

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SERMON OF THE SEASONS.

A Sermon

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“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”—Genesis viii. 22.

Our Saviour constantly taught the people by parables, and I think he would have his ministers do the same. The condition of things just now, both as to weather and business, furnishes a very plain and instructive parable which it would not be wise to pass over. Every morning when we wake we hope for a change of wind, a glimpse of the sun, and the end of the frost; but still we moan with the poet—

“Oh, the long and dreary Winter!
Oh, the cold and cruel Winter!”

We say to ourselves, Will spring-time never come? In addition to this, trade and commerce continue in a state of stagnation; crowds are out of employment, and where business is carried on, it yields little profit. Our watchmen are asked if they discern any signs of returning day, and they answer, “No.” Thus we bow our heads in a common affliction, and ask each man comfort of his fellow; for as yet we see not our signs, neither does the eastern sky grow grey with the hopeful light of the long-expected morning. Having faith in God we faint not, but believe that a lesson of love for us is written by his hand in these black characters. Let us spell it out with childlike confidence.

Our text takes us back to the time when the waters of the flood had just assuaged, and God opened the door of the ark and bade Noah and his family come forth into a new world. For a time there had been a confusion: the seasons were mixed up, the perpetual downpour of the rain had almost turned day into night, and whether it was summer or winter could scarcely be told. The frame of nature seemed to be out of joint, her order suspended. And now the Lord, in making a promise to Noah that he would never destroy the earth again with a flood, also declares that while the earth remaineth there shall be no more of the confusion of the seasons and mingling of day and night which had brought such destruction upon all living things. As there should be no more a general deluge, so should there be no more a serious disarrangement of

the course of the seasons and the temperature appropriate thereto. Seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, are to succeed each other in their perpetually unchanging change, so long as the present reign of forbearance shall last. Till comes the close of time, the rolling year, made up of alternate day and night, shall pass through cold and heat in due order. We are grateful to God for thus settling in his mind that so it shall be. We are at ease because we know that he will not lift his hand again to destroy every living thing with a flood of water. He will deal with men in longsuffering, and tender mercy, and forbearance. He will not use the stern weapons of destruction, but will try the tender ministrations of patience and grace, that men may be led to repentance. There will come an end to this dispensation; but while the reign of forbearance lasts, nature shall keep her appointed marches, and we need not fear a disorderly rush or a destructive chaos. "Four seasons fill the measure of the year." In their mysterious round they come and go, and all combined display a moving harmony of wise design most glorifying to our God. Fear not in the day of tempest, for the rain shall not deluge the earth. The Lord setteth his bow in the cloud as the ensign of his covenant with mankind. Fear not in the black midnight: God will rekindle the lamp of day, and chase away the darkness.

It is very singular that when the Lord thus ushers in the reign of forbearance he gives as his reason the following statement:—"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." This is very singular, because this seems to have been the powerful reason why the Lord had already destroyed the guilty race from off the face of the earth. In the fifth and sixth verses of the sixth chapter we read: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Here we have almost the same words. Can the reason for judgment become the argument for mercy? Assuredly it can. God who changeth not absolutely, yet changeth his hand in his dealing with men. He had left them to themselves and permitted them to live through centuries; but the longer they lived, the more wicked they grew, until sin reached to a horrible degree of infamy. Man becomes a bad enough sinner when he lives to be seventy; but what he became at seven hundred or more it is somewhat difficult to guess. We wonder not that there were giants in those days—giants in crime as well as in stature. The Lord saw that however long man lived he only grew a greater adept in sin, for the imagination of his heart remained evil, and even grew to an intolerable height of iniquity; and therefore he said that he would destroy the race and begin anew. But when the Lord looked down upon those whom he had spared, who were to be the parents of a new race, he saw that in them also there was the same fountain of evil, and that their hearts also yielded evil desires and devices continually. Then he resolved to shorten the life of man, so that no individuals might ever arrive at so horrible a ripeness and cleverness of iniquity; but at the same time he said: "I will bear with them. I have dealt sternly with them, but they do not change; the few whom I have snatched from a

watery grave are still inclined to sin. This dreadful expedient has not washed away the rebellious tendencies of the human heart. Therefore I will deal leniently and gently with them, manifesting a long forbearance, that man may have space for repentance. I will no more destroy every living thing, because destruction itself does not avail to banish sin." Thus it seems by no means difficult to see how that which to divine holiness was a reason for judgment may be used by divine pity as a reason for mercy.

