

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE LORD'S NAME AND MEMORIAL.

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## A Sermon

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"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.—Isaiah lv. 13.

THESE words are a poetical description of great moral changes which the gospel works wherever it comes. It transforms human nature and makes society to become as though a desert suddenly blossomed into a cultivated field. At the same time, the words of the text are not solely and alone poetical, for it is a great truth that wherever the spiritual change comes the physical change is almost sure to follow. As men are elevated the earth yields her increase more largely. The earth was cursed for man's sake; and in proportion as man forsakes his sloth, his drunkenness, his savageness, the ground rewards his diligence with plenteous harvests. Look at the field of the sluggard, and the garden of the industrious! Look over the wild wastes of Africa, and then see the fertility of the same soil when tilled by the missionary's converts! The surest way to benefit men in their outward circumstances is to bless them spiritually; for as they draw near to God in obedience to his will, he will, as a rule, bless and prosper them. England will always flourish while she honours the word of God. If she departs from the gospel to follow after Popery, she may expect her prosperity to decline. If we desire our land to maintain her eminent position among the nations, we must go on to do everything which is just and right towards all classes; we must break down every old abuse, and build up the good and the true: doing this and upholding the word of God, we may expect that this land will inherit a future brighter than the past.

The text certainly does touch upon changes in the soil, yet it has mainly to do with the great moral world. The gospel transforms the whole state of man, so that instead of the thorn of sin comes up the fir tree of grace, and instead of the brier of lust comes up the myrtle tree of holiness.

I. I call your attention to THE EFFECTIVE AGENCY here spoken of, and I beg you to refer to your Bibles, and read the chapter with me, for it gives a very full and minute description of the gospel.

I do not find in this fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah that the cause of the spiritual miracles of my text is a gospel of forms and ceremonies, No. 833.

of altars and priests, genuflexions and processions, images and incense, millinery and mystery. I find not a single word concerning any of these throughout the whole chapter. Nor do I find here a gospel of dogmas and orthodoxies, of rigid creeds, and infallible statements, of which it is said that he who believes them not "shall without doubt perish everlastingly;" but I learn a gospel of quite another sort, more divine, more glorious by far.

We perceive in the chapter before us a gospel *revealing divine provision for man's necessity, and earnestly inviting man to partake of it*. Look at the first verse: observe its earnest "Ho!" and note the repetition of the entreaty "Come." The soul has a longing, fitly described as thirst, for this thirst the Lord provides abundant water: and if man thirsts for a drink more nourishing, here is milk; or, if he requires a draught more comforting and cheering, here is wine; and, inasmuch as the soul has hunger, and must needs receive spiritual food, here is provision whereof the man is bidden to buy and eat. The Lord has fully provided for man's needs. The gospel of Jesus says to man, "Man, all that you can possibly need Jesus Christ has prepared for you. Do you want sin forgiven? behold a fountain filled with blood—wash in it and you are clean. Do you want sin conquered in you? behold the Holy Ghost willing to dwell in you and to subdue inbred sin. Do you desire to grow in grace and to be made in the image of holiness? look unto Jesus; behold the Spirit waiting to work the image of the Son of God in you, changing you from glory to glory as by the presence of the Lord." What are the cravings of your nature, what are the deep woes and longings of your unresting spirit? "Behold," said Jesus, "Only come to me, and I will give you satisfaction, and that satisfaction shall lead to rest." The gospel does not come to upbraid man, or say to him, "You ought not to have these needs," or, "You ought by your own efforts to supply them," but it saith, "Poor, abject, poverty-stricken man, come to me; God hath loaded both my hands with supplies for your great necessities; only come and take what God freely presents to you without money and without price." The gospel, then, which is to turn the thorn into the myrtle, is one which declares that God had made provision for the necessities of man, and which then heartily and earnestly invites man to partake thereof. I cannot understand the gospel of some of my brethren who never dare to say to a sinner, "Come," and are afraid to bid him repent and believe the gospel. I know why they are so afraid, because they believe that man is not able of himself to repent and believe (in which belief I fully agree with them); and therefore they will not bid men do what is beyond their power. Yet if preaching be the word of God, it should of right be something more than any and every simpleton might accomplish. Now, any fool has faith enough to tell a man to do what he knows he can do, but it needs a man to be full of faith, and to be sent of God, to command men in God's name to do things far beyond human reach. When a man dares to speak as God would have him, the Holy Spirit puts force into the command, and the hearer is enabled to do what he would not otherwise have attempted. The gospel which cries, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life;" this is the power of God unto salvation! We prophesy upon the dead,

and cry, "Ye dry bones, live!" Any man in all Israel could have said to the living bones, "Live," but only an Ezekiel could say, "Ye dry bones, live." This is one of the tests of the true servants of God, that they dare to bid men do what of themselves they cannot do, speaking in their Master's name, believing that the power of God himself goes forth with the word of gospel command, and that God's commandings are God's enablings to his elect when listening to his truth.

