

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD'S PEOPLE, OR NOT GOD'S PEOPLE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 12TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.”—Hosea ii. 23.

“As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”—Romans ix. 25.

To my mind, it is very instructive to notice how Paul quotes from the Prophets. The revelation of the mind of God in the Old Testament helps us to understand the gospel revealed in the New Testament. There is no authority that is so powerful over the minds of Christian men as that of the Word of God. Has God made known any truth in his Word? Then, it is invested with divine authority. Paul, being himself inspired by the Holy Spirit, and therefore able to write fresh revelations of the mind of God, here brings the authority of God's Word in the olden times to back up and support what he says: “As he saith also in Osee.”

Beloved friend, if you are seeking salvation, or if you want comfort, never rest satisfied with the mere word of man. Be not content unless you get the truth from the mouth of God. Say in your spirit, “I will not be comforted, unless God himself shall comfort me. I want chapter and verse for that which I receive as gospel.” Our Lord's reply to Satan was, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Give me, then, but a word out of God's mouth, and I can live upon it; but all the words out of man's mouth, apart from divine inspiration, must be as unsatisfying food as if men tried to live on stones.

Notice, again, how Paul teaches that the very essence of the authority of the Scriptures lies in this, that *God* speaks through his revealed Word: “As he saith also in Osee.” It is God speaking in the Bible whom we ought to hear. The mere letter of the Word alone will kill; but when we hear God's voice speaking in it, then it has power which it could not possess otherwise. It is a blessed thing to put your ear down to the promises of Scripture, till you hear God

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speaking through them to your soul. It is truly profitable to read a gospel commandment, and to listen to its voice until God himself speaks it with power to your heart. I pray you, do not regard anything that is preached here unless it agrees with what is written there in the Bible. If it is only my word, throw it away; but if it is God's truth that I declare to you, if God himself speaks it through my lips, you will disregard it at your peril.

I will make only one other observation by way of introduction. Is it not wonderful how God's Word is preserved century after century? There were seven or eight hundred years between Hosea and Paul; and it is remarkable that the promise to the Gentiles should lie asleep all that time, and yet should be just as full of life and power when Paul was quoting it after all those centuries. God's Word is like the wheat in the hand of the mummy, of which you have often heard. It had lain there for thousands of years; but men took it out of the hand, and sowed it, and there sprang up the bearded wheat which has now become so common in our land. So you take a divine promise, spoken hundreds or thousands of years ago, and lo, it is fulfilled to you! It becomes as true to you as if God had spoken it for the first time this very day, and you were the person to whom it was addressed. O blessed Word of God, how we ought to prize thee! We cannot tell yet all that lies hidden between these covers; but there is a treasury of grace concealed here, which we ought to seek until we find it.

Having thus introduced our texts as taken from God's Word in the Old and New Testaments, and as being God's voice to us, speaking adown the centuries with all the freshness and force it would have if it were uttered anew to-night, I invite every unconverted person to listen with both his ears, and his whole heart, to hear if there shall drop some living word of cheer and promise that shall make this evening to be his birthnight. If so, this shall be the time wherein his captivity shall be ended, his mouth shall be filled with laughter, and his tongue with singing, and his spirit shall rejoice in God his Saviour.

I. Now, first, in considering the words in the Epistle to the Romans, let us look at THE ORIGINAL STATE OF GOD'S PEOPLE. "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."

If we look at the original state of God's people, we shall gaze upon a very gloomy picture. Yet this portrait reveals the state in which every unconverted man is to-night, the state in which all of us, who are now saved, once were. We were not God's people; that is to say, *we had not God's approval*. I speak now of all those whom God has saved. There was a time when there was no approval of them; as the apostle says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." So was it with those who were not God's people; their thoughts were contrary to God's thoughts; their ways were such as God could not endure; their speech grated in his ears; they followed the devices and imaginations of their own hearts; the prince of this world had dominion over them, and God's grace had not been displayed upon them. They went astray like lost sheep. That is your condition to-night, sinner, you are the object of divine disapproval. "Not beloved", says the text. "Not

beloved." How can you be beloved of God? How can the Lord take any delight in a man who takes no delight in his God, who tries not even to think of him, who breaks his law with impunity, and finds pleasure in that which God abhors? "Not my people", says the text, that is, they were not the subjects of divine approval.

