

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SONG OF SONGS.

A Sermon

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“Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.”—Isaiah xlv. 23.

No doubt this prophecy had *a* fulfilment in the restoration of the captive Jews from Babylon, in the rebuilding of the temple, and the completion of the walls of Jerusalem. This made the nation rejoice with unspeakable joy, and made them cry, “Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.” This was *a* fulfilment, but not the fullest accomplishment of the soul-stirring prophecy before us, a larger blessing was yet to come, to make every word emphatic and to enlarge the area of the joy till all the earth and all the spheres of heaven should take part in it. I shall spend no time upon the minor meanings of the passage, but speak at once of that redemption, of which all the rest are but types, the redemption of the true Israel of God by Christ Jesus our Lord. To that redemption the words of our text are pre-eminently applicable. “Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.”

In considering the text we shall first *survey the scenery of the prophecy*; secondly, we shall *contemplate the exceedingly glorious subject for joy*. Having attended to both of these matters, we will for a little while *listen to the song*; and then, in the last place, if the Spirit of God shall graciously help us, *we will join in the universal chorus*.

I. LET US SURVEY THE SCENE. The scene of our text is noteworthy. We saw its earthly parallel yesterday. The heavens were overcast, the clouds were dense, the sky was black, the sun was obscured, and albeit it is near Midsummer a chill came over us. Far overhead rolled the loud thunder, the dread artillery of heaven pealed forth as in the day of the Lord's battle. We expected a terrific

tempest, and timid hearts began to quail. Who knew where the bolts of heaven might fall, and what mischief the flames of fire might work? The coward's fears were groundless, the storm had gathered for other fields than ours. There fell a shower which blessed the earth.

“Down, down they come, those fruitful showers!
 Those earth-rejoicing drops!
 A momentary deluge pours,
 Then thins, decreases, stops.
 And ere the dimples on the stream
 Have circled out of sight,
 Lo! from the sun a joyous gleam
 Breaks forth, of amber light.”

Then the ever gracious Lord hung out across the heavens his bow of beauty, the covenant token, as if to assure us that he was not about to destroy the earth with a flood. Anon the swift winds blew, and cloud after cloud disappeared, till as we went forth to walk beneath the gladsome trees, and amidst the laughing flowers, the thick clouds had gone and above us was the blue serene of heaven. Tempest and bolt of terror were far removed, heaven shore on earth, and earth smiled back on heaven. On such a spiritual scene the prophet fixed his eye, and he pictured it in the verse which precedes my text. A cloud, even a thick cloud of sin shut out the light of God's countenance from his people, and turned its dark side on their upward gazing eyes. Sins and transgressions interposed like a curtain, nay, rather like a wall of brass, between the sinful people and their God, so that their prayers could not pass through to him, nor could his favour shine down on them. They cowered down in terror, as they heard the voice of God threatening judgment, and they expected every moment that he would overthrow them in his wrath. Lo, instead thereof, the Lord hung out the covenant rainbow, gospel promises were seen, Jesus was set forth as the great atoning sacrifice; and as men looked upon him gleams from the light of God's countenance filled them with hope. Nor did they hope in vain, for anon the Lord fulfilled, as in a moment, the word wherein it is written, “I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.” So, going forth and returning to their God beneath that clear sky, from which the Sun of Righteousness shone down with beams of love, the forgiven people were filled with rejoicing, and by the mouth of the prophet they cried aloud, “Sing, O heaven, clouds veil thee no longer; shout, ye lower parts of the earth, which have been refreshed with fertilising showers; shout, O ye forest trees, whose every bough has been hung with diamond drops; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.” Thus the scenery of the text is helpful to the full understanding of it. Read the two verses together, and their beauty is seen.

