

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“TWO IMMUTABLE THINGS.”

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 10TH, 1895,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 30th, 1887.

“Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine.”—Ezekiel xvi. 8.

DURING this last summer, I took a little journey into the country, as I had an opportunity of preaching and visiting in the region where I lived as a little child, and where I afterwards spent some of my school-boy days. Everything was very vividly interesting to me, much more so than it could have been to anybody who was a stranger to the district. Now I want some of you, especially you who love the Lord, to go back in thought to your early days when you were children in grace; ay, go back even further than that, to the time of your spiritual birth, those first hours when your love to your Lord was true and fervent, and everything round about you was fresh and bright and joyous.

Biographies are generally interesting if they *are* biographies; that is to say, if the events of the person's life are truly told; but I think that the most interesting biography to any man is his own life. Take that book down from the shelf, and look into it. You say that you have not kept a diary; well, perhaps not, but you have one in your memory. You may have read Pepys' Diary, or Evelyn's Diary; they are interesting, but I want to get you to read your own. Turn over the pages of the book of memory, and think of those first times when you sought and found the Saviour, when you repented, when you believed, when you yielded yourself up to Jesus, when he took you to be his, and you took him to be yours. I am sure that this exercise will awaken many happy thoughts, and I feel equally certain that it will suggest many regrets; but the happiness will be good for you if it excites your gratitude, and the regrets will be good for you if they

deepen your penitence. I want you, then, to go back for a little time, and think of what God did for you then, and of what he has done for you since. You are called to this retrospect by such a chapter as the one before us, which is God's own statement of how he dealt with the chosen nation. It is also, in a parable, the Lord's declaration of how he has dealt with us. He remembers it, and he would have us remember it; and in the words of our text he reminds us of the covenant he made with us: "Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine."

Beloved, the time of our conversion, the time when we joyously realized that we were saved, was a covenanting time. The covenant itself, as to God's part in it, was made with Christ on our behalf or ever the earth was; it is older than the hills, it is as ancient as God himself. But, as far as we are concerned, the covenant comes into practical, experimental connection with ourselves when we believe in the Lord Jesus, rely upon his atoning sacrifice, and depend upon his promises of grace. I repeat that converting times are covenanting times. We made a covenant with God then; we said,—

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:
He drew me, and I follow'd on,
Charm'd to confess the voice divine.

High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renew'd shall daily hear:
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear?"

The covenant was also on God's part, for he has promised to save all those who trust him; and that promise became ours when we trusted his dear Son. All the promises of the covenant of grace became promises made particularly to ourselves when we received the seal of the covenant by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a somewhat singular thing that, in this chapter, God does not say anything about Israel's part of the covenant; he seems to pass that over as though it were never worth mentioning. The nation had so entirely forgotten it, and had been so altogether untrue to it, that the whole stress of the chapter seems to lie on what God did, how God kept the covenant. Though the sin of the people is brought to their remembrance, yet the Lord does not say to them, "Ye entered into covenant with me," but he says, "I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." So, at this time, I shall not say much about the covenant that you made with God; do not you forget it, and do not forget that you have often forgotten it. You did covenant with God that you would be his, and you meant it when you made the promise; you know how far you have been true to it; but what I want to remember myself, and for you to remember, too, is God's covenant with us, what he promised to do for us, and what he has done for us. Let this thought dwell in our minds, that it may renew our love to our Lord, and make us continually to realize that we are truly his because he has made a covenant with us.

Here, then, is our text: “Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becomest mine.” My remarks upon it will be, first, that *it was a covenant freely made*; secondly, *it was a covenant entirely of love*; thirdly, *it was a most sure covenant*; and in closing, I will try to show you that *this covenant involves very gracious consequences*.

I. In the first place, IT WAS A COVENANT FREELY MADE.

The context tells us that this child, with whom God entered into covenant, was one who could not have had any claim upon him. It was a covenant which he made at his own suggestion, out of the greatness of his own love, for the nation of Israel, of which he speaks, had *nothing in its pedigree to suggest it*. The Lord says, “Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.” Yet Jehovah entered into covenant with that people. And now, if you look back upon your pedigree,—

“What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?”

There are some who do not believe in the depravity of human nature. I must believe in it if I am myself a fair specimen of human nature; and every man who has watched his own heart, and has any idea of the sin which dwells within him, will know that his origin is tainted, that from the very first there is a tendency to evil, and only evil; and, therefore, that there is nothing in him as to his birth that can command or deserve the favour of God. If God enters into covenant with unfallen man, man is so insignificant a creature that it must be an act of gracious condescension on the Lord's part; but if God enters into covenant with sinful man, he is then so offensive a creature that it must be, on God's part, an act of pure, free, rich, sovereign grace. When the Lord entered into covenant with me, I am sure that it was all of grace, nothing else but grace; and I think that all of you who know what that covenant means, and can claim an interest in it, will say, “In my case, at any rate, it was of grace, and of grace alone.” It was a covenant freely entered into by divine grace, for our pedigree did not suggest it.