Next, such people *receive from God no good thing of the highest order.* "Oh!" say some, "but we are receiving all sorts of temporal blessings from God." I know you are, and you ought to thank him for them; but as you are not his people, and not beloved, even these good things turn out to be evil things to you. Your table becomes a snare and a trap to you. Men who receive God's mercies before his grace has brought them to himself, make idols of the good things he bestows upon them. They receive benefits at his hands, and use them to provoke him to anger. They take of their wealth, and they say, with the rich fool, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" and so they forget that they must die, and they forget their God. Oftentimes, even health and strength become a snare to men. They will plunge into greater sin because they have so much vigour of body. We have known some, who have been so robust in health that they would not think of God, or of Christ, or of their souls, or of eternity. I tell you, sinners, that while you are as you are, God's curse rests upon your blessings. There is no good thing out of Christ; for that which would be good with Christ becomes evil without Christ; it becomes a thing which destroys rather than blesses, and which helps men the more rapidly to destroy their souls. Oh, what a sad state is yours of whom God says, "They are not my people, and they are not beloved"! While they are as they are, they cannot receive the highest good from God; even the best thing that he sends them they turn into evil.

Remember, too, you who know not God, that you are in a very miserable condition, because to you there is *no application of the precious blood of Christ.* Jesus died for sinners; but you pass by his cross as though you had nothing to do with it. Israel in Egypt was saved because God saw the blood, and passed over the houses of his people; but you are not beneath that crimson sign. You have never looked to Christ by faith. No blood is on the lintel and on the two side-posts of your door. All we can say of you, as we look at you, is "Not beloved: not beloved." Oh, poor souls, you who have not believed, what does the Scripture say to you? Why, that you are "condemned already" because you have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. You who have not believed in Christ are lying in the wicked one; and what does that expression mean? Why, lying in his bosom, as if you were the darling children of the devil. How can there be any sign of the divine delight or complacency towards you while your delight is in Satan and in sin? No, you have no interest in the precious blood of Jesus. Ah, me! What should I do if this were my case? I would sooner lose my eyes, my hearing, my sense of taste; I would sooner lose life itself than lose an interest in the precious blood of Jesus. Yet some of you live at ease though there has been for you no pardon of sin, no washing in the blood of sprinkling. You are still guilty before God.

Again, when these people were called by God "not my people", and "not beloved", there had been *no saving work of the Spirit of God upon them*. I am addressing some here to-night who have never had their hearts broken by the Spirit of God. They have never been brought to repentance, they have never been led to faith in Christ. Consequently, to them the Spirit of God is not a Quickener; to them he is not a Comforter; to them he is not an Illuminator. All his divine offices are fulfilled in other people; but not in them. They are strangers to that blessed power, without which no man can come to God, or believe in Christ. Oh, what a sad condition for any to be in—"not my people", and "not beloved"! They have no trace of that life which they would have if the Spirit of God had made them to pass from death unto life. God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; and as long as you are dead in sin he is not your God in this special sense, neither does he call you his people.

Those who are in that sad state have *no relief in prayer*. They do not pray; they cannot pray. Now, when I am in trouble, I need nobody to advise me to pray. A trouble no sooner comes to me than I spread it before God, and I find a sweet relief at once. Oh, if there were no mercy-seat, I should wish that I had never been born! But there are some of you who never truly pray. Such prayers as you do offer have no heart in them, no life in them; and therefore God does not hear you, and you live on in this world without prayer. Men, how can you exist thus? Life must be to you like a burning desert, where every particle of sand blisters the foot that treads upon it. What can this world be to a prayerless man?

And as you are without prayer, so you are *without the promises of God to sustain you*. The wealth of God's people seldom lies in ready money. Their treasure consists mostly in promises to pay, promises which God has made to his own people. But for the ungodly there are no blessed promises. God will give nothing to you who will not even believe his Word. He has made no covenant with you who will not even trust his Son. You remain as he says,—it is not my word, but his,—"not my people", and "not beloved", as long as you are without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: whatever promises he has made to his people, you are without power to plead those promises at the throne of grace, for they do not belong to you.

In addition to all this, you are now *without any fellowship with God, or with his Son, Jesus Christ*. God made this world; but you never speak with the world's Maker. You are guarded by his providence, and yet you have no fellowship with the God who ruleth over all. Why, the joy of life to some of us lies mainly in our fellowship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is the very centre of the circle in which we move. He is the height and glory of our manhood; the all in all of our existence. We would not wish to live if it were not for him. He is the sun that makes our heaven bright; all would be dark without him; and yet some of you have no communion with him, perhaps not even any knowledge of him. Oh, my dear friend, you have no Christ, no Saviour, no communion with God, no fellowship with the Most High! What a terrible condition is yours!