When did the joyous event take place which we are bidden to celebrate with song? We may consider it as virtually accomplished *in the eternal counsels of God*, for our Lord is “the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.” When the covenant was made between the Father and the Son, and Jesus undertook to die as a substitute for his chosen people, then the cloud was gone and the Lord could look

upon his elect with complacency, as redeemed by their Surety's pledge. Viewing them as guilty, his holy eyes could not endure them, but looking upon them as in Christ Jesus, regarding them through the atonement, he cast their iniquities behind his back, and was well pleased with them "for his righteousness' sake." At the thought of the covenant "ordered in all things and sure" the universe of intelligent beings may well rejoice, for therein man's redemption and God's glory are joined together by an eternal decree. On the strength of that covenant multitudes entered heaven before the great Surety had shed his blood; it was therefore a legitimate theme for holy song before the long appointed day had dawned.

The clouds were actually removed *when the atonement was presented*. In the fulness of time Jesus appeared, and up to the tree carried all the sins of his people. Having all his life long carried their sicknesses and sorrows, he bore the burden of sin to the place of its annihilation, and by his death he made an end of it. Apart from the atonement, the chosen of God, like other men, lay under sin; the black cloud was over all the race, but Jesus took the dense mass of all the transgressions of his people, past, present, and to come, and obliterated the whole, even as a cloud is blotted out from the face of heaven. Jesus took the whole incalculably ponderous load, all charged with tempest as it was, and bore it all upon those shoulders, which must have been crushed to the earth had they not been divine: on the tree he bore that sin and the wrath which was due to it, feeling all its crowded tempests in his own soul, until in that moment when he had borne all, and ended all, he sent up the victorious shout of "It is finished." Then shone forth the unclouded glory of boundless love; then was gone for ever the threatened storm; then righteousness sprang out of the earth, and peace looked down from heaven, and the reconciled ones might well exclaim, "Sing, O heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." Sin was put away, transgression was cast into the depths of the sea, and loud o'er all rang out the jubilant challenge—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? who is he that condemneth, now that Christ hath died?"

The text also receives an actual fulfilment to each one of God's people in the moment *when the eye of faith is first turned to the crucified Saviour*. I scarcely need to sketch that experience, for, my brethren, you know it well. Oh, the blackness of the darkness above; oh, the horror of the tempest within, in the dreadful hour of conviction of sin, when my weary soul longed for nothingness, that it might escape from its own hell. Oh the dread of the wrath to come. I saw all God's indignation gathering up to spend itself upon me, but glory be to God it spent itself elsewhere!

"The tempest's awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on thee!
Thy open bosom was my ward,
It braved the storm for me.
Thy form was scarr'd, thy visage marr'd,
Now cloudless peace for me."

Well do I remember the day in which I looked to Jesus and was lightened in a moment; the rain was over and gone, and all was peace and joy. Oh, that blessed day! I went forth with joy, and was led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills brake forth before me into singing, and all the trees of the field did clap their hands. Nor has the joy departed: for me the mountains still are singing, and the trees still clap their hands; for still my heart is glad within me at every mention of the precious name of Jesus, his blood still speaketh peace within my conscience, and his finished sacrifice is still my joy.

This also comes true not only at first, but *frequently during the Christian life*; for there are times when our unbelief makes new clouds, and threatens new storms. Though our sin was all forgiven at the very first, and when we were first washed we were clean every whit, so that we needed not ever afterwards to wash again, except to wash our feet, yet unbelief can revive the memories of sin, and defile the conscience with dead works, and so it can create clouds between us and God: nevertheless, when our Lord reveals himself he blotteth out our sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud our transgressions, and again we return unto him and rejoice in him. We need not come under these returning glooms, and we ought not to do so; but should it happen to us that we come under a cloud, it will be a blessed thing to look up and remember that the Lord can clear the skies in a moment, and turn our dreariest shades into the brightness of the morning.

The text will obtain its best fulfilment, methinks, *at the day of the Lord's appearing*,—that day around which our chief hopes must ever centre. The day will come when the gospel shall have been preached for the last time, when the chosen of God shall have been all gathered out from among men, and the dispensation shall be fulfilled. Then shall all the saints rise to glory at the call of God. The elect multitude shall be all there, every one according to the purpose of the Father, every one according to the redemption of the Son, every one according to the calling of the Spirit, all there; upon their faces there shall be no spot nor wrinkle, and on their garments no stain nor defilement, for they are without fault before the throne of God. Then as the books are opened, and the transgressions of the ungodly are published under heaven, they shall stand without trembling, for

“Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
Their beauty are, their glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall they lift up their head.”

