

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MICAH'S MESSAGE FOR TO-DAY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 1ST, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, August 22nd, 1889.

“Walk humbly with thy God.”—Micah vi. 8.

THIS is the essence of the law, the spiritual side of it; its ten commandments are an enlargement of this verse. The law is spiritual, and touches the thoughts, the intents, the emotions, the words, the actions; but specially God demands the heart. Now it is our great joy that what the law requires the gospel gives. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” In him we meet the requirements of the law, first, by what he has done for us; and next, by what he works in us. He conforms us to the law of God. He makes us, by his Spirit, not for our righteousness, but for his glory, to render to the law the obedience which we could not present of ourselves. We are weak through the flesh, but when Christ strengthens us, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Only through faith in Christ does a man learn to do righteously, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; and only by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifying us to that end do we fulfil these three divine requirements. These we fulfil perfectly in our desire; we would be holy as God is holy, if we could live as our heart aspires to live, we would always do righteously, we would always love mercy, and we would always walk humbly with God. This the Holy Spirit daily aids us to do by working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure; and the day will come, and we are pining for it, when, being entirely free from this hampering body, we shall serve him day and night in his temple, and shall render to him an absolutely perfect obedience, for “they are without fault before the throne of God.”

To-night I shall have a task quite sufficient if I dwell only upon the third requirement, “Walk humbly with thy God,” asking first, *What is the nature of this humility?* and secondly, *Wherein does this humility show itself?*

I. First, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS HUMILITY? The text is very full of teaching in that respect.

And, first, *this humility belongs to the highest form of character.* Observe what precedes our text, "to do justly, and to love mercy." Suppose a man has done that, suppose that in both these things he has come up to the divine standard, what then? Why, then he must walk humbly with God. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with him, still we shall need to walk before God very humbly, ever looking to the blood, for even then the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth and continues to cleanse us from all sin. If we have done both these things, we shall still have to say that we are unprofitable servants, and we must walk humbly with God. We have not reached that consummation yet, always doing justly, and loving mercy, though we are approximating to it by Christ's gracious help; but if we did attain to the ideal that is set before us, and every act was right towards man, and more, every act was delightfully saturated with a love to our neighbour as strong as our love to ourselves, even then there would come in this precept, "Walk humbly with thy God."

Dear friends, if ever you should think that you have reached the highest point of Christian grace,—I almost hope that you never will think so,—but suppose that you should ever think so, do not, I pray you, say anything that verges upon boasting, or exhibit any kind of spirit that looks like glorying in your own attainments; but walk humbly with your God. I do believe that the more grace a man has the more he feels his deficiency of grace. All the people that I have ever thought might have been called perfect before God, have been notable for a denial of anything of the sort; they have always disclaimed anything like perfection, they have always lain low before God, and if one has been constrained to admire them, they have blushed at his admiration. If they have thought that they were at all the objects of reverence among their fellow-Christians, I have noticed how zealously they have put that aside with self-depreciatory remarks, telling us that we did not know all, or we should not think so of them; and therein I do admire them yet more. The praise that they put from them returns to them with interest. Oh, let us be of that mind! The best of men are but men at the best, and the brightest saints are still sinners, for whom there is still a fountain open, but not opened, mark you, in Sodom and Gomorrah, but the fountain is opened for the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that even they may still continue, with all their lofty privileges, to wash therein, and to be clean. This is the kind of humility, then, which is consistent with the highest moral and spiritual character, nay, it is the very clothing of such a character, as Peter puts it, "Be clothed with humility," as if, after we had put on the whole armour of God, we put this over all to cover it all up. We do not want the helmet to glitter in the sun, nor the greaves of brass upon the knees to shine before men; but clothing ourselves like officers in mufti, we conceal the beauties which will eventually the more reveal themselves.

