

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SIHON AND OG, OR MERCIES IN DETAIL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever: and gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever: even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.”—Psalm cxxxvi. 17—22.

THESE six verses iterate and reiterate the same fact; they rehearse and repeat the same reflection. Is the tautology tedious; do the chimes weary you with their monotony? Nay; but this is a veritable charm in poetry. When the poet touches upon some important theme, which illuminates his soul and kindles his nobler passions to a flame, he is very apt to dwell upon it with enthusiasm, constrained to pursue it with avidity, to follow it up with feeling, and echo it over and over again with strong and yet stronger emotion. Nobody feels that repetition is out of place in poetry, because in weal or woe, with pleasure or with pathos we dwell on the theme which awakens our sympathy. This psalm, of which the refrain is always the same,—“His mercy endureth for ever,” has in it several instances of this repetition. “To him that made great lights” is followed by “The sun to rule by day,” and by the next, “The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.” The repetition is natural and secures attention, the words are musical as they strike on our ears, and the style is not only allowable, but acceptable as a beautiful licence of the poetic school. For my part, I like a repetition in the tune of a psalm as well as in its language. There has sprung up a fashion in music now to cavil at repeats. I must confess I do not feel of the same mind as some who, when the psalm or hymn is given out, seem to say, “Now, let us go through it as hard as ever we can tear from beginning to end.” I prefer to chew some of the words—to have them come over again—to get the flavour of them in my mouth, or rather in my soul. For instance, an old tune like the one we have sung is none the worse

No. 1,285.

because it gives us the repeat of "his loving kindness." Such a word as that you would like to keep on repeating, if it were needful, a dozen times—

"His loving kindness, his loving kindness, oh, how good!"

A repeat ought to be considered rather a beauty than a blemish in music. There is, moreover, a reason for every repetition in Scripture, for we may say of the ornaments of poetry when we find them in the sacred volume that they are never mere ornaments. The repetitions, though elegant, are not merely flowers of rhetoric: they have a design. The Holy Spirit dwells upon a theme because he has an intention in so doing. My present purpose is to endeavour to show you why there should be six verses here when one verse might have sufficed. One might have been quite sufficient, it is clear. Suppose it had run thus—"Who slew famous kings, Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan, and gave their land for a heritage to his people: for his mercy endureth for ever." That would have comprehended all the sense; but the Holy Spirit did not judge that to be the best way of speaking, and so he divided it into six parts. He repeated it that there might be heard six times the refrain—"His mercy endureth for ever;" but not, I think, merely for the sake of repeating that beautiful truth so often; but for other reasons besides connected with the truth of which he was writing. *It is well to dwell long, and to dwell deliberately, upon some of God's dealings with us.* This is the theme on which I want to thread a few reflections.

I. And, first, IT IS WELL TO DELIBERATE LONG OVER THE MERCIFUL SIDE OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

One does not always see that he "slew mighty kings: for his mercy endureth for ever; and smote famous kings; for his mercy endureth for ever." It would have read more naturally if he had said, "Who smote mighty kings: for his *justice* endureth for ever: and slew famous kings; for his *vengeance* endureth for ever." The point to be brought out, however, was that there was mercy in these judgments. The Holy Spirit would have us know that there is mercy abroad in the world even—

"When God's right arm is bared for war,
And thunder clothes his cloudy car,"

The removal from the earth of these great oppressive kings, though it was terrible for them, was a great blessing. When tyrants die, nations have time to breathe. When great oppressors are cut off, it is as when a lion falls, or as when wolves are slain, and the deer and sheep have time to rest. Who knows how often, in answer to the tear of the slave, God has been pleased to smite his tyrant master. Mercy herself had brushed the tear from her eye, and said, "Smite, O God." Sometimes when we have read stories of oppression and tyranny, wrong, and violence, the gentlest among us, who would not have hurt a hair of a man's head, have been the very first to express indignation, and to marvel that God kept back the thunderbolt—that he did not pour vengeance on the adversary, and deliver the injured and down-trodden. If you read all through history and see how dynasties have crumbled and empires have melted away—could you but discern the secret

