

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JEHOVAH HATH SPOKEN : WILL YE NOT HEAR?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4TH, 1883, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive.”—Jeremiah xiii. 15—17.

In this chapter Jeremiah had proclaimed the judgment of God against his sinful people under two very striking figures. Israel had been to God what a girdle is to a man;* the people had been bound closely about him in his great love and favour; but on account of their sin the Lord would put them away, and they should be hidden by the Euphrates till their beauty was marred; till, in fact, like a rotten girdle, their whole state had become decayed. “Thus saith the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.” Then he spake to them by a second parable—“Every bottle shall be filled with wine”;—and he showed how God's wrath would come upon the people to fill them with a judicial drunkenness, so that they should become besotted, and in their delirium should strive one with another to their mutual undoing. The Lord declared that thus he would “dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together.” Thus, under two homely but exceedingly terrible figures, Jeremiah preached the law to the people, that they might be humbled under a sense of sin. Had they but felt the force of this teaching they would have begun to mourn for their sin, and, under dread of wrath, they would have cried for mercy. Taking it for granted that this might be the case, though, alas! it did not so happen, the Lord gave to his prophet an interval for proclaiming mercy. After those two great thunder claps of judgment came a gracious shower of grace.

The prophet, in what we may venture to call an evangelistic style, exhorts the people, and addresses to them the characteristic gospel precept,—“Hear ye, and give ear; for Jehovah hath spoken.” His words remind us of Isaiah's exhortation—“Incline your ear and come unto me: hear, and

* See Spurgeon's Sermon, No. 1,706, entitled “The Cast-off Girdle.”
No. 1,748.

your soul shall live;" and again—"Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good." Under the gospel "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" and so Jeremiah doth, as it were, in these verses preach the gospel to the backsliding house of Judah. This is ever God's design in threatening judgment; he desires to prepare the people for his grace. I would take up the prophet's strain by the help of the Lord, praying to be a partaker of his earnest and tender Spirit. Oh, that to-day those who have never heard the voice of the Lord in the inward parts of their being may hear it and live! O Holy Spirit, work thou to that end!

I. We will enter upon our subject at once, for there is much to speak of. The first head will be this: listen, O my hearers, with deep attention, for THERE IS A REVELATION. Read the text—"Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: *for the Lord hath spoken.*" If the Lord had not spoken, the silence would have deepened and established your natural darkness, and if you had been inquiring after God your heart would have cried, "Oh, that he would break this dreadful silence!" How sad would have been our estate if we had to seek after God if haply we might find him! Shall man by searching find out God? Who among us could reason ourselves into the knowledge of the Lord? or imagine the thoughts of his mind? But here you have the great source of comfort and instruction—"Jehovah hath spoken." Is not this a just call for the attention of all his creatures?

The voice which we are bidden to hear is *a Divine voice*, it is the voice of him that made the heavens and the earth, whose creatures we are. Jehovah hath spoken! If it were but the voice of prophets apart from their Master, it might be but a slight sin to refuse what they say; but since Jehovah hath spoken, shall men dare to be deaf to him? Shall they turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? He that spake us into being hath spoken to our being. He by whose word the heavens stand, and at whose word both heaven and earth shall pass away, hath spoken, and his voice is to the sons of men. It is God who says, "I have written to him the great things of my law." The sacred Scriptures are the record of what God hath spoken: receive them with the reverence which they deserve as coming from God only, and as being, therefore, pure truth, fixed certainty, and unerring right.

It is a word most *clear and plain*, for Jehovah hath *spoken*. He might have taught us only by the works of his hands, in which the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen. What is all creation but a hieroglyphic scroll, in which the Lord has written out his character as Creator and Provider? But since he knew that we were dim of sight and dull of comprehension, the Lord has gone beyond the symbols and hieroglyphs, and used articulate speech such as a man useth with his fellow: Jehovah hath *spoken*! A man may act before us his mind in emblems, and we may fail to perceive his meaning; but when he speaks, we understand his communications by language, since such modes of expression are suitable to the human intellect. Speech is the fit manner of commerce between mind and mind, and it is, therefore, most delightful that the all-glorious Jehovah should stoop from writing in starry letters across the sky, and from mirroring his form in tempests on the sea, and *speak* with us as a man speaketh with

his friends. Jehovah is no dumb deity: he hath spoken to us in sweet and chosen words by his Spirit. Oh, when there is a testimony so clear and plain that he who runs may read, well may the prophet exhort us, saying, "Hear ye, and give ear; for Jehovah hath spoken." Let it not be said of us, as of the sinners long ago, "I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not."