From the same verse it is most clear that *this gospel is as free as the air*, for do we not read over and over again, "Buy without money and without price," and are not those invited to come who have no money? The meaning of this must be not merely that men cannot purchase salvation with gold, but that they cannot merit it any way. Gospel blessings must be received gratis. The Lord stops not to bargain and chaffer with sinners. You are not to dream of deserving mercy; you are not to think of making yourself fit for salvation; you are to come to Jesus just as you are. If you have no good feelings, you are to come to Christ to get them; if you have no graces, or virtues, or right emotions, you may come to Jesus for all things. If you are so bad that if you were sifted there would not be found a grain of goodness in you, yet, nevertheless, he that hath no money let him come, let him come and freely take what God provides. The gospel of Jesus is as free as the air we breathe: our lungs receive it without let or hindrance, and there is no toll or tax upon it. Grace is as free as the water gushing from the rock, whereof every thirsty traveller may partake; free, I say, to every man or woman born who is led by grace to long for it. "Then why do they not take it?" say you. Because their wills are perverse towards Christ, and it needs an act of sovereign grace to make men willing to receive him; yet remember if they will not receive the grace of God, the fault lies wholly with themselves, their eternal ruin is of their own procuring.

Further observe, that it is a gospel of *hearing and not of doing*. See the second verse, "Hearken diligently." Notice the third verse, "Incline your ear;" and yet again, "Hear and your soul shall live." Death came to us first through the eye, but salvation comes through the ear. Our first parent, Eve, *looked* at the fruit; she "*saw* that it was good," and so she plucked, and so we fell. But no man rises to eternal life by signs and symbols appealing to the eye; it is by the use of the ear that the joyful news is communicated. The soldiers of Emanuel would fain carry Eye-gate by storm, but it is not to be done. Ear-gate is a far more accessible point of attack for the gospel warrior. There we must sound the silver trumpet, and there we must keep the battering-rams of the gospel continually beating, for faith cometh not by seeing, but it cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Dear hearer, if you desire eternal life, you have not now to perform a dreary penance, or to pass through tormenting horrors of mind, or to live for years a meritorious life; you have but to listen to the gospel with attention and faith; listen to it and receive it into your soul, and that gospel will do for you what you never can do for yourself—it will change your nature; and when your nature is changed, then good works will follow as a result. If you seek good works as a cause of salvation, you will make a gross mistake; but if you will take the gospel to be in



you, the cause and root of holiness, then all manner of good things shall spring up to your comfort and to God's praise. The first business of a sinner is to hear the gospel. Note how it is over and over again, "Hearken," "Incline your ear," "Hear, and your soul shall live." I charge you, frequent a gospel ministry; I beseech you, search the Scriptures; be diligent in seeking to know what the gospel is; for while you are waiting at the posts of Jesus' doors, you shall hear the good word which saith, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." Down with those gospels of gazing and staring; they will damn men, but they cannot save them. The gaudy idolatries, which every day are flaunted in our faces, are enough to make the martyrs start from their graves to curse their craven sons that they tolerate such worse than fooleries. The land must surely groan at its heart, to see that here again, on English soil, the pollutions of crucifixes, and cross-bearings, and altars, and shaveling monks, and I know not what besides, are to be multiplied in every corner. The gospel saith, "Look to Jesus and live;" it saith not "Look to crucifixes;" its message is, "Incline your ear, and come unto me;" not "Turn your faces and gaze upon a priest, acting like a fool in a pantomime." The gospel heard by the heart and believed in by the soul, is the great transforming agency of which Isaiah speaks.