The second remark is this, *the humility here prescribed involves constant*

communion with God. Observe that we are told to walk humbly with God. It is of no use walking humbly away from God. I have seen some people very proudly humble, very boastful of their humility. They have been so humble that they were proud enough to doubt God. They could not accept the mercy of Christ, they said; they were so humble. In truth, theirs was a devilish humility, not the humility that comes from the Spirit of God. Oh, no! This humility makes us walk with God; and, beloved, can you conceive a higher and truer humility than that which must come of walking with God? Remember what Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Remember how Abraham, when he communed with God, and pleaded with him for Sodom, said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes;" "dust"—that set forth the frailty of his nature, "ashes"—as if he was like the refuse of the altar, which could not be burnt up, which God would not have. He felt himself to be, by sin, like the sweeping of a furnace, the ashes, refuse of no value whatsoever; and that was not because he was away from God, but because he was near to God. You can get to be as big as you like if you get away from God; but coming near to the Lord you rightly sing,—

"The more thy glories strike mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie."

Depend upon it that it is so. It might be a kind of weather-gauge as to your communion, whether you are proud or humble. If you are going up, God is going down in your esteem. "He must increase," said John the Baptist of the Lord Jesus; "but I must decrease." The two things go together; if this scale rises, that scale must go down. "Walk humbly with thy God." Dare to keep with God, dare to have him as your daily Friend, be bold enough to come to him who is within the veil, talk with him, walk with him, as a man walks with his familiar friend; but walk humbly with him. You will do so if you walk truly; I cannot conceive such a thing,—it is impossible,—as a man walking proudly with God. He takes his fellow by the arm, and feels that he is as good as his neighbour, perhaps superior to him; but he cannot walk with God in such a frame of mind as that. The finite with the Infinite! That alone suggests humility; but the sinful with the Thrice-holy! This throws us down into the dust.

But, next, *this humility implies constant activity.* "Walk humbly with thy God." Walking is an active exercise. These people had proposed to bow before God, as you notice in the sixth verse, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" But the answer is not, "Bow humbly before God," but "Walk humbly with God." Now, beloved, when we are very actively engaged, pressed with business, one thing after another coming in, if the great Master employs us in some large concern,—large, of course, only to us,—if we have work after work, we are too apt to forget that we are only servants, we are doing all the business for our Master, we are only commission agents for him. We are apt to think that we are the head of the firm; we should not think so if we did think

steadily for a moment, for we should know our right position ; but in the midst of activity we get cumbered with much serving, and we are too apt to get off our proper level. We have, perhaps, to rule others ; and we forget that we also are men under authority. It is easy to play the little king over the little folk ; but it must not be so. You must learn, not only to be humble in the closet of communion, and to be humble with your Bible before you, but to be humble in preaching, to be humble in teaching, to be humble in ruling, to be humble in everything that you do, when you have as much as ever you can do. When from morning to night you are still pressed with this and that service, still keep your proper place. That is where Martha went wrong, you know ; not in having much serving, but by getting to be mistress. She was Mrs. Martha, and the housewife is a queen ; but Mary sat in the servant's place at Jesus' feet. If Martha's heart could have been where Mary's body was, then had she served aright. The Lord make us Martha-Maries, or Mary-Marthas, whenever we are busy, that we may walk humbly with God !

Next, I do not think that it is far-fetched if I say that *this humility denotes progress*. The man is to walk, and that is progress, advancing. "Walk humbly : " I am not to be so humble that I feel that I cannot do any more, or enjoy any more, or be any better ; they call that humility. It begins with an S in English, and the full word is SLOTH. "I cannot be as believing, as bold, as useful as such a man is." Thou art not told to be humble and sit still, but to be humble and walk with God. Go forward, advance, not with a proud desire to excel your fellow-Christians, not even with the latent expectation of being more respected because you have more grace ; but still walk, go on, advance, grow. Be enriched with all the precious things of God ; be filled with all the fulness of God ; walk on, walk ever. Lie not down in despair ; roll not in the dust with desperation because thou thinkest high things impossible to thee ; walk, but walk humbly. Thou wilt soon find out, if thou dost make any progress, that thou hast need to be humble. I believe that when a man goes back he gets proud, and I am persuaded that when a man advances he gets humbler, and that it is a part of the advance to walk more and more and more humbly. For this the Lord tries many of us, for this he visits us in the night, and chastens us, that we may be qualified to have more grace, and get to higher attainments, by being more humble, "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." If thou wilt climb the mountain-side, thou shalt be thirsty among the barren crags ; but if thou wilt descend into the valleys, where the red deer wander, and the brooks flow among the meadows, thou shalt drink to thy full. Doth not the hart pant for the water-brooks ? Do thou pant for them ; they flow in the valley of humiliation. The Lord bring us all there !