Moreover, I gather from the expression in the text that the revelation made to us by the Lord is *an unchangeable and abiding word*. It is not to-day that Jehovah *is speaking*, but Jehovah *hath spoken*: his voice by the prophets and apostles is silent now, for he hath revealed all truth which is needful for salvation. The Lord might fitly say to us this day; "What I have written I have written." He changeth not his word, but though heaven and earth pass away, his word abideth. We are not living in a period of gradual revelation, as some imagine: Jehovah hath spoken, and he openeth not his mouth a second time. He hath closed the canon of Scripture with a curse upon him that shall add to or take from the words of the book of this prophecy. Jehovah hath spoken! You have not to go on making discoveries of new truth outside of Scripture; your duty lies in diligently receiving the completed testimony of the Lord God, for the word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. He has fully told you your relation to your God, and the way by which you may be reconciled to him, and be at peace. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Jehovah hath spoken; and it is written in his law, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you."

Beloved, this revelation is pre-eminently *a condescending and cheering word*. The Lord might without a word have trodden us down to destruction when we sinned against him; he might have left us to that natural testimony which is borne upon the face of creation, and which is also reflected in the conscience of all men, and when we rejected these testimonies he might have allowed us to travel on in tenfold night. But instead thereof, in the plenitude of his grace, Jehovah hath spoken; and be it ever remembered that while of old he spoke in sundry times and divers manners by the prophets, he hath in these last times spoken unto us by his Son. The very fact that the great God speaks to us by his Son indicates that mercy, tenderness, love, hope, grace, are the burden of his utterance. His Son Jesus is full of grace and truth, and therefore that which he now speaks to us is not only truth, but grace; it is truthful grace and gracious truth which God speaks to us by Jesus Christ. Oh, the richness of that message, the height and depth of love which it contains! Who can refuse to listen to the heavenly music of mercy? The Lord's voice on the first day of creation said, "Let there be light," and there was light, and now this second voice, this voice to the spiritual world, gives us light, and life, and love, and every needful, conceivable, desirable boon. The words of God, as they are recorded in this Book, have a fulness unfathomable about them: they are spirit and life. In Christ, by whom he speaks, there is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The prophet asked no more than was perfectly reasonable when he said, "Hear, and give ear; for Jehovah hath spoken." When the kings who dwell at the utmost ends of the earth hear that Jehovah hath spoken, they would do well to quit their thrones

and make a journey, like the Queen of Sheba, to hear of the divine wisdom. If all workmen should throw down their tools, and say, "We will hear what God the Lord shall speak," and if merchants should close their shops and counting-houses for awhile, and come together without delay crying, "Everything must stop till we have heard what the Lord has spoken;" would it be any more than right reason would suggest to thoughtful and right-minded men? O sirs, if God has spoken, every ear should surrender itself to attention, for surely never could the sense of hearing be more honourably and profitably employed. Jehovah hath spoken, and his word is true: "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." There is a way of salvation arranged and determined of the Lord; it is not to be guessed at, but we are to learn it from infallible wisdom: Jehovah hath spoken. There is an atonement prepared, provided, designated, and set forth; we have not to search for it, or add to it: Jehovah hath spoken. There is no point of necessity, nor even of real interest to the heart of man, but what Jehovah hath spoken upon it; and if there be any truth upon which he has not spoken, it is because it is to his glory to conceal the thing, and for our profit that we do not pry into it. Upon all that is essential to our full preparation for our eternal destination, Jehovah hath spoken. He hath said it, and here it is recorded; in the volume of the Book it is written, and blessed are they that read and keep the words of the Book of this prophecy.

