

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A REFRESHING PROMISE.

A Sermon

WRITTEN AT MENTONE, BY

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“I will water it every moment.”—Isaiah xxvii. 3.

WHEN the Lord is most intent on justice he is at the same time earnest in his love. The day of vengeance of our God is also the acceptable year of the Lord. In the Scripture before us the prophet saith, “Behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity,” (Isa. xxvi. 21), and he foretells that the Lord will come forth as one armed with a great and strong sword to smite the fiercest of his enemies with a deadly wound (Isa. xxvii. 1); yet before he had bared his arm for the battle he prepared chambers of refuge for his people that they might dwell as within closed doors until the tempest of indignation was overpast (Isa. xxvi. 20). The shoutings of war did not prevent the Lord from remembering his beloved and his song of love concerning her, for he saith, “In that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment.” Happy people, who even in the day of wrath are satisfied with favour. Blessed heirs of grace who hear the just and terrible avenger say concerning them, “Fury is not in me” (verse 4).

The love of the Lord towards his whole church goes forth to each individual member thereof; the care which he displays towards the vineyard is exercised upon each vine which he has planted. So, then, we may without hesitation believe that the Lord will do for us personally that which he promises to do for his people as a whole; else would there have been exceptions stated, and the word would have run thus—“I will water a part of my vineyard, but a portion of the plants shall be left to be dried up. The Lord’s word is so truthful that it would never raise ungrounded expectations by general statements if there were, indeed, cases not included therein. We are always safe in concluding that if the Lord had meant to shut out one believing soul from a privilege he would have mentioned it, for he has not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth, anything which would militate against the happiness of any one of his people. This then, beloved friends, is the pledge of love concerning the spiritual life of my soul and yours, and the soul of every humble believer in Jesus,—“I will water it every moment.” This is a precious promise, and the more we meditate upon it the more rich will it appear. May we now be watered by the Holy Ghost while we meditate upon this promised watering.

Nos. 1,464-5.

In warm climates irrigation is essential to fertility ; hence, travellers see on all sides pools and watercourses, wheels and cisterns, and channels for the water to flow in. The watering arises from necessity, and it is carefully attended to, because otherwise the husbandman or gardener would look in vain for fruit. I remarked to a gardener in the South of France that the weather was bad, but he replied that it was good for the garden, for the rain gave plenty of water, and that was the chief thing. In Paradise it was no mean advantage to its verdant bowers that a fourfold river pursued its course through its midst, and that before the rain had fallen upon the earth there went up a mist from the earth and watered the face of the ground. From the necessity and value of water to the plants of the earth the Lord would teach us our own need of his grace, and the preciousness of that grace, and render his promise of supply the more delightful to our souls.

That we may prize the goodness of the Lord in the promises before us we shall consider *the necessity* of our being watered, *the manner* in which the Lord promises to supply our need, and *the certainty* that he will do so. O for a living meditation, not upon the letter of the word only, but upon its innermost teaching.

I. There is a great NECESSITY for the watering promised in the text. This we might conclude from the promise itself, since there is not one superfluous word of promise in the whole Scriptures, but it becomes more evident when we reflect that *all creature life is dependent upon the perpetual outgoing of divine power*. Existence is a continued creation, for the creatures have no power within themselves to preserve their own being ; even the solid rocks and the great mountains would melt away as so many shadows if eternal omnipotence did not every moment keep them in being. The world is not like a wheel, which, having received a great push from a strong hand, continues to revolve long after the hand is withdrawn ; but the divine energy goes forth continually to uphold all things which it has made. Now, the same law holds good in the more choice and illustrious works of God in the kingdom of grace, and multitudes of illustrations of this are to be found in Holy Writ. Believers are stones, but their upholding comes continually from the foundation ; they are branches sucking nourishment perpetually from the stem, members of the body always deriving life from the Head. Towards God we are streams and not fountains ; rays of light, not suns ; lamps which must be trimmed and nourished with oil ; sheep which need unceasing care and feeding. The inner life cannot live upon itself. It is one mark of its presence that the believer is not only dependent as a creature, but feels it as a living, sensible, instructed, and trustful creature. The Christian has no quarrel with the hint of utter weakness which is implied in the text, for he is right well aware that he must be each moment watered or he will dry up from the root and cease to be.

Moreover, the truth is specially certain as touching the believer, for *a multitude of agencies are at work to dry up the moisture of his soul*. As far as this world is concerned, he is planted in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ; his sorrows tend to parch him, like a hot wind from the desert, and earthly joys are still more like a sirocco which burns as an oven. Satan's temptations scorch and wither our hearts

unless the water of life is abundantly laid at our root ; and the men of the world act after the same manner. If we trusted in ourselves we should soon be as the heath in the desert, or as the grass upon the housetops. Indwelling sin especially is a devouring blast, and would, if it acted without check and counterbalance, turn the garden of the soul into a desolate wilderness. We are as plants set in the blaze of a tropical sun, upon which a burning oven pours forth its tremendous heat. One moment without divine watering and shading would dry us up root and branch.