Yes, and *we* shall be there who have believed in Jesus, every one of us; and with what delight, as we reflect upon our sins, shall we see the all-covering atonement, the cross which crucified our sins, the sepulchre which swallowed up in an eternal death all our transgressions, the ascension which led captivity captive, and the second coming which gave to us the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body, and perfected us so that no trace of sin's mischief can be found upon us. No damage shall be sustained by our humanity; we shall come up out of the furnace of life's trial with not the smell of fire upon us. Though the temptation and the guilt were like a seven times heated furnace,

yet, because he, the Son of God, came into the burning furnace with us, we shall live and come forth unscathed, and in the last day our humanity shall have suffered no harm, but shall even be brighter and better than if it had never fallen. Ah, what notes will be heard; not the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, as in the days of Babylon's idolatries, but blessed songs of holy adoration shall be heard, to which angels' harmonies shall keep tune, and this shall be the hymn—"Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

II. We have now reached the second part of our subject, and therefore LET US CONTEMPLATE THE GLORIOUS SUBJECT FOR JOY. The great subject of joy is *redemption*—the redemption of God's Israel. *This is a stupendous work.* It was a simple matter for man to sell himself into slavery, but to redeem him was another matter. This is the work, this is the labour! To redeem man from his iniquity is a work which all the cherubim and seraphim could not have accomplished, a work indeed which all creatureship would have failed to perform. My brethren, our slavery was terrible, and the price of deliverance was far beyond mountains of silver and gold. The redemption of the soul is precious; "it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold." As there needed a price, so there was needed a power, to redeem; for with a high hand and an outstretched arm must Israel be brought out of Egypt; and where could such power be found? Neither angel nor archangel possessed it, and as for the sons of man, the insects which dance through a summer's eve are not more feeble. Hopeless is human bondage unless the malice and craft and power of Satan can be matched by love and wisdom and force superior at all points. The price has been found, the power has been displayed. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord has found a ransom! We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, and that price has effectually set us free. Break forth into singing, ye mountains, for the Lord hath also found the power: his own right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory! He has brought up his people out of the house of bondage and made them free indeed.

Of redemption, redemption by price and by power, we are bidden to sing, a redemption so *pre-eminently desirable* that we can never sufficiently value it, a redemption which has delivered us from sin, of all slaveries the worst. "Sin shall not have dominion over you;" Christ has effectually redeemed you from its tyrannic sway. You enjoy also deliverance from the curse of the law, by Christ's being made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." You are blest with deliverance from misery; wherever there is sin misery is sure to follow, but Jesus has borne the penalty for your sins and turned it aside from you. You are delivered from carking care, and unbelieving anxiety; the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps your heart and mind by Jesus Christ. And you are delivered from death and hell. Let this thought thrill you with delight: in your ear can never ring the doleful sentence, "Depart, ye

cursed": for you there is no bottomless pit, no fire which cannot be quenched, no worm which never can die. Christ has delivered you; you are no longer slaves to sin and victims to death, for you are set free from the thralldom of Satan's power, who hath the power of death. He may tempt, but he cannot force; he may provoke, but he cannot subdue: Christ has undone the devil's work, has cast him down from his throne, and torn up his stronghold; his empire over you is ended, never to be renewed. In you who have believed the Lord has set up his throne, and there will he reign for ever. Glory be to God for this. The Lord's redemption is the theme of ceaseless praise, for it is a redemption which brings in its train hope, holiness, and heaven, deliverance from sin, likeness to Christ, and eternal glory with Christ. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth!