history of the nations, and how much there was of robbery and oppression, injustice and cruelty, you would understand that when emperor after emperor was slain in battle, or overtaken by sudden death, and king after king was swept from the throne, it was because God's mercy endureth for ever. It was not mercy to the one man, perhaps—to Nero, Caligula, Tiberius, or the like; but was it not mercy to the millions who had grown weary of his abominable rule? The sufferings of the helpless cried to God for redress. The moans and tears of serfs and vassals, prisoners and captives, presented their wretchedness before him, till his mercy linked hands with his wrath, and he smote great kings, and slew famous kings, because his mercy endured for ever. Read the page of history, I say, with this sentiment in your mind, and you will often judge that what seemed to be a very severe retribution upon some man of eminence, may turn out, after all, only to have been an act of mercy towards those who were under his power.

Apply the thought another way. There are huge systems of power in the world, and such there always have been—systems, like Sihon, king of the Amorites, whose force and fame have held vast hordes and populations in terror, and the defences of these systems have been strong as the walled cities of Og, king of Bashan; but since the day when Christ came into the world and gathered his twelve apostles around him, how many of these systems have been utterly destroyed? Ask, at this moment, where are the gods that were worshipped when Paul entered Athens and preached Jesus and the resurrection? Where are all the gods that held sway over Greece and Rome when Peter, and the rest of the fishermen, were telling of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the propitiation that he made for sin? They have passed away, and they are not. And, since then, there have risen up great systems and schools of thought—in which human wisdom has opposed the divine wisdom. Strong and mighty systems they have been, but the student of history knows how they have all passed away one after the other. And in our own land there has passed away—I pray God never to return—the system of Popery, more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan. And now our ruined abbeys are scattered all over the land—ruins which make our souls rejoice as we look upon them, for we say, “Come, behold the works of the Lord; what desolation he hath made in the earth.” And here is another instance of how he can put his foes to flight. At this day there are other systems still standing, crushing down the people, darkening the night of nature with a denser darkness of superstition—turning a midnight of human depravity into a darkness that might be felt, as in the plague of Egypt of old. But, as the Lord liveth, as he hath scattered falsehoods one after the other, so will he scatter all these systems, and the day shall come when we shall say, “Mahomet's crescent is forgotten now, for his mercy endureth for ever; and the pomp of anti-Christ has passed away and all his infallibility; for the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever.” One great error after another is brought down by the strong hand of the God of Jacob, for his mercy endureth for ever; and though in each case these things seem like judgments upon the people, yet are they judgments full of mercy, for it is a blessing when God smites any system which is contrary to himself and to his truth, contrary to his Son, contrary

to the liberties and the rights of man, and, above all, contrary to the gospel life and the holy purity of the church.

Now, brethren, there are other judgments yet to come—judgments which we, surely, are to look forward to with great hope as instances of the mercy of God. The day is coming when he who is more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, shall be cast out. Christ, by his death, has broken the power of Satan, but Satan still holds sway to a great extent over the sons of men. As the gospel spreads his power shall lessen, and by-and-by there shall come the time when he shall be bound—when he shall be cast into the lake of fire, and his power shall cease. It will be a judgment upon him. But what an illustration it will be of how God's mercy endureth for ever. Then shall he lift "his brazen front with thunder scarred," receive his sentence, and begin anew his hell; and in that day the saints shall sing "His mercy endureth for ever." And death, too, that terrible thing, that also is to be destroyed, the last enemy it is, but it is the last enemy *that shall be destroyed*; and when death itself shall cease to be, and the sepulchre shall be rifled of all its treasures, then shall we magnify and bless the Lord, as Israel did when they thought of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when that last tremendous act of vengeance shall come, and death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire; and all the hosts of evil, even all that have done iniquity and have rejected Christ, shall be cast out for ever from all hope and joy—in that dread day, while it shall be to them weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, it shall be to the righteous "Hallelujah! hallelujah! for God and goodness, the right and the Christ, have triumphed for ever." Yea, even in the condemnation of the lost, it shall be a token of mercy to the universe that sin was not permitted to triumph, that evil was not allowed to have its sway, but that God overcame it at a mighty cost, and, at last, shut it up within its proper bounds, never to break forth again, for "his mercy endureth for ever."

