

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SPRING-TIME IN NATURE AND GRACE.

## A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 28TH, 1857,

DELIVERED BY

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*On Lord's-day Evening, May 1st, 1857.*

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”  
—Isaiah lv. 10-13.

This is a text for the spring-time. If you read it through to-morrow morning, before the smoke has clouded the heavens, whilst yet the earliest birds are calling up their mates to sing, you will understand its meaning better than I can make you comprehend it by any words of mine. The whole four verses seem to describe a scene in nature which is only to be witnessed about this time of the year; yet I am not going to look into the poetical meaning of the text so much as to use it as a description of personal experience. I think, nay, I am sure that there are many of us who have passed through our spiritual winter. We have also had our spring, we are even coming to our summer, and there are some whose ripe and mellow experience has the peacefulness of autumn about it. Our lives are, in miniature, like the years that so quickly follow one another; and every year does but repeat the changes in our lives. I want at this time to speak about spring-time in our spiritual experience; touching, however, upon a more advanced period, as it will be necessary to do; but my first word is to be concerning our spring-tide experience.

Brothers and sisters, by nature we lie in the cold and death of winter; everything is frost-bound, withered, dead. We are nothing, we yield nothing, we can do nothing. The Word of God comes to us as the beams of the sun pour down their warmth from the heavens, and by a mighty and mysterious influence that Word begins to work upon us, and we soon feel that we have entered upon quite another season of life. We are no longer in the cold winter, we have come to

a blessed spring-time. That is the theme upon which I am going to speak now.

I. First, notice in the text the descent of the Word, THE DOWN-COMING: "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven."

Our spring begins with April showers alternating with rough winds; there is sure to be, at this period of the year, a rainy season, to prepare the earth for bringing forth fruit, to swell the buds on the trees, and to work with sunshine to produce the spring. So is it spiritually; the down-coming of the Word of God is to our hearts like the falling of the rain from heaven.

Concerning this down-coming, I may say, first, that *it is usually unpleasant*. We are accustomed to speak of rainy weather, and especially of snowy weather, as "bad" weather. We are the wisest people in the world in matters relating to the weather! Having, as some say, no "climate"—only "weather"—we talk a great deal about it, and inform each other what kind of weather it is when one can see just as well as the other what it is. Now, when we spiritually begin to live, it is usually rough weather, and we are apt to think it is bad weather. Drip, drip, drip, fall showers of repentance. Snowflake after snowflake falls, and buries all our hopes; our joys are covered, as with a winding-sheet. It is bad weather with us, and we are not slow to complain of it. Oh, dear friends, if we did but know how God is blessing us, if we could but realize that these experiences are working out our lasting good, we should thank God that his Word comes down upon us as the rain and the snow fall from heaven!

The work of grace in our hearts, however, is like a spring shower in another respect. *It differs very much in its method*, for rain and snow do not always come down in the same way. Sometimes the rain falls very gently, we can hardly tell whether it is rain or not. Our Scotch friends would call it "a mist." At another time, the rain, like Jehu the son of Nimshi, drives furiously. Big drops come pouring down, and before we can reach a shelter we are wet through. So is it with the snow; it falls at times as gently as the dropping of tiny feathers, but it may descend thick and fast, a blizzard blowing it into our faces, and almost blinding us. So, there are some to whom God's Word comes very softly; it does come, but it comes without tempest or storm. There are others to whom it comes very terribly; the Word of the Lord is full of dread to them, it is a tempest, a whirlwind. The rain or the snow comes down to them, and there is no mistaking it; they are shivered through with its cold, they are wet to the skin with its moisture. Hence learn this, you who have been comparing yourselves with others, that, as the rain at one time differs from the rain at another time, and as the snow in one place varies from the snow in another place, and yet the rain is always rain, and the snow is always snow, so the entrance of divine grace into one heart differs from the way it enters into another, yet it is always the same grace.