But what, think you, could have made the reasoning assume this new form? I attribute it to one thing never to be forgotten. Read the verse which precedes our text: "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar; and the Lord smelled a sweet savour." The sacrifice is the turning-point. Without a sacrifice sin clamours for vengeance, and God sends a destroying flood; but the sacrifice presented by Noah was typical of the coming sacrifice of God's only begotten Son, and of the effectual atonement therein provided for human sin. The very shadow of the one great propitiation changed the state of the world. Now the Lord pleads with himself for grace as once he argued for doom. He speaketh of course after the manner of men; it is only to our apprehension that these things are so, for Jehovah changeth not, and he is always love and wisdom. For the sake of the sacrifice God resolves to bear with man, as with one who is incurably unwise, or desperately sick. He determines to look upon the evil tendency of man's imagination rather as an inveterate disease than as an unbearable provocation. He deals very patiently with the race, and no more sweeps it away in his wrath. See what the Lord will do when a sacrifice is provided! Methinks I hear him say of the earth, "Deliver it from flood, and bid the seasons keep their round of beneficence; for I have found a ransom."

I. Thus I introduce to you the text, and I would have you notice, dear friends, that in that text there is first of all a hint, A SOLEMN HINT, OF WARNING. It begins thus: "While the earth remaineth." I hear a sound in the bowels of the text like subterranean thunder. The voice of the text is a voice of mercy, but there is an undertone of "terrible things in righteousness." "While the earth remaineth" implies that *the earth will not always remain*. There is an end appointed of the Most High, and it will surely come: then the seasons will melt into the endless age, and time shall be promoted into eternity. The earth hath remained now century after century; alas! it has but little changed towards God. The whole world still lieth in the wicked one; darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the nations. Jehovah hath a people, "a remnant according to the election of grace," and for their sakes the earth remaineth yet a little while; but its end draweth nearer every hour. "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man Christ Jesus." An hour is set when mercy shall no longer hold back the axe from the barren tree, and forbearance shall no more restrain the angel with the sharp sickle from reaping the vintage of the earth. Love now journeys to and fro among the sons of men, with the voice of trembling pathos, pleading with them to be reconciled to God; but her mission will come to an end, the day of

grace will be over, and the reign of judgment will come. Let us not reckon too much upon this world's enduring even for a little while; let us not set our love upon anything that is upon it; for here we have no continuing city. "The things which are seen are temporal;" the world therefore shall pass away, and all the works that are therein shall be burned up: even "The elements shall melt with fervent heat." There is a day coming when floods of fire shall be let loose: they shall fall from above, and burst upward from below, and all material things shall be melted in one common conflagration. Poor world! thou, too, art surely doomed! God is gracious to thee, but thou art as a wreck drifting upon the rocks, or as a tree waiting for the axe. Believers in the testimony of God can joyfully say, "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness": therefore we are not dismayed.

I would have you notice again, dear friends, that *the time when the earth shall no longer remain is not mentioned*. The warning is left indefinite as to time, though definite enough as to fact. The expression, "While the earth remains," is proof enough that it will remain only for a season; but it is dumb as the tongue of death as to the date when that season shall close. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"; but when the hour of her deliverance shall come the best instructed cannot tell. Do not attempt to prophesy, and especially do not venture upon dates. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." The uncertainty of the end of all things is intended to keep us continually on the watch. We are to remain upon the tiptoe of expectation, and never to dream that we can reckon upon a certain length of time before the great and terrible day of the Lord. If you knew when Christ would come you might be tempted to spend the interval in neglect and wantonness; but as it is written, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh," it is the Lord's intent that you should stand with your loins girt and your lamps trimmed, waiting for the midnight cry, "Behold he cometh."

