we read again, "The glory of the Lord shall be thy reward." He will take care that you shall not be destroyed.

But now, secondly, the soul that is exiled: "I will gather her that is driven out." Perhaps I address someone here who has been driven out from the world. It was not a very great world, that world of yours, but, still it was very dear to you. You loved father, mother, brothers, and sisters; but you are a speckled bird among them now. Sovereign grace and electing love have lighted on you, but not on them. At first, they ridiculed you when you went to hear the gospel; but now that you have received it, and they perceive that you are in earnest, they persecute you. You are one by yourself. You almost wish you did not live among them, because you

are farther off from them than if you were really away from them. Nothing you can do pleases them. There are sure, to be a thousand faults, and they fling the taunt at you when you fail, and say, This is your religion!" You cry out, "Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech!" Do you recollect what became of the man when the Pharisees cast him out? Why, the Lord met him and graciously took him in. Remember what Jesus said to his disciples, "If ye were not the world, the world would love his own, but, because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." When I go to a man's house, and his dog barks at me, he does it because I am a stranger and when you go into the world, and the world howls at you, it is because you are different from worldlings, and they recognize in you the grace of God, and pay the only homage which evil is ever likely to pay to goodness, namely, persecute it with all their might.

Perhaps, however, it is worse than that. "I should not mind being driven out from the world," say you, "I could take that cheerfully, but I seem driven out from the church of God." There may be two ways in which this may come about. Perhaps you have been zealous for the Lord God of Israel in the midst of a cold church, and you have spoken, perhaps not always prudently; the consequence is, that you have angered and vexed the brethren, and they have thought that you fancied yourself to be better than they, though such a thought was far from your mind. It is an unfortunate thing for a man to be born before his time, yet he may be a grand man. Some Christians in certain churches seem to live ahead of their brethren. It is a good thing; but, as surely as Joseph brought down the enmity of his own brethren upon himself because he walked with God, and God revealed himself to him, so is it likely that you, if you are in advance of your brethren, will draw down opposition upon yourself which will be very bitter. Never mind; if the servants repulse you, go and tell their Master, do not go and grumble at them. Pray their Master to mend their manners. He knows how to do it.

But it is just possible that you have been driven out only in your own thoughts. Perhaps the members of the church really love you, and esteem you, and think highly of you; but, you have become so depressed in spirit that you do not feel that you have any right to be in the church. You have made up your mind that you will not be a hypocrite, and, therefore, you have given up all profession. You have a notion that some of your fellow-members think evil of you, and wonder how ever such an one as you can come to the church. Oh, the many poor little lambs that come bleating round me with their troubles! And when I tell them, "I never heard anything against you in my life, I never heard anybody speak of you but with love and respect, I never observed anything in you but tenderness of conscience and a quiet holy walk with God, they seem quite surprised.

Brethren, look after your fellow-members; do not let them think you are cold to them. Some of them will think it whatever you may do. Some of you, brethren, are thought to be so proud that you will not look at people; if they did but know the truth, they would see that you are very different. Now, you lambs, do not be grieved about nothing. But you who are stronger than they, mind that you do not give any offense that can be prevented. It is impossible but that offenses will come: but, woe unto him, through whom they come." Let us be careful not to break the bruised reed, even by accidentally treading upon it. But, dear brother or sister, if that is your condition, let me tell you that you are not driven out, — it is quite a mistake. But if you think so; go to your Lord. If you will tell Jesus, he will make up for any apparent change that may come over his people.

Ah, but I think I hear one say, "It is not being driven out from the world that hurts me, nor being driven out from the church; I could bear that, but I am driven out from the Lord himself. I seem to have lost his company, and losing that I have lost all.

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed! How sweet their memory still! But they have left an aching void The world can never fill."

Thank God if you feel like that! If the world could fill your heart, it would prove that you are no child of God; but if the world cannot fill it, then Christ will come and fill it. If you will be satisfied with nothing but himself, he will satisfy you. If you are saying, "I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me, "you shall get the comfort you need. He never did leave a soul to perish that was looking to him, and longing for him. Cry to him again, and this text shall be true to you, "I will gather her that is driven out." Alas that word come home to some of you! I do not know where you may be, but the Master does; may he apply the promise to your hearts!

One other person is mentioned here the soul that is troubled: "her that I have afflicted." Yes, and in all churches of God there are some dear, good friends that are more afflicted than others. They are often the best people. Are you surprised at that? Which vine does the gardener prune the most? That which bears the most and the sweetest fruit. He uses the knife most upon that because it will pay for pruning. Some of us seem scarcely to pay for pruning; we enjoy good health, but when trial comes, when the Lord prunes us, we may say, "Thank God, he means to do something with me after all."

Perhaps this afflicted one is afflicted in body, — scarcely a day without pain, scarcely a day without the prospect of more suffering. Well, if there is any child the mother is sure to remember, it is the sick one; and if there are any Christians to whom God is peculiarly familiar, they are his afflicted ones. "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness," is said concerning a sick saint. The Lord makes your bed, dear brethren and sisters, if you are suffering bodily pain!

Some are mentally afflicted. Much of the doubting and fearing we hear about comes from some degree of mental aberration. The mental trouble may be very slight, but it is very common. I suppose that there is not a perfectly sane man among us. When that

great wind blew, at the time of the Fall, a slate blew off everybody's house; and some are more affected than others, so that they take the black view of all things. This mental infirmity, for which they are not to be blamed, will probably be with them till they get to heaven. Well, God blesses those who are thus troubled.

Then some are spiritually afflicted. Satan is permitted to try them very much. There is only one way to heaven, but I find that there is a bit of the road that is newly stoned, a harder path to travel on, and some persons seem to go to heaven, all over the new stones; their soul is perpetually exercised, while God grants to others to choose the smoother parts of the way, and go triumphantly on. Let those I have spoken of hear the word of promise, "I will gather her that I have afflicted," for when God himself gives the affliction, he will bring his servant through, and glorify himself thereby.

To close, let us regard this promise, "I will gather her," as meaning "I will gather my tried ones into the fellowship of the church, I will bring my scattered sheep near to me." The Lord Jesus will gather his dear people into fellowship with himself. I will gather them every day around my mercy-seat. I will gather them, by-and-by, on the other side of Jordan, on those verdant hill-tops, where the Lamb shall for ever feed his flock, and lead them to living fountains of waters. "Poor, tried, halt, afflicted, limping soul, the shepherd has not forgotten you. He will gather all his sheep, and they shall pass again under the hands of him that telleth them; there shall not be one missing. I cannot make out how some of my brethren think that the Lord will lose some of his people, that there are some whom Jesus has bought with his blood, who will get lost on the way to heaven. It is an unhappy shepherd who finds some of his flock devoured by the wolf, but our Shepherd will never be in that strait with his sheep. He says, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." What say you to that, you halting ones? What say you to that, you, the hindmost of all? He has given eternal life to you as much as to the strongest of the flock, and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of his hand. He will gather you with the rest of his sheep.

And when will he fulfill that promise, beloved? He is always fulfilling it, and he will completely fulfill it in the day when he is manifested. As this chapter describes him, when he comes to make peace, and men beat their swords into ploughshares, then will he gather you. Even now, when he comes, as the great Peace-giver, he gathers her that halts. When the storms of temptation lie still awhile, and he shows himself in the heart as the God that walked the sea of Galilee of old, then are his people gathered into peace they rest in that day. Thank God, the most tried and troubled believer has some gleams of sunlight. In winter time sometimes, you know, there comes a day which looks like a summer's day, when the gnats come out, and think it is the spring, and the birds begin to sing as if they thought that surely the winter was over and past; and in the darkest experience there are always some blessed gleams of light, just enough to keep the soul alive. That is in one measure the fulfillment of the promise, "I will assemble her that halteth, ... in that day."

But the day is coming when you and I, who have been halting, and feeble, and weak, shall be gathered, never to halt, never to doubt, and never to sin again. I do not know how long it may be. Some of you are a long way ahead of me, according to your years, but we cannot tell. The youngest of us may go soonest, for there are last that shall be first, and first that shall be last. But there is such a day written in the eternal decrees of God, when we shall lay aside every tendency to sin, every tendency to doubt, every capacity for tribulation, every need for chastisement, and then we shall mount and soar away to the bright world of endless day. What a mercy it will be to find ourselves there! Oh, how we shall greet Jesus with joy and gladness, and tell of redeeming grace and dying love that brought home even the halting ones, and the weakest and the feeblest!

I think those that are reckoned strong, and do the most for God, are generally those who think themselves weakest when it comes to the stripping time. I read of a man who had been the means of the conversion of many hundreds of souls by personal private efforts, I refer to Harlan Page. On his dying bed, he said, "They talk of me; but I am nothing, nothing, nothing." He mourned over his past life; to him, it seemed that he had done nothing for his Master, that his life was a blank. He wept to think he had done so little for Christ while everyone was wondering how he had lived such a blessed and holy life. That man only is rich towards God who begins to know his emptiness, and feels that he is less than nothing, and vanity.

Beloved, it is because those who serve God best often feel that, they are halt, and driven away, and afflicted, and tossed with doubts and fears, it is because of this that this promise is put to the lowest case, and the blessing given to the very meanest capacity. It is so in order that one who is strong may be able to come in, and when in depression of spirit say, "That promise, will suit me, I will get a grip of it. I will come to God with it in my hand, and at the mercy-seat get it fulfilled to me, even to me." The Lord grant you, beloved, to be numbered amongst his jewels in that day!