Next, *the humility here prescribed implies constancy* : "Walk humbly with thy God." Not sometimes be humble ; but ever walk humbly with thy God. If we were always what we are sometimes, what Christians we should be ! I have heard you say, I think, and I have said the same myself, "I felt very broken down, and lay very low at my Master's feet." Were you so the next day ? And the day after did you continue so ? Is it not very possible for us to be one day, because

of our great debt to our Master, begging that he would not be hard with us, and is it not possible to-morrow to be taking our brother by the throat? I do not say that God's people would do that; but I do feel that the spirit that is in them may lead them to think of doing it, one day acknowledging your Father's authority, and doing his will, and another day standing outside the door, and refusing to go in because the prodigal son has come home. "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; I have been a consistent believer, yet I never have any high joys; but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. Here is a wretched sinner only just saved, and he is in an ecstasy of delight. How can this be right?" O elder son, O elder brother, walk humbly with thy Father! Always be so under any circumstances. It is all very fine to have a lot of humility packed away in a box with which to perfume your prayers, and then to come out, and to be "My lord," and some very great one in the midst of the church and in the world. This will never do. It is not said, "Bow humbly before God now and then;" but as a regular, constant thing, "Walk humbly with thy God." It is not, "Bow thy head like the bulrush under some conscious fault which thou canst not deny," but, in the brightness of thy purity, and the clearness of thy holiness, still keep thy heart in lowly reverence bowing before the throne.

Once more only, and then we will quit this part of the subject, *the humility that is here prescribed includes delightful confidence*. Do let me read the text to you, "Walk humbly with God." No, no, we must not maul the passage that way, "Walk humbly with *thy* God." Do not think that it is humility to doubt your interest in Christ; that is unbelief. Do not think that it is humility to think that he is another man's God, and not yours; "Walk humbly with *thy* God." Know that he is your God, be sure of it, come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved. Have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a doubt, that you are your Beloved's, and that he is yours. Rest not for a moment if there is any question upon this blessed subject. He gives himself to you; take him to be yours by a covenant of salt that never shall be broken; and give yourself to him, saying, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." "Walk humbly with thy God." Let not anything draw you away from that confidence; but then, in comes the humility. This is all of grace; this is all the result of divine election; therefore, be humble. You have not chosen Christ, but he has chosen you. This is all the effect of redeeming love; therefore, be humble. You are not your own, you are bought with a price, so you can have no room to glory. This is all the work of the Spirit.

"Then give all the glory to his holy name,
To him all the glory belongs."

"Walk humbly with thy God." I lie at his feet as one unworthy, and cry, "Whence is this to me? I am not worthy of the least of the mercies that thou hast made to pass before me." I think this is the humility prescribed in the text. May the Spirit of God work it in us!

II. And now, secondly, with great brevity upon many points, I

have to answer the question, WHEREIN DOES THIS HUMILITY SHOW ITSELF? I have what might be a long task; a Puritan would want an hour and a half more for the second part of the subject. Our Puritan forefathers preached, you know, by a glass, an hour-glass which stood by them, and sometimes, when they had let one glass run out at the end of the hour, they would say to the people, "Let us have another glass," and they turned it over again, and went on for another hour. But I am not going to do that, I do not wish to weary you, and I would rather send you away longing than loathing. Wherein, then, does this humility show itself? It ought to show itself in every act of life. I would not advise any of you to *try* to be humble, but to *be* humble. As to acting humbly, when a man forces himself to it, that is poor stuff. When a man talks a great deal about his humility, when he is very humble to everybody, he is generally a canting hypocrite. Humility must be in the heart, and then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs.