Besides this, *you have no hope of heaven*. If you were to die as you

now are, what could be your eternal portion but to be driven from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power? The Lord Jesus would say of you, "I never knew them, I never knew them. They are not my people. They are not my beloved." Why, you have never even sought him; you have never cried to him; you have never forsaken the sin which he hates! You have never rested upon the atonement which he has made. You have never trusted in his living power to save. Ah, poor creatures that you are, how I do pity you! "Do not call us poor," say you. "We are rich, we are increased in goods, and have need of nothing." So much the worse is your poverty, because of your fancied wealth. It will be an awful thing to go from your well-spread table to the place where you will be denied a drop of water to cool your burning tongues. It will be a terrible thing if you go from the weakness and sickness of the dying bed at once to stand before your God, to be driven from the pangs of your last moments into that dread position of a culprit, unpardoned, to receive sentence from the great Judge of all. "Not my people", and "not beloved." I cannot bear the thought of your doom; and I can say no more on that terrible theme.

II. But now, in the second place, I have to speak of THE NEW CONDITION OF GOD'S PEOPLE. Listen, and as you listen, may God make it to be your new condition! There are many in this world to whom my text has been proved to be true: "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."

Now see the change which God can make. It is God who makes it. The very same people of whom he said, "They are not my people," he now calls his people. Ay, and in the very place where he said that they were not his people, he says they are the people of the living God. Now, what if to-night I have been saying of such and such that they are not God's people? But what if, before they leave this place, God should say to them, "You are my people"? Oh, what a blessed change would have taken place in them! Let me describe it.

If the Lord shall say to us to-night, "Ye are my people, and ye are my beloved," then we shall know, first, that *he thinks upon us*, that his mind is toward us, that he has a kindly regard for us, that he takes delight in us, that his heart is set on doing us good. Oh, ye who do love the Lord, and are his children, do think of this, you have the thoughts of God running towards you in streams of ever-abounding tenderness, and mercy, and goodness, and faithfulness!

And, as the Lord thinks of us, *he speaks to us*. Oh, to think that the Lord should speak to those who were not his people once, and speak to them so effectually as to make his sweet promises enter into their ears, yea, into their hearts, and should become familiar to them, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant"! Oh, how sweetly does God commune with his own children! How he does open up his very heart to them, and make them to know him, even as Jesus manifests himself unto his chosen as he does not unto the world! It is a choice privilege of a child of God to be thought of, and then to be spoken to by the Lord.

More than that, *God hears us speak*. When we are his people, and

his beloved, then our accents become sweet in his ears. You know that your dear children often speak very poorly and badly, and other people do not care much to listen to their talk; but to a father's ear the sound of his own child's voice is always sweet. You have been away from home for some weeks. I know that you are longing to hear the dear prattlers once again. Well, like as a father loves the voice of his child, so does our heavenly Father love the voices of his beloved whom he calls his people, and he has regard to what they say, he hearkens to the voice of their cry.

Then, beloved, he not only hears us, but *he grants us our desire*. He will come to our deliverance in the time of trouble. He will bestow upon us all good things: "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Oh, the privileges of those who are God's people! The theme is too vast for human language to compass.

One special mark of our new condition is that the Lord *forgives our sin*. Once we were loaded with sin; but now we have not a single sin left upon us. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin. Paul challenges the whole universe to lay anything to the charge of God's elect, for God has justified them. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Oh, the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! And that is true of all whom God calls his people, though they once were not his people.

And then, dear friends, sin being forgiven, the Lord *works all things for our good*. Whether we are joyous or depressed, if we are the Lord's people, all is working for our good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Our losses and our crosses, our bereavements and our bodily pains, as well as our rapturous joys and our highest delights, are all working out the best results for us.

More than this, when we are in trouble, *God pities us*; for "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Ay, and *he sends us relief*, too, according to that word of David, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." What is better still, *God dwells in us*, as he said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And the Holy Spirit has come, and taken up his abode in these mortal bodies, and he dwells there, our Teacher and our Comforter, our Guide and our Friend.