Furthermore, running your eye down the chapter, you will notice that the great means God makes use of for turning deserts into gardens is the gospel *founded on a covenant*, a covenant made with David's Lord and Son. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." We were all lost through a covenant. God made a covenant with Adam, a covenant of works. It was on this wise: "This do, and thou shalt live. Abstain from eating of the forbidden tree, and thou, and those whom thou representest, shall live in my favour." Adam broke the condition of the agreement, and there and then, you and I, and all of us, fell down and perished by the fatal act of our first parent. The Lord has now arranged a new covenant, of a different character; it is made with Christ Jesus, the second Adam, and with all whom he represents. It is on this wise: "Thou, Jesus, thou shalt keep the law, and thou shalt also suffer a penalty for all the breaches of my law by all who are in thee. If thou doest this, all those who are in thee shall live eternally." At this hour this covenant never can fail us, because our Lord Jesus has fully and completely obeyed the law, and has suffered the penalty due for our guilt; the conditions of the covenant of grace have been fulfilled, and the covenant of grace is henceforth unconditional, and consists only of promises on God's part to us, and not of legal obligations on our part to God, for Jesus Christ has fulfilled the obligations of his people towards God so far as the law of works is concerned. The everlasting and sure covenant stands on this wise: "I will bless you; I will save you; I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Now, if there had been an "if" in the covenant, turning upon something to be done by us, it could not have been called, as it is in the chapter, "an everlasting covenant," for it would have been quite sure to break down sooner or later; but Jesus the Lord, having kept, to the utmost jot and tittle, his part of the covenant of grace, and fulfilled the conditions, the eternal Father is now engaged to fulfil his portion of the covenant towards Jesus Christ, and



all who are represented in him. This is the rock on which rests the blessed gospel. Wherever a covenant gospel is preached, it will work wonders; but it must ever be a gospel based upon the covenant of grace, even the sure mercies of David.

Still proceeding in our investigation of the chapter, notice that Isaiah describes *a gospel whose success is guaranteed*. See the fifth verse, "Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not." But you may call often, and men will not come; in this case, however, they *shall* come. "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee." And again, in the tenth and eleventh verses, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The gospel of Jesus Christ is an agency adapted to produce the results which God designed, and with the accompanying Spirit of divine grace, the ordained results are always produced. It is no haphazard as to whether the preaching of the word this morning shall be useful or not. God has determined and settled its results from before the foundations of the world. What a consolation this ought to be to all of you who are serving your Lord Jesus! As far as you are concerned, everything depends upon your earnestness and fidelity; but, so far as God is concerned, he has decreed and determined all results, and you may go in confidence that God shall not be disappointed, and the eternal purpose shall not be frustrated. Brethren, come what may, the gospel shall ultimately be triumphant; even in our own land the gospel will yet, like a blast from the Lord, sweep cardinal, and priest, and monk, and all the Popish crew, adown Albion's white cliffs, and sink them in the sea. The day shall come when the ranks of superstition shall be broken like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. The gods of the heathens, shaking even now, shall fall from their pedestals. Celestial light shall scatter the infernal darkness once for all. Only be of good heart, ye soldiers of the cross. The voice of Christ shall call the nations, and, uprising from their bondage, the nations shall come to him! The eternal Father shall send his quickening power into the hearts of myriads of men, and as though it were but one man, they shall throw their idols to the moles and to the bats, and shall turn to the Lord and live. In this is our comfort; let this be the encouragement of every fainting labourer.

One other remark only. The gospel which Isaiah speaks of is one which is *very full of gracious encouragement*. Were there ever more inviting words written than these, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"? Those eighth and ninth verses—what drops of honey they are! how they must delight the trembling sinner! Yes, and when we preach Christ, we are to preach him in this spirit. Jesus did declare the judgment of God, and warn men of hell—nobody ever spoke more solemnly than he concerning the world to come

and all its woes; but still it was all in gentleness, tenderness, and pity. Men are saved not so much by threatening them and making them to tremble with physical fear, as by gently wooing them with Jesus' mighty love, and reminding them of the great Father's pity, and the Holy Spirit's condescension. How tenderly the Lord deals with unbelieving, faint-hearted sinners! he puts language into the Bible which is so loving as almost to make fear impossible. 'The Holy Spirit searches for metaphors and illustrations, if I may so say, that shall by some means calm the perturbed spirit of poor tremblers, "Look," saith he, "your thoughts are very dark and despairing, and you conclude that you must be lost; but my thoughts are not as your thoughts. You know not how kind a God I am; you have no idea how ready I am to forgive the past, how willing to restore my rebel child to all that he has lost through offending me." You slander the great Father who is in heaven; you dream of him as a tyrant, you fancy that he bears always the sword in his hand; but know that, like the father in the parable, he sees returning prodigals a great way off, and when they come towards him he runs to meet them, his bosom yearning over them, and his tongue ready to speak words of peace. Let us, dear friends, whether we preach in pulpits, or preach in parlours, or preach in kitchens (and I hope we preach somewhere if we know the gospel experimentally), let us always talk encouragingly to those we meet with. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord"—what says the apostle?—"we *persuade* men." That is a very unexpected word, "*persuade*." You expected the passage to be, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we thunder at men, we threaten men." It is not so, but "We *persuade* men." With all those terrors heavily pressing our minds, we still adopt the soft, tender, and gentle method, and tell men of the great mercy of God, of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus, of the power there is in the atoning sacrifice to take away human guilt, of the readiness with which a sinner at hell's gate may yet be lifted up to heaven. It is the gospel of encouragement which after all wins the day.