We know not, brethren, what may happen to ourselves, but we know what *has* happened, and, in the light of the truth I am now dwelling upon, we may now sing unto the Lord a new song. We have had our smitings, and we have had our slayings. We have had sins within us slain that were mighty kings, and we have had corruptions that were famous kings, but they have been brought down; we have had our idols broken, and judgments have come upon our inventions. Oh, what a smashing of idols there has been with many a heart here present, how have you stood with tears in your eyes as your Dagon was made to fall before the ark of the Lord! You tried to set it in its place again, but you could not, for the Lord broke it to pieces; and he has taken away the gods wherein ye trusted and the things that your heart doted upon, and the delight of your eyes, and the joy of your spirit—he has taken these away one by one—mighty kings that swayed you, and famous kings that ruled your heart and mind, and engaged the best of your affections. These have been slain because his mercy endureth for ever, and, for my part, I would say, "O sword of the Lord, rest not: return not to thy scabbard if thou art slaying my sins, if thou art overcoming my corruptions, go through me, Lord, and smite again, and if thou breakest up the idols, break on."

“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne
And worship only thee.”

Still would I say of every act of idol-breaking and of king-slaying within my soul, “His mercy endureth for ever, his mercy endureth for ever.” Hence these smittings, hence these trials, hence these afflictions; they are sent, not in anger, but in his dear covenant love—not to harm us, but to bless us; not to impoverish us, but to make our inheritance wider and larger, both here and in the world to come. This is our first thought. In the midst of judgments we should wait and watch till we see the mercy side of them, for then we shall sing, “Who smote great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever.”

II. Secondly, EACH MERCY DESERVES TO BE REMEMBERED. With what special point and emphasis each instance is put, “Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever.” Why not give them in the gross—Sihon and Og? Why not, as we commonly and vulgarly say, lump them together, and thank God for them in the mass? No, no, they must come in detail—“Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever.” Why should they thus come in detail?

Because *every mercy we have received is undeserved*. The Israelites did not deserve that God should smite Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan. It was a mercy so rich and gracious that it deserved to be recorded. In that very chapter, from which I read to you just now, where God smote Sihon, you will find that the children of Israel murmured, so that God sent fiery serpents among them. In that same chapter we have the record of his chastening them with fiery serpents, and yet he is giving them victory over their foes. Oh, it brings the tears into our eyes, and fills us with humiliation, when we recollect that many of our choicest mercies have come to us just after our very blackest sins. It is not that the Lord gives us his mercy when we are walking consistently—when we are obedient, when we are what we ought to be; there would be great grace in that; but the crowning mercy is that when we have gone out of the way—when we have gone down By-path Meadow, when, like Peter, we have denied our Master, yet still some great mercy has been vouchsafed to set us right again. Sihon, king of the Amorites, just when we had provoked the Lord, has come down upon us to destroy us; but the Lord has said, “No, I will smite my children, but I will not let *you* smite them. I will chasten them and send fiery serpents, but, Sihon, you must not touch them. Get you back. If you dare lay a finger upon them my jealousy shall burn and smoke against you; for they are my children, and I will deliver them in the day of their afflictions.” Oh, bless the Lord for each mercy, because it has been so undeserved.

Nor have we received a mercy *that we could have dispensed with*. Had God smitten Sihon, king of the Amorites, and then when Og came against them had said, “I have done enough for you, and I will do no more; the nation would have been destroyed. No, Sihon, king of the

Amorites, is smitten. Bless the Lord for that. Yet if the Lord does not smite Og, king of Bashan, what will become of Israel? Thus each mercy is needed, why then should not each mercy have a separate song? When you are in present trouble you think much of the present mercy. My dear brother, when you have got through the trouble, why not think a great deal of the mercy afterwards? Then as it comes, a brand new mercy in a fresh dilemma, the more you need it, the more store you set by it. Why not set the like store by these mercies after you have received them, and commemorate in particular the benefits which flow out of each? Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan shall be sung of each one separately, because neither victory could be dispensed with. They were both needful that Israel might enter into the promised land.