But now, specially, walk humbly with God *when your graces are strong and vigorous*, when there has been a very clear display of them, when you have been very patient, when you have been very bold, when you have been very prayerful, when the Scriptures have opened themselves up to you, when you have enjoyed a grand season of searching the Word, and especially when the Lord gives you success in his service, when there are more souls than usual brought to Christ, when God has made you a leader among his people, and has laid his hand upon you, and said, "Go in this thy might." Then, "Walk humbly with thy God." The devil will tell you when you have preached a good sermon; perhaps you will not have preached a good one when he tells you that you have, for he is a great liar; but you may go home wonderfully pleased with a sermon with which God is not pleased, and you may go home wonderfully humble about a sermon that God means to bless. But when there really does seem to be something that the evil one tempts you to glory in, then hear this word, "Walk humbly with thy God."

Next, *when you have a great deal of work to do*, and the Lord is calling you to it, then, before you go to it, walk humbly with God. Do you ask, How? By feeling that you are quite unfit for it, for you are unfit in yourself; and by feeling that you have no strength, for you have not any. When you are weak, by owning your weakness you will grow strong. Lean hard upon your God, cry to him in prayer. Do not open your own mouth, but from your heart pray, "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall speak forth thy praise." Be intensely subservient to the Spirit of God, yield yourself up to be worked upon by him, that you may work upon others. Oh, there is such a difference between a sermon preached by our own power and a sermon preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! If you do not feel the difference, my brother, your people will soon find it out.

"Oh, to be nothing, nothing!
Only to lie at his feet!"

Then it is, when walking humbly with God in service, that he will fill us, and make us strong.

Next, walk humbly with God *in all your aims*. When you are

seeking after anything, mind what your motive is. Even if it be the best thing, seek it only for God. If any man, or any woman either, tries to work in the Sunday-school, or if anyone preaches in the open-air, or in the house of God, with a view of being somebody, with the idea of being thought to be a very admirable, zealous brother or sister, then let this word come into your ear, "Walk humbly with thy God." There is a word which Jeremiah spoke to Baruch which we need to have said to ourselves sometimes: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." You young men of the College, do not be always hunting up big places; be willing to go to small places to preach the gospel to poor people. Never mind if the Lord sends you right down to the lowest slum; but go, and let your aim always be this, "I do not desire for myself anything great except the greatest thing of all, that I may glorify God." "Walk humbly with thy God." You are the kind of man who will be promoted in due time if you are willing to go down. In the true Church of Christ, the way to the top is downstairs; sink yourself into the highest place. I say not this that even in sinking you may think of the rising; think only of your Lord's glory. "Walk humbly with thy God."

Walk humbly with God, also, *in studying his Word, and in believing his truth.* We have a number of men, nowadays, who are critics of the Bible; the Bible stands bound at their bar, nay, worse than that, it lies on their table to be dissected, and they have no feeling of decency towards it; they will cut out its very heart, they will rend asunder its tenderest parts, even the precious Song of Solomon, or the beloved apostle's Gospel, or the Book of the Apocalypse, is not sacred in their eyes. They shrink from nothing, their scalpel, their knife, cuts through everything. They are the judges of what the Bible ought to be, and it is deposed from its throne. God save us from that evil spirit! I desire ever to sit at the feet of God in the Scriptures. I do not believe that, from one cover to the other, there is any mistake in it of any sort whatever, either upon natural or physical science, or upon history or anything whatever. I am prepared to believe whatever it says, and to take it believing it to be the Word of God; for if it is not all true, it is not worth one solitary penny to me. It may be to the man who is so wise that he can pick out the true from the false; but I am such a fool that I could not do that. If I do not have a guide here that is infallible, I would as soon guide myself, for I shall have to do so after all; I shall have to be correcting the blunders of my guide perpetually, but I am not qualified to do that, and so I am worse off than if I had not any guide at all. Sit thou down, Reason, and let Faith rise up. If the Lord hath said it, let God be true, and every man a liar. If science contradicts Scripture, so much the worse for science; the Scripture is true, whatever the theories of men may be. "Ah!" you say, "you are an old-fashioned foggy." Yes, I am; I will not disclaim any compliment which you choose to pass upon me; and I will stand or fall by this blessed Book. This was the mighty weapon of the Reformation; it smote the Papacy, and I shall not throw it down, whoever does. Stand thou still, my brother, and listen to the voice of the Lord, and "walk humbly with thy God" as to his truth.