By and by, *the Lord Jesus will come again, and receive us unto himself*, that where he is there we may be also. I wish I had the tongues of men and of angels that I might tell you the splendour of the position of those who are the Lord's own people, the Lord's own beloved. And who where these people once? I come back to my text again. They were not God's people, and not beloved: "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." Now then, some of you, whom God cannot now look upon except with anger, why should he not look upon you with love to-night through Jesus Christ? He that believeth in Christ Jesus may have the blessed assurance that the Lord loves him, and that he is one of

the Lord's people. You may have come in here saying, "I belong to the devil. I am sure I do; I feel within my spirit that I am under his cruel sway. Alas! I have not a spark of grace, or a thought of goodness. I am as far off from God, and holiness, and heaven, as ever I can be." Then to you, may God say, "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved"! Oh, the magnificence of this grace that waits not for man, neither carries for the sons of men, but works according to the eternal purposes of God, and accomplishes all his sovereign will!

III. This brings me, in the third place—going back to the text in Hosea—to notice THE GRAND RESULT OF THIS WONDERFUL CHANGE: "I will say to them which were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say, thou art my God." Here is a dialogue between the Lord and his people. God says something to them, and they say something to him.

Remember that there is no change in God; it is only a change in our relation to him, because those who have become his people were really his people, in his everlasting purpose, from before the foundation of the world, though they were not actually so as to their own spiritual condition. But now, when this change comes to pass in their relations to God, see the grand result of it.

First, *the Lord says*, "*Thou art my people.*" Now I pray that the Lord may come to-night, and speak to some who never made mention of his name before, some who never knew him, who never trembled at his Word, never hoped in his mercy, never trusted in his Son, never, indeed, meant to be his people at all. I do trust that the Lord will now say to some of them, "*Thou art my people.*" Oh, what a wonderful experience it is when the poor lost sinner finds out that he belongs to God, that he has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, that God means to save him, that he will not let his Son's blood be shed for him in vain! I remember the shame and yet the joy that filled my soul when I first woke up to the consciousness of what Christ had done for me. I remember the confusion of face I felt because I had treated such a Saviour so badly; and yet I also felt intense delight in thinking that he loved me, notwithstanding all my sins. This is a text that comforted me,—I pray the Lord to send it home to some other heart,—"*I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;*" and this one also, "*I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*" Oh, if the Holy Spirit would apply those words with power to some sinner's heart to-night, what a running after God, what a seeking after Christ there would be!

"I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people." The Lord does not always say that to his people with equal force. At first, they half hope that it is so. They indistinctly hear his voice saying it; but as faith increases, they hear him say it more distinctly, "*Thou art my people.*" I do feel that it is most gracious of God to call those his people that were not his people. You see that he gives them a new name, and that overrides the old one. I think that I hear some one saying, "*I have found the Saviour.*" "*What? What?*" says somebody who knows you. "*You? Heugh!*

we all know what *you* were." Perhaps one says, "Ah, you know that you have been as bad as any of us!" Possibly in one case they might say, "You talk of being God's child? You are a fallen woman," or, "You have been a thief," or, "You have been a liar," or, "You have been a frequenter of places where God is forgotten, a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God." Yes, but beloved, if the Lord says, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine;" you can say to yourself, "They may say what they please about me, and I must own the truth of it all; but this word of the Lord, "Thou art mine," overrides it all.

What a blessed text this is for one who has lost his character, for one who has lost all repute! If you come to Christ, and believe in him, here is a text that applies to you. God says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." God can make "right honourables" out of those who are in themselves most dishonourable, and he can give them a name and a place among his people. Yet I can imagine God looking upon some one here to-night, and saying of such an one, "How can I put *him* among the children? What! put such a sinner among my children?" I can fancy there is somebody here who is so extremely sinful that, if I were to propose to God's people that he should be received among them, they would say, "We should not like to receive that man into the church." Ah, but when our heavenly Father welcomes home his prodigal son, he will not have the elder brother talk like that. He comes out, and reasons with him, and says, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." Jesus would have us receive the very chief of sinners, the jail-birds, the hell-birds, the men who have gone farthest astray, the men who have lost all hope, the most forlorn and self-condemned, the most dejected, distressed, devil-haunted men and women out of hell. These are just the people in whom the grace of God triumphs over all sin. "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved;" "and I will say to them, which were not my people, thou art my people."

When the Lord says this to any, their sin is put away. My Lord is a great Forgiver! My Lord, whom I preach to you to-night, who was once nailed to the cross, is able to save all them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. "He delighteth in mercy," it is his right-hand attribute, his last-born, his Benjamin. Never does he display his mercy more than when, like the mighty sea, his love rolls over the very tops of the mountains of iniquity, and covers them.

