

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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“For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.”—Psalm lxxii. 12.

THIS is a royal psalm. In it you see predictions of Christ, not upon the cross, but upon the throne. In reference to his manhood as well as to his godhead, he is exalted and extolled and very high. He is the king—the king's son, truly with absolute sway, stretching his sceptre from sea to sea, and “from the river even unto the ends of the earth.” It is remarkable that in this psalm which so fully celebrates the extent of his realm and the sovereignty of his government, there is so much attention drawn to the minuteness of his care for the lowly, his personal sympathy with the poor, and the large benefits they are to enjoy from his kingdom. Where Christ is highest and we are lowest, and the two meet, there is “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.” I might almost raise the question whether this psalm is more a tribute of homage to the Messiah, or a treasury of comfort for his poor subjects. We will compound the controversy by saying that as Christ here is highly exalted, so his poor needy ones are highly blessed, and while it is a blessing to them that he is exalted, it is an exaltation to him that they are blessed.

Turning to our text without further preface, we shall note in it *the special objects of great grace*. “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper;” then, *the special blessings which are allotted to them*. Here it is said that he shall deliver them, but all through the psalms there are scattered promises full of instruction and consolation all meant for them. And, lastly, *the special season which God has appointed for the dispensing of these favours*. “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth.” That shall be God's time. When it is our time to cry, it shall be God's time to deliver.

I. First, then, notice THE SPECIAL OBJECTS OF GREAT GRACE. There is a three-fold description—they are needy, they are poor, they have no helper.

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They are *needy*. In this they are like all the sons of men. We begin life in a needy state. We are full of needs in our infancy, and cannot help ourselves. We continue throughout life in a needy state. The very breath in our nostrils hath to be the gift of God's goodness. In him we live, and move, and have our being. And, as we grow old our needs become even more apparent. The staff on which we lean reveals to us our needs, and our infirmities all tell us what needy creatures we are. We need temporal things and we need spiritual things. Our body needs, our soul needs, our spirit needs. We need to be kept from evil; we need to be led into the paths of righteousness; we need on the outset that grace should be implanted; when implanted, we need that it be nurtured; when nurtured, we need that it be perfected and made to bring forth fruit. We are never a moment without need. We wake up, and our first glance might reveal our needs to us, and when we fall asleep it is upon a poor man's pillow, for we need that God should preserve us through the night. We have needs when we are on our knees, else where would be the energy of our prayers? We have needs when we try to sing, else how should our uncircumcised lips praise him aright? We have needs when we are relieving the needs of others, lest we become proud of our almsgiving. We have need in preaching, need in hearing; we have need in working, need in suffering, need in resting. What is our life but one long need? All men are full of needs. But God's peculiar people *feel* this need—they not only confess it is so, but they know it experimentally. They are full of needs. Once they thought that they were rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, but now, through the enlightenment of God's Spirit, they feel themselves to be naked, and poor, and miserable. Their needs were great before, but they appear now to be incalculable, more in number than the hairs of their heads. They have need of a covering for the sin of the past; they have need of help against the temptation of the present; they have need of perseverance as to the entire future. If there are any people under heaven who could claim the title of "needy," above all others, it is not the pauper in the workhouse, nor the mendicant who asks alms in the streets, but it is the child of God, for he feels himself to be so dependent that the more he gets from his great Benefactor the more he requires, and the more he must have to satisfy the enlarged desires of a heart that begins to know the will of God concerning us. Our needs are great and constant.

The second description given is that he is *poor*—"the poor also." A man might be needy, and be able to supply his own need. As fast as his needs arose, he might have sufficient wealth to be able to procure what he wanted. I speak merely of his temporal wants. But, with regard to us in spiritual things, we are not only needy, but we are poor to utter destitution—there is nothing within our reach that we can help ourselves with. We have need of water for our thirst, but nature's buckets are empty, and her cisterns are broken. We have need of bread, but nature's granary is bare. Like the prodigal son in a far off country, there is a famine, a mighty famine, in that land, and we are in want. We have need of clothing; we have found that we are naked, and we are ashamed, but our fig leaves will not serve us, and we