Moreover, there was *a peculiarity about each mercy*. This was sure to be the case. You never had two mercies from God that were quite alike. There were some special circumstances which made a marked difference. Pluck the leaves from a tree: commonly speaking, they are alike, yet there are no two leaves veined exactly in the same manner. So too with mercies. There is some distinction, if you look narrowly into them. Generally, when we are in deep waters, there is some peculiar feature to distinguish the trial and to identify it afterwards. I know that Monday's mercy will not do for Tuesday, and I should be sorry if I had nothing but Tuesday's mercy to help me through Wednesday. His mercies "are new every morning: great is his faithfulness." Now, since they are all new, and each one separate, why should not each one be spoken of by itself? As God paints so many fresh pictures, why should we not set them in appropriate frames, saying of each one, "His mercy endureth for ever"? There is a speciality about each. Sihon is not Og, and Og is not Sihon. Well may my text assign to each one its place in the song of praise.

But if any mercy deserves to be rehearsed more distinctly than another, it is early mercy. The children of Israel had not got their hands into fighting yet. They had not crossed the Jordan; they had not entered Canaan, where they were to be soldiers every day; they were on this side the Jordan, and they had not learned war. They offered to Sihon, and to Og, to go quietly through their land, and not so much as pluck a fruit from their trees, or drink a drop of water from their wells. But Sihon and Og were in an ill state of mind, and they would not allow them to go peaceably through. There was a battle—the first of their battles—the commencement of their warfare, and so they always looked back with happy and grateful memories to their first fights and their first victories. No doubt they recollected all about Adonibezek, and about the king of Ai, and all those other kings; but these were afterwards, their first fights were with Sihon and Og. Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, I should like you to recall your first troubles—your first labours for Christ, your first trials, and your first successes. You recollect the first soul that you brought to Jesus—you cannot forget the little room where you began to work. You remember the half-dozen girls that you collected for the first time to form a class—those two or three boys that you got into that little room down in the back-slum. Now, remember your Sihon, king of the

Amorites, and your Og, king of Bashan, and how God helped you over those beginnings. It was a great thing, you know, for you were not so big then as you are now. You begin to think (I am only saying out aloud what your heart whispers to you)—you begin to think that *you* can do it. Why, you are a man of experience, are you not? And you, young man, why, you are a well developed minister now; you can do a great deal. We too often feel as if our experience had matured us into something far more important than we dreamed of in the first stage of our little career. It is a wicked feeling, but the vanity of our hearts will sometimes assert itself. Now, just let us revert to the time when we were little in Israel, and all unknown, some of us were, perhaps, quite boys and girls, though we truly loved our Lord. We were weak and feeble; nobody thought there was anything in us; or, if they did, we ourselves did not think so. We were all trembling, and afraid; but, glory be to God, we overcame Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, and our early victories are fresh in our memories. Let us recall them, partly to humble us, and partly to strengthen us. Let us, like David, say, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." The Lord who helped those young days will not forsake you now. Only trust him with the same simplicity; only distrust yourself as much as you did then, and a little more; only sink into the very dust of self-abasement, and rise in all the grandeur of childlike confidence in God, and as he smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, so will he make all your foes as driven stubble before your face. He will make you as a new, sharp threshing instrument, having teeth, and you shall thresh the mountains and make them as chaff.

Thus each mercy deserves to be specially remembered, for not one is deserved, not one is needless, and every one has its peculiarity, and especially the early ones,—they have a never-to-be-forgotten speciality.

III. Thirdly, EACH MERCY DOES REALLY IN ITSELF DESERVE SEPARATE CONTEMPLATION.

I will show you exactly why I think so. I go to visit a sick person. He has been in trouble. Let me suppose it is yourself who makes the visit, for I dare say you have done the same thing. Very soon after you enter you get an account of the trouble in pretty full details; and then you have all the special circumstances related to you. "You see, my dear sir, I should not have felt the loss of this dear child so much, only it is the second or the third I have lost; and then, you see, sir, she was such a sweet girl;" or, "It was that dear boy upon whom I had set all my hopes." These little points are always mentioned as occasions of special grief or aggravations of a heavy sorrow. "My dear husband is taken away," says the disconsolate widow; and, unwilling to mingle her tears indiscriminately with other weepers in like afflictions, she adds, "Ah, sir, but in my widowhood there are pangs peculiarly bitter. Just after he had been toiling and struggling with the tide against him, and we were beginning to get on more smoothly, he was taken away with a sudden stroke or a slow consumption before there was a proper provision made for these dear children. When they seemed to want a father's care and tenderness, it was then, just then, he was smitten, and