What shall I say to those who know nothing about the divine life at all, who, perhaps, are saying, "Well, we never get halting or doubting. We have a merry time of it"? Yes and so does the butterfly, while the summer lasts; but the winter kills it. Your summer may last a little while, but the chill of death will soon be on you, and then what is there for you but hopeless misery for ever and for ever? God give you grace to fly to Jesus now, and be saved with an everlasting salvation, through Jesus Christ our Savior! Amen.

EXPOSITION

By C. H. SPURGEON

Micah 4:1-13

Micah 4:1. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hill; and people shall flow unto it. See **The New Park Street Pulpit, No. 249**, "[Micah 4:1 Vision of the Latter-Day Glories](#)."

God's cause and kingdom shall not be hidden away in a corner: "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains," an Alp upon other Alps, higher than all the other hills. The day is coming when the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be the most conspicuous thing in the whole world, "and people shall flow unto it." The heathen, the people who knew nothing about it, shall flow to it like a great river.

Micah 4:2.

That is the way the grace of God works in us; he teaches, and then we not only **learn**, but we **obey**.

Micah 4:2, 3.

The kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, shall attract people and nations that were far off from the holy city where he lived and died.

Micah 4:3.

They shall give up the study of the art of war. Their spirit shall be softened, in many cases renewed by grace and then they shall take to the useful arts; they shall not throw away their swords, but shall beat them into ploughshares, they shall not hurl their spears into the earth, but shall bend them into scythes or pruning-hooks. Oh, that the day were come when the wealth and ingenuity and power of nations were used in the pursuits of peace instead of in the arts of war! This is the tendency of the kingdom of Christ, for wherever he comes, he makes peace. Nothing is more opposed to the spirit of Christianity than war; and when men are Christians, not in name only, but in deed and in truth, wars must cease.

Editorial Note: As you read Spurgeon's writings, remember that Micah is addressed to literal Israel and not to the Church of God (and not primarily to NT believers), the church in fact not being mentioned in the OT - however the principles in Micah are certainly applicable to the Church and to NT believers according to 2Ti 3:16, 17 (see notes) -- just be aware of Spurgeon's bias as you read his sermons and expositional notes. See study Israel of God - Is God "Finished" with Israel in His prophetic plan?

Micah 4:4. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree: and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.

The best evidence that this will be the case is that the Lord of hosts, who has all power at his disposal, has said that it shall be so.

Micah 4:5. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

When we learn to know God in truth, we do not give him up, but we walk in his name for ever and ever. God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant, reaching beyond time, and enduring throughout eternity. Some nations have discarded their idol gods; but those who really know and love the Lord will walk in his name for ever and ever.

Micah 4:6. In that day, saith the LORD will I assemble her that halteth, —

God will bring to himself you that limp, that hesitate, that tremble, that fear: "I will assemble her that halteth," —

Micah 4:6. And I will gather her that is driven out —

Hunted by Satan, and harassed by care, frightened by depression of spirit, "I will gather her that is driven out," —

Micah 4:6. And her that I have afflicted;

If God has laid his hand upon one of you so that you have a special affliction from himself, you have this gracious promise that he will gather you to himself.

Micah 4:7.

Little scattered communities, churches which have been weak and feeble shall have the strengthening of God, and they shall be, through his sovereign grace, a remnant saved by grace to his praise and glory.

Note how everything here is done by God; you keep on reading, "I will," "I will," "I will." Oh, those blessed "I wills" of God! Our wills are often defeated and disappointed, but God's "I wills" stand fast for ever.

Micah 4:8.

So it did. "Beginning at Jerusalem," was Christ's order concerning the preaching of the gospel after his resurrection. The first servants of Christ were of that ancient people who might be called the "tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion." Oh, that Christ would soon return in mercy to the — "Chosen seed of Israel's race, A **remnant (study)** weak and small," —

and gather them to himself, for that would be the fullness of the Gentiles also!

Micah 4:9.

Sometimes, our prayers may be the utterance of our fears rather than of our faith, and then the question comes, "Is there no king in thee? Is thy Counsellor perished?" Can we not trust to him whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"?

Micah 4:10. For pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

They are sharp pangs, but they lead to life, and therefore they are blessed pangs after all.

Micah 4:10.

It looks more like a threat than a promise that God would send his people to Babylon, but there they were to be delivered; and it oftentimes happens with us that we must be brought into captivity before we are set free, we must feel the weight of the iron bondage of sin and Satan before we are brought out into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free.

Micah 4:11. Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.

All the enemies of Israel came together, hoping to destroy her, they saw that God had left her for a while in their hands, so they maliciously sought her destruction.

Micah 4:12. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, —

They had their own thoughts, and they thought that the Lord meant what they meant, — the entire destruction of the chosen race. So the prophet says, "But they know not the thoughts of the Lord," —

Micah 4:12. Neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

God let them come together, great hosts of them, like the sheaves of wheat upon the threshing-floor. Then see what the Lord says: —

Micah 4:13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people:

She was to be like the ox that treadeth out the corn, and she was to have horns of iron and hoofs of brass with which to break in pieces those that had oppressed her.

Micah 4:13. And I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

So that, when they expected to destroy her, she destroyed them, and there may come a day when all the great men and the wise men and the proud men of the world will come together to destroy the Church of Christ (**ED NOTE: See note appended to Micah 4:3 above**), but, oh, how mistaken they will be! For when their pride is at its height, then will the poor weak Church of Christ be suddenly strengthened by the Most High, and she shall tread them under her foot, and they shall be utterly defeated, to the praise of the glory of the God of Zion who liveth for ever and ever.

OUR LORD'S TRANSCENDENT GREATNESS

Micah 5:4

NO. 3382

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"Now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth." — Micah 5:4.

There can be no doubt but what the prophet here spoke of the Messiah — of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not need to enter into any discussion of that subject here, but shall take it at once for granted that the passage means, "Now shall the Lord Jesus be great unto the ends of the earth." This does not mean that Jesus Christ will be any greater really than he always is essentially and naturally. As the Son of God, he is infinite in glory, and can be no greater. As King of kings and Lord of lords, his glory fills immensity. Before him all intelligent spirits that are obedient to God pay their constant homage. He is so great that, as we look up to him, we can both rejoice in him as our brother, and be humbled in his presence when we reflect that he is our God. Jesus Christ is not to be greater, then, essentially than he now is. He is "God over all, blessed for ever." The greatness here spoken of is not one of essence, but of manifestation. Christ is to be made great in the judgment, and hearts, and understandings men, as he is at all times really great in himself. When we read in the text, "Now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth," we may remember that he is already great in heaven. Albeit that man rejects him, painful as the thought is that multitudes in this world have not even heard his name, and that multitudes more only know it to revile it, yet there is a place where his name is great.

In every golden street that name is celebrated. The strings of every holy harp in heaven are set to the melodies of his praise. No one of "the melodious sonnets sung by angel hosts above" but is to extol and magnify him. They delight to do him service. We may comfort ourselves with this thought when blasphemy abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. There is at least one shrine where he is evermore adored: one happier and better land where the sound of blasphemy never profanes him: where he is loved, adored, and revered by every creature.

And it is sweet also to remember that, although Jesus Christ is not as yet great unto the ends of the earth, yet he is exceeding great in the hearts of the multitudes of his people. When we meet here to-night, a comparatively little band, we are not the only worshippers of the Crucified. At this moment the sacred song is going up from the lips of thousands of sincere hearts in this island. Across the Continent there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but who delight to join with angels and archangels in singing the praises of Jesus. And far, far across the sea men of our own kith and kin love him as we do. Nay, nay, where is there a place where the name of Jesus is not now known? As the wide sea is everywhere whitened with the sails of our commerce, so do these swift ships bear in them the servants of God.

The desert has been heard to ring with the songs of his praises, and adventurous missionaries have forced their way to what seemed to be impenetrable swamps and deserts, that never could be trodden by the foot of man, and Jesus Christ's name has been made known, at least as a witness against the people, even where it has not been received by the people. Little is the light, but we thank God we have some light! Few there be that find the narrow road, but, still, there is a goodly company who, as they march along, sing of Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one," but, like an oasis in the midst of the desert, we can see the Christian church. Like a handful of salt scattered over a mass of putridity, like here and there a lamp hung up in the thick darkness, God has a chosen people, and in their hearts Jesus Christ is great, and shall be great in time and in eternity. But the text does mean this, that throughout the whole world — north, south, east, and west — Jesus Christ shall yet be made great, and we will speak of this to-night, first, by showing that he deserves to be great; then by reminding you that God has decreed that he shall be great; thirdly, by asking you, my brethren, whether you do not also agree with that decree, and now, in his strength, that you will make him great; and then I shall close by asking whether there are not some here whose hearts, as yet unbowed to his dominion, shall to-night come and own his sway, that they also may feel and proclaim his greatness unto the ends of the earth. In the first place, what a task I have undertaken in endeavoring to show that: —

I. Jesus Christ Deserves To Be Made Great!

Oh! my brethren and sisters, it needs an angel to set forth the person of the Lord Jesus, and yet an angel might fail, for an angel was never washed in the Savior's blood, and never redeemed from wrath by Jesus the Substitute. What are my lips but poor, cold clay, and what are my words but air, and how shall I, then, set forth the Son of God, the Eternal One, "who, though he was rich, yet

for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich”?