There was also *nothing in our condition to commend it*. This poor child had never been washed or clothed, it was left in all its filthiness to die; there was nothing about it to commend it to the attention of the passer-by. And what were we by nature? Oh, dear friends, let us think, with shame and confusion of face, of what we used to be before we knew the Lord.

“Backward with humble shame we look
On our original;
How is our nature dash'd and broke
In our first father's fall!”

We were not all of us open, profligate sinners; some were, however. If I speak of drunkards, and swearers, and fornicators, and the like, I may add with the apostle, “And such were some of you; but ye are washed.” And others of us, who were not suffered to run in these evil ways, yet with our hearts, with our thoughts, with our

tempers, and with our spirit, we sinned grievously in the sight of God. When I remember what a den of unclean beasts and birds my heart was, and how strong was my unrenewed will, how obstinate and rebellious against the sovereignty of the divine rule, I always feel inclined to take the very lowest room in my Father's house; and when I enter heaven, it will be to go among the less than the least of all saints, and with the chief of sinners.

Yes, dear friends, it is only too true there was nothing in our condition to commend us to God, or to induce him to enter into covenant with us. It was just because he would do it, because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; because, when he is showing the greatness of his mercy, he feels that he may as well show it where it is most needed; so he looks out, not for merit, but for misery; not for deservings, but for undeservings. According to the riches of his grace, he abounds in mercy towards the very worst of us, pardoning our sin, passing by our transgression, and blotting out our iniquity.

It was, then, a covenant freely entered into because there was nothing in our condition to commend it.

It was also a covenant freely made because there was *nothing in our beauty to warrant it*. Indeed, there was a total absence from us of everything that might be reckoned comely and beautiful. Are you now penitent? Yet, *then*, your heart was harder than adamant stone. Are you now believing? *Then*, you were an unbeliever. Are you now zealous for God? *Then*, you were rather zealous against him, or if not, you were quite indifferent to divine things. Is there any virtue, is there any praise, is there anything of good repute in you? It was not there when God entered into a covenant with you. If there was any beauty in the wife who is mentioned in this parable, it was after the marriage; but before, she was cast out, she was not grown. Whatever there was there, was undeveloped, and worse still, unclean. And in that day when Jesus took us to himself, and we took him to be our Saviour, there was nothing as yet apparent of that which his grace has now wrought in us; it was totally absent then. Oh, brothers and sisters, let us praise and magnify that free grace that ever entered into covenant with you and with me!

That is the first point, it was a covenant most freely made.

II But we cannot linger long on any one part of our glorious subject; so we notice, in the next place, that **IT WAS A COVENANT ENTIRELY OF LOVE.**

Taking our text in its connection, we learn that this covenant was a *marriage covenant*. It is a very wonderful thing that God should enter into a marriage covenant with his people; but he has done so. The Lord Jesus Christ has taken upon himself our nature, and has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; so that, when Paul is speaking of marriage, he says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." And then he adds, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church," which means that Christ has joined himself to his people, and become one in nature with his chosen henceforth and for ever. The Lord Jesus Christ hath taken

his people to be henceforth as joined unto him as the wife is joined to her husband. They become one; and so does Christ make his people one with himself. This is a very easy thing to say, but it is an almost impossible thing to compass and understand. Can it be really so, my soul, that thou art wedded to the Son of God? Is it really so that he says, “Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee,” and that covenant is a covenant of marriage by which he has joined with him all his people unto his own heart, world without end? Catch that thought if you can, and enjoy all the comfort of it; but give God the glory for such wonderful condescension.

“On such love, my soul, still ponder,
 Love so great, so rich, so free;
 Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
 Why, O Lord, such love to me?
 Hallelujah,
 Grace shall reign eternally.”

That it was a covenant which was meant to be entirely of love, is proved by *the way in which it was carried out*. See how it is said, “Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head;” and so on. This is a covenant all of love, for these are all love-tokens, love-gifts to the beloved one.