Brethren, the very centre and emphasis of the song seems to me to lie in this: "*The Lord hath done it.*" How my heart delights in those five words, "The Lord hath done it!" Look at them for a minute. Whatever God does is the subject of joy to all pure beings. God in action is the delight of an intelligent universe. When God created the world, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. I can well conceive that they kept a more than ordinarily joyous festival on that Seventh Day, when the Lord "rested and was refreshed." Wondrous expression! If we were perfect, everything that God did would cause us to sing, and as he is always acting we should be always singing. Ay, if he smote us, it would make us bless him, if we were clean divorced from sin. If salvation were the work of man, our scantiest notes might suffice, for what is man but a worm, a creature that is crushed before the moth? Wherein is he to be accounted of? But when we sing of redemption it is the Lord's redemption. He planned it from the beginning, he carried it out in the person of his Son, he applies it by his Holy Spirit. Salvation is of the Lord. "The Lord hath done it." You who choose may invent a salvation that is partly by man and partly by God, and you may cry this up much as you please; as for me, I have no desire for any salvation but that which is all of God, neither is there any other. This one note shall occupy my entire being—"The Lord hath done it:" "The Lord hath done it." Every new convert who has newly found peace knows that the Lord has done it; every man who has been for years a believer, and has learned his own weakness, will say clearly, "The Lord hath done it;" ay, and the aged Christian just about to depart is the man to say, "The Lord hath done it." Grace reigns without a rival, the Lord alone is exalted. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful O earth, for redemption is Jehovah's work.

It is sweet to reflect that *redemption is an accomplished fact.* It is not "The Lord will do it," but "The Lord hath done it." If I were sent this morning as a prophet to tell you that the Lord would become incarnate, and bleed, and die on Golgotha, I hope that some would believe it; but it may be you would find it difficult to realise it, and as Abraham did to see Christ's day, and be glad; for it is a marvel not to be believed at all except upon divine testimony that God himself should make atonement for injury done to his own moral government. But I have to-day to speak of a matter of history—"The Lord hath

done it"; he who was the offended one has provided a propitiation; his own deed of transcendent grace has scattered the thick clouds of sin, and poured eternal day upon the darkened earth. Jesus has bled and died, and vanquished sin thereby. Our glorious Samson lay asleep in the Gaza of the tomb, and his foes thought they had him fast for ever; but he awoke before the morning light, and he pulled up the gates of death and hell, post and bar and all, and carried them away, leading captivity captive. He hath done it, our divine deliverer has spoiled death and the grave for us. "Sing, O ye heavens: shout, ye lower parts of the earth." The Breaker is gone up before us, and our King at the head of us; he hath broken up and cleared a pathway straight from the tomb to the throne of God. Glory be to his name, he has done it.

We may lay peculiar force upon the word, "The Lord hath *done* it," for *he has finished the work*. In the matter of the redemption of his people nothing remains to be done. There is no mortgage on the church of God to be ultimately discharged, the Lord has made us his unencumbered freehold, and we are his own portion for ever. There is not a little left of human merit for the sinner to work out for himself, or some little point in which the work of salvation is incomplete; but "The Lord hath done it." No, brethren, even the fringe of the robe of righteousness is all there; you have not a thread to add to it, it is without seam, and woven from the top throughout, all of one piece. *Consummatum est*. "It is finished," every type fulfilled, every commandment kept, every sin abolished, the wrath of God and everything that hindered put away. "The Lord hath done it." The heavens sang when Jesus came to do the deed, they woke the silence of the sheepfolds when the heavenly babe was born; how must they sing now that he has finished the work which was committed to him, and perfected for ever all those who were set apart! I cannot speak on such a theme; language is too poor a medium for the expression of my grateful joy. I wish that we could pause and sing the text—"The Lord hath done it: he hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

A very important part of the song, however, lies in the fact that *what God has done glorifies himself*. Infinite mercy and condescending love reflect glory upon God. What a subject for a Dr. Owen to write upon—the attributes of God as displayed and glorified in redemption. He would need a score of volumes, all crowded with such condensed thought as he was wont to give forth. What a chapter should be written on the *wisdom* of redemption! What another chapter upon the *justice* of it! How the Lord would not pardon sin without a sacrifice, because he was just, and could not tolerate iniquity. What another chapter, nay, what tomes upon tomes, might be composed upon the *love* of redemption! The fear would be that our finite minds, in beholding the brightness of one divine attribute, would be so dazzled as to forget the rest. Who can tell us, concerning the atonement, which of its letters best is writ, the wisdom, the justice, or the grace? In redemption you see all the attributes of God, blended in harmony, shining with benignant radiance, not with the flash and flame of Sinai, but with the soft beams of peace and love from Calvary. God is never

so gloriously seen as at the cross; no, not even amidst the flaming seraphim do the saints above enjoy such a view of God as when they see him in the wounds of Jesus, and putting their finger into the print of the nails, exclaim with transport, "My Lord and my God."