I am left with a heart withered like grass." Then you meet another who has lost money, and you hear of the failure that is likely to come on. And then there are certain reasons about the loss—about the person that was trusted, certain circumstances about the cruel manner in which he acted, and the shameful way in which he betrayed confidence. You hear all that. Oh, I know all about it. I have heard it, and, moreover, when I have got some trouble of my own, I think I generally find myself turning it inside out, like a child does a new dress, saying, "Look here," and showing every bit of it—every point of it—upside down, the right way up, the wrong side up, and the wrong side out, and all ways. You always do that, do you not, with all your troubles? Now then, dear friends, ought you not to do the same with all your mercies? Do you not think so? If the Lord gave you nothing but troubles, then, methinks, there might be some justification in dwelling so much upon them; but since there are so many mercies, would not it be wisdom to tell your friends, sometimes, all about those mercies with a sparkling eye, and say, "They were manifold mercies. There was fold upon fold. See the goodness of the Lord in this thing. He sent that mercy just when I wanted it—just when I most required it, and it came to me in such a beautiful way, too, and it was delivered to me by the very person that made it most acceptable. The way in which the gift was bestowed so sweetened it, that I do not know how to praise the Lord enough for it." Oh, that I heard Christians often saying one to another, "Have you heard what the Lord has done for me? Sit down a little while, and let me fill your ears with the sweet tale of his lovingkindnesses and his tender mercies." Is not this justice? Bare justice? If you will harp on your sorrows, you should, in a better sense, harp on your joys, and bring out the best harp with all its ten strings, and touch all those strings with praise to him who has done so much for you. Tell the world not only that he overcame your foes, but say, "To him which smote great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever." "We might tire people," says one. I am glad you are a little sensitive on that point, because you have been rather inconsiderate sometimes when you have been talking about your troubles, and I think you might be excused if you were to weary us occasionally by declaring your mercies. Oh, but the ears of saints are not tired with such themes as this; on the contrary, they are gladdened and made to rejoice. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." I am sure the response of all God's people will be—"Let us hear it. Tell it to us, for we will rejoice with you and magnify the name of the Most High."

IV. Fourthly, CONTINUED BENEFITS ARE A SPECIAL PROOF OF ENDURING MERCY.

For God to slay Sihon king of the Amorites may hardly prove by itself that his mercy endureth for ever, though it does prove that he had mercy then. Hence the inspired poet wisely strikes that string, and ere the note has died away upon the listening ear he touches another. "Og king of Bashan," says he; "for his mercy endureth for ever." One, two, three, four, five, six succeeding stanzas—these mercies

come quickly one after the other, and so they show the continuance of the mercy, while the unbroken succession of wave upon wave in ceaseless regularity gives sanction to the chorus, "his mercy endureth for ever." Thus, dear brethren, were we in the habit of dwelling distinctly upon God's distinct mercies, do you not think we should have in our souls a firmer faith as to the endurance, the continuity, the everlastingness of the mercy of God? Oh, what the Lord did for us when we were babes in grace! When we think of what he then did, we say, "His mercy endureth for ever." Then consider what he did for us when we were young men in Christ Jesus. "His mercy endureth for ever." Think of what he has done for us after we have grown to be fathers, "His mercy endureth for ever." And O ye grey heads, tell of what the Lord has done for you, for when you put all four ages together you can say with peculiar emphasis, "His mercy endureth for ever." I wish I had a memory strong enough to recollect all the mercies of God to me in the past year. They have been very many, very great, and taken one by one they have been very sweet. As I look at them one after the other, the evidence seems to accumulate till the argument becomes conclusive that "His mercy endureth for ever." It has endured all through the year, it was connected with all the years that went before, it is gathering fresh force in the year that is current, so I may trust for the years that are yet to come that he who was yesterday so full of mercy, and is to-day so full of grace, will be for ever the same. Do you not see that the striking of these bells one by one—the bringing out of each mercy in its distinctness one after the other—goes to illustrate the precious and ever-blessed truth that his mercy endureth for ever. Let our hearts look forward with the calm confidence which must come to a soul that lives by faith and sings without fear—

"For his mercies shall endure
Ever faithful—ever sure."