Neither have we any other source of supply but the living God. "All my springs are in thee." We have the ordinances and means of grace, but we cannot of ourselves fetch a blessing from them : the Spirit of God is as the dew and the rain, but we cannot command his influences, these lie altogether at the sovereign disposal of the Lord. To convince us of our utter impotence in the matter the Lord asks us in the book of Job, "Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds that abundance of water may cover thee?" No, the bottles of heaven drop at Jehovah's bidding, and unless his good pleasure gives the land its refreshment "the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together," the brooks are dried up, and the springs of water fail. None can afford us a drop of spiritual water unless the infinite depths of divine grace overflow to us and the Lord visits the heart and waters it from the river of God, which is full of water. Hence the need that we cry with David, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee : my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land."

Remember, also, that our need of divine watering is clearly seen when we consider *what drought, and barrenness, and death would come upon us if his hand were withdrawn.* Then would be fulfilled in us the prophecy of Jeremiah, "Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters : they came to the pits, and found no water ; they returned with their vessels empty ; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads." Then would our leaf wither and our root fail ; as for fruit, there would be none, and we should be only fit for the burning. Without watering every moment the most faithful among us would be cast forth, and be only fit for the fire ; every prophet would become a Balaam, every apostle a Judas, every disciple a Demas. We must be watered, and watered every moment, or we die. Lord, save us, we perish. Look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted.

II. This point is clear, and our experience daily brings it under our notice. Let us now carefully regard THE MANNER in which the Lord promises to water his people—"I will water it every moment."

Our first thought is excited by *the perpetual act*—"every moment" the Lord will water the vineyard. There is never a moment in which it ceases to need it, and, therefore, the supply is as constant as the demand. He further says, "Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day," so that at all hours of the night, as well as of the day, the Lord's care is over his people. Mercy knows no pause. Grace has no canonical hours, or rather all hours are alike canonical : yea, and all moments too.

We may stay our asking, but God doth not stay his giving. We may not perceive the flowings of his grace, and yet they are never suspended, no, not for a moment, or else it were not true,—“I will water it every moment.” This leads us to rest assured of our final perseverance, since his perseverance in watering will produce our perseverance in budding, leafing, and fruit-bearing, else were his watering in vain, his grace ineffectual, and his purpose defeated, and it would not be true that none had hurt the vineyard. Glory be to the great Keeper of the vines, he will give a good account of his charge, saying, “Of all that thou gavest me I have lost none.” Between here and heaven there will never be a moment in which the Lord will not water his people, and therefore never a moment in which they will be dried up, and so left to perish. Let faith lay hold of this and gather strength from it.

Nor is this all—the Lord’s watering is a *renewed act*. He does not water us once in great abundance, and then leave us to live upon what he has already poured out. He does not cause so much rain to fall in one day as may water the earth for seven years, or there could not then be a daily dependence upon him for rain and dew; neither does he give grace enough to his servants at any one time to serve them for a month, or a week, or a day, or even an hour, but he waters them “every moment” that they may know that at no one instant of time can they do without him. He placed the whole fountain of living water in his Son, for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, but in our case he husbands his showers that we may seek and obtain new outflowings of the eternal life, and every moment come under new debts to his infinite love. It is very sweet to have it so, for thus we have each moment a reason for coming to him, inasmuch as every moment he has something to impart to us. If we are conscious at this moment of our poverty we need not despair, nor even hang our heads, for the next moment has its appointed watering, and ere the clock has ticked faith may receive a flood of grace, according to the promise: “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”

Attention should be gratefully directed to the fact that the watering promised by the Lord is a *personal act*: “I will water it.” Apollos waters, but he cannot do it of himself, nor can he do it every moment, nor at all except as an instrument in the hands of God. The Lord doth his work effectually; as in creation he spake not in vain, but he spake and it was done, so in grace he waters, and we are watered indeed. Sweet is the truth that we are not left to second causes or agents; these might fail us in the hour of need, yea, they must prove liars unto us if we depended on them, for it would be impossible for any of them, or all of them put together, to water us every moment; but the all-sufficient God out of the measureless stores of grace can and will, in his own person, supply all his saints for ever, giving them to be filled with his fulness and never to know a lack. Not even to angels has he left the care of his saints, but he himself, through the mediation of his dear Son, doth every moment keep and water us by his effectual grace.

How condescending is this on the Lord’s part! He who leads forth the stars by their armies bows the heavens to visit your soul and mine,

taking care that there shall be a channel for the water of life to flow to the poorest and meanest of his people. How near this brings the Lord to us, and what an idea it gives us of his perpetual active presence. As the gardener stands over the plant, gently pouring the water all around it and upon it, so as to feed the roots and wash the leaves, even so doth the Lord as it were stand over his people, watching over them for good, and dispensing his grace with all wisdom and prudence as they are able to receive it. Our necessity calls for his abiding presence, and his love vouchsafes it. Every moment is the Lord near us, for every moment he waters us. Every moment does he love us, because his love is actively demonstrating itself in condescending actions. His love suggests the watering, and the watering proves his love. He is never weary of the work which he has himself undertaken in love, and which he will not delegate to others because he is so well pleased with doing it himself.