Walk humbly with God, next, *as to mercies received*. You were ill a little while ago; and now you are getting well. Do not let pride come in because you feel that you can lift so many pounds. You are getting on in business; you wear a much better coat than you used to come here in; but do not begin to think yourself a mighty fine gentleman. Now you get into very good society, you say; but do not be ashamed to come to the prayer-meeting along with the Lord's poor, and to sit next to one who has not had a new coat for many a day. "Walk humbly with thy God," or else it may be that he will take thee down a notch or two, and bring thee back to thy old poverty; and then what wilt thou say to thyself for thy folly?

Next, walk humbly with God *under great trials*. When you are brought very low, do not kick against the pricks. When wave after wave comes, do not begin to complain. That is pride; murmur not, but bow low. Say, "Lord, if thou smite me, I deserve more than thou dost lay upon me. Thou hast not dealt with me according to my sin. I accept the chastisement." Let not the rebellious spirit rise when a child is taken away, or when the wife is taken from your bosom, or the husband from the head of the house. Oh, no; say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

And next, walk humbly with God *in thy devotions, as between thyself and God* in thy chamber. Dost thou read? Read humbly. Dost thou pray? Pray humbly. Dost thou sing? Sing joyfully, but sing humbly. Do take care, when thy God and thyself are together, and none besides, that there thou showest to him thy humble heart, with deep humility that it is no more humble than it is.

And then, next, walk humbly *as between thyself and thy brethren*. Ask not to be head choir-master; desire not to be the principal man in the church. Be lowly. The best man in the church is the man who is willing to be a doormat for all to wipe their boots on, the brother who does not mind what happens to him at all so long as God is glorified. I have heard brethren say, "Well, but you must stand up for your dignity." I lost mine a long time ago, and I never thought it was worth while to look for it. As to the dignity of the pastor, the dignity of the minister, if we have no dignity of character, the other is a piece of rag. We must try to earn our position in the Church of God by being willing to take the lowest room; and if we will do so, our brethren will take care that before long they will say to us, "Go up higher." In thy dealings with weak Christians, with feeble Christians, do not always scold. Remember that, if thou art strong now, thou mayest very soon be as weak as thy brethren are.

And *in dealing with sinners*, "walk humbly with thy God." Do not stand a long way off, as if you loved them so much that distance lent enchantment to the view. Do you not think that, sometimes, we deal with sinners as if we would like to pluck them from the burning if there was a pair of tongs handy; but we do not care to do it if our own dainty fingers would be smutted by the brands? Ah, beloved, we must come down from all lofty places, and feel a deep and tender pity towards the lost, and so walk humbly with God!

Now, I have not time to go through all *this subject as to your circumstances*. If you are poor, if you are obscure, do not be pining after

a higher place ; walk humbly with your God, take what he gives you. In looking back, rejoice in all his mercy ; and walk humbly at the recollection of all your stumbles. In looking forward, anticipate the future with delight, but do not be proudly imagining how great you will yet be made. "Walk humbly with thy God." In all thy thoughts of holy things, be humble ; thoughts of God should lay thee low, thoughts of Christ should bring thee to his feet, thoughts of the Holy Ghost should make thee grieve for having vexed him. Thoughts of every covenant blessing should make thee wonder that such privileges ever came to thee. Thoughts of heaven should make thee marvel that thou shouldst ever be found among the seraphim. Thoughts of hell should make thee humble,—

" For were it not for grace divine,
That fate so dreadful had been thine."

Oh, brethren, the Lord help us to walk humbly with God ! This will keep us right. True humility is thinking rightly of thyself, not meanly. When you have found out what you really are, you will be humble, for you are nothing to boast of. To be humble will make you safe. To be humble will make you happy. To be humble will make music in your heart when you go to bed. To be humble here will make you wake up in the likeness of your Master by-and-by.

The Lord bless this word, for Jesus' sake ! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MICAH VI.