II. Secondly—and I have already anticipated it—since there is a revelation, IT SHOULD BE SUITABLY RECEIVED. If Jehovah hath spoken, then all attention should be given; yea, double attention, even as the text hath it, "*Hear ye, and give ear.*" Hear, and hear again: incline your ear, hearken diligently, surrender your soul to the teaching of the Lord God; and be not satisfied till you have heard his teaching, have heard it with your whole being, and have felt the force of its every truth. "Hear ye," because the word comes with power, and "give ear," because you willingly receive it. Oh, brothers, I fear that we give far more attention to the distracting voices of the world than to the soul-satisfying voice of the God of all grace. How eager men are after the treasure which melts before their eyes—how they will drink in every syllable by which they may learn how to be rich; but when God speaketh, who brings in both his hands eternal and abiding riches, men are deaf as the adder, careless as the beasts of the field. He saith, "I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded." Is this right or wise? Surely, if Jehovah speaks we are bound by all that is just, and good, and grateful to wait in reverent silence till we know his mind. Let a general hush go through the universe, and let all ears with solemn reverence await the sound of the voice of the Lord.

Then it is added, as if by way of directing us how suitably to hear this revelation—"Give glory to Jehovah your God." There ought to be in hearing and reading the revelation of God a constant giving of glory to the Lord. His speaking is a manifestation of his glory, as when the sun ariseth his light is spread abroad; you and I are to reflect that light even as the valleys rejoice in his brightness of the noontide. Let us stand, as it were, this morning to be shone upon by the Lord, ready

everyone of us, to reflect that light which cometh from on high. Give glory to God at once by worthily hearing his gospel. How is that to be done?

Stand thou still, and hear the word of the Lord. Glorify the Lord by *accepting* whatsoever he saith unto thee as being infallibly true. Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. Know what the Lord has said, and let it stand to thee as sure and steadfast truth. Seek for no further reasons to sustain thy faith; but let "Thus saith the Lord" stand to thee in the stead of all arguments. To me a sentence of Scripture is the essence of logic, the proof positive, the word which may not be questioned. Eyes and ears may be doubted, but not the written word, inspired of the Holy Ghost. Blessed are those who sit at Jesus' feet and receive of his words. It is our wisdom to know nothing of ourselves, but to be taught of the Holy Ghost; and to think nothing of ourselves, but to have the mind of God, and think after him whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. We give glory to God in reference to revelation when we receive it, every jot and tittle of it, and bow our minds before it. In these days this virtue is lightly esteemed, for the Saviour's words are still true,—“He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.” In all its length and breadth, whatsoever the Lord saith we believe; and we desire to know neither less nor more than he has spoken.

We must receive the word, however, in a hearty and honest manner so as to act upon it. We must therefore *repent of the sin* which the Lord condemns, and turn from the way which he abhors; we must loathe the vice which he forbids us, and seek after the virtue which he commands. We give glory to God when we penitently confess that we have broken his holy law, and grieve because we have so done. Did not Joshua bid Achan give glory to God by confession of his sin? and so must we. By confession we glorify God's justice, omniscience, and truth, and yet further we glorify his mercy when, confessing sin, we ask for pardon through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus should every human being receive the revelation of God bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. Thy light hath shone upon me, O my God, and therefore I see my darkness! O remove it! Thou hast lighted a candle, and by its light I discover my spots and stains, and I acknowledge them in thy sight,—“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” Thus humbling ourselves on account of sin we receive the word of God aright, and give God glory.

But we must go further than repentance and the acceptance of the truth as truth, we must further reverence the gracious voice of God when he bids us believe on Christ and live. He has couched that message of love in so blessed a form that he who does not accept it must be wantonly malicious against God and against his own soul. For the Lord does not demand that by penances and acts of mortification, and feelings of misery and despair, we are to purge ourselves from sin; but he has graciously declared—“He that believeth on him is not condemned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” If Jehovah has spoken in such a manner, if the sum and substance of what

he has spoken is that "God hath set forth his Son Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," then we must and will give ear to him. He saith, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." If this be the heavenly word, how can we refuse to hear it with our whole hearts? Give glory to the Lord by answering, "Lord, I joyfully obey thy call. I am glad of a Saviour, glad of the atoning blood, glad to cast myself at those dear feet that were nailed to the cross for me, and to find in the Lord Jesus my salvation and my all." This is the way in which we ought to receive this revelation, and we ought to go on to *complete obedience*. We should humbly inquire, "Lord, what further wouldst thou have me know, what further wouldst thou have me do? Is there still left in me a part of my nature unsubdued, I would humble myself under thy mighty hand. Is there in me anything unrenewed, of pride revolting, or of the flesh rebelling, then conquer it in me, for I desire thy word to be my rule, my law, my guide. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! I wish in all things to be obedient to thy gracious will." There is no part of God's word at which the human mind should kick. If our hearts were in a right state we should fling open all the doors of our mind, and say, "Come in, O sacred truth, come in! Thou art welcome to my heart of hearts since thou comest from my God." If Jehovah speaks ought we not instead of cavilling, and questioning, and disputing, and raising difficulties, just to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"? When the Lord says to us, "Seek ye my face," our heart should at once reply, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." I think that point is clear. There is a revelation, and that revelation ought to be suitably received.