Now, will you go back in thought, and recollect when you used to receive those gifts from the Lord? You remember when your ears were hung with ear-rings. Oh, what hearing that was! You did not grumble at the preacher then, you enjoyed listening to him whenever you could. You would be up early, and work hard so as to get a half-holiday, that you might go and hear the gospel. Your ears were hung with ear-rings then. And, oh, how you rejoiced in God as he gave you humility, and patience, and zeal, and love, and all the precious jewels out of the divine casket! You hardly thought you had them, but other people could see them, and they told you that they were there; and they would sometimes say, “How beautiful God has made you by his grace!” Do you remember that? You cannot have forgotten, I hope, those happy times when love-tokens came to you so fresh and frequent! Those evening meditations, how delightful! That sitting up in bed at midnight, enjoying the presence of your Lord; those morning prayers; those quiet walks! Oh, how precious were many texts of Scripture! How delighted you often were with the visits of the Spirit of God, when he brought home this and that great truth to your soul with overwhelming comfort!

I am only reminding you what the Lord has done for you. As for myself, he has been all love, and goodness, and kindness, and nothing else to me. Truly, a blessed Husband hast thou been unto my soul,

O Jehovah! I cannot find fault with thee; neither am I able to find words with which to praise thee sufficiently for all the love and kindness thou hast made to pass before me. Do you not say the same? I think you do. As we sang just now,—

“Dost thou ask me who I am?
Ab, my Lord, thou know’st my name;
Yet the question gives a plea
To support my suit with thee.

Thou didst once a wretch behold,
In rebellion blindly bold,
Scorn thy grace, thy power defy:
That poor rebel, Lord, was I.

Once a sinner near despair
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer
Mercy heard and set him free;
Lord, that mercy came to me.

Many days have pass’d since then,
Many changes I have seen;
Yet have been upheld till now:
Who could hold me up but thou?”

Let us praise the name of the Lord for the covenant which, in the way it has been carried out, has proved to be a covenant all of love.

And, dear friends, I would not have you forget that it must be a covenant all of love which God has made with such creatures as we are, because *it could bring the Lord no profit*. What benefit could he get from us? He may well say, “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.” What glory can we bring to Omnipotence? What tribute can we render to him who is Possessor of heaven and earth?

“Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow?”

of what use would they be to him? No; if the Lord enters into covenant with us, it cannot be for any gain to himself; it must be only out of a desire to benefit us. Wherefore, let us bow in reverent adoration of the unselfish, self-created love of God to us which we have known since that dear hour which brought us to his foot, and he entered into covenant with us, and we became his own. Surely I have said enough upon this topic to suggest many a grateful thought within the minds of all God’s people.

III. But now I want to carry you with me to another point; that is, thirdly, IT WAS A MOST SURE COVENANT: “I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee.”

The covenant which God makes with believers is *intended to remain for ever*. It is not something which may be broken in a few hours, like a child’s toys; it is an everlasting covenant. Read that 60th verse: “Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.” How I love to get among the everlasting things! You

know, in Canada, they build palaces of ice in the winter time, and very beautiful things they are; but then, when spring comes, where are those palaces? And in summer, the very foundation upon which they were built has melted back into the St. Lawrence. God does not make with his believing people covenants like those ice palaces; his covenant stands secure, though earth's old columns bow. If God has promised to save thee,—as he has done if thou believest in Jesus,—he will save thee in the teeth of death and hell. Rest thou sure of this, and say with David, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” Here is something to rest upon: “I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee.” He intended it to remain.

And in proof that he intended it to remain, he *ratified it by an oath*. Even among men, where there is an oath, there should be an end of all question; and if Jehovah lifts his hand to heaven, and swears, who shall, after that, dare to suggest that a question is possible? In the day in which we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, he did, as it were, swear unto us: “Surely, blessing, I will bless thee.” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” We needed nothing more than the promises of Jehovah to rest upon; but, “God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” My soul, be thou full of comfort, for the God who entered into covenant with thee has ratified that covenant by an oath.

“His oath, his covenant, and his blood,
Support me in the sinking flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay:
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

To make a covenant even surer than by an oath, men were accustomed to *seal it by a sacrifice*. They struck hands, and then they said, “Let us kill a bullock, let us slay a lamb, and the blood shall be the token that this covenant is made between us.” Now, beloved, you who believe have the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, to confirm the covenant of grace. God cannot break it; if thou believest in Jesus, he must save thee, by the pledges of his own Son's life and death. If thou truly believest that Jesus is the Christ, thou art born of God. If thou believest that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. If thou art trusting alone in him, he cannot, he will not cast thee away, for the sacrifice of his Son makes the eternal covenant sure. Is not the blood of Jesus called “the blood of the everlasting covenant”? And herein we see the covenant most surely established.