III. This much suffices to fill our slender space : let us now, in the third place, consider THE CERTAINTY that the Lord will water every plant that his own right hand hath planted. Here a vast number of arguments suggest themselves, but we will content ourselves with the one ground of confidence which is found in the Lord himself and his previous deeds of love. The Lord our God is true and cannot lie, and therefore if he says, "I will water it" we need no further guarantee that it will be done. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" Has he ever broken the word which has once gone out of his mouth? Assuredly not. The Lord is mighty, and cannot therefore leave his promise unfulfilled from want of power to make it good. He may safely say "I will," because nothing is impossible with him. Man's "I will" is often an empty boast, never is it so with the Lord of hosts. Our souls need supplies so great as to drain rivers of grace, but the all-sufficient God is able to meet the largest demands of the innumerable company of his people, and he will meet them to his own honour and glory for ever. Here, then, we see his truth, his power, and his all-sufficiency all pledged to provide for his chosen, and we may be sure that the guarantee will stand.

The immutability and omnipresence of God both speak to the like effect. The Lord has watered his people hitherto, and as he cannot change they may expect the like treatment at his hands. He will neither revoke his promise nor cease from fulfilling it. Moreover, he can be with his needy servants every moment, as his promise implies ; for it will never be said of him, "Peradventure he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or he sleepeth and must be awakened." While he is working in heaven and on earth, and in all deep places, yet can his gracious hand be busy among the tender plants of his grace, and that at all times, yea every moment.

If we needed further confirmation we might well remember that the Lord has already watered his vineyard in a far more costly manner than it will ever need again. The Lord Jesus has watered it with a sweat of blood, and can it be supposed that he will leave it now? Gethsemane wrought for the church much beyond any future need which can possibly arise to her ; he who spared not his own blood will not withhold watering from those he has redeemed. Dear friend, you and I have already cost the Saviour so much that there is no fear of his

parting with us, or losing his reward in us, by giving us over to barrenness. Jesus has already fulfilled on our behalf a weightier engagement than that which is contained in the text. He said "I will redeem it," and he has kept his word; and now if he declares "I will water it," it would be a superfluity of unbelief to distrust his word.

Hitherto the sacred promise has been fully kept, for we have been graciously preserved in spiritual life. Droughty times have befallen us, and yet our soul has not been suffered to famish; why, then, should we question the goodness of the Lord as to years to come? His delight is in us as much as ever, because Jesus, in whom he beholds us, is as fair and lovely as ever, and therefore we may expect the same kindness from the same loving heart. He has not only pledged himself to water his people, but again and again has he spoken to the same effect. Hear how Isaiah speaketh by the Holy Ghost—"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Jeremiah also speaketh to the same effect in his thirty-first chapter at the twelfth verse. Shall the Lord run back from his covenant? Shall we so much blaspheme his name as to suppose that he will be false to his engagements? Unbelief, hide thy guilty head. Doubting one, be comforted. He who said, "I will water it every moment" must not be dishonoured by thy guilty suspicions, for he will do even as he hath said. It is true thy heart is by nature barren and dry, but what has that to do with the promise of free grace so as to render it of none effect? Is not thy parched and desolate condition the rather to be viewed as a reason why the Lord should open the windows of heaven above thee and pour out his blessing?

One thing is never to be forgotten—we are the Lord's. Therefore, if he do not water us, he will himself be the loser. An owner of vine-lands, if he should suffer them to be parched with the drought, would derive nothing from his estate; the vineyard would be dried up, but he himself would receive no clusters. With reverence be it spoken, our Lord himself will never see of the travail of his soul in untended vines, nor in hearts unsanctified and unrenewed, nor in men whose graces droop and die for want of divine refreshings. The Lord must carry the work through, or lose what he hath wrought, and that would not be consistent with the foresight of his wisdom, or the purpose of his heart. He chose us, he bought us, he delights in us, he put his very glory in pawn concerning us, and we may therefore be sure beyond all peradventure that he will water us to the end.

Does he water us every moment? Then let his praise continually be in our mouths. Doth he thus care for us? Let us, then, watch for the advance of his cause, the extension of his kingdom, the good of his people. He who is thus watered should water others. If the Lord puts within us a well of living water through his divine watering, then let us give forth to others rivers of living water. Yet let not this be our first thought, but rather let us go away crying, "Lord, make my soul as a watered garden. Saturate my fleece, fill my vessel to the brim, and keep it full for ever. Fulfil this word unto thy servant, upon the which thou hast caused me to hope, and water me every moment, *even me.*"