V. Fifthly, THE OVERRULING OF TRIALS IS A SUBJECT TO DWELL UPON WITH DELIGHT.

Read the verses—"And gave their land for a heritage, for his mercy endureth for ever: even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever." The Israelites did not expect to have the territory of Sihon and Og. Their land was on the other side of Jordan, but since Sihon and Og assailed them as unexpected foes, they got out of them unexpected territory. You and I have had, and we do have, unexpected trials. In looking back we have suffered many trials which we did not anticipate from unlikely quarters, from persons who ought to have been our friends, our helpers, our comforters. The result has shown that we have had unexpected advantages: our perils have proved pioneers of our progress. I want you to remember this, that you may sing the more sincerely, "His mercy endureth for ever."

How many sins and how much unsuspected treachery of heart have we been led to discover through our troubles. Those vipers would have slept in our soul quietly: they would have bred disease there of the deadliest kind; but trouble came, and we were put in such a state of trembling that we began to search; and as we searched we found the deadliest evil, and we put it away. How many a vice has been discovered

to us in the hour of trial. Whenever I hear of a brother who thinks his corruptions are dead, I feel inclined to say, "Put him half-an-hour in the furnace, and if he does not hear the dogs bark inside his soul, I am mistaken." There they are, sure enough. Depend upon that. He is possessed of most devils who thinks he has the fewest imperfections, as a general rule. Only let us get into trouble—be thrown into the sieve, and let the devil give us an extra shake or two, and there is enough of chaff or dust in us all to blind our eyes, or to fill them with tears, when our Lord sends us repentance. It must come—this trouble, and we must be thankful for the trouble since it winnows the wheat and makes us clean before the living God.

Besides helping to cleanse us, how many times has trouble helped to instruct us. You may read the book all through, young man, and you may think that you know all about it; but your grandfather knows the meaning of texts that you cannot spell yet. "Oh," you say, "I have been studying the commentators; I have been looking into them for the meaning of the passages." Yes, but there is another way of reading the commentators, and it comes from *experience*; experience is the grand way of getting texts written upon your heart. There are many texts that cannot be brought home to your own heart yet. A text of that sort must be brought home to you when you are in such a position as to need its application, and it cannot be understood until then. You may have learned all about anchors, sir, but you never know the value of a sheet anchor till you have got into a storm. You may read and hear on shore all about a tempest, and you may have met with beautiful descriptions of it, and think you know how it tosses the ship about; but I will warrant you that a good heave or two will let you know more about sea-sickness and the effects of those mighty tempests that rouse the billows and rock the vessels than all the books you have ever read for sound instruction or reasonable entertainment.

And how much has the character of God been revealed to us in trouble. We do not know our friends till we fall into adversity; neither is that "friend who sticketh closer than a brother" truly prized by us till we are brought into trouble, and then we know his power to sympathize and to succour.

Trials help to strengthen us. It is impossible for a Christian to be very strong—in certain ways, at any rate—unless he grapple with difficulties and endure hardships. There is no proving your courage and prowess in war, except you smell gunpowder, and are exposed to the dread artillery. There is no learning to be strong in the battle except you pass through trouble: depend upon it. My arm would soon weary if I had to lift the blacksmith's hammer for an hour or two, and make horseshoes. I am afraid I should soon give up the business. But the blacksmith's arm does not ache, for he has been at it so many years, and he rings out a tune on the anvil, so joyfully does his strong arm do the work. Practice has strengthened him. And so, when we have become inured to trial and trouble, faith is to us a far more simple matter than it was before, and we become "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." What shall we say then? Thanks to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for teaching us war? Nay; but we will thank the Lord, who has given "their land

to be a heritage, even a heritage for Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever."