I would have you notice, in our text, that the covenant is *remembered by God*. It is he who says, “I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee.” He does not forget it; he does not want to forget it; he does not intend to forget it. He says, “Can a woman

forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." The Lord remembers what he did when he swore that he would save his people, and when he gave Christ to make the covenant sure.

Yet once more, this covenant *will be remembered by him for ever*. I will read again that sixtieth verse: "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." And then the sixty-second verse: "And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." He made a covenant with Noah that he would not again destroy the earth with a flood, and he promised to hang his bow in the cloud as a token of that covenant; and he has done so to this day. He has not destroyed the earth with a flood, and his covenant, which he has made with the greater Noah, who is our true Rest, stands fast, and shall still stand fast when heaven and earth have passed away.

I want you to think with deepest gratitude of this wondrous condescension, that God should ever have entered into such a covenant with you and with me. Why, if I believed what some preach about the temporary, trumpety salvation which only lasts for a time, I would scarcely be at all grateful for it; but when I know that those whom God saves he saves with an everlasting salvation, when I know that he gives to them an everlasting righteousness, when I know that he settles them on an everlasting foundation of everlasting love, and that he will bring them to his everlasting kingdom, oh, then I do wonder, and I am astonished! Such a blessing as this to be given to you, and given to me!

"Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!
Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'"

Sit still and meditate till your hearts burn within you because of this amazing love.

IV. I finish by noticing that THIS COVENANT INVOLVES VERY GRACIOUS CONSEQUENCES. Let me read the text again: "Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." Read those last three words again: "*Thou becamest mine.*"

Beloved, if God has entered into covenant with us, *we have become the Lord's*. Whose were you before? The world's? Your own? The devil's? Well, we will not dispute with the many claimants; but now you can say, "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name."

"Thou becamest mine." Do you recollect the spot,—perhaps it was your own little room,—where, as a youth you sat, after having long prayed and wept? And at last you felt that Jesus was yours; and you sat still, and you said to yourself, "Yes, I am his, every bit of me. He has bought me with his blood, I am his." Do you remember those first few days in which you felt half afraid to do anything lest

you should grieve that dear Lover of your soul? Then you wanted to do everything that you might please him whose servant you had become. I remember a verse of Scripture, which, as a young believer, I used often to repeat: for it was very dear to me. I daresay you love it too; it is this: “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” We did feel then that we were wholly Christ’s; do we feel it as much now? “Thou becamest mine.” To come back to the marriage covenant of which the Lord speaks,—when the husband put the ring upon his bride’s finger, he said to her, “Thou hast become mine.” Do you remember when you felt upon your finger the ring of infinite, everlasting, covenant love that Christ put there? “Thou becamest mine.” Oh, it was a joyful day, a blessed day! Happy day, happy day, when his choice was known to me, and fixed my choice on him!

Now, beloved, *we ought to be the Lord’s more and more.* Ever since we became his, we have been the objects of his love and mercy. He has done everything for us. I cannot tell you what he has done, nor can I tell you what he has not done; for everything that could be desired and wished for, Christ has done for you and for me. This long list which he gives here of how his spouse was clothed, and shod, and adorned, and crowned, reminds me of that verse in the 103rd Psalm where the list of benefits reaches its climax: “Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.” Well now, after having experienced the blessings of this covenant, we ought to love our Lord Jesus Christ better than ever, and we ought to feel that we are more and more completely his than ever we were in our lives.

If that be our feeling, it will lead us practically to *renew the bond of the covenant.* “Thou becamest mine.” After all that the Lord has done for us, let us become his again; let us come and yield ourselves up to him once more. If any of you have backslidden, or grown cold towards your Lord, come and renew your vows unto the Most High. Say, with me, “My Saviour, I repent not of having yielded myself to thee; but I do repent that I have not more fully carried out my resolve to be wholly thine. If I had never trusted and loved thee before, I would desire to begin to trust thee and love thee now, for thou art unutterably lovely, thou art unspeakably worthy of the confidence of every redeemed man and woman.” Let us each come, and lay our hand once more on that dear head which was bowed with the burden of our sins, and look up into that dear face which has brightened our life so often with its love-glances; and let us now surrender ourselves fully, perfectly, joyfully, over again unto him whose we are, and whom we serve. God help you to do it!

And you who have never done so, may you come to Jesus this very moment! Your only hope lies in him. God says by the mouth of his servant Isaiah, “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” There is no covenant between God and man except in Jesus Christ. Come, then, and take Christ as your Saviour; and God has sworn to thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, that he will never cast thee away, but thou shalt be his in that day when he makes up his jewels. God grant it, for his name’s sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

EZEKIEL XVI. 1—3, 5—16, 60—63.