Let me further remark that *the day when the remaining of the earth shall cease cannot be very far off*; for according to the Hebrew, which you have in the margin of your Bibles, the text runs thus: "As yet all the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease." The "while" of the earth's remaining is counted by days; not even months or years are mentioned, much less centuries. The earth seems grey with age to us, but in the language of inspiration the present stage of its history is reckoned by days. There will one day come a last day, and let us not reckon that the time is distant, for Peter saith, "The end of all things is at hand"; and he adds, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. If geologists speak correctly concerning the history of the world, it has lasted many myriads of years already, and passed through many periods before it came to that which is described in the first chapter of Genesis. The era of man is that which God describes to us by the inspired penman; and we are led to believe

that this era will be a very short one. From the day when God fitted up this earth for the abode of man to the time when he shall consume it with fervent heat, there will be comparatively a very short space of time. God lives by millions of years; therefore, a few thousand years to him are but as a watch in the night. Let it be thus far understood by us that this dispensation is not to be a protracted one, and that the duration of the world in its present state is to be exceedingly brief as compared with preceding and succeeding ages. The life of this present evil world is but a span; it also is of few days and full of trouble. But I must also add that the era of sin and grace is crowded with marvellous manifestations of the glory of God in infinite love and mercy.

II. Thus, then, there is a hint of warning in our text; but secondly, there is a SENTENCE OF PROMISE, rich and full of meaning: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." It is a promise concerning temporal things, but yet it breathes a spiritual air, and hath about it the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed.

This promise has been kept. It is long since it was written, it is longer still since it was resolved upon in the mind of God; but it has never failed. There have been times when cold has threatened to bind the whole year in the chains of frost; but genial warmth has pushed it aside. Seedtime and harvest have been threatened, but they have come; the harvest may not have been abundant, but yet there has been a harvest sufficient to sustain the race. Days have been dark, and hardly discernible from night, like the gloom of Egypt's plague; but still, taking things as a whole, day and night have divided time between them. The ordinances of heaven have continued with us as with our fathers. No student of nature can doubt that to this hour, despite occasional extremes of heat and cold, the seasons are unchanged; and notwithstanding occasional absence of sunshine, and diminution of light, day and night have followed the diurnal revolution of the earth. Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were. One great interruption occurred at the deluge, but the Lord has kept his promise to prevent any other.

So long-continued is the fulfilment of this promise, that *even this race of unbelievers has come to believe in it.* We look for the seasons as a matter of course. I do not suppose that any one in this audience doubts the coming of spring. The boughs are bare, the buds are not eager for their bursting, the crocus and the daffodil are afraid to show themselves; but yet the birds believe in the coming spring, for I hear them in sweet chorus every morning singing their songs of expectancy. Men and brethren, you are expectant also. Long observation has begotten in you an unwavering faith. When the sun goes down at night, not even a little child fears that God has blown out the sun, and that the great candle will never be lighted again. No, we look for the morning. When winter has chilled us a while, we look for the spring and the summer; and when summer has browned our faces, we expect the falling of the leaf and the descent of the snow. I want you to ask yourselves—Why do we not believe God's other promises? Why have we not as solid a conviction of the truth of other statements which our God has made as we have upon this point? Is it that we

have experience in this case? O brethren, we have had experience concerning other matters also. If we were to deal with the weather with the same short-sighted doubt which governs us in our thoughts of divine providence, we might be doubtful about summer and winter. We might say, "It really does not look very likely that spring will come. Look at our meadows, and mark how the cold has literally burned the grass; see how our hardy evergreens are many of them dead, and others sadly cut to pieces; see what mischief the cold has wrought. Will there ever be leaf and flower again? Is it possible that I shall ever wipe the sweat from my smoking brow on some blazing noontide? Can these frozen brooks leap into liberty? To-day we crowd around the fire, hardly keeping ourselves alive from the bitter cold; shall we yet bask in the hay-field, or fan ourselves amid the golden sheaves?" Had we less experience, it would seem highly improbable. Yet we enjoy a full assurance as to the revolution of the seasons and the succession of day and night: do we not? Why this assurance of one promise, and why such frequent distrust of others equally true?