Does the world ring with the name of the Conqueror? It was but a few years ago that everywhere the name of Napoleon was dreaded, and men trembled at the very thought of that mighty destroyer of the human race. Ah! well, if a conqueror's name always seems to have a spell about it which fascinates men with its glitter and its glare, I will say that Jesus is a greater conqueror than all the Napoleons, or Alexanders, or Caesars, who ever devastated the world, for he has overcome that which overcame them.

Kings as they were, they were often the victims of great sin. Alexander drowned himself in the bowl long ere he died, for he was the slave of drunkenness. But Christ has fought with sin, and overcome it, leading it captive at his chariot wheels. Behold the conqueror, smitten in the breast by the skeleton hand, lies as motionless as the slave he slew. Death is the conqueror of conquerors, and casts noble dust upon the same grave as the poorest and most ignoble. But my Lord and Master has conquered death.

“He, hell in hell laid low,

Made sin. he sin o'er-threw,

Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,

And death by dying slew.”

My Master met Satan face to face, and put his foot upon his neck; he met sin, and trod it as men tread grapes in the wine-press; he met death itself, the master of all, and rent the grave, and rolled away the stone, and proclaimed a resurrection to the buried sons of men.

'This Conqueror is, and well does he deserve to be, made great. Some men who will not applaud a conqueror will sometimes speak well of a deliverer. I saw on the triumphal arch at Milan, at the far end of the Corso, a well-deserved encomium on the man who, whether with or without his own will, helped at first to snap the chains of Italy. There was a grateful recognition on the part of Italy of the deeds of Victor Emmanuel, and of Louis Napoleon, and the horses of triumph on the top of the Arch of Victory seemed well placed as a tribute to one who had helped to set a nation free, which long had felt the tyrant's chain. It is said that, when Macedon was first set free, the Greeks were assembled at their games, and they gave to him who freed Greece the name of "Sotea" or "Savior," and the shouting was such that they said the birds fell dead, astonished. 'Twas an exaggeration, but I can understand the joy of a nation when a Savior comes to deliver them from bondage. But what shouts shall be equal to the praises of the Son of God! The fetters he has broken are the fetters of your souls. The dungeons from which he delivers are the dungeons of eternal fire. The rescue that he brings you is not for this life only, but for the life to come. As everlasting as the age of God is the deliverance which Jesus brings. Sound, sound his name abroad! Daughters of music, give him your sweetest notes. See, the triumphant hero comes! Now, let every heart give forth its glad peal of holy joy for all that he has done. He deserves to great, both as conqueror and as deliverer.

In these more peaceful times, too, men are inclined to make those great who are full of learning. When a man has penetrated through the shell of ignorance, and has gotten to the central core of knowledge, men say that he is great. We speak of a great geologist, a great mathematician, or a great astronomer. Men are proud of their fellow-man when he has threaded the stars, and walked with his staff above, and become familiar with planet and with comet, as though they were his next of kin. But what shall I say of my Lord, for in him dwelleth all "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"? To know him is life, and by his knowledge shall his righteous one justify many. If you get Christ, you get wisdom. His name is "wisdom." Solomon, the wise one, called him so. He is wisdom without faintest folly, knowledge without mistake.

Oh! let him, then, be made great. Great discoverers, too, are highly honored and valued. It was right of Her Majesty the Queen to confer knighthood upon those who had bound two lands together, moored two distant nations side by side, so that they could speak to each other in friendly accents. 'Twas well done, good sirs, to make the depths of the sea a highway for human thought! But what has Jesus done? He has not merely linked England and America together, but heaven and earth. He has thrown a connecting cable between the sinner, far off from God, and the Eternal One, who, hating sin, was far off from man. Now, through him we can speak with God, and, through him, God returns an answer to the message of our misery, and the sigh of our grief. Oh! brethren, Christ has established a communication which is swifter than the telegraph.

"Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." He has bridged a gulf such as no human mind ever imagined could be bridged. As far as hell is from heaven was man from God, but Christ has bridged the chasm. The mountains of our sins are greater than a thousand Alps heaped on each other, and they stood between us and God, but the crees has tunnelled the mountains, and there is a highway now for souls to come to God. Now shall he be great indeed, if he gets his just deserts.

Men also, now-a-days, are wise enough to think those great who show great generosity. She is great who goes into the hospital,

devoting the prime of her days to the assuaging of human misery.

He is truly great who, having acquired wealth; gave it with more than a princely hand to build habitations for the poor. He is great who, having won a nation, gave it up as freely as he won it, and who lives untrammelled by the smiles or frowns of kings, and is the true, though uncrowned, king, the world's hero, whom we all delight to honor. But oh! my Master, my Lord Jesus, as much excels all these as the sun excels the stars. He gave not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but he gave himself, his heart, his soul, his deity, he gave such a jewel for us that, if heaven and earth were sold, they could not buy another like it. He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from iniquity. Speak of entering into hospitals? He came unto this great hospital: this huge lazarus-house, the world, and he himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses, and by his stripes we are healed. Speak of the disinterestedness that has made men heroes from the mere love of their fellow-men? What had Christ to gain? Oh! ye lamps of heaven, what had he to gain? Your splendor was enough for him. What could he win but shame, disgrace, abuse, the spittle on his cheeks, and the scourging on his shoulders?

It was for the love of his enemies, the love of those who hated and despised him, and nailed him to the cross — it was for this transcendent, unparalleled love that Christ came to earth. He deserves to be great, and I am sure that if you do not think that Jesus Christ is great, it is because you do not know him.

**“His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love him too.”**

There is no biography that has ever been written that is like that given us by the four evangelists. There is no story of human sacrifice that can rival it, or that can be mentioned in the same breath. Oh! men, it was for you he lived! Oh! men, it was for you he died!

The angels love him, though for them he laid not down his life, and shall men alone be dumb, or earth alone fast close her mouth and refuse to praise him? The very stones, surely, would speak, if we did not say, “Now, shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.” Thus much upon a theme that defies our power to set forth fully. And now, in the second place, the text may be viewed as:

II. A Solemn Purpose And Decree On The Part Of God.

Christ shall be made great to the ends of the earth. There are idol-gods that are worshipped by the largest proportion of our race, but the idols he shall utterly abolish. The false prophets have more followers on earth than Christ has. There are more Mohammedans than Christians of all kinds. But the crescent of Mohamed must wane. The Papacy has still a firm hold upon the minds of millions, but, like a millstone which is hurled into the flood to rise no more, so must the anti-Christ of Rome be utterly cast away. Everything that standeth in the place of Christ must be broken into a thousand shivers, for he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. Brethren, the very signs of the times, as well as the Word of God, lead us to the comfortable belief that there should be a wider enlightenment of the human mind. It may be, certainly it may be, that the Lord will speedily come, but it does not seem to me at all likely that he will. We are to live anticipating his coming, as servants who know they will have to give an account when he does come. That is the practical bearing of the doctrine upon our life, but there are many prophecies yet to be fulfilled, which seem to show that he is not coming just now. I believe that there will be a gradual enlightenment of the human race. I see but little of it at present, but, still, he must be great unto the ends of the earth. Hard hearts will melt before the preaching of his gospel. Perhaps they will melt suddenly. Perhaps a nation shall be born in a day. That preaching which now wins tens might, if God willed it, win hundreds, nay, and it might win thousands and hundreds of thousands. I have never seen any reason why, if God blesses half a dozen in the Tabernacle under a sermon, he should not bless the whole congregation. I do not see any reason why, if he blesses the preaching of the Word here, he should not bless it everywhere. Nay, I see a great many reasons why he should, and I hope that he will do it, and that Pentecost will be outdone, until we shall talk of that blessed day as being but a trifling beginning of a much greater result. Pentecost was only the feast of the first-fruits: it was not the harvest. The first-fruits were just one sheaf only, and surely the harvest is to be much more than that.

Let us, then, expect, far greater things than even Pentecost knew.

We should not be surprised if news should come, long before these heads of ours sleep among the sweet clods of the valley, that there has been an awakening through Germany and France: that the gospel has spread all down the Apennines: that the truth, as it is in Jesus, has shaken Italy from end to end: that Turkey has submitted to the cross: that the Euphrates has dried up its rebellion: that the multitudes of India have cast away Vishnu and Siva, and bowed before Christ: that Confucius is no longer the great philosopher of China, but that the Man of Nazareth is the teacher of millions in that strange people: that from Eastern Coast to Western, the people have set their faces towards Christ, and desire to learn concerning him. We may be living upon the threshold of mighty times. “There were giants upon the earth” in days gone by: there may be giants yet again, and the gospel which has crept

along at a steady pace may yet take to itself its great power, and, swift as the chariot of the sun, the light of truth shall fly the whole world over. This, then, is God's purpose and decree, "Now, shall he be great unto the ends of the earth." I want, now, in the third place, to ask Christians here: —

III. Whether, As This Is God's Decree, It Has Not Often Also Been The Expression Of Our Hearts

When you and I were first converted, did we not say that we would make him great? And we did try to do it. We began to talk to our next friends. We got a handful of tracts and gave them away. We tried to get into a little cottage to speak about Christ, and our resolve then was that, as far as ever our power would go, we would make Christ great to the ends of the earth. Ah! we have fallen very sadly short of those first days. I am afraid we have not kept up our first love, but I wish that every Christian here would go back to that first moment when he received his pardon, and say, "Yes, I have been loved much, and, having had much forgiven, in God's name, I will love him much in return, and as far as I can I will make his name great."