are too poor to buy a garment for ourselves. We are so poor that when a want comes it only shows us how empty the treasury is; and every want while it draws upon us meets with no fitting response; there is nothing, nothing, nothing, in human nature at its very best, that can keep pace with its own needs. Speak of self-reliance!—'tis well enough in matters of the world, but self-reliance is absolutely madness in the things of God. We have heard of self-made men, but if any man would enter heaven, he must be a God-made man from first to last, for all that can come out of human nature will still be defiled. The stream shall never mount higher than the fountain-head, and the fountain-head of human nature is pollution, total depravity. It cannot rise higher than that, let it do its best. We are very needy, and very poor. If there be any poor in all the world, who have tasted the bitter ingredients of this cup of sorrow, it is God's people. We are very needy and very poor, though we did not always think so. When the discovery was first made to us, we felt the smart as those do "who have seen better days." Once we fancied ourselves able to do our work and sure to get our wages; we did hope to merit a reward for our good conduct; and we thought it was only for us to add a little piety to our decent morals in order to be well pleasing to God and our own conscience. Ah, sirs! when we woke from these foolish dreams, and faced our own abject poverty, how ashamed we were; how we shunned the light; how we sat alone and avoided company; how fear preyed on our heart; with what anguish we chattered to ourselves, saying, "What shall I do? What shall I do?" Poor indeed we are and we know it.

Moreover, it is said they have *no helper*. Now, until God enlightens us, we seem to have a great many helpers. We fancy—perhaps we once fancied—that a priest could save us. If we have a grain of grace we have given up that idea. Perhaps we imagined that our parents would help us, that our godly ancestry might stand us in some stead:—but we have long ago been brought to the conviction that we must each stand personally before God, for only personal religion is of any value. At one time we placed some dependence upon the ministry we attended, and hoped that in some favored hour that ministry might be of use to us; but, if God has awakened us, we look higher than pulpits and preachers now. Our eyes are up towards the hills whence cometh our help, and as to all earthly things, we see no help in them. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." "He shall be like the heath in the desert—he shall not see when good cometh." The Lord grant us all to be reduced to this—that we have no helper, because when we have no helper here, he will become our helper and our salvation. Put the three words together and you have a very correct description of the awakened people of God—needy, poor, and having no helper.

We have felt this, beloved, very keenly some of us just before we looked to Christ. Oh! we can remember now when we wanted to have our sins forgiven us, we would have given all we had if we could but have found mercy;—we were full of needs. We turned all our good works over, but they had all become mouldy and worm-eaten, and they stank in our nostrils. We tried our prayers. We used to fancy if we began to pray earnestly it would all be well with us, but alas! alas!

we found our prayers to be poor comforts—broken reeds. We looked all around us, and we could get no consolation. Even Scripture did not seem to cheer us; the very promises seemed to shut their doors against us. We had no helper. Oh, do you remember then when you cried to God in your trouble, and he delivered you? I know you verified the truth of the promise in our text, “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth.”

Since that time, we have been equally needy; we have been making fresh proof of our indigence; and getting into straits from which we could by no means extricate ourselves. Indeed, when a Christian is richest in grace he is poorest in himself. The way to grow rich in grace is to feel your poverty. Whenever you think you have stored up a little strength, a little comfort, a little provision against a rainy day, you are pretty sure to have the trouble you bargained for, and to miss the resources you counted on. Estimate your true wealth before God by your entire dependence on him. The more you have, the less you have, and the less you have, the more you have. When you have nothing at all in yourself, then Christ is all in all to you. The perpetual condition of every child of God in himself is that of a needy and a poor and a helpless one—on the high mountains with his Lord, rejoicing in his love, yet is he even there in himself less than nothing and vanity—still poor and needy.

There have been times when we felt this very powerfully, perhaps, very painfully. Has Satan ever beset you, my brethren, with his fierce temptations? No doubt many of you have had to feel the ferocity of his attacks. Perhaps, blasphemous thoughts have been injected into your mind—dark forebodings, such as these, “God has forsaken me.” Perhaps, he has said, “He has sinned himself out of the covenant—he is a castaway,” and your poor little faith has tried to hold on to Christ, but it seemed as if she must be driven from her hold. While others found it as you thought easy to get to heaven, you realised the truth of the text—“The righteous scarcely are saved.” You have had to fight for every inch of ground, and it seemed to you often as though you had not a spark of grace in you, not a ray of hope, and not so much as a single grain of the grace of God within your heart. Ah! and at such times you have been poor and needy, and you have had no helper. And, perhaps, at such seasons, too, temporal trouble may have come in. Whoever may go through the world without trouble, God’s people never do.

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown.”