III. But thirdly, **PRIDE IN THE HUMAN HEART PREVENTS SUCH A RECEPTION.** The text runs, "Hear ye, and give ear; *be not proud*: for the Lord hath spoken." And further on the prophet says—"If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places *for your pride*." The prophet here puts his finger upon the blot. Why is it, my dear hearers, that there are any among you this day who have heard God's word year after year and yet have not received it? The secret reason is your pride. Perhaps pride prompts you indignantly to deny the accusation.

In some it is the *pride of intellect*. They do not wish to be treated like children; they are not content to receive the kingdom of God as a little child, and so when Jesus says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," they reply that they intend to think out a gospel for themselves. To lay the inventiveness of thought on one side, and simply to believe what Jesus teaches, is not to their mind; they will not humble themselves to a fact so little self-exalting. Well, sirs, if you shut the door of the kingdom against yourselves because you are too wise to enter, be this known unto you, that the poor have the gospel preached to them, and that they receive it; and that God hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes. Things that are despised, hath God chosen, and things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are: that no flesh may glory in his presence. If your wisdom is greater than the wisdom of God, it were better for you to be foolish. If you will destroy yourself

to indulge your own conceit, well, so it must be; but the day shall come in which your regret shall know neither measure nor end. Oh, let none of us be so proud as to lift up ourselves in opposition to that which Jehovah hath spoken!

In some others it is the *pride of self-esteem*. "No," say they, "this gospel which we have heard so often is too simple—we are capable of something more elaborate. It humbles us, it represents us as fallen, as depraved; it says that we can do nothing, it lays us in the very dust, it makes nothing of us: it excludes all hope of boasting and glorying: we cannot stoop so low. Salvation by grace, is it? Then free grace, sovereign grace is not to our mind. We care not to be saved like paupers; we care not to be freely forgiven as those who have nothing to pay. That no composition will be accepted, not even a farthing in the pound of our own merit—is a doctrine too lowering to our dignity." They set the gospel on one side because it sets them on one side. They are too great to be saved. O sirs, if ye must be proud, at least do not throw away your souls to indulge that propensity. Surely, something less costly may suffice for a sacrifice to the demon of vain glory. It is a dreadful thing that men should think it better to go to hell in a dignified way than to go to heaven by the narrow road of a child-like faith in the Redeemer. Those who will not stoop even to receive Christ himself and the blessings of eternal life deserve to perish. God save us from such folly. It may well make us weep to think that any man should be so far gone astray from right reason as to throw away eternal bliss in order to walk with haughty steps through this poor life.

Some have a *pride of self-righteousness*. They are good, they have kept the commandments from their youth up: they have attended to religion, they have seen to it that all rites and ceremonies have been duly performed upon them, and they thank God that they are not as other men are. This righteousness of theirs is a garment respectable enough for them to wear, and therefore they reject the righteousness of God. O ye proud, I would to God ye knew that ye are naked, and poor, and miserable. I would ye understood that your fig-leaf righteousness will never cover your nakedness in the sight of God, for if ye knew this ye would seek after the perfect righteousness of Christ, and be robed and adorned therewith. While sin ruins many in the outside world, I fear self-righteousness ruins more among those who attend places of worship. They say "we see," and therefore their eyes are not opened: they cry "we are clean," and therefore they are not washed from their iniquity. Oh that they would cease from this vanity, and give glory to the Lord their God, instead of taking glory themselves? How can they believe while they seek honour one of another?