In like manner, brethren, the coming down of the snow and of the rain *differs also in time and in quantity*. One shower is quickly over, and another lasts all day and all night. The snow may in one season fall heavily for a few hours only; at another time, a week of

snow may be experienced. So, the work of divine grace, when it begins in the soul, is not very manifestly the same in different persons. Some of us were for years subject to the operations of God's Spirit, and endured much pain and sorrow before we found peace in believing. Others find Christ in a few minutes, and leap out of darkness into light by a single spring. I have known some whose convictions have been so brief, and have been so completely swallowed up by their almost immediate faith, that it has been a trouble to them to know whether they ever were truly convinced of sin at all. On the other hand, I have known many who have been so long shut up in Giant Despair's dungeons that they have thought that they were the men in the iron cage, that they were given over to destruction, and could never find salvation. Judge nothing, I pray you, after this fashion; but remember that God's Word, as it comes down like the rain and the snow from heaven, yet has varied methods of reaching different hearts.

One thing more I may say about this down-coming of the Word of God, and that is, *it is always a blessing, and never a curse*. If the rain should pour down very heavily, and continue to fall until we might be led to think that the very heavens would weep themselves away, yet, brothers, it never can produce a flood that would drown the world, for yonder in the heavens is the bow of the covenant. These rains must mean blessing, they cannot mean destruction; and if the snow should fall never so deep, yet not even by snow will God destroy the earth any more than by a flood. So, when God's grace comes streaming into the heart, it may produce deep conviction, it may sweep away the refuges of lies, it may cover up and bury beneath its fall every carnal hope; but it cannot be a flood to destroy you. There shall yet come a change of weather for you, and your soul shall live. Let the grace of God but come, and let that grace come how it may, it is always a benediction to the man who receives it.

Thus have I described to you the first part of our spiritual spring-time; when, at last, our long winter begins to yield beneath the sunlight of divine grace, the Word of the Lord comes down upon us like the snow and the rain that fall upon the earth.

II. The second thing to notice in our text is, **THE ABIDING**. We have had the down-coming; now follows the abiding of the rain or the snow that comes down from heaven: "it returneth not thither, but watereth the earth." So is it spiritually; when God's grace falls from heaven, it comes to stay.

My dear hearers, this morning\* I had to complain of some that they were like the rock upon which the rain falls, but which it never enters. It drops upon the granite, and runs down the side of it, and produces no result; but when God sends his grace from heaven, you may know it by this sign, that *it soaks into your soul*. Oh, how much of my preaching there is, and how much of other people's preaching there is, that reaches the ear, and there is an end of it! Oh, for hearers who drink in the Word of the Lord! O rain from heaven, would God that thou didst always find us like ploughed fields ready

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\* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,961, "S. S.: or, the Sinner Saved."

to drink thee in! This is how grace works; it enters the soul, penetrates the heart, saturates the conscience, abides in the memory, affects the affections, gives understanding to the understanding, and imparts real life to the heart, which is the seat of life. I wish that we always heard the gospel in that fashion; but hearing is often mere child's play. If it were true hearing, it would be the most serious work under heaven, and it would be done in a reverential manner as a true part of divine worship. Then we should find the Word of God soaking into men's hearts as the snow and the rain from heaven enter the earth.

It appears from our text that this down-pour, instead of returning to heaven, does this also for the soul into which it soaks, it fertilizes it, *it makes the soul bring forth and bud*. Yes, but the metaphor of my text cannot set forth the whole truth, for this Word of God, which is the rain, is also the seed; this Word of God, which is the snow, is the living seed itself. What should we think of clouds that rained down the seeds? That would be a new thing beneath the heavens; yet it is the old thing after all. The Word of God is the living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever; and whenever that seed is sown, God's Word comes soaking into the soul, and making the soul to live, and causing the heart to yield its life up to the living seed. I cannot distinguish between the seed and the soil in my metaphor here, for it seems as if the very soil did breed the seed, and take it up into itself, and cause it to grow, causing it to bring forth and bud. O beloved, if the Word of God has been to you like an uncomfortable shower, may it afterwards prove its living power, making you feel a new life that you never felt before, a something within, struggling, striving, a something which of itself was not previously there, but which comes with the heavenly Word, and is indeed the sure evidence of the beginning of the new life within your soul!