“In the world ye shall have tribulation” is as sure a promise as that other, “In me ye shall have peace.” The trials of God’s servants are sometimes extremely severe. Not a few are literally as well as spiritually poor. Hunger, privation, and embarrassment haunt their steps. And when you once come to be poor, how often does it happen that you have no helper. In the summer of prosperity your friends and acquaintances are numerous as the leaves of the forest, but in the winter of your losses and distresses, your friends are few indeed; your neighbours stand aloof, your old mates desert you, for like the wind

your trials have borne them all away as sere leaves, and you cannot find them.

But, do not think that the Lord has cast you off, because he is thus chastening you with the rod of men; take it as an exercise of your faith, and go to him and plead this promise, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

Thus I have set before you the character of God's especial objects of sovereign grace; they are poor and needy spiritually. Do you ask why is it that God selects these? Our first answer is, he giveth no account of his matters; he doeth as he will. He is a sovereign; who shall say unto him, "What doest thou?" And, in order that he may make that sovereignty clear to the sons of men, he is pleased to select those whom naturally we might expect him to pass by. Did not Jesus lift his eyes to heaven full of gratitude and say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen, but God hath chosen the poor of this world, he hath chosen the things that are despised, (and as the Apostle puts it) "Things that are not hath God chosen to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." When the chariot of the Eternal comes from above, he bids it roll far downward from the skies; he passes by the towers of haughty kings; he leaves the palaces of princes and the halls of senates, and down to the hovels of cottagers the chariot of his grace descends, for there he sees with joy and delight the objects of his everlasting love. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is the word of divine sovereignty, and God makes it true by taking the poor and the needy, and them that have no helper.

Still, if we may enquire into the reason, we see in the poor, and the needy, and the helpless, a reason for God's grace. They are the persons who are most willing to accept it, for they are the persons who most require it. Your generosity will not stand to be dictated to, but, at the same time, you usually prefer to give to those who want most. Wise mercy seeks out chief misery, and God therefore delights to give his blessings to those who need them most, not to those who fancy they deserve them—they shall have none of them, but those who need them, they shall have all of them.

When a soul is made to feel its own poverty, it does not set itself up in rivalry with Christ; it does not pretend to be able to help itself; it has no disputing about the terms of the gospel. A sinner, when he is thoroughly famished, has such an appetite that he eats such things as God's mercy sets before him, and he raises no question. A proud Pharisee will say, "I will not submit to this, to be saved by faith alone—I will not have it. To accept mercy as the absolute gift of heaven, irrespective of my character, I cannot endure it." The high soul of a Pharisee, I say, kicks at it. But when God has brought a man low, till like the publican he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he is glad to be saved in God's way, and no matter however humbling the plan of grace, nor how the sinner is debased and Christ exalted, the poor sinner loves to have it so. It

is a way suitable to his own wants, a way which he accepts for the very reason that God has adapted it to his position. Hence, if there be reasons they lie here, not in man's merit but on the Lord's mercy. The fact that bare misery, when touched and guided by the Spirit of God, makes the soul to open its mouth like the hard chapped soil to drink in the rain, as soon as the rain descends from above, is an argument why grace so commonly flows in this course.

In choosing to bless the poor and needy by his grace, the Lord finds for himself warm friends, those who will give him much praise, contend earnestly for his reign and for his sovereignty, and endure much obloquy for very love to his dear name. Why if the Lord were to save the Pharisees, they would hardly say, "thank you," they are so good themselves. They reckon themselves to be so excellent, that if they had salvation they would take it as a matter of course, and, like the lepers, they would never return to thank him that healed them. But when the Lord saves a great sinner, a man that feels there is nothing good in him; oh, how that man talks of it and tells it to others. He cannot take any praise to himself, he knows that he had nothing to do with it, that it is all of the grace of God. And, oh, see that man how he will stand up for the doctrines of grace! He is as the valiant men in Solomon's song, "each man with a sword on his thigh because of fear in the night;" for the doctrines of grace are not to him matters of opinion, but matters of experience. They are dear to him as his own life. "What," says he, "is not God the giver of salvation? Is not salvation all of God, from first to last? I know it is," saith he. "Don't tell me. Whatever your arguments, however smooth may be the form and fashion of your theology, it does not tally with what I have tasted and handled and felt; for unless it is grace from first to last, I am a lost man; and, if I be indeed a child of God, then can I contend for the doctrines of grace, and will do till I die." I know I felt myself last Sunday night, after I had talked to you about the difficulties of salvation, that if ever I got to heaven, I would praise and bless God with all my soul. I felt like that good old woman who said, that if the Lord ever saved her he should never hear the last of it, for she would tell it everywhere, and publish it abroad throughout all eternity, that the Lord had done it, that he was a good and gracious God to have mercy on such a soul as she was. Now, since one object of God in bestowing his mercy is to glorify himself, he does wisely in bestowing his mercy upon the poor and the needy, and such as have no helper. The Lord give to you, my dear hearer, to be brought down to this to-night. I know many of you have been brought there and are there now. Let my text encourage and cheer you. Dear objects of Almighty love, he finds you on the dunghill, but he lifts you from it. He finds you in the dust, but is not this the song of Hannah and the song of Mary too—"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and he hath exalted them of low degree: he hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away?" It is God's way of dealing with the poor and lost; rejoice at it, it is full of encouragement to you. But I say to any of you that have never been humbled, good people, who have always been good people, you that have always kept the law from your youth up, and gone to church regularly, or to chapel regularly,