Verse 1. *Hear ye now what the LORD saith ;*

And yet some doubt the infallible inspiration of Scripture. I would commence every reading of the Scripture with such a word of admonition as this: "Hear ye now what the Lord saith." That is what the prophet said ; but God spake by the prophet: "Hear ye now what the Lord saith."

1. *Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.*

As men were hardened, and turned away their ears, the prophet was bidden to speak to the mountains, those mountains which had been disfigured with the shrines of idols, with altars on every high hill, or, perhaps, those higher hills that were never cultivated, and that remained untouched by the defiling hand of men. God makes an appeal to these ancient things.

2. *Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth : for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.*

It was wonderful condescension on God's part that he should deign to come as a defendant before the august court of the mountains, and in the presence of the deep foundations of the earth. It is a noble conception, in poetry most excellent ; in grandeur, worthy of God. He made his appeal to the ancient hills to hear his pleading while he condescended to argue and ask his people why they had rejected their God, and turned aside to idols. Then he pleaded with Israel.

3. *O my people, what have I done unto thee ?*

"What but good, what but mercy, have I done unto thee ?"

3. *And wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.*

He asks them to give any reason whatever why they had turned away from him. Beloved friends, have any of you, who are the people of God, grown cold in your love to him? Are you neglecting the service of the Most High? Are you beginning to trust in an arm of flesh? Are you seeking your pleasures in the world? Have you lost the love of your espousal, your first love to your blessed Lord? Then hear him plead with you. Be not as Israel was, but let the Lord speak to you rather than to the hills: "What have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." O Lord, we have nothing to testify against thee! We have very much to testify for thee; and we blush to think that we have not done so oftener. Oh, that we had felt more love to thee, and had borne a bolder and more consistent testimony to thy love, thy grace, thy faithfulness!

4. *For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.*

God constantly refers to Israel's coming out of Egypt; on every great occasion he begins, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." And to his people the Lord still says, "I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of slavery." Is it not so? Do we not still delight in his redeeming work, in the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and in the high hand and outstretched arm with which the Lord delivered us from the bondage of our sin? Remember that thou also wast a bondman; forget not who bought thee, and with what price; remember who delivered thee, and led thee out, and with what mighty power. Remember this, and let thy cold love burn up again, and let thine indifference turn to enthusiasm. O Lord, revive thy people!

The Lord further says to his people, "I sent before thee Moses (the law-giver), Aaron (the priest), and Miriam (the prophetess);" one to teach thee, another to plead for thee, and to sacrifice for thee, and the third to sing for thee, to sing thy song of gladness at the Red Sea. God has given to his people many ministries in divers forms; and they are all concentrated in his Son, who is everything to us. Oh, by the greatness of his gifts to us, let us come back to our former love to him, and to something more than that!

5. *O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.*

Balak endeavoured to get Balaam to curse the people of God; but they could not be overcome by human power. He sought to destroy them by superhuman agency; but Balaam's curses turned to blessings. God would not permit the false prophet to curse Israel; and he has in our case turned the curse of the great adversary into a blessing. He has delivered us, and our trials have strengthened us, and taught us more of God. Will we not remember this? Shittim was the last encampment on the further side of Jordan, Gilgal the first in the promised land; therefore they are united here with God's righteousnesses to his people, for the word is in the plural. It is a remarkable idiom: "That ye may know the righteousnesses of the Lord." He is righteous always, in every way, towards everything, and under every aspect. I wish we knew this, for sometimes we begin to think that he deals harshly with us. When we are severely tried, we begin to doubt the righteousness of the Lord. Remember all that he has done to you from the first day to the last, "that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord."

Now the plaintiff takes up the case, but he, too, turns defendant, and asks what he can do to bring about a reconciliation.