And, again, the Word of God, when it comes into the soul, and abides there, *works in the man whatsoever God pleases*, all his divine purposes: "it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." It is a very wonderful thing to get the Word of God thoroughly into your soul, to get soaked and saturated with it. We have none of us any idea what that Word may yet do for us. Who among us knows the infinite reaches of the divine purpose? Who shall cast the lead, and fathom all the divine intentions concerning man? Verily, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" but when the Word of God is truly in us, it will work whatever the divine purpose is, and carry it out to the full without fail, for the Word of God is living and powerful to effect the designs and purposes of the Most High.

My beloved hearers, open your hearts to this Word; drink it in, do not stay its course, do not try to hinder its divine operations. Pray to be completely under its influence, for you do not know how holy, how strong, how happy, how heavenly, you may yet be. This, then, is how our spiritual spring-tide comes to us; first, showers under which we tremble and are troubled; but, afterwards, a divine abiding, which produces marvellous effects in our hearts and lives.

III. So, in the third place, I will briefly speak to you about THE RESULTS of the down-coming and the abiding. The rain has come, and the rain remains; now, what happens?

First, we are told, *it makes the earth to bring forth and bud*. I love the time of buds. There is nothing more beautiful than the rosebud; it is more charming by far than the full-blown rose; and the buds of all manner of flowers have a singular charm about them. But when the grace of God has come into a young man's heart, we very soon see his buds, he has gracious purposes, he has holy resolves, he has the beginnings of prayer, he has the makings of a man of God about him. Childhood in grace is a sweet budding time, with many rare beauties and delights. Some of you, perhaps, are complaining of yourselves that you have not come to the perfection of flowering yet; do not murmur on that account, but be thankful if you have only a bud. A little prayer, a faint desire after holiness, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness,—these are buddings; be grateful for them. There are some birds that like to eat the buds of trees, and they do much mischief to the garden; and there are some old Christians who, I think, are rather too fond of nipping buds, and so doing damage to young beginners. May God keep these destructive birds away from you who as yet are but feeble!

Beloved, if you are what the Lord would have you to be, you will not long be content with buds. If you serve the Lord, and the Lord continues to visit you with showers of blessing, you will soon *bring forth seed for the sower*. You yourself will become useful to others; your experience, your knowledge, your service, will become the seed of good for other people. The devil can never destroy the Church of God, or banish it altogether from the face of the earth, because, if there were only one Christian left in the world, he would be seed for other Christians; and I cannot tell you how many might spring from him. If all of us should die, and there were only one of the dear children left who have lately joined this church, yet the Church of God would spring up and flourish again from that one child. That grace which first comes to you, and fills you with conviction of sin, afterwards comes to you to make you to be the seed-corn for others.

Grace also makes us produce *bread for the eater*. I was thinking to-day that, next Tuesday (May 3rd, 1887), it will be just thirty-seven years since I was baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Up to that day, I had never opened my mouth for Christ; I had not even engaged in prayer at a prayer-meeting, for I was very diffident, and I was afraid to speak of spiritual things. I was not very old, so perhaps my timidity might be excused; but, thirty-seven years ago, when I gave myself to Christ, I could not even have imagined that I should stand here to-night, to preach the Word to these thousands of people. The "bud" of that day has been "seed to the sower"; and, blessed be God, it is still "bread to the eater." Oh, young man, you do not know what God can make of you! Young women, if you consecrate yourselves to Christ, and come under the saturating influence of the divine Word, you do not know how many your lips may feed, nor how many your word may even convert to Christ. You, too, shall furnish seed to the sower, and

bread to the eater. You may, perhaps, at first pass through a painful experience, in which you will be made to see your own worthlessness; but you will, in due time, come out into a joyful experience, in which God shall bless you, and increase your usefulness, and make you to be a blessing to those who are round about you.