In this very remarkable chapter, God describes his ancient people Israel under the figure of an infant which had been cast away, but which he had cared for and tended, and upon which he had lavished much love, making it the object of his choice, on which his very heart was set. Yet this specially-favoured one had gone astray, and committed all manner of wickedness; but for all that, the love of God had not been withdrawn. The whole chapter is a graphic picture of the way in which Israel and Judah went after false gods, and forsook the only living and true God.

Verses 1, 2. *Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,*

This is a very necessary command, for unless men know their disease they will not apply to the great Physician. Only he who knows that he is poor will be willing to accept of alms. It is, therefore, a needful part of the duty of God's servants to make sinners know their evil ways: "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations."

3. *And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.*

Abraham, the father of the nation, came from beyond the flood; but here, because of the sin of the people, God attributes their birth to the place of their settlement rather than to that chosen and noble man. They had lived so long in Canaan that they had grown to be Canaanites. Their habits were so evil that there was little choice between the Israelites and the Amorites and Hittites whom God had smitten in his wrath. So the Lord says: "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite."

Then, in the fifth verse, he describes the condition of the nation when it was in Egypt, when nobody cared for it:—

5. *None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.*

You remember that Pharaoh tried to destroy all the male children of the captive Israelites. No mortal eye had any pity upon the downtrodden race in the house of bondage; but God looked down from heaven in love, and pity, and grace.

6, 7. *And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field,*

Israel came out of Egypt exceedingly multiplied, a great people; and when they settled down in Canaan they still increased till they became a numerous and powerful nation.

Remember that all this description applies to us spiritually. There was a day when we seemed polluted, and cast away, and left to perish; but God in great mercy passed by, and said unto us, "Live."

8, 9. *Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.*

How wondrously the Lord did all this for us! Our washing, and our anointing, we never can forget.

10. *I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.*

All that God could do for Israel, he did. That poor poverty-stricken nation increased and multiplied till, in the days of David and Solomon, it was of high repute among the nations, and exceedingly rich and wealthy. Even so has God dealt with us; he "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We who, a little while ago, were cast out as helpless and worthless, he hath greatly enriched with heavenly treasure.

11—13. *I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel upon thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work;*

The work of the Lord Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit have made marvellously glorious "broidered work" for our spiritual adornment. Well does good Dr. Watts sing,—

"How far the heavenly robe exceeds,
What earthly princes wear!
These ornaments, how bright they shine!
How white the garments are!

Strangely, my soul, art thou array'd
By the great Sacred Three!
In sweetest harmony of praise
Let all thy powers agree."

13, 14. *Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.*

Doubtless, these words apply to Israel; but they are still more appropriate to us when we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, and made beautiful in his beauty.

15, 16. *But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.*

As soon as ever the Israelites grew rich and powerful, they began to build altars to the false gods. The very treasures that God had given them, they desecrated to the making of idols; and God calls this a spiritual harlotry, a turning aside from the one true God, who was the Husband of the nation, to follow after false gods. It is an ill sign in any of us when God's blessings are themselves made into idols. If thou beginnest to worship thy wealth, thy health, thy children, thy learning, or anything that God has given thee, this is exceedingly provoking to the Most High; it is a breach of the marriage covenant between thy soul and God.

The rest of the chapter is rather for private reading than for the public assembly. It gives a truly awful picture of the sin of Israel, and heaps up most dreadful descriptions of the way in which the people turned aside from God. I confess that, after reading to the end of this chapter, I am astonished to think that it should close as it does. It is an amazing instance of the immutable love of God. Turn to the 60th verse.

60. *Nevertheless—*

Blessed “nevertheless”!

60, 61. *Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed,*

Infinite mercy makes men ashamed of their sinfulness. Great pardon produces both humility and holiness. The ungodly think that, for God to forgive great sin will be to give a licence to it, but the Lord knows that it is not so. He understands that the greatness of his forgiving love will be the cause of the pardoned sinner's hatred of sin: “Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed,”—

61—63. *When thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.*

Pardon from God for great sin is a silencer to all our pride. We never dare open our mouths again because of our shame; yet the blessed silence of a grateful heart makes true music before the throne of God, and when the Lord opens our lips, then our mouth shall show forth his praise.

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“I know, from past delightful experience, that He *can* make it acceptable and even edifying to His people; and I am trusting Him to ‘undertake for me’ again in this matter, according to His promise, ‘My kindness shall not depart from thee.’”—*From Mrs. Spurgeon's Personal Notes in “The Sword and the Trowel,” November, 1895.*