When God's promises appear to be difficult of fulfilment, wherefore do we doubt them? They are fulfilled in due season: which of them has ever failed? They come to pass without difficulty: why should we suspect them? When deliverance looks as though it could not come, it is none the less sure; for the Lord has promised it. The absence of visible means need not enter into the account: he who is Almighty God has infinite resources.

So, too, dear friends, we have to recollect, that if the Lord himself does not send spring and summer we cannot create either of them. Here we are out of the field. When the sun goes down, if the Lord did not cause it to rise again, we could not open the doors of the morning. I love to get into the field of nature on a large scale, for there one is quit of man, and the Lord alone is seen working all things according to his will. The heavens and their ordinances know no presence and power but God alone. As far as we are concerned, we cannot lift a finger to change the seasons. What could all our Parliament—King, Lords, and Commons—do with all their Acts towards bringing on spring-tide or hastening summer and harvest? Nothing at all. These matters are out of man's power; and yet they are none the less sure. So, my brethren, when you get into such a condition that you can by no means help yourself, you are not, therefore, to doubt that God can achieve his purpose and fulfil his promise without your help. When hath he asked your aid? Good men have gone very wrong when they have thought of aiding in the fulfilment of promises and prophecies. See how Rebecca erred in trying to get the promised blessing for Jacob. We had better leave the Lord's decrees in the Lord's hands. When any case comes to its worst, and you can do nothing whatever in it, you may safely stand still and see the salvation of God. At this hour you feel sure that springtime and summer will come, though you cannot move the sun an inch beyond his predestinated course; be as much at ease about the other promises of God as you are concerning the cycle of the year.

Remember, also, that every coming of summer—yes, and every rising of the sun—is a great wonder. Only our familiarity leads us to think

of these things without marvelling. A real miracle is every break of day and every set of sun. A world of wonders bursts forth in every spring-tide; each blade of grass and ear of corn is a display of divine omnipotence. We are surrounded with works of almighty power and goodness from morn till eve and through the watches of the night; from the first day of the year until its close the Lord is about us. Unseen by us, his hand propels the silent spheres which no force within human calculation could move in their orbits; that same power sustains and animates and perfects all things. God is in all, and in all wonderful. If God continues thus to work the pleasing changes of the year as he promised to do, why do you doubt him concerning other things, O ye of little faith? Will he not keep his word to his children if he keeps it to the earth? Will he not fulfil his every promise to his own elect if he is true to sun and stars? Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, have come according to his word without our aid, and, wonderful as these changes are, they have never failed; and will the Lord forget in other things? Will he forswear his covenant and deny his promise to his Only Begotten? God forbid.

Brethren, we have come not only to believe this promise as to the seasons and to make quite sure about it, but *we practically act upon our faith*. The farmers have sown their autumn wheat, and many of them are longing for an opportunity to sow their spring wheat; but what is sowing but a burial of good store? Why do husbandmen hide their grain in the earth? Because they feel sure that seedtime will in due time be followed by harvest. They put their grain into the ground hoping to receive it again multiplied a hundredfold. Why do we not act in an equally practical style in reference to the rest of God's promises? True faith makes the promises of God to be of full effect by viewing them as true and putting them to the test. When faith asks of God, it believes that it has the petition which it has asked of him. Many prepare their thinner garments in prospect of warm weather, or at the close of summer provide household flannels for the winter, because they reckon upon the season; why do we not also prepare ourselves to receive the Lord's blessing in the time appointed? Why do we not reckon upon every word of Scripture being fulfilled? We ought to take the promises into our matter-of-fact estimate, and act accordingly.