There is one other thing that must be noticed under this head. The result of divine grace upon the heart is very singular, so that I can hardly bring it under the metaphor of rain and snow, for *it works a transformation*. When rain falls on a plot of ground, if it is covered with weeds, it makes the weeds grow; but in the spiritual realm, the rain that comes down from heaven itself sows the ground with good seed. What is more singular, where it falls, it transforms the ground, and the plants that come under its influence change their nature: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree." If you were in Australia, you might see leagues of land covered with huge thistles and thorns. Down comes this shower of grace upon man's nature, thus covered with thorns; and, instead of thorns, come up fir trees, useful, delightful objects in the landscape; not gnarled and twisted thorns, but fair and comely fir trees. "And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." When the grace of God begins to work, a change is made in those who are like briars, and they become like myrtles. Out at Mentone, there are large tracts of land covered with myrtles, rosemary, and other odoriferous plants. Often have I thrown myself down upon them as upon a spring bed; for they grow close together, and, as you rest upon them, a delightful perfume is round about you everywhere. Now, when the grace of God comes into the soul, it takes the obnoxious things in us, and transmutes them into blessings. Here is a man who is naturally of an obstinate disposition. You know him. When the grace of God comes into his heart, he becomes firm in his attachment to the truth. A fine character can be made out of an obstinate man, he is the one of whom you can make a martyr if need be; he would be willing to burn for Christ's sake, you would never find him flinching. Here is another person who is full of levity and trifling. The grace of God comes, and transforms that lightness into cheerfulness and amiability; he is the light of the house, you are glad to know such a person. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." This is wonderful grace, is it not? I hope that some of us are now undergoing its transforming power in our hearts. This spring-time of grace is charming, far beyond that of nature, for nature in her developments continues still to bring forth the primæval thorn and thistle which our father Adam, by his disobedience, brought to us; but the grace of God changes these evil things, and makes the soul to bring forth that which is good, pleasing, sweet, and profitable, both to God and man.

IV. Now I have come to my last point. We have considered the down-coming, the abiding, and the result of the rain; now let us notice THE REJOICING.

This is a time of joy; the music of the year is full in spring-time. Birds get silent towards the end of autumn. That is the Sabbath of the year; God's bounty, then, has become so manifold that nature

seems to feel that she cannot express her gratitude, and even the birds as a rule are silent then; but now they are bursting into song as trees are bursting into leaves, and plants are bursting into flowers. I want that to be your experience in this spring-time. I saw, the other day, outside a certain place of worship (!), the notice of "a free and easy." I wonder what kind of *worship* that is. However, though I do not know and cannot imagine, yet I should like you who are the Lord's to feel wonderfully "free and easy" in the highest sense. Now that the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come, let every child of God enjoy himself, for our text says, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Why should we be so happy? Why should everything about us be so happy? Let us run the parallel between spring-time in nature and in grace.

In spring-time, one cause of happiness is *new life*. Things have been dead, but they are springing into life now. The blood runs more quickly within our veins, our whole being seems now warm with the new life that courses through our nature. It is so spiritually. We have come into a new life, the Holy Ghost has breathed upon us, and we live; and, blessed be God, that life never gets old! After knowing the Lord these thirty-seven years, as I have told you, I feel his love to be as sure as ever, and the power of his grace as powerful as ever. There is a constant novelty about the life of faith; the mercies of God are new every morning, and fresh every evening. Well, then, since you have a life of which you knew nothing before, since you can see all around you the tokens of a life which you never perceived before, be glad. Sing, to-night, ye songsters of the Lord! Break out into sweetest music because of the new life within you, that new life which can never die, but which shall in due season be enlarged and perfected into life for ever before the throne of God above.

Another source of joy in spring-time is to be found in our *happy surroundings*. It is beginning to be warm; we hope soon to be able to sit out of doors in the sunshine. We trust that the dull and heavy clouds will not return, and that the winds which pierced us to our very marrow will now be withheld from us. So we feel happy in the advent of spring; and is it not so with us spiritually? We are no longer in bondage, and no longer in fear. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Reconciled through the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord, we joy in God. Let us be happy together; and, coming to this table, whereon are spread the memorials of our Lord's great love to us, let us not come with dull and heavy hearts, as though we were assembled at a funeral, but let us meet in joyful anticipation of the day when we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb in glory. New life and happy surroundings should make us clap our hands, and rejoice before the Lord.