6, 7. *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

The people will give God everything but what he wants. They begin, you see, by saying that they will bring burnt offerings; they are ready to do that. The axe shall fall upon the head of numberless young bullocks, such as God demanded under the law. The people are ready enough for that sacrifice; and as for rams, they will shed their blood by thousands. If oil is wanted for the meat offering, rivers of it shall flow. When they have offered what God would have, they offer what he would not have, what God abhorred and loathed, for they offered to give their firstborn for their transgressions. They insulted Jehovah with the sacrifices of Moloch, with human slaughter, offering their children to obtain atonement for their sins. They were willing to go even that length, and to do anything but what God wants; and men will still give to God anything but what he asks for; majestic edifices, gorgeous services, ecstatic music, gold and silver; anything but what the Lord demands. Here is God's answer:—

8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

It was a spiritual worship that the Lord required; not externals, not outward gifts, but the heart. If thou wilt bring an offering, bring thyself; there is no other gift that the Lord so much desires. The prophet mentions three things that the Lord required of his people:—

“To do justly:” here are the equities of life. “To love mercy:” here are the kindnesses of life, which are to be rendered cheerfully. The prophet does not say, “to do mercy,” but to “love” it, to take a delight in it, to find great pleasure in the forgiveness of injuries, in the helping of the poor, in the cheering of the sick, in the teaching of the ignorant, in the winning back of sinners to the ways of God. “And to walk humbly with thy God.” These are the things which please him; and when we are in Christ, and he becomes our righteousness, these are the sacrifices with which God is well pleased; they make an offering of a sweet smell, a holy incense which we may present before him. Talk no more of your outward ordinances, your will-worship, with abundance of music, or human eloquence and learning, and what not. These things delight not the Lord; no offering is acceptable unless the outward conduct shows that the heart is right with him.

9. *The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

God's voice to his people is often uttered by means of their affliction: “Hear ye the rod.” He wishes us to understand that judgments and calamities are his voice crying to the city. Oh, that we were men of wisdom, that we would hear what God has to say! Alas! Israel did not hear, and Judah would not listen, even to God's own voice!

10. *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?*

Here he comes to practical details. In Micah's day, men had grown rich by oppression, by a want of justice; they had wronged their fellow-men, and God asked them whether they expected to be pleasing to him when their houses were full of treasure which they had virtually stolen by giving scant measure and short weight. God condescends even to point out these minute particulars of moral conduct, and so should his servants do. It is not for us, his ministers, to be soaring into the clouds, to astonish you with the grandeur of our thoughts and words; but to come to your shops, to look at your bushel-measures and your pecks, your yard-sticks and your weights.

11, 12. *Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.*

They were, I suppose, very much what Orientals are still; you cannot trade with them without having need of more than two eyes. Their price has to be beaten down; their quantities must be counted. God would not have his people like this. He says nothing about the Moabites or the Babylonians doing this, but for his people to do it was very grievous to him.

13. *Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.*

They lied, and they cheated; so God would give them a sorry tongue, betokening their ill-health. He would make their present distress to get worse and worse, till they should be sick through their wounds.

14. *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied;*

The satisfaction that comes to us through eating is of his mercy, and when he wills, he can say, "Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied."

14. *And thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee;*

"Thou shalt feel an inward sinking; even when thou hast eaten, thou shalt be faint, as a man who has eaten nothing."

14. *And thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.*

So that in every project they would be disappointed; in every design they would be frustrated, because God would be against them.

15. *Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.*

God can let men have every form of outward prosperity, and yet make nothing of it. I fear that some, perhaps some present, have every outward religious blessing; yet nothing comes of it. You hear sermons, you come to meetings, you tread the olives, but you are not anointed with the oil. The grapes are in the wine-vat; but you drink not the wine. God save us from that sad condition!

16. *For the statutes of Omri are kept,*

They would not keep the statutes of God; but they could keep the foul statutes of Omri, which appear to have been specially objectionable to God.

16. *And all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels;*

He was an arch rebel against God. Remember his murder of Naboth to get his vineyard; and these people followed his evil example.

16. *That I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.*

Very hard was it to bear that reproach, when there would be none of the comforts of the Spirit to go with it. There are some professors who bear the reproach of Christ, but will never share his crown; that is a fearful state of things. Gladly enough would we take up that reproach that we may be truly his; but if we profess to be God's people, and act inconsistently, we shall bear all the reproach, but have nothing to sustain us under it. O Lord, of thy mercy, save us from this!