We have spent time enough in noticing the efficient agency which produces the results spoken of in the text, and must pass on to another point.

## II. Secondly, observe THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF THE GOSPEL.

The change depicted in this verse is very radical, for a little observation will convince you that it is a change in the soil. The verse does not say, "Instead of the thorn God shall plant the fir tree," no, but as the thorn coming up naturally by itself indicates such-and-such a condition of soil, so fir trees shall spring up by themselves spontaneously, indicating an altogether radical change in the earth beneath. Instead of the thorn shall *come up*, shall spring up naturally, the fir tree. The results and outgrowth of the soil are different, but it is clear from the use of the words, "*shall come up*," that the soil itself is different too. I passed by a piece of common yesterday. They had been enclosing it, as those rascals always will if they can, to rob the poor of their rights, and filch every morsel of green grass upon which we may freely put our feet; but I noticed that they had only enclosed it, and had not dug it up, nor ploughed it, nor planted it; and though they had cut down the gorse and furze, it was coming up again—of course it would, for it

was a common still, and a bit of fence or a rail could not alter it; the furze would come peeping up, and ere long the enclosure would be as wild as the heath outside. It is not so in the text. When God encloseth a heart that has laid common, does he cut down the thorns and the briers, and then plant fir trees? no, no, but he so changes the soil that from the ground itself, from its own vitality, there spontaneously starts up the fir tree and the myrtle. This is a most wonderful result. You take a man and leave him at heart the same godless man, you mend his habits, you make him go to church, or to the meeting-house, you clothe him, you break his wine bottle, you rinse his mouth out so that he does not talk so filthily, and altogether you say, "He is now a respectable man" ah! but if these respectabilities and rightnesses outwardly are only skin deep, you have done nothing. At least, what you have done is no great wonder; there is nothing in it to be proud of. But suppose this man can be so changed that just as freely as he was wont to curse he now delights to pray, and just as heartily as he hated religion he now finds pleasure in it, and just as earnestly as he sinned he now delights to be obedient to the Lord; ah! then, this is a wonder, a miracle which man cannot accomplish, a marvel which only the grace of God can work, and which gives to God his highest glory.

Note the poetic metaphor which describes the outward change. Originally the natural heart yields thorns. A thorn is *the conspicuous emblem of the curse*. Upon many ungodly men there is very evidently the curse—while upon all it really rests—they toil hard but are yet impoverished: the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. Drunkenness, gambling, and uncleanness always carry a curse with them. You cannot enter some men's houses without seeing on the dirty walls and the bare floor the mark of the curse. Listen to them, hear them talk, and their speech bewrayeth them; they can hardly get through a sentence without some word which indicates the curse of sin. Or, sojourn among another class of society, and you soon find the curse-mark either in the shape of discontent, or weariness of religious exercises, or fear of death, or hatred of the gospel, or some other form. But when grace displays its marvellous transformation, how different is the scene! Instead of the thorn there comes up the fir tree, a tree chosen to be used in the building of the house of God, where beams of cedar and fir were abundantly to be seen; the man blesses and magnifies now the Most High God, and though he feels (and mourns as he feels it) some of the effects of the curse in his own corrupt nature, yet the longings of his soul are in the opposite direction, and the bent and bias of his spirit are towards the hearty and loving service of the Most High.