Why, my brethren, the Lord has not only illustrated every one of his attributes in the great plan of redemption, but he has been pleased to show how the goodness of his nature triumphs over all the power of evil. Satan seemed to have gained a great advantage over God when he poisoned our race with his venom; the advantage was but temporary, and it ended in his greater defeat. Little did he know that by his craft and malice he was preparing a black background for divine love to lay its lovely tints upon, that they might be the more conspicuous. How art thou baffled in thy dark designs, O Lucifer! How art thou vanquished, O thou enemy! How art thou spoiled, O thou spoiler! How art thou led captive, O captivity! Thou thoughtest that man would be thy weak and willing instrument with which to show thy spite against the Most High, but lo, man, whom thou didst disgrace and dishonour, triumphs over thee on God's behalf. The seed of the woman whom thou didst beguile has been wiser than thou; his bruised heel has been the breaking of thy head; while he hath all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea. The man Christ Jesus is Lord of all, and at his name all creatures bow the knee. Even the devils are subject unto him, and evil is overruled for good. See how the Lord "frustrateth the token of the liars, and maketh diviners mad." Let the Lord be praised for ever and ever.

The Lord has also glorified himself by raising up a race of creatures such as could not have been created by mere power, at least, so far as we can judge. God has a company of angels to worship him, but they never knew evil, and consequently their choice of good is not so marvellous. They are also of an ethereal nature, and are not cumbered with material bodies of flesh and blood. The Lord might have created myriads more of pure spirits like the angels, but he desired to be served and loved by beings who should be in part material, and yet should be akin to himself: beings who should possess freedom of will, and should know both good and evil, and yet should for ever choose good alone. Behold how such creatures have been produced! Not so much by creation as by redemption. The glorified once plunged deep into sin, but they were, without a violation of their free agency, recovered to their allegiance by the love of Jesus, and then lifted up into such a position that in Christ Jesus they are akin to God himself, so that no order of beings intervenes between them and God; and yet they never will nor can presume, nor take ambitious advantage of their elevated position. If God were to create free agents, knowing both good and evil, and put them where men will be in heaven, without their undergoing any preparatory process, it would be a dangerous experiment; but for him to let them know evil to the full, and yet be for ever bound to perfect holiness, because infinite love sways them with omnipotent obligations of gratitude,—this is to make creatures which bring exceeding glory to their author. These are not merely fashioned

on his wheel, but dipped into the blood of his own suffering self, and indwelt by his own mighty power, and well may they be precious in his sight. "Glory, glory, how the angels sing"; but far louder are the notes of the redeemed. "Glory, glory," thrice and sevenfold told is that which comes from those loud harps of ransomed ones, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lord hath glorified himself in Israel.

I cannot linger here, though the subject fascinates me, for I have to say somewhat upon the third point, which is,

III. LET US LISTEN TO THE SONG. The angels sing, for they have deep sympathy with the redemption of man, the redeemed in glory sing, for they have been the recipients of this mighty mercy, the material heavens themselves also ring with the sweet music, and every star takes up the refrain, and with sun and moon praise the Most High.