Since that period we have had some very happy seasons. I know that in this very house of prayer we have sometimes felt that we could stop here for ever. It has been like heaven below to us, and then we have said, "Oh! what will I not give him? I will consecrate my substance; I will use my tongue, my mind, my hand; I will do anything for him; he has loved me so much that I cannot help talking about it; I will make my children and all my family know what a precious Savior he is." Oh! I wish that we had come to this, and that we not only said it now and then, but that, it was our prayer, night and day, and the one comfort of our hearts. Beloved, there are some of us who can say before God, the heart-searching One, that the one thing we care about is to make Jesus Christ great. I have sometimes prayed from this platform a prayer which has made some of you wonder when I have asked that, if the crushing of me might lift Christ one inch higher, it might be done at once. Well, it is my daily feeling, I thank God, that, if it would more honor him to cast me where he wills, if I might but be permitted to love him, and he will but love me, the thing may be done, and he shall have all the praise. While Mr. Tennant was being greatly helped of God in preaching, it came to pass on a certain Sunday that a sermon which he had very carefully prepared suddenly went from his mind, and, instead of preaching, he was compelled to be silent. It was a painfully humbling thing for him, but it was the means of the conversion of one of his hearers, who said, "Then I am to understand that, as Mr. Tennant preaches so mightily sometimes to the people, but could not preach on this occasion, he must have been helped of God before, and so it has been God that has spoken to me," and this thought pricked the man to the heart. Oh! it were a good thing to be made a shame, a blessed thing to be a butt, a jest, a jeer, a by-word, if Christ were but lifted up thereby.

When Sir Walter Raleigh laid down his cloak and covered the mire for Queen Elizabeth's sake, it was, I fear, but a courtier's trick, but for Christians to be willing to lose their reputations, and even their very lives, to make Christ glorious — this is the only truly Christian way of living. God forbid that we should ever think about sparing or pampering self. I saw a good Christian brother last Friday, whom God has greatly blessed, but, when working in a very bad part of London, he used to be constantly teased by abominable stories, which were made up against him. Said I to him, "I see you have got something that no evangelist can afford to have." "What is that?" said he. "Why," was the reply, "you have got a good reputation, and you must get rid of it for Christ's sake, that is to say, live a holy life, and then let men call you 'devil' if they like, let them lay every sin to your charge, but never heed them, never speak nor fight for yourself, but speak and fight for your Master; contend for him, and think it to be your honor and your glory to become a butt, an outcast, and as the off-scouring of all things, if Jehovah-Jesus may but wear the crown, and you can win but one single soul to Jesus Christ for ever."

I think, then, that we are all agreed upon this point; we moan, God helping us, to hold fast to this, and to do what we can that Jesus Christ may be great unto the ends of the earth.

And now we can spend only two or three minutes in asking the question:

IV. Are There Not Some Here To-Night In Whom Jesus Christ May Be Made Great?

Now, you good people who have never done anything wrong, and who have got a very good righteousness of your own — I do not ask you to glorify Christ, because you cannot. If I wanted praise up some doctor, and said, "Now, here he is; he can cure all diseases; will you come and help him to get a name?" I should know that you who were not sick could not help him, but the man who was most sick would be the very one that would get the doctor the best name if he could cure him. So when Christ's name is to be lifted up, and we want to preach him so that he may be extolled, you who feel your guilt are the very men who can help us. Supposing now, Jesus Christ should take the drunkard, and wash out his mouth, and make a sober man of him and a Christian, would not that make Christ to be exalted! And ah! if there should be, even here, a woman of evil and vicious life, and Christ should change her so as to make chaste and honorable, oh! how great it would make him to become! And if some black villain has crept

in here, and one who has said of himself that there is no hope of his being converted, and no mercy possible for him — supposing he should find pardon and peace by believing in Jesus, and then become a preacher of his gospel, would that not make Christ's name to be made great? John Newton was once the vilest of the vile, and oh! it made London wonder when the African blasphemer stood up in the pulpit of the church of St. Mary, Woolnooth, to preach the Christ and the cross which he had so ribaldly blasphemed! And oh! may God make London wonder yet again, by taking some of the worst of the worst, and saving them, and making them proclaimers of the gospel of his grace. Why should he not do it? He has often, done it. Are you willing and anxious that he should do it again? Then cry to him, and he will do it.

Perhaps there is one here who has been a Backslider. Ah! backslider, you can make Christ's name great if you come back to him! Mr. Whitfield's brother had once been a very sad backslider. He had gone far, far from the way of Christ. At last, his conscience was pricked and he fell into despair. Sitting at one day with the Countess of Huntingdon, he said to the Countess, "I know what you have said is very proper, and I believe in the infinite mercy and goodness of God; but I do not believe in its application to me, for I am a lost man." The Countess put down the tea, and said, "I am glad to hear it, Mr. Whitfield; I am glad to hear it!" "Madam," said he, "I did not think you would rejoice and glory in a thing so terrible as that." "I am glad to hear you say you are lost, Mr. Whitfield," she said, "for it is written that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost." His eyes sparkled, and he said, "I thank God for that text, and for the extraordinary power with which it has now come into my heart." He died that night, and God had just sent him the word of peace in time to gather him into the fold. Why should not many of you who are lost glorify the name of Christ by trusting him, for he came to seek and to save the lost? Andrew Fuller was once preaching in Scotland, and there was a wicked, abandoned woman, whose life had been given up to all sorts of filthiness. She noticed that the kirk was very full, and that many people were standing outside, so she asked what was doing. They told her that an Englishman was preaching. She desired to hear him; she pressed into the crowd, as some of you may have done to-night, and Mr. Fuller just then used this blessed expression, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." "Oh!" said the woman, "is there an invitation to the ends of the earth? Surely I am one of the ends of the earth!" She looked, according to the gracious command, and Christ got a good name in that Scottish parish through her being so wondrously saved. Oh! I wish he could be great to some of you who are in the ends of the earth!

I feel as if I could, give my eyes, both of them, if Christ could but be great with some of you!

The devil has been great with you. He has had his bit in your mouth; he has ridden you, and will ride you down to hell yet! Will you never kick against him? Oh! that. Christ might come and lay hold upon your bridle and say, "You shall go no further," so turning you into a new course, and making you willing in the day of his power.

Last of all, there may be one here who has been an infidel. If there is, I only hope that he will yet come to make Christ's name great. I remember hearing that Mr. John Cooke, of Maidenhead, was once blessed to the conversion of a man when he was preaching upon the unpardonable sin. In the town where he preached there was a young man who was a member of a club which was very common some fifty years ago, but now happily, I hope, extinct, called "The Hell-Fire Club."

The object of the club was to meet once or twice a week, and each member of the club was to invent some new oath or be fined. The young man went to hear Mr. Cooke only with the design of picking up some new religious phrase that he might turn it into fresh blasphemy, and so delight the unhappy men with whom he was accustomed to meet at the public-house.

The subject was, as I have said, the unpardonable sin, and Mr. Cooke showed what that sin was not, and who had not committed it, and the man found, as he listened, that he was one of those who had not committed it. He went home, and fell, bathed in tears, before God, to think that he had gone so far, but had not been permitted to go quite as far as the unpardonable sin. That man became a Christian, and a useful servant of the Lord Jesus. I will be bound to say that "The Hell-Fire Club" begun to feel that Jesus Christ's name was great. I wish that some of you who are practically hell-fire men and women might become heaven's men and women, and become so to-night! Oh! it would be a fine thing if you went home, and your wife should find you saying — instead of cursing and swearing — "I think we must pray" How struck she would be! There is a good woman here now with her husband — I think they are both to be received into fellowship to-night — and what a happy time it was for her — though even she then knew little or nothing about Christ — when one night, as they were going to bed, her husband knelt down and prayed! She had never heard such a thing before, but after a little while she thought she had better pray, too. You cannot do better, good woman, when the Lord blesses your husband, than to try to get a blessing, too. They could not long pray in quiet, and soon she asked how it had all come about, and so she learned that it came to pass that God had met with the husband. Oh! I wish he would meet with some of you! He has, in his love, turned many a lion into a lamb, and many a raven into a dove.

Let us all pray this short prayer: —

"Oh! sovereign grace, my heart subdue,

I would be led in triumph, too:

A willing captive to my Lord,

To sing the triumph of his Word.”

WOE AND WEAL.

NO. 3239

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me he will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold his righteousness.” Micah 7:9.

Those who expect to find the road to heaven smooth and unobstructed will discover little in the experience of the ancient saints to support the expectation. The Lord’s people have, in all ages, been tried people. Cowper well says,-

**“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”**

Though, perhaps, to the youthful mind this may sound rather harsh, yet there is a Large amount of comfort in it to the more advanced saint, for he says to himself, “Then my difficulties, my distresses, my tribulations, are no new thing; I am in the footsteps of the dock; I can see that I am travelling in the good old way that leads to God,-

**“The way the holy prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment.’**

“Did I meet with no chastisement, I might fear that I was not a child of God; but inasmuch as I am made to smart under the rod, I may hopefully infer from it, if I feel the Spirit of adoption within, that my Father has not forgotten me.”

All sorts of trials have beset the saints of God. Rough winds have blown upon them from all points of the compass, and they have had bad weather in all seasons of the year. They have been plagued from within, and assailed from without. The arrows of temptation have come upwards from the pit, and often the blows off the rod have come downward from the throne. There is no form of sorrow, I suppose, which has not been experienced by the chosen of the Lord, though, blessed be his name, the Lord hath delivered them out of it all.