Let me go further:—*If a man did not act upon the declaration of God in our text he would be counted foolish*. Suppose a man said, "I do not feel sure that there will come a harvest, and therefore I shall not sow"; his neighbours would look upon his uncultivated fields, and reckon him out of his mind. If another should say, "I shall lay by no stores for the winter, because I believe that we have arrived at perpetual summer, wherein there will always be corn in the sheaf and fruit on the trees," we should regard him as fit for a lunatic-asylum. Equally mad are they who treat other promises of God as if they were idle words, no more worthy of notice than the prophecies of a charlatan. The masses of our fellow-men never search the Word of God to find a promise suitable to their cases, and even if such a promise were laid before them, they would only regard it as a matter of imagination or meaningless jargon. What shall I say of those who thus trifle with eternal verities, but that madness has carried away the heart of man? What God has promised

ought to be a clear indication to us of the future, and a hint as to how we should act. Let us act in faith upon the divine promise. If the Lord says, "Seek ye my face," take care that you do seek his face. If he says, "Ask, and it shall be given you," be sure to ask and expect to receive. If the Lord promises pardon to those who believe on his Son, let us believe on his Son, and receive mercy. He keeps his covenant with day and night; let us, therefore, believe that he will keep covenant with us, and do even as he hath said. Oh that this lesson, simple as it is, may be learnt by every believer, and by every unbeliever too!

Let me close this point by noticing that, *whether men believe this or not it will stand true*. A man says there will be no winter, and provides no garments; he will shiver in the northern blast all the same when December covers the earth with snow. An unbeliever declares that there will be no summer, and therefore he will not sow nor prepare a barn. Will his foolish scepticism prevent the coming of harvest? Miserable farmer that he is! He will secure a harvest of thorns and thistles to reward his own practical unbelief, but a harvest will come to the rest of the land, to his confusion. The year will go on whoever plays the fool; so, too, will the sun arise, whoever prophesies an endless night. God's purpose and God's promise will stand fast though the hills be removed. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall be saved, but if you believe not, you must perish: in either case, the law will not alter for you. God's great laws in the spiritual world hold good with a certainty as great as those which govern the natural world. We cannot suspend the force of gravitation; and if we could, we should not even then be able to change the veracity of the Most High, who must be true so long as he is God. Hath he said and shall he not do it? Ay, that he shall. Though we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself; therefore, ye sons of men, be wise, and take heed to the word of the Lord. As in the summer ye prepare yourselves for winter; and as at spring-tide ye sow your seed that ye may gather your harvest in the summer, and thus ye obey the voice of God in nature, I pray you also have respect to that voice as it speaks in the pages of his Book, and shape your conduct by that which the Lord has revealed.

III. There is also in the text, I think, A SUGGESTION OF ANALOGIES. Reading these words, not as a philosophical prediction, but as a part of the Word of God, I see in them a moral, spiritual, and mystical meaning. Holy Scripture is intended not to teach us natural but spiritual things: I conclude, therefore, that there is an analogy here well worthy of being worked out. May the good Spirit guide us therein!

While the earth remaineth *there will be changes in the spiritual world*. Read the text laying a stress upon the words of change, and see how it rises and falls like the waves of the sea: "While the earth remaineth, *seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*" No one of these states continues; it comes and goes. The seasons are a perpetual procession, an endless chain, an ever-moving wheel. Cold flies before heat, and anon summer is chased away by winter. Nothing is stable. Such is this life: such are the feelings of spiritual life with most men: such is the history of the church of God. We sorrow and we rejoice: we struggle and we triumph: we

labour and we rest. We are not long upon Tabor, neither are we always in the valley of Baca. Let us not be amazed, as though some strange thing happened to us, if our day darkens into night, or our summer chills into winter. From joy to sorrow, from sorrow to joy, from success to defeat, from defeat to success, we pass very rapidly. It is so: it will be so while the earth remaineth, and we remain partakers of the earth.