Descending from heaven, the song charms the lower earth, and the prophet calls upon materialism to share in the joy; mountains and valleys, forests and trees, are charged to join the song. Why should they not? This round earth of ours has been o'ershadowed by the curse through sin; she has yet to be unswathed of all the mists which iniquity has cast upon her, for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Therefore let creation sing. What mountain is there that has not been defiled with idolatry? Lo, the altars of Chemosh and the high places of Baal! But sing, ye mountains, for the God of the hills is revealed, and has purged you, by the blood of Calvary. What valley is there which man has not polluted with sin? In the plains, which should have been sacred to peaceful harvests, men have shed the blood of their fellows in fierce battle, and cities have been builded which have become the strongholds of iniquity. But sing, ye valleys and ye fruitful plains, for the Lord shall walk through you, and make you as the valley of Barachah, where the men of Judah sang, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever"; therefore the name of the place was called the valley of Blessing unto this day. Ye forests, where wild beasts have been invaded by still wilder men, break forth into singing, for no more shall the destroying hand of the Lord be upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan! Ye groves, which have witnessed the cruel rites of bloody worship, sing; for adown your aisles shall now be heard the holy hymn which chants redeeming love. O ye green trees, under which men have polluted themselves, beneath your shade shall saintly spirits find retreats prepared for prayer and praise. Break forth into singing, ye mountains! Sing, O Moriah, on whose summit the patriarch drew his knife to slay his son, for the true Isaac has been offered up, God has provided for himself a lamb! Sing, O Sinai, for the law proclaimed from thy awful summit has now been magnified and rendered honourable! Sing, O Pisgah, for now that Christ has died, from thy peak may be seen a promised land into which the servants of the Lord shall not be denied an entrance! Sing, O Carmel, for the controversy between God and Baal has been decided once for all! Sing, O Hermon,

for now the gentle dews of brotherly love shall fall upon mankind; and keep not silent, O Gilboa, once accursed, for the Son of David gives thee back thy dew! Sing, O Tabor, for Messiah transfigured has become the image of the future race! Sing, O Olivet, for where Jesus groaned and bled he comes to plant his foot to establish for ever bliss and holiness! The text exhorts the lower parts of the earth to shout, and well they may, for in the hands of the redeeming Lord are the deep places of the earth. Let the valleys respond to the song of the hills. Shout, O valley of Shaveh, thou that are called the king's vale, for now the great Melchizedek hath brought forth the true bread and wine for the seed of Abraham! Shout, O Eshcol, for thy richest clusters are outdone by the true vine, which the Lord hath planted! O valley of the Jordan shout, for in thy river the Redeemer was baptised! O valley of Baca rejoice, for the Lord Jesus has filled thy pools! O vale of Achor shout, for thou art now a door of hope! O ye wildernesses and solitary places, be glad, for redemption shall make you blossom as the rose! Let every tree in the forest bless the Lord, let each one yield boughs with which to strew the way before the lowly prince. Fruitful trees and all cedars, praise ye the Lord! Adown the fir trees' pillared shade let the soft murmur of praise be heard; and beneath our island's giant oaks let the glorious gospel be proclaimed. Praise ye the Lord ye elms, as peace sports adown your ancient avenues; praise him ye far-spreading beeches, as beneath your umbrageous boughs the flocks feed in plenty; and you, ye pines, for ever clad in verdure, join ye the song. Let not a single herb be silent, nor even the hyssop upon the wall be dumb. I cannot reach "the height of this great argument," nor can any man beside, I ween, unless he were a Milton, and had a soul inspired at once with loftiest poetry and grace divine.

The meaning of the whole seems to be this, that wherever saints are they ought to praise God for redeeming love, whether they climb the Alps or descend into the plains; whether they dwell in the cities or walk in the quietude of the woods. In whatever state of mind they feel themselves they still should praise redeeming grace and dying love; whether on the mountain top of communion, or in the valley of humiliation; whether lifted up by prosperity or cast down by adversity. They should leave a shining trail of praise behind them in their daily course even as does the vessel when it ploughs the sea.

The text calls upon all classes and conditions of men to praise God for redemption. Ye that are lifted up like mountains,—magistrates, princes, kings, and emperors; and ye who lie beneath like plains, ye who eat bread in the sweat of your faces, ye children of poverty and toil, rejoice in redeeming love. Ye who dwell in the midst of sin as in a tangled forest, ye who have transgressed against God and plunged into the deep places of vice, be glad, for ye may be restored. All ye of woman born, together praise the Redeemer of Israel, for he has accomplished the salvation of his people!