In some, too, it is the *pride of self-love*. They cannot deny their lusts. To cut off right-hand sins, and pluck out right-eye iniquities, cannot be endured by them. Their hearts are set upon a certain evil pleasure, and they cannot give it up. The gospel of Jesus Christ demands of those who receive it that they shall be saved not *in* their sins, but *from* their sins; it comes to give us renewal as well as rest, purity as well as pardon, sanctity as well as safety; and there are many who, because of their foolish self-indulgence, cannot deny themselves any seeming joy, but must needs fill themselves with the poisoned sweets

which delight the flesh. O friend, I wish that this pride were taken from thee, and that it seemed wisdom to thee to deny thyself life itself for the present rather than miss the hope of life eternal.

The *pride of self-will* also works its share of ruin among men. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" is the cry of many beside Pharaoh. The unrenewed heart virtually says—"I shall not mind these commands. Why should I be tied hand and foot, and ruled, and governed? I intend to be a free thinker and a free liver, and I will not submit myself." Just so, and you are free to lose all hope of heaven, my friend, free to destroy yourself. If this be your choice, then who is to hinder you in it? I know that I cannot. Oh, that the Lord will lead you to a better mind. Would God the Lord that he would change your will and renew your heart. But if you are so proud that you reject the testimony of God against yourself, then who is to blame when you fall into eternal destruction? Who is to blame but yourself? So I pass from mournfully considering this great evil which prevents the revelation of God from being properly received.

IV. Fourthly, HENCE THERE COMES AN EARNEST WARNING. The prophet has put it—"Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." I desire to explain this with deep humiliation of spirit on my own part, and with much trembling lest anyone of you should ever by experience know the truth of these words. Listen, my friend, thou who hast rejected God and his Christ till now. *Thou art already out of the way*, among the dark mountains. There is a King's highway of faith, and thou hast refused it; thou hast turned aside to the right hand or to the left, according to thine own imagination. Being out of the way of safety, *thou art in the path of danger even now*. Though the sunlight shines about thee, and the flowers spring up profusely under thy feet, yet thou art in danger, for there is no safety out of the King's road. If thou wilt walk according to his bidding thou shalt be quiet from fear of danger, for no lion shall be there; but inasmuch as thou art now thine own keeper and thine own law, and thou followest in thine own ways, thou art in great peril. The unbeliever is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God. Escape, I pray thee, while thou mayest, and enter upon that one road which is strait and narrow, but leadeth unto life eternal—the way of faith in Jesus.

If thou wilt still pursue thy headlong career, and choose a path for thyself, I pray thee remember that *darkness is lowering around thee*. The day is far spent! Around thy soul there are hanging mists and glooms already, and these will thicken into the night-damps of *bewilderment*. Thinking but not believing, thou wilt soon think thyself into a horror of great darkness. Refusing to hear what Jehovah has spoken, thou wilt follow other voices, which shall allure thee into an Egyptian night of confusion. Thou wilt go on meditating and ex-cogitating, or criticizing and trifling, till thou art enveloped in a cloud of doubts, wrapped as in a dense smoke of speculation, and well nigh smothered in exhalations of unbelief. Thou shalt not know what to do, nor what to think, nor what to say, nor whither to betake thyself, for thou wilt have renounced thy guide and quenched thy torch. At the same time, it may be, there will come upon thee a darkness of *distress*:

thou wilt be sick and sorry, thou wilt be faint and weary, thou wilt be tried and troubled, and thy soul will see no help or deliverance. To which of the saints wilt thou turn? Upon whom wilt thou call in the day of thy calamity, and who will succour thee? Then thy thoughts will dissolve into vanity, and thy spirit shall melt into dismay. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends." Thou shalt grope after comfort as blind men grope for the wall, and because thou hast rejected the Lord and his truth, he also will reject thee and leave thee to thine own devices.

Meanwhile, there shall overcloud thee a darkness bred of thine own *sin and wilfulness*. Thou shalt lose the brightness of thine intellect, the sharp clearness of thy thought shall depart from thee, professing thyself to be wise thou shalt become a fool. Thou shalt no longer be able to boast thyself because of the clearness of thy judgment, but thou shalt find thy conceptions thrown into confusion. Thou shalt ask of others, but they shall know no more than thyself, or if they know thou shalt not understand what they tell thee. Thou shalt be in an all-surrounding, penetrating blackness. Hence comes the solemnity of this warning, "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness." While as yet you have not absolutely turned away from the truth and rejected God's word, accept it in your heart by a living faith, and give him glory, lest by continuing a procrastinator and a halter between two opinions, thou be gradually made to slide by little and by little away from the brightness of the truth, till thou be shut up in a sevenfold night, out of which there shall be no escape.