Micah appears to have been troubled by a combination of difficulties and afflictions. He was grieved at the low estate of the Church,-a combination which ought to affect some of us a great deal more than it does. Alas! there are some who will always be contented enough if their own house shall flourish, though God’s house should be utterly ruined. Micah loved the Church of God, and the low estate of it cut him, to the quick. Moreover, the generation among whom he lived added to his grief. “The best of them,” he said, “is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.” Doubtless he sympathized with the cry of David when he said, “Woe is me, that I sojourn Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” Ill company vexed his soul as the Sodomites vexed the soul of the righteous Lot; and it appears, from reading the chapter though, that he also had a personal difficulty, probably in the matter of slander. He speaks of “her that is mine enemy.” You may notice how he dwells upon it,-upon himself being persecuted and maligned, and he implies his belief that God would arise, and plead his righteous cause. Slander is no uncommon injury for the children of God to bear. That which false tongues glibly utter, ungenerous minds easily credit; and pure conscience is exquisitely sensitive. The birds will pluck at the ripe fruits, whatever they may do with the sour ones. The longest trees cast the longest shadows, and those who stand the highest are often said by men of the world to be the most base. God was slandered in paradise; why should we expect to escape being slandered in the midst of this world of sinners”

It seems that, in the midst of all this affliction which had befallen Micah,-affliction far heavier than any words of mine can describe, - the prophet was led into meditation, and in this meditation he penned the words of our text, in which we may discern, first, what the prophet felt. He Says, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.” Secondly, what he believed: “until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me” and, thirdly, what he expected: “He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.”

I. While tracing out What The Prophet Felt, if we happen to be feeling the same, it may comfort us to hear the voice of a fellow pilgrim passing through the valley of death-shade.

Doubtless he felt the smart of the rod. The tone of his utterance shows this. He speaks like a man who could not be callous, for his had been touched in his inmost soul. I think God intends that his people should feel the rod. If we had manifold temptations, but were never depressed in spirit by them, I question whether they would answer my good design. The "needs be" is not only for the trial, but for the "heaviness" which results from the trial for you remember that the apostle saith, "If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." There is a "needs be" that the rod should make the child smart. To play the Stoic under trouble is a very different thing from playing the Christian; in fact, it is the very opposite of it. Our great Savior did not stand at the grave of Lazarus, and say coldly, "It is well," without any show of emotion; but "Jesus wept;" so we are permitted, nay, expected, to weep when God chastens us. Do not ask, dear friends, that your nerves may become steel and your sinews of iron. This would be no excellence; it is rather an excellence to be sensitive under the hand of God. I see not how, excepting by the blueness, of the wound, the hurt can be made better. It is when the trouble really stings that it blesses, when the flail falls heavily upon the wheat that it separates the chaff from the pure grain. Expect not to play the bravado with God; expect rather to have to humble thyself before him; and out of the depths to cry out, as others have done, Unto the Most High. It is clear, from the language he, uses, that the prophet felt the smart of the rod.

It is equally clear that he readily perceived that the rod was held in the hand of God. Not all Christians can see this, especially in the case of slander. We generally exhaust our thoughts upon the second cause, and vent our indignation upon the framer of mischief. We are angry with the person who has caused us our love, or put us to shame, instead of knowing that God uses even the wicked to chastise his people. Beat a small dog, and it will try to bite the stick; if it were a reasoning creature, it would try to bite you. Sometimes you and I are doggish, and we snap at the instrument that makes us smart. We are irritated with the missile which has smitten us to our grief. Oh, that we would but look up, and see that there is a hand, an unseen hand, that wields the agencies of providence, and realize that not a stroke comes upon the Christian but is given by his heavenly Father's will. Would to God we were not, so accustomed generally to stop at second causes! I am afraid that this is a part of the philosophy of the age. When the world was very ignorant, men used to pray for rain, and thank God for it when it came; they believed that thunder was the value of God, and lightning was the glittering of his spear. Now we have grown so wise that we attribute all startling visitations to natural causes. We will scarcely pray to have cholera or plague removed, or ask for anything desirable as the bountiful gift of heaven. The philosophy that puts God farther off from us than he used to be, would be better unlearned, and a truer philosophy known. At any rate, so far as personal sorrows are concerned, it would be a very sharp and trying experience to me to think that I have an affliction which; God never sent me, that the bitter cup was never filled by his hand, that my briars were never measured out by him, nor sent to me by his arrangement of their weight and quality. Oh, that were bitterness indeed! But, on the contrary, the prophet here sees the hand of God in all his trials, and I pray that you and I may do the same. May we see that our heavenly Father fills the cup with loving tenderness, and holds it out, and says, "Drink, my child; bitter as it is, it is a love-potion which is meant to do thee permanent good." The discerning of the hand of God is a sweet lesson in the school of experience.

As he felt the smart, and traced that smart to the hand of God, the prophet discerned that he had sinned. "Because I have sinned," said he. We do not always see that quite so clearly in health as we do in sickness. A night or two of weary tossings upon our bed will do more for us as to heart work and as to the depravity of our nature than a hundred sermons. To be despised and misrepresented, to have to creep into a corner away from one's best friends because they are alienated from you, or to have to go to the grave with one after another of the dearest objects of one affection,-these are sermons under which we cannot sleep, and sermons the responsibility of which we cannot shift to another. God's children, if they be as they should be, are greatly profited and benefited in the discovery of sin by the affliction which God sendeth them. I had never known the loathsomeness there was in my heart if the spade of tribulation had not burned over the green sods of my profession, and made me see therein holes and places where loathsome things did creep and crawl within. Do not shun the furnace, dear friends. You need not certainly pray for it; you will have enough of it without praying for it; but if God sends it, do not be afraid of it. There is no more enriching place in the world to go to than to the Egypt of bondage, for ye shall come up out of it with Jewels of silver and of gold. I am of Rutherford's mind when he said that, "Of all the wine in God's cellar, birch-wine may be the bitterest, but it is the best." And so it is. You shall never see the stars shine with such splendor as at the Northern pole, where the sharp frosts and the long winter have taken away the light of the natural day. All the Arctic voyagers tell us that there seems to be an excessive sparkle about the stars there; as is it in the winter of trouble. We then see the sparkling of the grace of God as a contrast to the evil which we discover in our own hearts.

Another thing the prophet felt was, the trouble he then experienced from God dealing with his sin. We must always discriminate between things that differ. God never punishes his people for sin in the sense of a loyal and vindictive infliction. That would be unjust, for Christ, their Substitute, was once for all punished in their stead. They owe no debts to divine justice, for all their debts were paid by Christ, to the utmost farthing. But now they are placed under a different government. They are not summoned before a judge, but they are put under parental care; and like as a father chastens every child who he loveth, so our heavenly Father chastens us; again, I say, not with a legislative punishment for sin, but with a father's chastisement for our offenses.

Antinomians have gone the length of saying that there is no such thing as even chastisement for sin. Very likely not, as far as they are concerned. I do not suppose that they were ever worth chastening, or that God ever took the trouble to chastise them. But he

dare chastise his own children, and I think the who know their adoption will not be long before they get a very clear realization of it in the tingling of their flesh under the rod of the covenant. Why, of all the blessings of the covenant, the sharpest, but one of the best, is the rod. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy Word," says David; and that testimony of David's is the testimony of all the saints. They will all tell you that they have, to bless the hand of a chastening God quite as much as they have to bless the lips of a caressing God when he kisses them with the kisses of his mouth. No, the children of God cannot sin without smarting for it, even as God said to the children of Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." If some boys were breaking windows in the street to-night, and you went by, you might let them all alone save and except your own boy if you saw him there, and most likely you would make him smart for it; and when God goeth through the world, as this is not the day of judgment, he winks at the sins of many sinners; but if he sees his people transgressing, he will not wink at them. I have often felt very glad when I have seen some of God's people come down in the world to poverty. I have not rejoiced at their misfortunes, but I have been glad of the gracious discipline it indicated. I have sometimes said of such-and-such a man, "If that man prospers, acting as he does in business, I shall know that, he is not, a, child of God, if he be a child of God, he cannot do as other men do without making a terrible misadventure of it ere long." If you only want gain in this world do not be a Christian: nor pretend to be one. You cannot expect God and mammon to agree together. If you be a Christian, God will watch you more narrowly than others. If you be a king's counsel, a little thing will be treason in you which would not have been treason in an ordinary subject. God expects great things where he gives great things; and if he honors us so much as to tell us the secret of his covenant, he expects us to walk with the greatest possible circumspection. So, Christian, whenever you are in trouble, though it may not be distinctly the result of sin, yet you may well enquire whether it be so or not. Say with Job, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." At the bottom of our sorrow there is generally a sin; at the roots of our grief we shall find our guilt.

Observe one more point. The prophet felt that, since he could connect his suffering with his sins, he could bear it. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." 'Twas a grand point in Aaron when he "held his peace." In that case, "silence" was golden" indeed; and when we distinctly see our trouble coming upon us, and springing out of our wrong-doing, what can we say, what can we do, but put our hand upon our mouth, and humbly bow before God? I am persuaded, dear friends, that we often make more trouble for ourselves by holding an argument with God about our trouble. When your child is stubborn, as long as he holds out, and brazens it out with you, you will not put away the rod; but when, with broken heart and weeping eyes, he confesses that you travel done right, and that he has been wrong, then your heart moves towards him, and your bowels yearn with compassion. It is so with our God, so let us cast ourselves into his hands. It is a sweet thing to be able to say, "Well, Lord, do as thou wilt with me." It is not easy to say it when the pain is acute, or when the inward grief is very heavy; but it is a sweet relief to let the lancet, as it were, into the gathering, and it gives us ease to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." You are not far from liberty when you are content to sit there in the dungeon till he wills to let you out; when you can say in your spirit, "Strike, Lord, if thou wilt, only sanctify the rod to me; but go on striking if so thou wilt, I will not say a single word against all that thou doest. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' "Have you ever read Brooks's Mute Christian under a Smarting Rod? If you have not, you might do so with great profit, if you can get a copy of it; but better than reading that will be to go out yourselves, and be "mute Christians under a smarting rod."