I close by noticing what the Lord's people say to him, "*They shall say, Thou art my God.*" That is the right saying for every one of the Lord's people, "Thou art my God." Poor sinner, may God the Holy Ghost help you to begin to say that, "Thou art my God"! Here is a text that should help you to say it, even as it helped me in the hour of my conversion, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Will you look to God, sinner? Will you say to the Lord, "Thou art my God"? "My God, I have long forgotten thee, I have blasphemed thee, I

have rebelled against thee, I have desecrated thy Sabbath, I have decried thy gospel, I have ridiculed thy servants! But, behold, I look to thee, for I have sinned; have mercy upon me, for thy dear Son's sake!"

That is a good beginning; but may you have grace to advance beyond that experience, so that you may come and lay your hand on Christ the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, saying "This Saviour is my Saviour. I accept him as my Substitute, to stand in my room, and place, and stead"! When you have once rightly uttered this blessed sentence, "Thou art my God," God's grace will help you to keep on saying it. There is no getting further than this, "Thou art my God." That is the end of all good things. What more does a man want? What more can a man desire? There is not a good thing anywhere out of Christ. One of the old Puritans, in the days when nobody much liked going to sea, said, "When a man is in a ship, and in his own little cabin, if he casts his eye all around, and sees nothing but the wild waste of waters, without a sign of land anywhere, nothing but angry billows tossing the vessel up and down, if anyone says to him, 'Will you leave your little cabin? Will you leave your little ship?' 'No,' says he, 'where else can I go? There is nowhere else to go.'" That is just how I feel to-night about my Lord. My cabin, my ship, my Christ, my faith in him, gives me rest and peace. I cannot see anywhere else that I can go except to destruction and despair; so my soul says over again, "Thou art my God, thou art my God. Others may have what they will; but I will have my God. They may have what god they like; but thou, Triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, thou art my God, and on thee my soul doth rest, seeking no other confidence."

Will *you* say that to-night, my dear hearers? I do not know your cases; but I know that, if I want to get sheep into a fold, a good way is to set the gate open as widely as ever I can; and then another good way to entice the sheep in is to have rich pasture inside. Well, I have tried to set before you the rich, free grace of God to the very chief of sinners, and I have pointed to the opened door, that is wide enough to let the biggest sinner come through. Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Now, if Noah's ark had a door that was big enough to let an elephant through, then it was big enough to let a dog through, or a fox, or a cat, or a mouse. You may come if you are the biggest sinner in the world; and I do not suppose that you are, for the biggest sinner died and went to heaven long ago. Paul says that he was the biggest sinner, the chief of sinners; and I believe that he knew what sized sinner he was. If there was room for him to go through the gate of salvation, there is room for you. May God's grace draw you this very night; and unto the God of all grace shall be the praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

HOSEA II. 5—23.

In this chapter God compares Israel to a woman who had been unfaithful to her husband in the very worst and most wicked manner.

Verse 5. *For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.*

She attributed to false gods the gifts which God had given to her. This was great ingratitude to God, and a high insult to his holy majesty.

6. *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.*

That is what God does to sinners whom he means to save. He will not let them take their own course. He gives them thorny trials which hedge up their way. He puts an obstacle in their path; perhaps some sickness or poverty. When men are desperate in wickedness, God has a way of stopping them. Even in their mad career, his mighty grace comes in, and says, "So far shalt thou go, but no further."

7. *And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them:*

Thus sinners go after the pleasures of the world, and the pleasures run away from them. They make one thing their god, and then another; and they put out all their strength to attain the object of their ambition; and God thwarts them. In infinite love, he baffles all their endeavours because he means to bring them to himself.

7. *Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.*

That is what he brings us to; weary of the world, ay, weary of life itself, we get worn out in the ways of evil, and then we say, "I will go to God." What a blessed conclusion to come to! However terrible the whip with which he scourges us, it does us good. The fierce billow that washes the mariner upon the rock of safety, is a blessing to him.

8, 9. *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.*

God claims the blessings of providence as his own; and when he sees his people misuse them, he says, "I will recover them. She is giving them to Baal, she is using them for an evil purpose; I will take them away."

10, 11. *And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.*

When God deals with men, he uses no half measures. If they have been very happy in the ways of sin, and he intends to save them from their evil courses; he will take away all their joy. They shall henceforth have none of the merriment in which they indulged. He will give them better happiness by-and-by; but for the time being it shall be true, "I will cause all her mirth to cease."