For after that darkness there comes a *stumbling*, as saith the text, "before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." He who is going to think out his own way apart from revelation, will meet with mysteries which he cannot surmount. There are mysteries in revelation, but these rise before us like hills of light; while to those who trifle with the word of the Lord there shall arise mountains of gloom. I care not what philosophy you take, whether it be old or new, openly profane or faintly sprinkled with Christianity, you will never get rid of mystery—it is essential to the limited capacity of the human mind confronted by boundless truth. There must be difficulties in every man's way, even if it be a way of his own devising; but to the man that will not accept the light of God, these difficulties must necessarily be dark mountains with sheer abysses, pathless crags, and impenetrable ravines. He has refused the path which wisdom has cast up, and he is justly doomed to stumble where there is no way. Beware of encountering mysteries without guidance and faith, for you will stumble either into folly or superstition, and only rise to stumble again. Those who stumble at Christ's cross are like to stumble into hell.

There are also dark mountains of another kind which will block the way of the wanderer—mountains of dismay, of remorse, of despair. Woe to that man who finds himself travelling at midnight, without a guide, without a road, amid tremendous mountains, impassable to human feet. Ah, when a man comes into the land of doubt, which is a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness—how terrible his case! I say no more—thank God, my hearers, you are not there yet! Therefore

hearken to Jehovah's voice, and give glory to God ere he send a thick darkness over all your soul, even darkness that may be felt, and your feet stumble, never to rise again.

After that stumbling there will come bitter *disappointment*. The man finding that he cannot discover his way sits down awhile, and says to himself, "I will wait till the moon rises, or the day dawns. Many before me have come to a pause ; no doubt light will come." He looks and looks and looks again, but all in vain, for thus saith the prophet, "While ye look for light, he turns it into the shadow of death." Dread word—*death*! Terrible shade which death casts over men's minds! That shadow is coming on the man as years advance, and he has no light with which to dispel it. The physician cannot remove the death shadow—the disease is incurable. The sinner's face is pale with anguish, and his heart melts like wax in the midst of his bowels, for the shadow now upon him chills him to the marrow of his bones! What will he do now that the arrow is rankling in his heart? What will he do now that eternal night is descending? He cowers down and waits ; but nothing comes except the thickening of the death shadows, amid the weeping of those whom he must leave. He is anticipating the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, which are to be his endless portion.

And now a *paralyzing despair* seizes him, for God makes the darkness to be "gross darkness," black, palpable, as it were a solid thing. The man is shut up, and he cannot come forth ; the darkness is within the chambers of his soul, it is in his brain, it is in his heart, he is drowning in a black sea. Meet ending this for one who hated the light! Oh, I pray you, before any of you pass into that state, give glory to God, and receive his word. I beseech you believe ere your doubt has utterly destroyed you. Accept the witness of God before you become hardened in scepticism.

I do not know what may ever happen to me in this life ; perhaps it shall come to pass that I may be visited with severe physical infirmities, and possibly these may cause me mental depression and anguish ; but this one thing I know, I have committed my mind, my heart, my whole intellectual nature to his keeping who has promised to preserve his own. I desire to believe nothing but what he tells me, to do nothing but what he bids me, and to yield myself to no influence but that which he ordains for my direction ; and, therefore, it seems to me that having done this for many a day I can with unstaggering confidence say at the last, "Father, into thy hand I commit my spirit." I think I may confidently hope to cast anchor for ever in that haven which is no new refuge to me, but the daily roadstead of my soul. Can a man be more safe as to his soul's condition than when he has ceased from depending upon himself and has taken the great Lord to be the Shepherd at whose heel he follows? What shield can so well protect you as the divine faithfulness? Under what rock can you find such shelter as under the truthfulness of God? I am at a pass with all new ideas in religion : I will have none of them. If that grand old Book fail me, I am content to fail ; if the Lord shall desert me, I resign myself to be deserted : if God himself doth lie then there is an end of all things, and we all alike flounder in chaos. We tolerate no such fears. Believing in God I am not fearful of the future. Neither

dark mountains nor dark death can cause the believer to stumble, for he cries, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." But oh, if God be true, what will become of you who will not hear him? If the Bible be true, what must be your portion who pretend to be wiser than the Holy Ghost? You must assuredly wander into that endless captivity from which there can be no redemption.