If some of you do not know anything about this infliction now, you will one day. You need not wish that the day may be very soon; but when it comes, remember what has been said to you tonight, and "bear the indignation of the Lord" as the prophet Micah did.

II. Let us enquire, briefly, in the second place, What Did The Prophet Believe?

He believed that he had an Advocate above. Though he would not plead for himself, yet he says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, ... until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me." Every believer has at least two Advocates in heaven. His Father himself is his Advocate. "Like, as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Have you never felt your own heart plead for your child when you have said to him, "Now you are under my displeasement; go away, I shall not want to see, you again; go to your bed-chamber, and stop there"? And if you have heard him moaning there, and sighing and crying, oh, your heart has ached to be with him. You have said to yourself, "Have I been too severe?" And though you may have come to the conclusion that you were not, but that it was necessary for his good, still your child does not need to plead for himself, for your heart pleads for him. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Oh, the tenderness of God's heart, even when you feel the roughness of God's hand! Oh to believe, Christian, that God is, as it were, doing despite to himself when he smites you; that, although his wisdom and his highest love appoint it, this tenderness of love would fain let you go unchastened, unless the knowledge and prudence of love recognized that it was for your welfare that you should feel the smart! You have an Advocate in your Father himself, and then you have another Advocate whose office it is to plead for you, your blessed Lord Jesus. Could you want a better? In all your afflictions he is afflicted. He can sympathize with every pang that torments you, with every doubt that oppresses you.

“He takes you through no darker rooms

Than he went through before.”

And at the everlasting throne, when you are being sifted like wheat, he is praying that your faith fail not, and so the rod passes away; and full often, what is worse than the rod, the axe, too, because the Intercessor pleads for us. Yes, we have an Advocate above to plead our cause.

And do you notice that the prophet puts, with the pleading above, activity on earth? He looks at his present trouble, which seems in his case to have been slander, and he says that the Lord himself would execute judgment for him. When David took his sword in his hand, and declared that not a single man of the house of Nabal should he alive by morning light, how furious was the son of Jesse as he marched at the head of his clan; and what a blessing it was when Abigail, the wise woman, knelt before him, and stopped him, and said, “My lord fighteth the battles of the Lord.” David stopped, and bethought himself that, when he became a king, it would be no small consideration to be able to feel that he had not shed blood in haste; so he put up his sword, and went his way. There was no need for David to slay Nabal, for ten days afterwards the Lord smote him, and he died. Why, oh why, should we be in such a great hurry to fight our own battles?

Brethren and sisters, if anybody should speak hard words of us, we are up in arms directly. “Oh! “ says one, “I will have this wrong righted; my character is too precious to be lost in that way.” “Yes,” says another “I will see the thing through; I will have the law of such-and-such people.” Well, now, be still; or go and fight the Lord’s battles, let God fight for you. What is your name or your character, after all? Who will be any the better for your caring about such an insignificant creature as you are? Why, when you are dead and gone, the world will not miss you! It is wonderful what great being we are in our own esteem, and yet what little beings we really are, after all! When Mr. Whitelock was much troubled about the peril of England, his servant said to him, “Mr. Whitelock, did England get on pretty well because you were born? “ “Oh, yes, John! very well indeed.” “And do you think it will get on all right when you are dead “ “ Yes, I think it will, John.” “Very well, then; if I were you, sir, I’d leave it to God now without troubling yourself about it.” The fact is, the longer I live, the more I feel that the very things which I fret about are the things that go wrong; but the other matters that I can just put on the self, and leave with God, always go right. A line in one of our hymns says,-

“’Tis mine to obey; ’tis his to provide.”

While we are trying to provide, we neglect to obey, and so the obeying and the providing both go awry. If it be a battle of your own, leave it alone. In everything else, if you want a thing done, do it yourself; but in the matter of your own character, if you want it defended, leave it alone. God will take care of it; and the less you stir in that matter, the better will it be for you, and the more for God’s glory.

What a sweet thing it is, then, to believe that you have One to plead for you above, and that the same Lord will vindicate your cause below! How blessed it is for you to live with the consciousness that you have left everything in his hands, casting your burden upon the Lord, and making it your only burden to pray to him and serve him all the days of your life!

III. Now, lastly, What Was It That The Prophet Expected?

He says, “He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.” Believer, will you also expect this,-that God will bring you forth to the light? “Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.” But if you are not of good courage, your heart will be weak. If Satan can persuade you that the night will never give place to the mornning, then he can make an easy prey of you; but if you can say, with Micah, “He will bring me forth to the light;” if you can still feel persuaded that God never did cast one of his own chosen ones down without intending to lift him up again, that he never did kill without making alive, and never did wound without intending to heal, why then your worst and multiplied afflictions can be borne with holy cheerfulness and confidence. “He will bring me forth to the light.” Oh, what a mercy it is to come forth to the light after you have been in the dark! How sweet the light is then! I have heard people, who have been very sick, say that, after they have recovered, life has been a perfect joy to them. Nay, I know one who very seldom has a day free from pain; and when she does have such a day, it is a day indeed. You can see, by the very sparkling of her eye, how good a thing it is to live. It is almost worth while to suffer pain to have the joy of being delivered from it. And so, when a child of God has been tried, tempted, afflicted, and he once gets out of it, what joy and peace he has! If you are baptized in trouble, when you lift your head up again, you shall come out all the fairer and the brighter for the washing, and thank each billow that breaks over you for the good it has brought you, as you come fourth to the light. Then you shall be able to sing,-

“For yet I know I shall him praise

Who graciously to me,

The health is of my countenance,

Yea, mine own God is he.'

"Aforetime, he has succoured me, so I can say to him, 'Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow at thy wing will I rejoice.' If I cannot get the light of thy face, the very shadow of thy wings shall make me glad, for I shall feel that I am safe even under their shadow. O God, thou wilt bring forth thy people to the light, and they shall triumph in thine exalted right arm, O my delivering God!"

Then the prophet added, "and I shall behold his righteousness." One might have half-forgiven him if he had said, after being slandered, "I shall behold my own righteousness; men shall see it too, and they shall honor me the more because, they treated me so unjustly for a time." Oh, no, it is not so written; but "I shall behold his righteousness." To see the righteousness of God in having tried us, to discern clearly his wisdom, his goodness, his truth, his faithfulness in having afflicted us, and more and more to see how suited to our case is the fullness of righteousness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus, this is the divine result from all our troubles. So may it be with us till the last wave of trouble breaks over us, and we enter into everlasting rest!

Dear friends, I commend the text to you. May you live in the spirit of it, and may the Lord help you to glorify him even as the prophet Micah did.

Alas! I know that there are some here who have their troubles, and they have no God to go to. How I pity you! The snow that falls tonight makes it very cheerless for you who have to be out in it, and the thaw makes the snow press through your boots till your very bones and marrow seem chilled. Thank God, we can get the curtains drawn, and sit around the fire, and if the blast blows outside, it is all warm within. But what must it be to have no home to go to? What must it be to be a houseless wanderer on such a night as this? What must it be to pass by houses all alight and cheerful, and to say, "There is no home, sweet home for me; I am an outcast, and must, tread all night these snowy streets"? I hope there is no such creature in London who will have to do so. One could pity such a poor wretch indeed! But think, my dear friends, what it must be for your soul to have no home at the last; when the storm of wrath shall fall, to have nothing to comfort you; to be driven from, God's presence; to have no Father in heaven, to find no warmth of love in the diving heart; to see the happiness of angels and the joy of glorified spirits; perhaps to see your own children in heaven, and to be yourselves shut out; dear ones, whom you loved on earth, divided from you by a great gulf forever? Happily, the, day of grace is not over yet, the day of mercy is not yet past, the long eternal night has not yet set in! Hasten, sinner! There is a home for thee if thou hast grace to knock at this door. The door is Mercy; to knock is Prayer, to step across the threshold is Faith. Trust the Lord Jesus, and thou needest not fear, though all thy life long thou should be tried. Thou needest not fear the accumulated terrors of the latter days, whatever they may be, nor fear the dread trump of judgment, nor the last tremendous day. Fly to Jesus! Fly to Jesus! Fly to Jesus now! May his spirit draw you this night! Amen.

A SWEET SALAAM

Micah 7:18.

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"He delighteth in mercy." — Micah 7:18.