Spring-time, I think, is peculiarly pleasant because of its *large promise*. We are thinking of the hay harvest and of the fruit of the field. We are reckoning upon luscious grapes, and upon the various

fruits which faith sees to be hidden within the blossoms. Ay! but, may not our hopes be disappointed if we reckon upon earthly fruits? But you and I have come, by grace, into a land of hope most sure and steadfast. We have hopes grounded on God's Word, and they shall never be disappointed. Let us be happy, then; since we shall certainly one day be in heaven, let us begin the music of heaven down here. Since our Lord is on his way back to us, and may arrive before this assembly breaks up, let us anticipate the joy of his glorious appearing. May God the Holy Spirit help us to think of all these choice mercies, that we may be glad in the Lord!

In spring-time, once more, there always seems to me to be a *peculiar sense of divine power and divine presence throughout all nature*. It is as if nature had swooned awhile, and lay in her cold fit through the winter; but now she has been awakened, her Lord has looked her in the face, and charmed her back to life again. I trust that you and I feel this peculiar presence of God in the highest sense. Some say that there is no God. Ah, me! Ah, me! Blind men say that there is no sun, perhaps; but they must be very blind if they think so. We know that there is a God; not only by the argument from design, which is a very strong one; but by better evidence than that. We have had dealings with God, personal dealings with him, as when the sun, though it be ninety-five millions of miles away, has commerce with the earth, and the bulbs that sleep beneath the black mould begin to swell and upheave, and by-and-by the yellow cup is held up to be filled with the light of the sun. There must be a sun, we know, because of all its warmth and genial glow, and the life-force with which it charms the earth into the revival of spring; and, though we have not seen God at any time, neither can conceive of him in all his glory, for he is essentially inconceivable, yet have we felt his power charming into life our hope, our faith, our love. Sometimes, as the sun may be for a while hidden from us, a cloud obscures our God. Ah, me! what darkness then returns to us, how do all the young shoots seem to droop in the blackness! But when that cloud is gone, and the light comes streaming out again, O Lord, how we rejoice, how strong, how bright, how happy we are! If we have not wings, yet do we learn to fly without wings; we soon mount aloft when God himself draws us towards himself.

If you do not know God, my dear hearer, conclude that there is a life which you have not yet discovered. As Columbus found a new world when his prows steered across the Atlantic, so may you yet discover a new world, which you have not seen as yet. May God himself steer your ship, and bring you there! But do not tell us that there is no God, and no such new world. You cannot prove a negative; but we can prove a positive, namely, that we have entered into a new life, we have been into the new world. Suppose that I were to try to teach a horse astronomy. I could not make him understand me; but if I possessed the power to put an immortal soul into that horse, how easily would his eye look through the telescope, and how speedily would he begin to rejoice in sun and moon and stars! You, my dear hearer, who are without God, are nothing but a soul-ish man at present, almost a brute man in some respects. There is a

higher spirit that you need ; oh, that you had it ! God the Holy Spirit can breathe it into you. That is what we mean by regeneration. When he imparts a new and higher nature, and when you have received that nature, then you will be able to say, "There is a God, for I perceive him. I also have entered a new world. Things are the same as they used to be, and yet they are wonderfully different. I see nothing as I used to see it. Before, I saw it as a brutish man, but now I see it as a man twice-born, who has become so exalted as to be near akin to God himself." Then, dear friends, when you reach that state, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace : the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." God give you saving faith, and this new life of which I have been speaking, through Jesus Christ his Son ! Amen.

### Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH LV., AND PSALM CXXXVI.

Hear these inspired words, dear friends, as though they came fresh from heaven, as though God himself spoke them at this moment out of the excellent glory, for indeed he does so. The Word of God never grows old ; these messages are just as new as if the ink on the pens of the prophet and the psalmist were not yet dry.