very good people—The Lord have mercy upon you, and let you see that your goodness is filthiness, that your righteousness is unrighteousness, and that the best that is in you is bad, and that the bad that is in you that you have never seen as yet will be your ruin, your eternal destruction, unless God set it before your eyes, and bring you down to loathe yourself, and feel yourself to be abominable in his sight, and abominable also in your own sight, when his law comes with power home to your souls. Thus I have spoken upon the special objects of divine grace.

II. Now, a few words upon THE SPECIAL BLESSING WHICH THE GREAT KING HAS STORED UP FOR THESE PEOPLE. Kindly look at the second verse. “He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment;” so that one of the special blessings for God’s poor is that they shall be judged with judgment. Alas! they are often judged with harshness; or they are judged in ignorance; or they are judged by malice—not judged by righteousness, nor by judgment. When their enemies see them, they say, “These are a broken-spirited people; they are moping and melancholy, wretched and sad.” Thus hard things are spoken against them, and unkind stories are told of them. Sometimes they say they are out of their minds, and then they will insinuate that they are only hypocrites and pretenders. Slander is very busy with the children of God. God had a Son that had no fault; but he never had a son that was not found fault with. Ay, God himself was slandered in paradise by Satan: let us not expect, therefore, to escape from the venomous tongue.

One blessing, however, that will always come to God’s needy ones is this—Christ will right them, he will judge them with judgment. Are you harshly spoken of at home? Don’t be angry, don’t provoke in return, don’t answer railing with railing. “He shall judge his poor with righteousness.” Leave it to him. Wait, wait, till the judgment sits, for who are these that they should judge you? Their opinion, though it is bitter as gall to your spirit, does not really affect your character or your destiny. If you are right before the Lord, through faith in Christ, they cannot make you wrong by anything they say. God judges and God knows. “He searcheth the heart and tries the reins.” You remember how David, among his brethren, was much despised. He had not the appearance and the carriage that his elder brethren had, and even Samuel, the Lord’s prophet, thought the others to be better than David, and said of them, “Surely the Lord hath chosen these.” David was therefore despised of his brethren, but what mattered it? The Lord looked not as man looks, for man looked upon the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart. Bide your time you that are one of a family and alone. Or, if for Christ’s sake you have been despised, have courage to-night and let not your spirit be bowed down. “Rejoice ye in this day and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.” The King will speedily come, and when he cometh then will this word be verified. “He shall judge his people with righteousness and his poor with judgment.” There is one mercy for you—to have your wrongs righted and your character cleared.

God’s poor and needy ones, you will perceive, if you turn a little

further down, shall be saved from oppression. Fourth verse: "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The Lord's people are like sheep among wolves, the wolves treat them injuriously. Christ himself was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. His people may expect to be oppressed too; but they have this for their comfort, that Christ will surely deliver them, and he will break their oppressors in pieces. Are you to-night oppressed by Satan? Have you things laid to your charge by him that you know not of, and doth conscience oppress you with the remembrance of sins which have been forgiven? Have you ever believed concerning them in the atonement of Christ? Well, bow your head meekly, and go to the mercy-seat once again, pleading the precious blood, and he shall break in pieces the oppressor. There is no answer for Satan like the blood! and there is no answer for conscience but the blood. Plead it before God, plead it in your own soul, and you shall find that the great and glorious King in Zion shall, in your hearts, break in pieces the oppressor. There is another special mercy, then—help against the oppressor.