12. *And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whercof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.*

Her most precious things shall be destroyed; or, if they are allowed to

exist, they shall become a cause of fear and trouble. Oh, how often have I seen this verified in the experience of men and women whom God has saved by his almighty grace!

13. *And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the LORD.*

They burnt no incense at Jerusalem; they refused to offer sacrifice there; but they went to this hill and to that, to worship the different images of Baal, and said, "These are our gods." Therefore, God says that he will make them sick of their idolatry. They shall grow tired of thus polluting his holy name, and degrading themselves by worshipping things made of wood and stone.

14. *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.*

Oh, glorious verse! She that went so far astray, God will come, and draw her back from the path of sin. He will get her alone; he will bring her into a place of grief and sorrow, a wilderness; and then he will come near, and speak sweet words of comfort into her ear. "I will allure her," as the bird-catchers whistle to the birds, and draw them to the net, so will I allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, the place of loneliness, the place of want; and "I will speak to her heart," so the Hebrew has it, for God knows how to speak, not only into the ear, but into the heart.

15. *And I will give her her vineyards from thence,*

He will give back what he took away. He will seal with lovingkindness the real kindness which made him deal roughly with her at first.

15. *And the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

Oh, backslider, God can give you back your early joy, your early love, ay, and your early purity; and he can make you sing as at the beginning! Wherefore, be of good comfort, and come to your Lord; come even now, with all your sins about you, and he will receive you.

16. *And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.*

"Baali" means "my lord" in the sense of domination; but God will not seem to us any more like a domineering governor, as we once thought him; but we shall call him "Ishi", "my husband." There shall be such nearness of love, such confidence of hope, between the restored soul and her God, that she shall call him no more Baali, but Ishi.

17. *For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.*

Oh, the love of God! He does not want us to recollect our old ways. I do not like to hear people talk about their old habits, except they do it very tenderly, with many a tear and many a sigh, and tell the story to the praise and glory of divine grace. God takes the old names out of our lips; we forget them, we have done with them, we bury the dead past, and we live in newness of life.

18. *And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground:*

So that the insects should not devour the crops, and the foxes should not spoil the vines, and the birds should not steal the seed. So will God take care of his people still. It does seem that, when we are at peace with God, we get right with everything; when we are at peace with him, then neither beast, nor fowl, nor creeping thing can do us harm.

18. *And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.*

They had been much troubled by war. It had killed their children, destroyed their homes, and made them poor and wretched. Now God says, "I will break the bow and the sword and the battle." How often God gives a heavenly calm to us when we are once washed in the blood of Christ, and covered with his righteousness! I remember how the storm within my heart was hushed into a deep calm as soon as I had seen my Lord, and had yielded my heart to him. Oh, you that are in storms to-night, I pray that God may bring you to himself, and give you "peace, perfect peace!" And then what more will the Lord do?

19. *And I will betroth thee unto me for ever ;*

What, this woman that had gone so far into evil? Can a man receive such an one back? No; but God can. He says there shall be a new betrothal, a new marriage: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." Blessed word!

19, 20. *Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness : and thou shalt know the LORD.*

Thou shalt know Jehovah; thou shalt know that there is none like him, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin; and faithful to his people even when they are unfaithful to him. Is there any god like our God? Have you ever tasted his grace? Do you know his pardoning love? Have you ever been brought back to him? Have you been restored to his favour? Then I am sure you can say, "There is none like unto Jehovah."

21, 22. *And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.*

God would send rain when it was wanted. He would be all ear to hear on behalf of his people. He would not only hear them, but hear the very earth they tilled, and the heavens above their heads, as if nature itself began to pray when the child of God learned that holy art.

23. *And I will sow her unto me in the earth ;*

He would make the people to be like the seed which he himself would sow, and cause to spring up, and abide.

23. *And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy ;*

I would like to read that again. Somebody has, perhaps, come in here to-night, who has never obtained mercy. Perhaps you have been seeking it, and you have not found it. Hear God's promise, and lay hold upon it: "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy."

23. *And I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.*

See, it is all in "shalls" and "wills." God is speaking, God omnipotent, omnipotent over men's hearts. He is not saying, "I will if they will," but "I will, and they shall," for he hath the key of free agency; and when he turns it in the lock, without violating the free will of man, he makes him willing in the day of his power to the praise of his divine supremacy, for God is God when he saves as much as when he reigns; yea, his reigning grace is the very glory of his nature, and this we love and adore. God grant us a taste of it! Amen.