Observe, again, the man originally brought forth a thorn—that is, *a fruitless thing*—look at it and see how barren it is. God gets neither prayer nor praise from the ungodly man. Throughout his whole life the God who made him is forgotten. He never seeks to glorify his Maker; he looks upon that, perhaps, as cant. His great god is his money, and if he can increase his wealth he is satisfied: but, O thou good God! from this unconverted man thou gettest nothing—he is a thorn, and bears no fruit. Now, as soon as he is changed by the grace of God through the hearing of the gospel, he becomes like a fir tree. The



tree here described is one of the most useful growing in the East ; and so the converted man becomes useful to his God, useful to his fellow man, useful to the church, useful for spiritual things, useful to eternity.

A thorn, too, is a *repulsive* thing—there is nothing inviting about it; nobody would choose to make it a pillow or a companion. An unconverted selfish man is frequently most repulsive. I say not so of all, for some Christless persons are naturally amiable; but many and many a man, especially when sin has come to a head with him, is a thorn-hedge, a churl, an unsympathising, selfish being. Sinners are as bad company for true saints as thorns and briers would be for a naked man. "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men," says the Psalmist; as if he felt their company to be too irksome to be borne. But when changed, sinners become beautiful and attractive, like those stately firs which delight our eyes. Happy is that man, who though he was once like a thorn, pushing aside all Christian communion, standing in solitary rebellion by himself, has now become one of those who fear the Lord and speak often one to another, even as the pine trees of the forest speak often to one another in their sacred solitude, when the wind sounds through their pillared shade.

Again, the thorn is a *rending* thing, offending, noxious. Pass over it with naked feet, and what laceration you receive! see how your garment is torn, and the beauty thereof marred by the thorn! So has it been with ungodly men, when unrestrained by grace. Like Saul of Tarsus, they breathe out vengeance against God and his people. Persecutors are rending and tearing thorns, but when saved of God, they are not the same men. That which they once pulled down, they now seek to build up, and they are now as earnest to extend the kingdom of Christ as once they were to blaspheme his name.

As for the metaphor of the brier used in the text, it was always the emblem of *desolation*. The brier came up on the desolate walls of Babylon and Nineveh; the brier covered the land of Israel, when the inhabitants were carried away captive. In how many human hearts where the gospel has not come is there desolation, sadness, despair! They want they know not what; their cries are like the cries of the dragon and the owl amidst the broken palaces of kings: the heart is deserted of its God, and therefore deserted of all happiness.

The brier, too, is a thing that *cumbers* the ground; it occupies the place of the palm or of the fig; and so ungodly men cumber the ground; they do no good; they occupy spheres in which others might have served God; they are altogether wasters, they rob God, they bring him no revenue of glory.

The brier is soon *to be cut down*, and when cut down no use can be made of it; it is burnt; it is put away. Such is the future history of the unconverted man. His sin will bring him sorrow, the halls of his soul shall be desolate; his life is a cumbering of the ground, and his end shall be to be utterly destroyed amongst the refuse things which God casts away. Blessed is such a one when God transforms him into the comely myrtle, nurtured and tended and cared for by the Lord, and made to celebrate the victory of all-conquering grace. All this the gospel does; it enters a man's heart, and finds him like a wild heath overgrown with thorns; it ploughs him through and through, and

cross-ploughs him; sin is made a bitter thing to him; in the sight of the cross of Christ he is made to detest himself, that he should have treated divine love with such infamous and insolent ingratitude. And then, after the ploughing comes the sowing; living truth is cast into the furrow; up it springs, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, and God is glorified where once Satan ruled and mischief alone was wrought. There are many such cases of glorious transformation in this house this morning. It is our comfort to know that if we wanted proofs of our ministry, or seals to the power of the gospel, here they are. Oh, how clearly can some of us testify what grace has done for our souls! Blessed be the name of our God, it was not priestcraft that saved us; but we heard the good news that Christ came into the world to save sinners—it exactly suited our case—we came to Jesus just as we were, and we cast ourselves on him; and now being saved our great concern is to show forth his praise who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