Sons of men, rejoice that such God has revealed himself to you! This should cause a universal Hallelujah, the whole world over, as soon as ever it is hard. "He delighteth in mercy." Clap your hands, and rejoice before him; yea, exceedingly rejoice! The heathen did not find out this. Although they had gods many, differing one from another in character, none of them were ever gods of mercy. They were usually fierce demons, some of them only rejoicing in the exaction of human blood. Go at this very day to Hindostan, and see what gods man maketh unto himself — gods more beastly, more cruel, more devilish than himself. Such is not the living and true God. Far from taking pleasure in the sufferings of creatures, he tells us plainly that he delights in mercy. It is not enough that he is merciful, but he delights in this high prerogative. While we may well suppose that every attribute of God gives him pleasure in the exercise, mercy is supremely singled out as being especially his favourite. Mercy is the last attribute openly manifested; he exercised his power in making men before they sinned, or needed mercy; and he displayed his wisdom in balancing the clouds and piling the hills before he needed to show mercy, for sin as yet had not come into the world. If I may so say, mercy is God's Benjamin, and he delighteth most of all in it. It is the son of his right hand, though, alas! in bringing it forth, it might well have been called the son of sorrow too, for mercy came into this world through the sorrows of the only-begotten Son of God. He delights

in mercy, just as some men delight in trade, some in the arts, some in professions; and each man, according to his delight, becomes proficient in pursuing a work for the very love thereof. So God is proficient in memory. He addicts himself to it. He is most Godlike, most happy, if such a thing may be said of him; when he is stretching out his right hand with his golden sceptre in it, and saying to the guilty, "Come to me, touch this sceptre, and you shall live!" He delighteth in mercy.

Now, surely it would suffice were I to sound this trumpet again and again with its celestial monotone. If you heard nothing but the same unvarying notes and did but remember them, believe them, and come to God in consequence of them — there would be enough of sermon in the text, without further exposition or comment. "He delighteth in mercy." Nevertheless, as you are willing to listen, it will not be grievous to me to speak on such a lovely theme. Let me therefore mention some facts which prove it; answer some objections that are raised to it; warn you against some perversions of it; and then endeavour to push home the great lessons which spring from it.

I. Facts Which Prove That God Delighteth In Mercy.

This is clear, from the first dawn of promise. When our first parents sinned, he might, if he had pleased, without straining the words which he had spoken, have destroyed them both, and so at once have put an end to the race of rebels. He had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." If he had chosen to give to that a literal as well as a spiritual meaning, he might surely have put on the black cap, and condemned our parents to perish on the spot. But why did he permit them to live and to become the parents of an innumerable race? Why, from that single pair, has he suffered he millions of the race to spring? Because every man that is born becomes a sinner, and in every one of these millions there is a space for God's mercy — these all furnish so many platforms I might say, on which God might display his mercy; so many millions of black foils against which God shall put the sparkling sapphire of his mercy, that its brightness may be more clearly seen. Surely, it is only because he delighteth in mercy that he spares this earth to swarm with sinners, and to be covered over with multitudes of transgressors.

That he delighteth in mercy is clear, from the fact that oftentimes after his anger has waxed hot, he has spared the offender when he has repented. God determined to destroy the race of Israel in the wilderness. "Let me alone that I may destroy them." But the prayer of Moses touched the tender part of God, namely, his mercy; and he said that he would spare the people for his covenant and for his prophet's sake. Even Ahab, that most cruel of kings, when he had been threatened, humbled himself; and God said to Elijah, "Go and say unto Ahab, Because he hath humbled himself, this thing shall not be in his day." And that great city of Nineveh, which has been given up o all manner of evil, God had said to John, "Go and cry, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" but, when they put themselves in sackcloth, and repented at the prophet's warning, the Lord would not destroy the city, but spared the multitude for a season. Oh! I tell you the tears and cries of men move the heart of the Most High. Not a prayer ever comes from the most guilty breast, if it be but sincere, fails to enter into the ear of the God of Mercy. The tears of penitents forge their way into his soul. He hath a bottle for those precious drops; he hath a ready record for all their groans and sighs. He has proved this in innumerable cases. He has drawn the sword from its scabbard and put it back again when the man has repented. He has lifted the axe, yet laid it down again when the husbandman has pleaded, and said, "Let it alone this year also." His sparing, even when his anger has waxed hot, proves that he delighteth in mercy.

Brethren and sisters, I appeal to all of you in this present assembly. The fact that we are here to-night after all the provocations which we have given to God, proves that he delights in mercy. Ah! I need not begin with the worst, the openly worst; let me mention some of you who have been trained from your childhood in the paths of piety, and yet you forgot God. You lived without him; prayer was neglected; his day was a weariness; to go up to his house was a toil. And yet you have been spared though you were useless and unprofitable servants; he might have chased you out of the house, and given you your portion among the tormenters, but he has borne with your ill manners, and spared you to this hour. Ah, but there are some who have gone farther. They have broken his laws; they have trampled on his statutes. Some have cursed his name; some here have done it. They have dared to imprecate damnation on themselves, and have done it often. They have spoken against God, perhaps with impious and infidel lips. They have done worse than that — if worse can be they have persecuted God's children, and that is to touch the apple of his eye, and to hurt him in the tenderest place. We seemed, some of us, in the days of our sin, as if we would ride steeplechase to perdition, as if nothing could stop the insanity of our suicidal resolve. We would sin, even if sin were bitter to us. We would pursue our ruin at all risks and hazards, and yet he cried, "How can I give thee up?" He turned to plead with us. A mother's voice pleaded; from the grave she pleaded. The fever came and preached to us on the sickbed, and he heard it. The cholera came and preached; we heard its voice in the street; we saw its power in the frequent funerals that passed along through the city. The preacher came and spoke as best he could, and besought you, as a brother, that you would turn; that you would not perish, but would turn to God, and all theses entreaties — these stretchings out of the hand, these wooings, and these tears which God has used upon you have been all in vain to now, and you have sinned and revolted yet more and more. Doth he not delight in mercy to continue still to invite, still to mourn, and not to cut it short by destroying you altogether?

And the very best proof that God delighteth in mercy methinks is to be found in the great number of persons who are saved. I say the great number of those who are saved, for he who says they be but few, contorts some passages of God's Word, and understands it not as a whole. Look yonder, if your eyes can see as mine can, by faith: you can no more count the spirits that rejoice before the throne than you can count the stars in the sky, or the upon the sea shore. Their music yonder is like great thunders, or like the mighty waves of the sea, for they are ten thousand times ten thousand, a company that no man can number, all having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of Jesus, all saved by the mercy of our God. And here below, how many there are of us who are making our way to the Celestial city, led by the precious Christ who is our Captain, and in every one of our cases the mercy of God is seen.

Nor is the mercy of God to be discovered only in the numbers, but it is seen also in the character of those who are saved, for God does not select the most virtuous, the most chaste, the most honest, the most talented. He often takes, to make them monuments of his mercy, the vilest, the most abased and blasphemous. He lays hold upon the polluted publican instead of the proud Pharisee. He singles out the wandering prodigal before many who thought themselves far better. He lifteth the poor out of the dunghill, and setteth him among princes. Glory be to the infinite majesty of eternal grace that has snatched brands out of the burning, that has lifted men from the very gates of hell and passed them through the gates of heaven. The guilt of one soul might sink a world; the accumulated guilt of all the millions whom Christ redeemed will stand for ever as a proof that God delighteth in mercy.

Reflect a moment upon the conduct of those saved after they have tasted that the Lord is gracious, for albeit they are renewed yet they are not perfect. Oh! brethren and sisters, we ought to be ashamed to have to confess it tonight, blushes should scarlet our cheeks, that we have been ungrateful, unbelieving, unfaithful. We have sinned against the gracious Father who has taken us into his family, sinned against the love of God, against the blood of Christ, against the sweet comforts of the Holy Ghost; and yet no child of his was ever cast away; no believer in Christ was ever disowned of God. The mercy which once flowed to them flows on for ever, never pausing for an instant, because he delighteth in mercy.

But think, and here is the main point, think with regard to these guilty ones who have been saved, at what an expense it was all done. He spared not his own Son. A son is most dear to a father, yet God so loved mercy that he gave the only-begotten to the smart, and to the death-pang, to the cross and the sepulchre, that mercy might ride on the milk-white steed, a queen amongst the sons of men. Behold the Saviour bleeding! I pray you let me portray him to you, with hands and feet pierced with nails. Mark you his sufferings; view you his agonies; and let me tell you that this was all for the sons of men, that the mercy of the everlasting Father, without bound and limit, might come to those who seek his face through Jesus Christ. Farther proof surely is not needed. This is proof, overwhelming proof, that should confound despair, proof that should make unbelief impossible. He who gave his son to die must be a God that delighteth in mercy.

II. Some Objections Are Often Raised, which I shall very briefly meet.

"If he delighteth in mercy, "saith one, "why are some men lost?" Surely, sir, God does not so delight in mercy as to tarnish his justice. If he did, there would be a slur upon his mercy, for sometimes it is not mercy to the many to forgive the few. It were no mercy to London to set free all the burglars and garroters. It were no mercy to England if every man who had committed murder were suffered to go red-handed without punishment. Punishment for the guilty is required even by mercy itself. Remember, of all the lost, there is not one brute has simply and barely the due reward of his sins, and if that had been roughly and evenly given to him, he would have known no reprieve that allowed him, to, live here after his first offence. To full many of them, certainly to all of you, if finally lost, you will have had mercy presented to you. You have had Christ preached to you; you have been bidden to come to him; you have been assured, on God's own authority, that if you trust Jesus you shall be saved. Then if you do it not, lay not your ruin at the door of God's mercy, but at the door of your own folly. If a man die of fever because he will not take the medicine, who but himself is at fault? If a man leap over a precipice wilfully, let him blame no one if he dashed himself to pieces. On the head of every lost one, his own condemnation lies, as yours will, except you turn to God and repent.