V. So now I have to close, but not till I have delivered my burdened heart once more. If the people would not submit to God, the prophet determined what *he* would do. THERE REMAINS FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE IMPENITENT BUT ONE RESORT. The loving prophet cries, "If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." He cannot do anything more, he has no other message to deliver. He cannot hope that God will brook their insults and invent another way of saving them. He has told them the truth, and if they refuse it he will lay no flattering unction to their souls. He will deliver the word of the Lord once more, and if they again refuse he will go home to mourn for them even as Samuel mourned for Saul when the Lord had put him away. Observe that he does not say in the first clause, "my eyes shall weep," but "my soul shall weep." Bitter tears make red the eyes, but what must be the brine of those tears which are wept by the soul itself—a soul in anguish over wilful men who persist in destroying themselves!

Those soul-sorrows showed themselves in floods of tears which drenched the prophet's cheeks; for he loved the people, and could not bear to look upon the ruin which was coming upon them. Like our Lord in later times, the prophet beheld the city and wept over it: he could do no less, he could do no more. Alas, his sorrow would be unavailing, his grief was hopeless. *He* could not help those who would not be helped by God. If they refused to hear, he does not speak to them of "a larger hope" yet to be revealed, another season of probation, or a future revelation which would override the present word. Ah no, he loved men too well to invent for them fools' paradises; he dared not imitate the old serpent in the garden by insinuating—"Ye shall not surely die." I fear that the garments of many modern divines are steeped in the blood of souls whom they are deluding with their "larger hope," which is but a larger snare of Satan. Jeremiah had a brave though tender heart; he did not truckle to men, and sing pretty ditties to them, as preachers nowadays are prone to do; but he told them they would stumble in the darkness, and that nothing remained for him but to sigh out his soul over their ruin. Let us each one learn to sympathize with this holy man:—

"Arise, my tenderest thoughts, arise,
To torrents melt my streaming eyes;
And thou, my heart, with anguish feel
Those evils which thou canst not heal.

"See human nature sunk in shame;
See scandals pour'd on Jesu's name;
The Father wounded through the Son;
The world abused, and souls undone.

"See the short course of vain delight
Closing in everlasting night;
In flames that no abatement know,
Though briny tears for ever flow."

Observe that the prophet did not expect to obtain sympathy in this sorrow of his. He says, "My soul shall weep *in secret places* for your pride." He would get quite alone, hide himself away, and become a recluse. Alas, that so few even now care for the souls of men! Many ignore their danger, forgetting or else denying it, and few mourn over the ungodly and seek,

"With cries, entreaties, tears to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave."

Hearts are hardened, pride is flattered, falsehoods are cried up; and what can the faithful do but seek to their God alone, and weep in secret places? Solitude and weeping are a poor solace, and yet there is no other.

This also puts a pungent salt into the tears of the godly, that the weeping can do no good, since the people refuse the one and only remedy. Jehovah has spoken, and if they will not hear *him* they must die in their sins. O sirs, if you will not have Christ, if all the saints in the world prayed for you, yea, all the saints that ever lived, or ever shall live—if they all prayed for you, and if in one great river the tears of the whole church flowed on for ever, they could not help you nor bring you hope of salvation. You must have Christ or die, you must believe in the Lamb of God or perish everlastingly. Stands it so according to the Scripture? Then none can change it. Do not dash yourselves against this rock! Fall not upon this stone!

What a burden it is that so many should cause us this unnecessary sorrow, for if men turned to God our joy would exceed all bounds. O my hearers, why will you distress me? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? What excuse can you urge for your folly in choosing to perish? What motive can be strong enough to make you leap into the fire when Christ is waiting to be gracious to you? We have labour enough in preparing and delivering our weighty messages, without the added grief of seeing you reject them to your own destruction. Our throes of heart are sometimes grievous enough before we preach a sermon lest we should not preach aright: why must we be driven to this further misery? We exhaust ourselves while pleading with you: why should we have to sit down in sorrow because you will not believe our report? O blessed Spirit of God, touch all hearts this day, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah xiii. 1—17;
John i. 1—18.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK,"—92 (Part 1), 100, 97.