III. Our last exercise is to notice THE GLORIOUS ISSUE. "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Jehovah might, if he willed, have taken other names; he might have selected other works of his hands to be the ensigns of his glory, but he has chosen the results of the gospel to be his proudest honours; he has, if I may use such a term, staked his eternal majesty upon the effects of gospel grace. With the heathen their gods took names from what were thought to be their most glorious work. We read of Jove, the thunderer, because they imagined that he launched the bolt from his hand. They spoke of the far-darting Apollo—the rays of light flashing from the sun. They talked of the cruel Juno in the wars of Troy. Each god and goddess was allotted some particular name as indicating its individuality. If Jehovah, the one only true God, had chosen, he might have been "Jehovah, the Thunderer;" we might have read of the far-darting God; we might have had him constantly portrayed in Scripture as the terrible and avenging Lord; but he hath not chosen such a name; he hath not been pleased to select anything that is terrible as his peculiar glory, but that which is full of melting mercy and tender pity. The gospel of mercy to guilty sinners, the gospel of abounding mercy for abounding sin, shall be his name—the gospel of hearing and living, the gospel of inclining the ear and being saved. Now, observe that the Lord was by no means necessitated to choose this to be his distinguishing sign, escutcheon, and glory. See what his arm hath done in days gone by, where he made the heavens and the earth, and stretched out the firmament, and filled the channels of the great deep: might he not have said, "These shall be unto me for a name," when he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast? Or if the things of earth were too insignificant, lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created all these things, these ponderous orbs which move in majesty—hath not he made them all? If he had willed it, as he made those stars whose distances and magnitude are utterly inconceivable by us, might he not have said, "These shall be unto the Lord for a name"? We are told by astronomers, and we do not doubt it, that the whole of the fixed

stars visible by the telescope may be possibly nothing more than a little group somewhere in an obscure corner of the universe; occupying a space perfectly inconceivable for immensity, they may yet be as the small dust of the balance compared with the whole of God's works. If it be so, and God has made worlds without number filled with countless inhabitants, all of which sound forth his praise, he might have said, "This creation, which I have finished, shall be to me for a name." But it is not so; the Lord has not chosen creation to be his distinguishing glory. Beloved, there is the world of providence, and in that providence there are wheels within wheels, evolving marvels of manifold wisdom; surely, these might have been to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign, but it is not so declared. Those mighty acts which we read of in sacred story—surely these might have been unto God for a name—when he laid bare his arm and crushed the pride of Pharaoh! Hear ye Miriam's timbrel? Can you not even now catch the exulting strains of Israel's song, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea"? Surely, this might be to Jehovah for a name, but it is not so recorded. The leading of his people through the wilderness, when he fed them with manna dropping like dew from heaven; or the destruction of the inhabitants of Palestine; when he made the heathen kings to flee before the Israelites; or the overthrow of Sennacherib; or those ten thousand mighty wonders wrought by him whose mercy endureth for ever, surely these might have been called his name, but it is not so.

Turn your thoughts for a moment from that which we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears, and think of another world. There is a land of spirits, where weeping rules the day; nay, let me amend my speech, where lamentation rules the night, unbroken by glimpse of light. There lie the enemies of God, defeated and bound in chains. Deep in the awful dungeons lie the princes and kings who said of the royal Son, "Let us break his bands asunder." Behold the boasters, they are abject slaves in the lowest hell! There lie the cruel persecutors of the church—wicked popes, proud cardinals, lascivious monks, and lying priests; what a goodly heap of fuel for the fire! There, too, are the nations that forgot God, and the myriads who hated and despised him. See how Jehovah has conquered! how all his enemies are overthrown! how his foot falls heavily upon them all, crushing them eternally! how terribly he tears them in pieces, and there is none to deliver! An Alexander or a Napoleon might carve their names in conquest, and write up their glory in crimson lines of blood, and shall not the awful Jehovah, who will by no means spare the guilty, shall he not make this to himself to be a name? Not so, saith the text, not so. Mercy is his name, pardon is his glory, forgiveness of men is his everlasting sign. Brethren, observe that there is nothing material which God takes to be his glory, because, although he made materialism, it is far beneath him, and not to be gloried in. God is a spirit, and his highest glory must always come from the spiritual world. To find Rome built of brick and leave it built of marble is a fit triumph for mortal man; but there is nothing in the loftiest material work worthy of an immortal spirit. What is the difference between