VI. Lastly, THE HAPPENING OF ALL THIS TO THE SAME PERSONS IS A FURTHER ILLUSTRATION THAT HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER. These six verses tell of great things done for Israel, all for Israel. That last verse is very sweet to me—"Even an heritage unto Israel his servant." What are the kings slain for? For Israel. What does Sihon die for? For Israel. Why does Og fall? For Israel. For whom is the heritage? For Israel. And who is Israel, and what has Israel done, to have all this? What have they done? Brethren, it is a sad but gracious story. Israel! Israel! Why, that is the nation that made the golden calf, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Israel! Why, these are the people who said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou brought us into this wilderness to destroy us." Israel! Why, these are the people that took the daughters of Moab and committed lewdness with them. Israel! Why, these are the people who provoked the Lord, so that he said to his servant Moses, "Let me alone! Let me alone, that I may destroy them," for they provoked the Lord to jealousy. Israel! Why, these are the people of whom God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. Yet is it the same nation. Their children have followed them; it is Israel still, and God has done all this for Israel. Now, while you are thinking about Israel, just begin to think about yourselves. For whom has God done all this—turned judgment into mercy, fought great battles on their behalf, and given them a great inheritance of mercy and lovingkindness and favour? Who is it for? Well, I will not mention anybody's name, but I will mention my own to myself; and as I mention it I think—

"O grace, it is thy wont
Into unlikeliest hearts to come."

How singular that thou shouldst do all this for such an one as I am. Brother, sister, I can better understand God's mercy to you than I can his mercy to me. I know one who has, in distress, sometimes doubted the lovingkindness of the Lord. I know one who has been proud, envious, and worldly. I know one whose heart has been cold, dead, callous, careless, when it ought to have been tender, and full of pity and full of love. I know one that is all imperfections, all faults. He seems to himself to grow worse instead of better every day: at least he loathes himself more a hundred times than he used to do. And yet I know that the Lord loves that man; but why I do not know, except "even so, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight." And if you tell your own story truly, and know your own hearts and your own lives, you will wonder and be astonished to the extreme of wonderment that the Lord should give a heritage to Israel—to you, his servant—truly his servant, but a poor, faulty servant to have such a heritage given him out of the abundance of the grace of God. And why does he do it, but that his mercy endureth for ever? Is there one of us who might not justly be in hell before the clock ticks again, if it were not that his mercy endureth for ever? The brightest saint here has no brightness but what God lends him, and he only lends it to him because his mercy endureth for ever. Oh, bless his name, ye children of his that live near to him—

you that have climbed to the highest stage of communion. Remember, you do not stand there because of anything in yourselves, but because his mercy endureth for ever. If you have conquered your sins—Sihon king of the Amorites—it is because his mercy endureth for ever; and if to-day you put your foot upon the neck of Og, king of Bashan, it is not because you are strong, but because his mercy endureth for ever. If you have grown in sanctification, and begin to possess the land which God has given to be a heritage to his people, it is still because his mercy endureth for ever; and when death itself is dead, and you have passed beyond the gate of pearl, and taken possession of the throne reserved for you with Christ at God's right hand, the only reason why you shall get there will be because his mercy endureth for ever. This is the song of every saved soul in this tabernacle, as it shall be in the temple above, from henceforth even for evermore.

I think it ought to be a great encouragement to those of you who are not God's people, if there be any such present, and there may be. Oh, how it ought to ring in your ears, "His mercy endureth for ever." You are very old, but his mercy endureth for ever. You are very sick and near to die, but his mercy endureth for ever. You have gone to the utmost extreme of sin, but his mercy endureth for ever. You have resisted his Spirit, you have stifled your conscience, you have been disobedient to Christ, but his mercy endureth for ever. You have indulged every evil passion, you have broken loose from every bond that ought to have held you to the way of right, but his mercy endureth for ever. The last day of your life is almost come, but his mercy still endureth, and will endure till you die. If death comes, we have no gospel for the dead, but as long as you live that mercy still endureth.

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

The returning prodigal trusting in Jesus Christ shall find mercy. If you say, "Oh, but, Lord, my sins are strong, how can I master them?" the answer I shall give you is in the words of my text, "He slew great kings, for his mercy endureth for ever: yea, slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth for ever." Cannot God slay your sins? As for Satan and the world, he slew Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever. If you say that you never can be holy, and never can grow like his children, I know "he gave their land to be a heritage, for his mercy endureth for ever, even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever," and why should he not even thus enrich you with sanctifying grace? May God of his rich mercy abundantly bless you, that you may sing his praise for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Numbers xxi. 21—35; and Deuteronomy ii. 16-37, iii. 11.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 196.