Yet, *there will be an order in it all.* Cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, do not come in a giddy dance or tumultuous hurly-burly; but they make up the fair and beautiful year. Chance has no part in these affairs. God compelleth winds and storms, and sun and sea, to keep the order of his house, and none rebelleth against his commandment. So in the spiritual kingdom, in the life of the believer, and in the history of the church of God, all things are made to work for good, and the spiritual is being educated into the heavenly. In our seasons there is an order visible to God, even when we walk in darkness and see no light. We have our winters, in which the sap is prepared in secret to produce the clusters of summer; we have our colds, in which we lose the superfluities bred of our heat. Expect the changes, and believe that they come by rule.

Great rules will stand while the earth abideth, in the spiritual as well as in the natural world. For instance, there will be seedtime and harvest, effort and result, labour and success. There will be to you, dear brother, a time in which you will chiefly have to receive; it is your seedtime, and God is sowing you by instruction and sanctification, in order that in due time you may yield him a harvest to his glory. Sometimes we lie passive, like the ploughed fields, and then our divine Sower casts into us the living seed; but soon other days arrive, when we are active, and yield unto God the results of his grace experienced in former days. It ought to be so. To you, beloved workers in the Mission-hall, or the Sunday-school, there will be a time of sowing; not much may be accomplished, though a great deal of effort may be put forth. To me in preaching there are times for sowing, and nothing else but sowing; few seem to be the green blades which spring up around me. Perhaps a year may intervene before the worker shall see any reward for his toil: "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth." The missionary upon his district, the Bible-woman on her round, may see no manifest effect produced by daily teaching: but harvest and seedtime are tied together in a sure knot. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Brethren, believe that, and be of good cheer. "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord." While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest will take each one its turn.

So, too, while the earth remaineth there will be the interchanges of cold and heat. Where there is life there must be change; only in death is there monotony. There will be times in your experience when you will feel the awful withering of that convincing Spirit who dries up the glory of the flesh. "Who can stand before his cold?" Anon there will be a melting season of contrition and repentance, and then the Holy Spirit will have warmed your heart into hope and faith and love and joy and delight in God. Cold and heat come to the church.

I have noticed oftentimes her bitter cold, and I have cried to God about it. But the heat has come ; we have felt the glow of revival ; enthusiasm has been kindled, zeal has abounded. I wish we could always keep at one glorious summer heat, walking in the light as God is in the light. It ought to be so with us. Some of us labour to be always zealous and full of fire ; but should times come when we or others are not in the fulness of the blessing, we will not despair ; but we will the rather cry mightily unto the Lord to send his Word and cause the waters of his grace to flow, and make our winter to be over and gone, while flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds comes on.

So, too, have I seen in our mortal life summer and winter, prosperity and adversity. Do not expect, dear brother, while you are in this world, always to dwell among the lilies and roses of prosperity. Summer will come, and you will be wise to make hay while the sun shines by using all opportunities for usefulness ; but look for winter. I do not know into what trade you can enter to be secure against losses, nor what profession you could follow in which you would escape disappointments. I know no corner of the earth without its night, no land without its stones, no sea without its storms. As to spiritual and mental experience, it seemeth to me within myself that while the earth remaineth I shall have my ebbs and flows, my risings and my sinkings. Do not therefore begin to kick and quarrel with the dispensations of God's providence. When it is summer-time say, "The Lord gave, and blessed be his name." When it is winter say, "The Lord hath taken away, and blessed be his name." Keep to the same music, even though you sometimes have to pitch an octave lower. Still praise and magnify the Lord whether you be sowing or reaping. Let him do what seemeth him good, but to you let it always seem good to praise.

Beloved, labour will be followed by rest ; for while the earth remaineth there will be day and night. In the day man goeth forth to his labour ; at night he lieth down. Let him bless God for both. There cometh a night wherein no man can work : to us this is not dreaded, but expected. I do not know for which I thank God most, for day or for night. Our young people praise God for day, with its activities ; but we who are older are more inclined to bless the Lord for night, with its repose. The grey beard, the man of many years and sad experiences, looks forward to that night wherein the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. If we regard death as night, we look forward to an endless day, which will follow on, when the sun shall go no more down for ever. Jesus our Lord is the Sun of that glorious country to which we wend our way. While the earth remaineth, there will continually be a variety of benedictions, a change-ringing upon the silver bells of mercy. When thou art on high, my brother, remember thou must descend ; and when thou art cast down, expect a cheerful lifting up. When it is broad day, let us travel swiftly, for night comes on ; but when it is dark, let us watch hopefully, for the morning cometh. As sojourners in a changeful country, let us spend the days of our pilgrimage in a holy fear, which shall preserve us from love of the world. I need not further work out the analogies of the text ; many more will rise before the meditative mind.