The third blessing is that of our text: "He shall deliver the needy." Deliver them! You are brought into great troubles; you shall be delivered out of them. You are just now the subject of many fears: you shall be delivered from your fears. It seems as though the enemy would soon exult over you, and put his foot upon your neck, and make an end of you; you shall be delivered. You are like a bird taken in the fowler's net, and he is ready to wring your neck and take the breath out of you; but you shall be delivered out of the hand of the fowler, and brought safely through the perils that threaten you. Oh, that we all had faith! Oh, that we all could exercise faith when in deep waters. It is a fine thing to talk about faith on land, but we want faith to swim with when we are thrown into the flood. May you, to-night, get such a grip of this precious word that you may take it before the Lord and say, "I am poor and needy, and have no helper. O God, deliver my soul now."

But, we have not exhausted the string of blessings. A little further down in the psalm, at the thirteenth verse, you will notice it is said of the King: "He shall spare the poor and needy." If he lays heavily upon them apparently, yet will he by-and-by stay his hand; if he bids one of his rough winds blow, he will save the other. As he is said to temper the wind to the shorn lamb, so will he certainly temper it to his people; they shall be afflicted, but it shall be in measure; he shall spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him: the rod shall make them smart, but shall not make them bleed; they shall be made to suffer, but they shall not be called to die. Perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; there

shall always be a gracious limit put to the blows that come from Jehovah's hand for his own people. Oh, what a mercy to be amongst his poor ones, and to feel that he will spare us; he spared not his own Son, but he will spare us, the poor and needy; he smote him with the blows of avenging justice, but concerning us it is written, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of my love shall not depart. As I have sworn that the waters shall no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." He will spare his people; he will bring them safely through, and, meanwhile, he will not let the waters be deep enough to overwhelm them.

There is one other blessing which sums up all the rest; you find it in the fourteenth verse: "He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence." Redemption belongs to the Lord's poor people. He bought with a price his poor ones, and as the ransom has all been paid, they belong to Christ, and none shall take them out of his hand. He that redeemed them by price will redeem them by power. He will, if it be needful, divide the Red Sea again to redeem his people; and, if by no usual means his servants can be preserved, he will bring unusual means into the field. There are no miracles now, we say, but if they are ever wanted for the safety of God's people, there shall be miracles as timely and as plentiful as of yore. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall never pass away." He would sooner shake the heavens themselves than suffer one of his children to famish, or utterly to perish, rest assured of that. Oh, what glorious comfort there is in all this! We shall be spared, we shall be redeemed, we shall be delivered, we shall be saved, we shall be revenged and cleared before the judgment-bar of God; and, all because the great King has made the poor and needy the special objects of his love. Oh! my soul revels in this. I cannot speak out the thoughts I feel, much less the joy that arises out of them; but what a mercy it really is, that the great King, the King who rules from the river to the ends of the earth, is the poor man's friend. I am very poor and needy and helpless to-night, but the king has made me his favourite, counts me one of his courtiers: it is the same with you, dear brother, if you too are poor and needy. He rules, and he rules on the throne for us. He is great and hath dominion, but he uses all his greatness and his dominion for us. As Joseph in Egypt was invested with power for the good of his brethren, or at least such sovereignty as he held of Pharaoh he laid out for the welfare of his father's house, so Jesus has all power and authority in heaven and earth; all might, majesty, and dominion for the good of his people. He has the king's signet ring upon his finger, but he uses it for his own beloved ones that he may enrich, and honour, and cheer, and perfect them. His glory is concerned in every

one of us. If one of the least of his people should perish, his crown would suffer damage. He is the shepherd and surety of the flock, and at his hand will the Father require all those who are committed to him. He cannot, therefore, let us perish, for then he would not be able to say at the last, "Of all that thou hast given me I have lost none." He must and will preserve us. We are wrapped up in his honour. His power, I say, his crown, his glory, his very name, as the Christ of God anointed to save sinners, all are wrapped up and intertwined in the salvation of every poor and needy soul that is brought to rest in him.

III. And, now, our closing word is, THE SPECIAL SEASON WHEN ALL THIS SHALL BE TRUE. He shall deliver the needy *when he crieth*.