Isaiah lv. Verse 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,*

This invitation is not given to you who are full, to you who can satisfy your own needs out of the buckets of your own righteousness. No, the prophet speaks to you thirsty ones, who feel an awful necessity which will not let you rest. Hunger you may appease ; but thirst is terrible, none can bear its pangs long. "Ho, every one that thirsteth." Whatever your age, sex, character, rank, or position in life, if you do but thirst, then the gospel stands with uplifted finger, and cries to you, "Ho !" as do merchants and traders who want to dispose of their wares.

1. *And he that hath no money ; come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

In the Lord Jesus Christ there is all you want, and more than you know that you want. As yet you only thirst, but here is bread for your hunger as well as drink for your thirst. Whereas "waters" might seem to satisfy your thirst, here is a superfluity of grace, an exceeding abundance of mercy : "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Christ is as free as the air. As you have only to take in the air by breathing, in order to live by it, so have you only to receive Christ into your soul, and you live by him. As flows old Father Thames through the green meads, and every dog may come and lap, and every ox may stand knee-deep in the stream, for there is none to keep even an animal away, so is it with Christ : "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

2. *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ?*

Why are you so busy about your ceremonies, your work-mongering, your feelings, none of which can yield food for your soul ? Come to Christ, and buy without money the Bread of Life which came down from heaven.

2. *And your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

If we will but hear the gospel, and attentively hear it, "faith cometh by hearing," and that faith leads us to Jesus Christ, and in him we find that which is substantial, solid, the very thing we need. We find in Christ all

that is super-excellent, so that our soul delights itself in fatness. I have no lean Christ to preach to you, no half-starved salvation, that will drag you into heaven, and save you "so as by fire." But in coming to Christ, you are invited to "let your soul delight itself in fatness." A Christian cannot be too happy; "the joy of the Lord" is beyond all description. You must taste it to prove its sweetness. As honey among the sweets, such is the joy of the Lord among joys; yea, as the sun amid the lesser lights in the sky, such is the joy of Christ compared with all other delights that men can ever know. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness."

3. *Incline your ear,*

You know what that means; bend forward, to catch the faintest utterance of the voice that is speaking.

3. *And come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live;*

We do not live by sight; all the pretty things that you can see in a Romish place of worship will not save a single soul. The preaching of the gospel is God's way of salvation: "Hear, and your soul shall live." Christ rides into the City of Mansoul through Ear-gate. Take heed what ye hear, and take heed how ye hear.

3. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

Think of God making a covenant with you; this is a very wonderful thing. You may almost leap for joy at the thought that God should ever enter into covenant with you. You think very little of yourself, and reckon yourself to be amongst the most obscure of mankind; "yet," says the Lord God, "I will strike hands with you, and be your Friend, and pledge my word to you; ay, and make a covenant with you, and an everlasting covenant it shall be, too. Surely, blessing, I will bless thee." Oh, what a wonder of divine grace it is that God should enter into covenant with sinful man!

"Even the sure mercies of David." You know what David this is; this is the Son of David, the inheritor of great David's name, "great David's greater Son."

4. *Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

Jesus Christ is a witness to you of his Father's love. I do not know how God could show his love more fully than he does in the life and death of his Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the great witness of the Father's love. Behold how he loves his people in that he gives his Son to die for them! Will you not clasp hands with God across this great sacrifice of his only-begotten Son? Let us do so now again as we have often done before. "I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." If he leads, let us follow; if he commands, let us obey. His command is, that we are to believe in his name, and to be baptized in his name; let us not be disobedient to any part of his holy will.