stone and marble after all? Both shall pass away: and when the desolating wave rolls up, marble and brick shall alike be overthrown by its shock. God has made fairer things than these, and wrought mightier miracles than all the pomp of kings can imagine, or the skill of art can execute, but he delights not in material things; his name rises from a spiritual conquest—the gospel reigning in men's hearts. Observe, further, that out of spiritual things God has selected as his special fame a very peculiar case. He has not made unfallen spirits to be to him for a name. There are probably many orders of beings who were never tempted; they are unconscious of anything like evil, they are always holy, they cannot be otherwise than pure; and while these spotless beings honour and glorify God, he has not selected them to be to him for a name. Pure, untried, untempted virtue is fair, but there is something nobler yet. There are angels that have been tempted but did not fall; these are the elect angels, who when Satan fell, preserved their integrity, faithful amongst the faithless found. They did well not to sin; they did better than Adam, who did sin; and yet these ever-faithful servants are not called a name unto God nor an everlasting sign. But see, he has selected creatures who know good and evil, know them both by experience; and he has selected these fallen and defiled beings, and has entered into the arena of their hearts, and in them has fought foot to foot the battle of love against moral evil, and his love has conquered; and henceforth to have won that creature once so enslaved to evil, to have overcome sin by the power of love, to have brought his creature back by his grace to perfectness, he reckons as a greater honour than even to have upheld an angel or made a world. The Lord has given evil a great opportunity; he has thrown down the gage of battle to it, and said, "Do thy worst;" he has suffered it to intrench itself in the very nature of man, has suffered man to be a prey to the machinations of Satan, and a slave to his own lusts, and yet he has delivered him and brought him to his feet. The Lord has ceded to the hosts of evil for ages all the wisdom of the world, its riches, its pomp and greatness, and he has put down in the world a humble Man, despised, and rejected, and nailed to the cross, and has sent out, as followers of that Man, feeble men with no weapons but their tongues and their hearts, and no power except the force of truth and the aid of the Holy Ghost; and yet the Lord has overthrown Satan, utterly worsted and destroyed him, and the archangel of truth has put his foot upon his neck. Moral evil has been defeated by the love of God. In the hearts of tens of thousands of men who believe in Jesus, evil has had the fullest sway, but it has been dethroned, it has been cast from its royalty, its hands have been bound, it has been lashed to the chariot wheels of Christ, and he has led its captivity captive. Now, this is what is "unto God for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

The Lord has acted wisely, as he always does, in selecting such a matter as this to be his name, to be a display of himself, because it is everlasting. God might have made materialism everlasting if he had chosen to do so, but he has not done it. It follows then, if this world had been God's name, since it will be destroyed and burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the

Lord would have been dishonoured. If the sun, moon, and stars had been the grandest illustrations of Deity, since they all shall pass away, where then were the glory of God? The sun shall grow dim with age, and the whole universe shall shrivel up like a scroll that is burnt in the flame; but God has selected immortal men who cannot die, and in these he has wrought a work which they never can forget, a work which has plunged them under solemn obligations to him which they never can discharge, bound them to himself by grateful ties of affection which nothing can dissolve. He has plucked us out of the horrible pit, and put us into such a place that throughout eternity it shall be our delight, our very life, to praise and magnify his name. Oh, how will we tell angels what he has done! How will we show forth in every street to the sacred inhabitants what grace has done for us, and how the love of God accomplished a mighty triumph over our sins! We will tell the cherubim and seraphim what God has done, and make them think they never saw God before till they beheld him working in men. Long adown the ages, when the morning star is laid asleep, we will tell our fellow immortals, of Golgotha, of Calvary, of Jesus and his love; we will repeat the story of the cross; we will publish abroad the story of the God that loved and died, and of the triumph of the pierced and crucified One when he entered the doors of our hearts and captured us by the force of his love. This then will be an everlasting sign unto the Lord our God.

Let this encourage Christians. If it is God's glory to save man, expect to have them saved and go to work to save them. Get to your knees, this afternoon, with great courage and confidence. Go out with tracts, my good brethren and sisters, expecting God to bless you. Preach in the streets, young men; engage in all sorts of holy work, my brethren; for your labour is not in vain in the Lord. A man always likes to do what will honour himself; God also delights in that which will glorify him. Expect him then to save sinners.

To you who are unconverted, this last word. How this ought to encourage you to come to God in Christ Jesus! Is it to his glory to save you? Oh! then he will do it. There is nothing in you that could be a motive for grace—you do not deserve his pity; but then the greater your present sin is, the more the mercy of God will be seen in pardoning you. Come then with your sin. If you are the biggest sinner that ever lived, then God's mercy will be seen better in you than in any before; so come now, even now. Come to Jesus as you are, and let the infinitude of his mercy cover the vast extent of your sin.

As for you who have been saved, let the text encourage you to tell it to others. Do not be backward to profess your faith. If it glorifies God, you owe him so much that you must not rob him of his praise, but be bold at once to come forward and tell what God has done to your soul. May his blessing rest upon you, for his love's sake. Amen.