"Ah!" saith another, "but God is not always merciful, look at his severity sometimes: Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are swallowed up; Sodom is destroyed by fire from heaven." Yes, sir, and even mercy saw this done without a tear in her eye. What, should Sodom go unpunished? Shall the Shall the bestial vice of which Sodom was guilty never be checked? Why, if this should spread amongst the sons of men, it would bring in its infernal train ten thousand times more damage than the destruction of Sodom, and Gomorrah. The sin itself is infinitely worse than the fire which burned it up. There is mercy in the physician if he sees poison in the hand when he cuts it out and cauterizes the wound, and this is what God did with Sodom. He did, as it were, cut out the plague-spot and cauterize it, lest that filthy sin should overspread all mankind. As for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, their death was the life of others, they were pestilent traitors against the dominion of God, and unless they had died, others would have revolted and have perished too. Many of those things which we call severe judgments are only mercies in disguise. The great fire of London — how the preachers preached about that! I suppose there are hundreds of sermons extant to prove that the great fire of London was a punishment

upon London for its gluttony and covetousness. Why, what greater blessing ever befel the city than that fire, burning up as it did all those fever and pest dens where all kinds of malaria and disease would constantly lie festering? Nothing could have been better. The deaths of some in the plague before the fire, had called attention to the evil, and then the fire came and swept the evil away. I do not doubt that even cholera in our own times has been simply God's great sanitary commissioner, sent to London to warn us to cleanse this and sweep away that, that so on the whole life may last longer and mercy may prevail. Judge not go, then, by your feeble sense, wait awhile till you see his judgments in the long run, and then you shall discern how they are always seasoned with mercy, and love holds the sword.

Should anyone say, with blank surprise, "If God delighteth in mercy, why is there such a thing as the unpardonable sin?" Methinks I should reply, with a burst of gratitude, "Is it not a great mercy that there is only one sin that is unpardonable?" There might have been a catalogue of crimes for which forgiveness was impossible; there is but one; that one is only unpardonable because the person who commits it has so seared his conscience that he never sues for pardon. Any of you, man or woman, that asks for mercy sincerely, shall have it, whatever sin you may have committed. But that one sin strikes a cold chill about the heart, and henceforth the man never desires mercy, but perishes an impenitent and a careless sinner.

Should another say, "How is God merciful, when I feel in my own self that he cannot have mercy upon me?" I should reply, Your feelings are not to be trusted. Whatever despair may whisper or doubts may suggest, one text of Scripture is worth fifty fears and doubts, or fifty thousand either. You may be a black sinner, but he delights to wash you. You may have offended him, year after year, and done despite to his grace, but his arm is still not shortened that he cannot save. I care not how far you may have gone, I am sure he can come after you. Lost sheep, bleating on the mountains, the Shepherd can hear you, and the Shepherd can reach you. You may fall into a pit but it shall not be so deep that he cannot bring you out. While life remains there is hope. Sin as you may have sinned, there is abundance of pardon with a gracious God. Oh, put not your thought so in opposition to the declaration of heaven, but believe to-night that God is able and willing to forgive you, and come with a penitent prayer, and find forgiveness now. All objections to the delight of God in mercy are but illusions of your brain, or delusions of your heart.

III. There Is Peril Of Misusing This Mercy Of God, lest instead of leading us to repentance, it should plunge us deeper into sin.

Though God delights in mercy, sin is no trifle in his estimation. Sin is an enormous evil, an evil so great that it never could have prevented from destroying us all, except by God himself coming into this world, taking upon himself our nature, and offering to the very death in our stead. Calvary tells us that sin is not a thing to be laughed at. It cost our Saviour groans unutterable, and griefs that never can be measured, to deliver us from our guilt, and if the sinner come not to Christ it shall cost him endless tears; it shall cost him everlasting misery; his sins shall sink him to perdition forever. Oh! trifle not with sin because God is merciful. This is a cruel, brutal thing to do, to sin because grace doth abound. If you do so, you shall find that there is no grace for you.

Say not that because God is merciful a prayer or two on your dying bed will suffice. How do you know you may ever have a dying bed? Men fall dead in the streets. There was one who always said, "I shall set it all right at last; I shall say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and it will be all right." Returning home drunk one night, he spurred his horse over the parapet of a bridge into a deep river, and the last word he was heard to say was a sentence too blasphemous for me to repeat. And why may not you die so? You cannot tell. Put no trust in death-bed repentances; they are of all things the most deceitful. Every thief repents when he comes to the prison, and every murderer will leave a word of repentance on his pathway to the gallows. It is a sign of the heart being set right to cry and groan when you are coming near to your punishment. God is merciful to these who seek him early, but procrastinators will find that he is just. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, lest he swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest."

Though God is merciful you are not therefore at liberty to despise the Lord Jesus and his salvation, for all his mercy flows to us through the silver pipe of Jesus Christ the Mediator. I speak advisedly, there is no mercy in heaven or earth in the shape of saving mercy, except through Jesus Christ. Unless you come to the cross for it you shall not have it. God has nailed up every other door but this. This one alone is left open, the door sprinkled with blood on the lintel and the two side-posts, and on which is written, "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall never perish, but have everlasting life." There is an alternative. It is, "He that believeth not shall be condemned." What, if he do this and that, or if he humble himself, if he be virtuous? Yes, yes, God makes no exception. The sentence comes to kings and queens and emperor, as well as to crossing-sweepers, paupers, or even to convicts, "He that believeth not shall be condemned." They shall take which they will. If they will have Christ and God's mercy, so be it; God's grace has constrained them to take that. But if they will not have Christ, there is no mercy no, not a drop of mercy, but wrath, righteous wrath, against those that despise the Son of God.

Nor must you think that the doctrine of God's free mercy at all comes into conflict with the doctrine of God's electing love. Nay, rather, by his election it is seen that God delighteth in mercy — thinking mercy, planning mercy before men needed mercy, in the

eternal covenant determining the persons upon whom mercy should come; selecting them, not because of any good in themselves, but entirely out of his own God pleasure, and thus proving his mercy. If God had sent into the world a gospel full of conditions and of human doings, it would have been no gospel to anybody, for no man could fulfil the conditions except by divine grace. But he has sent an unconditional gospel. He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion upon whom he will have compassion; and in this great free-grace gospel the mercy of God is magnified to the fullest.

IV. What Is The Lesson From All This?

If God be so merciful let his ministers preach of his mercy. If God delights in mercy and not in sacrifice, do not let his ministers be dressing themselves up, and performing genuflexions, bowing to the east, winking with their eyes, making signs with their fingers, offering incense, and I know not what beside. God is not a child to be amused with toys that are beneath the notice of babes. God delighteth in mercy. Let the pulpit therefore, ring with mercy. Let the preacher be continually telling of mercy through the blood of Jesus, mercy through faith in his name, mercy for crimes of deepest dye, mercy that comes to us through the aborting Saviour. This ought to be our daily message when we preach. We ought to remember that, God delighteth in mercy. As God's ambassadors let us proclaim most freely that which he has the most pleasure in, his mercy — his mercy — oh, his mercy, it endureth for ever.

Christian people, here is a noble example for you. If God delights in mercy, and you are his children, be like him, let mercy be your delight. Be merciful to the poor. Be merciful to the ignorant. Be merciful to the guilty. Never be the man to cast the first stone at the fallen woman, for your Master did not condemn her. Never be the man to pass by the naked and the poverty-stricken. Your Lord's eye was quick to detect the leper. Mercy well becometh the heir of the God of mercy, and if you are not merciful how can you expect to obtain mercy, or think to be numbered among the children of the great merciful One? To all of you I would say — take care, as you expect the mercy of God, to deal it out to other. Never say, "I won't forgive," for you seal your own condemnation when you do, and if you forgive not your brother his trespasses neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. You have chosen your own destruction when you shut the door against your child, or against your neighbour, and say, "I will treasure up that enmity as long as I live." I tell you, sirs, your offerings at God's altar are an abomination to him until you have forgiven every one of your fellows his trespasses. Your prayers cannot come up before God, they are hindered most effectually. How can you pray when one of the petitions which God puts into your mouth is this: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive them that are indebted unto us"? How canst thou, with one hand on thy brother's throat, lift thine other hand and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? Go your way to-night, and if possible before you close your eyes in sleep make your peace with any whom you have offended or who have offended you. As God delighteth in mercy, let the children of God delight in mercy likewise,

Still, the great lesson I want to bring out is this — if God, delights in mercy then why should those who have offended him be afraid to seek him? He will hear your prayers be they ever so feeble or broken. He is ready to forgive you, however grossly you may have offended. Think of that. If he be so kind, why do you stay away from him?

Oh! come to him, come now. 'tis all mercy to-day. You are not bidden to come to a judge, nor to advance to the bar where the sentence shall go against you; 'tis a sweeter note you hear: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Oh! I wish I could lead you to the Lord. It is not in my power. His Spirit alone can do it, but ah! do come, and welcome. There is not a hard word in the whole of the Bible for a coming sinner. There is nothing to keep back a, soul that desires to be at peace with God. God's house is open; God's heart is open; God's table is spread; God waiteth to be gracious — nay, he comes to meet the sinner that comes to him. Are you willing to have him and to have his mercy. If so, you may have it. Come, then; come and welcome, sinner, come!

"Lord thou hast won, at length I yield,

My heart by mighty grace compelled

Surrenders all to thee;

Against thy terrors long I strove,

But who can stand against thy love?

Love conquers even me.

"If thou hadst bid thy thunders roll,

And lightning's flash to blast my soul,

I still had stubborn been;

But mercy has my heart subdued,

A bleeding Saviour I have viewed,

And now I hate my sin.”