IV. LET US JOIN IN THIS SONG. Mr. Sankey is now behind me, but he cannot sing sweetly enough to set forth to the full the majesty of this song, nor could the choicest choir of singing men and singing women; nay, this task exceeds the reach of the seraphim themselves.

Praise is silenced, O Lord, by the glory of thy love. Yet, brethren, let us give forth such music as we have.

Let us consider how we sing this song. We sing it when by faith we see the grand truth that Jesus Christ took his people's sin upon him, and so redeemed them. Understanding this fact, which is the heart of the gospel, we begin to sing for joy. Get a grip of that, my brethren, and hold it fast: your hearts will then sing; you cannot help it. Not all the harps of heaven can be more melodious than your song will be when your heart fully understands this fact—that Jesus Christ did actually stand in his people's stead, and finished transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness for them. You will sing it better still if the Holy Spirit has applied it to your own soul, so that you can say, "My sins are blotted out like a cloud, and like a thick cloud my transgressions." "Through Jesus' blood I am clean, I am accepted in the Beloved, I am dear to the heart of God, on me there remaineth now no spot nor wrinkle, for I am cleansed through Jesus Christ." Nothing else can bring forth such charming music from any man's mind as a sense of redeeming grace and dying love.

You will be still better able to sing this if you every day realise the blessings of redemption and pardon, by drawing near to God, using the privilege of prayer, trusting the Lord for everything, enjoying sonship, and communing with your heavenly Father. If you seek to bear the image of the heavenly as truly as you have borne the image of the earthly, if you are fully consecrated to the Lord's service, and are borne along by the irresistible current of divine love: oh, if it be so with you beloved, you will be for ever crying, "Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it."

I think I hear from different parts of the building the lament, "Alas, we cannot sing, for we have not believed in Jesus, and Christ has not put away our sin." Listen a minute, and I have done. Sinner, though you have not this redemption, yet I would have you sing about it, for it is precisely what you want. You are slaves to sin, and ought you not to bless God that there can be such a thing as *redemption*? If I had been a slave in the old slave days, even though I had small chance of being redeemed, yet the word redemption would have been a sweet morsel to me, and if I heard of others being redeemed, if I sang at all, I should choose for my theme redemption. So may you, poor soul. Many are redeemed, and are rejoicing in it; why should it not come to you? At any rate, begin to hope.

Rejoice, because salvation is a work done for you by another hand. "The Lord hath done it." A redemption in which you had to find a part of the price would not make you sing, for you are too poor to contribute a farthing; but the Lord has found the whole cost to the utmost penny. If ever you are saved, it must be by power beyond your own, for you are weak as water; be glad, then, that the Lord has done it. If you can ever get that thought into your mind (and I pray the Holy Ghost to put it there), that your salvation was completed on the tree by the Lord Jesus, why, methinks, you will with joy shout forth the Redeemer's praise.

Think again "the Lord hath done it," even he whom you have

offended. The God whom you have grieved has condescended to work out your redemption. Ought not this to make your soul say, "Would God it were for me"? and then begin to sing even at the bare possibility of such a thing.

Then, sinner, listen. Your sin can be blotted out. You have tried to remove the stain, but all in vain; that scarlet stain abides, and though you were to wash your hand in the Atlantic till you reddened every wave, that blot would never disappear: no finite power can ever remove the accursed spot. But it can be got out, for the text says he has blotted it out in the case of others. Why not, then, for you? This disease is not absolutely unto death: it may be cured. O man, those fetters are not, after all, eternal, they may be snapped; the bars in yonder window may be torn out, so that you can escape into liberty. Begin to sing, then! Alas, I know you will not because I bid you, nor at any man's bidding, till grace sets you free. The only thing to make you sing is for you to realise salvation, and oh may you do so at this moment by believing in Jesus. Have done with everything but Christ, and drop into his arms! Rest in him, trust him, depend upon him, and all is well, and then will you cry aloud, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it."

"Come every soul by sin oppressed,
 There's mercy with the Lord;
 And he will surely give you rest,
 By trusting in his word.
 Only trust him! Only trust him!
 Only trust him now!
 He will save you. He will save you.
 He will save you now."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah xlv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—96, 203, 428.