Ah! while I have been preaching there may have been some poor child of God here who has said, "I am poor and needy, and I am in great distress, but I have not been delivered." And there may be some sinner here who has said, "God has taught me my poverty and need, and I know I have no helper, but I cannot find I have been delivered." Perhaps, dear friends, you have been praying for months, praying very bitterly too, after a sort, and you have been desirous that you might find mercy. God's time, when will it come? Well, it will come when you cry. That is something more, I take it, than a mere ordinary prayer. A child asks you for something, and you may perhaps deny it; but you know there is a difference between asking for a thing and crying for a thing. Oh, when you get so that you must have it, and your heart breaks for it, when your needs are so extreme that you cannot stand up under them—well, now, it comes to this, that you must have Christ or perish. "Give me Christ or else I die," when it seems as if you could not put your prayer into words any more, that you could only fall at the foot of the cross, and say, "O God, I cannot pray, but my very soul groans after thee, to have mercy upon me," then is the time, then is the time, but not till then, when God will deliver you. The Lord loves to hear the prayers of his people, and he sometimes keeps them waiting at the posts of his door, that they may pray more. It is always a blessing for us to pray as well as to get the answer to prayer. Prayer is in itself a blessing. When the Lord hears us knock faintly at the door, he does not open; we may knock and knock again—he likes us to knock; it does us good to knock. But when it comes to this, that it is all knocking with us, and our very soul and body seem to knock, and our heart and flesh cry after God, the living God: when we shall thus come to appear before God, and open our mouth and pant vehemently for the mercy he has promised, then it will come. When thou canst not take a denial, thou shalt not have a denial. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. There is none so violent as the man who is in desperate need. There is a person who has been without

bread many hours, and he asks you for charity in the street. You would pass him by, but he is famished, and he says, "Oh give me bread ! I die." He compels you to it. And such is the prayer that prevails with God. When the soul cannot wait, dare not wait, fears lest it should shut its eyes and open them in hell. Oh ! God will not keep such a soul long waiting. I am always glad when I hear of convinced souls saying, "I went up into my chamber with the resolution that I would never come down again till I had found the Saviour. I always delight to hear of men and women who say, "I went upon my knees and cried to him, saying, I will not let thee go except thou bless me." He will bless thee. If thou wilt let him go, he will go, but if thou wilt not let him go, thou shalt have thy request of him. "But who am I," saith one, "that I should plead thus ? I have no right to hold him thus." 'Tis true, but when a man is hungry, when a man is dying, he does not think of rights. He holds you right or wrong. His need is his right. Poor soul, go and plead your need before God. Plead your sin, tell him you are wretched and undone without his sovereign grace. Use the strange argument which David used, the strangest in all the world, "For thy name's sake, O Lord ! pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Plead the very greatness of your sin as a reason for mercy ; the damnable character of your sin ; the certainty that you will soon be cast into hell, the fact that he might justly drive you from his presence for ever ; plead all that before him ; and say, "Lord, if ever the heights and depths of thy grace might be seen in saving an undeserving soul, I am just that one. If thy mercy wants to honour itself by saving the most undeserving, ill deserving, hell deserving sinner that ever lived, Lord, I am the man. If thou wantest a platform on which to erect a monument of infinite grace, that men shall stand and wonder, and angels shall gaze on it with astonishment, Lord, here am I. If thou wantest emptiness, here is one who is all emptiness. If thou as the good physician wantest a bad case, a glaring case, a desperate case, to operate on, thou wilt never have a worse case than mine. O God, turn aside and have pity upon me, and show thy mighty power." This is the way to plead. Not your merits—they will never get a hearing, but your misery, your sin, your guiltiness before God—these are the arguments. And then if faith can come in and plead the blood, and say, "Didst thou not send thy Son to save sinners ?" has he not said he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ? Is it not written that the Son of Man is come to seek and to save not the good, but that which was lost ? Oh ! if you can plead the blood in that fashion, you will not fail. His name is the Saviour—he came to save his people from their sins. He died for the ungodly, he justifieth the ungodly—the unrighteous he makes righteous through his own merits. If you can plead this, oh, then, you shall not long wait, for though God does not deliver till we cry, yet he does deliver

when we cry. "He will deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Oh, what a mercy it is when the tide is ebb'd right out, and there is nothing left. It will turn now, it will turn now. The streams of grace will turn now. When you are empty, when you are overwhelmed, when you are like a dish wiped out, and there is not anything good left in you—now will God come to you. The darkest part of the night is that which precedes the dawn of the day. When God has killed you, he will make you live. When he has wounded you through and through, he will come to your healing.

" 'Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We get no *full* discharge.

But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small;
As soon as we have nought to pay,
Our God forgives us all."

May it be so now, for his name's sake. Amen.

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