IV. Last of all, I want you to regard my text as A TOKEN FOR THE ASSURANCE OF OUR FAITH. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And they do not. In this fact we are bidden to see the seal and token of the covenant. Look at the passage we read this morning in the thirty-third chapter of Jeremiah. Here is *the security of the King in whom we rejoice*. "If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, then shall David not have a son to reign upon his throne." God hath promised never to change the royal line; but while the earth remaineth, and day and night are seen, the Son of David shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords. Until all enemies are under his feet he must reign. So, then, as I wrap my garment about me, feeling the cold of winter, I will say to myself, "God hath, by sending cold, confirmed his covenant with Jesus our Lord and King." Every morning light saluteth my eyes, and declareth that "his name shall be continued as long as the sun"; and when the shades of evening fall, and the stars look forth from their houses, I hear a sound of "abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and of his kingdom there is no end. The Lord Jesus is King in Zion, and head over all things to his church while the earth remaineth.

The abiding of the ordinances of heaven is equally a token of *the continuance of the priesthood*. Under the type of the tribe of Levi the priesthood is vested in the person of our Lord. He is our Melchizedek, who is priest as well as king, and of his priesthood there is no end. While winter chills and summer burns, while day calls to labour and night to rest, our great High-priest abides in his office, still able to cleanse us, to make intercession for us, and to present our offerings unto God. His one sacrifice is perpetually a sweet savour unto God, and shall be till moons shall wax and wane no more. As I tread the soil which seems frozen into iron, and as I shiver in the bitter north-east wind, I say to myself, "The priesthood of our Lord abides; for cold has not ceased to visit us, and heat will come in its appointed months." As I go to my bed, or as I rise from it, day and night are to me a pledge that the Lord Jesus is a priest for ever according to the law of an endless life.

A third thing was also assured by the same token. The Lord said that as long as his covenant with day and night remained *he would not put away the seed of Abraham*. Since a son of David must rule them, they must exist to be ruled. There will for ever be a chosen people—a people for whom Jesus lives as king and priest. The Lord hath not cast away the people whom he did foreknow, nor will he do so, come what may. While seedtime and harvest, cold and heat abide, the Lord will maintain a church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. What a mercy is this! Alas! men whom I hoped were faithful have turned aside from the truth; ministers who were regarded as pillars have fallen, and persons esteemed to be saints turned out to be hypocrites: yet "there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The Lord hath a reserve of men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Therefore, let us be of good courage, and never tremble for the ark of the Lord.

To end all, let our prayer be that the Lord would abide with us, and then the heat shall not smite us, nor the cold molest us. The presence of God makes fair weather. Let us sing with quaint John Ryland—

“ Rise then, Sun of righteousness,
Me with thy sweet beamings bless ;
Winter then may stay or flee,
Lord, 'tis all alike to me.”

Oh, you that know not our God, I feel heartily sorry for you ! To you all seasons must be blank, for God is not in them. Oh that you knew Jesus. The world is a bleak house, a chill and empty corridor without God ; and men are orphans, and life is hopeless, and death is starless night, if Jesus is not known and loved. He who trusts his soul with Jesus has found the key of the great secret, the clue of the maze. Henceforth he shall see, in all that smiles or rages around him in our changeful weather, pledges of the love of the Father, tokens of the grace of the Son, and witnesses of the work of the Holy Ghost. To the one God be glory for ever ! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxlvii ;
Genesis viii. 20—22 ; Jeremiah xxxiii. 17—26.

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