Now comes a promise made to our great Leader, our Covenant Head:—

5. *Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.*

That is, Jehovah has glorified Christ. It is promised that multitudes shall come to him. "Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not." He never saw you in his house before, he never knew you to fall on your knees in prayer, but he is calling even you by his grace and by his gospel. You are here to-night, and he is calling you, even you; therefore, come to him at once. There are some here who do not know Christ Jesus our Lord, they are strangers to his love and to his power to save, but the promise is that "nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee." That implies speed,

it is a double quick march. Oh, that many sinners would at once run to Christ! Some who often hear the gospel are very slow in coming to Christ; but I pray that some of you who do not know as much of it as they do may run to Christ at once, and be saved by him. It is a blessed thing to take Christ at the first time of asking. Love to Christ at first sight is the wisest kind of love that can be. May it be largely bestowed on many of you! Listen to these next words:—

6, 7. *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Hear the music of the glorious message, “he will have mercy,” “he will abundantly pardon.” Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you, he will abundantly pardon you.

8, 9. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Perhaps you are thinking that he cannot forgive you, that he cannot possibly mean that he will blot out your sins; but he does mean it, ay, and he is willing to do it now. Oh, that you would come to your pardoning God, through Jesus Christ his dear Son!

10—13. *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

Now let us read the 136th Psalm.

Psalm cxxxvi. Verses 1—3. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

In this Psalm we have the same refrain repeated twenty-six times. The words—“for his mercy endureth for ever,” were probably intended to be taken up as a chorus by all the people in and round about the temple at their solemn festivals. But, though there is repetition here, there is no tautology, for the saints of God are so fond of God’s praise that they can never have too much of it. I am sure that, if you have ever tasted the faithful mercy of God in covenant with his people, you will never hear this sentence once too often. “For his mercy endureth for ever” will be a sound that shall be most welcome to your ears.

You will observe that, first of all, the praise is to the Lord’s person: “O give thanks unto Jehovah . . . the God of gods . . . the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.” Next, the praise turns upon his works:—

4—9. *To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: the sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

In the works of creation, and in the dispensations of providence, we have

abundant proofs of the perpetuity of God's lovingkindness. No sooner have we experienced the blessings of the day than the mercies of the night follow quickly upon their heels. If we look up to the heavens, we have instances of God's mercy there, in kindling the stars, and lighting the sun and moon; and if we look upon the waters, and the land that standeth above them, we still see God's lovingkindness. That man is intensely blind who can see nothing of love and kindness in creation. You have but to open your eyes anywhere to see that the whole earth is full of the mercy of God. Still, the loudest song belongs to God's dealings with his Church; and, therefore, in the tenth verse, we come to God's deliverance of his peculiar people, his chosen Israel, in which we also have our share, for in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth are blessed this day.

10—15. *To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn : for his mercy endureth for ever : and brought out Israel from among them : for his mercy endureth for ever : with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm : for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which divided the Red sea into parts : for his mercy endureth for ever : and made Israel to pass through the midst of it : for his mercy endureth for ever : but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea : for his mercy endureth for ever.*

And you and I have experienced deliverances of a like kind. Our troubles have been overcome; our sins have been forgiven; we have been preserved by God's goodness, and guided by his wisdom. Let us, therefore, sing of that covenant faithfulness, and of that immutable truth, which have never left us.

16—18. *To him which led his people through the wilderness : for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which smote great kings : for his mercy endureth for ever : and slew famous kings : for his mercy endureth for ever :*

We are far too slow to recall the special mercies of God. We have here a bright example given us, not only to remember God's goodness in the lump, but in detail. We are, as it were, to take his mercies to pieces, that we may see fresh grounds for thanksgiving in every separate section.

19—23. *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. Who remembered us in our low estate : for his mercy endureth for ever :*

Here is a song for us: "Who remembered us in our low estate." We were brought low by sin, by conviction, by ignorance, by our own powerlessness; but, low as we were, "He remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever."

"He sent his Son with power to save  
From guilt, and darkness, and the grave ·  
Wonders of grace to God belong,  
Repeat his mercies in your song."

24—26. *And hath redeemed us from our enemies : for his mercy endureth for ever. Who giveth food to all flesh : for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven : for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Thus the Psalm finishes upon its key-note: "for his mercy endureth for ever." May that be the key-note both of our daily song and of our eternal hymn of praise unto the Lord! Amen.